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**FRANCESCO ALGAROTTI AND FRANCESCO MILIZIA:
ARCHITECTURAL AND DRAMATIC THEORISTS
OF THE ITALIAN ENLIGHTENMENT**

by

Mark Anthony Ceolin

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Centre for Study of Drama
University of Toronto
1999**

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ABSTRACT

*Francesco Algarotti and Francesco Milizia:
Architectural and Dramatic Theorists of the Italian Enlightenment*

Mark Anthony Ceolin - Doctor of Philosophy 1999

Graduate Centre for Study of Drama

University of Toronto

In the early part of the eighteenth century, in Venice, Carlo Lodoli, a scholar-priest, established an early argument for functionalism in art with his call for a general reform of the architectural design practices of his day. There has been much debate, in light of the French hegemony in theories of art during the period, as to the originality of Lodoli's concepts. Among Lodoli's many disciples stand two, Francesco Algarotti(1712-64) and Francesco Milizia (1725-98), both of whom became famous for their interpretations and applications of Lodoli's functionalist approach in a number of treatises published throughout the middle of the century. The similarities in, and far-reaching success of their treatises, argues for the existence and importance of a school of thought that can be considered representative of the Italian Enlightenment.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the ways in which Algarotti and Milizia applied a new functionalist artistic criticism to what they perceived as one of their society's oldest and most important institutions: the theatre. Both men viewed the representational qualities inherent in the arts as something vital to the well-being of society and, in their respective treatises, *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica*(1755) and *Del*

Teatro(1772), they brought their architecturally conceived sense of order to bear on analyses of the theatre as a physical space and as an event. This thesis analyzes Algarotti's and Milizia's dissection of the theatre event and their creation of rules meant to guide the process of design and production thereby returning the practice of theatre to its original function of creating utility and pleasure.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	v
Introduction	1
Chapter I: Algarotti and Architectural Theory	25
Chapter II: Algarotti: Theories of Drama in the Opera	59
Chapter III: Francesco Milizia and Theories of Architecture	86
Chapter IV: Milizia and Dramatic Theory	150
Conclusion	187
Works Cited	191
Appendix: Translation of Francesco Milizia's <i>Treatise</i> <i>on Theatre</i> , including illustrations	201

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

No.	Subject	Page
1.	Vanvitelli's Theatre, Caserta	13
2.	Villa Algarotti	35
3.	Adam's House in Paradise	43
4.	The rustic hut	46
5.	Teatro Scientifico	53
6.	Ancient Roman and Grecian Theatres	55
7.	Berlin Opera House	57
8.	Origin of Architecture	87
9.	Soane's Leicester Square Opera House Design	89
10.	Teatro Regio, Turin	91
11.	Classical Sculpture of Hercules	100
12.	Origins of the Three Orders	103
13.	Burnacini, Set Design	109
14.	Chinese Maze Garden	110
15.	Theatre of Marcellus, Rome	114
16.	Theatre, Pompeii	115
17.	Greek Theatre, Siracuse	117
18.	Teatro Regio, Turin	122
19.	Theatre of San Carlo, Naples	123

20.	Theatre, Bologna	124
21.	Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza	125
22.	Farnese Theatre, Parma	130
23.	Tordinone Theatre, Rome	131
24.	Argentina Theatre, Rome	132
25.	Teatro Comunale, Bologna	133
26.	Court Theatre at Versailles	134
27.	Covent Garden Theatre, London	135
28.	Equestrian Statue, Farnese Theatre	137

Introduction

The birth of a new style may be said to require the happy conjunction of four factors: a new intellectual view of the world, a new aesthetic doctrine, a new vocabulary of form, and a new structural system. If this rule is rigorously applied, it will seem to break on the fourth factor, since history reveals many more styles than it does structural systems . . . In other words, any three of the four factors may produce a new style.¹

In addressing the debates revolving around aesthetic ideals in the eighteenth century, Ernst Cassirer in his *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* refers to the period as the "age of criticism." This well-known work, of course, addresses the literary discourse of the period and its relation to philosophy. Much research has been published since which examines the new critical stance which was applied in debates raging across all of the arts, including painting, sculpture, architecture and theatre. A sense of the interdependence of these arts with philosophy had permeated the question of the place of the arts in society at the time, bringing together different threads with the intention of intertwining them within the unity of nature.

