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Performing Women:

Opera, Sexuality, and the Female Voice in Seventeenth-Century Italy

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Abstract

This study considers how the emergence of opera, its evolution, and the rise of the prima donna influenced literary and musical culture during the seventeenth century. I focus on the remarkable careers and voices of two Roman singers, the sisters Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa, to consider two over-arching questions: first, how were women's voices—whether in song, in speech, or in writing—received and represented by their contemporaries during the first century of opera? And secondly, how did women singers and writers fashion their public voices—and consequently, their livelihoods—against shifting notions of women's creative authority, gender norms, and the dynamics of power?

Chapters One and **Two** reconstruct the lives and performance histories of the Costa sisters and use their experiences as a springboard for an investigation of the social and cultural forces that shaped the performances and patronage strategies of seventeenth-century women singers. **Chapter Three** investigates the cultural context of the persistent alignment between women singers and prostitutes, investigating the complex relationship between singing and *onestà* using the archives of the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso—a religious institution founded to house repentant prostitutes—to show how the control and regulation of women singers' behavior influenced both their public images and their financial futures. **Chapter Four** uses the image of Saint Cecilia as a starting point for an analysis of the complexities of self-fashioning for a singing woman in the seventeenth century, analyzing how three socio-cultural phenomena playing out during this time—the emergence of opera, the climate of religious reform, and the rediscovery of Saint Cecilia's incorrupt body—shaped the ways in which women singers fashioned their public images and shaped their careers during a period that saw major shifts in norms and prescriptions for women's speech and song. I focus in particular on Margherita Costa's narrative poem, *Cecilia martire*, to show how Costa fashioned herself as a secular Cecilia to appeal to her Barberini patrons in 1644. **Chapter Five** tells the story of how Anna Francesca Costa stepped beyond the role of prima donna to become one of the few female impresarios of the seventeenth century. Letters exchanged between Anna Francesca and her patron in Florence, Giovan Carlo de' Medici show that she single-handedly organized successful performances of the opera *Ergirodo* in Bologna in 1653. Through new archival evidence, I show that the opera was first performed in Paris, where Anna Francesca had sung in the first Italian operas presented at the French court from 1644 to 1647; the opera was conceived to legitimize Anne of Austria's new regency, explaining its preoccupation with the Salic law used there to exclude women from the throne.

Through its reconstruction and analysis of the extraordinary careers of the Costa sisters, *Performing Women* shows how women singers, writers, and impresarios fashioned their voices against the same issues that were dramatized in *Ergirodo* and other operas of the period: new ways of conceiving and resisting women's power: whether that authority was used to rule empires, to sing, to write, or to take charge of creative enterprises such as the production of opera itself.

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Introduction

The pleasures and dangers of singing women have been debated at least since Homer's sirens nearly lured Odysseus and his men to a watery grave. But in the seventeenth century, as opera flourished and women singers moved increasingly into the public eye, discourse preoccupied with female vocality in all its forms reached new levels of intensity. At the center of concern was a new type of female performer, a type we have come to call the prima donna. Unlike the court chamber singer, whose performances took place exclusively in private palaces before a rarified group of guests, the prima donna sang primarily on the stages of public theaters before a paying audience. The prima donna embodied self-display and self-expression—qualities that early modern audiences had long associated with promiscuity and prostitution. As Bonnie Gordon has shown, part of the problem with singing women lay in the inherent parallels, for seventeenth-century audiences, between the act of singing and the act of sexual intercourse.[1] In the seventeenth century, and well beyond, Galenic ideas about the differences between men and women's bodies were still in force. Women, in this model, were inherently colder and leakier than men. Because both singing and sexual activity were thought to heat up the body and increase blood flow, when a woman sang, she was not only taking on a masculine persona, but also embodying a sexually aroused state. At the same time, women were thought to be particularly susceptible to the sin of excess sexual desire—by heating up their bodies as they sang, they unleashed sexual urges that were harder for their weak natures to control. In that context, a singing woman—her mouth open, her body warm, her cheeks flushed—must have

[1] Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

been a particularly erotic sight. Small wonder, then, that contemporaries found the sight and sound of a singing woman both alluring and threatening.

In 1642 the Roman-born singer Anna Renzi, often called the first diva of the Italian operatic stage, was the subject of an entire volume of breathlessly encomiastic poetry penned by her elite male admirers.[2] But as we shall see, other commentators described Renzi as a courtesan, and one went so far as to denounce her as a "whore".[3] By the 1670s, as one Parisian observer recorded, the most celebrated prima donnas were sometimes literally showered with sonnets written in their honor during performances.[4] Yet already in the 1630s, at least in Rome, female singers were sometimes rounded up alongside prostitutes for ritual public floggings when they transgressed laws regulating their behavior.[5] And in 1646, the Jesuit reformist Gian Domenico Ottonelli devoted an entire treatise to the dangers of the female voice, reminding his

[2] On Renzi as the first Italian diva, see Claudio Sartori, "La prima diva della lirica italiana: Anna Renzi," *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 2 (1968): 430-52. The volume dedicated to Renzi and compiled by Giulio Strozzi on behalf of the Accademia degli Incogniti is Giulio Strozzi, ed., *Le glorie della Signora Anna Renzi romana* (Venice: Surian, 1644). For a fundamental discussion of Renzi's career and the Strozzi volume, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 229-35.

[3] See Herbert Seifert, "Cesti and his opera troupe in Innsbruck and Vienna, with new informations about his last year and his oeuvre," *Quaderni della Rivista italiana di musicologia* 37 (2003): 19 and 49.

[4] A description of this practice in Venetian opera houses is found in Alexandre-Toussaint de Limojon de Saint-Disdier, *La ville et la république de Venise* (Paris: Barbin, 1680), 423. Cited in Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 235.

[5] See, for example, the manuscript miscellany MS Urb.lat. 1647 (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), for accounts of "Frustature di diverse canterine e donne di mala vita" ([Public] floggings of various singers and women of ill repute) that took place in the 1630s.

readers of Augustine's warning that while the hiss of a basilisk might destroy a man's body, the song of a woman had the power to destroy his soul.[6]

Meanwhile, women writers were also encountering increasing resistance from colleagues and commentators, especially when their literary performances, whether written or spoken, took place in the public sphere. Ottonelli's treatise on the female voice included a lengthy chapter on "il pericolo di peccare mirando la donna accademica parlatrice" (the danger of sinning while looking at an academic female orator).[7] The beginnings of this decline in the status of literary women can be traced in the pioneering figure of Margherita Sarrocchi (c.1560-1617), author of the epic poem *La Scanderbeide* and correspondent of Galileo Galilei.[8] Around 1602, Sarrocchi became the first woman admitted to the Accademia degli Umoristi, the most avant-garde of all the literary academies in Rome. It was there that she met the poet Giambattista Marino, with whom she struck up a literary friendship. Although the two writers initially exchanged sonnets of mutual admiration, Marino eventually began to attack Sarrocchi in print, denouncing her in his

[6] Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della pericolosa conversatione con le donne, o poco modeste, o ritirate, o cantatrici, o accademiche* (Florence: Luca Franceschini & Alessandro Logi, 1646).

[7] Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della pericolosa conversatione con le donne*, 426-40.

[8] Margherita Sarrocchi, *La Scanderbeide, poema heroico della signora Margherita Sarrocchi* (Rome: Lepido Facij, 1606); For Sarrocchi's biography and a modern edition of her poem, see Margherita Sarrocchi, *Scanderbeide: The Heroic Deeds of George Scanderbeg, King of Epirus*, ed. and trans. Rinaldina Russell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006). For a modern edition and English translation of Sarrocchi's letters to Galileo, see Meredith Kennedy Ray, *Margherita Sarrocchi's Letters to Galileo: Astronomy, Astrology, and Poetics in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

Adone as a "chattering magpie" who had dared to challenge true poets such as himself.[9] Later, Tommaso Stigliani, once part of Sarrocchi's circle, would dismiss her epic poem—the first of the genre to be written by a woman— as fit only for wrapping fish.[10] After Sarrocchi's death, Gian Vittorio Rossi (1577-1647) included her as one of only seven women featured in his *Pinacotheca imaginum illustrium*, a collection of literary portraits of writers, scholars, and intellectuals. Rossi, who published under the pseudonym Janus Nicius Erythraeus, was known for his merciless satire. True to form, his portrait of Sarrocchi, although it begins with praise for her literary talent, paints an unflattering picture, representing Sarrocchi as vain and quick to argue. As for her moral reputation, Rossi points out that rumor had it that she "favored Marino with a love that was other than platonic."[11] He adds trenchantly that "her chastity was famed to be such as is generally that of female poets, musicians, and singers, and those who neglect their domestic responsibilities to practice the arts of painting and sculpture."[12] Satiric though it may be, Rossi's response to Sarrocchi's literary success sheds light on social norms that cast any woman who sought to leave

[9] Giambattista Marino, *L'Adone, poema del cavalier Marino* (Venice: Giacomo Sarzina, 1623).

[10] Tommaso Stigliani, *Il canzoniero del sig. cavalier Fra' Tomaso Stigliani* (Rome: Giovanni Mannelli, 1625), 445.

[11] "Baptistam Marinum, quem illa, ut fama erat, alio amore dilexerat, atque Platonico." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca imaginum illustrium, doctrinae vel ingenii laude virorum* (Amsterdam: Iodocum Kalcovium et socios, 1643–1648), 260.

[12] "Ea pudicitiae fama, qua solent esse poetriae, fidicines, cantatrices, eaeque quas pingendi fingendique ars a lana et colu abduxit." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 261. Cited and translated in Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 201.

the confines of domesticity to engage in creative work, especially if that creative work took place in the public sphere, as socially transgressive and sexually promiscuous.

If in the sixteenth century it had been fashionable in mainstream literary culture to praise women, the seventeenth century saw what Virginia Cox has called a "rebirth of misogyny."[13] Cox traces this misogynist turn back to about 1600, noting that during the first three decades of the Seicento attacks on both individual writers and on women in general increased, while defenses of women decreased. In response, women writers began to produce more polemical texts, in contrast to the lyric poetry, pastoral drama, and religious writings that had dominated women's literary production in the previous century. Beginning in the 1640s the Venetian nun Arcangela Tarabotti wrote one fiery polemic after another, including her last published work, a 1651 treatise entitled *Che le donne siano della spetie degli huomini* (Women do belong to the human species), a response to an anonymous writer who had suggested satirically that women were not human.[14] By the middle of the seventeenth century, although a few women continued to publish religious writings, very few secular women writers were visible on the literary scene.

There are multiple reasons behind these changes in the cultural and social status of women writers. The first and most obvious of these is the influence of the Counter-Reformation church, which sought to exert ever tighter control over women's movements and behavior to prevent spiritual and social disorder. As Cox has argued, however, there are other factors that may have been even more influential, including the gradual decline of the Italian courts, which

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[13] Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*, 166.

[14] On Tarabotti, see Elissa B. Weaver, ed., *Arcangela Tarabotti: A Literary Nun in Baroque Venice* (Ravenna: Longo, 2006); Meredith Kennedy Ray, "Arcangela Tarabotti (1604–1652), Venetian Nun and Writer," in *Italian Women Writers* (University of Chicago, 2007). https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/IWW/.

led to women's diminished importance as both patrons of and audiences for literature; and, on a stylistic level, the new sensual and transgressive poetics of baroque literature.[15] Cox also points out that in the writings of Rossi and others, there is a "sense that a woman who ventures into the male territory of literature is radically out of place," positing that perhaps another factor in the "misogynistic turn" of seventeenth-century literature was a "sense that women writers were beginning to encroach too closely on male prerogative."[16]

These factors offer important context and insight into the role of women in the seventeenth century. But they do not tell the whole story. What is missing, I would argue, is a consideration of how the emergence of opera, its evolution, and the subsequent rise of the prima donna, might have influenced literary and musical culture during the seventeenth century. For it was just as prima donnas were moving into the limelight that anxieties about the potential disruptive power of women's voices bubbled up once again to the surface. At the same time, the starring role of women singers in the nascent opera world opened new and powerful spaces for women's voices not only in music and performance, but also in the other creative disciplines of literature and the visual arts.

This study, then, asks two over-arching questions. First, how were women's voices — whether in song, in speech, or in writing—received and represented by their contemporaries during the first century of opera? And secondly, how did women singers and writers fashion their public voices—and consequently, their livelihoods —against shifting notions of creative

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[15] On the causes of the misogynist turn in seventeenth-century Italian literature, see Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*; Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[16] Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*, 202.

authority, gender norms, and the dynamics of power? My approach here has been influenced especially by the seminal work of Wendy Heller on women, gender, and sexuality in seventeenth-century opera.[17] Heller's *Emblem of Eloquence* shows how contemporary Venetian writing about women influenced the representation of women in Venetian opera through the analysis of five operatic heroines. This study shifts the focus to the lived lives, careers, and performance strategies of the women singers who performed those roles. Alongside literary texts and treatises that offer representations of and proscriptions for women's voices, I focus, to the extent possible, on the voices and careers of the singers themselves. This study uses archival sources to offer a more detailed understanding of the social and musical context in which women singers lived and worked: these sources include notarial documents and payment records, *avvisi* (news and gossip circulated between European court centers, usually in manuscript), and published and unpublished letters.

My analysis of seventeenth-century singing women will focus on a pair of prima donnas born and likely trained in Rome: the sisters Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa. Both sisters were born in the early seventeenth century, just as opera, too, was emerging and evolving. Both were celebrated singers, performing in court settings and on the stages of private and public theaters of Rome, Bologna, Venice, and as far afield as Paris. Tellingly, while both continued to sing professionally well into the last years of their lives, both also pursued parallel careers that allowed them more control not only of their creative output but also of their professional

[17] Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Wendy Heller, "'O delle donne miserabil sesso': Tarabotti, Ottavia, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*," *Il saggiatore musicale* 7, no. 1 (2000).

reputations. Margherita Costa was one of the few women to publish prolifically during the seventeenth century, sending to press at least fourteen books of prose, poetry, and drama. Anna Francesca chose a different path to creative authority, making a name for herself as an *impresaria* through the operas she organized and produced in Paris, Bologna, and Florence. The remarkable careers and voices of Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa will serve as the through-line for my inquiry into the historical and cultural forces that shaped the ways in which women participated in musical performance during the Seicento.

The performance culture and social norms of seventeenth-century Rome, which shaped the contours of the lives and careers of the Costa sisters, are the geographical and socio-cultural center of this study. If both Costa sisters, like so many other women singers, spent much of their careers moving from court to court in search of opportunity and patronage, both continued to return to Rome throughout their lifetime. In Rome, more than elsewhere, the performance activities of women singers were tightly regulated by church authorities and surveilled by moralists. Because women singers in Rome were not as free to perform in court or private operas, they tended to earn their living mainly as chamber singers, often providing musical entertainment at social and literary gatherings known as *conversazioni*. This seems to have been the case with the Costa sisters, who probably sang at such gatherings in the 1620s—although the documentation for performances of this type is sparse. But by the 1640s, like many other Roman singers, both Costa sisters began to take advantage of opportunities offered on the stages of opera theaters in urban centers outside of Rome, where women singers often earned salaries as high or higher than their male colleagues. Both sisters had either died or withdrawn from the stage by the 1670s, when, as Valeria De Lucca has shown, there was a brief window of opportunity for

women singers on the stage of the Teatro Tordinona, promoted by two aristocratic female patrons, Queen Christina of Sweden and Maria Mancini, and Maria's husband Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna.[18]

The first two chapters of this study focus on reconstructing the lives and performance histories of Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa. In each chapter, I use the lived experiences of the Costas as a springboard for a broader investigation of the social and cultural forces that shaped the performances and patronage strategies of seventeenth-century women singers. In **Chapter One,** I offer an updated account of Margherita Costa's life, re-reading previous scholarship and sources and incorporating some new finds of my own, including Margherita's 1635 will. Retracing Margherita's steps, the chapter follows her as she moved from court to court in search of patronage, from her failed appearance in *La catena d'Adone* (Rome, 1626), to her attempt to rebrand herself as a writer at the Medici court in Florence, to her appearances on the stage in Venice and at the French court, to her final literary work, *Gl'amori della luna* (Venice, 1654), which she dedicated to the dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg. The voice that emerges from Margherita's publications is as performative as it is versatile—she is sometimes

[18] See Valeria De Lucca, *The Politics of Princely Entertainment: Music and Spectacle in the Lives of Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Valeria De Lucca, "Strategies of Women Patrons of Music and Theatre in Rome: Maria Mancini Colonna, Queen Christina of Sweden, and Women of their Circles," *Renaissance Studies* 25 (2011). On the women singers who appeared in *L'Alcasta,* see Valeria De Lucca, "*L'Alcasta* and the Emergence of Collective Patronage in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Rome," *Journal of Musicology* 28 (2011). The soprano Giulia Masotti was supported by the Colonna family throughout her life and career, which took place mainly in Venice, beginning in the 1660s. See Valeria De Lucca, "The Power of the Prima Donna: Giulia Masotti's Repertory of Choice," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 17 (2011). scm-jscm.org/jscm-issues/volume-17-no-1/the-power-of-the-prima-donna-giulia-masottis-repertory-of-choice/; Beth L. Glixon, "Giulia Masotti, Venice, and the Rise of the Prima Donna," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 17 (2011). https://sscm-jscm.org/jscm-issues/volume-17-no-1/giulia-masotti-venice-and-the-rise-of-the-prima-donna/.

the willing object of the gaze of her patrons, but always the active creator and protagonist of the dramatic history of her literary persona.

Chapter Two turns to Anna Francesca Costa, who has received much less critical attention than her sister. I begin with the story of how I nearly created a mistaken identity for Anna Francesca using a will I believed was hers, which turned out to belong to another woman with the same name. I eventually did find the correct will (Rome, 1670); I use my near miss to reflect on the challenges of archival research on early modern women. I incorporate my archival finds into already published sources to offer an updated performance history for Anna Francesca and tell the story of her career trajectory, from prima donna to *impresaria*. The story of the recruitment of another Medici singer, Signora Felice (also known as "Cice"), offers context for the ways in which Anna Francesca and other singers were constructed as sexually available by their patrons, and reveals how constructions of sexual availability influenced their careers. From Florence, Anna Francesca was called to the court of Anne of Austria in Paris, where she enjoyed great success during the opera seasons from 1644-1647. It was in Paris that Anna Francesca cultivated both the relationships and the skills that would prove invaluable as she stepped beyond the role of singer into the role of *impresaria*.

Both Costa sisters, like so many other seventeenth-century women singers, were often aligned with the figure of the prostitute. **Chapter Three** traces the cultural context of that alignment, focusing on the ways in which the performance activities of women singers clashed with the early modern notion of *onestà*, a multivalent quality that, for women, included perceptions of chastity, decency, modesty, and decorum. The chapter begins by revisiting how nineteenth-century historians of early opera aligned female singers with prostitutes and shows

how that outdated lens still conditions our scholarly approach today. The chapter then discusses the evolution of the professional female singer, from the singing actress of the 1560s, to the *concerto delle donne* of the 1580s, to the seventeenth-century *virtuosa* or *cantarina*, and finally, to the presence of women singers in early operas staged in Rome, to consider the ways in which singing *in scena* (on stage) was particularly problematic for a woman's reputation. Finally, the chapter investigates the complex relationship between singing and *onestà*, using archival documents from the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso—a religious institution founded to house repentant prostitutes—to show how the control and regulation of women singers' behavior influenced both their public images and their financial futures.

Chapter Four begins with the unlikely juxtaposition of Raphael's ethereal altarpiece depicting Saint Cecilia in ecstasy (c. 1518) and an engraved portrait of Margherita Costa published on the frontispieces of two of her earliest books of poetry dedicated to her Medici patrons (1639). Using these two images as a starting point for an analysis of the complexities of self-fashioning for a singing woman in the seventeenth century, the chapter analyzes how three socio-cultural phenomena, all playing out over the course of the seventeenth century, shaped the ways in which women singers fashioned their public images and shaped their careers during a period that saw major shifts in norms and prescriptions for women's speech and song. The first of these was the discovery of Saint Cecilia's body in 1599, which sparked new interest in the figure of the saint and her singing body. The second was the climate of religious reform in the wake of the Council of Trent, which intensified concerns regarding the potential danger of literature, music, and art to lead the faithful astray, but also encouraged reflection on how the arts could be used for spiritual growth. The third was the emergence of opera, which brought with it

seismic shifts in how women performed, and how they were received. The chapter shows how all three of these factors intersected to impact Margherita Costa's musical and literary career. It focuses, in particular, on Margherita's attempt to fashion herself as a secular Cecilia in her *Cecilia martire* (Rome, 1644), incorporating new archival evidence of her relationship with Tiberio Squilletti, a notorious bandit who worked for both the Medici in Florence and the Barberini in Rome. If Costa's relationship with Squilletti was morally damaging (especially in the eyes of her early nineteenth-century critics), it also seems to have been of mutual benefit—Squilletti secured Medici support for the publication of at least two of Costa's literary works, and Costa later helped negotiate Squilletti's absolution by Pope Urban VIII in 1644.

Chapter Five returns to the extraordinary career of Anna Francesca Costa to tell two intertwined stories that offer new perspectives on the role of women in the production of seventeenth-century opera. The first is the story how Anna Francesca, a celebrated opera singer, became one of the first and only female impresarios of her generation. The second is the story of the genesis of the opera *Ergirodo,* which Anna Francesca produced and brought to the stage in Bologna in 1653. The chapter uses letters exchanged between Costa and her patron in Florence, Giovan Carlo de' Medici, to show how Anna Francesca secured Giovan Carlo's financial and political support, negotiated the use of the theater, cast the production, ran the rehearsals, supervised the construction of the sets, and pulled off several well-attended performances of the opera. Finally, using new archival evidence, the chapter demonstrates that *Ergirodo*'s preoccupation with the so-called Salic law—invoked in France to exclude women from the throne—reflects the remarkable fact that the opera was conceived and first performed at the court of Anne of Austria in Paris. *Ergirodo* dramatized and problematized female rule, a theme that

must have appealed to Anna Francesca Costa, who stepped beyond her role as singer to claim creative authority as a seventeenth-century *impresaria*.

Chapter One:

Margherita Costa, Seicento Singer and Writer

Recasting Margherita Costa

Margherita Costa's literary production has been the subject of an increasing number of dissertations, scholarly publications, and conference papers over the past decade or so.[19] In 2015, Natalia Costa-Zalessow edited a selection of Costa's poems, which were published in the original Italian alongside an English translation by Joan Borrelli, under the title *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa*.[20] Three years later, in 2018, Sarah Dìaz and Jessica Goethals edited and translated Costa's best-known work, her comedy *I buffoni* (originally published in Florence in 1641), including a rich and important introduction that situates the comedy in its cultural context at the Florentine court and analyzes its place in the seventeenth-century comedic tradition.[21] Since then, Jessica Goethals has published a series of

[19] Two recent dissertations focusing exclusively on Costa, both written in English, are: Julie Louise Robarts, "Challenging Male Authored Poetry: Margherita Costa's Marinist Lyrics (1638-1639)" (Ph.D. PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2019); Anna-Luise Wagner, "'Io fui, e sono, e sarò Margherita': Margherita Costa as Virtuosa on the Literary Stage of the Seicento" (Ph.D. PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2020).

[20] Natalia Costa-Zalessow, ed., *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa* (New York: Bordighera Press, 2015).

[21] Margherita Costa, *The Buffoons, a Ridiculous Comedy: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Sara E. Dìaz and Jessica Goethals, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe, (Toronto: Iter Press, 2018).

insightful articles analyzing Costa's literary strategies, from her self-presentation as a "bizarre" writer to her staging of debates on comic acting in the seventeenth century.[22]

Costa's literary star has also risen of late in her native Italy. If in 1925 Dante Bianchi had opined that "dal silenzio ha tutto da guadagnare" (she has everything to gain from [critical] silence), in 2020, she was the subject of an international conference—"Margherita Costa, la poetessa virtuosa"—organized by Daniela De Liso and Valeria Merola and hosted by the Università degli Studi dell'Aquila.[23] The pioneering work of these scholars has offered important new perspectives on Costa's literary activities, as well as a more nuanced view of the context for and content of Italian women's writing in the seventeenth century.

Despite this rich and innovative new scholarship on Margherita Costa's literary works, we still know relatively little about her career as a singer. This is not to say that literary scholars have ignored Costa's musical pursuits, but instead to point out that her musical career has been considered primarily as context for her writing—which, of course, it is. But Costa's musical activities—which included performances for noble patrons in her private residence, engagement as a court chamber singer, and performances in staged operas in Paris and in Venice—offer

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[22] Jessica Goethals, "The Patronage Politics of Equestrian Ballet: Allegory, Allusion, and Satire in the Courts of Seventeenth-Century Italy and France," *Renaissance Quarterly* 70, 4 (2017); Jessica Goethals, "The Bizarre Muse: The Literary Persona of Margherita Costa," *Early Modern Women* 12, no. 1 (2017); Jessica Goethals, "The Singing Saint: The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia in Seventeenth-Century Literature and Theatre," *Women Language Literature in Italy/ Donne Lingua Letterature in Italia* 2 (2020); Jessica Goethals, "Worth Its Salt: Margherita Costa's Ridiculous Defence of Buffoonery," *The Italianist* 40, no. 3 (2020).

[23] For Bianchi's uncharitable assessment of Costa's literary merit, see Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa; Parte II (opere)," *Rassegna critica della letteratura italiana* 30 (1930): 211. The first part of the conference proceedings is available on the website of *altrelettere*, an open access scholarly journal dedicated to writings by and on women in the field of Italian literature: https://www.altrelettere.uzh.ch/issue/view/259.

important evidence for our understanding of the lives and careers of women singers in the seventeenth century. In what follows, I have shifted my own critical focus from a literary analysis of Costa's writings and her place within the Italian literary tradition to a consideration of Costa's career as a singer, attempting, when possible, to reconstruct her performance history. That said, Costa's writing is an important part of my analysis here, since it offers vital information regarding her musical career and her public persona as a singer. Costa herself chose to present some of her poems as explicitly autobiographical: one poem, for example, tells the story of the "Partenza da Roma dell'autrice nel 1647" (The author's 1647 departure from Rome).[24] While of course Costa's writing is a mediated and biased source for the historical events of her life, it is also a fundamental source for insights regarding her experience that cannot be found in the archive. And it is important to remember that there is fiction even in the archives, as Natalie Zemon Davis has eloquently demonstrated.[25]

Even scholars of music and theater history have focused primarily on Margherita Costa as a poet, rather than as a musician, probably in part because her literary production is more easily accessible than the scant evidence for her performances. In his study of the first Italian operas to be performed in Paris, Alessandro Ademollo described Margherita as "relatively known, whether in a positive negative light, in literary history, as the author of stuff both her

[24] Margherita Costa, *La selva di Diana* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1647), 86-95.

[25] Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

own and not her own but published under her name."[26] He noted that she was in Paris in 1647 and that she "celebrated in ugly Italian verse the entire French palace and court," and alluded, if briefly, to her career as a chamber singer.[27] But he did not mention the reason for Costa's presence in Paris: she had been invited by the minister of France, Jules Mazarin (born Giulio Mazzarini), to sing the role of Giunone (Juno)—alongside her sister Anna Francesca as Euridice—in his splendid production of Luigi Rossi's *L'Orfeo*. The French music historian Henri Prunières seems to have followed Ademollo's lead in his discussion of the opera: he cited Margherita's poems dedicated to Rossi, the librettist Francesco Buti, the castrato Marc'Antonio Pasqualini, and numerous aristocratic opera fans at the court, but was either unaware that Margherita sang in the opera or did not consider her performance worth mentioning.[28] I am dredging up the work of Ademollo and Prunières, written over a century ago, for two reasons. First, they are still two of the only musicological sources to discuss Margherita Costa's singing career in any detail, and secondly, these same sources continue to influence the way Costa and other women singers are studied today.

Evidence of this influence is found in two relatively recent entries on Margherita Costa in two fundamental reference works. As late as 1984 the author of the entry on Costa in the

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[26] "Bene o male ma abbastanza nota nella storia letteraria come autrice di roba sua e non sua, pubblicata col suo nome." Alessandro Ademollo, *I primi fasti della musica italiana a Parigi (1645-1662)* (Milan: Ricordi, 1884), 37.

[27] "Essa era a Parigi nel 1647, ove con la *Tromba di Parnaso* celebrò in brutti versi italiani tutta la reggia e la corte francese." Alessandro Ademollo, *I primi fasti della musica italiana a Parigi (1645-1662)*, 37.

[28] Henri Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli* (Paris: Edouard Champion, 1913).

Dizionario biografico degli italiani, citing Diante Bianchi as his fundamental source, described Costa as a "verseggiatrice prolifica e rinomata virtuosa di canto" (prolific lady versifier and renowned virtuosa singer) who "esercitò anche il meretricio; e la cosa sembra fuor di dubbio" (also practiced prostitution; and this matter seems beyond doubt).[29] And in her entry in Oxford Music Online, published in print in 1992 and online in 2002, Margherita is described as an "Italian singer and poetess" and her presence in Paris (and other court centers) is attributed not to her singing engagements but instead to her "rather chequered career as a talented courtesan."[30] Ademollo, Bianchi, and Prunières make up three out of the six sources in the short bibliography that follows the entry.

These assessments of Costa's career have clearly influenced emerging scholars of early modern women writers and performers. In 2015, during a panel on women dramatists at the Renaissance Society of America's annual conference, one presenter argued vehemently that Margherita Costa did not sing in the 1647 Orfeo, since her participation was not mentioned by any of the "important sources" on early opera in Paris. But a manuscript copy of the scenario for the opera proves the opposite. The scenario (held at the Biblioteca Vaticana) includes a complete

[29] Martino Capucci, "Costa, Margherita (Maria Margherita)," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1984). https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/margherita-costa_(Dizionario-Biografico)/.

[30] Tim Carter, "Costa, (Maria) Margherita," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002). https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O010035.

list of the cast, including "Signora Margherita Costa" as Giunone and "Signora Checca Costa" (Anna Francesca) as Euridice.[31]

I point out previous inaccuracies regarding Margherita Costa's life and career not to disparage the work of other scholars, but instead to call attention to the need for further research. It also seems important to consider the ways in which scholarly approaches to early modern women can be inflected (sometimes unconsciously) by persistent moralistic notions of appropriate female behavior. An important factor that has influenced the reception of Margherita Costa and other seventeenth-century singers is the persistent assumption that they must have been prostitutes or courtesans: even in 2002, as we saw above, Costa was identified as a courtesan in one of the fundamental reference works for music scholars. The various cultural and historical factors underlying the alignment between seventeenth-century women singers and prostitutes will be the focus of Chapter Three; for now, I want to simply point out that it is no coincidence that scholarly accounts in which Margherita Costa is categorized primarily as a courtesan tend to offer incomplete or inaccurate reconstructions of her contributions to music history (or to literary history, for that matter). In other words, when Costa and other women singers are subsumed into the category of courtesan, their musical careers fade into the background (at best) or are partially or completely erased from history (at worst).

My intentions here are to offer an updated—and hopefully, more accurate—account of the lives and careers of both Costa sisters, based both on re-readings of previously known

[31] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb. lat. 4059, fol. 131v. For a transcription of the complete scenario, with comments by Claude-François Ménestrier interspersed, see Frederick Hammond, *The Ruined Bridge: Studies in Barberini Patronage of Music and Spectacle 1631-1679* (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2010), 182-89. Hammond's chapter on *L'Orfeo* originally appeared as Frederick Hammond, "Orpheus in a New Key: The Barberini and the Rossi-Buti Orfeo," *Studi musicali* 25, no. 1 (1996): 103-25.

documents and some new archival sources I have uncovered during my research for this dissertation. That said, there are many details I have not been able to find or corroborate, in part because of the challenges of research on early modern women even under ordinary circumstances, and in part because as I write this, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been ongoing for almost two years, has made it much more difficult to even enter archives and libraries, much less to consult archival documents. Despite these difficulties, I did manage to dig up two important new sources on the lives and careers of the Costa sisters: Margherita Costa's will of 1635 and Anna Francesca Costa's will of 1670.[32] Although wills, of course, have formulaic aspects, these two documents offer us important information on both sisters as individuals, on the Costa family, and especially on the status of both women in Roman society. Tellingly, while they frequented many of the same courts and patrons, the two sisters appear together very infrequently in contemporary sources. Each woman followed a different career path: Margherita used the medium of print to construct a public image as a writer, while Anna Francesca sought creative authority as a musical organizer. While the sisters' stories sometimes overlap, I have divided my account and analysis of their careers into two distinct chapters, to facilitate an understanding of the career trajectory of each woman. This chapter will focus on the performance history and literary production of Margherita Costa. I begin with a discussion of how the new discovery of her 1635 will helps us to better understand her life and career. Then, I move backwards in time to discuss the sources and social context for Margherita's career as

[32] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Testamenti, busta 82, fols 343r-347v; "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, opened 13 May 1678, Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Istrumenti, busta 891, fols. 784r-786v, 803r-805r.

singer and writer, from her first, hazily documented appearances in 1626 Rome to her final letters appealing to patrons in Florence and Rome in 1657.

Rome, 1635: Margherita Costa's will

The most recent and accurate biography of Margherita Costa is found in the excellent introduction by Sara Dìaz and Jessica Goethals to their edition and translation of Costa's comedy, *I buffoni*, published in 2018.[33] Since then, new information on Costa has emerged, whether buried in publications focusing on other topics, or recovered from the archive. The most important new archival source is a will, drawn up by Margherita Costa in Rome in 1635 and still held in the Archivio di Stato di Roma.[34] To my knowledge, this document has not been previously analyzed by scholars of music history. It has been briefly discussed in print only once. In 1998 the historian Alessandra Camerano used Margherita's will as one of many examples in her meticulous and insightful analysis of the wills of various "donne oneste" (honest women) and "meretrici" (prostitutes) in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rome.[35] But Camerano, whose focus in the article is justifiably restricted to women's strategies regarding the management of their estates, assumes Margherita was a "meretrice" and is seemingly unaware of her literary and musical career. As an example of a strategy used by many women to keep their assets in the family, Camerano points out that Margherita left the largest share of a vineyard she owned at the

[33] Dìaz and Goethals, "Introduction," in Margherita Costa, *The Buffoons*, 1-72.

[34] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Testamenti, busta 82, fols 343r-347v.

[35] Alessandra Camerano, "Donne oneste o meretrici? Incertezza dell'identità fra testamenti e diritto di proprietà a Roma," *Quaderni storici* 33, no. 99 (December 1998): 637-75.

time of her death to her brother, probably because male relatives were more likely to successfully take possession of assets bequeathed to them.[36] Camerano also uses Margherita's will as an example of another financial practice that was common in seventeenth-century Rome: the practice of pawning possessions of value in exchange for cash. As Camerano points out, Margherita states that she has put up as collateral for 300 *scudi* her house in the via della Lungara, which she had sold with a sell-back contract (the buyer was obligated to sell the property back to the original owner upon request).[37] These details shed interesting light on Margherita's financial situation at the time of the will: she was not among the poorest of the poor, but her financial situation was relatively unstable.

Although Margherita's will contains a plethora of new and important information on her life, her family, and her social milieu, it does not establish precise birth or death dates for her. Most sources place her birth somewhere between 1600 and 1610, which seems reasonable given the date of her will and the chronology of her life and career. The will of 1635 was likely not her last—in it, she declared that she was of sound mind, but "alquanto inferma di corpo iacendo in letto" (rather infirm of body and confined to bed)—but a later will has not been located.[38] From the 1635 will, we can confirm the names of Margherita's parents and siblings, previously unknown. As was customary, in her will Margherita identified herself by stating her father's

[36] Alessandra Camerano, "Donne oneste o meretrici? Incertezza dell'identità fra testamenti e diritto di proprietà a Roma," 648.

[37] Alessandra Camerano, "Donne oneste o meretrici? Incertezza dell'identità fra testamenti e diritto di proprietà a Roma," 651.

[38] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 343r.

name: she was the daughter of the already deceased 'Cristophoro' Costa from Rome.[39] Later in the document, she named her "dilettissima madre" (adored mother), 'Dorathea' Costa, as her universal heir.[40] She makes various bequests to her brother, Paolo, and her five sisters: Anna Francesca, Anna, and three "sorelle piccole" (little sisters)—Barbara, Vittoria, and Olimpia.[41] I have not been able to find further archival information on Cristoforo Costa, but it is intriguing to consider the possibility that he may have been related—perhaps distantly—to his illustrious contemporary Ottavio Costa (1554-1639). Ottavio, who was born in Albenga (on the Ligurian Costa) and styled himself a Genoese nobleman, was the founder of an important bank in Rome (with his partner, the Spaniard Juan Enríquez de Herrera). He was also an art patron and collector: his collection included works by Caravaggio, Guido Reni, and the Cavaliere d'Arpino, among others.[42] Although I have not been able to securely document family or social relationships between the Costa sisters and Ottavio Costa, what is clear is that Ottavio's branch

[39] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 343r.

[40] "In tutti l'altri miei beni mobili, stabili, raggioni, note di crediti in qualsivoglia luogho essi siano etc. faccio mia herede universale et con la mia propria bocca nomino la signora Dorathea Costa mia dilettissima madre" (As for all of my other movable and fixed assets, accounts, or notes of credits, wherever they are located, etc., I appoint and nominate as my universal heir with my own mouth the Signora Dorathea Costa, my most adored mother). "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 345v-346r.

[41] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 344v. ("Paolo mio fratello") and 344r. ("mie sorelle piccole, cioè Barbara, Vittoria, et Olimpia...Francesca overo Anna Francesca mia sorella...Anna altra mia sorella").

[42] On Ottavio Costa and his family's activities in Rome, see Josepha Costa Restagno, *Ottavio Costa (1554-1639), le sue case e i suoi quadri: Ricerche d'archivio* (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2004); Maria Cristina Terzaghi, *Caraggio, Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni tra le ricevute del banco Herrera & Costa* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2007).

of the family was well known to many of the wealthy and aristocratic Roman families who would become important patrons to both sisters: the Aldobrandini, the Barberini, and the Mazzarini, among others.

Margherita's will also documents that she was married to one Giovanni Galbiati (or Galbizzi, the man's surname is difficult to read), to whom she leaves "una stanza di corami usati turchini" (a room of used, turquoise tooled leather [wall coverings]).[43] At the time Margherita made the will, her relationship with her husband appears to have been strained: she adds that under no circumstances should her mother bother her husband "regarding the claims I have with him of any kind or for any sum."[44] By January of 1645, Giovanni had died: Margherita was described as a "vedova" (widow) in the account books of Christine of France, the Duchess of Savoy, who promised to pay Margherita one thousand silver *lire* each year for her service as a "musica da camera" (chamber singer).[45] In 1657, Margherita described herself as a "vedova, e

[43] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 345v.

[44] "Voglio et ordino che l'infrascritta mia herede non possa né debba molestare il signor Giovanni Galbiati mio marito sopra le pretensioni che io ho con lui di qualsivoglia sorte et di qualsivoglia summa perché così mi piace et così è la mia intentione" (I wish and order that my aforementioned heir may not and must not bother Signor Giovanni Galbiati[?], my husband, regarding the claims I have with him of any kind and for any sum, because this is my preference and my intention). "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 345v.

[45] See the memo dated 7 January 1645 in the Archivio di Stato di Torino, Patenti Controllo Finanze, 1644-45, fol. 59r; there is a note recording a payment to "Margarita Costa Romana" for "pane, vino, e companatico" (bread, wine, and accompaniments) in the same document, fol. 62r.

povera virtuosa" (widow, and poor virtuosa singer) in an appeal for support to Cardinal Don Mario Chigi.[46]

In her will, Margherita asked to be buried in the church of S. Francesco a Ripa, and that her body be "vestito dell'habito del suo ordine" (dressed in the habit of his order—i.e., as a Franciscan nun).[47] Tellingly, Anna Francesca also seems to have also been particularly devoted to Saint Francis: before she died, she left instructions that some of her *luoghi di monte* (bonds) in Florence were to be used to build a chapel dedicated to Saint Francis and Saint Anthony of Padua.[48] Intriguingly, today there are several Costa tombs—albeit dating from the nineteenth century—in S. Francesco a Ripa: these include a floor tomb dedicated to the Costa family in 1826, as well as a marble monument with a bust portrait of Maria Costa (the mother of the nineteenth-century Roman painter Nino Costa) dated 1852. Given the devotion of Margherita and Anna Francesca to Saint Francis, the presence of these later Costas made me wonder if S. Francesco a Ripa was, at least for a time, the Costa family's parish church in the seventeenth century. Knowing that parish records for most Roman churches are now held at the Archivio

[46] Margherita Costa to Mario Chigi, from Rome, 4 May 1657, in Biblioteca Vaticana, MS Chigi, I.VII.273, 125r; cited in Capucci, "Costa, Margherita (Maria Margherita)." In the letter, Margherita mentions that she is supporting two daughters, one who is a "zitella" (unmarried) and the other married to a Flemish captain stationed in Crete. She also includes a poem addressed to Chigi, "Gran Prence, a te, che di Quirino al Trono." Crescimbeni included the poem in his entry on Margherita Costa's literary talents. See Giovan Mario Crescimbeni, *Comentarj di Gio. Mario de' Crescimbeni collega dell'imperiale Accademia Leopoldina, e custode d'Arcadia intorno alla sua istoria della volgar poesia*, vol. 2 (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1711), 202.

[47] "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 343r.

[48] The plans for the chapel are found in documents relating to a dispute over Anna Francesca's estate in the archive of the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, now held in the Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma: S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, Posizioni diverse, 52 (ex 14), 607r- 608r. This dispute will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Storico del Vicariato di Roma, near S. Giovanni in Laterano, I set off across the city in the hope of finding more information on Margherita and Anna Francesca and their family. Unfortunately, I was not successful; the only extant records for S. Francesco a Ripa in the Vicariato date from the early twentieth century. Parish records from the seventeenth century may be out there somewhere, but at this point I have been unable to locate them, despite having made inquiries with the two other archives kept by the Franciscan order in Rome.

Rome, 1626: *La catena d'Adone*

One of the earliest and most influential observers of the Costa sisters' lives and careers was Gian Vittorio Rossi, whom we encountered above as the author of a rather unflattering biography of the writer Margherita Sarrocchi included in his *Pinacotheca imaginum illustriam*. In the same work, Rossi described Margherita Costa as "non magis canendi artificio, quam turpi quaestu famosa" (famous not so much for her skill in singing as for her filthy habits) and another singer as "Ceccha a lacuna" (literally, 'Ceccha from the swamp")—probably a dig at Anna Francesca Costa.[49] He had been more explicit in an anecdote featuring Margherita's father in his roman à clef, *Eudemia*, first published in 1637, where Margherita is cast as a "notissima meretrix" (well-known prostitute).[50] Not surprisingly, Rossi's assessment of Margherita's character was taken up and repeated with increasing vigor as evidence against her by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century moralist critics discussed above. But Rossi's influence

[49] Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 3:150.

[50] Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Eudemiae libri decem*, vol. 5 (Coloniae Ubiorum [Amsterdam]: Iodocum Lalcovium [Joan Blaeu], 1645), 85.

continues even in the twenty-first century. As recently as 2018, the eminent art historian Salvatore Settis echoed Rossi's exact phrase in a glowing review of the editorial activities of Alberto and Marco Vigevani. In an offhand reference to the landscapes described in Costa's published account of the diplomatic travels of Ferdinando II de' Medici,[51] Settis defines her as a "virtuosa di canto, scrittrice prolifica, e notissima meretrix" (*virtuosa* singer, prolific writer, and well-known prostitute).[52]

Given Rossi's tendency to portray women writers and singers as immoral (usually for comic effect), we should approach his depictions of the Costa sisters' musical activities with caution. But Rossi's two anecdotes featuring the Costa family are worth re-examining here, since they are still the only sources offering information on their careers in Rome in the 1620s. Moreover, although Rossi's description of Margherita Costa as a "notissima meretrix" seems to have been absorbed into our collective scholarly consciousness, his anecdotes offer other details on the Costa family's activities that have not been previously understood.

It is from Rossi that we learn that Margherita Costa (despite her alleged "filthy habits") and another singer identified only as "Ceccha a lacuna" (literally, 'Ceccha from the swamp") were the likely inspirations behind the opera *La catena d'Adone*, first performed in Rome in

[51] Margherita Costa, *Istoria del viaggio d'Alemagna del serenissimo Gran Duca di Toscana Ferdinando Secondo* (Venice: n.p., n.d.).

[52] Salvatore Settis, "Il fondamentale ruolo della città nel catalogo de Il Polifilo," *Il sole 24 ore*, 7 November 2018, https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/il-fondamentale-ruolo-citta-catalogo-de-polifilo-AELekyaG.

1626.[53] The singer Rossi calls "Ceccha" may well be Anna Francesca, who was often referred to as "la Checca" (a variant of Rossi's Latin spelling, "Ceccha") by her colleagues and patrons.[54] Regardless of Ceccha's identity, Rossi's description of how the singer got her nickname is probably intended to suggest with a wink to his readers that she, like Margherita, had a "filthy" reputation. Rossi explains that "she was called 'Ceccha from the swamp' because she lived in that part of the city which, because of its stagnant waters, appeared to be a swamp."[55] This is likely a tongue-in-cheek allusion to the former *suburra*, the ancient Roman red-light district that was notorious for its swampy, unhealthy climate as well as the prostitutes who lived there. Rossi's descriptions of the two women, then, cast them as caricatures of themselves, playing up moralist concerns about the promiscuity of female singers for satiric effect.

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[53] Rossi's account of the genesis of the opera is in his profile of Tronsarelli; see Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 150-1. On the opera, see Simona Santacroce, "'La ragion perde dove il senso abonda': *La Catena d'Adone* di Ottavio Tronsarelli," *Studi secenteschi* 55 (2014): 135-53; Margaret Murata, "Catena d'Adone, La ('The Chain of Adonis')," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002). https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O901022; Saverio Franchi, "Osservazioni sulla scenografia dei melodrammi romani nella prima metà del seicento," in *Musica e immagine tra iconografia e mondo dell'opera: Studi in onore di Massimo Bogianckino* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993); Saverio Franchi, *Drammaturgia romana: Repertorio bibliografico cronologico dei testi drammatici pubblicati a Roma e nel Lazio; Secolo XVII* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1988), 144; Nino Pirrotta, "Falsirena e la più antica delle cavatine," in *Collectanea historiae musicae* (Florence: Olschki, 1956), 355-66.

[54] Costa-Zalessow argues that Rossi's "Ceccha a lacuna" could not have been Anna Francesca Costa because she was "too young to qualify," but does not cite specific evidence that would support this conclusion. See Natalia Costa-Zalessow, *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa*, 20. I disagree: Margherita Costa's will suggests that Anna Francesca was not significantly younger than Margherita herself, as does Anna Francesca's own will.

[55] "Ceccha quaedam, quae, quoniam habitabat in eo parte Urbis, quae olim stagnantibus acquis exundabat in more lacunae." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 3:150.

As Rossi tells it, *La catena d'Adone* was conceived as a singing competition between the two divas for the pleasure of their respective admirers: the Roman Prince Giovan Giorgio Aldobrandini and a certain Gian Domenico Lupi. Domenico Mazzocchi composed the music, commissioned for the express purpose of demonstrating which of the two singers surpassed the other in "sweetness of voice and artfulness of singing."[56] The libretto, adapted by Ottavio Tronsarelli after Giambattista Marino's sensual epic poem *L'Adone,* was deliciously appropriate for a vocal contest between two women.[57] The plot turns on the competition between the sorceress Falsirena and the goddess Venus for the attentions of the spectacularly handsome Adonis. After Adonis wanders into Falsirena's realm, the sorceress falls desperately in love with him and is persuaded by her *consigliera* (counselor) Idonia to create an enchanted garden to entice Adonis into staying with her. Despite the beauties of the enchanted garden, Adonis remains faithful to Venus, so Falsirena resorts to tying him up with the enchanted chain of the title. When Adonis continues to refuse to grant her his love, Falsirena uses her magic powers to adopt the guise of Venus, hoping to trick him into loving her. Her plans are thwarted when the

[56] "Vocis suavitate et canendi arte." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 150.

[57] For the libretto, see Ottavio Tronsarelli, *La catena d'Adone: favola boschereccia d'Ottavio Tronsarelli* (Rome: Corbelletti, 1626). Tronsarelli dedicated the libretto to Aldobrandini, casting his patron as a "nuovo Apollo" (new Apollo) and the promoter of the opera. The score, dedicated to Odoardo Farnese, was printed in Venice that same year: Domenico Mazzocchi, *La catena d'Adone posta in musica da Domenico Mazzocchi* (Venice: Alessandro Vincenti, 1626). Five additional editions of the libretto appeared, two more in Rome (all 1626), and three in Venice (1626 and 1627). A heavily altered version of the libretto indicates that a later performance took place in Bologna in 1648 (*La catena d'Adone, dramma musicale rappresentata nel Teatro degli Uniti nel Salone de gl'Illustriss. Sig. Malvezzi*, (Bologna: Dozza, 1648). Yet another production took place in Piacenza in 1650 (see Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Dalla *Finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*: storie di Febiarmonici," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975): 433.

real Venus arrives just in time, triumphantly ordering her son Cupid to release Adonis and bind Falsirena in his place.

We can only imagine how sweetly and artfully Margherita and Ceccha would have sung their roles. But unfortunately for the two women and their admirers, this was not to be. According to Rossi, Aldobrandini's wife, Ippolita Ludovisi, objected to the very idea of a musical competition between two women under her family's auspices.[58] And so it was that when *La catena d'Adone* premiered on 12 February 1626 in the Palazzo Conti, the roles created for Margherita and Ceccha were sung by castrati recruited from the papal chapel.[59] Despite—or perhaps because of— this last-minute change in casting, the opera was quite successful, and was repeated at least six more times during the Carnival season before a large audience of aristocrats that included both men and women.[60]

While Rossi's account of the genesis of the opera has elements of his characteristic method of heavy-handed critique through satire, it does offer important information regarding the patronage network and the reception of Margherita Costa and other women singers in Rome during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Although Margherita and Ceccha did not sing in the 1626 performance, Rossi's description of them as "two of the most prized women singers

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[58] "Sed ne musicum hoc certamen committeretur, fuit impedimento Aldrobrandini Principis uxor, itaque mulieribus substituti sunt eunuchi" (But the wife of Prince Aldobrandini prevented this musical contest from happening, and thus the women were replaced with castrati). Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 3:150.

[59] Administrative records of the Cappella Sistina show that four of its singers performed in the opera: Lorenzo Sanci, Francesco Bianchi, Bartolomeo Nicolini, and the celebrated castrato Loreto Vittori, who probably sang the role of Falsirena. See Saverio Franchi, "Osservazioni sulla scenografia dei melodrammi romani nella prima metà del seicento," 160-1.

[60] Nino Pirrotta, "Falsirena e la più antica delle cavatine," 356.

of the time" suggests that both were already known for their singing in Roman circles by 1626.[61] If indeed the opera was composed with the voices of Margherita and Ceccha in mind, it seems likely that one of them—probably Margherita, since she is given top billing by Rossi—was to sing the soprano role of the sorceress Falsirena, who is very much the *prima donna* of the show. Venus, on the other hand, does not even appear until the fifth and final act, making the role an unlikely vehicle for any sort of singing competition. What seems more likely is that Ceccha was to sing the role of Idonia, Falsirena's "consigliera d'amore" ('love counselor,' as the libretto describes her) and ever-present sidekick, a much more substantial role. Idonia is a decidedly bad influence. In the opening scene, Falsirena is so overcome by her love for Adonis that she decides to renounce magic for him, but the scheming Idonia convinces the sorceress that magic is the only way to be successful in love.[62] And later, it is Idonia who procures the enchanted chain and then persuades Falsirena to use it to bind Adonis.[63]

The overtly sensual nature of the opera's plot was justified by the "allegoria della favola" (allegory of the fable) that appears at the end of both the libretto and musical score. According to

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[61] "Duabus mulieribus cantatricibus, quibus tum temporis primae dabantur." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 150.

[62] The first scene opens with Falsirena and Idonia discussing the arrival of Adonis, his physical beauty, and Falsirena's attraction to him. Falsirena declares: "Dunque lunge da me Magici incanti;/ Poich' Amor più di voi/ Ha degne l'opere, & ha famosi i vanti" (Therefore, stay far away from me, magic spells, because Love, more than you, does worthy actions and is famously lauded). To which Idonia replies: "O stolta pria, ch'amante./Anzi sol la Magia/ A l'impresa d'amor scorta ti sia" (You are a fool rather than a lover. What's more, only magic can be your guide in the enterprise of love). Act I, scene 1, Ottavio Tronsarelli, *La catena d'Adone: favola boschereccia d'Ottavio Tronsarelli*, 18-19.

[63] Oraspe delivers the chain, which has been forged by Vulcan, to Idonia in Act II, scene 1; Idonia (with help from Oraspe) convinces Falsirena to use the chain on Adonis in Act II, scene II.

the allegory, Falsirena represents the Soul, persuaded to sin by Lust (represented by Idonia), while Adonis represents a man who suffers while far away from God (symbolized by Venus).[64] The allegory highlights Falsirena's weakness, and reminds the audience that "If, finally, the wicked Falsirena is bound to an unyielding rock, one must understand that the punishment, in the end, is the consequence of sin."[65]

The framing of the story of Falsirena's desperate desire for Adonis as religious allegory was probably intended to shield the reputation of Mazzocchi's patrons, the Aldobrandini family, and to appease the censors. But it is not hard to see how the figures of the sorceress Falsirena, overcome by her desire for Adonis and led astray by Idonia, the personification of lust, would have been perceived by Aldobrandini, his composer, and his librettist as fitting vehicles for two women singers like Margherita Costa and Ceccha "from the swamp." Had Margherita and Ceccha performed the roles of Falsirena and Idonia, they would have embodied, before the eyes of their patrons, the seventeenth-century discourse that imagined singing women as sirens, temptresses, and sorceresses whose songs could lead men astray and incite them to sin. The sorceress and her *consigliera* were based on already existing characters that were, as we recall, the poetic inventions of Giambattista Marino, who created Falsirena and Idonia in his *Adone*. But elsewhere Marino had dedicated verses to an unnamed "bella cantatrice" (beautiful woman

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[64] "Falsirena...da Idonia persuasa al male, è l'Anima persuasa dalla Concupiscenza... Adone poi, che lontano dalla Deità di Venere patisce incontri di varij travagli, è l'Huomo, che lontano da Dio incorre in molti errori" (Falsirena....persuaded to do evil by Idonia, is the Soul persuaded by Lust....and Adonis, who when far from the Deity of Venus meets various hardships, is Man, who encounters many errors while far from God). Ottavio Tronsarelli, *La catena d'Adone: favola boschereccia d'Ottavio Tronsarelli*, 79-81.

[65] "E se finalmente a duro scoglio è legata la malvagia Falsirena, si deve anco intendere, che la pena al fine è seguace della colpa." Ottavio Tronsarelli, *La catena d'Adone: favola boschereccia d'Ottavio Tronsarelli*, 80.

singer), likening her to a sorceress whose songs were exquisitely sweet yet potentially fatal for her listeners:

> O bella incantatrice,
> quel tuo sì dolce canto
> dolce canto non è, ma dolce incanto,
> nova magia d'Amor, novella sorte
> di far dolce la morte.
> Allor la vita more
> quando l'aura vital si manda fore,
> ma in alma innamorata
> con quell'aura mortal Morte ha l'entrata.[66]
>
> Oh, beautiful enchantress,
> that sweet singing of yours
> is not sweet singing, but sweet enchantment,
> new love magic, a new way
> to make death sweet.
> So life dies
> when vital breath is expelled
> but in a soul that is in love,
> Death, too, can enter along with that mortal breath.