There is, first the fundamental propensity of the century toward a clear and sure ordering of details, toward formal unification and strict logical concentration. The various threads which in the course of the centuries had been spun by literary criticism and aesthetic contemplation are to be woven together into one fabric. The material offered in such abundance by poetics, rhetoric, and the theory of the fine arts is now to be ordered and arranged from unified points of view . . . A correlation is now sought

¹Carroll L.V. Meeks, *Italian Architecture*, Preface xiii.

between the context of philosophy and that of art; and an affinity is maintained which appears at first to be dimly felt for the expression in precise and definite concepts.²

The expressive quality of Baroque art, as presented in the rationalistic debates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, was anathema to an ordering of the arts and society in accordance, not only with the laws of nature, but with the classical ideals of good taste which were to be firmly established by the 1760's with the publication of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums (History of Ancient Art)*. With regard to the playful nature of Baroque style in general, I refer to the abandonment of verisimilitude across the arts in an attempt to produce the marvelous in design. For the purposes of my thesis, I am borrowing Roy Eriksen's definition of the baroque movement, from his recently published *Contexts of Baroque*.

The Baroque is a style which deliberately violates the rules of physical verisimilitude or hovers ambiguously at the very edge between verisimilitude and excess. There is in Baroque's works of art an omnipresent proneness to play and to glide from one form into another, a tendency everywhere visible in matter, structure, and style, still we nevertheless reside within the framework of a controlling artistic and ideological design, which may generously embrace seemingly disparate and contradictory elements in the quest for the novel and the outstanding.³

In a chapter dedicated to neoclassical architecture, Joseph Rykwert sums up the power of an entire generation of architects associated with the rationalist theories of Fra Carlo Lodoli. These men were:

bent on the reform of their society. Their energies were invested in building, which they did not regard as the physiognomy of established powers, but as a kind of paradigm, almost as a sympathetic-magical

²Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp.275-276.

³Roy Eriksen, *Contexts of Baroque*, p.8.

model of society. They lived "in an age of repression, which was fearful, even when it was practiced by enlightened despots." The reform of architecture gave them a field of practical activity in which rationality, the desire for a harmony of thought (of rational thought in particular) with action was possible, without fear of prosecution. The aim of such reforming activity was a better, a more consequent, a purer architecture: and society, some of them hoped, would somehow follow the model which had been operated in building. Such ideas certainly inspired some of Lodoli's followers.⁴

In the spring of 1753, the *Essai sur l'architecture* by Marc-Antoine Laugier began to be sold in the bookshops of Paris. The book became an immediate success.⁵ In the preface to their introduction to an English translation of the *Essai*, Wolfgang and Anni Hermann explain the reasons for the far reaching success and the contributions that this work made in the history of western architectural theory. This one work, among many, has kept the author's name alive until the present day. The Hermanns point out that many critics consider much of the work borrowed from an earlier treatise by J.L. de Cordemoy, the *Nouveau traité de toute l'architecture*. Even if this were true, the original observations in the *Essai* argue for the dominance of French theory in the eighteenth century artistic debate. Laugier is lauded by the Hermanns over Cordemoy for several reasons:

"Where Cordemoy is confused, Laugier is lucid. Where Cordemoy has a vague idea about linking architectural forms to nature, Laugier pronounces the vital principle of the primitive hut, the pivot of all his basic conceptions, a principle at which he arrived quite independently. Laugier is very clear in his mind about what is needed to reform architecture and is therefore able to achieve something never even attempted by

⁴ Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p.299.

⁵"It was reviewed in all the important journals of the day and by all the leading literary critics." Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture*, Trans. Wolfgang and Anni Hermann, xi.

Cordemoy - to set out in the preface, the introduction and the first chapter in clear and systematic form a precise program of the architecture to come. He had something to say that needed to be said at that moment."⁶

This final point is of great importance in the argument that is to come. The Hermanns are quite adamant in asserting that the French society of the day was receptive to Laugier's call for a simpler, more natural artistic form as a reaction against the waning of the rococo⁷. Laugier's contribution to the history of art then is legitimized by the fact that "it was written at exactly the right time."⁸ Ten years in either direction would have made the work irrelevant. Certainly ten years later, as the Hermanns argue, would have been far too late, for, by then, neoclassicism had established itself as an artistic movement with architectural ramifications.

I have spoken of Cordemoy and Laugier for a variety of reasons. Firstly, their publications in France are examples of the debate that began in the late seventeenth century which was carried throughout the eighteenth with regard to the place of the arts in society, the place of nature in the arts, and the use of reason in artistic creation. Secondly, since architectural design was thought to incorporate techniques from painting and sculpture (especially as championed by Algarotti and Milizia), the treatises left behind by these two celebrated architects can be considered repositories of the cutting edge of French theory of the period in question. Finally, the fact that their ideas

⁶Laugier, *An Essay On Architecture*, p.xviii.

⁷In his determination to purge and invigorate the tradition of architecture by a return to sources, he was led to entertain the idea that the basis of all architecture should be envisaged as the rustic hut, a hut stark and almost natural in its forms. Middleton and Watkin, *Neoclassical and 19th Century Architecture*, p.21.

⁸Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture*, xix.

have developed a cult status which is venerated offers an opportunity to append to the record information indicating that the work of these designers was occurring simultaneously with equally competent work in Venice. Characteristically, the Hermanns, both in this translation and in their examination of Laugier's work, *Laugier and Eighteenth Century French Theory*, place the French contribution to this debate at the head of the class, a class which included, amongst others, a group of Italians who saw themselves as a creative force in the trans-national drive to reform their society at both the social and the artistic level. Amongst these theorists I am isolating two, Francesco Algarotti and Francesco Milizia, who are, representative of the culmination of the Italian contribution of thought during the European Enlightenment. Both men were architecturally trained and, with the rational minds of architects, envisioned reforms of architectural and general artistic practices that gave shape to a more purposeful functioning of the arts and sciences in society. Both brought to bear a critical approach towards design which, when applied to what they interpreted as the corrupt and distasteful results of bad practice, dissected the function of the product so that an appropriate form could be developed. By the 1760's Venturi claims that the most exciting developments of the Italian Enlightenment had been given the necessary nourishment to achieve fruition. It was in 1764 that Winckelmann defined neo-classicism as an artistic concept and this event is known to have had a major impact on the development of the course of art appreciation in Europe⁹. Neo-classical ideas

⁹"Beauty, according to this philosophy, can be attained only when individual, characteristic details are subordinated to the general plan of the whole, thus creating an ideal, suprapersonal work marked by harmonious proportions and a certain repose in the total effect - in Winckelmann's phrase, "noble simplicity and calm greatness." Donald Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, p. 231.

as applied to the study of theatre, however, had already been encoded in Algarotti's *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* which was written by him in 1755, and this work, among others, is largely the inspiration for Milizia's later treatise, *Del Teatro* of 1772.

Architectural theory was thriving at this time in the entire peninsula, from north to south. The existence of long-standing building traditions was encoded in the living textbook of the city streets. Into this environment ideas regarding building materials and functions were given additional weight through the presence of foreign artists. These men applied new critical approaches to the study of Italian architecture. Aware of their achievements, Italian theorists developed methods to further analyze both the design and location of a public building, as defined by Vitruvius, within the urban fabric; the end result of a long history of urban analysis that began with the Roman street renovations of Pope Sixtus V. This allowed them to examine the functionality of the structure itself as it related to the environment and to the customs of the society that used it. The resultant school of thought, producing the works of Algarotti and Milizia, was as timely a contribution as Laugier's to an artistic discourse bent on eliminating remaining vestiges of Baroque excess in design.

In a unique MA thesis which stands as one of very few¹⁰ recent analyses of the contributions of Lodoli's school of thought, Joanne Paul establishes the fundamental issues which informed the architectural debate in the age of Enlightenment. Questions revolved around: "The place and authority of history, the possibility of describing

¹⁰Hanno-Walter Kruft observes in his recent *History of Architectural Theory* that "in the eighteenth century, Italy opened itself up to an international debate for which there had seemed little occasion until well into the seventeenth century. An account of Italian architectural theory during the Settecento has, however, not been attempted to date." Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, p. 194.

definitive characteristics for beauty, taste or proportion, of giving quantifiable values and fixed rules for evolving technologies, and of defining the very foundation of building.”¹¹ These questions were made possible by the new move towards empirical observation established by Sir Isaac Newton, whose work had great impact on all discourse in the Enlightenment, in which it was argued that the world could indeed be known rationally. Into this mix was added the work of Fra Carlo Lodoli (1690-1761) whose unique contributions to the world of architectural theory are relevant for the real influence they had on the development of treatises produced by Algarotti and Milizia¹². Lodoli broke with architectural tradition claiming that the architecture of his time was fundamentally wrong.

He regarded reason ('ragione') as the central architectural concept, describing rational architecture as 'organic,' a term that Memmo, his biographer expressly states was first coined by him. Reason should dominate, he maintained, right down to the last item of furniture; hence his design for an anatomically correct chair for his own use.¹³

Lodoli's all-encompassing approach was novel in its systematic elimination of all that was irrational from design. The techniques he applied would later be repeated by his disciples when envisioning any building for public use. His work, then, speaks against the Hermanns' hypothesis that the architectural discourse of the Italian Enlightenment should be classified as either totally derivative or incidental to that of the French. The

¹¹ Joanne Paul, *Of Substantiating Nature*, pp. ii - iii.

¹² Andrea Memmo (1729-92) is considered a third important advocate of Lodoli's functionalist ideas especially in light of his treatise, *Elementi d'architettura lodoliana*. Because of their specialized attention to theatre, however, Memmo will not be treated together with Algarotti and Milizia in this dissertation.