Marino's singing sorceresses dramatized long-standing concerns and fascinations with the potential power of female singers. Given how tailor-made the operatic roles of Falsirena and Idonia appear to have been for Margherita and Ceccha, it is ironic that the two women evidently never performed them. However, this turn of events is not particularly surprising, given the social controversies that surrounded women singers in the early seventeenth century. Rossi places the blame for the casting switch on the shoulders of Ippolita Ludovisi, niece of the recently departed Pope Gregory XV and wife of Giovan Giorgio Aldobrandini, to whom Tronsarelli dedicated his libretto. But while Ippolita may have objected to the idea of two women

[66] "Bella cantatrice," in Giambattista Marino, *Della lira del Cavalier Marino, parte terza* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1614), 42.

singers performing in a production so closely associated with her husband's family name—or, as Christine Jeanneret has suggested, she may have simply enjoyed listening to castrati—she was probably not the prime mover behind the casting switch.[67] Domenico Mazzocchi, who composed the music for *La catena d'Adone*, had entered the service of Giovan Giorgio Aldobrandini's brother, the Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini, in 1621. As Wolfgang Witzenmann has documented, it was in fact Cardinal Aldobrandini who requested and obtained four castrati from the Cappella Sistina from its protector, Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte (best known for having been a patron of Caravaggio).[68]

Even after the women singers were substituted with castrati, the Aldobrandini family seems to have preferred that the opera was not performed under their roof. Instead, *La catena d'Adone* was staged in the palace of Evandro Conti, the Marchese di Gorga.[69] One of the reasons for this was likely the subject matter, which was not merely secular but decidedly sensual and even scandalous. Although the Aldobrandini family had long supported the poet Marino, by the

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[67] Christine Jeanneret, "Gendered Ambivalence and the Expression of Passions in the Performances of Early Roman Cantatas by Castrati and Female Singers," in *The Emotional Power of Music: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Musical Arousal, Expression, and Social Control*, ed. Tom Cochrane, Bernardino Fantini, and Klaus R. Scherer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 94. Jeanneret misidentifies the woman who objected to the casting of female singers as Giovan Giorgio Aldobrandini's mother, Olimpia Aldobrandini Borghese: Rossi's text states instead that the objector was "Aldobrandini Principis uxor" (the wife of Prince Aldobrandini), Ippolita Ludovisi. See Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Pinacotheca*, 151.

[68] Wolfgang Witzenmann, *Domenico Mazzocchi, 1592-1655: Dokumente und Interpretationen* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1970).

[69] The location is specified in Ottavio Tronsarelli, *Argomento della catena d'Adone, favola boscareccia composta da Ottavio Tronsarelli, ordinata dal sig. Francesco de Cuppis e rappresentata nel palazzo del sig. Evandro Conti marchese di Gorga* (Rome: Giacomo Mascardi, 1626).

time the opera was performed, Pope Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini) had already sent *L'Adone* to the examiners of the Holy Office, who would include it in the Index of Forbidden Books in 1627. Perhaps the Aldobrandini were attempting to at least present the appearance of respect for the pope's preferences when, in addition to reframing the opera's plot as religious allegory, they sponsored the opera from a distance rather than in their own home.

Despite Giovan Giorgio Aldobrandini's apparent failure to secure her a role in *La catena d'Adone*, over a decade later, Margherita Costa published a poem addressed to a "Signor Principe Aldobrandino" in *La chitarra*, her first volume of lyric poetry.[70] Costa's "bella donna" (beautiful woman), a poetic character and sometimes alter-ego she deploys frequently in this volume and in other works, laments the prince's absence from Rome, where she weeps for him in vain ("Io misera su'l Tebro piango in vano")—just as Falsirena had wept when Adonis refused to love her.[71] Like Falsirena, the "bella donna" is bound to her lover with "lacci e catene" (ties and chains).[72]

Whether or not Costa meant to allude to the *La catena d'Adone* affair—she, like other seventeenth-century poets, made frequent use of the metaphor of love as a chain that binds the lover to the beloved—her poem to Prince Aldobrandini made her connection to the Roman family public. In the same volume, which opens with a short collection of encomiastic verses by

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[70] "Bella donna all'Eccellentissimo Signor Principe Aldobrandino mentre si diportava fuor di Roma" (Beautiful woman to the Most Excellent Lord Prince Aldobrandini while he was amusing himself away from Rome), in Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa romana* (Frankfurt: Daniel Wastch, 1638), 20-22.

[71] Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 20.

[72] Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 22.

male poets addressed to Costa and praising her talents as poet and singer, Costa included a poem by Ottavio Tronsarelli, the opera's librettist.[73] These traces of Costa's ties to the organizers and creators of *La catena d'Adone* are poignant reminders to her readers that she once played an important role in the development of early opera in Rome, even if she had been forced off the stage.

A satiric portrait of the Costa family: *Eudemia*

Rossi's second description of the Costa family occurs in his *Eudemia,* a *roman à clef* that takes aim at the people, institutions, and society of seventeenth-century Rome through the tale of two Romans who flee the city in the wake of the Conspiracy of Sejanus (about 31 CE) only to end up shipwrecked on the island of Eudemia. Many of the seventeenth-century Roman intellectuals who appear in the *Eudemia* were members, like Rossi himself, of the Accademia degli Umoristi. It was probably there that Rossi met Maffeo Barberini, the future Pope Urban VII. In *Eudemia*, Rossi wisely represented the pope in an unambiguously positive light, giving him the pseudonym "Humanus." Rossi was not so charitable in his representation of Margherita Costa and her family, who are described in detail through a conversation between a character called Aridus (the name Rossi was given by the Umoristi) and a blowhard identified only as "the

[73] "Alla medesima del Sig. Ottavio Tronzarelli" (To the same woman [i.e., Costa] from Signor Ottavio Tronsarelli), in Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, front matter.

father of the famous courtesan, Pleura."[74] Luisella Giacchino has hypothesized that the woman in question was either Francesca Caccini or Leonora Baroni, but it seems more likely that the pseudonym 'Pleura'— from the Greek word πλευρά, which in turn is translated as "costa" in Latin (and 'rib' in English)—was meant to evoke Margherita Costa to readers in the know.[75] Tellingly, in the *Eudemia* Rossi has the boasting father Costa mention only one of his daughters—perhaps he had a bigger axe to grind with Margherita, who had already dared to make her writing voice heard in the public arena of print, than with Anna Francesca, who stayed out of the literary sphere and on the stage.

Although Rossi's satiric representation of Costa has been interpreted as proof that she was in fact a professional courtesan, such interpretations are not convincing in light of a careful reading of the phrase in the context of the entire anecdote, which is focused not on Margherita but on her father, the main target of Rossi's mockery. The singer's father boasts that she is so beautiful, elegant, and talented that he has had to rent a new house in the most exclusive part of the city to host the throngs of noblemen who flock to hear her perform, adding that she "treats me quite splendidly, dresses me, adorns me. But as to how her estate, which is very meager, can

[74] "Hunc esse Pleurae, notissimae meretricis, patrem." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Gian Vittorio Rossi's Eudemiae libri decem: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, ed. and trans. Jennifer K. Nelson (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2021), 258. My translations here are adapted from Nelson.

[75] Luisella Giacchino, "*Cicero liberinus*: La satira della Roma Barberiniana nell'*Eudemia* dell'Eritreo," *Studi secenteschi* 43 (2002): 213n76. In 1711, the literary historian Giovan Mario Crescimbeni identified Pleura as Margherita Costa. See Giovan Mario Crescimbeni, *Comentarj di Gio. Mario de' Crescimbeni collega dell'imperiale Accademia Leopoldina, e custode d'Arcadia intorno alla sua istoria della volgar poesia*, 2, 323.

sustain such expense, I do not think that is for an upstanding father to investigate."[76] Rossi's barb exposes Margherita's father as a social climber who allows his daughter to support him financially through activities that compromise her virtue. Rossi's description of Pleura's performances suggests that Margherita Costa, like so many other women singers in seventeenth-century Rome, may have sung in her home for groups of aristocratic men. Rossi's use of this performance practice as the basis for his representation of Margherita's father as his daughter's pimp plays on seventeenth-century notions of the inherent tensions between virtue and promiscuity that accompanied the performances of female singers.

Rossi also takes aim at Margherita's brother (presumably Paolo Costa, mentioned in her will), who appears under the pseudonym of Pusillo Pleurae ('Wretched little Costa'). In Rossi's account, Pusillo is described as a handsome young man of about twenty who "sings in a manner that makes even Apollo envious"—this detail is particularly interesting for our understanding of Margherita Costa's background and education, because if it is true that Paolo Costa was known to be a good singer, music may have been practiced by multiple members of the Costa family—perhaps it was even the family business. Pusillo's father boasts that his son is a skilled swordsman and equestrian but admits that he is prone to violence and has been exiled from the island after killing one of his rivals. Rossi's caricature of Paolo Costa as a hot-tempered, violent thug—along with Margherita's own poetic reference to her brother as a soldier fighting in a

[76] "Quae me curat nitidiuscule, vestit, ornat. Sed quo pacto res ipsius, quae paupercula est, tot sumptus sufferat, non esse arbitror boni parentis exquirere." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Gian Vittorio Rossi's Eudemiae libri decem: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, 258.

battle on behalf of the Barberini family—led Dante Bianchi and others to assume that, at least for a time, Paolo was a *bravo* in the service of the Barberini.[77]

A few new details about Paolo that emerge from letters in the Medici archive suggest that this assumption may be at least partially correct. In 1653, the cardinal Carlo de' Medici wrote to his nephew, Prince Giovan Carlo, to help arrange for the safe-conduct of "il fratello di Checca Costa" (the brother of [Anna] Francesca Costa, and thus also of Margherita) to enter the city of Florence.[78] Giovan Carlo wrote back to his uncle to say that he had attempted to negotiate the safe-conduct, but "il caso fusse tanto brutto" (the case was so nasty) that even he, a Medici prince, could not convince the authorities to allow Paolo Costa to enter the city.[79] If, as seems

[77] For Margherita's poem, which is dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, see Margherita Costa, *La tromba di Parnaso: Opera di Margherita Costa romana, dedicata alla Maestà della Regina di Francia* (Paris: Sebastian Craimoisy, 1647), 61-67. In the poem, Margherita thanks Barberini for giving work to her brother: "di rampollo virile unica speme/ Il mio fratello a tè la fede ha dato" (My brother, the only male heir and only hope [of our family]/ has put his trust in you) (65). Later, she addresses her brother by name (66). For Dante Bianchi's hypothesis regarding Paolo's service to the Barberini family, see Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," *Rassegna critica della letteratura italiana* 29 (1924): 4-5.

[78] Cardinal Carlo de' Medici to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Rome, 14 September 1653: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5284, fol. 921r. Cited in Sara Mamone, ed., *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari: Notizie di spettacolo nei carteggi medicei; Carteggi di Giovan Carlo de' Medici e di Desiderio Montemagni suo segretario (1628-1664)* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2003), 200.

[79] Minute of Giovan Carlo de' Medici to Cardinal Carlo de' Medici, 28 September 1653. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5371, fol. 286r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 201.

likely, Paolo was in the service of the Barberini,[80] the "caso brutto" may have had something to do with the Wars of Castro, which created hostility between the Barberini and the Medici (who had allied themselves with the Farnese dukes of Parma through the marriage of Margherita de' Medici to Odoardo Farnese in 1628). For our purposes here, however, it is important to point out that Bianchi used Paolo's presumed role as Barberini *bravo* as evidence for his argument that Margherita was "di bassi natali" (of lowly origins). For Bianchi, and for many of his followers, such lowly origins corresponded with an almost inborn lack of morality. This image of Margherita Costa, infused with Novecento moralism, has been absorbed into more recent scholarship focusing on Costa. Moreover, a similar moralist approach has influenced our understanding of early modern female performers in general—we tend to interpret contemporary descriptions of women performers as *meretrici* or *cortigiane* literally, using our modern lens to draw a clear dividing line between women who work in the sex industry and women who do not.

Both assumptions are problematic for the early modern context. After all, as Elizabeth Cohen has argued, "the courtesans of Renaissance Italy were prostitutes; indeed they were whores."[81] What Cohen was getting at with this provocative statement was that the language

[80] Further proof of Paolo Costa's connection to the Barberini is the fact that he was treated by the Barberini pope's physician. In 1638, Margherita published two poems thanking Prospero Cechini for having successful treated her brother's broken leg. See "A Prospero Cechini lodando la sua chirugia con occasione che sana d'una rottura di gamba al fratello di lei" (To Prospero Cechini, praising his surgery on the occasion that he healed her brother's brother leg), in Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 440-1. This man is probably the same "Prospero Cecchini chirugo" who was a respected papal physician and a member of the conclave at which Urban VIII was elected pope. Gaetano Marini, *Degli archiatri pontificj, volume primo nel quale sono i supplimenti e le correzioni all'opera del Mandosio* (Rome: Pagliarini, 1784), 442.

[81] Elizabeth S. Cohen, "'Courtesans' and 'Whores': Words and Behavior in Roman Streets," *Women's Studies* 19, no. 2 (1991): 201.

used to describe early modern women was often ambiguous, reflecting the ambiguity of a woman's public image in her community rather than any legal or professional category. Furthermore, as Cohen points out, "the choice of these terms seems to depend less on the status of the woman described than on the circumstances and the personal pretensions of the speaker."[82] This was equally true in the context of seventeenth-century women singers. While Rossi identifies Margherita Costa as a "notissima meretrix," her aristocratic patrons did not publicly describe her as such. In a letter to Cardinal Mazarin, for example, Cardinal d'Este was careful to comment on Margherita's virtue, which he cast as a reflection of Mazarin's own virtue: "The Signora Margherita Costa, whom Your Excellency, because of the virtues that shine within her, deemed worthy of Your favor, has brought me your letter."[83]

Was Margherita Costa a notorious prostitute or was she a virtuous woman who also happened to be a singer? The answer, I would argue, depended on whom you asked. As we shall see, in early modern Rome, any woman who was known to be a *canterina* (a female singer) was perceived as a *donna disonesta* and expected to abide by the same restrictions imposed on *meretrici* and *cortigiane*. Early modern commentary on women singers, like Renaissance discourse on courtesans, should be read in light of the overlap between these categories in treatises, literature, and edicts on female behavior. Perhaps when Gian Vittorio Rossi called

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[82] Elizabeth S. Cohen, "'Courtesans' and 'Whores': Words and Behavior in Roman Streets," 204.

[83] Cardinal d'Este to Cardinal Jules Mazarin, 21 March 1650. Paris, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Bibliothèque, Correspondance Politique, Rome 114, fols 147r-v. Cited in Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': *Virtuose* of the Roman Conversazioni in the Mid-Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), 297n45.

Margherita Costa a prostitute, he was highlighting and caricaturizing the ways in which a woman singer's performance would inevitably be perceived as transgressive of the boundaries regulating women's behavior.

We might think of the terms *cortigiana*, *meretrice*, *puttana* (and all the rest) not so much as categorical definitions of various types of women who worked in the sex industry, but instead as words that an early modern observer might sometimes use to disparage a woman and/or her male relatives, or simply to mark her behavior as morally transgressive—just as women performers today who are perceived as morally transgressive are labeled "sluts" or sometimes even "whores." A recent example of this phenomenon is the controversy in the wake of the performances of Jennifer Lopez and Shakira during the halftime show at the 2021 Super Bowl: some critics praised their performances as "sexy" and "empowering," while others declared it "nothing more than a bad strip show" and deemed Jennifer Lopez "nothing more than a middle-aged slut."[84]

Florence, 1628: *La Flora*

Dante Bianchi was the first to argue, based on Rossi's caricature of Margherita Costa's father in the *Eudemia,* that Margherita may have participated in the festivities organized for the

[84] Charles Trepani, "Jennifer Lopez, Shakira's Super Bowl Halftime Show Sparks Debate: Empowering or Objectifying?" *USA Today*, https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/music/2020/02/02/jennifer-lopez-shakira-super-bowl-show-praised-this-my-america/4642026002/ (accessed February 21, 2022); Gil Smart, "Super Bowl Halftime Show Should Have Come with a Parental Warning," *USA Today*, https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/music/2020/02/03/super-bowl-halftime-show-jlo-shakira-suggestive-controversial-gil-smart/4645572002/ (accessed February 21, 2022).

marriage of Margherita de' Medici and Odoardo Farnese in 1628.[85] In Rossi's anecdote, Margherita's boastful father claims that he and his daughter have just returned from a visit to the reign of "King Anthimus," who had invited them to his sister's wedding. King Anthimus was identified in two contemporary keys to Rossi's novel (it was a true *roman à clef*) as "il duca di Fiorenza" (the Duke of Florence), who at the time was Ferdinando II de' Medici.[86] Ferdinando II assumed full responsibility as Grand Duke of Tuscany on his eighteenth birthday in 1628, taking over for his mother, Maria Maddalena, and his grandmother, Christine of Lorraine, who had jointly governed as regents from 1621 to 1628—the only period of female rule in the two-hundred-year history of the Medici principate.[87] Three months after Ferdinando took power, festivities were organized to celebrate the marriage of his younger sister, Margherita de' Medici, to the Duke of Parma, Odoardo Farnese. On 14 October 1628, the court enjoyed a lavish production of a new opera, *La Flora*, with music by Marco da Gagliano and Jacopo Peri (who wrote the music for the role of Choris) on a libretto by Andrea Salvadori.[88] The opera tells the story of the union of Zephyr (the spring breeze) and Chloris (a nymph, who in Salvadori's

[85] Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," 9.

[86] Jennifer Nelson, in her introduction to Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Gian Vittorio Rossi's Eudemiae libri decem: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, 36. According to Nelson, one of the keys was probably by Gabriel Naudé, while the other was by Jean-Jacques Bouchard.

[87] On the extraordinary music and art patronage of Maria Maddalena and Christine of Lorraine, see Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[88] For the libretto, see Andrea Salvadori, *La Flora, o vero Il Natal de' Fiori, favola d'Andrea Salvadori, rappresentata in musica recitativa nel teatro del Serenissimo Gran Duca* (Florence: Pietro Cecconcelli, 1628). For the musical score, see Marco Da Gagliano, *La Flora del sig. Andrea Salvadori; posta in musica da Marco da Gagliano* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni, 1628).

version of her story resides in the Tuscan fields rather than in her traditional home, the Elysian fields), and the flowers that are born from their union, watered by Cupid's tears.

Did Margherita sing in *La Flora*? I have not been able to find conclusive proof that she did, but there are several suggestive leads to that effect. While the identities of most of the cast are still not known, one of them was certainly Loreto Vittori, the same castrato from the papal chapel who had taken Margherita's place in *La catena d'Adone.*[89] However, the Medici account books contain records of expenditures related to several unnamed women singers who were at court during the festivities. Two women singers arrived in Florence in early September and left in late October, presumably after having performed in the opera.[90] Another young female singer (possibly one of the two women previously mentioned) spent five months in Florence between September 1627 and February 1628.[91] Could this young woman have been Margherita, and could her extended stay at the Florentine court have been the basis for her fictional father's boastful claims that King Anthimus had hosted them for "eight full months"?[92] We may never know, but if Margherita was in Florence during this period, as Rossi suggests she was, it seems likely that she sang in *La Flora* alongside Loreto Vittori.

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[89] On the engagement of Vittori for *La Flora,* see Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 177-78.

[90] Payments to these women are found in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 264, ins. 50. Cited in Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 178n20.

[91] Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 178.

[92] Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Gian Vittorio Rossi's Eudemiae libri decem: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, 259.

La Flora marked an important moment of transition in the Florentine court: the end of the seven-year period of female rule, and the beginning of a new era of male rule as Ferdinando II assumed his full powers of governance. But as Kelley Harness has argued, "*La Flora* goes beyond merely acknowledging the new political regime: it symbolically reenacts the transfer of power from female to male rule."[93] As the court was preparing for the festivities that celebrated this transfer of power, a report emerged of tensions between the librettist Andrea Salvadori and the singer and composer Francesca Caccini. When asked by the bride for her opinion regarding Salvadori's *Iole ed Ercole*—the spectacle originally intended to celebrate the Medici-Farnese wedding—Caccini suggested that she wondered if the plot might inspire gossip that the princess wished to "teach her Serene Husband to spin"—like Hercules, who served as a slave at the court of Queen Omphale, where he became the queen's lover but was forced to disguise himself as a woman and spin wool among the ladies-in-waiting.[94] The possibility of representing her groom as a feminized, enslaved Hercules so alarmed the bride that she convinced her mother to order Salvadori to compose a new libretto more appropriate to the occasion.

Francesca Caccini's reference to the story of Hercules and Omphale must have been particularly resonant in the context of the Medici court, where two women had jointly ruled for seven years and where the new grand duke was beginning to exercise authority independently

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[93] Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 184.

[94] The writer Andrea Cavalcante told this story in a manuscript account of Salvadori's life. For a translation and discussion of Cavalcanti's narrative, see Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 89-91. The story of Hercules spinning at the court of Omphale was told by Ovid (through the voice of Deianira, Hercules' wife), in the ninth letter of the *Heroides*.

from his mother and grandmother. The image of Omphale, the queen who forced Hercules to take up the distaff—the ultimate symbol of women's work—would have brought to mind contemporary controversies over women's right to rule over men. Antoine Loisel's maxim of 1607, "The kingdom must not fall to the distaff side," was taken up and championed in France to justify the so-called Salic Law, which excluded women from the throne.[95] This imagery was also common in Italian commentary on women rulers, which often extolled the Salic Law in use in France and focused on the problems inherent in female rule.[96] But there were sometimes political reasons for supporting woman's claim to the throne, which is probably the underlying reason why many European royal houses (including most Italian ones) did not embrace the Salic Law as inviolable policy. An intriguing report by Cesare Burlamacchi, a Lucchese ambassador to the Florentine court, suggests that Louis XIII believed he was the rightful ruler of Tuscany, and not Ferdinando II. According to the ambassador, he had heard from sources in France that the king had been arguing that he should have inherited the position of grand duke of Tuscany from his mother, Maria de' Medici, "since in Tuscany there is no Salic Law that prohibits female succession." The ambassador does not seem to have agreed with the king's claims, since he

[95] "Le royaume ne tombe point en quenouille." As quoted in Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 150.

[96] See, for example, Alessandro Campiglia, *Delle turbulenze della Francia in vita del re Henrico il grande* (Venice: Giorgio Valentini, 1617).

added: "but it's clear that the investiture goes from male to male."[97] While the ambassador wrote this report in 1643, over two decades after Ferdinando II inherited the grand duchy, it reveals that controversies regarding claims to power and the sexual politics of succession may have followed him throughout his reign.

If Margherita Costa was among the singers at the Medici court in 1628, she experienced this tension between male and female power firsthand. Tellingly, Salvadori's hostility towards Francesca Caccini had manifested itself in a comic poem targeting singers entitled "Donne musiche parlano dall'Inferno" (Women Singers Speak from Hell), which was presumably circulated in manuscript.[98] The women singers in the poem lament from their place in Hell that because they used "false tears" in their singing on stage, they are condemned to "pay the penalty for false songs" by singing "sad madrigals" for all eternity.[99] Now, Pluto beats time on their

[97] The entire relevant passage is as follows: "Hanno alcuni portato di Francia questo concetto: che il Christianissimo pretenda sopra li stati di Toscana per ragione della Madre alla quale s'aspettava questo dominio, non al Gran Duca Ferdinando, non essendovi la legge salica dove non succedeno le femine, ma chiaro è che l'investitura è di maschio in maschio." (Some have brought this idea from France: that the Most Christian [King Louis XIII] is laying claims over the states of Tuscany because of his mother, who should have inherited this dominion, since there they do not have the Salic Law which prohibits female succession, but it is clear that the investiture goes from male to male). Cesare Burlacchi, May 1643 (just before Louis XIII died on May 14), in Amedeo Pellegrini, *Relazioni inedite di ambasciatori lucchesi alle corti di Firenze, Genova, Milano, Modena, Parma, Torino, (sec. 16-17)* (Rome: Poliglotta, 1901), 185. I am grateful to Suzanne Cusick for alerting me to the discussion of Salic Law in this dispatch (personal communication).

[98] The poem appears in at least two seventeenth-century manuscripts, both of which attribute it to Salvadori. Kelley Harness was the first to publish a transcription and translation of the text. See Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 180.

[99] "Usammo all'aria falsi pianti...paghiamo il fio de' falseggiati canti." Transcribed and translated in Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 180.

shoulders with his club, Satan is their *maestro di cappella*, and when they make mistakes, they are beaten with a branding iron by a devil named "Astarotto" (Astarotte is the erudite literary demon in Luigi Pulci's epic poem *Morgante*). The women singers curse the day they learned to sing, warning other women to heed their sad tale and take note of where singing has landed them: "Earlier, we sang for the world, and now we weep/ We were female singers, now we are female devils."[100] Salvadori had written the poem, according to a contemporary observer, to punish Francesca Caccini, who had exposed his tendency to favor those women singers he found attractive with better parts and music.[101] As Kelley Harness has pointed out, after Caccini's sabotage forced Salvadori to discard *Iole ed Ercole* and come up with a new libretto in only eight days, he wrote most of the characters that appeared in his poem on infernal women singers into *La Flora*. The opera features Amor (soprano) and Pluto (bass), as well as the female characters of Venus, Berecinzia, Corilla, and the three Graces—all soprano roles.[102] In more ways than one, *La Flora* dramatized the sexual politics both on and offstage against the background of the transition from a women's court to a court dominated once more by a Medici prince.

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[100] "Cantammo pria nel mondo, hora pianghiamo;/ musiche fummo, hor diavolesse siamo." As transcribed in Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 180. I have slightly adapted Harness's translation.

[101] See Suzanne Cusick's transcription of Andrea Cavalcante's manuscript life of Salvadori in Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 89.

[102] Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 180.

Florence, c. 1638: Margherita Costa, Singer and Writer

At some point after about 1629, or perhaps as late as the mid-1630s, Margherita Costa seems to have left Rome to base herself in Florence. Exactly when or why she left is unclear, although some have speculated that she was forced to leave due to a scandal of some sort.[103] It seems equally likely, however, that she went in search of patronage and career opportunities, perhaps attempting to shore up and maintain the connections she made during her stay at the Medici court in 1628. But musical culture at the court had changed dramatically by the time Margherita arrived. After the wedding festivities, as Ferdinando II assumed his full powers, the number of musical spectacles sponsored by the Medici court drastically declined.[104] During the first years of his reign, Ferdinando II was likely too busy with the aftermath of the Spanish-French conflict over the succession of Mantua and a devasting wave of plague to focus on organizing court festivities.

Things had settled down by 1637, when a week of festivities was organized to celebrate the grand duke's marriage to Vittoria della Rovere. The musical events included Giovanni Carlo Coppola's *Le nozze degli dei,* staged in the courtyard of the Pitti Palace, and a *festa a cavallo* (horse ballet) to a text by Ferdinando Saracinelli, *Armida e l'Amor pudico*, performed in the Boboli Gardens. In his account of the festivities, Ferdinando Bardi remarked that "the number of women involved was worthy of consideration, and they were all excellent. Besides the Signora Paola [Caccini] and the Signora Settimia [Caccini], they all received great praise for their singing

[103] For some speculation on when and why Costa left Rome, see Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," 8-10.

[104] See Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*, 195-6.

at the celebration."[105] Yet again, there is no evidence that Margherita Costa was one of these women singers—but there is no evidence that she was not among them, either. The two women named in Bardi's description both had longstanding ties to the Medici court. Lesser-known singers were often not named in official accounts of spectacles at the court—Ferdinando I had made this a matter of court policy.[106] It does not seem that Margherita Costa was ever inscribed by name in the Medici court payment records—in contrast to singers such as Francesca and Settimia Caccini and Vittoria Archilei.[107] Records of Margherita Costa's performances at the Medici court, if they do exist, probably do not refer to her by name.

Following Saidiya Hartman's lead, I want to suggest that we consider Margherita's absence from official documentation as an important source of evidence in and of itself regarding the status, lives, and careers of women singers.[108] It seems highly unlikely that Margherita Costa, a woman who had been celebrated enough for her singing in Rome that her patron had an opera composed to show off her talents, would not have sung in court-sponsored productions during

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[105] "Fu degna di considerazione la quantità delle donne, che tutte eccellenti otre la Sig. Paola, e la Sig. Settimia cantarono a questa festa con gran lor lode." Ferdinando Bardi, *Descrizione delle feste fatte in Firenze per le reali nozze de serenissimi sposi Ferdinando II, Gran Duca di Toscana, e Vittoria, Principessa d'Urbino* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni, 1637), 34. Paola Caccini was Francesca's cousin; Settimia Caccini was her sister.

[106] See Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 17, 22.

[107] Other women singers who served the Medici court during the seventeenth century included Arcangela Paladini, Angelica Sciamerone, Maria Botti, and Emilia Grazi.

[108] Here I am thinking of Saidiya Hartman's concept of "critical fabulation," a method of criticism that combines deep historical and archival research with narrative to make sense of the gaps in the information she was able to glean regarding the lives of enslaved Black women in the Atlantic world. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008). muse.jhu.edu/article/241115.

her time at the Medici court. That there appears to be no trace of her suggests not that she did not sing, but instead that she was not perceived as the sort of singer who would reflect well on the court in official accounts of its activities. Perhaps she was not famous enough, or perhaps she was too famous—or, better, too infamous—to bolster the Medici court's reputation. The women singers who were named in Medici court records and documents were either girls whose virtue was fiercely protected by their patrons, or women like Francesca Caccini, whose marriage to the musician Giovanni Battista Signorini was arranged by the grand duchess Christine of Lorraine in 1607, the same year Francesca officially joined the ranks of salaried musicians of the grand duke of Tuscany.[109]

In contrast, Margherita Costa does not appear to have benefited from this type of protection. As we learned from her will, she was married in Rome before 1635, but the marriage does not seem to have secured her reputation, nor to have provided her with financial or social stability.[110] When Margherita arrived in Florence, perhaps in part because of the limited opportunities for a woman singer of her social status, she turned to writing as a means for cultivating patronage and protection. Her first publication, *Istoria del viaggio d'Alemagna del serenissimo Grand Duca di Toscana Ferdinando Secondo*, is an account of the diplomatic travels of Ferdinando II de' Medici that began in 1627, just before he turned eighteen and assumed full

[109] On Francesca Caccini's marriage and its implications for her career, see Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 35-37.

[110] In his satirical anecdote featuring Margherita's father in the *Eudemia*, Rossi has the father remark that Margherita "is married to a young man who, above all, is handsome and is beloved by all of the noblemen." Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Gian Vittorio Rossi's Eudemiae libri decem: Translated with an Introduction and Notes*, 259. This detail seems intended to ridicule Margherita's father and husband for their attempts to climb the social ladder.

responsibility for governing Tuscany in July of 1628. The young grand duke left Florence in February 1627 with his brother Giovan Carlo (who, as we shall see, would later become a protector and patron of Margherita's sister, Anna Francesca) and an entourage of court gentlemen and servants. The first stop was Rome, where Ferdinando paid his respects to Urban VIII and other members of the Barberini family, including the papal nephews Francesco, Antonio, and Taddeo (all these men were important supporters of both Costa sisters). But the ultimate destination was Prague, where Ferdinando and his brother visited their uncle, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinando II of Habsburg. Costa's *Istoria del viaggio* was printed in Venice without a publication date. Others have assumed it was printed shortly after Ferdinando completed his trip in 1628, but it seems more likely that the publication date was as late as 1638— the book's dedicatee, the Spanish ambassador Don Giovanni de Erasso, was not sent to Tuscany until that year, and Benedetto Guerrini, described in the text as the current *segretario di camera* of the grand duke, was not appointed until 1637.[111]

While based in Florence from 1638 to 1641, Margherita published eight full-length books and several encomiastic poems in pamphlet form, all dedicated to high-ranking members of the

[111] On De Erasso's diplomatic mission to Florence, see Jacopo Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il governo della casa dei Medici*, vol. 4 (Florence: Ranieri del Vivo, 1781), 11. Costa declares that her account of the grand duke's travels is "raccolto dunque dagli scritti del Signor Benedetto Guerrini, hoggi segretario di camera di S.[ua] E.[ccellenza]" (gathered, then, from the writings of Signor Benedetto Guerrini, the present chamber secretary of His Highness) in Margherita Costa, *Istoria del viaggio d'Alemagna del serenissimo Gran Duca di Toscana Ferdinando Secondo*, 5.

Medici court.[112] Although she probably performed regularly—at least as a chamber singer—while in Florence, in her literary works Margherita often deployed an authorial persona that claimed to have renounced her morally suspect singing career to concentrate on the more respectable pursuit of writing. But her persona as singer was also a means for publicity. In 1638, she dedicated her first two volumes of lyric poetry—*La chitarra* and *Il violino*, works whose titles underscore their author's musical abilities—to the grand duke Ferdinando de' Medici. This was a bold move for a woman singer newly arrived from Rome. Both volumes included encomiastic poems by illustrious male authors—the Roman prince Pompeo Colonna, the Florentine poet Alessandro Adimari, and the librettist Ottavio Tronsarelli—that function almost as letters of introduction in support of Margherita's arrival on the Florentine literary scene. Several of the poems praise her twofold talent as both poet and singer. Andrea Barbazza, a member of the Roman Accademia degli Umoristi, exclaims breathlessly that "whether she is unfurling high notes towards Heaven or making wise use of her her singing pen...whether she

[112] Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*; Margherita Costa, *Il violino della Signora Margherita Costa romana* (Frankfurt: Daniel Wastch, 1638); Margherita Costa, *Lo stipo della Signora Margherita Costa romana* (Venice: n.p., 1639); Margherita Costa, *Lettere amorose della signora Margherita Costa romana* (Venice: n.p., 1639); Margherita Costa, *Flora feconda poema di Margherita Costa romana* (Florence: Massi & Landi, 1640); Margherita Costa, *La Flora feconda drama di Margherita Costa Romana* (Florence: Massi & Landi, 1640); Margherita Costa, *Li Buffoni: Comedia ridicola* (Florence: Massi & Landi, 1641); Margherita Costa, *Per l'incendio di Pitti la signora Margherita Costa romana*, (Florence: 1638); Margherita Costa, *Al serenissimo Ferdinando II, Gran Duca di Toscana, per la festa di San Giov. Battista* (Venice: n.p., n.d.); Margherita Costa, *Al serenissimo principe Gio. Carlo di Toscana, per la carica di generaliss. del mare conferitagli della M. Cattolica* (Florence: Massi & Landi, n.d.).

writes or sings, she always manages to make every heart fall in love with her...beautiful triumphs of honor, immortal virtues....to have the merit of both muse and siren!"[113]

The author herself makes only a few direct references to her singing career. In one such poem, Costa's "bella donna" (beautiful woman)—a persona she often uses as a sort of literary avatar—addresses the Venetian noblewoman Bianca Zeni.[114] As the poet recounts, Zeni fell ill during a visit to Florence and summoned the singer to her bedside to distract her from her malaise. If we are to believe the poet, Zeni was so taken with the *bella donna*'s singing that she invited the singer to come back to Venice with her. The *bella donna* suggests that she planned to oblige.[115] Although I have not been able to find further confirmation of this specific singing engagement, as I will discuss in greater detail below, there is evidence to suggest that Costa was

[113] "O che disciolga al Cielo alti concenti,/ o saggia tratti qui penna canora/...Ma scriva, o canti i cuor sempre innamora./...Haver di musa, e di sirena il vanto!" Andrea Barbazza in Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, n.p. On Barbazza, see Nicola De Blasi, "Barbazza, Andrea," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1964). Barbazza was a protector of Marino and participated in the Umoristi's attempts to create a corrected edition of his *Adone* after it had been placed on the Index of Forbidden books, a detail that suggests he may have been involved in—or at least aware of—the plans for *La catena d'Adone*—the libretto discussed above that was based on Marino's poem and inspired by Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa.

[114] "Bella Donna alla Signora Bianca Zeni nobile Veneziana & inferma in Firenze mentre per spassarsi il male la richiese che andasse a cantare, e sentendola cantare la vuolea condurre a Venezia" (Beautiful women to the Signora Bianca Zeni, a noble Venetian lady who is ill in Florence and who, to distract her from her pain, requested that she come to sing, and on hearing her sing, wished to bring her to Venice). Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 234. Bianca 'Zeni' was probably a member of the Venetian patrician Zen family (the spelling 'Zeno' or 'Zeni' was an Italianized version of the Venetian spelling).

[115] "Verrò dunque a servirti, e sia tuo vanto/soggiogar le mie voglie, e miei pensieri;/ discioglierò per te la voce al canto/ e più lieta vivrò fra i tuoi piaceri" (I shall come, then, to serve you, and you may boast of commandeering my desires and my thoughts; I shall unfurl my voice in song for you, and I shall live more happily among your pleasures). Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 236.

in Venice by 1650 and that she performed both in her private residence there and on the stages of the city's public opera houses.

I want to return briefly to Costa's poem addressed to Bianca Zeni for a closer look at the poet's rhetorical strategies of patronage. Intriguingly, in this poem, Costa casts her *bella donna* as the devoted lover of her patron's beauty and noble spirit: "Oh, beauty without equal, oh, divine spirit of unique and angelic beauty in this world [...] Although I am a woman, I have been made a lover (*amante*) of your lovely and noble countenance."[116] In this public declaration of devotion and service, the poet transforms her *bella donna* persona into a sort of courtly lover, a figure derived from the *amor cortese* tradition—and one that was, of course, traditionally male. Costa's appropriation of a traditionally male poetic voice—and her positioning of herself as lover—when addressing her female aristocratic patron offers interesting context for the rhetorical strategies she deployed in her poems addressed to men. We saw earlier how in her poem to the Roman Prince Aldobrandini—the man who probably commissioned *La catena d'Adone* to showcase her voice—Costa cast her *bella donna* as the tearful abandoned lover, a sort of Dido to Aldobrandini's Aeneas. Similarly, in a poem addressed to another Roman aristocrat, Don Federico Colonna, "while he was in Naples and in love with a Spanish woman," Costa's *bella donna* plays the jealous lover, begging her patron not to abandon her for her Spanish rival.[117] In her poems to male patrons, then, Costa often made use of the more traditionally female role of

[116] "O beltà senza pari, o sola al mondo/ d'angelica beltà, spirto divino/[...]/ del tuo vago, e nobile sembiante/ benché donna mi sia son fatta amante." Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 236.

[117] "Bella Donna all'Eccellentissimo Signor Don Federico Colonna mentre si ritrovava in Napoli innamorato d'una Spagnola," in Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*, 23.

the weeping, abandoned lover left behind while her noble beloved pursued other women or more heroic goals. Although this strategy has been read as proof that Costa was the literal lover of her male dedicatees, we might also consider the possibility that in casting herself as Penelope or Dido to her noble male patrons, the poet was making use of a literary mode she probably saw as an effective vehicle for cultivating patronage and support.

In 1640, Costa published two works based on the mythological tale of Zephyr and Flora, perhaps in a nod to Salvadori's 1628 *La Flora*—the opera, as we recall, that was performed as part of the festivities in honor of Margherita de' Medici's wedding to Odoardo Farnese, and in which Costa may have sung. Costa's narrative poem, *Flora feconda* (Fertile Flora), dedicated to Ferdinando de' Medici, was written to celebrate the birth of the grand duke's first son.[118] It was originally written in nine cantos, one for each month of the grand duchess's pregnancy, and told the story of Zephyr and Flora's journey to the oracle of Jove in hopes of conceiving a male heir. But after the baby died at only three days old, Costa added a tenth canto in which Jove decides to keep the baby boy and transforms him into a star. The next year, Costa adapted her poem into a drama, *La flora feconda*, dedicating the new work—a spoken drama that included singing and dancing—to the Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere.[119]

During her Florentine period, Costa seems to have been attempting to minimize her public identity as a professional singer while rebranding herself as a poet in her new city. In a poem published in 1640, Costa looked back at her glory days in Rome as a successful singer

[118] Margherita Costa, *Flora feconda poema di Margherita Costa romana*.

[119] Margherita Costa, *La Flora feconda drama di Margherita Costa Romana*.

under the guise of 'Elisa infelice'.[120] In the poem, Elisa-Margherita deploys her "musico vanto di soavi accenti" (musical skill of sweet sounds) to attract crowds of admirers, enjoying extraordinary success until Fortune suddenly turns against her, and Fame, "impudica" (shameless, but also immodest, the same word used by authorities to describe transgressive women), drags her name through the mud.[121] Her reputation in tatters, she flees Rome for Florence, where a man she calls Aminta convinces her to leave singing behind and to focus instead on the more noble pursuit of writing, through which she can defend her virtue and regain her admiring public.[122] For a time, writing seems to do just that, but soon, "in scherno de' suoi carmi il Ciel le piove onte di folle honor, di vili stime" (in mockery of her poems, the Heavens pour down upon her wildly dishonorable disgraces, and vile evaluations).[123] Through the poetic voice of Elisa, Costa dramatizes the double-bind in which she finds herself: the more fame she acquires, whether as singer or writer, the more vulnerable she is to accusations of impropriety. In 1644, Costa sought to counter those accusations with the publication of her first and only Roman

[120] "Elisa infelice: Qui l'autora sotto nome di Elisa descrive parte della sua sventurata vita" (Unfortunate Elisa: Here the author under the name of Elisa describes part of her unfortunate life). In Margherita Costa, *La selva dei cipressi: opera lugubre di Margherita Costa romana* (Florence: Massi & Landi, 1640), 229-56.

[121] Margherita Costa, *La selva dei cipressi*, 231 and 33.

[122] Aminta convinces Elisa to focus her energies on writing in Margherita Costa, *La selva dei cipressi*, 242-44. The poetic character of Aminta is probably based on Tiberio Squilletti, a one-time bandit who was in the service of Ferdinando de' Medici in the late 1630s and early 1640s and who acted as a sort of literary agent for Costa. In 1640, Squilletti wrote to Leopoldo de' Medici to thank him for helping to get one of Costa's books published (Tiberio Squilletti to Leopoldo de' Medici, Florence, November 24 1640. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 5561, c. 606). The partnership between Margherita Costa and Tiberio Squilletti will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

[123] Margherita Costa, *La selva dei cipressi*, 245.

work, *Cecilia martire,* dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini. The work signaled her move from Florence to Rome, where she hoped to rekindle her old ties to the Barberini. But Costa's attempts to seek Barberini patronage were thwarted when Pope Urban VIII died shortly after she published her *Cecilia*. The new Pamphilj pope made life difficult for the Barberini family, and Costa's patrons fled to Paris to take refuge at the court of Anne of Austria under the wing of their old ally Jules Mazarin. By 1647, Costa had followed the Barberini to Paris, appearing alongside her sister in Mazarin's splendid *Orfeo*.

Paris, 1647: Margherita Costa on the stage and on the page

As she had done with the Medici a few years earlier, Margherita used the medium of print to attempt to secure the patronage of Anne of Austria, Mazarin, and other aristocrats at the French court. In 1647, she published two volumes with the Parisian printer Sebastian Cramoisy. *La tromba di Parnaso*, a collection of encomiastic poetry, is dedicated to Anne of Austria. The collection is loosely divided into three parts. The first part contains poems dedicated to the queen and members of her court. These included Cardinal Mazarin, Henrietta Maria (the queen of England), Gaston of France (Louis XIV's uncle), and even "le bellissime dame della camera della maestà della Regina di Francia" (the beautiful ladies-in-waiting to Her Majesty the Queen of France). The second part was addressed to the Barberini family, including a set of poems criticizing the "basso volgo" (lowly and vulgar people) who attacked the family after the death of Urban VIII. The volume closes with a section of poems addressed to the men involved in bringing the 1647 *Orfeo* to the stage: the composer Luigi Rossi, the castrato Marc'Antonio Pasqualini and the librettist Francesco Buti. All three of these men were in the service of the

Barberini family. By praising first her Parisian hosts, then her Barberini patrons, and finally the musicians who served both the French court and the Barberini, Margherita created a volume that had broad and strategic appeal. It emphasized the magnificence of Anne of Austria and her court and the generosity of the Barberini family, highlighting their mutual participation in bringing *Orfeo* to fruition. It was a strategic volume in which Margherita could create an ideal and idealized patronage network while she presented herself as a loyal court poet, ever ready to record and publicize the magnificence of her aristocratic patrons.[124]

Venice, 1651-1652: Margherita Costa on the public stage

Margherita's participation in Mazarin's high-profile *Orfeo* in Paris seems to have generated further support for her singing career. After she returned from Paris, a letter of recommendation from Mazarin in hand, Margherita was hired to perform in at least three operas—all with music by Francesco Cavalli and librettos by Giovanni Faustini—at the public Teatro Sant'Apollinare in Venice. In 1651, she sang the juicy leading role of the sorceress Nerea in *Rosinda*, who descends to the underworld to enlist the help of Pluto and Proserpina in reclaiming her lover Clitofonte from the Princess Rosinda. While Margherita had been denied the chance to embody another singing sorceress in the *Catena d'Adone* debacle in Rome in 1626, her appearance as Nerea offered her the chance to display her expressive talents to the fullest. As Nerea, Margherita sang the sensual and show-stopping aria "Vieni, vieni in questo seno" (Come, come to my breast), tempting Clitofonte with the promise that if her breasts had once offered him

[124] On opera as an expression of the social status and "cultural finesses" of its patrons, see Valeria De Lucca, "Patronage," in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen Greenwald (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 648-65.

manna, now the "fine rubies" of her nipples would overflow with ambrosia for him.[125] The Vicentine Paolo commemorated the performance in his poem "Alla Signora Margarita Costa, nel Teatro di S. Apollinare Nerea la Maga" (To the Signora Margherita Costa, Nerea the Sorceress in the Teatro di Sant'Apollinare), praising Margherita's "amorose magiche note" (amorous, magical notes) .[126]

Faustini, an impresario as well as a librettist, must have been impressed with Costa's performance: he hired her to perform in two more collaborations with Cavalli at the Teatro Sant'Apollinare: *La Calisto* (which opened on November 28, 1651) and *L'Eritrea* (which premiered on January 17, 1652). As Faustini's account books record, "Margarita da Costa" (almost certainly our Margherita Costa) was hired in August of 1651.[127] Margherita and the other *prima donna* hired for the season, Caterina Giani, were each paid 1860 Venetian *lire* to sing in

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[125] "Vieni, vieni in questo seno,/ che sereno/ già t'accolse entro il suo latte./ Le sue, caro,/ mamme intatte,/ se già manna a te stillaro,/ da quei fini/ loro rubini. Vo', ch'ambrosia or ti zampillino." *Rosinda*, Act III, scene 5.

[126] Paolo Abriani, *Poesie di Paolo Abriani* (Venice: Francesco Valuasense, 1663), 20. The poem is cited in Francesca Fantappiè, "'Angelina senese' alias Angela Signorini Nelli: Vita artistica di un'attrice nel Seicento italiano; Dal Don Giovanni ai libertini," *Bullettino senese di Storia Patria* 116 (2009): 262.

[127] Beth and Jonathan Glixon discovered Faustini's account books in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia; see Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon, "Marco Faustini and Venetian Opera Production in the 1650s: Recent Archival Discoveries," *The Journal of Musicology* 10, no. 1 (1992); Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 198, 203, 345-47. Glixon and Glixon argued in *Inventing the Business of Opera* that Faustini's "Margarita da Costa" was probably not our Margherita Costa (195n2). But in a recent private communication, Beth Glixon concluded that after having considered further evidence she is inclined to believe that it was indeed our Margherita Costa who sang in the Cavalli-Faustini operas. For a summary and analysis of the evidence to that effect, see Díaz and Goethals in Margherita Costa, *The Buffoons*, 19-21.

both operas. Faustini did not specify their respective roles, but the payment schedule suggests that Margherita sang the *seconda donna* role of Diana to Caterina's Calisto in 1651 and then took the title role of Eritrea while Caterina sang the secondary role of Laodicea in 1652.[128] As the virgin goddess Diana, Margherita embodied moral discipline and chaste love: after Diana rescues her beloved, the shepherd Endymion, from the scurrilous Pan, the goddess and the shepherd promise that their love will be expressed only through kissing. Jennifer Williams Brown has suggested that the same singer who played Diana may have also performed the role of Jove-in-Diana in the scenes where Jove appears in the guise of Diana to seduce Calisto.[129] If Margherita did sing the role, she appeared as a woman disguised as a man disguised as a woman seducing another woman—a gender-bending erotic fantasy that must have titillated her audience.[130] Margherita would have also appeared *en travesti* for her performance in *Eritrea*: as the opera opens, we learn that Eritrea has been disguised as her dead twin brother to circumvent laws preventing female rule in Assyria. In the guise of her brother, Eritrea even plays at being a Don Giovanni, attempting to thwart her former lover's plans to marry Laodicea by wooing and marrying her in his stead.

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[128] As convincingly argued by Nicola Badolato and Álvaro Torrente, Margarita da Costa received the first half of her fee the day after the premiere of *Eritrea* and the remaining half at the end of the season; she also received a bonus of twenty percent about a week before the end of the season, probably because *Eritrea* had proved to be financially successful. Nicola Badolato and Álvaro Torrente, eds., *Francesco Cavalli: La Calisto, dramma per musica by Giovanni Faustini* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2011), XX.

[129] See the introduction by Jennifer Williams Brown in Francesco Cavalli, *La Calisto*, ed. Jennifer Williams Brown (Middletown: A-R Editions, 2007), XV.

[130] For a provocative and magisterial analysis of the gender dynamics of *La Calisto*, see "The Nymph Calisto and the Myth of Female Pleasure," Ch. 5 in Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 178-219.

Exit aria: Maria Margherita Costa's *Amori della luna* (Venice, 1654)

While *La Calisto* does not seem to have attracted large crowds, *Eritrea* was much more successful, attracting a total of 3,423 spectators during its twenty-three performances.[131] It may have been during the opera season in Venice that Margherita encountered (whether in person or through word of mouth) the three dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg, the brothers Georg Wilhelm, Ernst Augustus, and Johann Friedrich. Like the Medici brothers, the German dukes were important patrons of opera and opera singers, particularly in Venice.[132] From 1654 to 1688, at least thirty librettos were dedicated to the dukes of Brunswick-Lüneberg by Italian librettists, composers, and singers. It was to these men that Margherita dedicated her final full-length work, a libretto for a pastoral in three acts entitled *Gl'amori della luna*, in 1654.[133] The subject she chose for the opera-loving dukes was the story of the goddess Diana and her love for Endymion—the same character she had likely portrayed on stage only a few years before. In the dedication to the work, Margherita notes with bitterness that despite having published fourteen solo volumes in the past with the support of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, she now finds herself

[131] For the numbers, see Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 353-57.

[132] On the dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg as patrons of opera in Venice, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 31-32; Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Production, Consumption, and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 267-70.

[133] Maria Margherita Costa, *Gl'amori della luna della Signora Maria Margherita Costa, all'Altezze Sereniss. di Girgio Guglielmo, Erneste Augusto, Giovanni Federico, duchi di Branswich, et Lunemburgo* (Venice: Giuliani, 1654). It is not clear why Margherita signed this work alone as "Maria Margherita Costa," adding her first name and omitting the "Romana" that she usually included to identify her provenance. Perhaps she wanted to create a new, non-Roman identity for herself.

"quasi sommersa tra queste acque" (almost submerged in these waters)—presumably, the waters of the Venetian lagoon.[134] Although she hoped to find support and new patrons, she has not managed to write anything for four years—her pen has been de-quilled and her tongue silenced ("dispennata la penna, ammutita la lingua").[135] The problem, she points out, is the ignorance and misogyny of her detractors, who refuse to acknowledge literary talent in a woman: "L'ignoranza chiama nel nostro sesso mostruoso le Lettere" (It is ignorance that calls knowledge of liberal arts monstrous in our sex). Appealing to the dukes for support, she begs them to protect her "parto" (literally, her newly delivered child) from vilification. Although she would publish a few pamphlets and broadsheets of encomiastic verse in 1655—one in honor of Ferdinando II de' Medici, and one on the occasional of the arrival of Christina of Sweden in Rome dedicated to Maffeo Barberini— the dedication to the dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg was her final major gambit for aristocratic patronage. Whether Margherita's opera was ever performed, as well as whether she received the support she sought from the dukes, is still unknown.

Margherita's last appearances in secondary sources date from 1657. In both instances, she appeals to powerful former patrons, presenting herself as a vulnerable and poor widow with two daughters to support. In May, she appealed to Don Mario Chigi, the new Pope Alexander VII's brother and a frequent correspondent of the Medici princes, lamenting that she found herself "in

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[134] Some scholars have suggested, based on Margherita's description of herself as being "sotto cielo straniero" (under foreign skies) in the dedication to *Gl'amori della luna,* that she may have spent some time at the German court. Although that is possible, Margherita's description of herself as being "almost submerged in these waters" suggests (to my ear, at least), that she was referring to her stay in the lagoon city of Venice (where she published the work).

[135] Maria Margherita Costa, *Gl'amori della luna della Signora Maria Margherita Costa, all'Altezze Sereniss. di Girgio Guglielmo, Erneste Augusto, Giovanni Federico, duchi di Branswich, et Lunemburgo*, n.p.

infinite misery with the burden of two daughters....a widow, without anyone to support me....a poor *virtuosa*."[136]

A month later, she wrote directly to her former patron, Prince Mattias de' Medici, informing him that due to her "disaventura" (misfortune), she had been unable to leave Rome for three months and that she was in need of his help.[137] She was sending a certain Fortunato to look after her "interessi" (interests, probably financial in nature) in Florence, and she hoped Mattias would offer his protection in helping the mission go smoothly. She adds that upon Fortunato's departure, she and her daughters will be left "without anyone to help us, and among people who would like to completely annihilate us and rob us of what little we have been able to regain."[138] Although it is not yet known when or how Margherita died, she was probably one of the deceased sisters for whom Anna Francesca requested prayers in 1670.[139] Margherita's desperate pleas for help are the last words we have in her voice. But perhaps she would have preferred that we remember her in the guise of the goddess Diana, a role she had portrayed on the stage of the

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[136] "Mi trovo tra infinità di miserie con il peso di due figlie...vedova, e senza nessuno per me sostegno...povera virtuosa." Margherita Costa to Don Mario Chigi, from Rome?, 4 May 1657. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi I.VII.273, fol. 125r.

[137] Margherita Costa to Mattias de' Medici, from Rome, 17 June 1657, in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5466, fols. 341r-v. Cited in Sara Mamone, ed., *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi: Notizie di spettacolo nei carteggi medicei; Carteggio di Mattias de' Medici (1629-1667)* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2013), 557.

[138] "Rest[i]amo qua senza nessuno per noi, e tra gente che ne vorrebbero annichilare affatto e levarne quel poco che abbiamo ricuperato." Margherita Costa to Mattias de' Medici, from Rome, 17 June 1657, in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5466, fols. 341r-v. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*.

[139] In her will, Anna Francesca requested that one hundred masses be said in the Church of SS. Vincenzo et Anastasio in Trevi "per l'anima mia e le anime di mio Padre e Madre e sorelle." "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, fols 785v-786r.

Teatro Sant'Apollinare in Venice, and for whom, in her own final work, Margherita created a triumphant happy ending: in Margherita's telling, alongside her beloved Endymion, Diana rules over the stars as queen of the night sky.

Chapter Two:

Anna Francesca Costa, from Singer to Impresaria

Rome, 2022: Thinking from women's lives

A second and important new source for the lives and careers of both Costa sisters—and one that also enriches our understanding of seventeenth-century women singers as a group—is a will drawn up by Anna Francesca Costa and notarized in 1670.[140] The story of how close I came to never finding this document and misidentifying Anna Francesca Costa is worth telling here, because it demonstrates how difficult it can be to reconstruct even the most basic biographical details of early modern women's lives. To reconstruct the lives of the Costa sisters and other women singers, it has been necessary to think hard about how traditional methods of gathering evidence and even the archive itself can sometimes distort or even erase the subjectivity of women—a feminist theoretical approach that the philosopher Sandra Harding called "thinking from women's lives."[141] In 1993, Suzanne Cusick drew on this idea to revise and correct scholars' understanding of the life and career of Francesca Caccini. Before Cusick, scholars had accepted Alessandro Ademollo's assertions, published as a footnote in 1888, that Francesca Caccini had left the service of the Medici after her first husband's death in 1626 and that she had

[140] "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, opened 13 May 1678, Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Istrumenti, busta 891, fols. 784r-786v, 803r-805r. The document is no longer found in the files dated 1670; but the original (or a copy) was filed with the attestation of its opening in 1678.