¹³ Kruff, p. 197.

vitality of Lodoli's ideas, infused in the teaching of his functionalist school, in turn energized the intellectual achievement of two of its primary proponents. It was primarily through Algarotti that Lodoli's ideas have come down to us, and Milizia is clearly recognized by architectural historians as a disciple of the Lodolian school. It is not the isolated genius of Lodoli, then, which establishes the uniqueness of the Italian functionalist contribution to the architectural debate of the eighteenth century, but the contributions of those who utilized and applied his theories to the changing environments in which they found themselves.

In examining treatises of the period, both Francesco Algarotti and Francesco Milizia stand out for their abilities to address a social phenomenon, the theatre, in its entirety as both physical space, and dramatic and social event. They combined the results of their architectural training with an understanding of the need for reform in the theatre and, by extension, society of their day. In so doing they create and define the role of the Architect-Poet, an individual imbued with the talents necessary for a total reform of the theatre. There had, of course, been previous Italian examples of architects with poetic aspirations such as Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) the great architect, sculptor, designer, actor and author of plays such as *I due teatri* and *L'Impresario*.¹⁴ In contrast to Bernini's artistic output, however, Algarotti and Milizia created systems that dictated rules for dramatic and architectural reform.

The age of reason had ushered in a new need to question the accepted tenets of the ancients in such fields as literature and architecture. Disciples of Lodoli were

¹⁴Laura Visconti explores Bernini's association with theatre in her essay, *Bernini in the Theatre*. Published in Roy Eriksen's *Contexts of Baroque*, pp.219-237.

following his lead in applying a rationalistic argument to the revered work of Vitruvius, which itself could no longer be accepted at face value. Algarotti and Milizia were to use this same approach in their respective analyses of Aristotelian rules for tragedy, attempting to find the true place of dramatic representation in their society by breaking the work into categories and reinterpreting the function of the independent part with respect to its place in the whole. In so doing they codified rules for a relatively new genre, opera, which had an important status in the Europe of their day. The tools at their disposal for this ante litteram “deconstruction” of the theatre were found within the training provided to them, within the debates raging in the publications of the academies, and in direct contact with fellow architects and theatre practitioners. Winckelmann, for example, is connected, through his relationship with Mengs, to Milizia who was also an intimate of Mengs'.¹⁵ The contribution of the academies in applying different disciplines is of particular importance to the development, at the time, of the sense of interrelationship between different disciplines and their impact on society. The academies in Italy facilitated contact between diverse groups which, in turn, created an expansiveness of thought that would bring new perspectives to bear in problem solving, constructing the potential for new theoretical approaches which a narrower point of view could not. Such a marriage of practices was evident, for example, in Venice where steps were being made towards social renewal on various fronts and where the great

¹⁵In his preface to *The History of Ancient Art*, written in Rome in 1763, Winckelmann writes: “The *History of Art* I dedicate to Art and the Age, and especially to my friend, Antonio Raphael Mengs.” Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art*, p. 117.

playwright Carlo Goldoni dedicated *L'Uomo di Mondo* to Andrea Memmo, an architectural theorist who was also a student of Carlo Lodoli.¹⁶

With Francesco Algarotti, we see the products of a fertile mind that sought out and incorporated many of the crosscurrents of ideas in European intellectual circles. In his architectural treatises, as in his other work, he takes the approach of melding different traditions. This personal style has led architectural theorists to criticize Algarotti's credentials as a neo-classicist. When asked to write a work which reflected the theories of his master, Algarotti prepared the *Saggio sopra l'architettura* (1756) on the condition that neither Lodoli nor his close associate, Memmo, would interfere with the textual output. The result was a work which, while focusing on Lodoli's design concepts, is noted as placing Algarotti outside of the Lodolian circle because it mingles Laugier's concept of the primitive hut with Lodoli's functionalist argument. The result was an ambiguous line of thought which was "neither purely rigorist nor functionalist nor naturalist."¹⁷ It has been commented on by Rykwert that Algarotti retained his master's method while acquiring "rather cosmopolitan and conventionalized Anglo-Parisian tastes."¹⁸

Francesco Milizia is considered to be a firm adherent of the Lodoli school of design. Writing his *Del Teatro* in 1772, he demonstrates his familiarity with the ideology of the architectural master. He also shows a deep affinity with Algarotti, regarding ideas related to the reform of building design and of dramatic practices cursing the Italian

¹⁶Paul, v.

¹⁷Paul, 8.

¹⁸Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p.289.

stage at the time. Certainly some common environmental condition existed which led both theorists to attempt to correlate as issues the design of theatre, the function of drama, and the place of theatre, as event and as structure, at the heart of society. Their approaches are strikingly similar in spite of the sixteen years that separated their two treatises on theatre. Apart from the connection to Lodoli himself, there was much happening in the political, social, philosophical and artistic environment which encouraged Algarotti and Milizia to propose reforms for an event that was nourished by developments in all of these disciplines. This was the period of the "reform opera," which produced Calzabigi's and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* in 1762, seven years after Algarotti's *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica*, and a few years before Milizia's *Del Teatro*. These activities offered to the larger body of enlightenment discourse arguments against Baroque artistic conventions. Algarotti's and Milizia's analyses of the theatre as both event and structure are at the heart of the uniqueness of this contribution.

Both Milizia and Algarotti demonstrated a diversity of interests that were typical to the general philosophy of their age which, nurtured by Cartesian doubt, accepted Newton's empirical methods as universally valid.¹⁹ Their class gave them the resources of higher learning and travel while the intellectual movement of the time ensured that they would be involved in the assessment of the value of reason in systems characterized by a residue of Church control, tyrannical oppression and narrow-

¹⁹"The influence of Newton paved the way for the systematization and mathematization of knowledge, a knowledge that held that immutable, mathematical laws could be derived from the observation of natural phenomena, and that would eventually take on the form of nineteenth-century positivism."

From Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, p.11.

mindedness associated with limited intellectual horizons.²⁰ The old forces were still at work in the politically motivated building schemes in the Kingdom of Naples where the form of the construction was dictated by the need to make an impression of dynastic strength. Luigi Vanvitelli (1700-1773), for example, in outlining his work on the royal palace at Caserta, clearly demonstrates that it was conceived of more as propaganda than as a treatise dealing with architectural theory.²¹ It is no coincidence that, in rebelling against this heritage of Baroque design flourish, Algarotti and Milizia developed artistic visions that emphasized the rational and the democratic. Both were also convinced that the presence of an enlightened ruler would be the best possible guarantee of seeing reforms executed.²² Milizia further argues that it could only be philosophers who were to be the arbiters of taste, thus demonstrating that his beliefs agree with those of the enlightened French physiocrats who used the term "enlightened despotism" to indicate an absolute respect on the part of the ruler for the objective validity of such laws as naturally govern society."²³

²⁰van Pelt and Westfall, in their *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism*, speak of the development of a trans-European cosmopolitanism that created a society with "ties of kinship and patronage criss-crossing Europe," offering many opportunities for the exchange of ideas. (p. 17)

²¹ "The never executed oval forecourt and *città nuova*, whose gigantic blocks of houses were intended to adopt the proportions of the palace itself, are illustrated, thus disguising the fact that the economically weak Southern Italian monarchy had overreached itself in undertaking such a project." From Kruff's *A History of Architectural Theory*, p.196.

²²"Rousseau's democratic ideas were exceptional and even he agreed that monarchy was probably the best form of government for a large country. Most writers believed that the most effective way of achieving reforms was through the activity of a powerful ruler who was wise enough to heed the counsels of men like the philosophes. From Garland, Grimsley, Preston, White, *The Age of Enlightenment*, p.20.

²³Franco Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, p.44.