[141] Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Women's Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

died of "cancer of the mouth."[142] And yet, as Cusick showed, the reason Caccini supposedly disappeared from the archives after 1627 was not because she had left the music profession but instead because she remarried: Francesca Caccini had become Francesca Raffaelli. Cusick's work not only uncovered important details regarding Caccini's life and career after 1627, but also, in the process, demonstrated how much musicology itself had been guided by masculinist cultural priorities that left little room for a fuller portrait of a woman musician.[143]

Despite my good fortune in having inherited the insights of Harding and Cusick, when after months of searching I came across a 1655 will by a seventeenth-century woman named Anna Francesca Costa, I convinced myself that it had been written by Margherita's sister.[144] After all, it was the only will I had been able to find by a woman with that name, and the dates seemed to align. The fact that the 1655 will named Anna Francesca's father as Giovanni Francesco Costa from Turin, while Margherita's father was Cristoforo Costa of Rome, gave me pause, but I reasoned that perhaps Margherita and Anna Francesca were half-sisters with the same mother but different fathers. There was another detail that bothered me: Anna Francesca made no mention of Margherita in her will. In contrast, in 1635 Margherita had bequeathed to

[142] Alessandro Ademollo, *La bell'Adriana ed altre virtuose del suo tempo alla corte di Mantova* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1869), 151.

[143] Suzanne G. Cusick, "'Thinking from Women's Lives': Francesca Caccini after 1627," *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (1993).

[144] "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 14 November 1655, Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Testamenti, fols. 522r-525v, 534r-535v.

Anna Francesca shares of her property in Rome as well as valuable jewelry and silver.[145] Nonetheless, given the strained relationship between the two sisters—documented in a letter Anna Francesca wrote to her patron Giovan Carlo de' Medici complaining that Margherita was trying to steal her dresses—I decided that it was understandable for Anna Francesca to have neglected to include her sister as one of her heirs.[146]

Having explained away my own doubts, I began the work of integrating the important information in the will with the other archival sources I had gathered to try to reconstruct Anna Francesca's biography and better understand her career as a professional singer. From the 1655 document, I began to create a portrait of the singer: she had married an embroiderer who was a member of the prestigious Accademia di San Luca in Rome who had left her a widow in 1653, she owned a house surrounded by fruit trees located near the Arch of Gallienus, and at the time of her death, she was owed money by high-ranking aristocrats: the duchess of Ceri, the duchess

[145] Items Margherita bequeathed to Anna Francesca included 'il mio gioiello di diamanti et la corona di coralli grossa e due candellieri d'argento" (my diamond jewelry and the large coral wreath and two silver candlesticks), as well as part of the money owed her for the "lite della vigna del Popolo con Angelo Salviati" (dispute regarding the vineyard near the Popolo [i.e. Santa Maria del Popolo] with Angelo Salviati). "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fols. 344r. and 345r.

[146] "Signore, deve sapere come la malignità di Margherita, mia sorella, non cessa perseguitarmi, ho per invidia, ho per avidità di levarmi quantto puole, ho per colera di non poter far della mia vita quello che aveva disegniato et infine per esercitare i suoi cativi pensieri, hora non avendo altro modo, cerca di levarmi alcuni abiti che mi sono rimasti in Roma" (My Lord, you must know that the wicked intent of Margherita, my sister, does not cease to pursue me, either because of envy, or because of her greedy desire to take from me what she can, or because of her anger that she cannot make my life into what she planned and put her evil thoughts into practice. Now, as a last resort, she is trying to take some of my clothes that I left in Rome). Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, 10 July 1645, Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5349, fol. 375r. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," *Medioevo e Rinascimento* 6, no. 3 (1992): 121; Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*.

of Bracciano, and the duke and duchess of Oriano. What's more, she had appointed the cardinal Virgilio Spada, the wealthy and prominent patron of the architect Borromini, as one of the administrators of her estate. Finally, I was thrilled to discover that Anna Francesca had apparently not felt it necessary to name the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso (an institution created to house women who wished to take vows and leave prostitution behind them) as one of her beneficiaries, despite the papal edicts that required most female singers who died in Rome to do so. Given these details, I began to envision for Anna Francesca a triumphal story of a woman so talented that—despite her gender, her circumstances, and her reputation as a woman willing to display her body and voice on the public stage—she was able to earn the respect and support of some of the most important patrons in Rome. So confident was she of her patrons' support and of the social capital and status she had earned, I reasoned, that she had presented herself as a virtuous Roman widow in her will, choosing not to acknowledge her morally compromising appearances on the operatic stage. In doing so, she had defied church authorities and had taken the risk that her entire estate would be confiscated by the monastery should the authorities decide she had overstepped her bounds. It seemed a fitting way for a woman like Anna Francesca—a woman who had forged her own path as one of Italy's first female *impresarie* in a society and profession dominated by men—to leave her mark on the world.

Rome, 1670: "I, Anna Francesca Costa, daughter of Cristoforo Costa"

Imagine my disappointment when I discovered that the document I had used as evidence for reconstructing Anna Francesca's career was not her will at all. Instead, it had been drawn up

by a woman with the same name. Perhaps the other Anna Francesca Costa was a relative. But she was not Margherita's sister, and she was not the celebrated singer and *impresaria* I had been seeking in the archive. I found the correct will only a few months ago (in fall 2021), quite by accident, while perusing the *rubricelle*—hand-written seventeenth-century indexes—at the Archivio Storico Capitolino. Because I had been operating under the assumption that Anna Francesca had died in the mid to late 1650s, I had not previously noticed the record of a will drawn up by a woman named Anna Francesca Costa that was notarized in 1670, but not opened until 1678. But on that fall day, as I leafed through the brittle pages of the manuscript index, Anna Francesca's name jumped out at me. I jotted down the notary's name, gathered up my things, and ran back through Piazza Navona to the Archivio di Stato at Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, where I managed to turn in my request just in time. When I finally had the parchment-bound *busta* in my hands, I opened it up and began to read: "I, Anna Francesca Costa, daughter of the deceased Cristoforo of Rome, understanding the fragility of our lives, and that death usually comes unexpectedly..."[147] The first line, in which Anna Francesca identifies herself as the daughter of Cristoforo Costa (like her sister Margherita) confirmed what I had suspected but not wanted to believe: this document—not the one I had been working with for years—was the will of Anna Francesca the *impresaria*, and the narrative I had constructed of her life and career would have to be rewritten. As we shall see, Anna Francesca's correct will reveals that although she did not openly defy church authorities, she did make some equally impressive gambits in her self-presentation, aligning herself with some of the most powerful patrons in the city.

[147] "Io, Anna Francesca Costa, figlia del q.[uondam] Cristopharo Romano, considerando quanto sia fraggile questa nostra vita, e che per lo più la morte ci tronca all'improvviso...." "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, fol. 785r.

When Anna Francesca drew up her will in 1670, her father, mother and at least two of her sisters had already died.[148] Although neither Anna Francesca's nor Margherita's will records their mother's maiden name (a problem, it should be noted, that makes tracking down early modern women particularly tricky), Anna Francesca's will was opened in 1678 at the instigation of a woman identified her niece, Dorotea Biscia, and mentions two other female relatives from the Biscia family: Maria and Anna Biscia.[149] It seems likely, then, that the mother of our two Costas, whose first name was Dorotea, was born a Biscia. Although I have been unable to find definitive proof, it is possible that Dorotea may have been related to Cardinal Lelio Biscia (1573-1638), a protege of Pope Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini) and a patron to writers such as the Greek humanist Leone Allacci and artists including the sculptor François Duquesnoy. Cardinal Biscia, like several members of the Costa family, was buried in the church of S. Francesco a Ripa—Biscia and his brothers had financed the restoration of the church.[150]

Anna Francesca does not mention Margherita by name; instead, she asks that masses be said for the souls of her deceased father, mother, and sisters—one of whom was probably

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[148] In her will, Anna Francesca asked that "mentre il mio corpo starrà esposto sopra terra facci celebrare cento messe de requie per l'anima mia e le anime di mio padre e madre e sorelle" (while my body is displayed above ground, let there be one hundred requiem masses for my soul and for the souls of my father and mother and sisters). "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, fols. 785v-786r.

[149] The notary registered the opening of the will on 13 May 1678. See Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Istrumenti, busta 891, fols. 784r-v.

[150] On Biscia's connections to S. Francesco a Ripa, see Anna Menichella, *S. Francesco a Ripa: Vicende costruttive della prima chiesa francesca di Roma* (Rome: Edizioni Rari Nantes, 1981), 50-3. Anna Francesca's will mentions an "Anna, figlia di Francesco Biscia" (Anna, daughter of Francesco Biscia); perhaps Anna's father was Lelio Biscia's brother of the same name.

Margherita. She leaves fifty *scudi* to her two remaining sisters (both of whom also appeared in Margherita Costa's 1635 will). The first of these is "Suor Maria Massimiliana, monaca nel Monasterio della Duchessa in Viterbo" (Sister Maria Massimiliana, a nun in the Monastery of the Duchess in Viterbo). The monastery, located inside the city walls, was founded in 1557 by Girolama Orsini, the duchess of Parma. In the early seventeenth century, the old church of S. Bartolomeo was demolished and a new church, S. Maria della Visitazione, was annexed to the monastery. Suor Maria Massimiliana is probably the same sister mentioned by Margherita Costa in a poem to Francesco Barberini published in 1647. There, Margherita thanks Barberini for having saved one of her sisters from the "ciechi inganni" (dark deceits) of the world and having placed her "tra caste celle" (in chaste cells).[151] If, as the poem suggests, Barberini helped place Margherita's sister in the Monastero delle Duchessa, he may have also paid what would have probably been a hefty convent dowry. In addition to Suor Maria Massimiliana, Anna Francesca mentions another sister, Barbara Costa. Barbara will play a leading role in the next chapter, where we will see how she attempted to win back her share of Anna Francesca's assets from the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso in Rome. Finally, Anna Francesca named her brother Paolo (the presumed bravo in the service of the Barberini) as her "erede usufruttuario" (usufructuary heir), leaving him the rights to a large share of her property and assets "in qualsiasi loco posti" (wherever they are located).[152]

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[151] Margherita Costa, "All'Eminentissimo Principe Cardinale Francesco Barberini," Margherita Costa, *La tromba di Parnaso*, 62. Suor Massimiliana Maria was probably the name taken by one of the Costa sisters (most likely Olimpia or Vittoria, both mentioned as two of the three 'sorelle piccole' (little sisters) along with Barbara, in "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 344r.

[152] "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, fol. 803r.

One of the most interesting details to emerge from Anna Francesca's will is her wish to be buried in the church of SS. Vincenzo e Anastasio a Trevi. As we shall see, this detail reveals just how connected she was to important patrons she had cultivated mainly during her stays at the French court in Paris. The church, which overlooks the Trevi Fountain, houses the *praecordia* (embalmed hearts and organs) of twenty-two popes, beginning with Pope Sixtus V and ending with Leo XIII in 1903. In the seventeenth century, Cardinal Jules Mazarin (born Giulio Mazzarino, 1602-1661), who had just bought a palace on the nearby Quirinal Hill, financed the rebuilding of the church, including an impressive new façade topped with his coat of arms. Mazarin entered diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1628 and was a favorite of Pope Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini) and his nephews the cardinals Antonio and Francesco Barberini, who included him in their circle of artists, painters, and musicians. In 1641, Pope Urban VIII made Mazarin a cardinal, and in 1642, after the death of the celebrated Richelieu, Mazarin was appointed the first minister of France. It was Mazarin who invited both Costa sisters to Paris in 1647 to sing before the French queen regent, Anne of Austria, in Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo.* When Mazarin died in 1661 (in Vincennes, France), the façade he had financed served as a backdrop to an elaborate ceremony in remembrance of him. The event was commemorated in a book enriched with five engravings curated by Mazarin's Roman secretary and agent Elpidio Benedetti, who had been instrumental in securing the singers (including both Costas) for Mazarin's operas in Paris.[153]

[153]Elpidio Benedetti, *Pompa funebre nell'esequie celebrate in Roma al cardinal Mazarini nella chiesa de SS. Vincenzo, & Anastasio* (Rome: Stamperia della Reverenda Camera Apostolica, 1661). Benedetti also designed stage sets for the French court; in Rome, he collaborated with the painter and architect Plautilla Bricci.

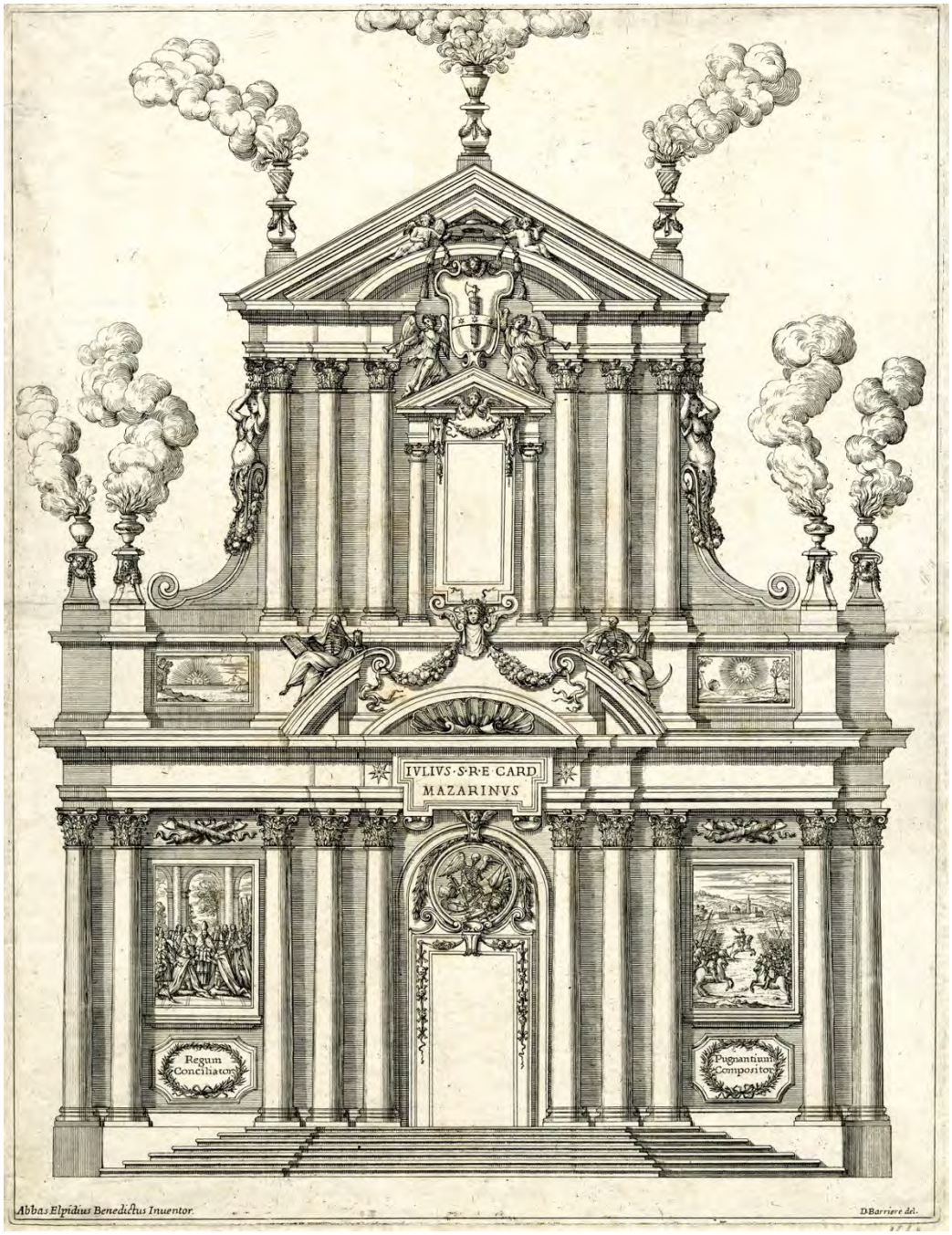

Fig. 1: Dominique Barrière, engraving depicting the facade of SS. Vincenzo e Anastasio with incense burning in vases to commemorate the death of Jules Mazarin in 1661. In *Pompa funebre nell'esequie celebrate in Roma al Cardinal Mazarini* (Rome: Stamperia della Reverenda Camera Apostolica, 1661).

In her will of 1670, just nine years after Mazarin's death, Anna Francesca Costa left instructions for her interment in SS. Vincenzo e Anastasio in Trevi, the parish church for the Quirinal Palace and the popes who resided there—a bold request indeed from a female opera singer who had once been labeled a "donna pubblica."[154] Anna Francesca specified that she wished to be interred next to the "altare della Madonna" (altar of the Madonna) in a wooden coffin lined with lead, leaving to the church the amount of money necessary to cover her interment.[155] She bequeathed her "crucifisso d'argento con la croce di ebbano" (silver crucifix with the ebony cross) to the Altar of the Madonna, probably hoping it would be displayed there. Anna Francesca's Madonna is most likely the Madonna "delle Grazie," also known as "del Suffragio," a fragment of a fourteenth-century fresco depicting the Madonna and Child that was

[154] Both Costa sisters were described as "donne pubbliche" in an *avviso* penned by a Modenese Ambassador in Rome in 1645 that I will discuss in detail below. See Modena, Archivio di Stato di Modena, Ambasciatori d'Italia, Roma 243, 30 August 1645. Cited and translated in Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': The Function of Portraits of Mid-Seventeenth-Century *Virtuose* in Rome," *Italian Studies* 63, no. 1 (2008): 106n210.

[155] "Et il mio corpo, quando verrà il caso della morte, voglio sia portato privatamente alla Chiesa Parochiale SS. Vincenzo et Anastasio in Trevi, et si esponghi con quella pompa che parerà all'infrascritto mio erede, e sia seppellito accanto l'altare della Madonna di detta chiesa con la cassa di legno, e una di piombo sola per cui alla chiesa lascio le raggioni della sepultura solamente" (And as for my body, when death shall come, I wish that it be brought privately to the parish church, SS. Vincenzo et Anastasio in Trevi, and that it be displayed with the funeral that seems appropriate to my heir, and that it be buried next to the altar of the Madonna of the aforementioned church with a wooden coffin, and one of lead, for which I leave to the church money to cover the burial alone). "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, fol. 785v.

widely venerated during the early modern period for its many miracles.[156] Pope Innocent XI was apparently so devoted to the Madonna delle Grazie that he asked that his own *praecordia* be placed in the homonymous chapel, rather than under the presbytery with the rest of the popes.[157] His wish was granted after his death in 1689.

As for Anna Francesca Costa, whether she was also laid to rest next to the Altar of the Madonna delle Grazie is uncertain. Not surprisingly, on a recent visit to the church—the interior of which was redone in the nineteenth century—I found no trace of Anna Francesca's tomb, nor of her crucifix. Nor did I find any information regarding her death or burial in the church records from the period, which—like the historic records of most of Rome's parish churches—are held in the Archivio Storico del Vicariato.[158] However, the same Madonna delle Grazie that Anna Francesca so admired can still be seen today, surrounded by a gilded *gloria* (sunburst), in the chapel closest to the high altar on the left side of the nave.

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[156] For a description of the Madonna delle Grazie and its miracles, including the tale of Angelo Spadasanta, who remained unscathed thanks to his prayers to the icon even when his pistol spontaneously fired while holstered at his hip, see Pietro Leone Bombelli, *Raccolta delle immagini della Beatissima Vergine ornate della corona d'oro dal R.mo Capitolo di S. Pietro con una breve ed esatta notizia di ciascuna immagine*, vol. 3 (Rome: Salomoni, 1792), 45-49.

[157] See Pietro Leone Bombelli, *Raccolta delle immagini della Beatissima Vergine ornate della corona d'oro dal R.mo Capitolo di S. Pietro con una breve ed esatta notizia di ciascuna immagine*, 3, 46.

[158] Rome, Archivio Storico del Vicariato, Parrocchia dei SS. Vincenzo ed Anastasio a Trevi, Morti, 1670-1680.

Florence, c. 1637: Anna Francesca Costa at the Medici court

Like her sister, Anna Francesca eventually sought patronage and protection in Florence at the Medici court.[159] But if Margherita focused her literary efforts in large part on Grand Duke Ferdinando II de' Medici, Anna Francesca seems to have concentrated instead on ingratiating herself to Ferdinando's brother Giovan Carlo.[160] Together with the two youngest Medici princes, Mattias and Leopoldo, Giovan Carlo was an important patron of music and theater in Florence and beyond. As Sara Mamone has argued, Giovan Carlo and his brothers worked as an "impresarial collective" to organize music and other entertainments in Florence and other Tuscan cities and to provide the opera houses of Venice with singers.[161] For Anna Francesca, Giovan Carlo's support would prove invaluable as she began to make a name for herself as a singer and musical organizer.

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[159] For an insightful analysis of the dynamics of patronage, and especially the relationship between singers and the nobles who sponsored them, see Anna Tedesco, "Mecenatismo musicale e distinzione sociale nell'Italia moderna," in *Marquer la prééminence sociale: Actes des conférence organisée à Palerme en 2011 par SAS en collaboration avec l'École française de Rome et l'université de Palerme*, ed. Jean-Philippe Genet and E. Igor Mineo (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014), 1-19. On the Florentine marquis Filippo Niccolini's patronage of the singer Lucia Coppa Rivani, see Antonella D'Ovidio, "All'ombra di una corte: Lucia Coppa, allieva di Frescobaldi e virtuosa di musica del marchese Filippo Niccolini," *Recercare* 30, no. 1-2: 93-95.

[160] Although Margherita Costa dedicated her *Lettere amorose* to Giovan Carlo in 1639, she does not seem to have ever written to him directly; Anna Francesca, on the other hand, wrote multiple letters addressed to Giovan Carlo to ask for his sponsorship and financial assistance, mainly in the early 1650s. These letters will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

[161] See Sara Mamone, "Most Serene Brothers-Princes-Impresarios: Theater in Florence under the Management and Protection of Mattias, Giovan Carlo, and Leopoldo de' Medici," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 9, no. 1 (2003), https://doi.org/https://www.sscm-jscm.org/jscm/v9/no1/mamone.html#n14.

The patronage relationship between Anna Francesca and Giovan Carlo can be traced back to sometime before 1637, when the Medici prince commissioned the Florentine artist Cesare Dandini to paint Anna Francesca's portrait.[162] According to the seventeenth-century art historian Filippo Baldinucci, Dandini had painted the portrait 'al vivo' ('from life'— a phrase that had various meanings, including painting a live model directly or painting from a drawing). Baldinucci's description of the portrait, written in the 1680s but published posthumously, emphasizes the sitter's fame: "For the Most Serene Prince, then Cardinal Giovan Carlo, [Dandini] portrayed from life on an oval [canvas], Checca Costa, the renowned female singer, when she was a girl."[163] The portrait, one of Dandini's most appreciated works, is striking in its intimacy: Anna Francesca, against a dark background that highlights the creamy, pale, perfection of her skin, meets our gaze with an extraordinary intensity. She leans forward and rests her left elbow on a piece of furniture (could it be a keyboard of some sort?) draped with velvet; her right

[162] The portrait was identified by Silvia Mascalchi as one of the works in Giovan Carlo de' Medici's collection; the collection was sold by Ferdinando II shortly after Giovan Carlo's death and dispersed, it has still been only partly identified. The portrait appears in three Medici inventories of Giovan Carlo's residences during his lifetime: in 1637, it was in Giovan Carlo's Villa di Mezzomonte (now the Villa Corsini in Mezzomonte; in 1647 it was in the Casino di Via della Scala; and in 1663, it was in the Villa di Castello, where Giovan Carlo died. See Silvia Mascalchi, "Le collezioni di Giovan Carlo de' Medici: Una vicenda del Seicento fiorentino riconsiderata alla luce dei documenti" (Tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 1984), 103-04; Silvia Mascalchi, "Giovan Carlo de' Medici: An Outstanding but Neglected Collector in Seventeenth-Century Florence," *Apollo: The International Magazine of Arts* 272 (1884): 268-72; Sandro Bellesi, *Cesare Dandini* (Turin: Artema, 1996); Sophie Couëtoux, "La 'vaghezza' d'une chanteuse: Dans l'intimité du 'Portrait de Checca Costa' par Cesare Dandini," *Revue des études italiennes* 45, no. 1-2 (1999): 95-108; Sandro Bellesi, "I ritratti delle sorelle Costa di Cesare Dandini e Stefano della Bella," in *Con dolce forza: Donne nell'universo musicale del Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Laura Donati (Florence: Polistampa, 2018), 65-74.

[163] "Per lo Serenissimo Principe, poi Cardinale Gio. Carlo, ritrasse al vivo in un ovato, la Checca Costa, rinomata cantatrice, in tempo che ella era fanciulla." Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, vol. 6 (Florence: Santi Franchi, 1728), 215.

hand and index finger are curved into an ambiguous gesture that almost resembles a manicule—the tiny hands with pointing fingers used in seventeenth-century texts to direct readers' attention to important information.

Fig. 2: Cesare Dandini, *Ritratto di Checca Costa*, before 1637,
Florence, Collezione Koeliker

Giovan Carlo seems to have been particularly attached to the portrait. He went to the trouble of bringing it along with him as he moved between three different residences: from the Villa di Mezzomonte (now Villa Corsini), to the Casino di Via della Scala, and finally to the Villa di Castello, when he died 1663.[164] Further evidence of the painting's wider popularity is found in a second version—of uncertain provenance—attributed to Dandini and painted around 1640.[165] In the second version, the painter has added several details that tone down the sensuality of the original: this time, Anna Francesca wears a camisole underneath her gown, proof that even if the gown were to slip, her breasts would remain covered. Dandini has crowned her with a wreath of flowers, a detail that may have called to mind the similar wreaths he and many others had painted on the heads of figures representing the goddess Flora or even Saint Cecilia. Anna Francesca wears a necklace of luminous pearls, an adornment favored by aristocratic women at the Medici court. The provocative and unsettling hand gesture of the original has been replaced: in this version, the sitter holds a stemmed, round tray or flat bowl—perhaps a nod to Caravaggio's *Bacchus*, which had been donated to the Medici by Cardinal del Monte in 1608 and thus would have been familiar to Dandini and his patrons.[166]

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[164] Silvia Mascalchi has traced the location of the painting as documented in inventories of Giovan Carlo's collections. See Silvia Mascalchi, "Le collezioni di Giovan Carlo de' Medici: Una vicenda del Seicento fiorentino riconsiderata alla luce dei documenti."

[165] On the second version, see Sandro Bellesi, *Cesare Dandini*, 104; Sandro Bellesi, "I ritratti delle sorelle Costa di Cesare Dandini e Stefano della Bella," 67; Giuseppe Cantelli, *Repertorio della pittura fiorentina del Seicento* (Florence: Opus Libri, 1983), 26.

[166] See https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/caravaggio-bacchus, accessed 10 April 2022.

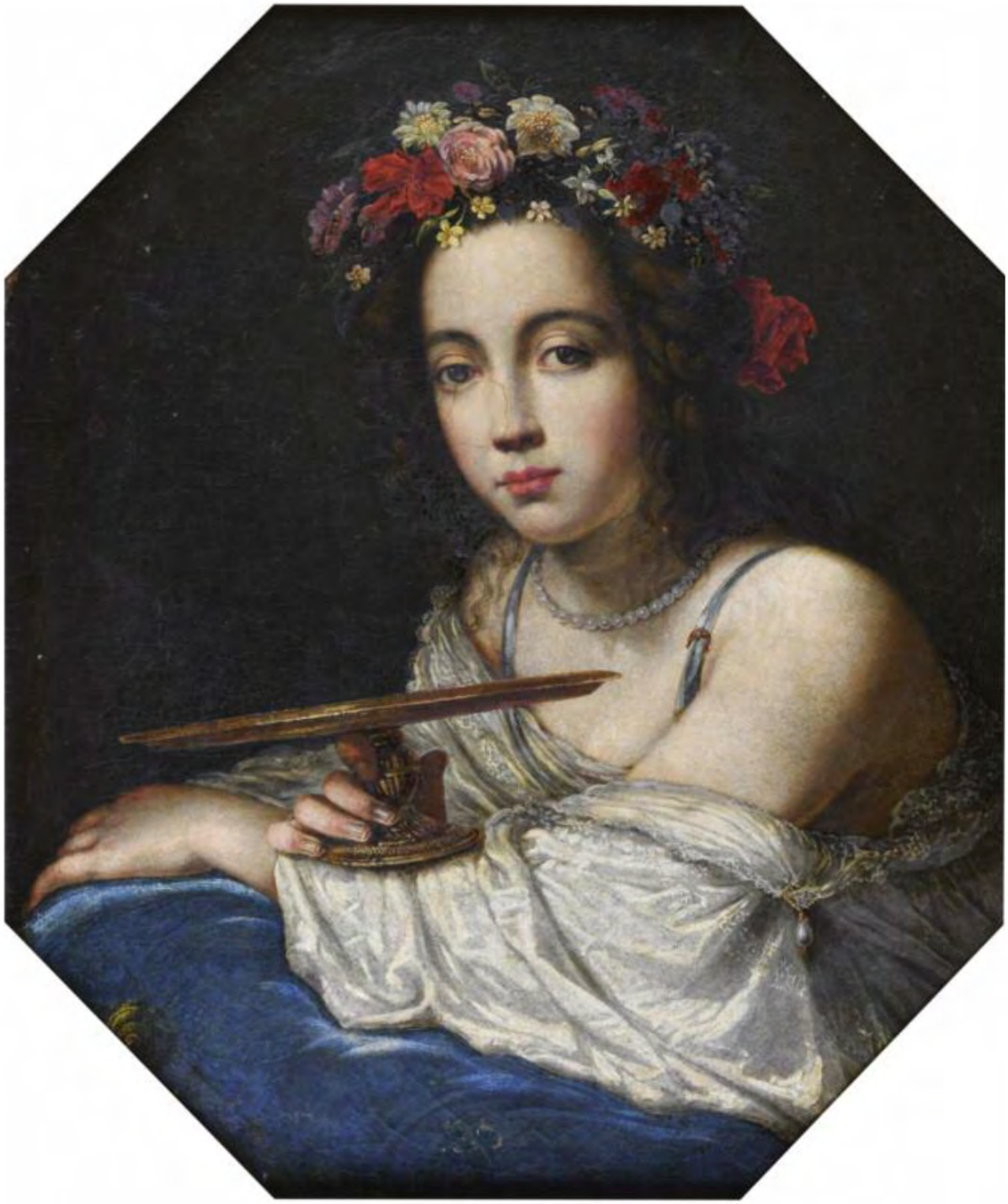

Fig. 3: Cesare Dandini, *Ritratto di Checca Costa con corona di fiori*, c.1640, Florence, Museo Stibbert

Before Silvia Mascalchi identified the woman in the portrait as Anna Francesca Costa, it had been interpreted in more general terms as a "mezza figura femminile" (half-length female figure) or sometimes as an unspecified "figura allegorica" (allegorical figure). In 1982, the poet and literary critic Piero Bigongiari went further, describing the portrait as an "allegoria della tentazione" (allegory of temptation).[167] And in 1996, the art historian Sandro Bellesi argued in his discussion of the portrait that Anna Francesca was Giovan Carlo's "amante" (lover)—a description that has influenced the approach of subsequent scholars.[168] It is not hard to see why the painting has been interpreted as an expression of eroticism. The dark intimacy of the setting, the velvet throw upon which the woman rests her arms as she leans forward, and her filmy, lace-trimmed gown all suggest the boudoir rather than the stage. Her ruby lips are echoed and amplified by the ribbon that holds back her loosely gathered curls, and her gown has slipped down to expose the creamy pale skin of her shoulders. As Amy Brosius has pointed out, these details, along with the portrait's relatively small size (75 x 60 cm), suggest that it was probably meant to be hung in Giovan Carlo's private chambers, rather than displayed in one of the more public rooms of his residence.[169]

While the painting is undeniably sensual, it also conveys—at least to my eye—an understated elegance and a certain sense of respect for the sitter. The woman represented in Dandini's portrait is clearly not a mere sex object, despite the desire she likely aroused in her

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[167] Piero Bigongiari, *Il caso et il caos: Il Seicento fiorentino tra Galileo e il 'recitar cantando'* (Florence: Sansoni, 1982), 27.

[168] Sandro Bellesi, *Cesare Dandini*, 103.

[169] Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': The Function of Portraits of Mid-Seventeenth-Century *Virtuose* in Rome," 27.

views. If Anna Francesca's filmy gown exposes her shoulders, it modestly covers her breasts and is draped so as not to reveal even the contours of her body beneath the fabric; her mouth, though accented with rouge, is firmly closed. Her gaze is steady and intelligent—perhaps slightly unapproachable—rather than seductive. The gesture she makes with her right index finger is ambiguous (art historical scholarship seems to avoid even mentioning it): is she upbraiding the viewer, enticing him, or beating time? Is it meant to echo the gesture of a classical orator, to call attention to her powers of speech and song?

In thinking about how Dandini represented Anna Francesca, it is interesting to note the ways in which his portrait differs markedly from a painting of another seventeenth-century woman singer attributed to Guido Cagnacci and now in the Accademia di San Luca in Rome.[170] The unidentified singer in Cagnacci's painting is represented with her lips parted in song and one breast bared. She sings from a sheet of vocal music in her left hand, while holding another, rolled-up sheet in her right hand, her index finger pointing straight up as she appears to beat time. In short, while Cagnacci's singer appears to come from the less rarified world of more public, popular performance, Dandini's portrait of Anna Francesca—her almost solemn expression, her closed mouth, and her delicately raised index finger—projects refined sensuality, as would have been appropriate for singer in the service of a Medici prince.

[170] The painting was previously attributed to Gerrit van Honthorst, a Dutch painter working in Rome during the seventeenth century and known as Gherardo delle Notti for his talent in painting artificially lit scenes. The Accademia di San Luca later attributed the painting to Guido Cagnacci. See https://www.accademiasanluca.eu/it/collezioni_online/pittura/archive/cat_id/1788/id/2163/donna-che-canta

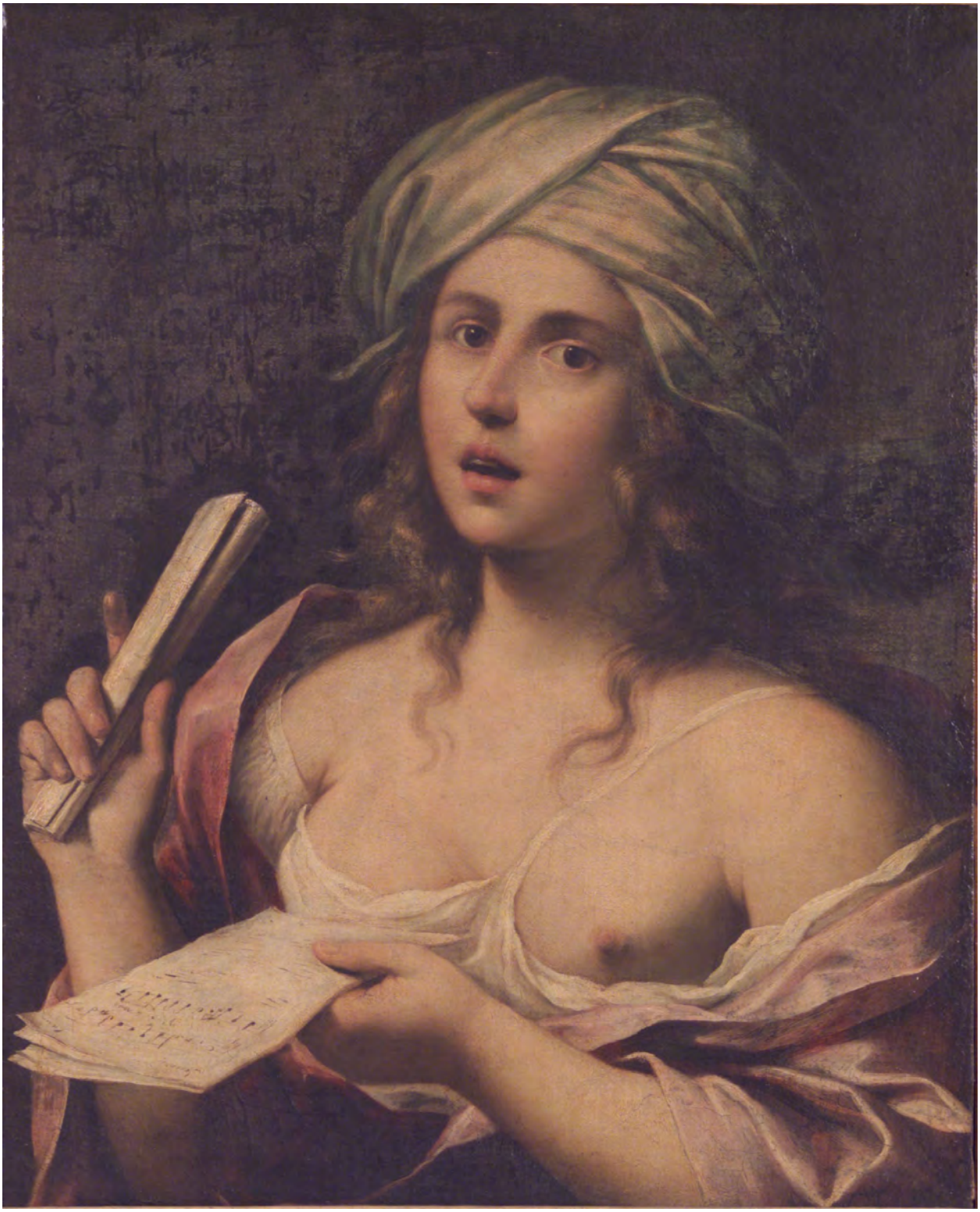

Fig. 4: Guido Cagnacci (1601-1663), *Donna che canta*, 17th c., Rome, Accademia di San Luca.

After the Dandini painting, the first documentary evidence for Anna Francesca's presence in Medici circles is found in a letter dated 1643 from Francesco Maria Guicciardini to Mattias de' Medici, who is on the battlefield (presumably fighting in one of the conflicts related to the War of Castro).[171] In the letter, Guicciardini reports on his negotiations with various artists and singers, assuring Mattias that "si dice che venga all'Armata la Signora Checca" (it is said that Signora Checca may come to the Armata)—an assertion that suggests Anna Francesca was already known to Mattias and his circle. By the next year, Anna Francesca must have been staying in Florence at least temporarily, since an entry in the Medici account books records that one of her servants was given 1 *scudo* in exchange for "pere mature" (mature pears).[172] It was not until after Anna Francesca had been invited to Paris by Jules Mazarin that she appeared in the Medici account books as receiving a monthly stipend: from August to November 1650, she must have been in residence in Florence, where she received 5.5 ducats per month—more than the monthly stipend of 5 ducats paid to Giovan Carlo's secretary Desiderio Montemagni.[173]

Like her sister Margherita, Anna Francesca Costa spent the majority of her career circulating between the urban centers and courts of Italy (Naples, Rome, Florence, Milan,

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[171] Francesco Maria Guicciardini to Mattias de' Medici, Florence, 27 September 1643. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5430, fol. 426v. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 95.

[172] "A dì 13 dato a uno della Checca Costa che donò pere mature scudi 1." Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Depositeria generale, parte antica,1604, fol. 8v. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 212n5.

[173] The payments to Anna Francesca Costa (in the account books she appears variously as "Checca Costa," "Cecca Costa," and "Francesca Costa") are in Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Depositeria generale, parte antica, 1604, fols. 113r, 115r, 116v, and 118v. Teresa Megale cited but did not transcribe nor record the amount of these payments in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 223n43.

Bologna) and France (Paris, and perhaps Fontainebleau).[174] In that sense, both sisters were itinerant performers, of the sort often referred to as 'comiche' (comic actresses, many of whom were known for their singing abilities).[175] The instability of these figures, their constant motion from place to place, contributed to their reputation for promiscuity and immorality. But neither Costa sister fits neatly into the category of itinerant performer. They are both, I would argue, hybrid figures: part itinerant performer, part court chamber singer, and part opera singer. On the one hand, they both continued to move from court to court in search of patronage throughout their lives. And on the other, both had brief periods of stability during which they were supported financially by aristocratic patrons. Yet it is important to note that neither singer ever attained the status of women such as the singer and artist Arcangela Paladini or the singer-composer Francesca Caccini—both of whom were raised at the Medici court, married off to court-approved husbands, protected by powerful Medici women, and given the official title (and stipend) of court *musica*.[176] In contrast, Anna Francesca and Margherita remained at the margins of the court—they were outsiders whose virtue had already been the subject of speculation by the time they arrived in Florence.

[174] For evidence documenting Anna Francesca's movements, see Teresa Megale, "Altre novità su Anna Francesca Costa e sull'allestimento dell'*Ergirodo*," *Medievo e Rinascimento* 7, no. 4 (1993).

[175] On the reception of early modern Italian actresses, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three, see Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Maggie Günsberg, *Gender and the Italian Stage: From the Renaissance to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). On singing actresses, see Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[176] The careers and reception of Paladini and Caccini will be discussed in Chapter Two.

The Casting Couch: Women singers and sexuality at the Medici court

Financial records, correspondence, *avvisi*, and other court-related archival sources offer relatively plentiful information regarding singers constructed as chaste—Francesca Caccini, Vittoria Archilei, and Adriana Basile, for example. In contrast, details regarding the presence of the Costa sisters are few and far between, especially during the 1630s and early 1640s, before their performances in France increased their visibility and conferred them more professional legitimacy. Still, throughout their careers, both women were often sexualized by their observers, who characterized them as enticing seductresses or more bluntly as courtesans or whores. These sexualizing responses to the Costas have often been interpreted by modern scholars as confirmation that they and other marginalized women singers were in fact courtesans by trade. And yet, I would argue, the role of sex and sexuality in the careers of seventeenth-century women singers was far more complex and nuanced than it may seem at first glance. The evidence I have gathered suggests that the Costas (and other women of similar status) were not courtesans who sang. Instead, they were singers who were expected to offer to their patrons and their audiences a performative sexual availability (that may or may not have materialized, in some cases, into physical sex). At the risk of making an anachronistic analogy, the sexual politics at court appear to have included a phenomenon much like that of the storied casting couch: where aspiring Broadway or Hollywood actresses were expected to trade sexual favors for the roles they sought.[177]

[177] For an insightful history and analysis of the casting couch phenomenon, see Ben Zimmer, "'Casting Couch': The Origins of a Pernicious Hollywood Cliché," *The Atlantic*, October 16, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/10/casting-couch-the-origins-of-a-pernicious-hollywood-cliche/543000/.

A series of letters by Medici agents sent to Rome in the 1640s to recruit women singers—referred to as 'mercanzia' (merchandise) in one letter—offers an intriguing portrait of the ideal candidate for the job.[178] In 1644, Alessandro del Nero described the social-moral status of two potential recruits, invoking the two poles of chastity and promiscuity: "una è zitella, ma non zitella zitella, e l'altra puttana, ma non puttana puttana" (one is a maiden, but not a maidenly maiden, and the other is a whore, but not a whorish whore).[179] The ideal woman singer, then, was neither too virginal nor too whorish—respectable enough to serve a Medici prince, but not so unapproachable that it would be in poor taste to fantasize about her sexual potential. This quality is outlined in more detail in a later letter describing the 'zitella' singer, whose name, we learn later is 'Cice' (Felice).[180] According to Alessandro del Nero, Cice and her mother 'hanno del civile e non delle puttane' (have civil qualities rather than whorish [qualities]), and "the girl is

[178] "Ho veduto la mercanzia propostami" (I have seen the merchandise on offer). Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, Rome, 29 October 1944. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5434, fol. 243r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 122. Alessandro del Nero was a Florentine noble; his son Carlo Ventura del Nero would later become involved with Anna Francesca Costa. Several of the letters I discuss below have been previously analyzed by Maddalena Bonechi, whose conclusions differ in some respects from mine. See Maddalena Bonechi, "La figura della cantante alla corte medicea nella prima metà del Seicento," in *Con dolce forza: Donne nell'universo musicale del Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Laura Donati (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2018).

[179] Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, Rome, 22 October 1644. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5434, fol. 212r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 122.

[180] Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato has suggested that the Cice mentioned here may be a singer named Cice dell'Orso. A portrait of "Cice dell'Orso che suona l'instrumento" is recorded in the 1659 inventory of the Villa di Lappeggi, which at the time was the country home of Mattias de' Medici. See Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato, "Le 'musiche' delle granduchesse e i loro ritratti," in *Con dolce forza: Donne nell'universo musicale del Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Laura Donati (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2018), 57. I have not been able to find further information on this singer.

not known to have done anything wrong, except with a *Cavaliere* who kept her for a year, got her pregnant, and then left."[181] What's more, "the mother has done a few little things, but the girl has always been thought to be a maiden, and she was visited only for the purpose of hearing her sing."[182] Cice, pregnant and abandoned, can no longer be constructed as a chaste virgin. But as a girl who has been raised by her mother to be a proper 'zitella', she is not so sexually wayward as to threaten the reputation of her Medici patrons. She is neither a Madonna, nor a whore, and it is this in-between status that makes her a desirable candidate for a position at the Medici court. Months later, after giving birth to her baby (no mention is made of the child's fate), Cice was on her way to sing for Mattias at his court in Siena. Camillo del Nero (Alessandro's son) emphasized both Cice's potential as a sex object and her mother's gentility in his report to the prince: "She certainly sings in a manner that Your Highness will relish, and she is also the type you can take to bed with you and leave the light on, she has a lovely way about her, and her mother is very well-mannered."[183]

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[181] "Non si sa che la figlia abbia fatto male se non con uno Cavaliero che l'ha tenuta un anno, e s'è impregnata, e s'è partito." Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, from Rome, 22 October 1644. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5434, fol. 248r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 125.

[182] "La madre ha fatto qualcosetta ma la giovane è stata tenuta sempre per zittella, e s'andava solo per sentirla cantare." Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, from Rome, 19 November 1644. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5433, fol. 248r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 125.

[183] "Ier mattina partì Cice, la quale certo canta in maniera che gusterà a Vostra Altezza, et anco è di quelle che si può dormire seco col lume, et ha un bel modo di trattare, e sua madre poi è garbatissima." Camillo del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, from Rome, 11 June 1645. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5431, fol. 568r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 154.

In addition to these qualities of appearance and character, Alessandro del Nero also emphasizes Cice's musical and expressive talent. She sings well and her voice is very beautiful; although she can accompany herself, she is not yet confident in doing so.[184] But she has already made a name for herself 'in scena' (on stage) as an extraordinarily expressive singing actress. Del Nero enthuses: "Ha fatto stupire Roma...dicono di non aversi udito meglio" (She has astonished the city of Rome...they say they have not heard better).[185] Another essential quality that she possesses is the art of witty conversation: "She is graceful, witty, and she can banter with anyone you put in front of her—but within reason, and politely, and she is quick with repartee."[186] A few months later, Girolamo Maffei reports that Cice has agreed to travel to Siena (while seven months pregnant); every night, she has promised to sing for one hour and to participate in "baie" (witty jokes and conversation) for five hours.[187]

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[184] "Canta di buona maniera, et ha una voce bellissima...s'acompagna un poco ma non è sicura, a volerne aver gusto è necessario uno l'accompagni." Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, Rome, 19 November 1644. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5433, fol. 248r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 125.

[185] Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, Rome, 19 November 1644. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5433, fol. 248r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 125.

[186] "È graziosa, spiritosa e delle baie ne faria con chi le trovò, però con termine e con garbo, e prontissima nelle risposte, canta di buona maniera, et ha una voce bellissima." Alessandro del Nero to Mattias de' Medici, Rome, 19 November 1644. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5433, fol. 248r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 125.

[187] Girolamo Maffei to Mattias de' Medici, from Rome, 5 February 1644 [1645], Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5431, fol. 190r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 135.

Del Nero's account of Cice's talents reveals that the Medici court privileged singers who were not only young and beautiful, but also talented performers and engaging conversationalists. What's more, Cice's story can help us understand the ways in which women like the Costa sisters, who performed in private and on the public stage, were sexualized and constructed as sexually available by their employer/patrons. It is this construction of sexual availability—a fantasy created by and for patrons—that has become entwined with our understanding today of the lives and careers of seventeenth-century singers like the Costas. To put it bluntly, it seems important to point out that the raunchy commentary by Medici agents on Cice's sex appeal should not be read as proof that Cice herself was promiscuous: instead, such commentary should remind us of the lurid locker-room banter of prominent politicians who don't realize (or don't care) that others are listening. If we continue to follow in the footsteps of contemporary observers, who labeled women singers as whores—or as courtesans, when they wished to shore up their own courtly identities—by approaching women like the Costas as "courtesan singers" we risk not only diminishing their achievements, but also misunderstanding or even erasing their lived lives and careers as professional musicians.

Paris, 1644-1647: Anna Francesca and the first Italian operas in France

Cardinal Jules Mazarin was an important patron and supporter of both Costa sisters, but it was Anna Francesca who maintained strong connections with Mazarin and his family. Those connections may have begun in Rome, when the Costas and Mazarin were moving in Barberini circles, but they were developed and nurtured in Paris. In fact, as we shall see, Anna Francesca Costa was a key player in Mazarin's campaign to bring Italian opera to the French court. The

celebrated Roman *virtuosa* Leonora Baroni was the first Italian singer that Mazarin invited to sing in Paris at the court of Anna of Austria. After protracted negotiations, she arrived in April 1644, with her husband Giulio Castellani —Cardinal Francesco Barberini's secretary—in tow.[188] Married to a high-ranking papal secretary, Leonora had for years been constructed as a sort of heavenly, chaste siren. This image was promoted by cardinals and noblemen, who published their poems in praise of her virtues in a book entitled *Applausi poetici alle glorie della Signora Leonora Baroni* (Poetic applause for the glories of the Signora Leonora Baroni) in 1641.[189] At the French court, Leonora quickly gained the favor of the queen regent, Anne of Austria, who would send her back to Rome with a purse full of money and extravagant gifts of jewelry in April of 1645. Before Leonora's departure on 28 February 1645 an Italian opera and a ballet "danced by noblemen of the court" was performed in the small theater of the Palais Royal before the seven-year-old Louis XIV, the queen regent, and other members of the royal family.[190] Leonora had eschewed stage performances of any kind throughout her career, preferring instead to maintain her image of decorum and modesty. If she did sing in the February 28 performance, her appearance on stage was not made public.

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[188] For Leonora's biography, see Argia Bertini and Susan Parisi, "Baroni family," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001). https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.44260.

[189] Francesco Ronconi, ed., *Applausi poetici alle glorie della signora Leonora Baroni* (Bracciano: n.p., 1639). A second edition was published in 1641.

[190] The only public report on the opera, which focuses more on court protocol than on the performance—and does not name any of the singers—appeared in the *Gazette de France* on 4 March 1645. For a transcription and translation, see Neal Zaslaw, "The First Opera in Paris: A Study in the Politics of Art," in *Jean Baptiste Lully and the Music of the French Baroque: Essays in Honor of James Anthony*, ed. John Hadju Heyer (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 15-16.

The title of the opera—probably the first Italian opera ever performed in Paris—is still a matter of debate among specialists.[191] But thanks to a letter from the castrato Atto Melani, what is certain is that he and Anna Francesca Costa were on the stage that evening. Anna Francesca, along with Atto and his brother Jacopo, had arrived in Paris in early November of 1644, in plenty of time rehearse and prepare for performance of the opera on 28 February 1645.[192] As Atto reported to Mattias de' Medici, the opera was so successful that the queen ordered a second performance: "We finally performed the opera, which is very beautiful, and her Majesty wishes to hear it again on Sunday. All of us played our parts well, and I—to honor Your Highness—tried not to be the least of them, which, by the grace of God, I managed better than I had hoped. Signora Checca did very well, as well as her knowledge allowed."[193] Atto's snide comment regarding Anna Francesca's capabilities is suggestive, especially given her resounding success at the French court—both singers, after all, were in competition for Mattias's support and attention.

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[191] Neal Zaslaw argued for Pier Maria Capponi's suggestion that the opera was Mazzaroli's *Il giuditio della Ragione tra Beltà e l'Affetto* in Neal Zaslaw, "The First Opera in Paris: A Study in the Politics of Art." Margaret Murata disagrees, however, and points out that the work in question may not have been an "opera" in Margaret Murata, "Why the First Opera Given in Paris Wasn't Roman," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7, no. 2 (July 1995): 103n38.

[192] Henri Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*, 60; Neal Zaslaw, "The First Opera in Paris: A Study in the Politics of Art," 15; Roger Freitas, "*Un Atto d'ingegno*: A Castrato in the Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1998), 56.

[193] "Alla fine si è recitata l'opera et è stata bellissima, e domenica Sua Maestà la vuole sentire di nuovo. Ognuno ha fatto bene la sua parte, et io, per fare onore a Vostra Altezza, ho cercato di non esser l'ultimo che, ringraziato Dio, m'è riescito [sic] più che non desideravo. La Signora Checha ha fatto benissimo per tanto quanto comporto il suo sapere." Atto Melani to Mattias de' Medici, Paris, 10 March 1645. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5245, fol. 221r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 148.

Mazarin invited Anna Francesca back to Paris in the fall of 1645, where she sang in his production of *La finta pazza*, performed on December 12 in the great hall of the Palais du Petit Bourbon and repeated several times.[194] The opera had premiered in Venice in 1641, with music by Francesco Sacrati and a libretto by Giulio Strozzi. Backed by members of the Accademia degli Incogniti and featuring the Roman soprano Anna Renzi in the lead role of Deidamia, *La finta pazza* was (to use Ellen Rosand's words) "the first, and possibly the greatest operatic 'hit' of the century).[195] The production created for Paris was probably based on a trimmed down "touring version" created by the choreographer Giovanni Balbi that had first been performed in Florence earlier that year.[196] It was presented as a comedy with music, combining spoken dialogue with recitatives and arias; the choruses that had followed each act in Venice were replaced by new ballets created by Balbi, to cater to French taste. The spectacular sets and stage machines were created by the celebrated Giacomo Torelli, invited at the queen's express request.

It is quite possible, given her presence at court, that Anna Francesca Costa sang the leading role of Deidamia—the "finta pazza" (feigned madwoman) of the title, a role that had been created to great acclaim by Anna Renzi. Deidamia is in love with Achilles, who has been

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[194] On Anna Francesca's movements in 1645, see Henri Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*, 82.

[195] Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 190.

[196] For the libretto for the Paris production, see Giulio Strozzi, *Feste theatrali per la Finta pazza: Drama del sig.r Giulio Strozzi, rappresentate nel Piccolo Borbone in Parigi quest anno 1645 et da Giacomo Torelli di Fano inventore dedicate ad Anna d'Austria Regina di Francia regnante* (Paris: s.n., 1645). For a discussion of the many reworkings of the opera, see Nicola Michelassi, "*La finta pazza* di Giulio Strozzi: un dramma Incognito in giro per l'Europa (1641-1652)," in *Gli Incogniti e l'Europa*, ed. Davide Conrieri (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2011), 145-208.

disguised as a girl and hidden among the court ladies of the king Lycomedes by his mother Thetis in hopes of saving him from the Trojan War. Intriguingly, Achilles is not the only character to engage in gender-bending: at one point, Deidamia kidnaps one of the court eunuchs to interrogate him regarding Achilles' plans—although she never cross-dresses, her character's forcefulness and initiative make a striking contrast to the feminized Achilles. When Achilles decides to join the warriors preparing to sack Troy, Deidamia pretends to be mad with grief to keep him from leaving her. Her feigned madness eventually works, touching Achilles, who asks for her hand in marriage, and her father, who gladly consents. As the warriors set off towards Troy, Deidamia triumphantly frees herself from the chains that bound her in her feigned madness, offering them to the goddess Cynthia.

Torelli and Balbi would later publish a commemorative edition of the libretto complete with commentary describing their sets and choreography.[197] In the libretto, the names of only three performers appear, all female singers: Margherita Bartollotti, who performed the role of Aurora "con grazioso canto" (with graceful song); Lodovica Gabrielli Locatelli, whose stage name was "Lucilla" and who played Flora "con la sua vivacità, fè conoscere ch'ella era una vera luce dell'armonia" (with her vivacity, she made it known that she was a true light of harmony); and Giulia Gabrieli, called "Diana," who sang the role of Thetis and "sì al vivo espresse gl'affetti di passione e d'ira" (brought to life the emotions of passion and rage).[198] It was not yet

[197] Giulio Strozzi, *Feste theatrali per la Finta pazza: Drama del sig.r Giulio Strozzi, rappresentate nel Piccolo Borbone in Parigi quest anno 1645 et da Giacomo Torelli di Fano inventore dedicate ad Anna d'Austria Regina di Francia regnante*.

[198] Giulio Strozzi, *Feste theatrali per la Finta pazza: Drama del sig.r Giulio Strozzi, rappresentate nel Piccolo Borbone in Parigi quest anno 1645 et da Giacomo Torelli di Fano inventore dedicate ad Anna d'Austria Regina di Francia regnante*, 4 and 10.

customary for singers' names to appear in the printed librettos that were distributed to the audience at performances; this would become common practice beginning only in the 1680s.[199] Still, why those three women in particular were the only performers named in the *Feste theatrali* is uncertain. But it is telling that the name of the woman who sang the role of Deidamia is not given—perhaps because, if the singer was Anna Francesca, she would have been well-known to the French court. Or perhaps this omission was a sign of respect, and to name Anna Francesca in the publication would have been considered unseemly or damaging, either for her own reputation or for that of the queen regent.

In January 1646, less than a month after the performances of *La finta pazza* had been staged, another opera was in the works—this time, with Anna Francesca at the helm. Giovan Battista Barducci reported to Giovan Carlo de' Medici that "the Signora Anna Francesca Costa is preparing, along with her company of *virtuosi*, to perform an opera next week at the Palais Royal in the presence of the queen...and if I am not mistaken, the aforementioned Costa will not have great difficulty in keeping her promise to return [to Florence] in March, since those who have heard her sing offer highest praise for her talent."[200] The opera in question, as Barducci would confirm a few weeks later, was *Egisto*—probably a version of Faustini and Cavalli's opera,

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[199] See John Rosselli, "From Princely Service to the Open Market: Singers of Italian Opera and Their Patrons, 1600-1850," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 1 (1989): 13.

[200] "Posso ben dirle che la Signora Anna Francesca Costa si va preparando con la sua compagnia di virtuosi per recitare un'opera della prossima settimana nel Palazzo Reale, alla presenza della Regina...Se io non m'inganno la detta Costa non averà gran difficultà di tener la sua promessa di tornarsene costà a marzo, ancorché chi l'ha sentita cantare lodi in estremo la sua virtù." Giovan Battista Barducci to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, 19 January 1646, Paris. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5367, fols. 83r-84r.

which had premiered in Venice in 1641 to great acclaim.[201]As Barducci reported to the Grand Duke, the performances were attended by several important members of the court and guests of the queen, including Cardinal Antonio Barberini, who had recently fled from Rome in the wake of the election of the Pamphilj pope to take refuge at the French court.[202] Barducci assured Giovan Carlo that the opera had been a smashing success and that "all of the performers transcended the expectations of the French with the exquisiteness of the music and with their way of singing. And Checca Costa, above all others, was celebrated by Their Majesties and

[201] Giovan Battista Barducci to Ferdinando II de' Medici, from Paris, 16 February 1646. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4651, fols. 487r-v. Barducci names the opera as "un'opera intitolata *Egisto*" but does not specify the composer. Barbara Nestola has suggested that the work in question was not Cavalli's *Egisto* but instead Marazzoli's *L'Egisto ovvero Chi soffre speri.* Nicola Michelassi, however, has published evidence that Curzio Manara and many of the performers in Paris took Cavalli's *Egisto* to Florence in May 1646 and would perform it in many other cities in the years that followed, arguing that this proves the Paris *Egisto* was Cavalli's. See Barbara Nestola, "L'*Egisto* fantasma di Cavalli: Nuova luce sulla rappresentazione parigina dell'*Egisto ovvero Chi soffre speri* di Mazzocchi e Marazzoli (1646)," *Recercare* 19, no. 1/2 (2007); Nicola Michelassi, "*La finta pazza* di Giulio Strozzi: un dramma Incognito in giro per l'Europa (1641-1652)," 191-2.

[202] "Nella medesima settimana la nuova compagnia di musici venuta ultimamente d'Italia rappresentò in musica l'opera intitolata Egisto alla presenza delle regine di Francia, et d'Inghilterra, del sig:r duca d'Orleans, del principe di Condé, et del principe Tommaso, et de' cardinali Antonio, e Mazzarini" (During the same week, the new company of musicians newly arrived from Italy performed with music the opera entitled *Egisto* in the presence of the queens of France and England, the Duke d'Orléans, the Prince of Condé and Prince Tommaso, and the cardinals Antonio [Barberini] and Mazarin). Giovan Battista Barducci to Ferdinando II de' Medici, 16 February 1646, Paris. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4651, fols. 487r-v. Cited in Barbara Nestola, "L'*Egisto* fantasma di Cavalli: Nuova luce sulla rappresentazione parigina dell'*Egisto ovvero Chi soffre speri* di Mazzocchi e Marazzoli (1646)," 125-6.

applauded by all the other members of the audience."[203] What Barducci's reports make clear is not only Anna Francesca's success in the eyes of the French court, but also the fact that she was perceived as the organizer of the 1646 opera—early evidence for the impresarial talent she would bring to fruition in her production of *Ergirodo* in Bologna in 1653. Anna Francesca returned to Florence with a recommendation letter from Mazarin, who assured Giovan Carlo de' Medici that "together with Her Majesty the Queen and the entire court, I have been left entirely satisfied by the virtues of the aforementioned Signora [Anna Francesca]."[204]

In 1647, both Costa sisters sang in the first Italian opera written for the French court: *Orfeo*, with music by Luigi Rossi and libretto by Francesco Buti.[205] Both of these men were members of Cardinal Antonio Barberini's household, as was the castrato Marc'Antonio Pasqualini. By the time the opera was performed, although Antonio Barberini was in Provence (he would return in time for the May performances), the rest of the Barberini family was in

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[203] "Avendo tutti gl'attori trapassato con l'esquisitezza della musica e col loro modo di recitare l'opinione che avevano i francesi di essi; e la Checca Costa tra tutti gli altri fu celebrata dalle Loro Maestà e applaudita da tutti gli altri assistenti." Giovan Battista Barducci to Ferdinando II de' Medici, 16 February 1646, Paris. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4651, fols. 487r-v. Cited in Barbara Nestola, "L'*Egisto* fantasma di Cavalli: Nuova luce sulla rappresentazione parigina dell'*Egisto ovvero Chi soffre speri* di Mazzocchi e Marazzoli (1646)," 125-6.

[204] "Insieme come la Maestà della Regina e tutta la corte, sono restato con piena sodisfazione delle virtù di detta signora." Jules Mazarin to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Paris, 10 March 1646. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5312, fol. 185r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 128.

[205] For an elegant and useful overview of the context and plot of the opera, see Margaret Murata, "Orfeo(ii) [L'Orfeo] ('Orpheus')," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002). https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O005885.

residence at the French court: Francesco, Taddeo, and Taddeo's wife, Anna Colonna.[206] With the conflict of the War of Castro behind them, the Barberini and Medici families put their differences aside and each contributed singers to Mazarin's production, in homage to Anne of Austria. No expense was spared to make the production as impressive as possible. To accommodate the sumptuous staging and sets designed by Giacomo Torelli, Mazarin excavated the foundations and enlarged the side walls of the theater in the Palais Royal.[207] For the Costa sisters, participation in such a high-profile event was a chance to strengthen relationships with these and other powerful patrons, who came to the French court to see and hear them on the stage of the Palais Royal.

Already in September 1646, Mazarin's agents began negotiations to recruit both sisters as part of a group of singers the queen wished to have on hand in Paris to entertain her court with chamber and theater music.[208] Although Anna Francesca's return to Paris appears to have been a given—by this time she had already proved her talents to the queen—there was some initial doubt regarding whether Margherita would make the trip. During the negotiations, Elpidio

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[206] For a detailed chronology of the Barberini family's flight from Rome, arrival in Paris, and the genesis of the opera, see Frederick Hammond, "Orpheus in a New Key: The Barberini Flight to France and the Rossi-Buti *L'Orfeo*," in *The Ruined Bridge: Studies in Barberini Patronage of Music and Spectacle 1631-1679* (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2010).

[207] John S. Powell, *Music and Theatre in France, 1600-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22-23.

[208] "Havendo la Maestà della Regina risoluto di voler havere in Parigi quest'inverno una buona mano de musici tanto per la camera quanto per il theatro, si scrive alla Signora Francesca Costa et alla Signora Margherita sua sorella, che si ritrova in Venetia, di venire in Francia con altri musici." Giovanni Bentivoglio to Cornelio Bentivoglio, 29 September 1646. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2000), 5.

Benedetti—whom we met earlier as the organizer of Mazarin's funeral ceremonies in Rome—suggested rather rudely that if Margherita did not agree to come, he could replace her with Signora Felice, "con tanto avantaggio quanto grande è la differenza dall'età di 17 a quella di 47" (with an advantage as great as the difference between the ages of 17 and 47).[209] Benedetti added that he believed that Felice, "who has just returned from the service of the prince Matthias, would be much relished in France, having made great progress in music, a very pleasing appearance, and a singular spirit for the stage."[210] Signora Felice, then, must be the young singer called "Cice" discussed above and recruited in Rome for Matthias de' Medici a few years earlier by Alessandro del Nero, who commented on her expressive powers on the stage. Despite Benedetti's support, Felice does not seem to have been among the Italian singers at the French court for the 1647 season.[211]

In the end, Margherita accepted the engagement, and both Costa sisters arrived in Paris with the castratos Atto Melani and Stefano Costa in late December 1646.[212] In early January,

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[209] Elpidio Benedetti to Cornelio Bentivoglio, 29 October 1646, Rome. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, 8-9.

[210] "Io credo che la Signora Felice, ch'è ultimamente ritornata del servitio del sig.r prencipe Matthias, potesse dar gran gusto in Francia, havendo fatto gran progresso nella musica, essendo d'un apsetto molto grato, et havendo un spirito molto singolare per la scena." Elpidio Benedetto to Cornelio Bentivoglio, 20 October 1646, Rome. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, 8.

[211] Felice's name does not appear in the manuscript cast list for the opera, transcribed and published in Frederick Hammond, "Orpheus in a New Key: The Barberini Flight to France and the Rossi-Buti *L'Orfeo*," 182.

[212] Stefano Costa was in the service of the Bentivoglio family. There is no evidence thus far that he was related to Anna Francesca and Margherita.

Stefano Costa wrote to his patron Cornelio Bentivoglio in Ferrara to report that preparations for the "opera grossa quale le parole sono del sig.r Buti" (big opera with the words by Signor Buti, i.e. *Orfeo*) were running behind and that the company would likely perform "Nerone" as a sort of interim entertainment, but in the small theater and without stage machines.[213] "Nerone" was shorthand for Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea,* which had premiered in Venice in 1643. As Ellen Rosand has pointed out, *Poppea* was revived in Venice in 1646, where Margherita Costa and Stefano Costa could both have conceivably sung in it.[214] If—as Rosand suggests—Monteverdi's opera was performed at the French court in 1647, we can assume that all three singers named Costa—Anna Francesca, Margherita, and Stefano—were part of the cast. Anna Francesca, in particular, was enjoying continued success at court, as evidenced by a report from the bishop Zongo Ondedei to Cornelio Bentivoglio that "Signora Checca is making a reputation for herself and she is praised to the stars by the Chevalier de Jars."[215] Already in 1644, the Chevalier had been called upon by Giovan Carlo de' Medici to provide Anna Francesca with whatever she required upon her arrival in France, "making sure that she has, to the extent

[213] "In torno alla recita siamo addietro assai et non è con posto altro che il primo atto delle parole et anco della musica, et si crede che faremo il Nerone sicuro in anzi però nel piciolo teatro senza machine, solo con le abbiti belli, et dopo poi faremo l'opera grossa quale le parole sono del sig.r Buti." Stefano Costa to Cornelio Bentivoglio, 3 January 1647, Paris. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, 13.

[214] Ellen Rosand, *Monteverdi's Last Operas: A Venetian Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 126.

[215] "La sig.ra Checca si fa honore, et è portata alle stelle dal cavalier de Jars." Zongo Ondedei to Cornelio Bentivoglio, 8 February 1647, Paris. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, 14.

possible, the satisfaction she is owed—which will be particularly pleasing to His Highness [Giovan Carlo]."[216]

After many delays, *L'Orfeo* was finally presented to the court on March 2, 3, and 5 and repeated after some revisions on April 29 and May 6 and 8.[217]Anna Francesca appeared in the leading female role of Eurydice to Atto Melani's Orpheus, while Marc'Antonio Pasqualini (a castrato in the service of Antonio Barberini) played Orpheus's rival, the shepherd Aristaeus. Margherita sang the role of Juno, characterized in her traditional guise as the archenemy of Venus. According to a plethora of contemporary responses (*avvisi*, letters, newspapers), the opera was the talk of Paris. Shortly after its premiere, a detailed and enthusiastic review appeared in the *Gazette de France*, praising not only the staging, but the singers, who sang "avec un perpetuel ravissement des auditeurs" (to the continual ravishment of the listeners)."[218] And the

[216] "Il Serenissimo Signore Principe Giovan Carlo mio signore mi ha comandato di scrivere a Vostra Signoria che aiuti il negozio contenuto nell'inclusa di Anna Francesca Costa, passandone gli opportuni offizi con il Signor Cavalier de Jars e procurando che ella abbia, per quanto si potrà, la dovuta soddisfazione che sarà di particolare gusto di Sua Altezza." Minute of Giovan Carlo de' Medici to Fabrizio Piermattei, from Florence, 15 March 1643[1644]. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, 5362. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 113.

[217] For the dates of the performances, see Frederick Hammond, "Orpheus in a New Key: The Barberini Flight to France and the Rossi-Buti *L'Orfeo*," 169. For evidence that the opera was revised after the initial performances in March (based on correspondence between the librettist Buti and his patron Antonio Barberini), see Michael Klaper, "Vom Ballett zur pièce à machines: Entstehung, Aufführung und Rezeption der Oper *L'Orfeo* (1647)," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 13, no. 1 (2007). https://sscm-jscm.org/v13/no1/klaper.html.

[218] *Gazette de France*, 27 (1647), 202.

queen herself enjoyed the music so much that she asked for a copy of the score so she could "have the four singers who will remain [at court] sing the *ariette* that are in it."[219]

As Eurydice, Anna Francesca was at the center of the love triangle in Buti's plot, which emphasized the competition between Orpheus and Aristaeus for her affections (as told originally by Virgil). Rossi, who must have written the music with Anna Francesca in mind since she created the role, featured her voice in three love duets with Atto Melani as Orfeo, various other ensembles, and at least four short but exquisitely tuneful solo arias. Because the choreographer (possibly Giovanni Battista Balbi) chose to feature Anna Francesca in a dance number, we can add dancing to her considerable list of musical talents. The libretto recounts that after the scene changes to represent a garden, Anna Francesca's Eurydice enters the scene having planned to meet the dryads because she wished to dance. When she finds herself alone, she confesses: "il desio della danza me guidò pria del tempo in questo loco" (the desire to dance lead me to arrive early to this place).[220] A chorus of graces sings her to sleep while they wait for the dryads to arrive with the lovely and much-admired "Dormite, begli occhi, dormite"—a *sommeil* (sleep scene) that would inspire Lulli. When the dryads finally appear, it is Anna Francesca-Eurydice who gives the command: "Or sù, dunque, alla danza" (Now, come on, then, let's dance)! A seventeenth-century description of the performance suggests that Anna Francesca did indeed

[219] "Per far cantare a' quattro musici che qui resteranno delle ariette che sono in essa." Carlo Claudi to Annibale Bentivoglio, 10 May 1647, Paris. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, 18.

[220] "L'Orfeo, tragicomedia per musica," Act II, scene 9. This and all citations of the libretto are taken from the manuscript copy in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb.lat 3803.

dance along with the chorus, at least in some form: "The Dryads arrived and woke Eurydice up, dancing with castanets a ballet so pleasant that she joined in with her nymphs."[221]

One of the arias Anna Francesca sang, "Mio ben, teco il tormento," was copied and circulated widely in collections of arias and cantata manuscripts; it continues to be one of Rossi's best-known pieces today.[222] In Rossi's setting, Eurydice sings "Mio ben" (over a chromatic, descending bass line) after she has learned that the augurs predict that her wedding will bring bad fortune. Steadfast in her love for Orpheus, she is on her way to the temple to ask for the gods' mercy when she encounters an old woman (Venus in disguise) who advises the young bride-to-be that the only way to avoid disaster is to choose a different husband. As a contemporary manuscript description of the opera's plot relates, Eurydice is undeterred even by the old woman's warning and—as the manuscript scenario for the opera emphasizes—"to demonstrate the steadfastness of her love, she sings a very beautiful song in praise of Orpheus."[223] Eurydice's constancy and steadfast love for Orpheus is further expressed in a second aria: "Fugace è labile è la belta, ma sempre stabile mia fè sarà" (Beauty is fleeting and fickle, but my fidelity will always

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[221] "Les Dryades arrivées l'éveillerent, & danserant avec des castagnetes un ballet qu'Euridice trouva si agreable qu'elle s'y mêla aves ses Nymphes." Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes* (Paris: Guignard, 1681), 202.

[222] The text for the aria is as follows: "Mio ben, teco il tormento/più dolce io troverei,/Che con altrui il contento,/Ogni dolcezza è sol dove tu sei./E per me, amor aduna/Nel girar de' tuoi sguardi ogni fortuna." In "L'Orfeo, tragicomedia per musica," Act II, scene 2.

[223] "Per autenticare la fermezza dell'amor suo canta una assai bella canzone d'encomij delle lodi d'Orfeo." Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, MS Barb.lat. 4059, fol. 133. Transcribed in Frederick Hammond, *The Ruined Bridge: Studies in Barberini Patronage of Music and Spectacle 1631-1679*, 185.

be constant).[224] According to the review of the production that appeared a few days later in the *Gazette de France*, it was precisely this steadfast love that made Eurydice such a compelling character. Moreover, it was the constancy of Orpheus and Eurydice, steadfast in their "chaste love" despite so many obstacles, that communicated the comedy's message: virtue always triumphs over vice.[225] In this reading—which, we should remember, may well have been suggested by the queen and Mazarin—Anna Francesca, in the guise of Eurydice, was the unlikely allegorical incarnation of the virtue of constancy.

Margherita had less to sing than her sister, but in her role as Juno, she had the important function of antagonist to Venus. In Buti's libretto, Venus promises to help Aristaeus win Eurydice's hand, and even commands the Graces to make Aristaeus more beautiful.[226] As Juno, Margherita —as part of a quartet with Apollo, Momo, and Amor—convinced Amor (i.e., Cupid) to work against his mother and support Orpheus instead. Juno's argument turns around the fact that Venus is an adulteress, having betrayed Vulcan with Mars, while she, on the other hand, will

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[224] "L'Orfeo, tragicomedia per musica," Act II, scene 2.

[225] "Mais ce qui rend cette piéce plus considérable, & l'a fait approuver des plus rudes censeurs de la comédie, est que la vertu l'emporte tousjours au dessus du vice, nonobstant les traverses qui s'y oposent: Orphée & Eurydice, qui en font les principaux personnages, n'ayans pas seulement esté constans en leurs chastes amours, malgré tous les efforts de Venus & de Bacchus, les plus puissans autheurs des debanches: mais l'Amour mesme ayant resisté à sa mere pour ne les vouloir pas induire a fausser la fidelite conjugale" (But what makes this play more worthy of consideration, and has made it approved by the harshest censors of comedy, is that virtue always prevails over vice, notwithstanding the obstacles in its way: Orpheus and Eurydice, the principal characters, have not only been constant in their chaste love, in spite of all the efforts of Venus & Bacchus, the most powerful authors of debacles: but Amore [i.e. Cupid] himself has defied his mother, not wanting to induce them distort their conjugal fidelity). *Gazette de France*, 27 (1647), 211.

[226] "L'Orfeo, tragicomedia per musica," Act I, scene 4.

protect and defend marital love: “Io rimango/ a far che i nuovi sposi/ godan hore serene,/ ch’à me, pronuba Dea, questo s’attiene” (I shall stay and make sure the newlyweds enjoy their time in serenity, because this is my responsibility as the goddess of matrimony).[227] In her most important solo aria, Margherita as Juno vows: “Io son Dea/ch’a Citherea,/no, no, no che mai non cederò” (I am a goddess that will never concede to Venus, no no no!).[228] Alongside her sister, who portrayed the steadfast chastity of Eurydice, Margherita represented the goddess of marriage as antagonist to the seductive and disruptive Venus—played by Caterina Martini, another singer in the service of the Medici court.[229]

Despite the enthusiasm of the queen regent and her supporters for *Orfeo*, as hostility toward the monarchy exploded into the Fronde of the Parlement in 1648, the lavish production and its cast of Italians became a target of public outrage and an avalanche of largely anonymous *Mazarinades,* pamphlets attacking the prime minister. Mazarin’s detractors criticized him for over-spending on entertainment for the rich and royal, but also for importing a motley crew of foreign, morally-suspect castrati and loose women. In 1649, an anonymous “religieux” (religious man) included an unnamed Roman singer among the list of “infamous females” associated with Mazarin:

> Who does not know at what cost [Mazarin] has had opera singers brought from Italy to France, among whom was an infamous female that he had debauched in Rome, and through the pimping of her, he insinuated himself into the good graces of Cardinal Antonio? All this during the war, when the people were forced to contribute to the

[227] “L’Orfeo, tragicomedia per musica,” Act II, scene 4.

[228] “L’Orfeo, tragicomedia per musica,” Act II, scene 8.

[229] Caterina Martini, also known as “Rossina” or “Rosina” (probably her stage name), is mentioned in two letters from Giovan Battista Barducci to Giovan Carlo de’ Medici, both written from Paris in May 1647. See Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 137-8.

> upkeep of the armies, and the blood of the poor was used to make Cardinal Mazarin laugh, to the satisfaction of his desires, and to provoke the wrath of God against us.[230]

It is possible that the unnamed infamous female opera singer Mazarin is accused of using to gain favor with Antonio Barberini was one of the Costa sisters. What is clear, however, is that that Mazarin's anonymous critic understood that the alignment between opera singers and promiscuity could be deployed as a weapon not only to undermine the singers themselves, but also to target the reputation of the powerful men who sponsored them. Mazarin, however, eventually emerged from the Fronde relatively unscathed in 1653: as a sign of his good humor, her had the *Mazarinades* he found the most amusing collected and performed at the Palais Royal.

If singing on stage had the potential to damage a woman's reputation, it also offered increased exposure and publicity, as well as the opportunity to perform before a wide network of powerful patrons. Anna Francesca Costa used her time on and off stage in Paris to her advantage, gaining not only applause and admiration, but also some concrete financial and social support. As Anna Francesca reported with evident satisfaction to Giovan Carlo de' Medici in 1648, she had so impressed Anne of Austria that the queen not only sent a letter of recommendation on the

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[230] "Qui ne sçait se que coustent à la France les Comediens chanteurs, qu'il a fait venir d'Italie, parmy lesquels estoit une infame qu'il avoit debauchée à Rome, & par l'entremise de laquelle, il s'estoit insinué dans les bonnes grace due Cardinal Antonio? Tout cela durante la guerre, dans le tempos qu'on mettoit le peuple à la presse pour contribuer à la subsistance des armées, & le sang des pauvres estoi employé a fair rire le Cardinal Mazarin, à la satisfaction de ses convoitises, & à provoquer l'ire de Dieu contre nous." *Lettre d'un religieux envoyee a mons. le prince de Conde, a St. Germain-en-Laye, contenant la verite de la vie et moeurs du card. Mazarin, avec exhortation au dit seigneur prince d'abandonner son parti* (Paris: Rolin de la Haye, 1649), 4-5. Translated in Todd P. Olson, *Poussin and France: Painting, Humanism, and the Politics of Style* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 123. I have slightly revised Olson's translation.

singer's behalf to the French ambassador in Rome, but also gifted her the sum of 300 *doppie*.[231] Margherita Costa, however, perhaps in part because she had a lower-profile role, does not seem to have attracted as much admiration from audiences at the French court: while, as we have seen, the Medici agents and others make frequent mention of the applause dedicated to Anna Francesca, the same men are silent regarding reactions to Margherita's performances. One reason for this may be that Giovan Carlo and Mattias de' Medici—both enthusiastic and engaged music patrons—seem to have favored and protected Anna Francesca over her sister. While Anna Francesca was a frequent subject in their correspondence (and wrote frequently to Giovan Carlo), Margherita appears only rarely.

Anna Francesca Costa, from singer to *impresaria*

If Margherita Costa sought to step beyond the circumscribed role of singer and into the more powerful and public role of author, Anna Francesca Costa focused instead on claiming the role of *impresaria*, or musical organizer, especially after her successes in Paris. This was a role Anna Francesca had already begun to practice at the French court, where she was increasingly applauded both for her talent as a singer, and for her leading role in organizing the operas presented to the queen regent. Anna Francesca's important role in Paris was noted by the Medici ambassador Giovan Battista Barducci, who pointed out that she had convinced the Commendatore di Jarres, "il direttore maggiore della musica italiana" (the greatest director of

[231] "La Maestà della Regina mi ha fatto grazia d'inviare una sua letera in mia raccomandazione al Ambasciatore di Francia in Roma, la quale è benignissima et anche mi ha fatto mercede la medema Maestà di una remessa di tre cento doppie sul banco di Felippo Velenti in Roma." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 22 September 1648. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5314, fol. 45r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 141.

Italian music), to arrange for lodging and a stipend for Caterina Martini—the Medici-backed singer who sang the role of Venus in the 1647 *Orfeo*.[232] When the opera opened, Barducci reported that the Commendatore, "ad istanza anche della Signora Anna Francesca Costa" (also upon request of the Signora Anna Francesca Costa), had granted him a coveted seat among the Florentine nobles present in the theater.[233] Barducci's reports suggest, in fact, that Anna Francesca was serving as co-director of the music program in Paris alongside the Commendatore.

After she returned from Paris, Anna Francesca seems to have made good use of the connections and patronage she cultivated there, focusing her energies increasingly on assuming the creative and administrative role of musical organizer. In 1653, she single-handedly organized and brought *Ergirodo*—an opera on a libretto by the Medici librettist Giovanni Andrea Moniglia—to the stage in Bologna. But Anna Francesca's production of *Ergirodo*, as we shall see in Chapter Five, had strong ties to the patrons she had cultivated in France—ties she would strategically seek to reinforce in Bologna and beyond. Even after the death of Mazarin in 1661, Anna Francesca managed to maintain her connection to Mazarin's family in Rome.

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[232] "Il Signor Commendatore di Jarres, ch'è hoggi il direttore maggiore della musica italiana, et egli in gratia anche della sua Signora checca Costa ha fatto dare alloggio alla Signore Caterina, et assegnargli uno scudo il giorno per suo trattenimento." The Commendatore is probably the Chevalier we met earlier, who by this time had been promoted. Giovan Battista Barducci to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Paris, 11 January 1647. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4651, unfoliated. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 217.

[233] "Il Signor Commendatore di Giarres, ad istanza anche della Signora Anna Francesca Costa, mi fece avvertire che io vi haverei havuto luogo con tutti i Signori fiorentini ch'erano qui." Giovan Battista Barducci to Balì Gondi, from Paris, 8 March 1647. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4653, unfoliated. Cited in Henri Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*, 385.

As we saw earlier, in her will of 1670, Anna Francesca rather boldly asked to be interred next to the Altar of the Madonna in the Mazarin's church, SS. Vincenzo et Anastasio a Trevi. Armed with this information, I discovered a parish census that reports that in 1671 Anna Francesca—along with her nine-year-old niece Anna Biscia and three servants: a maid, a footman, and a coachman—was living in the vicinity of Mazarin's church in a rather splendid location: the Casino dell'Aurora, named for the fresco of Aurora scattering flowers before the dawn by Guido Reni (1613-1614) that adorns its ceiling.[234]

Fig. 5: Façade of the Casino dell'Aurora Pallavicini as it appears today.

[234] The census records that "S[ignora] Anna Francesca Costa, Maddalena Burona serva, Nicolo Bati ser[vito]re, Angelo Tedeschi Cocchiere," and "Anna Biscia, a[nni] 9" were living in the "Orto già de Sig.ri Fiorentilli con il Casino al presente dell'Em.mo Mancini" (Garden once belonging to the Fiorentilli family with the Casino that presently belongs to the Most Eminent Mancini). The four adults are registered as communicants. Anna's age is given as nine years; she is probably the same Anna named in Anna Francesca's will as the daughter of Francesco Biscia, see above. Archivio Storio del Vicariato di Roma, Parrocchia di SS. Vincenzo ed Anastasio a Trevi, Stati delle anime, 1671, n.p.

The Casino dell'Aurora was built at the top of the Quirinal Hill in the garden of what is now the Palazzo Rospigliosi-Pallavicini, originally commissioned by Scipione Borghese as a summer residence. Mazarin acquired both buildings in 1641 and bequeathed the complex upon his death to Cardinal Francesco Maria Mancini, whose brother Lorenzo married Mazarin's sister Geronima in 1634.[235] In 1671, when Anna Francesca was living in the Casino, the main palace was occupied by Mazarin's younger sister Laura Margherita and her husband Girolamo Martinozzi. Decades earlier, in 1647, Mazarin had called Laura Margherita and her young daughters (two of Mazarin's nieces, later known as the "Mazarinettes") to the French court, where they may have heard Anna Francesca and Margherita sing. Living in such splendid quarters, with Mazarin's sister just across the garden, Anna Francesca seems to have enjoyed—at least for a time—the fruits of her labors, made possible by the patronage she had secured in Paris and continued to cultivate at home in Rome. It is tempting to speculate that Anna Francesca may have enjoyed the protection and company of Maria Mancini, Mazarin's niece, who lived just on the other side of the Quirinal in her husband's palace, and who during this time played a decisive role in the patronage of singers at the Teatro Tordinona. This is a connection I have not been able to document, but given Maria Mancini's passion for opera and close friendship with Anna Francesca's colleague, the Medici-backed castrato Atto Melani, it seems reasonable to assume

[235] Francesco Maria Mancini had close family ties to Mazarin. His brother, Lorenzo Mancini, married Mazarin's sister Geronima in 1634. See Stefano Tabacchi, "Mancini, Francesco Maria," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2007). https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-maria-mancini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

that the women may have encountered one another.[236] The 1671 census is Anna Francesca's last appearance in secondary sources during her lifetime. The circumstances and exact date of her death are still uncertain, although a notarial record proves that she was dead by 1678.[237]

If the clues Anna Francesca left in her will allowed me to trace her connections to Mazarin and to imagine her waking up under Guido Reni's fresco each morning and opening her windows to look out over the Quirinal Hill, they also forced me to confront the fact that she, like her sister Margherita, had chosen to obey the papal edict that required "donne disoneste" (dishonest or indecent women) who died in Rome to leave a portion of their assets to the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso. In the next chapter, I investigate the social context behind this edict to uncover why and how the Costa sisters and so many other female singers—but not all female singers—were constructed as indecent women, and how their reputation as such impacted them not only socially, but also financially.

[236] Maria Mancini grew up in Rome, was sent to the French court in Paris in 1653, and remained there until her marriage to Colonna in 1661. If Maria and Anna Francesca (who was probably about 30 years older than Maria) did not meet in Rome, they could have met at the French court, during Anna Francesca's brief visit there in 1654. On Maria Mancini's patronage of opera and of women singers, see Valeria De Lucca, "Strategies of Women Patrons of Music and Theatre in Rome: Maria Mancini Colonna, Queen Christina of Sweden, and Women of their Circles." Valeria De Lucca, *The Politics of Princely Entertainment: Music and Spectacle in the Lives of Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna*.

[237] Anna Francesca's will was opened in 1678, presumably shortly after she died. See the notary's record of the opening, dated 13 May 1678: Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Istrumenti, busta 891, fol. 784r.

Chapter Three:

Women, Opera, and *onestà* in Seventeenth-Century Rome

Rossi's sardonic insistence on Margherita Costa's "filthy habits"—elsewhere he referred to her as a "notissima meretrix" (notorious prostitute)[238]—is one example among many from the period in which a woman singer is aligned with the figure of the prostitute, whether directly or indirectly. Such slippage between the two categories of woman singer and prostitute was not new, of course. But over the course of the seventeenth century, as opera emerged and flourished and women singers moved ever more into the public eye, they were increasingly aligned with prostitutes by satirists, academicians, religious moralists, and religious and political authorities. In this chapter, I seek to untangle that alignment by investigating how the reception of female singers was influenced by seventeenth-century ideals of proper feminine comportment. In particular, I focus on the ways in which the performance activities of early modern women singers clashed with the early modern notion of *onestà*—a multivalent quality that when applied to women indicated not simply chastity, but also decency, modesty, and decorum.[239] To be perceived as possessing the quality of *onestà* was especially important for a professional female singer, since it was this quality (or lack of it) that shaped her career opportunities. Consider, for example, the financial compensation and prestige that Margherita and Ceccha would have enjoyed had they been permitted to perform in *La catena d'Adone*, a production sponsored and

[238] Gian Vittorio Rossi, *Eudemiae libri decem*, 5, 85.

[239] As Guido Ruggiero has pointed out in a discussion of games and social status in the Renaissance, the concept of *onestà* often "had less to do with truth than with social correctness and status." Guido Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love: Sex, Self, and Society in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 232n11.

attended by the most powerful and wealthy families in Rome. The recasting of the production with castrati was more than an amusing and slightly provocative anecdote: instead, for the women denied the opportunity to perform, it represented a significant loss of both social and financial capital.

This chapter focuses primarily on Rome, the city to which the Costa sisters continued to return throughout their careers, and the city that most shaped the contours of their lives. Even in cities like Venice or Florence, where women were not restricted from appearing in public theaters, the undercurrent of anti-woman and anti-theatrical texts produced by Roman moralists and religious reformers certainly influenced the reception of women singers. I begin by revisiting the ways in which historians of early opera have studied the figure of the female singer to show how contemporary sources, which so often align women singers with prostitutes, have conditioned our critical approaches to singing women. My aim here is to reevaluate the conflation between singers and prostitutes to offer a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which women singers constructed their own public images and, consequently, their livelihood. I then turn to a discussion of the evolution of the professional female singer, from the singing actresses of the *commedia dell'arte* who began to appear in the 1560s, to the court chamber singers of the first *concerti delle donne* in the 1580s, to the seventeenth-century *virtuose* who are the main focus of this study. After tracing these various types of female performers, I explore the problem for seventeenth-century singers of singing "in scena" – that is, in a staged musical performance. With the opening of the first commercial opera house in Venice in 1637, the problem with appearances onstage became even more complicated, since woman who sang for a paying audience was easily likened to a prostitute. But, as we shall see, even an appearance in a

staged production in the context of a court celebration was perceived as compromising to a woman's reputation.

Finally, the chapter analyzes the complex relationship between singing and *onestà*. The issue of a woman's perceived *onestà* was fundamental, since it was this quality (or lack of it) that defined a woman singer's career opportunities. In seventeenth-century Rome a rich source of evidence concerning how women's *onestà* was both imagined and regulated can be found in the archives of the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso. Although the monastery has been understood primarily as an institution to house repentant prostitutes, its jurisdiction included many other categories of women who were perceived to have violated norms of *onestà* in various ways: these included adulteresses, *malmaritate* (often victims of domestic violence), and— most relevantly for my discussion here—singers. Historians of early opera have not previously studied the Convertite archives; here I use new archival evidence to show how the Convertite's control and regulation of the *onestà* of female singers influenced their public images and their financial futures.

Historiography: *cantarine* or *cortigiane*?

To understand the history of early opera and its singers, we must grapple with period sources that sexualize the woman singer and align her, more or less directly, with the prostitute. These sources in turn have had a profound influence on how we have studied early modern women singers and have shaped our understanding of their social status, their reception by contemporaries, and the ways in which they crafted their own careers. We might begin with a deceptively simple question: why did early modern observers so often conflate women singers

and prostitutes? In 1630, Grazioso Uberti, a Roman writer and amateur musician, had his two protagonists articulate their anxieties regarding attending the musical performances of *donne dishoneste*:

> Severo: Certain others remain, who say that music in *donne dishoneste* (dishonest women) should be condemned, because one should flee them, and because with their singing and playing, they are able to entice men further, just like bird hunters deceive birds by whistling to them.
>
> Giocondo: It is true that one should flee *donne impudiche* (indecent women) ...but it is not said that one should flee in order not to hear their singing, but instead, in order not to desire their beauty, and not to consent to their desires...Music in women like this is like an outer garment that entirely covers their shame. Such women are renowned and praised for their music, their playing, and their singing—far from any memory of their lascivious behavior, which otherwise would render them greedy and abominable.[240]

Giocondo's argument points to the ways in which women singers were alternately defined as *dishoneste* or renowned and praised by the men who frequented them—this had less

[240] "Sev[ero]: Ci restano certi altri, che dicono doversi dannare la Musica nelle Donne dishoneste; perche sì devono fuggire, & elle con il canto, e suono allettano maggiormente gli huomini, come appunto gl'Uccellatori ingannano gl'uccelli col fischio. Gio[condo]: E vero, che si devono fuggire le Donne impudiche...ma non si dice, che si debbiano fuggire per non sentire il loro canto: ma sì bene per non desiderare la loro bellezza, e per non acconsentire alle loro voglie...Anzi, che la Musica in simili Donne è come una sopraveste, che copre ogni vergona. Vengono nominate, e lodate simili Donne per la Muisca, per lo suono, per lo canto, lungi ogni memoria de lascivi costumi, li quali altrimente le renderebbono esose, & abominevoli." Cited in Grazioso Uberti, *Contrasto musico: Opera dilettevole del Signor Grazioso Uberti da Cesena* (Rome: Lodovico Grignani, 1630), 72. Partially cited and translated in Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': *Virtuose* of the Roman Conversazioni in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," 147. My translation and interpretation of this passage differs from Brosius, who focuses on the passage as evidence that music made women singers "honorable" and thus worthy to frequent elite social circles. I do not disagree, but I think it is important to note that the passage also reveals anxiety regarding the potential power of singing women to corrupt their listeners.

to do with the women themselves than with an attempt by men who enjoyed such gatherings to shore up their own reputations.[241]

Paradoxically, the underlying problem was that women singers worked with and performed for men, both in theaters and in their own homes and the homes of their patrons. In 1740, a theater official in Naples elucidated this very issue during deliberations regarding whether an ordinance banning prostitutes from the city center should apply to a group of singers he was representing: "They have never been considered *oneste*, since the profession of *canterina* (female singer) carries with it the harsh necessity of frequenting many men – choir masters, instrumentalists, poets, and lovers of singing – and anyone who sees all of this traffic in and out of a woman's house is easily led to say that she is dishonest, whether or not there is actually anything bad occurring."[242]

As the theater official astutely pointed out, observers of female singers tended to assume that they were guilty as charged of *disonestà*, taking accusations of immodesty and sexual misconduct as proof of the same. The same can be said of the founding fathers of scholarly

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[241] For a discussion of the relationship between gender and space in Uberti's *Contrasto musicale*, and for the insight that in this passage "the control over women's bodies and their visibility, along with the sounds they could produce is negotiated by moral justifications," see Valeria De Lucca and Christine Jeanneret, "Exploring the Soundscape of Early Modern Rome through Uberti's *Contrasto musico*," in Valeria De Lucca and Christine Jeanneret, eds., *The Grand Theater of the World: Music, Space, and the Performance of Identity in Early Modern Rome* (London: Routledge, 2020). Kindle ebook.

[242] "Non si son mai descritte per oneste, portando seco la professione di canterina la dura necessità di trattar con molti, e maestri di cappella, sonatori, poeti, e amanti del canto, e chiunque vede questo traffico in casa d'una donna, con facilità s'induce a dire, che sia disonesta, o che vi sia, o che non vi sia effettivamente il male." Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Carte Teatri, Uditore, August 13 1740, cited in Benedetto Croce, *I teatri di Napoli, secolo XV-XVIII* (Naples: Arturo Berisio, 1968), 370.

research on early Italian opera. In the late nineteenth century, the Florentine writer and theater historian Alessandro Ademollo identified and assembled a variety of documents drawn from Italian archives that offer invaluable contextual information on early modern opera and theater in Rome, as well as precious details regarding the performances of early modern women singers.[243] A few decades later, Henri Prunières published new information drawn from French archival documents on the performances of the Costa sisters and other Italian singers in the first productions of Italian operas in Paris in the 1640s.[244]

Given the rich source material it offers, the work of Ademollo and Prunières has been fundamental for subsequent studies of early modern theater and music. At the same time, their approach to early modern women singers, which viewed them through the prism of morality rather than focusing on their musical performances and careers, continues to inflect the way we think and write about early modern women singers today. As Amy Brosius astutely observed in her 2009 dissertation on Roman *virtuose*, Ademollo was primarily interested in Adriana Basile and her daughter, Leonora Baroni, singers who were constructed as *oneste* in the encomiastic poetry dedicated to them by academic literary circles.[245] In contrast, he largely ignored those

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[243] Alessandro Ademollo, *La bell'Adriana ed altre virtuose del suo tempo alla corte di Mantova*; Alessandro Ademollo, "La Leonora di Milton," *Opinione: giornale quotidiano, politico, economico, scientifico e letterario* (1879); Alessandro Ademollo, "La Leonora di Milton nei libri e nei documenti," *Fanfulla della domenica* (1883); Alessandro Ademollo, *I primi fasti della musica italiana a Parigi (1645-1662)*; Alessandro Ademollo, *La Leonora di Milton e di Clemente IX* (Milan: Ricordi, [1885]); Alessandro Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma nel secolo decimosettimo* (Rome: L. Pasqualucci, 1888); Alessandro Ademollo, *Il carnevale di Roma nei secoli XVII e XVIII: Appunti storici con note e documenti* (Rome: A. Sommaruga 1883).

[244] Henri Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*.

[245] Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': *Virtuose* of the Roman Conversazioni in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," 20-21.

singers who were constructed as *disoneste.* This approach has conditioned much subsequent scholarship, which has tended not only to accept Ademollo's views on which singers were chaste and which were not (or, in balder terms, which were "real" singers and which were courtesans who also sang), but also to follow his lead in focusing mainly on the "chaste" singers. Adriana Basile and Leonora Baroni have received far more scholarly attention than their "dishonest" counterparts, whose contributions to early modern music were often equally important.

One of those so-called dishonest women was Margherita Costa. In 1924, Dante Bianchi published a two-part article on Costa, casting her not as a singer, but instead as a "*cortigiana rimatrice*" ("a courtesan rhymer").[246] His evaluation of her moral status appears on the first page, where he declares: "That [Costa] was an honest woman is to be firmly excluded."[247] In the first part of his article, Bianchi claims to reconstruct Costa's biography using details extrapolated from her literary works, which he deems "priva affatto di valore poetico" (completely devoid of poetic merit) —echoing similar assertions by Ademollo regarding the musical contributions of women he categorizes as *cortigiane*.[248] And yet, Margherita Costa was no amateur "rimatrice." Instead, she was the most prolific and published female writer of her generation, sending to press at least fourteen solo volumes from the 1630s to the 1650s. She wrote in an astonishing array of

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[246] Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," 1-37; 187-203; Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa; Parte II (opere)," 158-211.

[247] "Che fosse una donna onesta è da escludere recisamente." Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," 1.

[248] Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," 160; Alessandro Ademollo, "Gli ambasciatori francesi a Roma nei secoli decisettimo e decimottavo secondo: Memorie contemporanee," *Rivista europea* 8 (1877): 216-17.

literary genres and styles: from lyrical love poetry, to baroque grotesque, to bawdy comedy. Her books included a prose account of the travels of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, six books of poetry, a narrative poem on the life of Saint Cecilia, and the first comedy to be published by a woman.[249] She was also an accomplished singer, performing alongside her sister Anna Francesca in the lavish 1647 production of Luigi Rossi's *L'Orfeo* at the court of Anne of Austria in Paris and starring in several Cavalli operas in Venice in the early 1650s. Despite these accomplishments, Bianchi categorizes Costa not as a professional singer or writer, but instead as a *donna disonesta* who merits further study not for her poetry, but instead for her "amorose avventure" (amorous adventures).[250]

While these views may seem outdated and irrelevant, they have continued to color more recent studies of singing women, wherein Margherita Costa, her sister Anna Francesca, and other singers who were constructed by their contemporaries as dishonest women are categorized,

[249] On Costa's life and publications, see Capucci, "Costa, Margherita (Maria Margherita)."; Natalia Costa-Zalessow, "Margherita Costa," in *Seventeenth-Century Italian Poets and Dramatists*, Dictionary of Literary Biography (Farmington Hills: Gale Publishing, 2008); Natalia Costa-Zalessow, *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa*; Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400-1650*; Margherita Costa, *The Buffoons*. Important new work on Costa's literary production is being carried out by Jessica Goethals. See Jessica Goethals, "The Bizarre Muse: The Literary Persona of Margherita Costa," 48-72; Jessica Goethals, "The Patronage Politics of Equestrian Ballet: Allegory, Allusion, and Satire in the Courts of Seventeenth-Century Italy and France," 1397-448; Jessica Goethals, "The Singing Saint: The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia in Seventeenth-Century Literature and Theatre," 43-61; Jessica Goethals, "Worth Its Salt: Margherita Costa's Ridiculous Defence of Buffoonery," 362-81.

[250] Dante Bianchi, "Una cortigiana rimatrice del Seicento: Margherita Costa," 211.

without further discussion, as courtesans.[251] And yet there is no direct evidence that either Costa sister made her living through the exchange of sex for money. Instead, they were itinerant performers who spent much of their lives moving from court to court in search of patronage, professionals who sang in costumed productions on both private and public stages, and singers who sometimes offered performances in their own or their patrons' homes for groups of aristocratic men.

Margherita Costa was also a writer whose publications ranged from the decorous to the bawdy. Such activities, in the seventeenth century, were in and of themselves grounds for accusations of *disonestà,* as Margherita was certainly aware. In her writing, she sometimes addressed these accusations through the voices of her literary characters. Her fearless forays into bawdy humor—in particular, her comedy *Li buffoni,* which features a randy prince, his sexually voracious wife, and a prostitute—were used by Bianchi and his followers as proof positive that she was a dishonest woman at best and a prostitute at worst. But I would argue that her unconventional self-presentation might reveal something much more interesting. Margherita knew that her career as a stage singer meant that she would likely be categorized by prospective patrons as a *donna disonesta*. In highlighting that status and incorporating it into her literary persona, she could appropriate and transform any perceptions of impropriety into an asset, reinforcing her own exceptionality as a female performer and writer. Anna Francesca chose instead to seek creative authority over her own public persona by stepping beyond the role of

[251] On Margherita Costa, see Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': The Function of Portraits of Mid-Seventeenth-Century *Virtuose* in Rome."; Natalia Costa-Zalessow, *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa*; Carter, "Costa, (Maria) Margherita."

singer into the role of *impresaria*. But in doing so, she was transgressing social norms and challenging the boundaries that kept *donne oneste* off the stage

Women Singers from the Court to the Stage

In 1986 Anthony Newcomb traced the evolution of the professional woman musician in sixteenth-century Italy in an important and aptly named essay, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians?"[252] Newcomb regarded the foundation in 1580 of the *concerto delle donne* (consort of women) at the court of Alfonso II d'Este in Ferrara as a watershed moment that marked the beginning of a change in the role of women in courtly society and, as a consequence, in their participation in professional music-making. The first *concerto delle donne* was a small group of women singers who provided entertainment at court gatherings. While the *donne* were recruited for the beauty of their voices and expected to sing at the duke's command, they were entered in the court rolls not as musicians but instead as ladies-in-waiting to the duchess. Their performances, often referred to as *musica secreta* – literally, 'secret music,' because only a select few were invited to hear them – were elite events that took place in the chambers of the duke and duchess.[253] They were such a sensation that within a decade, similar groups had sprung up in almost every court in northern Italy. Newcomb argued that the phenomenon of the *concerto delle donne* was the catalyst for a significant shift in the status of women musicians: by the end of the

[252] Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians? Professional Women Musicians in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 90-115.

[253] On the *concerto delle donne*, see Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

sixteenth century, he declares, "music as an honorable profession, especially within the confines of the court, became much more accessible to women."[254] Newcomb's essay provides fundamental context for understanding the reception of women chamber singers, who certainly can be seen as precursors in many ways to the *virtuose* of the seventeenth century. However, because it focuses on the years 1580 to 1600, it cannot address how the later emergence of opera and its evolution in 1637 into a public and commercial form of entertainment changed the ways in which women singers could be defined as honorable (or, better, as *oneste*).

Other precursors to the *prime donne* of the seventeenth-century stage can be found in the actresses of the *commedia dell'arte*, many of whom were accomplished singers. Emily Wilbourne has traced the roots of early opera back to the sound of the *commedia dell'arte*, by which she means not only the musical numbers and *intermedi* that often were part of commedia performances, but also the actors' voices and the entire sonic experience such productions offered to listeners.[255] As Anne MacNeil has shown, the *commedia* actresses of the late sixteenth century, known for their portrayals of *prime donne innamorate,* were often celebrated for their musical talents.[256] The most famous of these was Isabella Andreini (1562-1604), a poet, actress, and singer, who together with her husband Francesco led the *commedia dell'arte* company known as the Gelosi. As Rosalind Kerr has demonstrated, Andreini and her husband carefully curated her public image as wife, mother, and decorous academician in support of her fame as

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[254] Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians?," 92.

[255] Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell'Arte*.

[256] Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

prima donna.[257] During her lifetime and beyond, Andreini was widely praised in print for her talent and for her *onestà*.[258] But Andreini's shining reputation is something of an exception: more often than not, early modern actresses, like professional female singers, were aligned with the figure of the courtesan and perceived as dishonest women.[259] Tellingly, there is much evidence that the addition of women actresses in the 1560s to previously all-male troupes was an important factor in the commercial success of the *commedia dell'arte*.[260] But if comedy itself was troubling to moralists, the presence of women on stage was more so. This was especially true in Counter-Reformation Rome, where theater in general, but especially women actresses and singers, became targets of reformers like Ottonelli. In 1648, Ottonelli published a treatise calling for the "Christiana moderazione" (Christian moderation) of theatrical practices. Singing female actresses were seen as particularly problematic: "Comic actresses, I say, sing to deceive men rather than to please the Creator of men. If you, o *cantatrice*, sing in such a way as to seek praise, you are a seller of song, rather than a maker of it. If you are the mistress of your voice, Signora,

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[257] Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage*.

[258] For a discussion of Andreini's reputation in print, see Kathryn Bosi, "Accolades for an Actress: On Some Literary and Musical Tributes for Isabella Andreini," *Recercare* 15 (2003): 73-118.

[259] On the reception of modern actresses, see Teresa Megale, "Il professionismo delle attrici: Stato degli studi e nuove domande," *Italica Wratislaviensia* 10, 2 (2019). On women in early modern theatrical practice, see Jane Tylus, "Women at the Windows: 'Commedia dell'arte' and Theatrical Practice in Early Modern Italy," *Theatre Journal* 49, no. 3 (1997).

[260] Ferdinando Taviani, *La commedia dell'arte e la società barocca: La fascinazione del teatro*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991); Ferdinando Taviani and Mirella Schino, *Il segreto della commedia dell'arte: La memoria delle compagnie italiane del XVI, XVII e XVIII secolo*, 3rd ed. (Florence: Usher, 2006).

you should be equally the mistress of your soul."[261]

Women Singers in the Earliest Roman Operas

While Margherita and Anna Francesca were not permitted to sing in *La catena d'Adone*, the context for the production sheds light on the obstacles encountered by women singers during the first half of the seventeenth century as opera was taking hold in Rome. One of these obstacles was the social controversy regarding the use of female singers in staged musical performances, which had the concrete result of limiting professional opportunities for women singers. As opera proliferated, women singers profited alongside men from the increased publicity and salaries that came along with stage performances in other urban centers, while women in Rome performed mainly—but not exclusively—as chamber singers in private and court settings. On that note, however, I want to point out that the oft-repeated notion that women were banned from the stages of Rome and the papal states by Pope Sixtus V in 1588 is not entirely correct. In fact, there is no documentary evidence that a sweeping ban on the presence of women in Roman

[261] "Le comiche, dico io, cantano per lusingar piuttosto gli uomini, che per piacere al Creatore degli uomini. Se tu, o Cantatrice, canti in modo, che ne cerchi la lode, sei piuttosto del canto venditrice, che formatrice. Deh, sei padrona tu sei della tua voce, sii altresì padroneggiante, Signora, dell'anima tua." Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della christiana moderatione del theatro libro primo [-quinto]* (1648), 151.

theaters ever existed.[262] To be sure, in seventeenth-century Rome, the presence of women on stage was not only closely monitored but also highly discouraged by church authorities, and opportunities for women singers to perform in staged musical productions were few and far between. But the reasons for this, I would argue, were more complex and more ambiguous than a general ban on women—instead, concerns regarding the problematic ramifications of women on stage were woven into the exceptional social and moral fabric of Rome during this period.

As Roberto Ciancarelli has demonstrated, already in the late sixteenth century, Pope Sixtus V had taken steps to change the papal court's traditional role as the primary patron at the center of all festive performances and events in the city.[263] No longer would the pope project to

[262] The notion of the 1588 ban, which is omnipresent in scholarly literature about women performers, probably originates in early and consistent scholarly misinterpretation of several period sources cited by Alessandro Ademollo in 1855 and then by Alessandro d'Ancona in 1891. In fact, Sixtus V did not unilaterally ban all women from the stage. Instead, he issued edicts prohibiting women from both performing in and attending specific performances. One of the sources first cited by Ademollo and later misinterpreted by many is an *avviso di Roma* dated 13 February 1588 reporting that the pope has granted the Accademia dei Desiosi license to perform comedies in Rome "senza donne" (without women). The original document is in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4027, cited in Alessandro Ademollo, *Una famiglia di comici italiani nel secolo decimottavo* (Florence: C. Ademollo, 1855), XXXI. Already in 1922, Giulia De Domenicis argued that the incorrect notion of the 1588 ban was based on this and other documents cited by Ademollo. She clarifies that a few years later, in 1593, another edict regarding performances by the Desiosi orders that no women were permitted to attend the performances ("che non vi vadano donne"). The original edict is in Rome, Archivio Segreto della Santa Sede, Bando per il buon governo, Armadio IV, 60, fol. 123. See Giulia De Dominicis, "I teatri di Roma nell'età di Pio VI," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 46 (1922). For a recent discussion of the issue, see Roberto Ciancarelli, *Sistemi teatrali nel Seicento: Strategie di comici e dilettanti nel teatro italiano del XVII secolo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008), 50-55.

[263] Pope Sixtus V signaled this change in 1587 by demolishing the grand arena in the Cortile del Belvedere, where Pope Pius IV had sponsored wedding festivities and tournaments. On this change and on the origins of Rome's "anomalous" profile as compared to other Italian urban centers, see Roberto Ciancarelli, *Sistemi teatrali nel Seicento: Strategie di comici e dilettanti nel teatro italiano del XVII secolo*, 19-55

the public an image of wealth and magnificence: instead, religious ceremonies and the liturgy would be conducted with a new austerity in line with reformist concerns. At the same time, if on the face of it the pope had withdrawn from his role as patron of public festivities and events, the pope and his court still maintained moral control over the content and form of performance events offered to the public. As Ciancarelli observed, even as Sixtus V programmatically and publicly renounced the displays of wealth and magnificence that had characterized his predecessors, he presented himself as a "sovereign who, with enlightened benevolence, allowed—thanks to the sacrifice and delegation of his privilege as patron—the autonomous development of new forms of entertainment."[264] In other words, although the pope no longer officially sponsored festive events and spectacles, he continued to pull the strings behind the scenes by strategically offering protection, finances, and favors to members of his own family (he was born Felice Peretti) and other aristocratic allies who took on the role of organizers and patrons of private and public celebrations and entertainments. The pope's influence on the city's theatrical and cultural offerings continued after his death and well into the first decades of the seventeenth century. In 1585, Sixtus V appointed his fourteen-year-old great-nephew Alessandro Damasceni Peretti to the cardinalate; Alessandro, known as Cardinal Montalto, was at the center of the most important circles of Roman music patronage until his death in 1623.[265]

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[264] "Un sovrano che con illuminata benevolenza consente, grazie al sacrificio e alla delega del proprio privilegio di mecenate, lo sviluppo autonomo delle forme dello spettacolo." Roberto Ciancarelli, *Sistemi teatrali nel Seicento: Strategie di comici e dilettanti nel teatro italiano del XVII secolo*, 20.

[265] On Cardinal Montalto as music patron, see John Walter Hill, *Roman Monody, Cantata, and Opera from the Circles around Cardinal Montalto* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

The presence of women singers was particularly problematic in high-profile staged and costumed performances in Rome, where cultural production and patronage was inextricably tied to religious power and authority. In the first half of the seventeenth century, concerns about the potential ramifications of women onstage, against the backdrop of renewed concerns regarding the uses and abuses of music, converged with the emergence of opera—an art form that combined the display of the body with the power of song. It should come as no surprise, then, that in papal Rome, the Aldobrandini family eventually thought better of casting Margherita and Checca in their 1626 production of *La catena d'Adone.* When Cardinal Aldobrandini arranged to substitute the two women with castrati from the papal chapel, he was toning down—but not eliminating—the erotic undertones of the drama, which brought to life a decidedly secular love story, even if it had been framed as religious allegory.