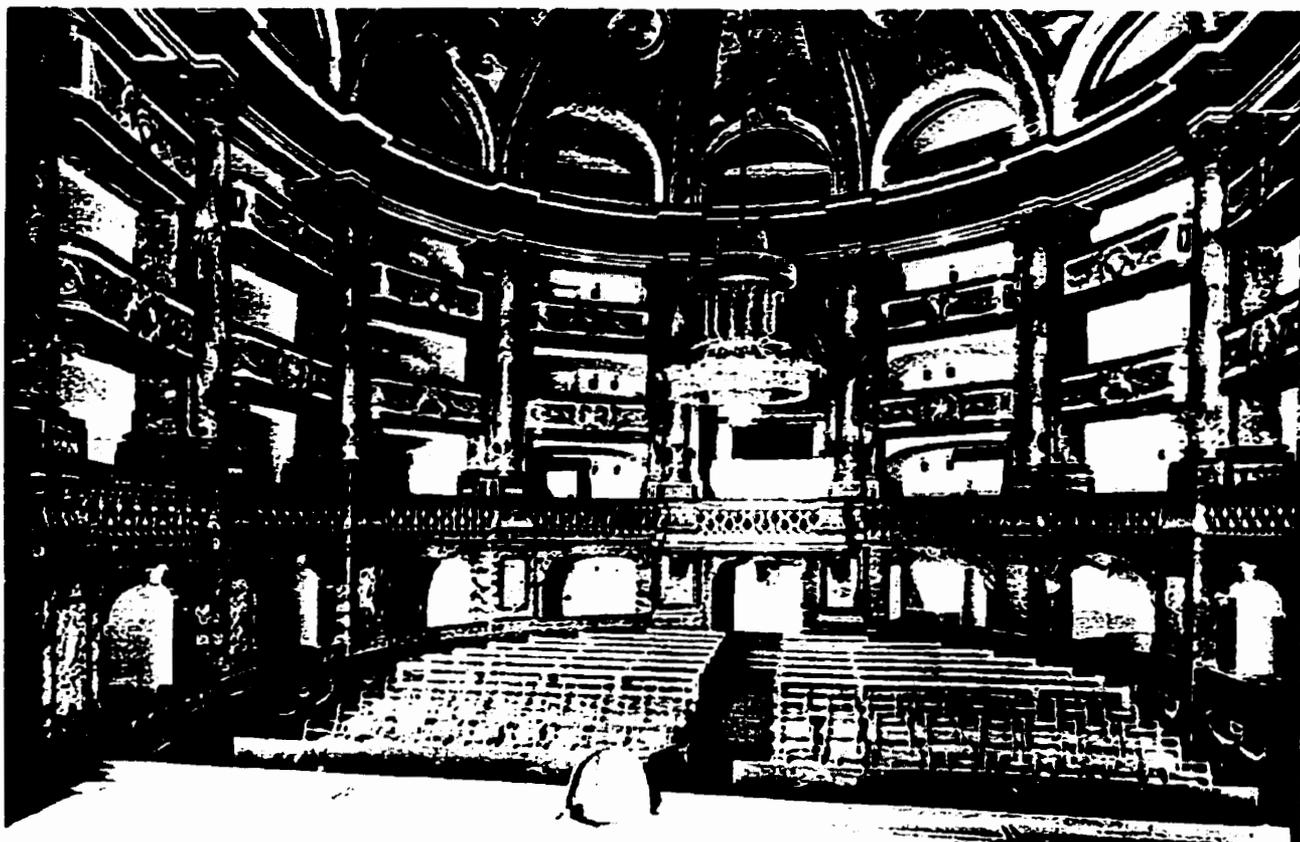


Illustration 1: Vanvitelli's Theatre in the Neapolitan Royal Palace at Caserta, 1752-59.

From Simon Tidworth, *Theatres: An Illustrated History*, Plate 88, p. 103.

In his preface to a work that places the people and events of Italy in the larger context of the European Enlightenment, Franco Venturi raises questions regarding what constituted the idea of the enlightened cosmopolite in the period that was framed by Fontanelle's humane use of the word in 1722 and Pietro Verri's more nationalist interpretation in 1775.²⁴ In that period, something constituting true enlightenment thought is proposed by Venturi as having occurred.

It was the work of men who were aware that they had elements in common, who sought and created new forms of organization and action, who thought and worked in terms of these and who, on each occasion, created an awareness of their own activity in the world which surrounded them and a consciousness of the place which they occupied in society and history.²⁵

The work of these men was given impetus by the motivational forces of the new concept of reason. This concept was not based on the seventeenth century perception of reason, which supported universal truths that connected man and God, but on true eighteenth century principles, as described by Cassirer in his seminal work. These principles characterize the work of the two theorists at hand; Algarotti and Milizia. Thus, in its deconstructive sense:

What reason is, and what it can do, can never be known by its results but only by its function. And its most important function consists in its power to bind and to dissolve. It dissolves everything merely factual, all simple data of experience, and everything believed on the evidence of revelation, tradition and authority; and it does not rest content until it has analyzed all these things into their simplest component parts and into their last elements of belief and opinion. Following this work of dissolution begins the work of construction. Reason cannot stop with the dispersed parts; it has to build from them a new structure, a true whole. But since

²⁴Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, Preface, xix.

²⁵Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, p.1.

reason creates this whole and fits the parts together according to its own rule, it gains complete knowledge of the structure of its product. Reason understands this structure because it can reproduce it in its totality and in the ordered sequence of its individual elements. Only in this twofold intellectual movement can the concept of reason be fully characterized, namely, as a concept of agency, not of being.²⁶

With reference to structures, of course, the work of Giambattista Vico is of special relevance to this study. The impact of *The New Science* (1725) cannot be underestimated in the case of the school of theorists aligned with Lodoli. Lodoli himself, a friend of Vico's, attempted to have the work published in Venice and disseminated the knowledge contained therein to his students. Mixed with his argument for functionalism and in light of the growing awareness that Italian culture was unique, although slipping from a position of respectability, *The New Science* provided much of the ground work necessary to the analysis of that culture with respect to its man-made social institutions.²⁷ Clearly, Algarotti, Milizia, and the group of reformers surrounding them incorporated into their analyses of the theatre a Viconian attempt to return to the beginnings of theatre in the hopes that an exposition of original function could shed light on modern-day excess. Viconian thought thus becomes inseparable from the revolution initiated by his axiom that "every theory must start from the point where the matter of which it treats first began to take shape."²⁸

²⁶Cassirer, pp.13-14.