Before *La catena d'Adone* was performed at the Palazzo Conti in 1626, only five operas (I use the term in the broad sense of a costumed, staged drama that is sung throughout) had been staged in Rome. The first three were produced and performed in religious contexts: Emilio de' Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo*, performed at the Oratorio di S. Maria in Vallicella in 1600; Agostino Agazzari's *Eumelio*, staged at the Seminario Romano in 1606; and Ottavio Catalani's *David musicus*, written for the Collegio Germanico in Rome in 1613.[266] Not surprisingly, all three of these religious dramas were written for and performed by all-male casts.

It was not until 1614 that a secular, court opera was staged in Rome. Not coincidentally, this opera, entitled *Amor pudico*, was also the first in Rome to include women singers. Women

[266] On early opera in Rome, with particular focus on *David musicus*, see Margaret Murata, "Classical Tragedy in the History of Early Opera in Rome," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 101-34.

had also been on the stage in the elaborate productions at the courts of Florence and Mantua that preceded and likely inspired *Amor pudico.* Although produced in Rome, *Amor pudico* had its roots in Florentine court entertainments, which usually featured women chamber singers with strong ties to the court. The libretto for the Roman production, a *festino* (celebration) in five acts with interspersed dance numbers, was written by Jacopo Cicognini and was set to music by various composers. The sumptuous and expensive production was staged in the Palazzo della Cancelleria to celebrate the wedding of Anna Maria Cesi and Michele Peretti—the brother of Cardinal Montalto and a descendent of Pope Sixtus V.[267] Although the opera was officially sponsored by the groom (Prince Peretti), Cardinal Montalto provided several of the musicians for the performance from his own household staff. These included the soprano Ippolita Recupito and her husband, the harpsichordist and composer Cesare Marotta.[268] Ippolita sang the important role of Venere (Venus); another woman, Cleria Agazzari, sang both Fama (Fame) and Anfitrite (wife of Neptune and the goddess-queen of the sea.

[267] Jacopo Cicognini, *Amor pudico festino, e balli danzati in Roma nelle nozze de gl'illustr.mi & eccell.mi sig.ri d. Michele Peretti principe di Venafro, e signora principessa d. Anna Maria Cesis nel palazzo de la Cancellaria l'anno 1614* (Viterbo: Girolamo Discepolo, 1614). On the music patronage of Cardinal Montalto and his circle, see John Walter Hill, *Roman Monody, Cantata, and Opera from the Circles around Cardinal Montalto*. Chapter Nine focuses on *Amor pudico*.

[268] Ippolita Recupito, born in Naples around 1577, entered the service of the cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto (the groom's brother) by 1603, along with her husband Cesare Marotta, a harpsichordist and composer. See Alberto Cametti, "Chi era l' 'Hippolita,' cantatrice del cardinal di Montalto," *Sammelbände Der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 15, no. 1 (1913). Andrea Garaviglia, "Recupito, Ippolita," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2016), 699-701.

Fig. 6: Ottavio Mario Leoni, *Ippolita Marotti napoletana*, c. 1607-1612. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques (inv. 3308).

Ippolita's performance seems to have made an impression on Romolo Paradiso, who reported on the event in minute detail in a letter addressed to Giovan Battista Strozzi in Florence. Paradiso's letter highlights Ippolita's expressive movements and acting ability, as well as the sweetness of her voice:

> She lowered her eyes, seeming to gaze downwards with pity and displeasure at each and every ruined building in the city of her nephews, and she revealed these sentiments with words, to which her song added so much sweetness that the spirits of all the listeners were moved to compassion. In demonstrating this bitterness, she often rested her cheek on one hand, as people who are suffering often do, while she gracefully let her other hand dangle down from the chariot, almost as if on a whim.[269]

Paradiso also describes a duet between Ippolita's Venere and Cleria's Anfitrite, who wore a "blouse so transparent that it seemed made of crystal, through which one could see glimpses of flesh, and which did not defend her very well against the gazes of others."[270] After a dance of sea nymphs and sirens—whose "volti di donna delicata" (faces of delicate ladies) and "ignude" (nude) and with scaly fish-like tales recalled the sirens aligned with prostitutes in Alciati's emblem book that we saw earlier—Venere and Anfitrite appeared and sang a duet in

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[269] "Rivoltasi con gli occhi all'ingiù, parve riguardare con pietà, e dispiacere d'un in altro edificio tutta abbattuta la Città dei suoi Nipoti; e palesò quest'affetto con parole, alle quali il canto accrebbe tanto di dolcezza, che intenerì tutti gli animi de gli ascoltati. Nel dimostrar quest'amaritudine, spesse volte, come le persone addolorate costumano fare, la guancia su l'una mano iva posando, e l'altra, con molta grazia, lasciava, quasi per vezzo, fuori del carro pendere spenzolone." Romolo Paradiso, *Copia d'una lettera del Sig. Romolo Paradiso, con la quale dà avviso dell'Apparato, e grandezza, con che si è rappresentato il Festino dell'Eccellentiss. Sig. Principe Peretti* (Rome: Girolamo Discepolo, 1614), 13. See also pp. 64-67 for a list of names of composers, instrumentalists, singers (Ippolita is given top billing), artists, and other participants in the performance.

[270] "Tenea una camicia sì lucida, che somigliava il christallo: dalla quale parea trasparir la carne, e che dal guardo altrui non ben si difendesse." Romolo Paradiso, *Copia d'una lettera del Sig. Romolo Paradiso*, 58.

praise of Himeneo (Hymen, the god of marriage) and Cupido.[271] The two women sang so sweetly that "as their singing kidnapped the souls of all present, each one of [the listeners] voluntarily consented to such graceful tyranny."[272] Paradiso's description of the women's performances highlights the impact of a staged and costumed production on the viewer-listener: their bodies, displayed in extravagant and revealing costumes, their expressive stage movements, and the sweet sound of their voices all contributed to a sense of being "ravished" (in Paradisi's words) by the singers. This loss of control in the presence of a singing woman, which Paradisi seems to describe as pleasurable, is one of the major concerns of moralists like Ottonelli, who preached that such experiences inevitably threatened the listener's spiritual health.[273]

After the Peretti family treated Rome to the sights and sounds of Ippolita and Cleria in *Amor pudico* in 1614, women singers did not participate in a staged and costumed opera in Rome for over two decades—or if they did, no documentation of such an event has come to light. In contrast, women increasingly shared the stage with men in productions staged outside of Rome, as opera's center of gravity shifted from the Florentine to the Mantuan courts and then to the

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[271] Romolo Paradiso, *Copia d'una lettera del Sig. Romolo Paradiso*, 59.

[272] "E mentre il canto rapiva gli animi di tutti, ciascuno volontariamente consentiva a sì gratiosa tirannide." Romolo Paradiso, *Copia d'una lettera del Sig. Romolo Paradiso*, 59.

[273] "La vista della Donna molte volte è privatione della vista di Dio; e la faccia femminile, troppo considerata, troppo infiamma la mente all'Impudicitia: ma quando all'aspetto diDonna si aggiunge di più la soavità della voce, e del canto; dite pure, che le anime di molti deboli di Spirito corrono pericolo d'incorrere in una peste spirituale, & homicida" (Many times, the sight of a woman equals deprivation of the sight of God, and the female face, if one considers it for too long, inflames the mind to immodesty. But when to a woman's physical aspect is added the sweetness of her voice, and the sweetness of song; you can surely say that souls of many who are weak in spirit run the risk of catching a spiritual and deadly plague). Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della pericolosa conversatione con le donne*, 440. The notion of the double threat of women's physical presence and voices will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

public opera theaters in Venice. In Rome, Maffeo Barberini was elected as pope in 1623, taking the name Urban VIII. In the 1630s and early 1640s, the papal nephews Francesco, Taddeo, and Antonio Barberini organized a series of elaborate opera productions on librettos by Giulio Rospigliosi, with subjects that drew either on the lives of the saints or on Renaissance literary sources (but not pagan imagery, which Urban discouraged).[274] During these same years, the Barberini nephews offered support and protection to many of Rome's talented female singers, including the Costa sisters, but Urban's careful attention to propriety meant that the Barberini household did not sponsor the appearance of women singers in their operas.[275]

The next operas to feature women performers were sponsored not by a Roman aristocrat (no matter how well-connected) but by the French ambassador to Rome, François-Annibal d'Estrées. The first of these may have been *La sincerità trionfante*, with music by Angelo Cecchini to a libretto by Ottaviano Castelli, first performed in 1638 to celebrate the birth of the

[274] On the Barberini operas, see Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court (1631-1668)* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981); Virginia Christy Lamothe, "The Theater of Piety: Sacred Operas for the Barberini Family (1632-1643)" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009).

[275] The Barberini family account books do not contain any records of payments made to female singers during the papacy of Urban VIII. That said, Antonio Barberini provided financial support to Leonora Baroni and her sister Caterina. See Amy Brosius, "Singers Behaving Badly: Rivalry, Vengeance, and the Singers of Antonio Barberini," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 19 (2015). On the Barberini operas, see Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court (1631-1668)*.

French dauphin, the future Louis XIV.[276] When the opera was repeated in 1639, the cast may have included Anna Renzi, in one of her earliest performances.[277] But in 1640 Renzi and another woman singer made documented appearances in another opera sponsored by the French ambassador, *Il favorito del principe*.[278] The libretto was again by Castelli, a jurist and physician who had already organized multiple spectacles for the Barberini court. Castelli dedicated the libretto to the French Cardinal Richelieu in 1641.[279] In a letter to Mazarin, who was already making plans to bring Italian singers to the French court in Paris, Castelli highlighted the performances of the two women singers in the production:

> These *signore virtuose* have done so well, that in addition to having astonished all the nobility of Rome, the Lord Marshal [d'Estrées] was so satisfied with them that he is thinking of giving them – or rather, he commanded me that I kindly try to entice them to come, if needed, to France. And I have found so much agreement, that each one of them is dying to do so, to such an extent that, seeing how these women have been applauded, the other gracious virtuose have sent word to me offering themselves, willingly. And

[276] On this opera as a diplomatic event, see Katharina Piechockhi, "Sincerity, Sterility, Scandal: Eroticizing Diplomacy in Early Seventeenth-Century Opera Librettos at the French Embassy in Rome," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c.1410-1800*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hannings (London: Routledge, 2017), 114-29. On the context for the opera, and on the identities of some of the singers, see Margaret Murata, "Why the First Opera Given in Paris Wasn't Roman," 89-93.

[277] For the suggestion that Renzi sang in *La sincerità trionfante* in 1639, see Thomas Walker and Beth L. Glixon, "Renzi [Rentia, Renzini], Anna," in *Grove Music Online* (2001). http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

[278] Margaret Murata, "Why the First Opera Given in Paris Wasn't Roman," 96.

[279] Ottaviano Castelli, *Il favorito del principe: dramma heroicomico boschereccio* (Rome: Antonio Landini, 1641).

their voices are angelic, my Most Illustrious Lord, and what matters more, they are obedient....and their faces are not displeasing, in addition to the beauty of their voices."[280]

Castelli's enthusiasm notwithstanding, Anna Renzi did not sing alonside the Costa sisters at the French court when Mazarin's plan to bring Italian opera to Paris was finally realized a few years later. In contrast, after her performances at the French ambassador's residence in Rome in 1638-1639, Renzi's operatic career would unfold largely in the commercial theaters of Venice. Her debut in that city took place in 1641; she starred as Deidamia in *La finta pazza*, a new opera with music by Francesco Sacrati and libretto by Giulio Strozzi, which inaugurated the Teatro Novissimo. In 1643, Renzi created the role of the "disprezzata regina" Ottavia in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea,* a performance that would win her widespread approval. As Beth Glixon has shown, Renzi was one of the most financially successful singers of her time.[281] Her performances were commemorated and praised in multiple publications by writers associated with the Venetian Accademia degli Incogniti, many of whom had financial and social investments in the Teatro Novissimo. In *Il cannocchiale per la finta pazza* (1641), Renzi is described approvingly as "a young woman as skillful in acting as she is excellent in music, as

[280] "Queste Signore vertuose hanno fatto sì bene, che oltre l'essersi stupita tutta la nobiltà di Roma, il Sig.re Marescialle è rimaso tanto satisfatto da loro, che pensa di regalarle, anzi m'ha comandato, che gentilmente come da me provassi con loro di tentarle se (bisognando) fussero venute in Francia. Ed ho trovato tanta corrispondenza, che ciascuna di loro, se ne muore di voglia; in modo tale, che vedendo gli applausi di queste donne, le altre vertuose di garbo mi hanno fatto chiamare con oblatione [sic] di se stesse, volontariamente. E sono voci angeliche Mons.re Ill.mo mio, e quell che più importa, sono obedienti [...] e non hanno volti dispiacevoli oltre la bellezza della voce." Ottaviano Castelli to Jules Mazarin, Rome, 7 February 1940, in Paris, Ministère des Relations extérieures, Archives, Correspondance politique, Rome, vol. 69, ff. 146-147v. Cited and translated in Margaret Murata, "Why the First Opera Given in Paris Wasn't Roman," 96.

[281] Beth L. Glixon, "Private Lives of Public Women: Prima Donnas in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Venice," *Music & Letters* 76, no. 4 (1995): 509-31.

cheerful in feigning madness as she is wise in knowing how to imitate it, and modest in all her habits."[282] And in 1644, the poet and librettist Giulio Strozzi edited a collection of poems and essays in Renzi's honor, *Le glorie della Signora Anna Renzi romana.* Not coincidentally, Strozzi was also a mentor (and possibly father) to the Venetian composer and singer Barbara Strozzi, herself the object of a collection of satirical dialogues and letters calling her virtue into question.[283] Tellingly, although Barbara Strozzi had strong connections to the opera world in the form of the librettist Strozzi and the composer Francesco Cavalli, with whom she had studied, she is not known to have sung in a staged opera production. Instead, her performances took place during gatherings arranged by her father in his home. Were her talents simply not suited to staged opera? Or was this a (failed) strategy intended to preserve Strozzi's reputation as an honest woman?

Anna Renzi, on the other hand, spent the 1640s and part of the 1650s performing in the commercial opera theaters of Venice, with brief stints in Florence and probably Genoa. From 1653 to 1655, she made several trips to Innsbruck, where she performed at the court of the

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[282] "Giovane così valorosa nell'attione, come eccelente nella Musica; così allegra nel finger la pazzia, come savia nel saperla imitare, e modesta in tutti i suoi modi." Maiolino Bisaccioni, *Il cannocchiale per La finta pazza, drama dello Strozzi: Dilineato da M.B.C. di G.* (Venice: Gio. Battista Surian, 1641), 8. Cited and translated in Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 89.

[283] See Robert L. Kendrick, "Barbara Strozzi Revisited," *Recercare* 15 (2003): 171-2; Beth L. Glixon, "New Light on the Life and Career of Barbara Strozzi," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (1997): 311-35; Beth L. Glixon, "More on the Life and Death of Barbara Strozzi," *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (1999): 134-41; Ellen Rosand, "Barbara Strozzi, 'virtuosissima cantatrice': The Composer's Voice," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 31, no. 2 (1978).

Archduke of Austria Ferdinand Karl and his Italian wife, Anna de' Medici. In 1655, Renzi created the role of Dorisbe, a princess pursued by no less than three suitors, in Antonio Cesti and Filippo Apolloni's *L'Argia*. The opera was part of the celebrations in honor of the arrival in Innsbruck of the former Queen Christina of Sweden, who had abdicated her throne and converted to Catholicism and was making her way to Rome. Cesti himself played the King of Cyprus (the father of Renzi's Dorisbe); Renzi was the sole woman in the cast, while the rest of the female roles, including the title role of Argia, were played by castrati. In a program annotated by a (presumably) Italian audience member, Renzi is described as a "Romana Cortegiana che portò la meda[g]lia et Catena della Regina" (Roman courtesan who wore the Queen's medal and chain), a comment that emphasizes the writer's perception of Renzi as a dishonest woman even as it underscores Christina's support of the singer.[284] Also in the audience was the anti-Catholic English clergyman John Bargrave, who reported that the performance consisted of "most strangely excellent scenes and ravishing musick" and the cast included "seven castrati or eunuchs; the rest were whoores, monks, fryers, and priests."[285] For these two audience members, then, Anna Renzi's public image was that of "cortegiana" or "whoore." Even though this performance took place in the more rarified setting of the court, Renzi, a celebrated prima donna who had spent over a decade performing to great acclaim on the stages of commercial opera houses in Venice, could not avoid being categorized as a *donna disonesta.*

In the seventeenth century, a woman singer's reputation was particularly at risk should she perform on the stage of a commercial theater before a paying audience. The first public opera

[284] Cited in Herbert Seifert, "Cesti and his opera troupe in Innsbruck and Vienna," 49.

[285] Cited in Herbert Seifert, "Cesti and his opera troupe in Innsbruck and Vienna," 19.

house, the Teatro San Cassiano, opened in Venice in 1637; by the middle of the century, the lagoon city boasted no fewer than nine public theaters. Other Italian cities soon followed suit. But in Rome, where all theatrical performances required papal permission, public opera was much slower to take hold. Operas were performed regularly in the homes of Roman aristocrats and foreign ambassadors—and these occasionally featured women singers—but a commercial opera house would not open in Rome until 1671, when Christina, the former queen of Sweden, supported the building of the Teatro Tordinona.[286] But Christina was not the only woman patron behind the theater's activities. As Valeria De Lucca has shown, while Christina played a fundamental role in creating the theater, Mazarin's niece Maria Mancini—whose unhappy marriage to Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna in 1661 was arranged by Mazarin for diplomatic reasons—was behind the orientation of the theater's repertory.[287] During the patronage of Christina, Maria Mancini, and her husband, for a brief interlude—from 1671 to 1674—women singers performed on its stage.[288] But in 1676, Pope Innocent XI banned all public theatrical and musical performances in Rome (with or without women), and the Tordinona was closed and abandoned.

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[286] On the Teatro Tordinona, see Alberto Cametti, *Il Teatro Tordinona poi di Apollo*, 2 vols. (Tivoli: Arti Grafiche Aldo Chicca, 1938).

[287] Valeria De Lucca, *The Politics of Princely Entertainment: Music and Spectacle in the Lives of Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna*, 101 and passim.

[288] See De Lucca, who points out that the Tordinona was envisioned as a theater "alla moda di Venezia," and thus its models were the public opera theaters in Venice, where women performed regularly. Valeria De Lucca, *The Politics of Princely Entertainment: Music and Spectacle in the Lives of Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna*, 101.

Francesca Caccini and the problem with singing "in scena"

As commercial opera took hold, appearances on stage became even more compromising for women: a woman who sang for a paying audience could be easily likened to a prostitute. But even performances at court, despite their rarified settings, could compromise a singer's reputation, as the Medici court composer and singer Francesca Caccini knew all too well. In late January of 1637, the grand duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando II de'Medici, requested that Caccini's fifteen-year-old daughter, Margherita Signorini, sing in the festivities planned for his wedding to Vittoria della Rovere in July of that same year. In the wake of the death of his grandmother, Christine of Lorraine, the grand duke had ordered that her staff be evaluated and reassigned under his service. Despite the review, which put the positions at court of both Caccini and her daughter under scrutiny, Caccini flatly refused to allow her daughter to perform. According to the future Duchess Vittoria della Rovere, who wrote to her brother-in-law Giovan Carlo de' Medici to complain, Caccini worried that "by being seen on a stage (*in scena*), her daughter could lose her future and have that much more trouble either marrying or becoming a nun."[289] A second attempt to intervene by one Cavaliere Usimbardi proved equally unsuccessful. He reported to Giovan Carlo that Caccini had told him that "no other or greater reason forced her to show the opposite of her usual obedience than her concern not to compromise either the

[289] Minute of Vittoria della Rovere to Prince Giovan Carlo de' Medici, dictated to Ugo Cacciotti, 27 January 1637. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 6026. Cited and translated in Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 273.

reputation of her daughter, or that of her son, by having allowed her daughter to act publicly on stage."[290]

That Caccini would refuse to grant her sovereign's wishes during a time in which her own position at court was being reevaluated underscores how seriously she took the potential damage to her daughter's reputation. What is more, Caccini's concern for her daughter reveals the double-bind that faced so many women singers in the seventeenth century. In choosing to perform on stage and in a costumed theatrical production, a woman risked being categorized as a *donna disonesta*. Beyond name-calling, this label, which stripped her of her respectability, could have real consequences for her future, affecting not only her marriage prospects but also her perceived suitability for singing engagements for patrons who privileged modesty and decorum. At the same time, the new business of commercial opera made it possible for women who were both willing and able to perform on stage to earn salaries they may not have been able to equal otherwise. The price of this fame, however, was the paradoxical necessity to maintain a reputation of propriety offstage even while transgressing the boundaries between honest and dishonest behavior during performances.

Francesca Caccini's concerns regarding how a public performance might have impacted her daughter reputation were echoed by her patron, the grand duchess Vittoria della Rovere (1622-1694). In her will of 1694, the grand duchess left 600 *scudi* each to two of her female chamber singers (Maria Caterina Piccioli and Margherita Pesci). The singers were to receive the funds as dowries in the event that they either married or decided to enter a convent, "with the

[290] Minute of Cavaliere Usimbardi to Prince Giovan Carlo de' Medici, undated, dictated to Ugo Cacciotti. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 6026. Cited and translated in Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 273.

obligation that they must not sing on stages or theaters outside those of the Most Serene House."[291] While Caccini had not allowed her daughter to perform even inside that elite realm of the court, the grand duchess sought to preserve the chaste reputation of her young female court singers by protecting them from the perils of public performance.

For a stage singer to maintain a reputation of modesty took some doing. A letter from the castrato Atto Melani to his patron Mattias de' Medici, written in 1645 from Paris where he and Anna Francesca Costa had been called to sing, offers evidence on that score. As Atto recounts with evident pleasure, when the chevalier de Jars asked Anna Francesca whether she was married, Anna Francesca claimed that she was indeed a married woman. The chevalier, apparently not convinced, relayed his doubts to the queen. When this news reached Anna Francesca, she promptly asked for an audience with the queen, and "publicly affirmed, in front of the queen, that she was the wife of Leonardo Martellini, one of Giovan Carlo de' Medici's valets."[292] Archival records support Atto's gossipy suggestion; Anna Francesca was probably

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[291] Copy of the final codicil to Vittoria della Rovere's will, dated March 2, 1694: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 12, ins. 11. Cited in Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, "Court Culture in Seventeenth-Century Florence: The Art Patronage of Medici Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere (1622-1694)" (PhD diss., New York University, 2010), 205n431. Straussman-Pflanzer also discusses Vittoria della Rovere's greatly underestimated music patronage, and in particular, her patronage of female singers, which dates mainly from the 1670s and 80s (too late for the Costa sisters). See Straussman-Pflanzer, 205-218. For more on Vittoria della Rovere's musical patronage, see Antonella D'Ovidio, "Sul mecenatismo musicale di Vittoria della Rovere, granduchessa di Toscana: Alcune considerazioni," in *Firenze e la musica: Fonti, protagonisti, committenza; Scritti in ricordo di Maria Adelaide Bartoli Bacherini*, ed. Cecilia Bacherini, Giacomo Sciommeri, and Agostino Ziino (Rome: Istituto Italiano per la Storia della musica, 2014), 281-311.

[292] Atto Melani to Mattias de' Medici, Paris, 10 March 1646. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5245, cc. 221rv. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*, 148.

never married to Martellini, at least not in any official sense. To the contrary, one of her letters suggests that she and Martellini had long been hostile to one another (perhaps because they were both in competition for Giovan Carlo's support).[293]

As a foreigner in Paris and a woman known for her performances on the stage, Anna Francesca understood she needed to manage her reputation carefully. In presenting herself at Anne of Austria's court as a woman married to a high-ranking Medici court insider, Anna Francesca could craft a public image of matronly respectability and *onestà* that would counteract any potential damage to her reputation posed by her profession. For her part, Anne of Austria, newly widowed and intensely scrutinized for what some deemed an inappropriately close relationship with her new prime minister, Jules Mazarin, would have had good reason to ensure that she surrounded herself with suitably respectable company. Eventually, Anna Francesca's chaste comportment and self-presentation would gain the queen's ear, as we learn in an approving note from the prelate Giuseppe Zongo Ondedei to Annibale Bentivoglio: "What I can say is that [Anna Francesca Costa] has comported herself exceedingly well here, with good judgment, with discretion, with chastity, and with great wisdom; and in such a way that nobody

[293] "La malignità che [Martellini] con me ha sempre dimostrato." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Rome, 5 April 1653. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5322, fols. 367r-v. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 191-2.

can brag of even having touched her little finger, and this comportment is the reason that the queen was pleased to hear her [sing]."[294]

Over the course of the seventeenth century, opera and its modes of production were evolving from their roots in the late Renaissance courts into an impresarial system. Throughout their careers, Anna Francesca and Margherita Costa attempted to keep one foot in each world, cultivating the favor of aristocratic patrons even as they ventured into commercial productions. Anna Francesca's careful management of her reputation illustrates the ways in which she, like all early opera singers, depended on the support of elite patrons for her very livelihood.[295] This proved equally true for male singers, of course, not to mention castrati, for whom the situation was both complex and fraught.[296] But women were particularly bound by seventeenth-century notions of *onestà*, as the performance histories of Anna Francesca Costa and her sister Margherita demonstrate.

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[294] "Quello che posso dir io è che ella si è comportata quà egregiamente bene con giuditio, e con discretione, e con onestà, e saviezza grande, di modo che nessun può vantarsi d'haverle tocco un dito, e questi suoi portamenti sono stati causa che la Regina si è contentata di sentirla." Giuseppe Zongo Ondedei to Annibale Bentivoglio, Paris, March 27 1646. Ferrara, Archivio di Stato di Ferrara, Carteggio Bentivoglio, b. 271, fasc. 1646, c 24r. Cited in Sergio Monaldini, *L'orto dell'Esperidi: Musici, attori e artisti nel patroncinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, 5. Translation mine.

[295] For an overview of the process of evolution in opera production during the second half of the seventeenth century, see Franco Piperno, "Opera Production to 1780," in *Opera Production and Its Resources*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7-31.

[296] For a discussion of the patronage strategies of Atto Melani, a castrato who moved in the same circles as the Costa sisters, see Roger Freitas, *Portrait of a Castrato: Patronage, Politics, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Donne disoneste

In 1645, both Costa sisters appeared in a dispatch from a scandalized Modenese ambassador in Rome, who reported that Donna Olimpia Maidalchini Pamphilj, the sister-in-law of Pope Innocent X, had taken them under her wing: "The Costas," he writes, "who are very infamous and public women at this court, have been appearing in carriages during the high holidays because the Signora Donna Olimpia, after having received homage from these same women, was pleased to take them under her protection."[297] The Costas' protector Donna Olimpia, it should be noted, was something of an infamous woman herself: her detractors, who felt she exerted undue influence over the pope, referred to her as "La Pimpaccia" or "La Papessa." The ambassador's report is aimed at undermining Donna Olimpia's reputation just as much as it critiques the Costas comportment. What really bothered him was that Donna Olimpia had allowed her two protégées to display her arms above their door, and even to appear in her carriage on high holidays, "come se fossero honorate" (as if they were honorable), despite regulations that prohibited "donne cattive" (wicked women) from doing so. The ambassador's description of the two singers makes clear that in his mind, at least, they were included in the

[297] "Le Coste che sono donne assai diffamate e pubbliche in questa Corte compariscono in Carozza nelle solennità maggiori perché la Signora D. Olimpia dopo esser' stata regalata dale medesime, si è contentata di prenderle sotto la sua Protettione; le ha permesso che mettano l'Arme di S. Ecc.za sopra la sua Porta; et le ha conceduto che vadino in Carrozza senza risguardo alcuno come se fossero honorate. E perché quando fu fatta la proibizione della Carrozze alle Donne cattive fù creduto che ci fosse fine di cavarne grossi emolumenti, il caso delle Coste verifica tutto questo et insegna alle altre quello che devono fare per godere tanta commodità et honorevolezza." Archivio di Stato di Modena, Ambasciatori d'Italia, Roma 243, 30 August 1645. Cited and translated in Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': The Function of Portraits of Mid-Seventeenth-Century *Virtuose* in Rome," 106n210. My translation differs slightly from that of Brosius.

category of women whose dubious moral status meant that they were forbidden to ride in a carriage—a visible marker of social status that the authorities hoped to preserve for elites only.[298]

A Roman ordinance of 1624 listed three types of women who were forbidden to ride in carriages: *meretrici* (prostitutes), *cortigiane* (courtesans), and the rather vague category of *donne disoneste* (dishonest women).[299] Just who were these dishonest women? In seventeenth-century *avvisi* (handwritten newsletters), diaries, and court documents, descriptions of women viewed as *donne disoneste* often collapse and confuse the various terms for female singers (most frequently: *canterine*, *cantatrici*, or *virtuose*), with those for sex workers: *cortigiane* (courtesans), *meretrici* (prostitutes), and *puttane* (whores).[300] Chronicles penned in the 1630s describe "frustature di diverse cantarine e donne di mala vita" (whippings of various singers and women of ill repute) organized during the carnival season by the governor of Rome, Giovanni Battista Spada, in an attempt to "reprimere di queste male donne l'audacia" (quell the audacity of

[298] On the social significance of carriages during this period see John M. Hunt, "Carriages, Violence, and Masculinity in Early Modern Rome," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17, no. 1 (2014): 175-96.

[299]Archivio di Stato di Roma, Armadio IV-V, vol. 60, c218, 18 October 1624. Cited in Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97.

[300] For a discussion of these terms, see Amy Brosius, "'Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto': *Virtuose* of the Roman Conversazioni in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," 27-49; Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome*, 116-25; Elizabeth S. Cohen, "'Courtesans' and 'Whores': Words and Behavior in Roman Streets," 201-8; Courtney Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 12-23.

these bad women).[301] A certain Anna Stella was among a group of women arrested and subsequently whipped for singing in the street during the night.[302] Another singer, Barbara Rasponi, was arrested, whipped, and exiled to Naples because she had participated in a performance at the palace of the Spanish Ambassador.[303] Mixed in with accounts of the whippings of women identified as singers, we find others that focus on women who were described as being directly involved in the sex trade, such as "Margherita Ruffiana" (Margherita the Pimp), who was whipped along with two of the women she was accused of prostituting.[304] These public floggings were likely intended to punish patrons as much as the women targeted. Barbara Rasponi, for instance, was probably collateral damage in a conflict between the Spanish ambassador and the pope, who hoped to humiliate his rival through the punishment of his prized singer.

Although it has been customary for scholars to cling to neat hierarchies in which *puttane* are at the bottom of the spectrum, and *cortigiane* are at the top, the way these terms were used

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[301] "Frustatura di diverse cantarine e donne di mala vita," in the manuscript miscellany Urb. Lat. 1647 (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), 545r-548v. A digital copy of the manuscript is available at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Urb.lat.1647. For a discussion of the "frustature" in the context of the 1645 arrest of the singer Nina Barcarola, see Amy Brosius, "Courtesan Singers as Courtiers: Power, Political Pawns, and the Arrest of *Virtuosa* Nina Barcarola," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 73, no. 2 (2018): 207-67.

[302] "Frustatura di Anna Stella e di altre donne a cantare di not[t]e e che erano condotte a spasso per la città." Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. Lat. 1647, 546v.

[303] "Frustatura di una Cantarina chiamata Barbara Rasponi detta la Castellana per aver recitato in un opra fatta fare dal Ambasciatore di Spagna." Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. Lat. 1647, 547r-149r [sic = 548r].

[304] "Frustatura di Margherita Ruffiana con le due gioveni che essa mercantava." Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. Lat. 1647, 549r [sic = 548r].

both in speech and in written documents reveals that their meanings were not fixed, and that early modern women could not be so neatly categorized. The word *meretrice*, which can be roughly translated as "prostitute," was the most neutral term for a woman who made her living in the sex trade—when used in the literal sense. The word *cortigiana* was not a separate legal category; instead, it was a more refined and polite way to refer to the same women. As Elizabeth Cohen has cautioned, "the choice of these terms seems to depend less on the status of the woman described than on the circumstances and on the personal pretensions of the speaker."[305] I would add that when early modern observers used any of the many terms used for women in the sex trade to describe women singers, they were not necessarily affirming that the singer made her living through prostitution so much as casting doubt on her respectability and decency.

The vague but widespread phrase *donne disoneste* was a catch-all descriptor applied to women who could not be proven to be prostitutes but were nonetheless considered to be *disoneste*. This notion, in opposition to *onestà,* implied immodesty, promiscuity, or inappropriate sexual conduct, but also what Deanna Shemek has called "errancy"—straying from the path of societal expectations.[306] In seventeenth-century Rome, the was not simply an abstract idea found only in conduct manuals. Instead, in their lived lives, women's *onestà* was under constant surveillance by husbands, nosy neighbors, the larger community, and the government; all had a vested interested in controlling women's behavior. If these observers reported suspicions of adultery, unlicensed prostitution, or sexual transgression, the accused could find herself arrested

[305] Elizabeth S. Cohen, "'Courtesans' and 'Whores': Words and Behavior in Roman Streets," 204.

[306] See Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

by the *sbirri* – armed constables responsible for executing the warrants of the Governor of Rome's court.[307] After an arrest, the *sbirri* usually took the accused woman to the Corte Savella or the Tor di Nona for questioning; if it was deemed necessary, she might be confined in one of the city's religious institutions for so-called wayward women.[308]

S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso

One of these institutions for "wayward" women was the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, funded in 1520 by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici and erected canonically later that year by Pope Leo X.[309] Although the Monastery of the Convertite has been studied primarily as an institution created specifically for repentant prostitutes, its jurisdiction included women who were perceived to have violated norms of *onestà* in various ways. Some had been accused of adultery, others were *malmaritate* ("badly married women," often victims of

[307] On the responsibilities of the Governor of Rome during the seventeenth century, see Laurie Nussdorfer, *Civic Politics in the Rome of Urban VIII* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46-52.

[308] For an example from the mid-seventeenth century, see Sarah McPhee's account of the arrest and confinement of Costanza Piccolomini in the wake of a vendetta organized by the sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini, who had Costanza's face slashed because he believed she had betrayed him. Sarah McPhee, *Bernini's Beloved: A Portrait of Costanza Piccolomini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[309] On S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso (so-called because it was located just off the via del Corso), see Alessia Lirosi, *I monasteri femminili a Roma tra XVI e XVII secolo* (Rome: Viella, 2012); Alessia Lirosi, "'…Ritenere delle donne con tal temperamento': Case pie e monasteri per il recupero delle ex prostitute a Roma (secc.XVI-XVII)," *Analecta Augustiniana* 76 (2013): 153-208; Pamela Jones, "From Sin to Salvation: Guercino's *Penitent Magdalene* (ca. 1622) for the Church of S. Maria Maddalena al Corso and the Fight Against Prostitution," in *Altarpieces and Their Viewers in the Churches of Rome from Caravaggio to Guido Reni* (London: Routledge, 2016), 201-60; Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome*, 21, 64, 116, 34.

domestic violence, sometimes forced into prostitution by their husbands), and others were women whose work was perceived as dishonest. This last category included women singers. The archives of the monastery offer a rich source of evidence concerning how women's *onestà* was prescribed and monitored in seventeenth-century Rome, as well as how the *onestà* of female singers influenced their public images and their financial futures.[310]

The Monastery of the Convertite was intended to house young and beautiful women who wished to leave prostitution behind and lead a life of penitence, with the goal of stemming the spread of syphilis that was plaguing the city. It is no coincidence that the monastery's main church was dedicated to the Magdalene, represented as a former fallen woman and repentant sinner. From its inception, the institution was to be funded, paradoxically, by the same women whom it sought to save. In 1520, Pope Leo X ensured an income for the monastery by allowing it to claim all the assets of Roman prostitutes who died intestate. In 1525, the new pope, Clement VII, added that all Roman prostitutes, plus those women who had lived "evil lives" (*donne di mala vita*), were required to leave a fifth of their assets to the monastery of the *Convertite*. Such women could not escape this requirement by not making a will: should a woman die intestate, or neglect to leave the monastery the required portion of her estate, her will would be considered invalid and the monastery would be entitled to her entire estate. By 1549, Pope Paul III had expanded the monastery's jurisdiction even further to included "cortesane nuncupatae" (known courtesans, as opposed to those who were officially registered); prostitutes who worked in

[310] The archive of the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso is now held at the Archivio Storico del Vicariato in Rome. The documents date from the early sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. For a modern inventory of the archive, see Giorgio Caletti, "L'Archivio del monastero di Santa Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso: Inventario," *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 12, no. 3 (2004).

brothels or out of their own homes; concubines of laymen or clerics; and all "vitam impudicam agentes mulieres" (women leading impure lives).[311] In 1649, Innocent X raised the portion due to the monastery to one third, specifying that "donne impudiche" (indecent women) of all kinds (and not only known prostitutes) were to be considered liable.[312]

What the archives of the monastery of the *Convertite* make abundantly clear is that prostitutes were not the only category of women assumed to be *disoneste* by virtue of their profession alone. Tellingly, singers were included in a long list of *donne disoneste* who were obligated, along with Roman prostitutes, to bequeath one fifth—and later, one third—of their assets to the monastery. Officials specified that: "Under the named category of the aforementioned dishonest women should be included singers (*cantarine*), makers of collars, vendors of *arte bianca* [bread, pastry, oil, soap, etc.], innkeepers, and also sellers of *acquavite*, because these females are in constant contact with men of every rank and station, and thus they have against them the presumption of a dishonest life, which assumes carnal knowledge."[313] These records provide essential context for our understanding of the lives and performance

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[311] This and other relevant papal bulls are found in *Leone X, Clemente VII, Paolo III, Bullae super electionem monialum S. Mariae Maddalenae Convertitarum,* Romae MDCIII. Cited in Alessandra Camerano, "Donne oneste o meretrici? Incertezza dell'identità fra testamenti e diritto di proprietà a Roma," 665n15.

[312] Rome, Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, Interessi diversi del Monastero delle Convertite al Corso, vol. 6, f. 104r.

[313]"Sub complexivo nomine di dette inhoneste donne vengono ad essere comprese le cantarine, collarare, Arte bianca, Locandiere, et anche Aquavitare, stante che queste simili femine pratticando continuamente con gli'Huomini di qualsivoglia grado, e condizione, hanno contro di loro la presunzione di vita disonesta preseferente la cognizione carnale." Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, Interessi diversi del Monastero delle Convertite al Corso, vol. 6, f.105r. Paraphrased in Sarah McPhee, *Bernini's Beloved: A Portrait of Costanza Piccolomini*, 51.

histories of female singers, and they help explain why, for instance, a noble wife like Ippolita Ludovisi would object to the presence of female singers in her husband's circle.

Even Anna Francesca Costa, the celebrated diva and *impresaria* who had sung at the court of Anne of Austria, was unable to escape the grasp of the Monastery of the Convertite. The monastery's financial records reveal that shortly after Anna Francesca died, the monastery officials drew up a contract in which they claimed they were entitled to the entirety of her considerable estate. The officials justified their claim to Anna Francesca's assets with two assertions. First, they asserted that "si suppone morta ab intestato" (it is assumed that she died intestate)—as mentioned earlier, *donne disoneste* were required to "repay" the monastery in their wills or risk having their assets seized.[314] Secondly, the monastery declared that because Anna Francesca was a singer, she fell under their jurisdiction as a *donna disonesta*: "It is assumed that Anna Francesca, having been a singer (*cantarina*), lived a life that was loose and indecent in character."[315] But Anna Francesca did not die intestate—she had dictated her will to notary in Rome in 1670, adding a clause that the document should be considered her last will and testament, and that it should invalidate any previous documents.[316] What's more, in her 1670 will Anna Francesca had complied with the edict requiring *cantarine* (as *donne disoneste*) to

[314] Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, S. Maria Maddalena delle Covertite al Corso, Posizioni diverse, 52, (ex 14), f. 603r.

[315] "Venga supposto che d[ett].a Anna Francesca essendo stata cantarina si portasse seco qualità di vita rilassata et impudica." Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, S. Maria Maddalena delle Covertite al Corso, Posizioni diverse, 52, (ex 14), f. 603r.

[316] "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670.

leave a third of their assets to the Monastery of the Convertite or risk seizure of the entire estate.[317]

Why, then, did monastery officials declare Anna Francesca intestate? It is possible that the officials were unaware of her will's existence, although that seems unlikely, given that it was properly filed and sealed by a Roman notary. Did monastery officials sometimes overlook the wills of women they knew could be categorized as *disoneste*, since the papal edict gave the monastery the right to the entire estate of dishonest women who died intestate rather than a mere third? On what basis did monastery officials "assume" that Anna Francesca Costa, a woman with ties to powerful Roman, Florentine, and French patrons, would have died without leaving a will?

In any case, what is clear is that Anna Francesca's will remained closed and sealed until 1678, when her niece, Dorotea Biscia, brought the will to be officially opened before a judge.[318] As the notary records, Dorotea claimed that she had learned of the will's existence from a certain Caterina Stefani (perhaps a former servant) who had given it to her for "fear of being excommunicated." Caterina's fear probably reflects the attempts by officials to make sure the monastery got its due by threatening notaries and clerics who failed to report the deaths of *donne*

[317] "Inoltre per ragione di legato et Istituzione lascio al Monasterio delle Convertite di Roma la terza parte che de jure li va." "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 20 July 1670, fols. 803v-804r.

[318] See the notary's record of the opening, dated 13 May 1678: Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Istrumenti, busta 891, fol. 784r. I am grateful to Anna Tedesco for her help in reading the will and documents from the monastery, and especially for her insights on the sequence of events that lead to the opening of the will.

disoneste with excommunication.[319] After learning of the will, Dorotea informed Barbara Costa, Anna Francesca's sister, of its existence—claiming that as close relatives, they both had a right to ask that the document be opened.

It was probably the opening of Anna Francesca's will that prompted Barbara Costa to approach monastery officials to claim her status as Anna Francesca's heir.[320] In the record of her case filed in the monastery's archives, Barbara is identified as Anna Francesca's "unica sorella germana" (her one remaining full sister)—Margherita had most likely died by this point.[321] The monastery concedes that Barbara does indeed have a right to her sister's estate as her close relative. However, the officials continue, because Anna Francesca was a singer, and because she died intestate, the monastery has a right to exclude any heirs and to claim the entire estate, assuming it can prove "la qualità supposta" (the assumed quality)—that is, the quality of

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[319] "Dedottesi le prerogative, e Privilegij del Sud.o Monastero, si insua reverentemente, che per deficienza di notitie delle morti di simili donne, come anche de testamenti, che dalle sudette si fanno a favore di estranee persone resta notabilmente pregiudicato il Monastero; La onde si è considerato, che nelle due Bolle di Leone X e Clemente VII li sudetti sommi Pontefici hanno incaricato alli Rettori e Curati, che in caso delle morti *etia sub pena excommuniconis* debbano denunciarle alli Deputati del Monastero, come anche li Notari, che si rogano delli testamenti delle medesime." Rome, Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, Interessi diversi del Monastero delle Convertite al Corso, vol. 6, fols. 106v-107r.

[320] Margherita Costa included Barbara among "le tre mie sorelle piccole" (my three little sisters) in her will of 1635. "Testamento di Margherita Costa," 344r. For her part, Anna Francesca had left Barbara 50 scudi in her will of 1670 ("Lascio a Barbara Costa mia sorella altri scudi cinquanta moneta per una sola volta"), "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," 29 July 1670, fol. 786v. Dorotea Biscia, identified by the notary as Anna Francesca's niece, does not appear in Anna Francesca's will. She was probably named after Anna Francesca and Margherita's mother, who was also named Dorotea (and perhaps born a Biscia, although I have not been able to prove that was the case).

[321] For Barbara Costa's case against the Monastery of the Convertite, see "Romana pecuniaria," Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, Posizioni diverse, 52 (ex 14), fols. 603r-604r.

disonestà.[322] To avoid further arguments and expense for both parties, the monastery offers Barbara twenty percent of her sister's estate, on the condition that she agree to make no further claims against the monastery.[323] There is no further documentation, from which we may assume that Barbara accepted the deal. It was a deal that was to her advantage, since in Anna Francesca's will, she had been left only 50 *scudi.* The monastery, too, profited from this arrangement: it took eighty percent of the estate rather than the thirty-three percent Anna Francesca had bequeathed it.

It must have been difficult for Anna Francesca to acknowledge her debt to the Monastery of the Convertite—an institution that defined her as a loose and indecent woman because of her life's work as singer and *impresaria*. In leaving the monastery its due, she must have hoped that she could preserve the remaining two-thirds of her assets and that she could secure her final resting place in the splendid church of her patron Mazarin, next to the altar of the Madonna delle Grazie. Despite her attempt to retain control over at least part of her estate, it does not appear that Anna Francesca's wishes were respected. The circumstances and location of her burial are still unknown. Margherita Costa, like her sister, had left the required *quinta parte* of her own assets to the monastery of the *Convertite* in her 1635 will, specifying that in return the nuns were

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[322] "Ma perché venga supposto che detta Anna Francesca, essendo stata cantarina, così portasse seco qualità di vita rilassata et impudica, perciò pretende il monasterio delle Convertite, adherendo a suoi privileggi, escludere li parenti ab intestato benché peraltro sia certo che li parenti habbino piu forti raggione, e si assista senza nessun ostacolo, ogni legge è prosunzione di fatto, sì che sarebbe necessario provarsi dal M[onaste]rio concludentissim[amen]te la qualità supposta." "Romana pecuniaria," Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, Posizioni diverse, 52 (ex 14), fols. 603r-604r.

[323] "Dovendo detta Signora Barbara per via di concordia cedere alle sue giuste raggioni che ha sopra detta heredità....tralasciando ogni altra sorte di domanda si contenta ingenuamente et irrevocabilmente ritrarre dalle sopra detta heredità scudi venti per ciaschedun centinaro." "Romana pecuniaria," Archivio Storico del Vicariato di Roma, S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, Posizioni diverse, 52 (ex 14), fol. 603r.

obliged to pray for her soul.[324] I have not found further documentation of how Margherita's assets were distributed upon her own death. Tellingly, her will was not opened until 1703 (well after her death), probably after Clement XI ordered the notaries of Rome to open all unsealed wills in their possession in an attempt to keep track of charitable bequests.[325]

In the end, even the celebrated Anna Renzi, like the Costa sisters, chose to give the Monastery of the Convertite its due. In her will, Renzi was careful to specify that the monastery was entitled to one-fifth of her assets (this was the required portion in 1653), and nothing more: "I bequeath and leave to the nuns and church and monastery of the Convertite in Rome the usual fifth part of all my goods, with the understanding that for no reason whatsoever they may claim from my estate anything more than the aforementioned fifth part, because this is my wish, and this is what I want and prefer."[326] Renzi, as one of the most famous opera singers of her generation, must have realized that she could not avoid the watchful eyes of monastery officials, who would take her fame and fortune as proof that she—just like the prostitutes, courtesans, and

[324] "Item per raggione di legato iure institutionis etc. et alias omni meliori modo etc. allo reverendo monastero et monache di S. Maria Magdalena di Roma dette le convertite la quinta parte di tutti li miei beni mobili et stabili, raggioni acciò siano obligate pregare Iddio per l'anima mia." "Testamento di Margherita Costa," fol. 343v/

[325] Laurie Nussdorfer, *Brokers of Public Trust: Notaries in Early Modern Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 218 and passim.

[326] "Item per ragione di legato, et in ogni miglior modo lascio alle RR Monache e chiesa, e Monasterio delle Convertite di Roma come solito la quinta parte de tutti li miei beni, et altro, che di ragione gli prevenisse, con patto espresso, che non possono pretendere nella mia eredità niente di più della detta quinta parte, perché così è la mia volontà, e così mi pare e piace." Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Testamento di Anna Renzi, October 4 1653, Atti Beatian Fr 152 [69]. I am grateful to Beth Glixon for sharing with me her transcription of this document in a private communication.

adulteresses of Rome—was a *donna disonesta* required to pay her debt to the institution that defined her as such.

To sing on the stage, then, had its price. The choice to pay that price, to self-identify as a dishonest woman, however, was not always an acknowledgment that a woman considered herself a prostitute by trade. Instead, such self-identification could also be a savvy financial decision by a woman who knew that as a professional singer she had no choice other than to pay the monastery its due. But, as the twists and turns of the story of Anna Francesca's will shows, even women who attempted to maintain control of their own assets by complying with the edicts that required them to declare their status as *donne disoneste* did not always succeed. If the *Convertite* officials labeled women singers as *donne disoneste* as a matter of course, however, we should take care not to do the same. In allowing ourselves to collapse the two figures of singer and prostitute, we continue to view women like the Costas through an outdated lens. The officials themselves, as we saw earlier, specified that women singers were not prostitutes—instead, they were to be considered dishonest because they were "in constant contact with men of all ranks" and because, by virtue of their profession, they were assumed to have "carnal knowledge" of the men they frequented.

Susan McClary has argued that in the sixteenth century, around the time that the *concerto delle donne* emerged, "the majority of skilled female musicians practiced their arts as courtesans, in which case the selling of the voice attached directly to the prostitution of the body and vocal prowess operated quite literally as siren song."[327] And for Tessa Storey, by the seventeenth

[327] Susan McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 81.

century "there is evidence that the *canterina* or *virtuosa* could be a courtesan by another name."[328] And yet, as the Convertite documents show, a woman's *onestà* was not determined by whether or not she worked in the sex trade. In allowing ourselves to collapse the two figures of singer and prostitute, we continue to view female singers through an outdated lens. To be sure, some courtesans were skilled musicians, but it seems important to distinguish a courtesan who sings from a professional female singer who makes her living mainly as a musical performer. As we continue the important work of reconstructing the lives and careers of female singers, I hope we can also continue to disentangle them, and other creative, transgressive women performers from seventeenth-century-style surveillance of their *onestà*.

[328] Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome*, 194.

Chapter Four:

Singing Women, Saint Cecilia, and Self-Fashioning in Seventeenth-Century Rome

Two images offer a fertile entry point for this chapter's investigation of the ways in which singing women sought to fashion their public images in seventeenth-century Rome.[329] The first is an engraved portrait of Margherita Costa, created by the Florentine etcher and draftsman Stefano della Bella, a favorite of Costa's Medici patrons. It appeared on the frontispieces of two of Costa's earliest publications: *La chitarra*, dedicated to the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando II de' Medici in 1638, and *Lettere amorose*, dedicated to Ferdinando's brother Giovan Carlo de' Medici in 1639.[330]

[329] On early modern women's self-fashioning through music, see Antonella D'Ovidio, "Artiste virtuose gentildonne: Musica e universo femminile tra Cinquecento e Seicento," in *Con dolce forza: Donne nell'universo musicale del Cinque e del Seicento*, ed. Laura Donati (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2018), 15-28.

[330] Margherita Costa, *La chitarra della Signora Margherita Costa Romana*; Margherita Costa, *Lettere amorose della signora Margherita Costa romana*. In lieu of the portrait reproduced in fig. 1, the copy of *La chitarra* held at the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley contains a different portrait made by an unknown artist; this portrait appeared in most copies of another of Costa's poetry collections, *Lo stipo* (Venice, 1639). For reproductions and discussion of all three known published portraits of Costa, see Natalia Costa-Zalessow, *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa*, 16-18.

Fig. 7: Stefano della Bella, *Ritratto di Margherita Costa*, c. 1638, etching on paper, London, British Museum.

Enclosed within an ornamental, scrolled cartouche, Margherita regards the viewer with a composed and solemn expression, her mouth closed and unsmiling.[331] Her hands are folded in front of her chest. She wears a gown of what looks to be brocade, draped in heavy folds, and a high-necked chemise. Her facial expression, her posture, and her matronly gown signal decorum and respectability. On the 1638 version of the frontispiece, an inscription on the oval frame of the portrait names the sitter as Margherita Costa and a Latin couplet penned by Don Alfonso de Oviedo Spinosa (who contributed two poems to the volume) casts Costa as the "tenth muse," a phrase first used by Plato to describe Sappho, the most famous woman poet of Greco-Roman antiquity.[332] For the frontispiece of *Lettere amorose*, the inscriptions were removed and replaced with a laurel wreath and other foliate decorations, but the portrait of Costa was reused, unchanged. In both versions, the space beneath and to the side of the portrait is decorated with the tools of the *virtuosa*'s trade: a haphazard arrangement of baroque guitars, wind instruments

[331] A preliminary sketch of the portrait, by Della Bella, is held at the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe at the Uffizi (n. 623 O). For the argument that in the printed etching Costa's expression is "meno bonario e più arguto" (less good-natured and more witty) than Della Bella's sketch, see Sandro Bellesi, "I ritratti delle sorelle Costa di Cesare Dandini e Stefano della Bella," 71. A presumably unpublished version of the 1638 frontispiece (probably a proof), now held at the Rijksmuseum, contains a version of the portrait that appears closer to Della Bella's sketch than to the published version; the face is longer, the hair is dressed more loosely, and the expression is softer, suggesting that Costa preferred the more authoritative (if less appealing) expression to accompany her publications. See Stefano della Bella, *Portrait of Margherita Costa*, etching on paper, 179 x 130 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-34.305. In 1681, Filippo Baldinucci included a "Ritratto al naturale di Margherita Costa" (portrait from life—or as if from life—of Margherita Costa) among the works of Stefano della Bella that is probably the portrait in question. See Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 6, 1:231.

[332] The couplet was penned by Don Alfonso de Oviedo Spinosa, who also wrote two poems in praise of Costa that appear in the beginning section of the volume.

of various shapes, and vocal music part books, draped open as if they have been set down in mid-performance.

The visual composition in Della Bella's portrait echoes, intentionally or not, that of Raphael's influential altarpiece, *The Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia*. At the center of the painting, Cecilia holds an *organetto* (portative organ); curiously, the instrument is upside-down, and several of its pipes are in the act of falling to the ground. At the saint's feet, on the bare earth in the bottom foreground of the painting, lies a jumble of discarded musical instruments. A viola da gamba, with its damaged body and broken strings, is angled to the left and towards the viewer; in Margherita's portrait, the headstock and neck of a baroque guitar emerges at a similar angle, its body hidden from view. In Raphael's painting, Cecilia gazes upward as she listens to the heavenly music of the angels perched on the opening in the clouds above her head and gathered around two open books of music as they sing. In Della Bella's etching, Margherita's gaze meets our eyes, but she, too, has an open book hovering directly above her head, its fanned pages supported by the ornate architectural scrolls of the cartouche that encircles the portrait.

Fig. 8: Raphael, *Estasi di Santa Cecilia fra i Santi Paolo, Giovanni Evangelista, Agostino e Maria Maddalena,* c. 1518, Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna.

Scholars continue to debate the precise interpretation of Raphael's painting, but most agree that the instruments scattered at Cecilia's feet—which include a tambourine, two kettledrums, a triangle, and a pair of cymbals—symbolize the worldly music that Cecilia has renounced, while the choir of angels hovering in the clouds represents the celestial music that the saint hears and then reproduces in her heart.[333] The origins of this interpretation, and of Cecilia's association with music in general, are drawn from a passage in the sixth-century *Passio S. Caeciliae*, the earliest source for Cecilia's legend.[334] As the *Passio* recounts, Cecilia was a devout Christian from a noble Roman family who had pledged to remain a virgin as a sign of her devotion to God, despite her engagement to the pagan nobleman Valerian. On the day of the wedding, "while instruments were playing, Cecilia sang in her heart to God alone, saying, 'let my heart and my body remain undefiled, lest I be ashamed'."[335] Cecilia's prayer was answered: she would eventually persuade her pagan husband Valerian to join her in a vow of celibacy and to convert to Christianity.

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[333] On Raphael's painting, see Stanisław Mossakowski, "Raphael's 'St. Cecilia': An Iconographical Study," *Zeitschrift für Kunstegeschichte* 31, no. 1 (1968); Thomas Connolly, *Mourning into Joy: Music, Raphael, and Saint Cecilia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Nico Staiti, "'L'estasi di Santa Cecilia e quattro santi' di Raffaello: Riflessioni su pittura e musica," *Il saggiatore musicale* 8, no. 2 (2001): 177-92.

[334] On the dating of the *Passio* and some of its sources, see Hippolyte Delehaye, *Étude sur le légendier romain: Les saints de Novembre et de Décembre* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1936), 74-5, 78-80.

[335] *Passio*, 196, cap. 3: "Venit dies, in quo thalamus collocatus est et cantantibus organis illa in corde suo soli Domino decantabat, dicens: fiat cor meum et corpus meum immaculatum ut non confundar." Cited in Thomas Connolly, *Mourning into Joy: Music, Raphael, and Saint Cecilia*, 63n9.

Raphael's painting was commissioned by the Bolognese patrician Elena Duglioli dall'Olio, with the assistance of her friend and intermediary Antonio Pucci, to adorn a chapel dedicated to Saint Cecilia in the church of San Giovanni in Monte.[336] The choice of subject was not casual: Elena modeled her own life after that of Cecilia, resolving to remain a virgin at a young age. When she was pressed into marriage by her family, she convinced her new husband to take a vow of chastity along with her. During her lifetime and beyond, music was an important part of Elena's reputation as a mystic and holy woman. Contemporary biographers recount that she was known for her frequent ecstatic visions, during which she was reported to hear "celestiali concerti" (celestial concerts) and even to have spoken and sung with the angels.[337] Raphael's painting offered both a model for and a reflection of Elena's ability to hear celestial music, and to use music properly as a means for communication with the divine. When Elena died, she was interred in her chapel, along with the relics of Saint Cecilia she had received as a gift from the Papal Legate Francesco Alidosi.[338] Elena's reputation as a modern-day Cecilia endured; she was was beatified in 1828.

In 1550, the art critic Giorgio Vasari read Raphael's *Saint Cecilia* as spiritual ecstasy made visible. The instruments scattered at Cecilia's feet, appearing "non dipinti, ma vivi e veri"

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[336] For Duglioli dall'Olio's biography, see Marina Romanello, "Duglioli, Elena," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1992). https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elena-duglioli_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/. On Duglioli and the painting, see Regina Stefaniak, "Raphael's *Santa Cecilia*: A Fine and Private Vision of Virginity," *Art History* 14, no. 3 (1991): 345-71; Gabriella Zarri, "L'altra Cecilia: Elena Duglioli Dall'Olio," in *Le sante vive: Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990).

[337] Stanisław Mossakowski, "Raphael's 'St. Cecilia': An Iconographical Study," 4.

[338] Stanisław Mossakowski, "Raphael's 'St. Cecilia': An Iconographical Study," 2.

(not painted, but true to life and real), were for Vasari proof of Raphael's technical ability.[339] Just half a century later, the presence of those realistic, worldly instruments, even in a religious painting, required clarification. In his description of Raphael's painting, the organist and music theorist Adriano Banchieri ventriloquizes Cecilia, imagining that she is preaching directly to the instruments as she casts them off: Away with you, tunes, songs, worldly pleasures! Go back to your ancient mother, earth! I desire nothing else but to have a place in the holiest of choirs and to make music continually before my sweetest spouse, Jesus, singing Holy, Holy, Holy![340]

By 1663, when Bartolomeo Beverini in his *Vita di Santa Cecilia* described Cecilia as "dilettata dal canto e della musica" (delighted by songs and [instrumental] music), and as having an "angelica voce" (angelic voice), he was careful to annotate Cecilia's potentially compromising musical proclivities with an admonition against playing or singing "canti lascivi"

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[339] Vasari's complete description of the painting reads: "Evvi una Santa Cecilia che, da un coro in cielo d'Angeli abbagliata, sta a udire il suono, tutta data in preda alla armonia, e si vede nella sua testa quella astrazzione che si vede nel viso di coloro che sono in estasi; oltra che sono sparsi per terra instrumenti musici che non dipinti, ma vivi e veri si conoscono, e similmente alcuni suoi veli e vestimenti di drappi d'oro e di seta, e sotto quelli un ciliccio maravaglioso" (In it is a S. Cecilia, who, entranced by the choir of angels on high, stands listening to the sound, wholly absorbed in the harmony; and in her countenance is seen that abstraction which is found in the faces of those who are in ecstasy. Scattered about the ground, moreover, are musical instruments, which have the appearance of being, not painted, but real and true; and such, also, are some veils that she is wearing, with vestments woven in silk and gold, and below these, a marvellous hair-shirt). Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori*, 2 vols. (Florence: Giunti, 1568); Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. du Vere (London: Macmillan & The Medici Society, 1912-14), 229-30.

[340] "Gitene, gitene suoni, canti, & voi tutti mondani piaceri alla gran madre antica, che io altro non bramo solo essere assignata nella santissima Cappella Musicale tra quei Musici, & Organisti elletti vittoriosi gli quali concertano continoamente avanti il mio dolcissimo sposo IESÙ santo, santo, santo!" Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo* (Bologna: Gio. Rossi, 1609), 4-5. Translation mine. Cited in Connolly, *Mourning into Joy*, 15-16.

(lascivious songs)—which for him included all secular songs—in the Christian home.[341] Instead, Beverini instructed, parents should teach their children to follow Cecilia's example and sing, play, and listen to sacred music, which "awakens chaste thoughts" and "divine affections."[342]

Raphael's painting became especially well-known in seventeenth-century Rome, where interest in Cecilia's cult had grown exponentially since 1599. It was in that year that the saint's miraculously incorrupt body was rediscovered under the high altar of the Basilica of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere during renovations spearheaded by Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrati. The news of the discovery soon became public, and all of Rome came to see Cecilia's body, laid out in the basilica with loving care. The crowd was so large, and so eager to catch a glimpse of the saint, that at one point the cardinals had to call in the Swiss Guard to keep the situation under control.[343] To commemorate the recognition of Cecilia's body, Cardinal Sfondrati commissioned the Roman sculptor Stefano Maderno to carve a statue of the saint, which was then installed beneath the high altar of the basilica.

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[341] Bartolomeo Beverini, *Vita di S. Cecilia vergine, e martire descritta dal padre Bartolomeo Beverini della Congreg. della Madre di Dio, con alcune annotationi historiche, e morali* (Lucca: Iacinto Paci, 1663), 119-23.

[342] Bartolomeo Beverini, *Vita di S. Cecilia vergine, e martire descritta dal padre Bartolomeo Beverini della Congreg. della Madre di Dio, con alcune annotationi historiche, e morali*.

[343] On the rediscovery of Cecilia's body, see Alessia Lirosi, "Il corpo di Santa Cecilia (Roma, III-XVII secolo)," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* 122, no. 1 (2010): 5-51. For a description of the crowds that came to see the body in 1599, necessitating the Swiss Guard's intervention, see p. 27.

Fig. 9: Stefano Maderno, *Santa Cecilia*, 1600. Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome.

In the inscription in the pavement beneath the statue, the Cardinal reminds viewers that statue is an exact likeness of the saint, portrayed in the exact position in which the body was rediscovered, and that he saw the body with his own eyes.[344] Cesare Baronio, who was also present when the body was discovered and exhumed, recorded his impressions in meticulous detail, focusing on the ways in which Cecilia's body, by its position and appearance, made her virginity visible:

> And we saw (a thing worthy of admiration) not the body lying supine in the tomb, as usual, but instead, the supremely chaste virgin rested on her right side, as if she were laying in bed, with only her knees bent to signal her modesty, almost giving the impression that she was sleeping rather than dead, in such a way that we all immediately perceived the truth of her virginity precisely because of the composed position of her

[344] On Maderno's statue, see Estelle Lingo, *Mochi's Edge and Bernini's Baroque* (London: Harvey Miller, 2017), 48, 51-52. For a translation of the inscription, see p. 49.

body, so that (another admirable thing), nobody, despite observing with curiosity, dared touch that virginal body."[345]

Just a year before the rediscovery of Cecilia's body, Cardinal Sfondrati was in Bologna, where he admired Raphael's Santa Cecilia altarpiece and commissioned a copy, to be painted by Guido Reni. Sfondrati brought the painting home to Rome, and eventually donated it to the Polet Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi, where it still hangs today among Domenichino's beautiful frescoes of Cecilia's life, and where both Stefano della Bella and Margherita Costa probably saw it.

My point in comparing Costa's portrait to Raphael's Cecilia, however, is not to argue for a direct relationship between the two images, but instead, to use them as a starting point for thinking about the complexities of self-presentation for a musical woman in the seventeenth century, no matter how impeccable her status or reputation. These two images can help us uncover the historical and cultural forces that shaped the ways in which Margherita Costa and other women singers fashioned their public images and crafted their careers during a period that

[345] Cesare Baronio, *Annales Ecclesiastici,* 9 (1601), p. 862: "Visebaturque (quod admiratione dignum erat) non ut assolet, in sepulchro resupinum positum corpus, sed ut in lecto iacens honestissima virgo supra dextrum cubare latus, contractis nonnisi ad modestiam genibus, ut dormientis imaginem redderet potius quam defunctae, ipso ita ad insinuandam omnibus virginalem verecundiam composito situ corporis; adeo ut (quod aeque mirandum) nemo quamuis curiosus inspector, ausus omnino fuerit virgineum illud detergere corpus. (E si vedeva (cosa degna di ammirazione) non il corpo deposto supino nel sepolcro come si suole, ma l'onestissima vergine poggiare sul lato destro come giacente in un letto, con solo le ginocchia piegate in segno di modestia, quasi dando piuttosto l'immagine di una dormiente più che di una defunta, in modo da insinuare in tutti la verecondia verginale proprio per la composta posizione del corpo; cosicche (altra cosa ammirevole) nessuno, sebbene curioso osservatore, osasse in alcun modo toccare quel corpo verginale, preso da una certa indescrivibile riverenza, quasi che lo sposo celeste stesse come custode vigilante della sposa dormiente). Cited and translated into Italian in Alessia Lirosi, "Il corpo di santa Cecilia (Roma, III-XVII secolo)," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* 122, no. 1 (2010), 50-51n166.

saw major shifts in norms and prescriptions regarding women's speech and song. One of the most important of these forces was the emergence of opera at the beginning of the century, which brought about seismic shifts in the way women singers participated in music-making. Another was the climate of religious reform in the wake of the Council of Trent, which intensified concerns regarding the potential dangers of literature, music, and art to lead the faithful astray, but also encouraged reflection on how the arts could be used for spiritual growth. Alongside the rise of opera and the social and political changes wrought by religious reform, the discovery of the body of Saint Cecilia in 1599 sparked new interest in the figure of the saint, who was increasingly depicted as actively making music, and sometimes even singing. In what follows, I consider how these three factors intersected, and how they might have impacted not only how women singers were represented and received, but how the singers themselves fashioned their own public images.

Singing women and the stage in the seventeenth century

As opera became ever more popular, and ever more profitable, women singers moved into the limelight as never before. But in a culture that associated public display with promiscuity – at least for women – women's new prominence on the stage was cause for concern. The first public opera theatre opened its doors in Venice in 1637, with Maddalena Mannelli, the wife of the composer Francesco, in the title role of Andromeda. As opera spread like wildfire throughout Italy, women singers began to share the stage with men in Venice, Florence, Bologna, and other major urban centers. As Beth Glixon has shown, some women singers were paid as much or

more than their male colleagues.[346] In Rome, however, the presence of women on stage was officially frowned upon and closely monitored by church authorities.[347] This meant that women singers usually performed in private settings, often providing musical entertainment for literary or social gatherings. Less often, they sang in fully-staged productions put on by Roman and foreign aristocrats in their homes.[348]

The crusade against women's participation in the theater (whether as actresses or singers or both) waged by the Jesuit Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli can offer some insight into larger worries about the potential disruptive power of women singers.[349] As mentioned earlier, in 1646—at the height of Margherita Costa's career—Ottonelli devoted an entire book to the dangers of women's voices: *Della pericolosa conversazione con le donne, o poco modeste, o*

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[346] Beth L. Glixon, "Private Lives of Public Women: Prima Donnas in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Venice."; Beth L. Glixon, "*La sirena antica dell'Adriatico*: Caterina Porri, a Seventeenth-Century Roman Prima Donna on the Stages of Venice, Bologna, and Pavia," in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women: Many-Headed Melodies*, ed. Thomasin LaMay (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

[347] I have found no evidence to support the oft-repeated claim that in 1588 Pope Sixtus issued a ban forbidding women to appear in public theaters in Rome and the Papal States. This incorrect assumption seems to have its roots in the misinterpretation of evidence brought to light in the nineteenth century by Alessandro Ademollo. See Alessandro Ademollo, *Una famiglia di comici italiani nel secolo decimottavo*, XXXI. Instead, what Sixtus did in 1588, as reported in an *avviso di Roma* of that year, was to grant the Accademica dei Desiosi a license to perform in Rome, but only "senza donne" (without women). A few years later, in 1593, Sixtus issued another license to the Desiosi, specifying that no women were to attend the performances ("che non vi vadano donne"). For the 1593 license and further discussion of the lack of evidence for a papal ban, see

[348] See Margaret Murata, "Why the First Opera Given in Paris Wasn't Roman," 95-6.

[349] On Ottonelli as a "guerilla engaged in combat against the theater and especially against the role of women in it," see Joseph Connors, "Chi era Ottonelli?," in *Pietro da Cortona: Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma-Firenze 12-15 novembre 1997*, ed. Christoph L. Frommel and Sebastian Schütze (Milan: Electa, 1998).

ritirate, o cantatrici, o accademiche (On the dangers of conversing with women, whether they be immodest, religious, singers, or academicians).[350] In the chapter that focuses on *cantatrici*, Ottonelli argues that the experience of watching and listening to a singing woman is particularly dangerous to men's souls because it engages not only one, but two senses—sight and hearing: "Many times, the sight of a woman equals deprivation of the sight of God, and the female face, if one considers it for too long, inflames the mind to immodesty. But when to a woman's physical aspect is added the sweetness of her voice, and the sweetness of song; you can surely say that souls of many who are weak in spirit run the risk of catching a spiritual and deadly plague.[351]

In another lengthy volume focused on the uses and abuses of theater, *Della christiana moderatione del theatro* (On the Christian moderation of theater), Ottonelli returned to the dual power of a woman's body and voice in his argument that *comiche* (comic actresses, who often sang during their performances) should be banned from the stage: "Because these little females are usually beautiful and lascivious, and have sold their chastity; and, with the way they move and those gestures they make with their entire bodies, and with their sweet, melodious voices,

[350] Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della pericolosa conversatione con le donne*.

[351] "La vista della Donna molte volte è privatione della vista di Dio; e la faccia femminile, troppo considerata, troppo infiamma la mente all'Impudicitia: ma quando all'aspetto diDonna si aggiunge di più la soavità della voce, e del canto; dite pure, che le anime di molti deboli di Spirito corrono pericolo d'incorrere in una peste spirituale, & homicida." Giovan Domenico Ottonelli, *Della pericolosa conversazione con le donne* (Florence: Luca Franceschini and Alessandro Logi, 1646), 440.

and with their costumes and their grace, just like the Sirens, they enchant men and transform them into beasts."[352]

Ottonelli was an extremist even among his fellow reformers, but the idea that a singer's special affective power came from the double impact of her bodily and vocal presence was a common thread in seventeenth-century discourse, reflecting larger concerns about the representation and display of the body, especially when that body was female. As women singers gained status and prominence, commentators increasingly cast them as sirens and basilisks—polyvalent symbols that evoked women's spellbinding powers of attraction even as they hinted at their potential for destruction.[353] In Filippo Picinelli's *Mondo simbolico*, an emblem book first published in 1653, a man resolves to adopt the basilisk as his personal emblem to protect himself from the seductive gaze and siren song of a certain "bella cantatrice" (beautiful singer) he cannot seem to forget. Underneath the image of the basilisk, he inscribes the motto "E dagli occhi, e dal canto" (From her eyes, and from her songs), to underscore the double threat she poses, hoping to remind himself to avoid both the sight and the sound of her so as not to be lured in by her "forza

[352] "Poiche queste femminelle ordinariamente sono belle, lascive, e hanno venduta l'onestà; e con i movimenti, e gesti di tutto il corpo, e con la voce molle, e soave, con il vestito, e leggiadria a guisa di Sirene incantano, e trasformano gli uomini in bestie." Ottonelli, *Della christiana moderatione del theatro, libro primo* (Luca Franceschini and Alessandro Logi, 1648), 80.

[353] On courtesan singers and the ways in which the act of singing was perceived as sexual in the seventeenth century, see Bonnie Gordon, "The Courtesan's Singing Body as Cultural Capital in Seventeenth-Century Italy," in *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (New York: Oxford University Press).

e efficacia energia" (power and efficacious energy).[354] It is as if the old threat of a woman's eyes has been amplified by her singing voice, which, as the worldly man notes, magnifies her strength and potential power over him.

In the guise of earthly sirens, singers were directly linked to prostitutes in word and image. A famous example of this can be found in Andrea Alciato's emblem book, first printed in 1551, but widely popular throughout the seventeenth century.

[354] The story of the worldly gentleman and his cantatrice is found in a short section on the symbolic meanings of the basilisk. Filippo Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico, o sia Uniuersità d'imprese scelte, spiegate, ed'illustrate con sentenze, ed eruditioni sacre, e profane* (Milan: Francesco Mognaga, 1653), 238. Cited and translated in Elena Laura Calogero, "'Sweet aluring harmony': Heavenly and Earthly Sirens in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Literary and Visual Culture," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Lynda Phyllis Austern and Inna Narodistskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). My translation differs slightly from that of Calogero.

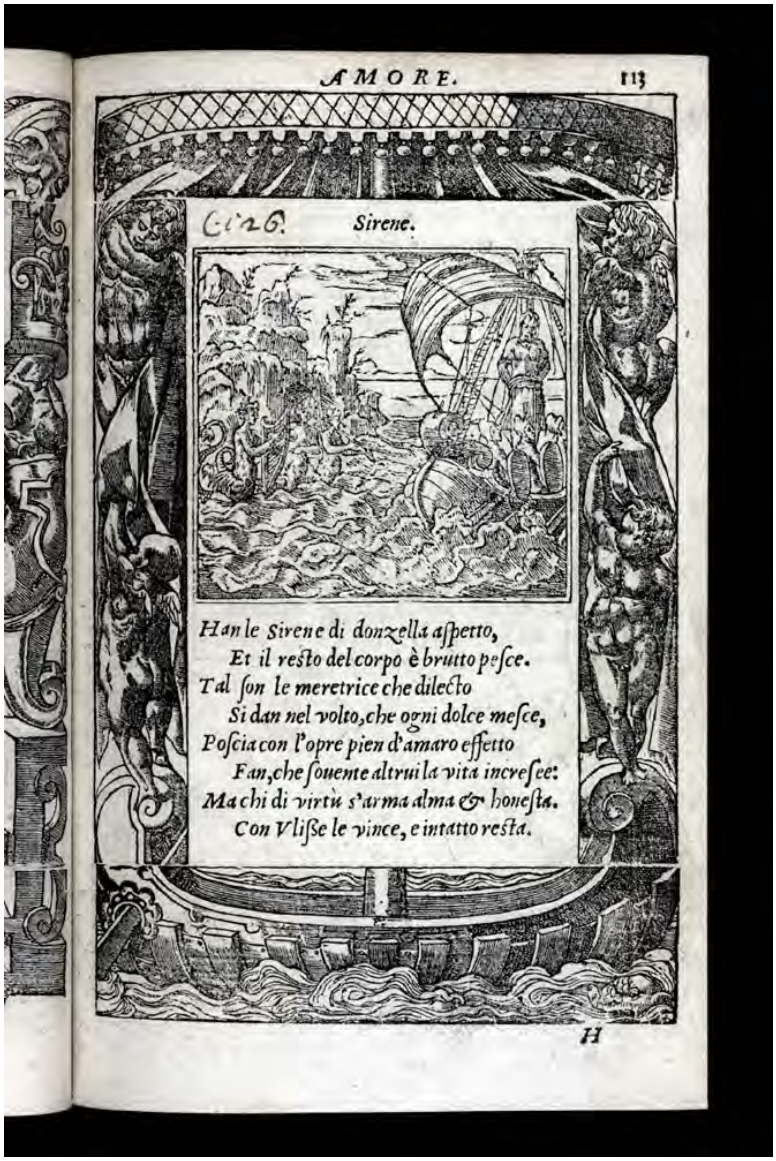

Fig. 10: Andrea Alciato, "Sirene," in *Emblemata* (Padua, 1621), 131.

In this 1621 edition of Alciato's book, the illustration depicts Odysseus, who has ordered his men to tie him to the mast of his ship so that he will not be able to follow the sirens' songs to the depths of the sea, no matter how tempted he becomes. On the left, a siren with a scaly, split tail plays a tune on the harp. The text underneath explicates the meaning of the image, which is

meant to teach its readers that prostitutes, despite their external beauty, are destroyers of men—just like the sirens, whose beautiful faces distract from their monstrous, fishy tails:

> The sirens have the faces of maidens,
> but the rest of their bodies are ugly and fishlike.
> Just like prostitutes, whose faces
> Bring delight, mixed with every sweetness,
> But soon, their actions create bitter effects
> Often making troubles in the lives of others:
> But he who arms himself with lofty and honest virtue,
> Can triumph over them, like Ulysses, and remain intact.

Another reading of the Sirens is found in an emblem book created in 1640 to celebrate the Jesuit order. Here, in his seventeenth-century incarnation as the virtue of chastity, Ulysses goes one step further, stopping up his ears so as not to hear the sirens' songs:

Fig. 11: "Castitas Religiosa voto adstricta," in *Imago Primi Saeculi Societatis Jesu* (Antwerp: 1640), n.p.

The motto under the image, addressed directly to the Sirens, reminds them that they "sing to the deaf, and [they] sing to the bound." This refusal to listen to their songs, however, only emphasizes their power. Tellingly, the siren in the right foreground, seated on a dolphin and accompanying herself on a lute, is not a siren at all – as we can see by her very human legs. Her human form, and her decidedly contemporary instrument, evoke instead a seventeenth-century singer.

As we saw earlier, in 1637 the composer and singer Francesca Caccini flatly refused to allow her fifteen-year-old daughter Margherita to perform in the festivities planned to celebrate the wedding of her own patrons, the Grand Duke of Tuscany and his bride Vittoria della Rovere.[355] Caccini's concerns about the ramifications of performing "in scena," even in an aristocratic milieu like that of the Medici court, offer useful context for thinking about the social status of itinerant *cantatrici* like Margherita Costa. Francesca Caccini's position as staff musician of the Granducato of Tuscany, and her two marriages—approved by the grand duchess herself—provided her with a level of financial security and social protection that Costa would never obtain. By 1623, before she was hired into the service of the Grand Duchess in 1627, Caccini seems to have stopped performing in costumed, staged productions altogether.[356]

In contrast, Margherita Costa and her sister Anna Francesca, also a chamber and opera singer, appeared in staged productions in both court and public theaters throughout their careers. These performances were important sources of income, patronage, and publicity, but they were also a liability to a woman's social status and moral standing. In 1647, both Costa sisters were in Paris at the court of Anne of Austria, where they performed in the lavish production of Luigi Rossi's *L'Orfeo* organized by the Italian-born prime minister Giulio Mazzarino (Mazarin to the

[355] For a description of this incident, see Suzanne G. Cusick, "'Thinking from Women's Lives': Francesca Caccini after 1627," 498-500; Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 273-4.

[356] For a list of Caccini's known appearances in costumed, theatrical productions (all of which took place in various locations in the Medici's Palazzo Pitti) see Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, 282-3.

French).[357] As the courtier Nicholas Goulas recounted in his memoires, during that period the gossip at court was that a certain Italian singer (unnamed, but likely one of the Costas) had the reputation of having "vend[u] sa beauté en Italie" (sold her beauty in Italy).[358] That same singer was a favorite of the queen, who appreciated the quality of her singing as well as her charm. As Goulas reported with obvious relish, when the queen asked Anna Colonna—a guest at court along with her husband Taddeo Barberini—if she had ever invited the singer to her palace in Rome, an outraged Donna Anna responded that "Si elle y fut venue, je l'aurois fait jeter par les fenestres!" (If she had come, I would have had her thrown out the window!).[359] The notion that women singers were inherently unchaste was reinforced by church authorities and often upheld by the courts in Rome. As we saw in the previous chapter, after Anna Francesca Costa's death, an agent for the convent of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso, which hoped to seize Costa's assets, declared that it was to be assumed that "essendo stata cantarina, si portasse seco qualità di vita rilassata et impudica" (having been a singer, she led a loose and immodest sort of life).[360]

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[357] On the 1647 *L'Orfeo*, and especially its relevance to the Barberini family, who were in Paris for the performance, see Frederick Hammond, "Orpheus in a New Key: The Barberini Flight to France and the Rossi-Buti *L'Orfeo*," 153-90.

[358] Nicolas Goulas, *Mémoires de Nicolas Goulas: 1643-1648* vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1879), 212.

[359] Nicolas Goulas, *Mémoires de Nicolas Goulas: 1643-1648* 2, 213.

[360] Rome, Archivio Storico del Vicariato, Santa Maria Maddalena delle Convertite, Posizioni diverse, 52 (ex 14), f. 603r. On the Convertite, see Alessia Lirosi, "'…Ritenere delle donne con tal temperamento': Case pie e monasteri per il recupero delle ex prostitute a Roma (secc.XVI-XVII)."

Costa, Cecilia, and the bandit: from Medici Florence to Barberini Rome

In 1644, against this backdrop of increasing focus on the powers and perils of performing women, Margherita Costa published the sacred poem *Cecilia martire*.[361] Written in *ottava rima*, the poem tells the story of Cecilia's martyrdom, death, and burial. Costa dedicated the work to Francesco Barberini, cardinal nephew of the reigning Pope Urban VIII; it was her first and only religious work, as well as her first and only work to be published in Rome, her native city. From the 1630s to 1641, when she published her comedy *Li buffoni*, Costa's energies and publications had been focused on cultivating the support of the Medici clan in Florence. But by 1644, as she worked to finish *Cecilia martire*, she had changed course and was seeking to reestablish her ties with the Barberini and return to Rome. She had a pressing personal reason for this sudden change of scene: his name was Tiberio Squilletti, alias 'Fra Paolo', a one-time bandit who entered the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando II de' Medici, by 1637.[362]

The details of Costa's relationship with Squilletti have largely been ignored by modern scholars, perhaps out of justified concern that to revive the story of her relationship with such a problematic figure is to reinforce the moralistic criticism of the nineteenth-century scholars who saw her connection to him as more evidence for her loose morals and lack of literary talent. My purpose in fleshing out the relationship here, however, is to offer new insight regarding the social

[361] Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana, all'Emin.mo Prencipe Francesco Card. Barberino, Vicecancelliero di Santa Chiesa* (Rome: Mascardi, 1644).

[362] "Il Capitano Tiberio Squilletti" appeared on the payroll of Ferdinando II de' Medici for the first time in 1637. See Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Camera del Granduca, 19, unfoliated. For a nearly contemporary account of Squilletti's long and storied life, see "Vita e morte di Tiberio Squilletti, detto comunemente Fra Paolo (1677)," in *Le prigioni più rinomate d'Italia* (Florence: Jacopo Grazzini, 1854).

and political context for Costa's poem on Saint Cecilia. The archives in Florence offer invaluable details regarding the creative partnership between Costa and Squilletti, revealing the ways they collaborated—at least for a short time—to cultivate the patronage of two powerful familes: the Medici in Florence and the Barberini in Rome.

Costa and Squilletti may have already been living together in Florence in September of 1639, when Squilletti's criminal past caught up to him and he was stabbed in the neck by a hired thug, sent by one of his many enemies in Rome. It was probably this traumatic event that Costa dramatized in her poem, "Tirsi trafitto" (Tirsi stabbed), published that same year.[363] The poem is of course a work of fiction, but the story it recounts is based on details that are present in the archival documentation of the trial of Squilletti's would-be assassin, one Sinibaldo Contucci, who was condemned to death by the Grand Duke Ferdinando II de' Medici and executed by public hanging less than two months later; these details include the circumstances of the attack, the gaping wound in Tirsi's neck, his return to health at the hands of skilled doctors sent by "il gran Fernando" (the Grand Duke Ferdinando II), and the punishment of the "empio" (evil man) who attacked Tirsi by the "gran Re Toscano" (great Tuscan King, another reference to Ferdinando II).[364]

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[363] Margherita Costa, *La selva dei cipressi*, 188-205.

[364] The Medici archive holds a thick file labeled "Capitano Tiberio Squilletti" and consisting of thirty folders of documentation of Squilletti's relations with the Medici court, various plots to murder him, and letters from Squilletti to Ferdinando II, among others (Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 504). For the details of Tiberio Squilletti's stabbing in 1639, see especially Fasc. 1, "Processo per il ferimento del capitano Tiberio Squilletti per mano di Sinibaldo Contucci" (Investigation regarding the wounding of Captain Tiberio Squilletti by the hand of Sinibaldo Contucci), and Fasc. 4, "Processo contro Sinibaldo Contucci condannato alla forca come feritore del capitano Tiberio Squilletti" (Trial of Sinibaldo Contucci, condemned to the gallows as the wounder of Captain Tiberio Squilletti).

By 1640, Squilletti was acting as a literary agent for Costa. In a letter to Leopoldo de' Medici, the youngest of the Grand Duke's three brothers, Squilletti thanked Leopoldo "del favore che mi fece in agiustare a stampare un'opera di Margherita Costa" (for the favor that you did for me of preparing a work of Margherita Costa's for print).[365] Squilletti sends along Costa's drama *La flora feconda* (1640) as an homage to his patron, and promises to "a voce rendergliele duplicate di queste, quando sarà stampata la opera sua" (double these thanks in person when the work is printed).[366] The next year, any stability and security Costa and Squilletti had managed to find in Florence was interrupted when another plot was hatched to assassinate Squilletti. A certain Camilla Perugina from Rome wrote directly to advise Costa that two brothers in Florence have been offered large sums of money to kill Squilletti by a "Gran Prencipe" (Great Prince) in Rome. Swearing Costa to secrecy, Perugina warns: "V[ostra] S[ignoria] faccia guardare bene l'amico Fra' Paolo perché hanno detto questi, che, se non potranno averlo altrove, che lo macellaranno nel Palacio del Sig Gran Duca" (Your Ladyship, make sure that your friend Fra' Paolo is watched over, because these men have said that if they cannot do it elsewhere, they will

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[365] Tiberio Squilletti to Leopoldo de' Medici, Florence, November 24 1640: Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 5561, c. 606. Squilletti's role in Costa's literary career may be part of the reason why some sources assert incorrectly that he was the true author of some of Costa's works. See for example, the seventeenth-century manuscript by Anton Francesco Marmi, "Zibaldone di diverse notizie letterarie, e storiche raccolte per lo più dagli eruditissimi discorsi del Sig:re Antonio Magliabechi…" (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, MSS VIII,8, 6, parts II and III; this manuscript contains many other innacuracies regarding Costa's life.

[366] Tiberio Squilletti to Leopoldo de' Medici, Florence, November 24 1640. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 5561, c. 606. Cited in Paola Barocchi and Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà, eds., *Collezionismo mediceo e storia artistica*, vol. 3, *Il Cardinale Giovan Carlo, Mattias e Leopoldo 1628-1667* (Florence: SPES, 2005), 380.

butcher him in the Palace of his Lordship the Grand Duke).[367] Shortly thereafter, Squilletti received an anonymous letter with the troubling suggestion that his Medici patrons were involved in the plot against him.[368] The plot was even thicker than it seemed, however. Another letter, addressed to the Grand Duke, reports that it is nonother than Cardinal Antonio Barberini who wants Squilletti dead, and that he has promised to pay an additional 3000 scudi upon receiving Squilletti's severed head.[369] I have not been able to establish who was behind the plot to kill Squilletti, although the answer is probably hidden somewhere in the copious archival documentation in Florence. What emerges from the files is that Squilletti had many enemies, and that the Medici and the Barberini both must have had reason to doubt his loyalty. Whatever the truth of the matter was, Costa and Squilletti seem to have felt it was time to get back into the good graces of the Barberini, and perhaps that it was safer to leave Florence behind for Rome.

By February of 1644, as chronicled by the Roman diarist Giacinto Gigli, Margherita Costa had used her social capital and connections to the Barberini to arrange for Squilletti's absolution by the pope, thus allowing the ex-bandit to safely enter Rome.[370] According to Gigli,

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[367] Camilla Perugina to Margherita Costa, from Rome, 19 January 1641. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 504, fasc. 6, fols. 9-10.

[368] Anonymous to Tiberio Squilletti, 30 January 1641. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 504, fasc. 8, fols. 1-2.

[369] Antonio Fancelli to Ferdinando II de; Medici, 12 January 1641. Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 504, fasc. 6, fols. 2-3.

[370] "Finalmente havendo amicitia di una certa Margarita Costa famosa meretrice, la quale anco era amica di uno, il quale poteva assai con i Barberini, con questi mezzi ottenne di poter venire a Roma, pentito come egli diceva delli suoi misfatti per ottenere dal Papa l'assolutione." Giacinto Gigli, *Diario romano (1608-1670)*, ed. Giuseppe Ricciotti (Rome: Tuminelli, 1958), 242.

Costa—whom he describes as a "famosa meretrice"—had also declared her intentions to become a penitent, and "il Cardinale Barberino, il quale ha grandissimo gusto quando sente che un peccatore o peccatrice si vuol ridurre a penitenza, l'ha ajutato e favorito" (the Cardinal [Francesco] Barberini, who takes supreme delight in hearing that a male or female sinner wants to become a penitent, helped and favored her).[371] Upon his arrival in Rome, Fra Paolo was met with carriages and hosted by Taddeo Barberini at Palazzo Barberini al Monte di Pietà; the Barberini brothers provided Squilletti with a stipend of 100 scudi per month (30 from Taddeo, and 70 from Francesco).[372] All of Rome was scandalized by this news; more so by the talk that the Barberini were planning to grant Squilletti a canonicate at San Pietro.[373] Squilletti's life in the lap of Barberini luxury did not last even a year. Pope Urban VIII, who on January 5 1644 had indeed absolved Squilletti of all of his previous sins, died on July 29 of that same year.[374] The new pope Innocent X, from the rival Pamphilj family, began to investigate the Barberini for financial corruption, and the balance of power in the city shifted abruptly. One by one, Squilletti's Barberini protectors fled the city, leaving him in a vulnerable position.

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[371] Giacinto Gigli, *Diario romano (1608-1670)*, 242.

[372] "Fu ben vero, che venne a Roma fra Paolo famoso ladrone, et assassino facinoroso, et fu ricevuto con incontro di carrozze, et menò cariaggi, et andò ad alloggiare in casa di D. Taddeo Barberino al Monte della Pietà, e quivi fu honorato, et andava in carrozza con D. Taddeo con maraviglia di tutti.[...] Questo è certo che D. Taddeo gli dà trenta scudi il mese, et il Card. Barberino settanta." Giacinto Gigli, *Diario romano (1608-1670)*, 242.

[373] "Et è fama che gli sarà dato un Canonicato di S. Pietro." Giacinto Gigli, *Diario romano (1608-1670)*, 242.

[374] There are three copies of Pope Urban's brief absolving Squilletti (dated 5 January 1644) in his file in the Medici archive in Florence: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 504, fasc. 29, fols. 1-15.

In the end, it turned out that Squilletti's suspicion of his former patron Ferdinando de' Medici was warranted: on December 18 1644, on Ferdinando's orders, Squilletti was ambushed by armed guards and promptly locked up in the Bargello prison in Florence, where he would die at the age of 81 in 1677.[375] The only thing that kept him from killing himself, according to a (probably romanticized) account written after he died, was to remind him of "la cara sua Checca Costa, che estremamente desiderava che egli vivesse, per corroborazione di che fu necessario mostrarli un anello che essa teneva in dito" (his dear Checca Costa [sic], who greatly desired that he might live, and to corroborate that [desire], it was necessary to show him a ring that she wore on her finger).[376] As this account shows, even contemporary authors confused the two Costa sisters. Here the sister in question is Margherita, not Anna Francesca.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Gigli's account of the exploits of Fra Paolo and Margherita Costa was trotted out as part of a debate regarding whether Costa was a courtesan. According to the nineteenth-century scholar Costantino Arlìa, and many others following in his wake, the answer was a definitive yes.[377] Although many modern scholars seem to agree with that assessment, I believe that a more fruitful question is not whether Margherita Costa was a courtesan, but why Costa and so many other women singers were routinely viewed as such. As we saw above, for seventeenth-century audiences and commentators, the line between singer and

[375] For details of Squilletti's capture, see Florence, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea 504, fasc. 15, fols. 1-11. For an account of Squilletti's time in prison and his death, see "Vita e morte di Tiberio Squilletti, detto comunemente Fra Paolo (1677)."

[376] "Vita e morte di Tiberio Squilletti, detto comunemente Fra Paolo (1677)," 612.

[377] See Costantino Arlia, "Un bandito e una cortigiana letterati," *Il bibliofilo* 2, no. 8-9 (1881): 164-66.

prostitute was especially blurry when a woman's body, along with her voice, was displayed on stage, whether that stage was private and princely or public and commercial.

Margherita Costa and Saint Cecilia

Costa's choice of Cecilia as protagonist in her bid for Barberini patronage was strategic on many levels. Cecilia, after all, was the most Roman of saints, believed to have been born and martyred in the second century on the very land where her church, the Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, was located. Like Cecilia, Margherita was a native Roman. What's more, Margherita had close ties to Cecilia's home neighborhood of Trastevere. For a time, she owned a vineyard nearby, just outside of Porta Portese and next to the now-demolished Villa Massimo.[378] And in her will of 1635, she asked to be buried in the church of S. Francesco a Ripa, about five minutes by foot from Santa Cecilia.[379] Margherita's *romanità* seems to have been an important part of her public image: she published all of her works, except for the final one, under the byline "Margherita Costa Romana." In the dedication to Francesco Barberini that prefaces the 1644 edition of *Cecilia martire*, Costa deftly highlights the provenance she shares with Cecilia. At the same time, she modestly acknowledges the saint's divine perfection and her own worldly imperfection: "Born in Rome myself, I thought it appropriate to dedicate to Your Eminence the

[378] "La mia vigna che ho fuora della porta di Portese accanto alli Massimo." "Testamento di Margherita Costa," Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Testamenti, busta 82, fol. 345r.

[379] "Et quando verrà il caso della mia morte il mio cadevere sia seppellito nella chiesa di S. Francesco a Rippa." "Testamento di Margherita Costa," Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Testamenti, busta 82, fol. 343r.

Martyrdom of Roman Cecilia, so that she who was worthy of Heaven might make up for all that is not worthy in me."[380]

Another thing that Margherita and Cecilia had in common, of course, was music. Margherita was an accomplished chamber and opera singer; Cecilia was well-established by the middle of the seventeenth century as the patron saint of music and musicians. Already in 1585, Sixtus V established by papal bull a guild for professional musicians, the Congregazione dei Musici sotto l'invocazione della Beata Vergine e dei Santi Gregorio e Cecilia (Congregation of Musicians under the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and Saints Gregory and Cecilia), still operating today as the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

In 1624, Urban VIII issued a brief giving the Congregazione dei Musici total control over music printing in Rome, as well as over music education in the city. During Urban VIII's papacy, Urban and his nephews Francesco, Antonio, and Taddeo Barberini were the most important patrons of music and spectacle in Rome.[381] Costa would have understood her talents as a singer were the way to Barberini hearts. She would also have known that as a woman who sang on the public stage—a "donna pubblica"— she would have to display her own singing body with care. Even in print, she could not cast herself directly as Saint Cecilia.

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[380] "Nata in Roma ho stimato convenevole dedicare all'Eminenza Sua il Martirio della Romana Cecilia, acciò quanto in me non vaglio tutto meriti in lei, che puotè meritare il Cielo." Margherita Costa, dedication to Francesco Barberini, in Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, n.p.

[381] On the Barberini family as music patrons, see Frederick Hammond, *Music and Spectacle in Baroque Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Frederick Hammond, *The Ruined Bridge: Studies in Barberini Patronage of Music and Spectacle 1631-1679*; Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court (1631-1668)*; Virginia Christy Lamothe, "The Theater of Piety: Sacred Operas for the Barberini Family (1632-1643)."

In 1619, Arcangela Paladini, a Medici singer, had done just that, playing the role of Saint Cecilia in a staged compline service for the grand duchess Maria Magdalena and her children. But Arcangela Paladini was no public woman. She was instead a completely different type of singer, performing exclusively in court settings and never on the public stage. Paladini's singing body and her reputation were closely surveilled by her patroness, the grand duchess. According to the librettist Jacopo Cicognini, who was present at the performance, Arcangela embodied the role of Cecilia so perfectly that the audience believed that "the Glorious Virgin Cecilia herself had appeared and called us to Paradise."[382]

When Arcangela died at only twenty-three years old, the grand duchess commissioned a monumental tomb for her, located under the portico of the Medici church of Santa Felicita. In the center, a portrait bust depicts Arcangela, her head chastely covered. To the left, a woman who represents Painting appears to be sleeping, her brushes and palette in her lap, alluding to Paladini's skills as a painter. To the right, an allegory of Music plays the harp, her upward gaze

[382] Jacopo Cicogni to Ottavio Corsini, 22 April 1619, in *Versi Sacri*, 59-62: "Ma, quello ch'io non voglio né debbo tacere, fu l'ammirabile stupore che lasciò negli animi di ciascuno la Signora Arcangela Paladini Brohomans, la quale con sì graziosa, e devota maniera rappresentò con l'attione, e col canto Santa Cecilia, che se è lecito il dirlo, credo che in quel punto credesse, che quella stessa gloriosa Vergine fosse apparita in quel santo Oratorio a chiamarne al Paradiso, perciocchè non solo col suono di voce veramente angelica, ma con gesti e movimenti sovrahumani esprimeva le parole, e concetti spirando tal'hora da gli occhi sollevati in alto purissimi raggi d'humiltà, e devozione...." Cited and translated in Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato, "Arcangela Paladini and the Medici," in *Women Artists in Early Modern Italy: Careers, Fame, and Collectors*, ed. Sheila Barker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 86n76.

reminding us of Saint Cecilia, who sang in her heart to God alone. The epitaph on the tomb describes Paladini as "innocent in celestial singing, the Tuscan Siren, the Italic muse."[383]

[383] The full inscription reads: "Arcangela Paladinia - Ioannis Broomans Anturpiensis uxor – Cecinit hetruscis regibus, nunc canit Deo – Vere Palladinia quae Palladem acu - Apellem coloribus Cantu aequavit musas - Obiit an suae aetatis XXIII - die XVIII Octobris MDCXXII - Sparge rosis lapidem coelesti innaxia cantu - Thusca jacet sirem; Itala muta jacet" (Arcangela Paladini, the wife of Jan Broomans of Antwerp, sang for the rulers of Etruria [i.e. Tuscany], and now sings for God. A true paladin, who equaled Pallas Athena in needlework, Apelles in painting, the muses in singing, died at the age of 24 on 18 October 1622. Place roses on this stone where, innocent in celestial singing, lies the Tuscan siren, lies the muse of Italy). Translated in Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato, "Arcangela Paladini and the Medici," 84.

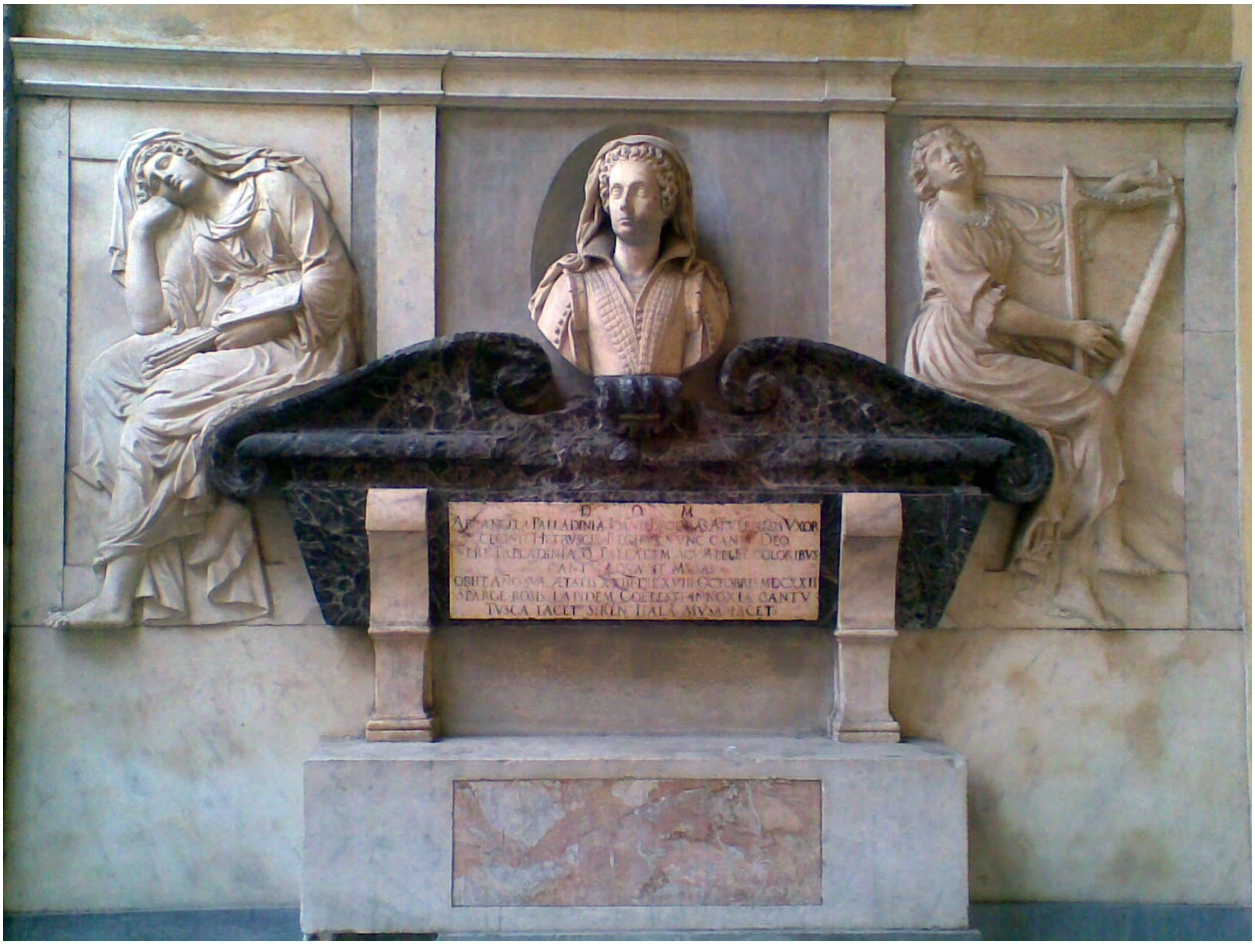

Fig. 11: Tomb of Arcangela Paladini, Santa Felicita, Florence, detail.

Margherita Costa, on the other hand, perceived by many of her contemporaries as a *donna di malavita*, could not literally inhabit Saint Cecilia's singing body, but she could offer to her Barberini patrons a literary Cecilia, a vehicle meant to appeal to their ideals of erudition and of music as a means for spiritual enlightenment. In the dedicatory letter to Francesco Barberini that precedes the poem, Costa makes a bold rhetorical move, casting herself as the famous

singing colossus of Memnon, one of a pair of ancient statues in the Theban Necropolis.[384] Like the statue, which produced sound when it was warmed by the morning light, Costa's songs are sparked and then supported by her patron Francesco, a noble ray of light emanating from Pope Urban's Barberini sun: "Indeed, if the statue of Memnon, son of Aurora, began to make sounds when touched by the light of the sun, I, a follower of Phoebus, trust in the virtue of your most illustrious name to unfurl my song; and because Your Eminence is a noble ray of the Barberini Sun of the Vatican, I hope my work will be granted the noble splendor of immortal life.[385]

Costa's reference to the singing colossus would not have been lost on Francesco Barberini, who was intensely interested in the art and archeology of Egypt.[386] The so-called Colossi of Memnon were built in honor of the Pharoah Amenhotep III, who ruled during the eighteenth dynasty. But after an earthquake damaged the northern colossus in 27 BC, the statue began to emit a sound—described variously as a human wail, a song, or an eerie whistle or screech—at daybreak, when the first rays of the sun warmed its stone body. The singing statue

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[384] On the statues, the inscriptions left by ancient visitors, and the poems and descriptions they inspired, see Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *The Language of Ruins: Greek and Latin Inscriptions on the Memnon Colossus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[385] "Anzi se la Statua di Mennone figliuolo dell'Aurora tocca dalla luce del Sole apprendeva il suono, io, che seguace sono di Febo, mi confido in virtù del suo chiarissimo nome sciogliere il Canto; E perché V.[ostra] Eminenza è gran raggio del Vaticano Sole Barberini, auguro all'opra mia nobile splendore d'Immortal vita." Dedicatory letter from Margherita Costa to Francesco Barberini, in Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, n.p.

[386] It was Francesco Barberini who arranged for the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher to have a position at the Collegio Romano, to benefit from Kircher's knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphs. On Kircher's relationship with the Barberini, see Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey: Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

was interpreted by early visitors as Memnon, the son of the dawn-goddess Eos (Aurora to the Romans), who died on the battlefield of Troy; the statue's cries were Memnon's response to his mother's grief. The ancient tourists who came to see the statue left inscriptions on its base recording their reactions; it inspired a flood of texts and poems beginning in the first century CE and continued to be a source of fascination for early modern European travelers and scholars. Through the erudite metaphor of the singing statue, Costa deftly transcends —even if only rhetorically and fleetingly—the problematic associations of her female body. Taking on the ancient, stone body of the fallen warrior, she inhabits her role as celebrated singer while keeping her distance from seventeenth-century notions of proper feminine comportment that associated women's performances with the promiscuity and danger of the earthly siren.

Another ancient colossus is featured in the engraving that immediately follows Costa's dedicatory letter and its literary image of the singing fallen warrior Memnon. This time, the colossus is a female warrior-goddess: Dea Roma, the personification of the city of Rome. The visual image of Dea Roma echoes and reinforces Costa's erudite self-presentation as the statue of Memnon in her dedication, transforming the singing male colossus from Egypt into a distinctly Roman and female presence whose songs are in celebration of the victories of the Barberini family.

Fig. 12: Unknown artist, engraving representing Dea Roma with the churches of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere and Sant'Urbano alla Caffarella in the background. In Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire* (Rome: Mascardi, 1644).

This version of Dea Roma appears to be an invention of the engraver rather than a representation of an existing statue, although her pose and attributes recall images of the same goddess on the reverse of ancient Roman coins.[387] Like her ancient ancestor, the seventeenth-century representation of the goddess wears a plumed helmet and poses atop a triumph of discarded armor and weapons, her foot resting on a sphere that symbolizes terrestrial domination. In her right palm, she holds a statuette of the winged goddess of victory; in her left hand, she displays a shield decorated with the three bees of the Barberini family arms. Inscribed on her pedestal are the words "MELLEO SAECULO URBANO" (the honeyed age of Urban), a flattering allusion to Urban VIII's accomplishments during his reign as pope.

The statue dominates a distinctly seventeenth-century architectural *capriccio.* On the left is the Basilica of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere; on the right, the church of Sant'Urbano alla Caffarella, which is located off the Appia Antica, nowhere near Trastevere. The visual presence of these two buildings anchors Costa's poem in its specific Roman context and emphasizes her connections to her patrons. The image of Cecilia's titular church recalls the rediscovery of her body there in 1599 and reminds us that in both Cecilia's *Passio* and in Costa's poem, Cecilia had been martyred on that very spot. The image of Sant'Urbano in Caffarella is a tribute to the extensive restoration of the church that Francesco Barberini had spearheaded in the 1630s. His interest in the church was part of a larger project to document and restore early Christian art and

[387] Dea Roma shared many attributes with Athena/Minerva. For a recent discussion of Roma's iconography, see Lillian Joyce, "Roma and the Virtuous Breast," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 59/60 (2014).

architecture.[388] Originally a Roman temple, the church was dedicated in the tenth century to Saint Urban, who was Pope Urban I from 222-230 AD. Saint Urban's church was of particular interest to the Barberini family for the obvious reason that he was the pope's eponym. In her text, Costa deftly assigned the restorations of the church an allegorical, Christian meaning: "le predittioni delle lodi del Pontefice Urbano VIII, che ritorar deve il Tempio di S. Urbano, sono i meriti dell'honore, il quale in terra per le buone opere si acquista" (the predictions of praise for Urban VIII, who will restore the Church of Saint Urban, symbolize the honor, which on earth one acquires through good works).[389]

Urban's hagiography was entwined with that of Cecilia. In Cecilia's *Passio*, Urban baptizes Cecilia's husband Valerian and his brother Tiburtius before they are martyred and the consecrates Cecilia's house, on her request, as a church. The connections between Urban and Cecilia were made visible in the eleventh-century frescoes decorating the interior of the church, which featured episodes from the lives of both saints. As part of his project to document early Christian imagery, Francesco Barberini had the artist Antonio Eclissi make watercolor copies of the frescoes in Sant'Urbano, as well as those in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere.[390] In her version of Cecilia's legend, Costa capitalized on the Barberini family's particular interest in both saints. While Urban does not speak a word in Cecilia's *Passio,* in Costa's poem he is given a starring role as Cecilia's spiritual guide and interlocutor.

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[388] On Sant'Urbano in Caffarella, see Kirstin Noreen, "Sant'Urbano alla Caffarella, Rome: The Reconstruction of an Ancient Memorial," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 47 (2002).

[389] "Allegoria: Canto Quarto" (Allegory of the Fourth Canto), in Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*.

[390] The copies are now in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb.lat. 4402.

Fig. 13. Unknown artist, engraving representing Saint Cecilia kneeling in prayer as her executioner draws his sword. In Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire* (Rome: Mascardi, 1644).

The second engraving represents a scene from Cecilia's martyrdom, echoing the title of Costa's poem as well as its content. Here Cecilia kneels in front of a Roman fountain, her head already crowned with rays of divine light, as the burly executioner draws his sword and prepares to strike. Winged putti fly down from the top left, carrying the martyr's palm and Cecilia's attributes (the portative organ and the crown of flowers), defeating the demons on the right, one of whom has horns and serpent's tail entwined around the other. In the background, a woman looks on and weeps, flanked by two Roman soldiers. The man with the bald head, mustache, and beard on the far right is probably meant to represent Cecilia's pope, Urban I. To my eye, his face and features bear a striking resemblance to those of Urban VIII as he appears in contemporary painted and sculpted portraits. The miniature portrait of Urban VIII would have further emphasized the parallels between the first Urban and his seventeenth-century Barberini namesake, parallels that are skillfully emphasized by Costa in her text, a hymn to Barberini power.

But Costa's poem does more than praise the good Christian leadership of her patrons. Through the voice of her literary Cecilia, Costa defends singing women, appropriating and then reversing concerns about the disruptive and dangerous power of the female voice that became increasingly common in the seventeenth century, as women singers like Costa gained status and prominence on the stage. As we saw earlier, Ottonelli had likened women singers to basilisks, warning that they could destroy mens' souls with their eyes and their voices, and Picinelli's worldly gentleman had created an emblem to protect him from the seductive gaze of his *bella cantatrice.* A scene in Costa's poem between Cecilia and her would-be executioner deftly responds to and reverses the trope of women's dangerous gazes and voices. After Almachius has

unsuccessfully attempted to suffocate Cecilia to death in her bathhouse, he sends an executioner to finish her off with his sword. But when the executioner arrives, he is blinded by the divine light that emanates from Cecilia's gaze, and unable, momentarily, to follow through on his deadly orders:

> De la Vergin nel viso alto stupore
> Scorge il crudele, e a lui quel lume abbaglia
> Le torve luci sue, tutte terrore;
> Nè forza ha più, ch'al suo timor prevaglia.
> Sente d'intorno inusitato odore.
> E dice. Ahi lasso, e chi sarà che vaglia
> Contro costei, che d'alta gratia splende,
> E con la luce l'altrui luci offende?
>
> In the Virgin's face, great astonishment
> Is perceived by the cruel man, and that light
> Blinds his glaring eyes, filling them with terror;
> He no longer has the strength to overcome his fear.
> He smells an unusual odor around him.
> And says: "Alas, who is there that can overpower
> This woman, resplendent in noble grace,
> Whose light wounds the eyes of others?"[391]

If the eyes of Ottonelli's singers could elicit lust and sinful behavior in the men that gazed upon them, the eyes of Costa's Cecilia can stop evildoers in their tracks. As he continues to contemplate Cecilia's face and gaze at her "lumi splendenti" (shining eyes), the executioner hears heavenly music, which awaken in him 'novi timori' (renewed fears).[392] At first the music is

[391] Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana all'Emin.[entissi]mo Prencipe Francesco Card.[inale] Barberino, Vicecancelliero di Santa Chiesa* (Rome: Mascardi, 1644), 49.