²⁷Vico's deduction from this was quite original and had the profoundest effect. If the objects of our knowledge, as far as the natural sciences are concerned, exist as part of divine creation, the objects of our historical knowledge are more "knowable," since they are made by man in the first place. History must therefore be a more proper object of scientific investigation than physical nature." Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p.281.

²⁸From the introduction to *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, p.47-48.

With regard to the literary scene, Lodovico Antonio Muratori had long before initiated a new and bitter debate in Italian and international circles with respect to the superiority and inferiority of the different genres of literature. The debate took tangible form in his major work of 1706, *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, which was spoken about in most academic circles in the country. An important consequence of this work was its singling out of the operatic theatre as a new form, an Italian form, that, unfortunately was rife with defects. These defects, in turn, negatively affected its ability to put forward ideals and values necessary for the well-being of society. Muratori's criticism of the opera, however, must be analyzed in light of his propensity to see it as a category of the tragic genre, its defects being associated with its inability to subscribe to the rules associated with that genre. His work is seminal, providing the groundwork for an Italian philosophical debate which eventually produces the milieu from which Algarotti and Milizia, half a century later, will pull ideas. It is clear, of course, that their reforms of the theatre, especially as advocated by Milizia, had to take into account the changes in practices that had been effected through the work of such practitioners as Calzabigi and Gluck. Such developments, however, had to be interpreted from the point of view of intellectuals saturated by Vicinian philosophy, Lodolian functionalism and distinct Italian social conventions that influenced conceptions of social hierarchy and community life in the middle of the eighteenth century.

To further complicate matters, the social and intellectual environment of eighteenth century Italy was clouded by yet another development: the acute awareness, by Italians, that Italian military and diplomatic power had been eclipsed in Europe. Direct connections were being made by Italian intellectuals, such as Algarotti,

between the force of arms and the force of ideas.²⁹ Thus, Muratori's demand for a reform of Italian theatre, returning it to men of letters, can be interpreted as something more than an aesthetic challenge.

It was a catalyst to the formation of Arcadia as an intellectual entity giving rise to an Italian contribution to Enlightenment ideas. His work, as that of many of his countrymen, was published and read in various periodicals that were springing up across the continent, feeding into a font of general knowledge as well as drawing from it; contributing to an exchange of ideas, and creating links between countries that colored thought in an imported and exported form. In Italy, the arrival of such ideas in the journals led to the gradual slipping away of the ethics of the Counter-Reformation, "giving way to new collective values which were less religious and pessimistic."³⁰

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the French had gained a hegemony over artistic matters that included literature, performance and architecture. Wolfgang Hermann points out that Laugier has been accused of plagiarizing the work of Lodoli. The classic quotation is taken from the work of Andrea Memmo who, as mentioned previously, also published a work on Lodoli's theories.³¹ Hermann indicates that the charges are absurd and implies that French architectural theory was capable of standing on its own even to the point of insisting that "it was highly naive of Memmo to

²⁹Algarotti's *Letters on the Military Science of Machiavelli* and his *Discorsi militari* were translated into English under the title: *Letters: Military and Political*. I am using the second English edition of 1784.

³⁰Carpanetto and Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason*, p.154.

³¹See Andrea Memmo, *Elementi d'architettura lodoliana, ossia l'arte del fabbricare con solidità scientifica e con eleganza non capricciosa* (Zara, 1834), Tomo I, p 248, note 5.

believe that a French author would look for a Messiah in the person of an Italian philosopher."³² It is not the purpose of this dissertation to prove or refute the charges laid against the supporters of Lodoli by critics such as Hermann. What is germane is the fact that the need to defend in itself points to the importance of the aesthetic contributions of Lodoli's school. The conditions for the production of original observations regarding the functioning of the arts and philosophy within society clearly existed at the time. This being said, it is also true that many Italian intellectuals looked outside of their own environments for examples of enlightened thought in action. Francesco Algarotti, for example, spent many years studying scientific and artistic developments in foreign countries. In England, France and Prussia he surrounded himself with intellectuals and political figures who could help him develop an understanding of social reform and political freedoms that could be applied to his own society back home. Such flexibility of thought in the time of the rising nation state is clearly something that distinguishes the work of Italian intellectuals of the eighteenth century. As a natural and enriching cultural phenomenon this approach has many benefits.