[392] Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 49.

in praise of Cecilia, but soon Cecilia herself begins to play the organ.[393] Finally, Cecilia begins to sing, warning the executioner that human audacity and pride will never win in a contest against the Creator of the Universe. As her song finishes, she reminds the Executioner that "Regnar Pluto non può, dove Dio posa" (Pluto cannot reign in God's presence).[394]

This is a crucial moment in the poem: the executioner is almost won over by the sweetness of the music, emphasizing music's potential power to incite good rather than evil. But as the executioner ponders the question of whether he should refuse to kill Cecilia as he has been ordered, he is assailed by demons, who incite him to doubt the heavenly musical vision he has been granted. Then, following the lead of Ulysses, who stopped up the ears of his men so that they could resist the temptations of the Sirens, the executioner resolves to close his own ears to Cecilia's "canti infidi" (treacherous songs).[395] He denounces Cecilia's music as "falsa magia" (false magic), and resolves to execute her: "Cedi misera il collo, e ancisa prova,/ Se 'l tuo splendor, se 'l tuo cantar ti giova" (Give me your neck, wretched woman! And when you are killed, you'll see if your splendor and your singing can save you!).[396] The executioner raises his

[393] "La Diva all'hor su risonanti legni,/c'han di concave canne ordini industri,/ con le dita trascorre..." (The diva, then, runs her fingers over the resonant pieces of wood, worked into concave orders of pipes). Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 50.

[394] Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 51.

[395] "Sù, sù, timido core, ardito ancidi/ Costei, che tanto in contrastarti vale,/ Chiudi l'orecchie al suono, a i canti infidi,/ E 'l colpo avventa qual cadente strale" (Come on, timid heart, boldly kill/this woman, who is so good at fighting against you,/ Close your ears to the music, to the treacherous songs,/ and strike the blow like a falling arrow). Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 58.

[396] Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 59.

sword and strikes three blows to Cecilia's neck. He is first amazed, and then terrified when he realizes that even his sword cannot kill her. Eventually, even Pluto, the ruler of the underworld, must concede that his powers are no match for Cecilia's singing. [397]

I read Costa's executioner as a cipher for the seventeenth-century listener-turned-critic. Unable to perceive the potential of a woman's voice as a vehicle for closeness to and knowledge of the divine, some critics and commentators reacted with violence. This violence was not only literary in nature, as a chronicle of "Frustature di diverse cantarine e donne di malavita " (public whippings of various singers and other disreputable women) in Rome during the 1630s demonstrates.[398] One of these singers was Barbara Rasponi, also known as "La Castellana," who was publicly whipped and then exiled to Naples as a result of her performances at the private residence of the Spanish Ambassador in Rome.[399] There is no hard evidence that Costa herself experienced such violence directly. Still, for a stage singer like Costa, whose financial and social stability (and personal safety) depended on the support of powerful patrons, the possibility of punishment was not an unrealistic concern—especially as she was finishing *Cecilia martire* in

[397] Io, che ne' bassi Regni inalzo il vanto/ Contr'ogni spirto fortemente atroce,/ Ad una Vergin ceda, e co 'l suo canto/ Ella stingua il furòr de la mia foce?/ E Pluto io sono?" (Am, I, though in the underworld I boast of overcoming the strongest, most atrocious spirits, conceding to a virgin? And is she, with her songs, extinguishing the fury of my maw? Am I not Pluto?). Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 61.

[398] Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Urb.lat. 1647, fol. 545r.

[399] For Barbara's story, see "Frustatura di una Cantarina chiamata Barbara Rasponi detta la Castellana per aver recitata in un opra fatta fare dal Amb.[asciatore] di Spagna" (Whipping of a singer named Barbara Rasponi, called the Castellana, for having performed in an opera put on by the Spanish Ambassador," in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Urb.lat. 1647, 547r – 549r [=548r].

the early 1640s, in the wake of the near-fatal attack on Squilletti, uncertain of Medici support and protection.

As Costa sought to reestablish contact with the Barberini in Rome, the executioner's challenge to Cecilia—"Let's see if your singing can save you!"—must have been foremost in her mind. Costa's poem is composed in *ottava rima*, appropriate for her sacred subject. And yet the poem has an operatic feel: as far as I am aware, the presence of the mythological ruler of darkness, Pluto, along with his demons and furies as Cecilia's primary opponent is original to Costa. This mixture of the sacred and the profane, and the spectacular battle between the forces of good and evil, was a common element in the plots of opera librettos of the period: including *La catena d'Adone* and *L'Orfeo* (Paris, 1647), both works Costa knew or had performed. Cecilia is not quite an operatic diva—Costa is too skillful to fall into that trap in a poem addressed to a Cardinal—but she is a prima donna of sorts, with operatic characteristics.

If in her *Passio*, Cecilia is said to sing only "in her heart, to God alone," in Costa's poem, Cecilia's voice takes center stage. In her dramatic death scene, God himself sends the angels to sing their praises of Cecilia and to offer her divine comfort through their heavenly music.[400] As Cecilia lays dying, Urban arrives—in the manner of an operatic leading man—to comfort her. She offers an impassioned monologue repenting for her sins and asking for his guidance—her exit aria (although she speaks (*dice*), rather than sings, if we read the text literally). In the end,

[400] "Da l'alte sfere de le stelle intanto/ Scendon' à gara gli Angeli festosi,/ E con lieta armonia di dolce canto/ Scaccian de' venti i turbini nembosi,/ Spiegano di Cecilia il nobil vanto." Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 82.

Cecilia's singing does save her soul, if not her body. As the saint dies, Urban urges Cecilia to keep singing in heaven.[401]

Metamorphoses: Juno punished and Cecilia reclaimed

Urban VIII died in July of 1644, less than a year after Costa's *Cecilia martire* was published. The new Pamphilj pope, Innocent X, ran the rest of the Barberini family out of town charging them with financial corruption. The three Barberini nephews, Antonio, Francesco, and Taddeo, took refuge in Paris at the court of Anne of Austria, under the shelter of their old friend Giulio Mazzarino, who had just been appointed prime minister of France. When Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa arrived in Paris late December of 1646, summoned by Mazzarino to sing in Luigi Rossi's *L'Orfeo*, they found the Barberini clan still in residence there.

In the wake of the success of the opera, Margherita turned once again to the figure of Saint Cecilia to reaffirm her relationship with the Barberini clan. Costa's *La Tromba di Parnaso* (1647) includes a poem addressed to Antonio Barberini, who returned to Paris in May in time to hear the second run of performances of *Orfeo*. As the rubric declares, the poem was written to thank Antonio for his gift of a golden chain and to accompany her own gift of a copy of her *Cecilia martire*.[402] Remarkably, the opening lines of the poem cast Costa not as Cecilia but

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[401] "Snoda, regia donzella, al nume amato/Le tue note felici, e 'n vago canto/Sciogli gratie a colui, che t'ha creato,/E spiega ne' tuoi detti il sommo vanto." Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*, 95.

[402] Costa's poem, titled "All'Eminentissimo Principe Antonio Cardinale Barberino, per un dono di una catena d'oro mentre le presenta il suo poema di Santa Cecilia con alcune ventaglie" (To the Most Eminent Prince Antonio, Cardinal Barberini, for the gift of a gold chain, while presenting to him her poem on Saint Cecilia, with some fans), is found in Margherita Costa, *La tromba del parnaso* (Paris: Sebastian Craimoisy, 1647), 68-72.

instead as the goddess Juno—the role she had played in *L'Orfeo*—to Barberini's Jupiter. "Io pendo da te...degno Giove," she declares, evoking a well-known episode from Homer's Iliad, in which Jupiter punishes Juno for her cruelty to Hercules by suspending her from a golden chain with two anvils attached to her feet.[403] As Juno, Costa pays the role of willing prisoner to Antonio, who has enchained not only her neck, but her heart, with his golden gift. The punishment of Juno had been illustrated, to great acclaim, by Correggio for the Badessa Giovanna Piacenza in Parma in 1518 (Fig. 14). Correggio's interpretation of the episode emphasizes Juno's complete subjugation to Jupiter—she is literally bound to him by means of the matrimonial chain, which only he can loosen. But Costa's representation of herself as Juno and Antonio as Jupiter would have also brought to mind images of conjugal sensuality closer to home, like Carracci's fresco in the Galleria Farnese in Rome of Juno and Jupiter on their wedding night (Fig. 15).

[403] Margherita Costa, *La tromba del parnaso*, 69. The punishment of Juno is described in the *Iliad*, Book XV.

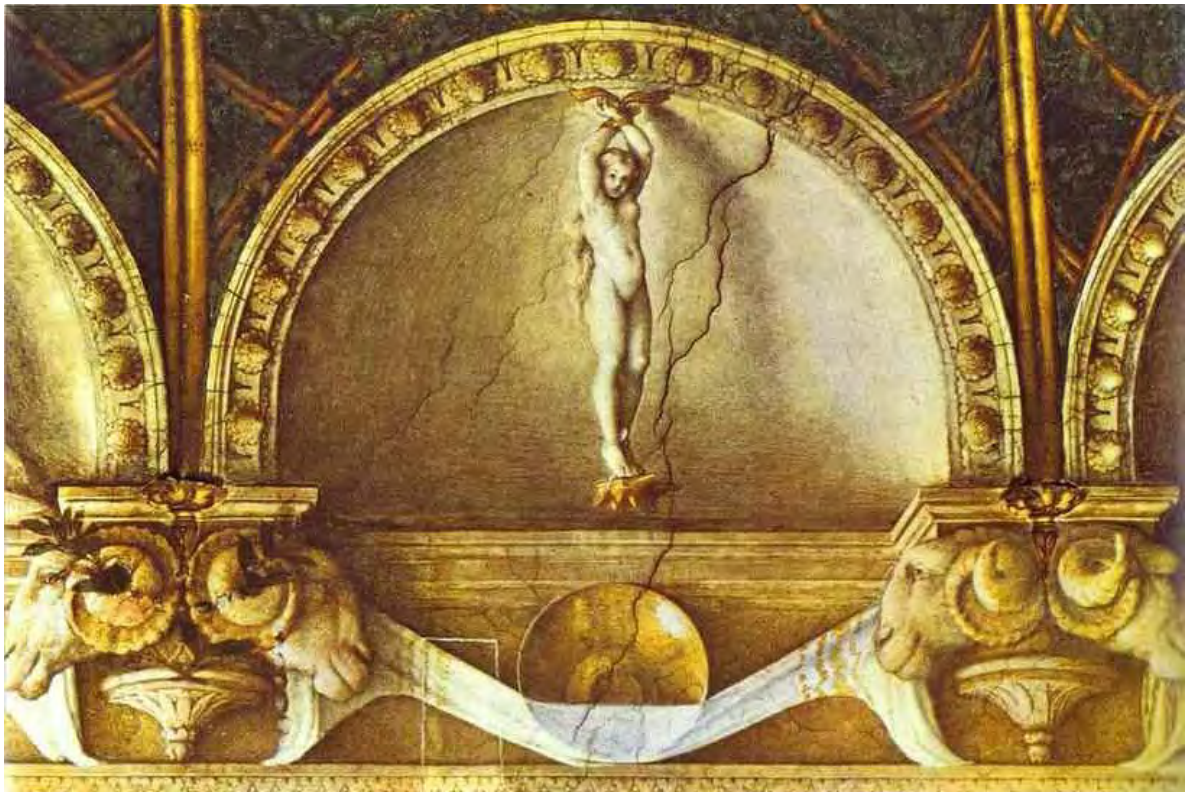

Fig. 14: Coreggio, *The Punishment of Juno*, Camera di San Paolo, Parma, 1518.

Fig. 15: Annibale Carracci, *Jupiter and Juno on their Wedding Night*, Galleria Farnese, Rome, 1597.

The metaphor casts Antonio as the wealthy and all-powerful patron who has bound Margherita to him, as the god Jupiter bound his consort Juno. At the same time, by assuming the guise of Juno in her poem, Margherita could evoke for her patron the experience of the performance, during which she sang the role of Juno as he listened and watched in the audience. An even more fascinating layer can be added to the metaphor when we recall the opera commissioned for Costa by Aldobrandini, *La catena d'Adone*. If Costa had sung the role of the sorceress Falsirena in 1626, her final scene would have portrayed her as bound by the enchanted golden chain she had tried to use to bind Adonis. Evoking her both her performance in Paris as

Juno and the role she inspired but never sang, Costa creates a persona that is at once erudite and sensual – displaying her talents as both poet and performer.

Yet it is telling that in the closing lines of her poem to Antonio Barberini, Costa sheds her Juno costume to align herself once more with Cecilia, the singing saint—perhaps a more socially acceptable avatar in negotiations with a cardinal. Just as Saint Urban watched over Saint Cecilia, Costa's literary Cecilia will defend the Barberini name from attack. In return, she asks only that the Barberini family offer her their protection: "E se nei Barberini ella [Cecilia] si loda/ In lei l'honor de' Barberini goda" (And if Cecilia glories in praising the Barberini, let the Barberini glory in praising her).[404]

Margherita Costa's deft transformation from singing saint to pagan goddess and back again as she sought support from the Barberini clan highlights the ways in which Saint Cecilia's body became a flashpoint for representation of singing women in the seventeenth century, whether as an example of music's power to move its listeners closer to the divine, or as a mediator between earthly sirens and their powerful patrons. Over the course of the seventeenth century, as the new art form of opera provided more opportunities for women singers to be seen and heard in public, Cecilia was increasingly represented in the act of making music, and sometimes even in the act of singing. But against the backdrop of Counter-Reformation concerns and the moralist anti-theater crusade that aimed to exclude women from the stage, even as Cecilia could be seen as a mediator between the spheres of heavenly and earthly music, a professional female singer like Margherita Costa had to tread carefully when aligning herself with the singing saint. If in her *Cecilia martire*, Margherita's Pope Urban I had urged Cecilia to

[404] Margherita Costa, *La tromba del parnaso*, 71.

"unfurl her happy notes" in service to the divine, in her dedication to Francesco Barberini, Margherita echoed that language, deftly presenting herself as a secular Cecilia whose singing was in service to her patrons in her closing words: "Io intanto freno le voci per snodare i canti, e profondamente la Sacra sua Porpora riverisco" (meanwhile, I will stop talking so as to unfurl my songs, in deep reverence to your sacred scarlet [Cardinal's hat]).[405]

[405] Margherita Costa, *Cecilia martire poema sacro di Margherita Costa romana*.

Chapter Five:

Staging Female Rule: Anna Francesca Costa, Anne of Austria, and *Ergirodo*

Most Eminent and Revered Lord,

The enterprise (*impresa*) for which I am preparing myself would be deemed reckless, and with good reason (there is no doubt of this, Most Eminent Lord), without the security of the authoritative protection of your Most Revered Excellence. But with it, I hope that even the most difficult of difficulties will be made easier, and that through your name alone, the path to good fortune will be opened to me. I rest secure in Your Eminence's kindness, taking the blame for my own audacity (it is my obligated devotion that is the cause of my most daring impulses), and, certain of finding your genius inclined to share its favors, under the onerous weight of feminine weakness I lighten my own load with the most certain relief of my hopes, that this *opera drammatica* consecrated by me in humility to your name, will be appreciated by Your Eminence, while praying that the Heavens compensate you with grace for your merit, I kiss your Eminence's robe reverently.

From Bologna, 27 December 1652.
Your Most Revered Eminence's most humble, devoted, and obligated servant,
Anna Francesca Costa[406]

[406] "Eminentissimo e Reverendiss.[imo] Signore, Temeraia (non v'è dubbio Eminentissimo Signore) sarebbe, e con ragione stimata l'impresa, alla quale m'accingo senza la sicurezza dell'autorevol protezione di V.E. Reverendiss.[imo]; Da questa spero agilitarsi ogni difficultà più difficile, e con il solo suo nome aprirmisi il sentiero ad ogni evento più fortunato; M'assicuro dall'humanità dell'Em.[inenza] V.[ostra] condanatomi l'ardire a cui l'obligata mia devozione prestommi gl'impulsi più ardenti, e certa d'incontrare inclinato a compartir favori il suo genio sotto il peso a debolezza femminile troppo grave alleggerisco me stessa al sicurissimo sollievo delle speranze, che sia dall'E.[minenza] V.[ostra] gradita quest'opera Drammatica, ch'humile all'Immortalità del suo nome vien da me consacrata, mentre pregandole dal Cielo l'intera corrispondenza di grazie al suo merito bacio reverente all'Em.[inenza] V.[ostra] la veste. Di Bologna 27 Decembre 1652. All'Em.[inenza] V.[ostra] Reverendiss.[ima] Humiliss.[ima] Dev.[ota] Obl.[igata] serva, Anna Francesca Costa." Anna Francesca Costa, dedication to Giovanni Girolamo Lomellini, in Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano* (Bologna: Dozza, 1652), n.p.

In 1652, Anna Francesca Costa dedicated the libretto for an opera entitled *Ergirodo* to Cardinal Giovanni Girolamo Lomellini, the papal legate to the city of Bologna.[407] Less than two weeks later, on January 9 1653, the opera was performed in Bologna's Teatro Guastavillani, the second of the city's public theaters and a favorite venue of its aristocracy.[408] There is little evidence regarding the identities of most of the cast, but it seems likely that Anna Francesca, by then an experienced and celebrated singer, was on the stage that night.[409] And yet it is telling that in the dedication, she was careful to emphasize not her role as prima donna, but the much more unusual role she had played behind the scenes. For the opera, as she reminded the Cardinal and the rest of her public, was indeed her own 'impresa', or enterprise, and a reckless one, at that.[410]

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[407] For Lomellini's biography, see Massimo Carlo Giannini, "Lomellini, Giovanni Girolamo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2005). http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-girolamo-lomellini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/.

[408] The first performance of *Ergirodo* at the Teatro Guastavillani occurred on January 9, 1653; see Anna Francesca Costa's letter to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Bologna, 11 January 1652[1653], in which she reports that "la prima volta la feci mercoledì pasato[sic]" (I put on [the opera] for the first time last Wednesday): ASF, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5319, c. 253r, as published in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 165-66. On the Teatro Guastavillani, also known as the Teatro Formagliari, see Corrado Ricci, *I teatri di Bologna nei secoli XVII e XVIII. Storia anedottica* (Bologna: Successori Monti, 1888), 75-115; Sergio Monaldini, "Il teatro di Filippo Guastavillani, i Riaccesi e l'opera 'alla veneziana' a Bologna (1640-60)," *Il saggiatore musicale* 25, no. 2 (2018): 247-98.

[409] For indirect evidence that Costa sang in *Ergirodo*, see Ferdinando Cospi's letter to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Bologna, January 26 1652[1653], in which Cospi notes that "questa sera [Costa] recita l'ultima volta la sua opera" (this evening [Costa] will perform her opera for the last time): ASF, Mediceo del Principato, f. 5319, c. 250r, cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 167.

[410] I have deliberately chosen to translate the word "impresa" as "enterprise" in this context, to emphasize the financial and managerial role that Anna Francesca Costa took on in bringing the opera to the stage. Although "impresa" can also be translated as "undertaking" or "feat," I believe Anna Francesca herself was likely trying to impress upon her readers that she was in fact the organizer and *impresaria* of the opera.

This turn of phrase was not mere showboating on Anna Francesca's part. As archival evidence demonstrates, it was Anna Francesca herself who secured the protection and financial support of several elite patrons, negotiated the use of the theater, engaged the rest of the singers, supervised the construction of the sets and scenery, and led rehearsals.[411] In short, Anna Francesca Costa was an *impresaria*—one of only a handful of women who worked as musical organizers during the century of opera.[412] The only other two seventeenth-century women for whom we have some evidence of impresarial activity are Cecilia Siri Chigi and Giulia de Caro, both of whom worked at the Teatro San Bartolomeo in Naples in the 1660s and 1670s, at least a decade after Costa's 1653 *Ergirodo*.[413]

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[411] Archival evidence documenting Costa's impresarial work in Bologna was first published by Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 211-33; Teresa Megale, "Altre novità su Anna Francesca Costa e sull'allestimento dell'*Ergirodo*," 137-42.

[412] The term *impresario* did not enter the Italian language until about 1715. However, especially in light of Anna Francesca's public declaration that Ergirodo was her *impresa*, I use the term *impresaria* to emphasize her important creative and administrative work as organizer and promoter of operas, which was not limited to *Ergirodo* alone. On the figure of the impresario in early modern Italy, see Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*; William Holmes, *Opera Observed: Views of a Florentine Impresario in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[413] On Giulia De Caro, see Paologiovanni Maione, "Giulia de Caro 'seu Ciulla' da commediante a cantarina: Osservazioni sulla condizione degli 'armonici' nella seconda metà del Seicento," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 32 (1997): 61-80; Paologiovanni Maione, "'Mena vita onestissima': Le cantarine alla conquista della scena," in *Dibattito sul teatro: Voci, opinioni, interpretazioni*, ed. Carla Dente (Pisa: ETS, 2006), 123-34. Dinko Fabris, *Music in Seventeenth-Century Naples: Francesco Provenzale (1624-1704)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 164-87.

Despite her unique role in the history of opera, until about thirty years ago, Costa was known to musicologists only in passing, and only as one of the singers who performed in the first Italian operas performed at the French court from 1645 to 1647.[414] It was not until the 1990s that Teresa Megale rediscovered and published archival evidence detailing Costa's role in planning and producing the 1653 *Ergirodo* in Bologna.[415] These documents, in large part drawn from the Medici Archive in Florence, also provide important evidence regarding Costa's relationship with one of the most important music patrons of the seventeenth century, Giovan Carlo de' Medici, who offered both protection and financial support for Costa's production of *Ergirodo*.[416] In 2003 and then 2013, Sara Mamone edited and annotated two massive volumes of excerpts, selected for their relevance to seventeenth-century theatrical and musical activities, from the correspondence of Giovan Carlo and his brother Mattias de' Medici.[417] These volumes, which include

[414] On Anna Francesca's performances in Paris, see Henri Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli*, 60, 63, 65, 82, 91, 94, 99, 106, 38; Nino Pirrotta, "Costa," in *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo* (Rome: Le maschere, 1956), 1555-6; Capucci, "Costa, Margherita (Maria Margherita)." For a brief biography of Anna Francesca, see Paola Besutti, "Costa, Anna Francesca," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002). https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O006274. In a footnote to their 1975 article on the touring opera companies known as the *febiarmonici*, Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker described *Ergirodo* as Anna Francesca Costa's initiative and noted that she signed the dedication to the libretto. See Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Dalla *Finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*: storie di Febiarmonici," 443n260.

[415] Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione."; Teresa Megale, "Altre novità su Anna Francesca Costa e sull'allestimento dell'*Ergirodo*."

[416] On the three Medici brothers as an impresarial team, see Sara Mamone, "Most Serene Brothers-Princes-Impresarios: Theater in Florence under the Management and Protection of Mattias, Giovan Carlo, and Leopoldo de' Medici."

[417] Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*; Sara Mamone, *Mattias de' Medici serenissimo mecenate dei virtuosi*.

transcriptions of thirteen of Anna Francesca Costa's letters and include numerous references to both Anna Francesca and her sister, the writer Margherita Costa, have been an invaluable resource for my own archival research, which has allowed me to reconstruct previously unknown details regarding the biographies and performance histories of both sisters.

Neither Anna Francesca Costa nor her production of *Ergirodo* have been the subject of further published research since Megale's two articles in the 1990s. Instead, both have remained mere footnotes in the history of early opera.[418] And yet the intertwined stories of Costa's extraordinary career and of the genesis of *Ergirodo*, her reckless and ultimately successful enterprise, have much to teach us about the sexual politics of the new business of opera in the seventeenth century and about the ways in which women's power was imagined and resisted in the seventeenth century. Indeed *Ergirodo*, an opera that dramatizes and complicates notions of what it meant to be a woman in charge in the seventeenth century, was a particularly appropriate choice for Costa, whose position of authority as *impresaria* and operatic producer must have presented her with unique challenges. Today *Ergirodo* is virtually unknown, even to specialists in Baroque opera, perhaps in part because neither the music nor its composer have been identified. The author of the libretto, identified on the frontispiece only through the pseudonym

[418] The only scholar after Megale to have focused on Anna Francesca Costa in any detail is Giacomo Villa, whose undergraduate thesis remains unpublished, and to whom I extend my warmest thanks for having shared the thesis with me shortly after he finished it. See Giacomo Villa, "'Confusi labirinti': L'opera in musica *Ergirodo* (1652) tra Bologna e Firenze" (Tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2007). In an article focusing on the genesis of Giovanni Andrea Moniglia's *Teseo*, Villa mentions Anna Francesca in a footnote as the organizer of *Ergirodo* in Bologna in 1653. See Villa, Giacomo Villa, "Fonti manoscritte per la storia dello spettacolo fiorentino di metà Seicento: il *Teseo* di Giovanni Andrea Moniglia," *Medioevo e Rinascimento* 23 (2009): 237-58.

"Gelinio Adriano Valgemma Adriano," is almost certainly the Medici librettist Giovanni Andrea Moniglia.[419]

The plot of *Ergirodo* revolves around two pairs of star-crossed lovers. Ergirodo, the king of Crete, suspects that his beloved, Irene, has fallen in love with another man. To avenge this presumed betrayal, Ergirodo forces Irene to marry Fidauro, the general of the Cretan army. Fidauro, who has secretly loved Irene for years, cannot believe his good fortune, but when Ergirodo continues to seek Irene's affections, Fidauro is enraged, and the two men come to blows. Meanwhile, Rosaura, a shepherdess on the neighboring island of Zacynthos who has fallen in love with Ergirodo's portrait, is captured and brought to Crete to work as a slave.[420] Under duress, Rosaura opens a sealed letter which reveals to her astonishment that she and Ergirodo were switched at birth; Rosaura is the true blood heir to the throne. Ergirodo, revealed as a commoner, is deposed by the satraps of Crete as his rival Fidauro prepares to exact revenge. But Rosaura's nursemaid, Dedala, makes another revelation that dissolves the conflict between the two men: Irene is Ergirodo's sister. Irene declares her devotion to Fidauro, and Rosaura, for her part, insists that Ergirodo marry her and reign beside her as king. The opera's conventional

[419] For the first suggestion of which I am aware that Moniglia is in fact the author behind the pseudonym, which is an almost perfect anagram of his name, see Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Dalla *Finta pazza* alla *Veremonda*: storie di Febiarmonici," 443 n. 260. I can offer further confirmation that Moniglia is the author of the libretto for *Ergirodo*. A manuscript version of the libretto, "Ergirodo re di Creta del Dottor Gio: Andrea Muniglia in tre atti in prosa," with the same basic plot and an almost identical cast of characters, attributes the text to "Dottor Gio:[vanni] Andrea Muniglia." The manuscript is in Pesaro, Biblioteca Olivieriana, MS. 167. For Moniglia's biography, see

[420] For an important analysis of the portrait motif in operatic plots, see Wendy Heller, "The Beloved's Image: Handel's Admeto and the Statue of Alcestis," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 3 (2005).

happy ending features a double wedding, and the joyous celebration of Rosaura's ascent to the throne.

There are many aspects of *Ergirodo*'s structure and plot that adhere to the body of conventions established for the Venetian *dramma per musica* by the middle of the seventeenth century.[421] *Ergirodo*, labeled on its frontispiece as a "dramma musicale," is in three acts, a format that had gradually become the standard for operatic plots. Also conventional is the mythological prologue declared or sung by Teti and Amore, a marine scene that may have provided the occasion for elaborate stage sets and stage machinery. The first and third acts were followed by *balli* danced by gardeners and tritons; the second act was followed instead by an *abbattimento* (a choreographed battle scene) between soldiers and thieves attempting to raid the palace armory.[422] The opera's pseudo-historical, complicated plot is a variation on a formula popularized by the Venetian librettist Giovanni Faustini: two pairs of lovers, whose dramatic misadventures are punctuated by comic interventions by various secondary characters, are reunited happily against all odds.[423]

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[421] For a fundamental discussion of the conventions of *dramma per musica*, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 322-60.

[422] For a useful discussion of these two dance forms, among others, in the Venetian context, see Irene Alm, "Winged Feet and Mute Eloquence: Dance in Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003). For a discussion of the dances in *Ercole in Tebe*, a *festa teatrale* for which Moniglia wrote the libretto, performed in Florence in 1661 see Barbara Sparti, "Hercules Dancing in Thebes, in Pictures and Music," *Early Music History* 26 (2007).

[423] For a discussion of this formula, which Ellen Rosand has dubbed the "Faustini mold," see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 73.

Ergirodo's general focus on the question of women's capacity to rule over men was not new in and of itself. In 1620s Florence, during the city's only period of female rule, the co-regent Grand Duchesses Maria Maddalena of Austria and Christine of Lorraine sponsored visual art and music on themes that reinforced their positions as capable rulers, often drawing on stories of noble virgin martyrs such as Agata and Ursula.[424] As Wendy Heller has shown, Venetian opera librettos, in particular, responded to and engaged in the debates on the nature and status of women that had begun in the Renaissance but were still very live at the middle of the seventeenth century.[425] Beginning in the 1640s, as commercial opera flourished in Venice and subject matter expanded accordingly, mythological and historical queens were increasingly popular operatic heroines. Some important examples of this trend are Busenello's chaste Didone, who took the stage in 1641, quickly followed by his scheming Poppea in 1643. And by the 1650s, operas featuring stories of Amazons or warrior queens were an important part of the repertoire in most Italian theaters.[426]

If its structure and basic plot are conventional, what is unusual about *Ergirodo* is its overt affirmation of women's right to rule, a stance that is dramatized in the staged celebration of Rosaura's reclaiming of her birthright and ascent to the throne. An even more surprising aspect is

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[424] The musical and artistic patronage of the two grand duchesses is the focus of Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence*.

[425] See Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*.

[426] For an analysis of the operatic Amazon/warrior queen and an index of productions featuring this figure, see Daniel E. Freeman, "'La guerriera amante': Representations of Amazons and Warrior Queens in Venetian Baroque Opera," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (1996).

the polemic against the "legge salica" (Salic Law), which is invoked on the very first page of the 'precedenti all'opera' (events preceding the opera) in the libretto that was distributed to the audience to facilitate their understanding of the opera.[427] Seventeenth-century audiences would have understood that the Salic Law, based on the ancient code of the Salian Franks, was often cited as authority for the notion that women should not succeed to the crown. As they leafed through the libretto before the performance, the audience would have learned that in the opera's fictional ancient Crete, the Salic Law not only excluded women from succession to the throne, but also stipulated the banishment of any queen who failed to produce male heirs. They would have also learned that it was the Salic Law, denounced in the libretto as "barbara tirannia" (barbarous tyranny), that forced the queen to exchange her newborn daughter (Rosaura) for a baby boy (Ergirodo) and deprived Rosaura of her right to rule.[428]

Ergirodo's direct polemic against the Salic Law is unique, as far as I am aware, among Italian opera librettos of this period, although Cavalli's princess Eritrea (played by Margherita Costa in 1652) was disguised as her dead brother of a fictional law (never named) that excluded women from the throne. But in Eritrea, the Salic law is never directly mentioned, and the exclusion of women from rule is incidental (and almost seems to have been meant to give the main character the opportunity to appear *en travesti*)—in *Ergirodo*, on the other hand, the Salic Law is central to the plot, a characteristic that seems notably out of place. In the early modern

[427] See the "Precedenti all'opera" in Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, n.p.

[428] Fidauro defines the Salic Law as 'barbara tirannia' as he reads the letter written by Rosaura's mother explaining her motivations for switching the babies and revealing Rosaura's identity as heir to the throne. See Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 68.

Italian states, while women were routinely excluded from succession to independent rule, there was no law to this effect, nor was the Salic Law in and of itself a particularly prominent topic in Italian treatises and literature. In France, on the other hand, the reformulated Salic Law was resurrected beginning in the fourteenth century to justify the exclusion of women from the throne, and subsequently touted by jurists as a fundamental law of the kingdom.[429] Why, then would *Ergirodo*, an opera ostensibly created for Bologna, so directly celebrate women's right to rule and criticize the French Salic Law of succession? In the following pages, I will offer an answer to that question through a reconstruction, to the extent possible, of the context in which *Ergirodo* was created and performed. Using new archival documents, I show that *Ergirodo* was created not for Bologna, but for the French court in Paris. Along the way, the story of Anna Francesca Costa and her opera offers a fresh perspective on the context and chronology of the first Italian operas performed in Paris, a history that remains incomplete to this day.

[429] On the history and political context behind the use of the Salic Law to exclude women from the throne in France, see Craig Taylor, "The Salic Law, French Queenship, and the Defense of Women in the Late Middle Ages," Article, *French Historical Studies* 29, no. 4 (2006); Sarah Hanley, "Configuring Authority of Queens in the French Monarchy, 1600-1840s," *Historical Reflections/ Réflections Historiques* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2006); Sarah Hanley, "Identity Politics and Rulership in France: Female Political Place and the Fraudulent Salic Law in Christine de Pizan," in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). Fanny Cosandey, "De lance en quenouille. La place de la reine dans l'État moderne (XIVe-XVIIe siècles)," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 52, no. 4 (1997); Fanny Cosandey, *La reine de France: symbole et pouvoir, XVe-XVIIIe siècle* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 2000); Ralph E. Giesey, *Le rôle méconnu de la loi salique: La succession royale, XIVe–XVIe siècles.* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007). On the figure of the queen or ruling woman in early modern Europe, including Italy, see Maria Teresa Guerra Medici, *Donne di governo nell'Europa moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2005).

Bringing *Ergirodo* to Bologna: "Temeraia sarebbe l'impresa"

By the time she brought *Ergirodo* to the stage of the Teatro Guastavillani, Costa had created a vast network that included some of the most influential music patrons of the seventeenth century. In Italy, she had established connections with Medici in Florence, the Barberini in Rome, and the Bentivoglio in Ferrara. And in France, she expanded her network to include Anne of Austria, Jules Mazarin, and the Chevalier de Jars. As dedicatee of the Bolognese production of *Ergirodo*, however, Costa shrewdly chose a more local patron, the Cardinal Legate Giovanni Girolamo Lomellini. Lomellini began his career in Rome at the Papal *curia*; in the late 1630s and early 1640s he was in the service of the Cardinal Antonio Barberini, for whom both Costa sisters had performed in Paris. Given these mutual connections, it seems likely that Costa would have either met Lomellini in person or been recommended to him by one of her supporters.

But Costa's success in Bologna did not come without a fight. A power struggle with Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi, a Bolognese senator and the co-renter (with Cornelio Malvasia) of the Teatro Guastavillani nearly forced her out of the theater a month earlier than she had planned. Such a disaster would have had grave consequences for Costa, damaging her reputation and probably making it more likely that she would lose some of the financial capital she had invested in the production. As the Medici secretary Francesco Panciatichi, whose sympathies Costa had managed to cultivate, put it: "consider the damage that this lady would incur if she were forced to prematurely mount an opera that has been dragged forward with such effort and such

expense."[430] And yet, in the end, Costa managed to negotiate the extra time in the theater and bring *Ergirodo* to the stage in its fully rehearsed glory. The story of how she did so is a complex one. But it is a story worth telling for the insights it offers into the sexual and social politics of the business of opera.

There are at least fourteen letters by Anna Francesca Costa, with dates from 1645 to 1654, in Giovan Carlo de' Medici's correspondence. Most of these are to Giovan Carlo himself. However, when necessary, Costa appealed to the men she knew had his ear: his secretary in Florence Desiderio Montemagni; the Bolognese Marquis and intermediary Ferdinando Cospi; and even Leonardo Martellini, her alleged husband and fellow musical organizer. Costa's letters offer several valuable insights regarding the factors that contributed to her successful career as a singer and *impresaria*. First and foremost, her letters reveal how widely she cast her net in search of patronage and protection. She had contacts (if not patrons) in Rome, Florence, Bologna, Mantua, Spain, and France; she had sung before kings, queens, cardinals, princes, and dukes. At the same time, Costa's letters also showcase her awareness of the importance of social capital, and her extraordinary skills of negotiation and diplomacy.

In her letters to Giovan Carlo, Costa is careful to emphasize their relationship of mutual obligation. In 1648, she apologized for her past "paz[z]ie" (craziness), assuring Cardinal that "I am left only with repentance for my misdeeds and an eternal obligation to Your Highness for my

[430] "Consideri il pregiudizio che questa dama riceverebbe, essendo costretta a precipitare un'opera tirata avanti con tanta fatica e con tanta spesa." Francesco Panciatichi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 5 December 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 463.

health."[431] In the closing to the same letter, she reminds Giovan Carlo of her many years of service: "And here, bringing to the memory of your Lordship my ancient servitude, I bow in obeisance."[432] Even as she highlights her obligations to Giovan Carlo and his to her, Costa calls Giovan Carlo's attention to the fact that she has many other important patrons who value her talents. In a letter of 1649, she provides him with a long list of her elite admirers in Milan.[433] She had been summoned there by none other than Luis de Benvenidas Carillo, the Marquis of Caracena and the Governor of the Duchy, who arranged for her to sing for "Sua Maestà." Presumably the monarch in question was His Majesty Philip IV of Spain, the brother of Costa's patron in France, Anne of Austria. In addition to the king, Costa recounts that she was also honored by the ladies of the Milanese court, and that the gifts she received from the Signora Marchesa of Caravaggio, the Princess Triulzia, and the Duchess of Mirandola were very generous indeed. Despite the social capital Costa acquired in Milan, she is quick to point out that she did not receive any material gifts. And yet, Costa's trip to Milan was successful in terms of expanding her patronage network: as she tells Giovan Carlo, the Marchesa di Caravaggio sent

[431] "Si assicuri Vostra Altezza che tutte le mie passate pazie mi pasornno che è un pezo, a segnio che non m'è remasto se non il pentimento delle comesse stravaganze et una eternna obligazione a l'Altezza Vostra della mia salute, ho voluto consegniar questa mia al Signor Marchese Cospi, acciò Vostra Altezza l'abbia sicura e per l'istessa via mi honorerà di benigna risposta." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Bologna, 22 September 1648. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5314, fols. 454r-v. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 221.

[432] "E qui, rendendo a memoria a Vostra Altezza la mia antica servitù, umilmente m'inchino." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Bologna, 22 September 1648. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5314, fols. 454r-v. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 221.

[433] Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, 31 July 1649, Bologna. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5315, fol. 30r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 146.

her off to Bologna with a letter of recommendation to the Cardinal Savelli. It was around this time that Costa began to pave the way for her successful production of *Ergirodo* in Bologna by soliciting letters of recommendation from Giovan Carlo that she hoped would help her gain the support she needed. In August of 1649, the Bolognese aristocrat Ciro Marescotti wrote to assure the Medici prince that he would do everything in his power to assist Costa.[434]

By February of 1650, Costa wrote directly to Giovan Carlo to ask for a letter of recommendation to Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi, the Bolognese senator who was the co-renter with Cornelio Malvasia of the Teatro Guastavillani.[435] Costa's instructions to her patron regarding the presentation of his request reveal her political and social savvy. Giovan Carlo should be careful to conceal the fact that Costa has initiated the request for support; instead, he should convince Fantuzzi that the letter in support of Costa has come directly from his desire to support such a talented musician. Even as she instructs her patron in the art of diplomacy, Costa is careful to emphasize the social capital she has already begun to accumulate in Bologna through her friendship with Fantuzzi's wife, Barbara Rangoni: "I beseech you to honor me with one of your letters of recommendation directed to the Signor Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi, but I would like said letter to be an initiative of Your Highness alone, and I don't want it to seem as if I went looking for it – since, in truth, I have been receiving a thousand honors from the Signora Donna Barbara,

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[434] "Incontrerò tutte le occasioni in servire la Signora Francesca Costa, raccomandatami da Vostra Altezza." Ciro Marescotti to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Bologna, 29 August 1649. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5345, fol. 293r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 147.

[435] Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, 11 February 1650, Bologna. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5368, fol. 766r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 148-9.

who treats me as if I were her equal, and brings me with her everywhere in the company of the first ladies of Bologna."[436] For his part, Giovan Carlo would follow Costa's instructions to the letter. In the spring of 1651, Giovan Carlo wrote to inform Fantuzzi he was granting his request to send "Antonio mio castrato" – probably Antonio Rivani – to Bologna to sing in some unspecified *commedie.* One of these may have been the Bolognese production of Cavalli and Cicognini's operatic hit *Giasone*, which was performed at the Teatro Guastavillani that year. Discretely, Giovan Carlo adds that he hopes Fantuzzi will also extend his courtesy to Francesca Costa, who is coming to the city for the same reason, since "she, too, truly merits [Fantuzzi's] favor due to her *virtù*."[437]

By the time Costa brought *Ergirodo* to the stage in 1653, she had established an impressive network of aristocratic patrons in Bologna. Given her previous appearances in musical comedies, presumably on the stage of the Teatro Guastavillani, she would have also had a fan base of opera-goers in the city. In the fall of 1652, Costa began the negotiations for the use of the Teatro Guastavillani, which as we recall was being rented from the Guastavillani family by two Bolognese senators, Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi and Cornelio Malvasia. What emerges from

[436] "La suplico volermi onorare di una sua lettera in mia raccomandazione apresso il Signor Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi, ma vorei che la detta lettera fosse scritta di proprio moto di Vostra Altezza e che non paresse ch'io lene avessi ricercato, poi che in vero io ricevo mille onori dalla Signora Barbera, tratandomi come io fossi una sua pari, conducendomi seco per tutto in compagnia delle prime dame di Bolognia." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 11 February 1650. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5368, fol. 766r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 148.

[437] "Merita anche ella veramente i suoi favori per la sua virtù." Minute of Giovan Carlo de' Medici to Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi, Florence, 16 April 1651. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5362, fol. 603r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 159.

the paper trail in the Medici archives is Costa's skill in engaging and mobilizing the support of Giovan Carlo and his intermediaries in her dealings with Fantuzzi.

On September 7, 1652, Costa wrote to Giovan Carlo to confirm that she had received his "begnignissime lettere" (supremely kind letters) in support of her venture and that she had already given them to Ferdinando Cospi.[438] Cospi, who had been at the service of the Medici court since his youth and been made senator in Bologna in 1650, was an important ally for Costa. Thanks in part to Cospi's efficient intervention and political clout in both Bologna and Florence, the initial negotiations with Fantuzzi seem to have gone smoothly. On September 12, Fantuzzi wrote to Giovan Carlo to confirm that Costa could have the theater. Fantuzzi's letter underscores both his desire to ingratiate himself to Giovan Carlo and the powerful ways in which musical performance could enhance a city's public image: "I accept this occasion with the particular ambition to obey Your Highness, and also to multiply the delight of my fatherland by making it easier for these *virtuosi* to render [Bologna] simultaneously admired and enticed with the quality of their talent."[439]

A letter from Cospi to Giovan Carlo, penned a few days later, confirms that Fantuzzi has conceded the theater to Costa and observes that "[Costa] is awaited here with great desire, as everyone hopes to see and hear a beautiful opera; and this will do us all good, because here there

[438] Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 7 September 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 240r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 176-7.

[439] "Ricevo con ambizione particolare quest'occasione d'ubidire a Vostra Altezza, non meno che di moltiplicare il diletto della mia patria, dando comodità a' virtuosi di renderla amirata et allettata insieme con la qualità del loro talento." Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Parma, 12 September 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 608r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 177.

are no other diversions, not even Zanni [commedia dell'arte characters]."[440] Cospi's letter hints at the civil unrest that was plaguing Bologna during this period, which meant that entertainment was reduced. But it also hints at Costa's significant role in the new business of opera, suggesting that her reputation as an experienced and talented musician and musical organizer preceded her.

The extent to which Giovan Carlo de' Medici was involved in Costa's production not only as protector but also as co-organizer is revealed in his letter addressed to Cospi in Septeber 1652. Here Giovan Carlo asks that an inventory be made of the theater before Costa takes possession of it: "All that's left is for Your Lordship to ask that the theater be consigned to one of your men with the purpose of making an inventory of all of the sets and all of the things that will be needed, so that when Costa arrives in Bologna, [the inventory] can be given to her."[441] Giovan Carlo's request illuminates not only his support of Costa's venture but also his financial investment in the production; the purpose of the inventory was to clarify what was already in the theater and what would have to be constructed or acquired specifically for *Ergirodo.*

The first sign of trouble came at the end of November, when Fantuzzi wrote to two separate letters, one to Giovan Carlo and one to his secretary, to complain that Costa was behind schedule in preparing her opera for the stage and was planning to occupy the Teatro

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[440] "Ella è aspetta[ta] qui con gran desiderio, sperandosi vedere e sentire bell'opera et farà bene poiché non ci è altri trattamenti, né meno comici Zanni." Ferdinando Cospi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Villa Bagnarola, 16 September 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 309r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 178.

[441] "Resterà che Vostra Signoria si compiaccia di operare che sia consegnato il teatro a qualche suo uomo, con far pigliar inventario delle scene e di tutte l'appartenenze che vi saranno, acciò venendo a Bologna la medesima Costa, possa a lei stessa farsene la consegna." Giovan Carlo de' Medici to Ferdinando Cospi, from Florence, 24 September 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5371, fol. 71r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 178.

Guastavillani for the entire month of January.[442] This, according to Fantuzzi, was a violation of their earlier agreement, which had specified that she could have the theater for three months: September, October, and December. The problem, as Fantuzzi explained to Giovan Carlo, was that he had agreed to give the theater in January to the composer Francesco Manelli, who was preparing performances of an opera entitled *Il ratto d'Europa*. Not coincidentally, Fantuzzi himself was the librettist for the opera, which was under the auspices of the Duke and Duchess of Parma (Margherita de' Medici, Giovan Carlo's sister). In his letter to Giovan Carlo, Fantuzzi is diplomatic in his account of the situation. He does not directly accuse Costa of wrongdoing, probably because he understood that she enjoyed the Cardinal's support and even affection. Instead, Fantuzzi claims that because Giovan Carlo requested the theater for three months and three months only, in conceding the theater to Manelli for the month of January, he did not imagine he would be neglecting his obligation to Giovan Carlo. To allow Costa to stay in the theater an extra month, however, would force Fantuzzi to break his promise to Manelli, who has already prepared the music and engaged the singers. This puts Fantuzzi in a very difficult situation. Fantuzzi's appeal to Giovan Carlo relies on what he hopes are shared values of service, obligation, and honor: "I humbly ask Your Highness to deign to give [Anna Francesca] some

[442] Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Parma, 28 November 1652, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 624r; Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Desiderio Montemagni, from Parma, 28 November 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 182 and 457-8.

motivation for promptness, so that I will not have to break my word to Manelli...thus I humbly portray for Your Highness the state in which I find myself ."[443]

In contrast to the diplomatic and measured tones of the letter to Giovan Carlo, Fantuzzi's letter to the secretary Desiderio Montemagni is decidedly accusatory in Costa's regard. His account casts Costa as deceitful and manipulative: "If she had asked for more time…I would not have given my word to Manelli; thus from the very beginning the cause of this mess was Signora Francesca herself, who did not even deign to say a word when she came to Bologna."[444] While Fantuzzi's appeal to Giovan Carlo had focused on his gentlemanly desire not to break his word to the composer Francesco Manelli, when addressing Montemagni he highlights instead his position as stuck between the wishes of two elite patrons: Giovan Carlo de' Medici and the Duke and Duchess of Parma. Appealing to Montemagni's sense of solidarity with a fellow courtier, Fantuzzi's letter presents his own intentions as pure in contrast to Costa's deception. To highlight this, Fantuzzi asks Montemagni to tell Giovan Carlo that he is willing to compromise and allow Costa to stay in the theater until the eighth of January, but no longer than that. Montemagni should take care to inform Giovan Carlo of this concession, but he should not under

[443] "Sono a supplicare umilmente l'Altezza Vostra a degnarsi di dare un motivo di sollecitudine alla medesima, a fine io non abbi a venir meno della mia parola al Manelli....onde rapresento all'Altezza vostra umilmente lo stato in ch'io mi trovo." Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Parma, 28 November 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 624r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 182.

[444] "E se nel modo medesimo che ha chiesto il teatro per i tre mesi avesse commandato per più, io non avrei impegnata la parola col Manelli e colpa principalissima di questo disordine è stata la Signora Francesca medema, che venuta a Bologna non s'è degnata né pure di fare un motivo." Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Desiderio Montemagni, from Parma, 28 November 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 460.

any circumstances tell Costa, because "she would abuse it and it would give her hope of a further extension."[445] In closing, Fantuzzi highlights his motivations, which were simply to serve his patrons, even as he reinforces the image he has created of Costa as dishonorable and capricious. If he had known Costa needed the theater earlier, he would have kept it free for her as Giovan Carlo's client: "But Signora Francesca did not say anything, and so I thought we were in agreement and because of my natural desire to serve everyone I gave the theater to Manelli for the performance of one of my operas. However, thank God, I managed to get the lowdown on Signora Francesca in time so that, if she wishes, she can do as she planned."[446]

A few days after Fantuzzi sent his letters to Montemagni, Costa followed up with two letters of her own in an attempt to elicit support from the men she knew had the power to intervene. "Look at the labyrinth in which I find myself," she exhorted Montemagni. "I beg you, my Lord, to favor me with [a letter] of your own, and although I have already been your most obligated servant for many reasons, this will be the largest obligation, and will render me

[445] "Se ne abbusarebbe e pigliarebbe speranza di proroga maggiore." Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Desiderio Montemagni, from Parma, 28 November 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 459.

[446] "Ma la Signora Francesca non ha parlato, io ho creduto che sia sul concerto e per quel naturale mio desiderio di servir tutti ho concesso il teatro al Manelli, per la recita d'un opera che è mia, però lodato Dio che presto mi sono penetrato a sentire della Signora Francesca in tempo che se vuole può aver il suo intento." Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to Desiderio Montemagni, from Parma, 28 November 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 460.

eternally tied to your kindness, given that we are talking about my ruin. With the warmth of your letters, Your Lordship can remedy this great inconvenience."[447]

In her letter to Giovan Carlo, Costa argues that Fantuzzi's lack of regard for her should be read as an insult to her patron: "With tears in my eyes, I turn to Your Highness to inform you of the state in which I find myself because of the slight, without regard for Your Highness, committed by the Senator Fantuzzi, who last night sent Count Uguzzone Peppoli to inform me that I was to leave the theater by the end of December."[448] Costa is careful to remind Giovan Carlo that while she did initially request the theater through the end of December, she did not take possession of it until much later than planned. This delay was caused by Fantuzzi, who made "domande impertimenti" (impertinent requests) to share in Costa's profits. Shrewdly, Costa points out that while Fantuzzi had granted Giovan Carlo the use of the theater at no charge, he had coerced her into paying him for "quatro stanzini i meglio li quali mi vogliano dire quatro dobole per sera" (four boxes, the best ones, which mean four doubloons per night). She agreed to this price, and now she finds herself in dire straights, since with so little time at her disposal, she

[447] "Veda in che laberinto mi trovo...la suplico mio signore a favorirme anche Lei una sua, già per tante altre ocasioneobbligatissima serva, ma questo sarà il magiore obligo che mi renderà in eterno legata alla sua benignità, mentre si tratta della mia rovina. Con la caldeza delle lettere Vostra Signoria Illustrissima pol rimediare a tanto inconveniente." Anna Francesca Costa to Desiderio Montemagni, from Bologna, 2 December 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 462.

[448] "Ricorro con le lacrime su gli ochi davanti a Vostra Altezze Serenissima segnificandoli nello stato nel quale mi trovo per il mancamento che senza riguardo della Altezza Vostra comette il Quaranta Fantuzzi il quale ieri sera mandò da me il Conte Uguzon Peppoli a dirmi ch'io lasciassi il teatro libero alla fine di decenbre[sic]." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 2 December 1651. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 623r. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 226.

will not be able to perform the opera as planned and will lose a great deal of money. As she had earlier when she requested letters of recommendation, here she instructs Giovan Carlo, telling him exactly what he must do to remedy the situation: "I turn then to Your Highness…and I beg you to write one letter to Count Uguzzone Peppoli and one to the Senator [Fantuzzi] so that they know that Your Most Serene Highness will not permit that I am assassinated in this way, while I find myself having spent an immense sum of money, as this would be the end of me."[449]

As befits her profession as a performer, Costa's language is vivid and dramatic, presenting her situation to Giovan Carlo as a matter of life and death. At the same time, in this letter Costa makes plain her practical knowledge of the inner workings of the financial and managerial aspects of the music business. She is an *impresaria* whose livelihood depends on her ability to bring her opera to the stage as planned. In the end, Costa's rhetorical strategies would prove very effective—Giovan Carlo seems to have done exactly as she asked. A few days later, Costa wrote to thank Giovan Carlo for his "benignissime let[t]ere" (very kind letters), adding that she hoped that all would turn out happily in the end, knowing that her "giuste ragioni" (just motives) had been protected by Giovan Carlo himself.[450]

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[449] "Ricorro dunque a quella [Altezza Vostra] con le più vive espresioni de l'animo e la suplico a scrivere una letera al Conte Uguzon Peppoli et una al Quaranta acciò sapiano che Vostra Altezza non vol permetere che io sia così assassinata mentre mi trovo aver fatto una spesa immenssa e questo sarebbe il mio esterminio." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 2 December 1651. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 623r. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 226.

[450] Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 7 December 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 240r. Cited in Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 228.

Shortly thereafter, Fantuzzi seems to have realized that to continue to antagonize Costa could have political ramifications. Yet before giving in completely to her demands he attempted to propose a solution that would have allowed him to make a profit: Costa could have the theater for the entire Carnival season, but she would have to share it with Manelli.[451] That plan does not seem to have been met with approval by Costa and her Medici patrons, perhaps in part because it was becoming apparent that Fantuzzi was out to "buscare qualche cosa del teatro" (make a buck off the theater).[452] On December 24, 1652 – just two weeks before the first performance of *Ergirodo* – Fantuzzi agreed to give Costa the theater for the entire month of January: "So that Your Highness will understand that the signs of my most humble service are ever more vivid, I have given Manelli a gift for the damage [he will incur], so that Costa can have the theater completely at her disposal for the entirety of next month."[453] A letter from Cospi to Giovan Carlo confirms that Fantuzzi has renegotiated the contracts with his musicians in order that "Costa can execute her performances with every comfort."[454] As Cospi points out, Fantuzzi's capitulation to

[451] Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to [Giovan Carlo de' Medici?], from Bologna, 11 December 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5207, fols. 792r-v. Cited in Giacomo Villa, "'Confusi labirinti': L'opera in musica *Ergirodo* (1652) tra Bologna e Firenze," 126.

[452] Ferdinando Cospi to Desiderio Montemagni, from Bologna, December 2 1653. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 462.

[453] "Al fine l'Altezza Vostra conosca sempre più vivi i segni dell'umilissima servitù mia ho aggiustato un regalo al Mannelli, per lo danno, sì che la Costa avrà tutto il seguente a libera sua disposizione il teatro." Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi to [Giovan Carlo de' Medici?], from Bologna, December 24, 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, 5207, fol. 752r. Cited in Giacomo Villa, "'Confusi labirinti': L'opera in musica *Ergirodo* (1652) tra Bologna e Firenze," 127.

[454] "Sì che la Costa fassi le sue recite con ogni comodità." Ferdinando Cospi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 31 December 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 236r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 185.

Costa's demands is really a victory for Giovan Carlo: "And so this affair has been concluded in conformity with the commands of Your Most Serene Highness."[455]

And so it was that Costa's production of *Ergirodo* premiered in the Teatro Guastavillani on January 9, 1653. The opera opened about two weeks later than planned, probably due to the negotiations with Fantuzzi, but the last performance took place on January 26, just as Costa had hoped all along. Further details on the performances are few and far between; as mentioned earlier, it seems likely that Costa sang one of the lead female roles, but proof of this has not yet surfaced. The identities of the rest of the singers are equally mysterious at this point, but there is a tantalizing clue as to one of them in a letter dated October 30 1652 from Cornelio Malvasia, the Bolognese senator who was co-renter with Fantuzzi of the Teatro Guastavillani, to the Duke of Modena Francesco I d'Este: "The Signor Prince Leopoldo de' Medici has commended to me a singer named Anna Maria [sic] Costa, who has come to Bologna to perform in certain comedies. She would like to have Paino for a principal role, if that neither inconveniences nor disgusts Your Highness."[456]

Whether or not "Paino" performed in *Ergirodo* is unclear, but Malvasia's note offers important evidence of Costa's abilities to strategically deploy her connections to some of the

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[455] "E questo è negozio finito in conformità de' comandi di Vostra Altezza Serenissima." Ferdinando Cospi to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 31 December 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5320, fol. 236r. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 185.

[456] "Il Signor Prencipe Leopoldo de' Medici mi racomanda una tal Anna Maria Costa [sic] cantatrice, che è venuta a Bologna per recitare certe opere in musica. Questa desiderarebbe d'haver per una parte principale Paino, se non è d'incomodo e di disgusto all'Altezza Vostra." Cornelio Malvasia to Francesco I d'Este, from the Villa di Panzano, 30 October 1652. Archivio di Stato di Modena, Letterati, busta 33. In Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione," 229n63.

most powerful music patrons of the seventeenth century. Costa had initiated the chain of correspondence about ten days earlier when she wrote to ask Desiderio Montemagni to prepare a letter on her behalf from Leopoldo de' Medici to Cornelio Malvasia.[457] In the same letter, she reminds Montemagni that she will also need a letter from Giovan Carlo to the Marquis Cornelio Bentivoglio, "per i suoi musici" (for his musicians). She closes the letter in true impresarial style, reminding Montemagni that "it is necessary for me to bring these two letters with me so that I can send them right away and settle the business with the musicians, which is what is most urgent, and that is the reason why I have found the audacity to bother you so."[458]

A few days after the show opened, Costa wrote to Giovan Carlo to report with evident satisfaction that the opera had "turned out very well, praise God."[459] In the same letter, she thanks her patron for his "intercession" regarding the theater in Bologna and promises that she will bring him the *memoriale* (expense report) in person shortly. Tellingly, here Costa also reveals that she plans to bring *Ergirodo* to Florence shortly after Easter. There she will "make [the opera] even more splendid" assuming she can count on his protection, "under the shade of

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[457] Anna Francesca Costa to Desiderio Montemagni, from Bologna, 19 October 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato,1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 458-9.

[458] "Mio Signore è necessario che io porti queste doi letere meco, acciò io possa subito inviarlle alli su detti e stabilire il negozio de' musici, il quale è quel che preme più e per tanto io piglio ardire di tanto infastidirla." Anna Francesca Costa to Desiderio Montemagni, from Bologna, 19 October 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 1505, unfoliated. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 458-9.

[459] "È riuscita lodato Idio benissimo." Anna Francesca Costa to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, from Bologna, 11 January 1652[1653]. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5319, fols. 253r-253v. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 165. Anna Francesca uses the Florentine dating style when she writes to Giovan Carlo; the date is not 1652 but 1653.

which I foresee that it will be safe from evil intent."[460] While the details have not yet surfaced, there is much evidence to suggest that – at least in some form – Costa's plan to bring *Ergirodo* to Florence was realized.[461] That she had such plans is further proof that her impresarial activies went beyond Bologna.

Ergirodo: authorship, text, plot

The music for *Ergirodo* has not come to light, nor has its composer been identified. It was not yet standard practice to credit the composer in print, so the fact that this information does not appear in the libretto printed in Bologna in 1652 is not particularly surprising. Yet even the name of the librettist for the opera is shrouded in mystery. On the title page, the text is attributed to "Gelinio Valgemma Adriano," probably a pseudonym for the librettist, poet, and physician Giovanni Andrea Moniglia (1625-1700).[462] Like Anna Francesca Costa, Moniglia was a favorite of Giovan Carlo de' Medici. In 1649, Moniglia had been admitted to the Accademia degli Apatisti, an important linguistic academy that had participated along with the Accademia della Crusca in the promotion and study of the Tuscan language and was under the protection of

[460] "A Firenze procurerò di arichirla anche davantaggio e con ogni umiltà suplicherò Vostra Altezza a onorarlla della sua protezione, sotto l'ombre della quale la vedo assicurata dalla malignità." Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5319, fols. 253r-253v. Cited in Sara Mamone, *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari*, 165. Anna Francesca uses the Florentine dating style when she writes to Giovan Carlo; the date is not 1652 but 1653.

[461] See Nicola Michelassi, "Il teatro del Cocomero di Firenze: uno stanzone per tre accademie (1651-1665)," *Studi secenteschi* 40 (1999).

[462] For Moniglia's biography, see Marco Catucci, "Moniglia, Giovanni Andrea," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2011). https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-andrea-moniglia_(Dizionario-Biografico)/.

Cosimo III. By 1651, Giovan Carlo de' Medici had nominated Moniglia for a professorship in medicine at the University of Pisa. This nomination was not successful, but in 1656, Giovan Carlo would appoint Moniglia as his personal physician. Just one year later, Moniglia's comedy *Il potestà di Cotognole*, with music by Jacopo Melani, was commissioned by Giovan Carlo and performed by the Accademia degli Immobili for the inauguration of the new Teatro della Pergola in Florence.

Although Moniglia did not include *Ergirodo* among his collected librettos, the *Poesie dramatiche* (3 vols., Florence, 1688, 1689, and 1698), there is much evidence to suggest he authored the text. The pseudonym Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, as Bianconi and Walker have pointed out, is a near perfect anagram for Giovanni Andrea Moniglia. And a seventeenth-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Olivieri in Pesaro, unnoticed by previous scholars, contains a prose comedy in three acts entitled "Ergirodo re di Creta"—probably intended to be performed as a play—that is clearly attributed to Moniglia, confirming Bianconi and Walker's hypothesis that the text is his.[463] Why, then, would Moniglia have used an anagram to sign the libretto for the Bologna production of *Ergirodo*? As we recall, the only two names on the libretto are that of the dedicatee, the Cardinal Legate of the city, Giovanni Girolamo Lomellini, and that of Anna Francesca Costa, who signed the dedication. For an up-and-coming young poet like Moniglia, the ramifications of allowing one's name to appear in print alongside that of a woman of dubious moral status may have been worrying. Costa, after all, had spent much of her career singing "in

[463] Giovanni Andrea Moniglia, "Ergirodo re di Creta del Dottor Gio: Andrea Muniglia in tre atti in prosa." Pesaro, Biblioteca Olivieri, MS 167. Anna Tedesco discusses the existence of a prose version of Cavalli's *Giasone* that was intended to be stage or read as a play in Anna Tedesco, "Cicognini's *Giasone*: Between Music and Theater," in *Readying Cavalli's Operas for the Stage. Manuscript, Edition, Production*, ed. Ellen Rosand (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).

scena" – on the public stage. The Cardinal Legate, on the other hand, was untouchable – his moral status was irreproachable enough not to be endangered even by associating with a public woman like Costa.

As Ellen Rosand has argued for the Venetian context, the practice of signing libretti with a pseudonym or anagram underscored the subversive potential of such texts.[464] In the case of *Ergirodo*, it was not only Costa's precarious moral status that was problematic, but also the controversial stance of the text itself. The printed libretto opens with two dense pages of *argumenti e precedenti all'opera*: two dense pages in which the complicated backstory to the plot is explicated in detail, followed by a short paragraph that summarizes only the first scene of the opera itself. It is in the *argumenti e precedenti* that the text takes a surprising and polemical stance against the *lex salica*. The so-called Salic law was not a law at all, but a set of beliefs and practices that were often invoked during succession disputes to exclude women from the throne when it was politically convenient. The problems created by these practices and beliefs, later denounced by Fidauro as "barbara tirannia" (barbaric tyranny), are the catalyst that sets the opera's plot in motion.[465] In the *argumenti e precedenti*, and in the plot of the opera itself, the injustices of the Salic law are described as taking two principle forms. Not only are women excluded from the throne, but to add insult to injury, the law also allows for the banishment of queen consorts who do not produce a male heir—even if they give birth to a princess.

[464] Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 87 and 156.

[465] Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 68.

The backstory of the opera features just such a queen, whose predicament sets the entire plot in motion. Iarba, the king of Crete, is left without an heir to the throne after the death of his wife Doriclea and their two sons. To remedy this problem, the aging Iarba takes a second wife, Felisdra. After four years have passed and Felisdra has not yet produced an heir, the Senate of Crete resolves to banish her, "così permettendo le leggi di quell'impero" (since the laws of that empire permitted such a thing).[466] In the nick of time, Felisdra discovers that she is pregnant. This news causes the Senate to rescind the decree that would have deprived her of her royal status. However, as the text is careful to specify, Felisdra's trials are far from over. Felisdra knows that if the child she is carrying turns out to be a girl, the Senate's decree will be enforced and she will be banished. To guard against this possibility, after giving birth to a daughter, Felisdra exchanges her child for a boy born the same day. The king is none the wiser, and the boy is raised as the heir to the throne, while the queen's daughter is sent off to the island of Zacynthos in the care of a wet nurse named Dedala.[467] Before leaving with the child, Dedala insists that the queen must write a letter attesting to her daughter's identity and sign it with the royal seal of Crete. The queen complies, but only on the condition that Dedala promise not to reveal the contents of the letter until such time as "distrutta la legge Salica potessero anco le femmine ereditare i regni" (with the abolishment of the Salic law, women were allowed to inherit

[466] "Argumenti, e Precendenti all'Opera," in Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, n.p.

[467] Dedala's name, the female version of Daedalus, evokes her role as guardian but also her function in the opera as the keeper of the "labyrinth" that holds Rosaura captive. Only Dedala knows Rosaura's identity, and it is Dedala who reveals in the final denouement that Ergirodo and Irene are brother and sister. This resolves the the feud between Ergirodo and Fidauro and makes possible the happy union of Rosaura and Ergirodo.

kingdoms).[468] Dedala obeys, raising the queen's daughter, whom she calls Rosaura, as a "povera pastorella" (a poor little shepherdess) on the distant island of Zacynthos without ever telling her of her birthright.

Back in Crete, Ergirodo, the boy raised as the heir to the throne, reaches adulthood and is crowned king upon the death of his father. When Ergirodo and his troops invade Zacynthos during a conflict, he is wounded, and ends up in the care of Dedala, who nurses him back to health but does not allow Rosaura to see him. When Ergirodo leaves, he gives Dedala his portrait in thanks for her kindness, exhorting her to come visit the original in Crete someday. When Rosaura sees the portrait, she falls instantly in love with its subject, despite the fact that she has never met Ergirodo in person. At this point, the audience is caught up on the backstory, and the opera begins.

In the opening scene, Rosaura strolls the shore of Zacynthos with Ergirodo's portrait in hand, singing of her hopeless love for a man she has never met. Fidauro, the general of the Cretan army, arrives with his soldiers who capture Rosaura and take her back to Crete as a slave. Meanwhile, Ergirodo has returned from Zacynthos, only to find a love letter that the maidservant Zelinda has written to another man in Irene's name. To cure his broken heart, he orders Irene to marry Fidauro. Ergirodo is mad with jealousy, and continually attempts to entice Irene into showing him a sign of her love, but she insists she must remain faithful to her husband. During a conflict between Ergirodo and Fidauro over the affections of Irene, Rosaura saves the king's life, and when Fidauro threatens to send her away, she offers him the sealed document and her

[468] "Argumenti, e Precendenti all'Opera," in Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, n.p.

identity is revealed. Gleefully, Fidauro takes the document to the satraps, who determine that "il re non è più re" (the king is no longer king).[469] Because the "barbara tirannia" (barbaric tyranny) of the Salic law of succession has recently been abolished, the throne belongs to Rosaura, Iarba's only true blood heir. When Fidauro threatens to kill Ergirodo in revenge for his attempts to seduce Irene, Dedala reveals that Ergirodo and Irene are brother and sister. This final revelation leads to a last-minute resolution between Ergirodo and Fidauro, who no longer have a reason to fight over Irene. As the opera ends, the two couples are finally, happily united: Fidauro with Irene, and Ergirodo with Rosaura.

The opera's complicated backstory and its plot, which features the travails of two pairs of lovers that are happily united at the very last minute, recall the librettos of the Venetian impresario Marco Faustini (1606-1676). As Ellen Rosand has argued, Faustini used "pseudo-historical" *antefatti* both to give "an aura of verisimilitude" to his librettos, and to help him create multiple variations of the same basic pattern.[470] The *precedenti all'opera* for *Ergirodo*, which sets the opera in Crete during some unspecified period of the distant past, shares this pseudo-historical quality. Intriguingly, it also casts the players of *Ergirodo* as descendants of other well-known operatic characters that had appeared in several of Faustini's librettos for Francesco Cavalli in Venice. Iarba, who in Faustini and Cavalli's *Didone* (1641) had saved Dido from suicide after she was abandoned by Aeneas, appears here as the king of Crete who has been left without heirs. Iarba's first wife, we are told, was Doriclea – a name that for seventeenth-century audiences would have recalled the fictional warrior queen created by Faustini for

[469] Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 72.

[470] Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 172.

Cavalli's opera of the same name in 1645. The name of Ergirodo's birth mother, Giocasta, is perhaps an allusion to Giovanni Andrea Moniglia's libretto *Giocasta regina d'Armenia*, published in his *Poesie drammatiche* in 1680, but certainly written much earlier. The two characters whose lives are most directly influenced by the Salic law, Iarba's second wife Felisdra and his blood heir Rosaura, are the only two to have original names, as if to highlight their importance in the plot.

Another element that *Ergirodo* has in common with the Faustini-Cavalli model is the mythological frame in which the main story of the opera is presented. In the prologue, the sea goddess Thetis, whose role as "alta regina del mar" (lofty queen of the sea) parallels that of Rosaura, true queen of Crete, flees from the island in protest of a situation that has placed the kingdom in the hands of the wrong person and unfairly excluded the true heir from the throne.[471] When Cupid arrives and attempts to keep her from leaving, Thetis explains that she will not return until the rightful heir to the throne rules the island. Cupid, for his part, swears that he will do everything in his power to make sure Thetis's hopes for Crete are realized. After Cupid's work is done, the two couples are happily united, and Crete is in the hands of its rightful ruler, the opera closes with another mythological scene that resolves the issue featured in the prologue. In the last scene, the sea nymph Dori exhorts the lovers of Crete to rejoice: Thetis, "la bella

[471] Thetis refers to herself as "dell'ondoso impero alta Regina" (lofty queen of the empire of the waves." See the "Prologo," in Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, n.p.

regina" (the beautiful queen) of the sea has returned, and "il germe di Crete comincia a regnar" (the heir of Crete begins her reign).[472]

Ergirodo: "l'opera che fu fatta in Francia"

In contrast to the allegorical function of the mythological scenes in Doriclea and other operas created after the "Faustini mold," in *Ergirodo* these scenes reinforce a concrete polemic against the ideologies and practices associated with the Salic law of succession. Thetis abandons Crete because its unjust laws have put the wrong person on the throne; she returns only when those laws are abolished and Rosaura, the blood heir and true ruler of the island is in power. In the printed libretto for the Bologna performances, the Salic law is mentioned explicitly in the *argumenti e precedenti dell'opera* as the reason why Queen Felisdra exchanges her newborn daughter for a baby boy. According to the laws of the fictional ancient Crete in which the opera is set, women are excluded from the throne. As the libretto points out, Felisdra's decision to switch the two babies is motivated by her understanding that the birth of a daughter would not save her from her impending exile: "because those laws allowed Kings to divorce their wives not only for being sterile, but also for being sterile of male offspring."[473] These laws, later denounced as "barbaric tyranny" by the Cretan General Fidauro, are both the catalyst that sets

[472] "Prologo," in Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, n.p.

[473] "Permettendo quelle leggi non solo il divorzio ai Regi per esser le mogli sterili, ma ancora sterili di maschia prole." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 68.

the plot in motion and the obstacle that stands in the way of resolution and harmony. It is only when the Salic law is abolished that Rosaura can take her rightful place on the throne.

Ergirodo's focus on women's right to the throne seems strange at first glance, since until now it has been assumed that the opera was first performed in Bologna in 1653. But two newly discovered letters penned by Anna Francesca Costa offer compelling evidence that *Ergirodo* was created neither for Florence nor for Bologna, but instead for Paris. In early September 1652, before all of her troubles began with Fantuzzi, Costa wrote directly to him to ask that he lend her the Teatro Guastavillani: "Confident in your kindness, I come before you to exhort that you might favor me by lending me the theater for three months….because I want to stage there an opera that was done in France, everything is in order; the sets that are already in the theater will be useful to me. This [opera production] will allow me to cover my modest living expenses, as well as to make a profit."[474] The same day, Costa addressed a similar request to Fantuzzi's wife Barbara Rangoni, asking the noblewoman to intervene on her behalf: "Most Illustrious Signora and Very Respected Patron, I come to you with this letter to remind Your Most Illustrious Ladyship of my devoted and passionate servitude, and with the title of true servant, I beseech you to act as my tutelary deity with the Most Illustrious Signor Quaranta [Fantuzzi] so that he

[474] "Confidata nella sua benignità vengo a suplicarla, che mi voglia favorire di prestarmi il teatro per tre mesi...volendovi io rappresentare un'opera, che fu fatta in Francia, et ogni cosa è all'ordine, mentre le medesime sciene, che sono in quel teatro sono al mio proposito, e questo mi serve per un poco di trattenimento, et anche ne caverò qualche utile." Anna Francesca Costa to [Paolo Emilio Fantuzzi], from Florence, 3 September 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 5207, fol. 1059v. Giacomo Villa cites the letter in his thesis, but incorrectly identifies the addressee as Carlo de' Medici. Giacomo Villa, "'Confusi labirinti': L'opera in musica *Ergirodo* (1652) tra Bologna e Firenze," 117. Villa's confusion is understandable since the addressee of the letter is not identified in the copy of the letter that ended up in Carlo de' Medici's correspondence. However, Anna Francesca addresses Fantuzzi directly as "Signor Quaranta, mio Signore," leaving no doubt that the letter was meant for him.

honors me by lending me the theater for October, November, and December, because I wish to stage there an opera that was done in France."[475] The opera that Costa was preparing in the fall of 1652 was, of course, *Ergirodo*—described in both letters as the opera "che fu fatta in Francia" (that was done in France). What exactly Costa meant by "fu fatta" is unclear—but what is certain is that some version of *Ergirodo* (whether the subject, the libretto, the music, or all of these) had been given at the French court before Costa began to organize the Bolognese production.

Given *Ergirodo*'s French origins, its preoccupation with the ideologies and practices associated with the so-called Salic Law makes much more sense. The issue of female rule would have certainly weighed heavily on the minds of the elite audience for whom *Ergirodo* was performed at the French court, still coming to terms with the new regency of Anne of Austria after Louis XIII's premature death in 1643. Especially after the fourteenth century, when Salic Law was invoked as justification to exclude women from political power, female regency became a subject of increasing concern in French literature, political treatises and pamphlets, and public discourse.[476] The controversial regencies of Catherine de' Medici in the sixteenth century

[475] "Ill.ma Sig.ra e Padrona Colendissima, vengo con questa mia a render a memoria a V.S. Ill.ma la mia divota e svisceratissima servitù, e con questo titolo di vera serva la suplico a voler esser mio nume tutelare a questo Ill.mo Signor Quaranta, acciò m'onori di prestarmi il teatro per ottobre, novembre, e dicembre, diserando io di rappresentarvisi un'opera che si fece in Francia." Anna Francesca Costa to [Barbara Rangoni], from Florence, 3 September 1652. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, 5207, fol. 1059r. This letter is partially cited by Villa, who again misidentifies the addressee, this time as Giovan Carlo de' Medici. But the letter is clearly addressed to a woman, most likely to Barbara Rangoni. See Giacomo Villa, "'Confusi labirinti': L'opera in musica *Ergirodo* (1652) tra Bologna e Firenze," 117.

[476] My discussion of French anxieties regarding female rule is informed by Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France*, Harvard Historical Studies, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

and Marie de' Medici (Louis XIII's mother) in the early seventeenth had brought concerns regarding the fertility of queens to the forefront. Henry IV had spent twenty-seven long years waiting for an heir before he annulled his marriage to Marguerite de Valois and married the fecund Marie, who gave birth to the long-awaited Louis XIII just one year later. Henry was assassinated in 1610, and Marie became regent for her son, who would famously send her into exile. History seemed to repeat itself when Louis XIII and Anne of Austria were married for almost twenty-three years without issue. The birth of "Louis Dieudonné," the God-given heir to the throne, brought momentary relief, as did the birth of another son two years later. But when Louis XIII died in 1643, his heir was not quite five years old, and the kingdom was left in the hands of Anne of Austria until the new king came of age. Louis XIII had attempted to circumscribe Anne's power as regent by stipulating in his will that decisions regarding important affairs of state would be made by a regency council, rather than by Anne alone.[477] With guidance from Mazarin, Anne initially accepted these conditions, positioning herself as appropriately deferent to her husband's wishes. But shortly after her husband's death, Anne quietly had the will overturned and assumed sole regency for her son, appointing Mazarin as her first minister.

Against the backdrop of Anne's new regency, Mazarin began to step up his efforts to bring Italian art, architecture, drama, and music to Paris. With this campaign, defined by Madeleine Laurain-Portemer as an "offensive baroque," Mazarin sought to enhance the image of

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[477] For this detail from Louis XIII's will, see Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France*. For a discussion of Anne of Austria's regency, see Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France*, 100.

the new regency and with it his own position at court.[478] The new genre of opera, he hoped, would do both. At Mazarin's initiative, at least seven Italian "operas" were performed in Paris between 1645 and 1662.

Although I have not yet been able to establish exactly when and in what form *Ergirodo* was performed in Paris, it seems reasonable to assume that Anna Francesca Costa performed in and possibly directed the opera in some form during one of her stays at the French court—that is, between 1644 and 1647.[479] Might Mazarin have commissioned *Ergirodo*, or had something to do with choosing its subject? An opera celebrating the (fictional) abolishment of the Salic law and the ascent to the throne of a female ruler would have fit in nicely with his campaign to ingratiate himself to the new queen regent and her court. The opera's polemical stance against the "barbaric tyranny" of excluding women from political power would have served the double function of appealing to Anne and her supporters and legitimizing the new regency and Mazarin's own position at court in the eyes of the audience. At the same time, to take such a position, even in the fictional world of ancient Crete, was risky in 1640s France. Anne's regency had brought the simmering debate over women's capacity to rule to the fore. The regency of a queen mother, moreover, undermined the dynastic principle of excluding women from political power that had been upheld as a natural and fundamental law bequeathed to France from ancient ancestors. Musicologists have often remarked on the seeming lack of publicity or interest in the 1646 performance at the Palais Royal, attributing this to lack of appreciation on the part of the

[478] Madeleine Laurain-Portemer, "Le Palais Mazarin à Paris et l'offensive baroque de 1645-1650 d'après Romanelli, P. de Cortone et Grimaldi," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 81 (1973).

[479] Costa's letters to her patrons prove that *Ergirodo* was performed before 1652; given the Fronde, which put a halt to Mazarin's productions between 1648 and 1653.

French for Italian opera. But perhaps Mazarin had underestimated the extent to which *Ergirodo* would raise the hackles of those who saw even the fictional abolishment of the Salic law as tantamount to heresy.

Neil Zaslaw has argued that in the seventeenth century, "the contents of staged works were usually taken to stand for current leaders and current events no matter how distant in time, place or overt subject the plots may have been."[480] *Ergirodo*, despite a setting that was comfortably distant in time and place from seventeenth-century France, was not distant in its plot. The story of Rosaura's ascent to the throne put the debate about the right of women to rule front and center. That the opera creates a world in which the abolishment of the Salic law makes Rosaura's reign possible, and both are celebrated, must have been thrilling to some and troubling to others. In that sense, *Ergirodo* can be read as political propaganda: an attempt to flatter the new regent and legitimize her government.

Rosaura as idealized female ruler

The opera takes its name from Ergirodo, the "mentito parto," or false-born boy who was raised as the heir to the throne. But the title is something of a red herring, since it is Rosaura whose story actually drives the plot. For the French court, then, Rosaura's rags-to-riches story might have called to mind Anne of Austria. And yet, Rosaura is less a direct stand-in for the queen regent than an idealized representation of a female ruler who understands her place in the hierarchy of political power. The opera may well have been received as transgressive for its

[480] Neal Zaslaw, "The First Opera in Paris: A Study in the Politics of Art," 19. On the political uses of the serenata as a celebratio of power in Spanish Italy, see Anna Tedesco, "'Applausi festivi': Music and the Image of Power in Spanish Italy," *Music in Art* 37, no. 1-2 (2012).

polemics against the Salic law, but Rosaura is anything but a usurper of male power. True, she does eventually ascend the throne of Crete, but she does so reluctantly – and only on the condition that Ergirodo reign along with her as king. Despite her centrality to the plot, Rosaura is not in any sense the leading lady. In the libretto, Rosaura's backstory dominates the *argumenti e precedenti*, which as we have seen goes into minute detail regarding the circumstances of her birth, her exile, and her love for Ergirodo. And yet, in comparison to Irene, her rival for Ergirodo's affections, Rosaura spends very little time in the limelight—and she has far fewer arias. In the list of *personaggi* included in the 1652 libretto, Irene appears as *prima donna*, while Rosaura is listed as third woman – implying that she is a character of marginal importance.

But Rosaura is the first character the audience encounters after the mythological prologue featuring Thetis and Amor. In the opening scene, Rosaura wanders the shores of Zacynthos, the Ionian island where she has been raised as a "povera pastorella" (poor shepherdess). As she watches the sun rise over the waves, she holds a portrait of Ergirodo in her hand and contemplates it. Her aria, the first one the audience hears, is addressed to the portrait—a trope that had become conventional in seventeenth-century opera and theater.[481] Rosaura's defining characteristic is quickly established in her first scene: she is motivated solely by her love for Ergirodo, a man she has never met in person. She declares herself completely subject to the tyranny of love, which imprisons her with unbreakable bonds: "My free will is no longer mine, the lofty power of love has bound it to [love] itself, and tightened it with unchangeable knots."[482]

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[481] Wendy Heller, "The Beloved's Image: Handel's Admeto and the Statue of Alcestis."

[482] "Non è più mio il libero volere/ D'amore l'alto potere/ A se stesso l'avvinse,/ E con nodi immutabili lo strinse." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 2.

In the next scene, Rosaura is transformed from metaphorical prisoner to literal prisoner when a trio of Cretan soldiers arrives and captures her, taking her back to their general Fidauro as one of the spoils of war. Even the coarse soldiers recognize her as the treasure that she is: one of them notes that even a soul that rebels against love cannot help but succumb to her charms. With shouts of "Alla preda" (to the prey!), the soldiers bind Rosaura with chains and drag her off stage, as Dedala begs unsuccessfully to be allowed to accompany her charge.

Rosaura does not appear on stage again until the second act, which opens with a long monologue by Ergirodo, who is tormented by thoughts of Irene with Fidauro on the morning after their wedding. This scene, which takes place at dawn, mirrors Rosaura's opening monologue in content, tone, and setting. It also emphasizes the contrast between Ergirodo and Rosaura, highlighting Rosaura's inherent ability to love correctly. Rosaura loves Ergirodo, while Ergirodo continues to focus his desires on Irene – even though Irene is now married to another man. After Ergirodo's lament, the scene changes to Rosaura, who is literally bound and shackled, in her new role as slave girl. "Barbara servitù" (Barbarous servility!), she exclaims, "what more do you want from me? My heart is tied up in knots of love, my soul is bound with pure fidelity, and my feet are wrapped in the iron shackles of servility."[483] Despite her misfortune, Rosaura asserts that if she were able to lay eyes on Ergirodo, she would be grateful for even for the chains and state of servitude that bring her closer to him; the sweet knots of love that bind her heart would become sweeter still.

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[483] Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 30.

In the scene that follows, Rosaura encounters Alindo, the servant who along with his female counterpart Zelinda provides the comic relief that enlivens the graver storyline of the two babies switched at birth. But even the lowborn Alindo, like the soldiers in the first act, recognizes immediately that Rosaura is no ordinary slave girl. "I have never seen you before," he declares upon meeting her, "but at first sight I consign myself to you as your servant."[484] Because Alindo sees Rosaura's inherent nobility, he does not understand why she is shackled: "But what is this, a scam? What are these shackles? These chains?"[485] Rosaura shows Alindo the portrait of Ergirodo and is delighted to hear that just as she hoped, the man she loves is nearby. As she had earlier, Rosaura demonstrates her willingness to live as a slave, as long as she can do so in the presence of Ergirodo. But when Alindo tells her that Ergirodo is the king, her delight is immediately transformed into despair. Slave girls, Rosaura knows, are not suitable companions for kings.

In the third act, Rosaura proves her devotion to Ergirodo by saving his life, not once but twice. As she herself points out, she saves his life first as slave and second as queen. In the first instance, Rosaura stops a jealous Fidauro from murdering Ergirodo out of revenge for his pursuit of Irene, and takes the blame upon herself. Through this action, she demonstrates not only her inherent nobility of soul, but also her concrete understanding of her place within the hierarchy of power. As Rosaura explains, she saved Ergirodo because "the law of nature commands that one

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[484] "Io mai ti vidi,/ ma il primo sguardo solo/ servo mi ti consegna." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 32.

[485] "Ma che imbroglio è questo? / Che ferri? Che catene?" Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 32.

saves one's king."[486] Furthermore, because Rosaura knew that in saving the king she was condemning Fidauro to death, she took the blame in order to save Fidauro, whom she defines as more worthy than she due to his valor in arms. When caught between her king and her master, Rosaura understands that her own position requires deference to both of them, and shows that she is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to maintain appropriate subservience in relation to both men.

After Rosaura's identity is revealed and she is declared queen, she saves Ergirodo's life a second time, using her royal power to stop Fidauro from killing his rival. In the scene that follows, Rosaura makes clear that she is not interested in ruling Crete without Ergirodo by her side. If she had been aware of her identity, she tells Ergirodo, she would never have shown her mother's letter to Fidauro. Instead, she would have torn it into a thousand pieces, or burned it. But now that the secret is out and she has been the cause of Ergirodo's downfall, she falls to her knees and begs him to either love her, or kill her: "I want either love, or death from you, my Lord."[487] Ergirodo is moved by Rosaura's offering, and begs her to get up, declaring that the only thing that will end his pain is to die as her servant. But Rosaura insists that without Ergirodo as king, she does not want to be queen: "If I am not queen and servant to you, the reigning king, then the reign is not mine."[488] In response, Ergirodo declares that because of her "dolci detti,"

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[486] "Comanda/ La legge di natura/ Che si salvi il suo Rege." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 65.

[487] "Voglio da te (Signor) amore, o morte." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 75.

[488] "Regina a te regnante/ Serva, se non son'io/ Il regno non è mio." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 75.

her sweet words, he now lives only for her. The two of them end the scene in unison, rejoicing in the "blessed chains and sweet knot" of love that bind them together, and declaring that "the infinite strength of reciprocal love binds together tightly two lives in a single heart."[489] It is Rosaura's acknowledgment of Ergirodo's right to the throne—and her role as "servant" to the king—that makes their joint rule possible.

Following their love duet, Rosaura sends Ergirodo away to wait for her in the royal chambers. Alone, she addresses the audience to remind them that there is one major obstacle that remains in her path to joyful union with her king. Once again, she finds herself caught between two powerful men, Fidauro (her former master and the man who saved her life) and Ergirodo (her beloved and Fidauro's rival): "If Fidauro, to whom I owe both my realm and my life, wants Ergirodo dead, how am I to give Ergirodo both life and realm?"[490] The resolution comes not from any man, but from the heavens, in the form of Dedala's revelation that Ergirodo and Irene are brother and sister, meaning that Fidauro no longer has any reason to view Ergirodo as his rival for Irene's love. With this last problem resolved, the two couples are finally matched properly: Fidauro with Irene, and Ergirodo with Rosaura. Fidauro apologizes to Ergirodo, reminding him that he was "driven by honor," and Ergirodo in turn asks Fidauro's pardon for

[489] "Di reciproco amor forze infinite/ Vivono in un sol cor strette due vite." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 76.

[490] "Se Fidauro, a cui devo, e Regno, e vita/ Vuol Ergirodo estinto? E come posso/ Ad Ergirodo dare, e vita, e Regno?" Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 77.

being misled by the "blind god" of love.[491] Irene and Rosaura, meanwhile, declare "a due" that each will now "enjoy" (Irene) and "possess" (Rosaura) her loving husband.[492] The opera ends with Dori's exhortation to the lovers of Crete to cease their lamentations: the "germe di Creta" (seed of Crete) has begun her reign, and Thetis has returned to its waters – a sign from the gods that all is as it should be.

In many ways, then, Rosaura had characteristics that would have echoed and dramatized Anne's own self-presentation. Like Rosaura, Anne was careful to present herself to the public as appropriately deferent to male authority—first to that of her husband and then, during her regency, to that of her son. Katherine Crawford has argued that Anne's image of public deference to her king (whether husband or son) was carefully constructed to differentiate her from her problematic mother-in-law Marie de' Medici.[493] This strategy was echoed in Anne's approach to establishing her regency, during which she emphasized her son's authority as king rather than her own political power. Above all, she presented herself as mother and loyal subject of the king, whose authority was paramount even though he was not yet five years old. In other words, Anne was careful not to take center stage, at least in public. Rosaura, the idealized queen of Crete, embodied similar strategies, dramatizing the pure motivations and willingness to defer to male power that were integral to Anne's own self-presentation during her regency. On stage,

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[491] Fidauro: "Mio Rè tanto furore/ Perdono merta, se mi spinse honor." Ergirodo: "Perdona amico al mio / Fallir, se mi fù scorta un cieco Dio." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 81.

[492] Irene and Rosaura *a due*: "Tutto amoroso/ Io goderò/Io possederò/Il mio Sposo." Gelinio Valgemma Adriano, *L'Ergirodo dramma musicale di Gelinio Valgemma Adriano*, 81.

[493] Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France*, 100-01.

Rosaura was the embodiment of a female regent who was not to be mistrusted or viewed as destabilizing to the king's power, but instead as a "regnante serva" like Rosaura: a servant to the king who reigned by his side rather than seeking to reign over him. If the opera both flattered the new queen regent and legitimized her government, it also presented a reassuring model of a female ruler who understood her place in the established hierarchy of power.

Anna Francesca Costa, *impresaria temeraria*

As Giovan Battista Barducci reported to Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Anna Francesca Costa was an undisputed star at the French court in the 1640s, "celebrated by Their Majesties and applauded by every else present."[494] During her time in Paris, Costa greatly expanded her network of patronage, winning the support of the queen regent, her prime minister, and various other royals and aristocrats at the French court. Her success in Paris and the support she earned there also strengthened her connections to elite patrons back home in Italy. Costa's revival of *Ergirodo* in Bologna in 1653—an opera that dramatized female rule—was a strategic one on many levels. Through the production and performance of the opera she had most likely starred in and possible produced for the queen regent and Mazarin, Anna Francesca sought to re-establish but also to display her ties to the queen of France and her court. And on a thematic level, what better opera than *Ergirodo* for an *impresaria* like Anna Francesca Costa? It does not seem coincidental that Anna Francesca chose as her signature opera *Ergirodo*, which dramatized and

[494] "Checca Costa tra tutti gli altri fu celebrata dalle Loro Maestà e applaudita da tutti gli altri assistenti." Giovan Battista Barducci to Ferdinando II de' Medici, from Paris, 16 February 1646. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, 4651, fols. 487r-v. Cited in Barbara Nestola, "L'*Egisto* fantasma di Cavalli: Nuova luce sulla rappresentazione parigina dell'*Egisto ovvero Chi soffre speri* di Mazzocchi e Marazzoli (1646)," 125-6.

problematized the new ways in which women's power and authority was conceived and resisted in the seventeenth century—whether that authority was used to rule empires or to take charge, as Anna Francesca did, of creative enterprises like the production of opera.

If Rosaura's approach to female rule echoed that of Anne of Austria, it also brought to the fore the same cultural forces and social norms that Anna Francesca had to grapple with as she crafted her career in a field and world dominated by men. Like Rosaura, who insisted that Ergirodo rule alongside her, and Anne of Austria, who presented herself as the king's mother and handmaiden, Anna Francesca, too, was careful to engage and acknowledge the support of powerful men as financial, political, and artistic collaborators. If as Eurydice Anna Francesca had declared her subjugation to Orpheus, for whom she was willing to undergo any torment, in her authorial role as impresario, she presented herself as both active agent and creative partner to her patrons. In that vein, it seems important to point out that despite her careful self-presentation as "regnante serva," it was Rosaura, in the end, who claimed her birthright and ascended the throne of Crete. Perhaps, then, the story of the slave-girl who became a queen was a particularly appealing one for Anna Francesca Costa, an unlikely but bold *impresaria*.

Conclusion

The lives and careers of Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa unfolded against the backdrop of a watershed moment for music history—the emergence of opera and its rise in popularity over the course of the seventeenth century. Margherita and Anna Francesca were born in Rome around the same time as the first court operas were emerging in Florence. As opera spread across the Italian peninsula and became ever more popular and profitable, the Costa sisters adapted and evolved in its wake, performing first as solo chamber singers, and then adding stage appearances in courtly and public opera productions to their repertoires.

This study began by asking two fundamental questions: how did the emergence of opera change the way women singers were received and represented by their contemporaries over the course of the seventeenth century? And how did women singers fashion their own public images and craft their careers against shifting notions of creative authority, gender norms, and power dynamics? There is not a short answer to either question, but I hope that the reconstruction of the lives and careers of the Costa sisters that I have offered here has at least begun to add richness and depth to our understanding of the important role the Costas and other women singers played in seventeenth-century musical performance culture. Several archival discoveries—most notably, the wills of both sisters, which are transcribed in full as appendices to this dissertation—have allowed me to offer more complete and accurate biographies of both women, although there are still many gaps that remain (I was not able, for instance, to locate birth or death certificates for either woman). These details may seem bureaucratic, or important only to archivists, but instead they are fundamental to establishing a more historically (and socio-culturally) informed

understanding not only of the Costas' performance history, but also of the role of women singers as a category in seventeenth-century musical history and culture.

Another archival discovery—a thick file in the Medici archive full of tidbits offering information on the relationship between Margherita Costa and the bandit Tiberio Squilletti—has allowed me to offer previously unknown context for the composition of Margherita's religious poem on the life of Saint Cecilia, *Cecilia martire,* which she dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1644. Costa's relationship with Squilletti, who worked as a hired thug for the Medici and the Barberini at different points in his career, provides insight into why she fell out of favor with Ferdinando II de' Medici and left Florence to seek patronage in Rome. The story of Margherita's attempt to ingratiate herself to the Barberini in Rome offers important context for her self-presentation as a sort of secular Cecilia, a figure that she knew would appeal to her Barberini patrons.

The Costa sisters, like so many other women singers in the seventeenth century, were frequently described by their contemporaries as *donne cattive* (bad women), *donne disoneste* (dishonest women), *donne pubbliche* (public women), and sometimes directly as *cortigiane* or *meretrici*. A fundamental goal of this study has been to untangle and trace the cultural context behind the persistent alignment of women singers with prostitutes. My study identifies the roots of that alignment in the ways in which the performance practices of women singers clashed with seventeenth-century notions of *onestà,* which required decent women to limit their contact with men. Using archival documents from the Monastery of S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite al Corso—an institution founded to house repentant prostitutes—this study shows that female singers in Rome were categorized as *donne cattive* because their careers required them to interact

with and perform for men, and not necessarily because they made their living through prostitution. What's more, women like the Costa sisters, who sang *in scena*—that is, in costumed and staged productions—were perceived as having transgressed the circumscribed boundaries of *onestà*.

Finally, this study offers the first sustained consideration of the extraordinary career of Anna Francesca Costa, one of the first and only female impresarios of the seventeenth century. My account of Anna Francesca's career has demonstrated her important role in Jules Mazarin's campaign to bring Italian opera to the French court, which has been underestimated by previous scholarship. Teresa Megale was the first to publish many of the letters between Anna Francesca and her patron Giovan Carlo de' Medici and to offer an account based on those letters of Anna Francesca's production of *Ergirodo* in Bologna in 1653.[495] My analysis here offers the first account of the opera's French connections, using new archival evidence to show that *Ergirodo* was originally performed in Paris. I analyze the opera's polemic against the Salic law of succession, which excluded women from the throne, and show how Anna Francesca Costa deployed her connections to the French court to construct a successful career as an *impresaria*.

As I conclude this project, I am confronted with how much I—and we—still do not yet know about women singers in the seventeenth century. In part because of the global pandemic that we have been experiencing for the past two years, and in part because the amount of information that is yet to be discovered is vast, I find myself with multiple archival leads I have been unable to pursue. Still, I hope that the rich and varied contributions of Margherita and Anna Francesca Costa have offered at least a glimpse of the ways in which women's new prominence

[495] Teresa Megale, "Il principe e la cantante: Riflessi impresariali di una protezione."; Teresa Megale, "Altre novità su Anna Francesca Costa e sull'allestimento dell'*Ergirodo*."

on the operatic stage during the seventeenth century opened a new and powerful space for the female voice, whether that voice was embodied (as in song and speech), authorial (as in published writing), or metaphorical (as in cultural agency).

Appendix A: "Testamento di Margherita Costa," Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Notai dell'Auditor Camerae, Testamenti, busta 82, fols 343r-347v.

[c. 343r]

In nome di Dio amen

Io Margherita Costa figliola del quondam Christophoro Costa romana, sana per gratia di Dio di mente, senso e intelletto, ma alquanto inferma di corpo iacendo in letto, aspettando il caso della futura morte non essendo cosa più certa e più incerta dell'hora et punto di essa et acciò dopo la mia morte sopra li miei beni nasca alcuna differentia, ho deliberato fare questo mio testamento nel modo che segue.

Et prima l'anima mia come cosa più nobile, quella la raccordo a Dio et tutta la corte celestiale, pregandoli che quando verrà il caso della mia morte mi vogliano protegere dall'insidie del demonio. Et quando verrà il caso della mia morte il mio cadavere sia sepellito nella chiesa di S. Francesco a Rippa vestito dell'habito del suo ordine con pompa privata, salvo parerà all'infrascritta mia herede.

Item per raggione di legato lascio alle infrascritte mie sorelle piccole scudi cento per elemosina da dividersi fra di loro per una sola <in calce alla pagina: per Aldrovandum levato> [c. 343v] volta et non altrimenti.

Item per raggione di legato lascio alla chiesa della Madonna della Vittoria di Roma a Termini un anello con un diamante da impegnarlo <[a margine]: con peso di dire sei messe l'anno in perpetuo. Margherita Costa mano propria>.

Item per raggione di legato che subito sarò morta l'infrascritta mia herede mi debba far dire duecento messe nella chiesa di S. Francesco a Ripa et anchor mentre sarà il mio corpo sopra

terra mi debba far dire le messe di S. Gregorio dalla colonna di Nostro Signore a Santa Prassede e a S. Lorenzo.

Item per raggione di legato etc. lascio che l'infrascritta herede debba far dire cento messe per l'anima di Christophoro mio padre.

Item per raggione di legato iure institutionis etc. et alias omni meliori modo etc. allo reverendo monastero et monache di S. Maria Magdalena di Roma dette le convertite la quinta parte di tutti li miei beni mobili et stabili, raggioni acciò siano obligate pregare Iddio per l'anima mia.

Item lascio et voglio che subito sarà seguita la mia morte l'infrascritta mia herede debba vendere tutti li mobili di casa et de quella ne debba pagare li debiti che [c. 344r] si trovaranno al tempo della mia morte. Et a pagare li detti debiti la detta mia herede habbia tempo un anno.

Item dico et dechiaro che la casa mia della Lungara che hoggi sta impegnata per scudi trecento al signor Bartholomeo Nicolino il ius et la facoltà a poterla redimere et ricuperare spetti alle infrascritte mie sorelle piccole, cioè Barbara, Vittoria et Olimpia, alle quale gli le lascio per raggione di legato et se verrà il caso che la detta casa al tempo della mia morte sia recuperata, tutta debba recadere all'infrascritta mia herede et essa mia herede sia tenuta dare a dette mie sorelle per una sol volta scudi quattrocento da dividere fra di loro.

Item lascio per raggione di legato a Francesca overo Anna Francesca mia sorella il mio gioiello di diamanti et la corona di coralli grossa et due candellieri d'argento.

Item lascio per raggione di legato a Anna altra mia sorella il mio vezzo di perle a due fila et li miei pendenti <in calce alla pagina; per Aldrovandum levato> [c. 344v] di diamanti et perle.

<a margine: Item lascio per raggion di legato a Dorathea mia madre. Margherita Costa mano propria> la mia collana di diamanti, dichiarando che hora la detta collana si trova in pegno parte al Monte della Pietà e parte alli hebrei in tal caso che lei se la debba riscotere a sue spese. Et se verrà il caso che avanti la mia morte fusse riscossa, essa mia madre sia tenuta darne scudi duecento a Paolo mio fratello.

Item lascio per raggione di legato che l'infrascritta mia herede debba dividere tutte le vesti che si trovaranno al tempo della mia morte nel modo che segue, cioè: a Paolo mio fratello una veste et zimarra ad elettione d'essa mia herede, un altro habito per ciascuna delle altre mie sorelle dette di sopra piccole delli più vili e minor spesa et il resto debba dividersi fra le altre mie sorelle Anna et Anna Francesca.

Item lascio per raggione di legato a Paolo mio fratello il mio anello di diamanti fatto a Lione[?].

Item lascio et dico et dechiaro che di quello si recuperarà dalla lite che ho con Plautilla Spinetti [?] della recupera- [c. 345r] tione di scudi seicento circa et dalla lite della vigna del popolo con Angelo Salvati si debbano dare scudi cento per ciascuna alle infrascritte mie sorelle piccole per una sol volta et il resto si debba dividere per rata fra mia madre, Anna Francesca, Anna et Paolo per quatro parti et le spese delle liti si debbano fare rata fra di loro.

Item lascio per raggione di legato a padre Antonio del Sacramento a S. Pantaleo scudi dieci per elemosina et che debba far oratione per me.

Item lascio per raggione di legato che la mia vigna che ho fuora della porta di Portese accanto alli Massimo, attaccata alla madre dell'infrascritta mia herede, la lascio godere a Paolo mio fratello per la rata di scudi settecento moneta, a Anna mia sorella <a margine: per la rata di

scudi. Margherita Costa mano propria> cinquecento scudi et a Annafrancesca altra mia sorella scudi cento moneta, in patto però che le dette portioni ciascheduno di loro non possino né venderle né impegnare et volendole vendere et disporre in altra maniera siano prescritti ciascuno di loro <in calce alla pagina; per Aldrovandum levato> [c. 345v] et essa infrascritta mia herede et anche con conditione che essa vigna debba stare sempre in casa nostra perché essa mia herede non la possa né vendere né impegnare.

Item dico et dichiaro che la detta vigna debbe esser finita di pagare al signor Francesco Plantanida perché si debbe sodisfare con li scudi seicento che sono sul banco di S. Spirito et con li altri scudi cinquecento da riscodere dal signor Papirio Capizucchi, come consta per instromento rogato per li atti del Colonna notaro.

Item voglio et ordino che l'infrascritta mia herede non possa né debba molestare il signor Giovanni Galbiati mio marito sopra le pretensioni che io ho con lui di qualsivoglia sorte et di qualsivoglia summa perché così mi piace et così è la mia intentione.

Al quale mio marito Giovanni Galbiati per raggione di legato lascio una stanza di corami usati turchini et una di pelli duecentottanta incirca.

In tutti l'altri miei beni mobili, stabili, raggioni, note di crediti in qualsivoglia luogho essi siano etc. faccio mia [c. 346r] herede universale et con la mia propria bocca nomino la signora Dorathea Costa mia dilettissima madre.

Et questo voglio sia il mio ultimo testamento et ultima volontà, cassando et annullando qualunque testamento et ultima volontà fin al presente giorno da refatto, volendo che il presente sia l'ultimo et se per tal raggione non valesse, voglio per raggione di donatione et che se per tal raggione non valesse, voglio per raggione di codicillo et se per tal raggione non valesse, voglio

per raggione di donatio causa mortis et in ogni altro modo che di raggione potesse valere così non solo col modo et fine presente, ma in ogn'altro miglior modo etc.

Questo dì 21 maggio 1635

Io Margherita Costa romana dico, dispongo et fo mia erede come è. Io propria mano.<in calce alla pagina: interfui aperitioni testamenti hac die 5 iulii 1703. Per Aldrovandum levatum>.

Appendix B: "Testamento di Anna Francesca Costa," Notai dell'A.C., Istrumenti, busta 891

[785r] In nome della SS Trinità Padre Figlio Spirito Santo

Io Anna Francesca Costa, figlia del q. Cristopharo Romano, considerando quanto sia fraggile questa nostra vita, e che per lo più la morte ci tronca all'improvviso, desiderando mentre io mi trovo con salute nelli miei sensi disporre della facoltà che il Signore Iddio si è compiaciuto concedermi, perciò spontaneamente et in ogni meglior modo che posso tanto de Jure quanto in ogni altro meglior modo ho deliberato di fare questo mio ultimo nuncupativo testamento che de jure civili dicesi sine scriptis quale per mia maggior sodisfattione voglio che sia serrato havendolo fatto scrivere da persona a me confidentissima dettato da me conforme alla mia intentione nel modo infrascritto e primieramente e [?] devotamente raccommando l'anima mia all'Omnipotente misericordia di Iddio nella cui Santa fede mi protegge di voler morire come sempre per la divina grazia sono vissuta, supplicando sua divina [785v] Maestà per il pretiosissimo sangue sparso per li peccatori a farmi degna della sua Santa Gloria et in ciò imploro e ricorro alla Protettione della Gloriosissima Vergine Maria et all'aiuto del Patriarche San Giuseppe mio padre Avocato, e di tutti li Santi e Sante della Corte Celeste et il mio Corpo quando verrà il caso della morte voglio sia portato privatamente alla Chiesa Parochiale S. Vincenzo et Anastasio in Trevi et si esponghi con quella pompa che parerà all'Infrascritto mio erede e sia seppelito accanto l'altare della Madonna di detta chiesa con la cassa di legno, e una di piombo sola per alla cui Chiesa lascio le raggioni della sepultura solamente, et inoltre lascio all'Altare della Madonna Santissima della detta chiesa dentro il quale il mio corpo sarà esposto il mio crucifisso d'argento con la croce di ebbano, di più lascio che mentre il mio corpo starrà

esposto sopra terra facci celebrare cento messe de requie per l'anima mia e le anim-[786r] e di mio Padre e Madre e sorelle.

Inoltre ordino e commando che l'infrascritto mio erede distribuischa ai poveri in detta Chiesa mentre il mio cadavero starà esposto scudi dieci moneta et anco che facci celebrare le solite messe di S. Lorenzo fuori delle Mura, alla Colonna del Nostro Signore Gesù esposto in Santa Presede[496] S. Maria Libera nos a poenis inferni,[497] e di S. Gregorio per una sol volta.

Item per raggion di legato lascio alli RR PP di San Domenico nella Chiesa della Minerba di Roma scudi trecento moneta compreso che li Padri di setta Chiesa faccin celebrare tante messe de requie in perpetuo per l'anima mia e di mio Padre e Madre per l'intrante quantità del frutto di essi da consegnarli seguita la mia morte.

Item per ragione di legato, et in ogni altro meglio modo lascio a Maria Biscia scudi cinquanta per una sola volta da consegnarlela quando si maritarà, o monacarà e ne maritandosi ne facendoli monacha il detto legato di averseli alla mia eredità.

Item per simil raggione lascio ad Anna Biscia, figlia [786v] di Francesco Biscia, scudi cento cinquanta da consegnarleli dal infrascritto mio erede quando si maritarà o monacarà per una sol volta quale seguita la mia morte si debba rimandare al sudetto suo Padre.

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[496] Santa Prassede houses an alleged segment of the column to which Jesus was tied when he was flogged before his crucifixion in Jerusalem.

[497] The chapel in Santa Prassede where the column above was held was often called "S. Maria libera nos a poenis Inferni" during this period.

Item per simil raggione lascio a Suor Maria Massimiliana Costa mia sorella monaca nel Monasterio della Duchessa in Viterbo[498] per una sola volta scudi cinquanta moneta.

Per simil raggione lascio a Barbara Costa mia sorella altri scudi cinquanta moneta per una sola volta.

Item ordino e commando all'infrascritto mio erede che seguita la mia morte facci stimare tutti li miei mobili, massarizie, bianchierie, posate e gioie, carozza, e cavalli e quelli stimati venderli et il prezzo di essi se ne debba pagare li legati et altro che dovevo dare, e quello che sopravanzarà pagabili debiti remunirli per altri luoghi di monti Cam.[erali] e vacabili a credito della mia eredità.

Item dichiaro che il S. Sinibaldi tiene in mano un mio diamante [?] intavola[?] sua il quale mi ha dato scudi [803r] cinquanta quale voglio che si riscoti e si vendi rimesa come anche si riscuotino tutti l'altri pegni che mi ritirono e si vendino, et il prezzo si diponghi come sopra.

In tutti e singoli altri miei beni tanto mobili come stabili in qualsiasi loco posti e anche in qualsiasi modo spettanti e che per avenire mi potessero spettare et partenere mio erede usufruttuario fò e deputo, e con la mia propria bocca nomino S. Paolo Costa mio fratello carnale, e doppo la sua morte nella sudetta mia eredità e per i miei eredi proprietarij fo et stablisco la Ven. chiesa d. S. Nicola di Tollentino a Capo le Case e Sacristia di detta Chiesa compreso però che li Padri di detta Chiesa siano tenuti celebrare tante messe de requie per l'anima mia e di mio Padre e Madre e Parenti in infinitu et in perpetuo per intrante quantità del frutto di detta mia eredità e che detto mio erede e detti proprietarij non possino mai vendere li beni di detta mia eredità ma quelli debbano stare in perpetuo per la celebrazione delle sudette messe, et in caso di

[498] The Church and Monastery of S. Maria della Visitazione in Viterbo is also known as the "Chiesa della Duchessa", or "delle Duchesse."

estrattione de mei luoghi clementi il prezzo di essi si debba [fol. 803v] di novo rinvestire in altri luoghi clementi Cam[erali] e Vacab[ili] sempre con espressa mentione da farsi in detti monti che purvengono dalla mia eredità, e con il peso di celebrare tante messe come sopra in perpetuo.

E questo voglio che sia il mio ultimo testamento et ultima voluntà, il quale o questo voglio che vaglia per raggione di testamento nuncupativo che di raggion si dice sine scriptis, e se come tale non valesse o non potesse di codicillo non potesse valere voglio che vaglia per donatione causa mortis o mortis causa, o pure come disposizione ad alias causa, e finalmente per raggione di qualsiasi ultima voluntà e ivi qualunque altro meglior modo perché può e deve valere lassando, et annullando qualsiasi altro testo, codicillo, donazione et ultima voluntà per fine ivi si sera fatta per atto di qualsiavoglia not[aio] sotto qualsiasi forma di pari in questo mio ultimo testo et ultima volontà voglio che vaglia ad ogni altro che havesse fatto e così dispongo e dichiaro e voglio in ogni miglior modo.

Inoltre per ragione di legato et Istituzione lascio al [fol. 804] Monasterio delle Convertite di Roma la terza parte che de jure li va in ogni meglior modo.

Per esecutore del presente mio testamento e volontà fede presto il Sig. Gio. Battista Marini al quale dò e concedo ogni facoltà notaria et opportuna et in specie[?] di far vendere li miei mobili, carozza, e cavalli et altro come sopra e fare adempiere la medesima mia volontà prestamente e così dico e dispongo e per maggior mia cautela ho letto e riletto il presente mio testo da me molto bene considerato e di mia voluntà di parola in parola sentito gli ho scritto di mia propria mano questo dì 20 di luglio il 1670 di più dichiaro haver Bollettini numero nove del Monte della Pietà di Roma.

Item per jure legato lascio che facci celebrare altre messe cento de requie oltre le sudette altre cento per l'anima mia come sopra da celebrare la settimana doppo seguita la mia morte, e si esponghi il mio corpo con torcie numero venti di cera ognuno [?].

Io Anna Francesca Costa testo e dispongo quanto di sopra si contiene mano propria.

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