. . . every culture needs periodically to square off against another. And such an encounter requires prior knowledge of, as well as intimacy with, that other culture; in short, its influence . . . this is one of the two basic facts about human history. The first is the appearance of autonomous cultures while the second is their cross-fertilization.³³

³²Hermann, p 161.

³³Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Phenomenology and Art*, p.26.

As a further impetus to the general realization that a social overhaul was required for the benefits of the arts and sciences in Italy, national shame had a motivating effect. The idea that Italy contained a group of petty and corrupt states was current in important travel literature of the time; literature that was being translated and discussed in European salons and academies. Venturi analyses Italian reactions to publications by English intellectuals, such as Gilbert Burnett and Addison, which support the impression that Italian artistic and political institutions were characterized by impotence and organizational weakness. Addison's accounts were published in 1705 and are considered by Venturi to be the most notable example of these attacks. The work contrasts the glories of ancient Italy with the "extreme misery and poverty that are inmost of the Italian governments,"³⁴ paying homage to Burnett for his earlier observations of a similar nature. In light of such external ridicule of Italian political impotence, and the fact that both Algarotti and Milizia surrounded themselves with foreign dignitaries, it becomes relevant that they often articulate their call for artistic reform in military language. Therefore, the desire to emulate advances in the arts and sciences, as successfully realized in countries such as England and France, must be considered as yet another of the forces which led to Algarotti's and Milizia's examinations of theatre as a socializing event. "They [Italians] were aware of their own

³⁴Venturi, "L'Italia fuori d'Italia," in *Storia D'Italia*, p. 1012-1013.

situation through comparison with richer and more active countries, and looked to the culture of the *Encyclopédie* for the means with which to overthrow the decadence they were becoming more and more acutely conscious of."³⁵

If Diderot's rationale in organizing the *Encyclopédie* was to change people's ways of thinking by exposing the relationship between the arts and sciences and society, then it is clear that the work had great bearing on the interests of both Algarotti and Milizia. Both reformers published their treatises on the relationship of theatre and society after Diderot's masterpiece had been widely distributed. In fact, by the 1760's, Venturi sees a generally enlightened discourse as having begun to present itself in a coherent and consistent manner. In Italy alone he presents a long list of reformist activities during this period which suggests a country-wide dissemination of the *Encyclopédie's* message in attempts to correct local abuses. Amongst these activities can be counted the Accademia dei Pugni in Milan, the Lezioni di commercio of Antonio Genovesi in Naples, reforms underway in Tuscany, the formation of agrarian societies in the Venetian provinces, the re-organization of Cagliari University, the attempts of Dalmazzo Francesco Vasco to get into contact with Jean-Jacques Rousseau to collaborate with him in the Corsican rebellion, the work by Carlantonio Pilati, *Di una riforma d'Italia*, etc..³⁶ In all of these reformist movements, enlightened thought was being applied in the assessment of the causes of the rise of particular social phenomena, its development and its decadence. Pieces of the whole of traditional

³⁵Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment*, p. 125.

³⁶Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment*, p.128.

institutions were being pried loose from one another, examined, and then replaced in a manner congruent with a rational analysis of the logical function of these same institutions. But, in some areas of Italy, especially in the traditions of the ancient republics, the need for social reform was different from that expressed in nations where political freedoms were being fought for in different ways. Franco Venturi notes the important distinction between the type of reforms needed in states born lacking in political freedom and those with free foundations, such as Venice. In the latter:

stood the passivity, the complete incapacity for reform of the oligarchic states, the lands dominated by the patriciates, countries which had been born as free countries, which in a certain sense still were so, but which by this time had witnessed the final estrangement from their structures, constitutions and customs of the ideals of freedom of the century . . . The revolts of the nobles would unleash revolution at the end of the century in France, but it would be effective precisely because it would take place on ground already prepared through the centuries of absolute monarchies.³⁷

The distinction is not trivial, as the categories of social structures being examined in Italy demonstrate. For example, in Italy, the development of the forms of theatre which culminated in what is perceived as the corrupted aesthetics of the eighteenth century, had a much longer and more socially significant history than in other nations. In the literature of the period it is repeated over and over that, where Italy had once led the way in the arts, she now wallowed in a decadence which, partly a result of the need for the reform of the stage event, was more dependent on the role of the audience and its expectations in visiting the theatre. The quality of the experience was noted, particularly by Jean-Jacques Rousseau who, during his stay in Venice, had to isolate himself from

³⁷Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, p. 30.

his companions at the theatre, deserting their box so that he might find a place in the audience from where he could see and hear the opera without interruption.³⁸ This scenario is repeated again and again throughout the major opera houses of Italy with the result that, in Italy, "society life and the pleasure of conversation used the theatre more as a background than a source of stimulation."³⁹ The consistency of this style of social engagement with the theatre is considered by Algarotti and Milizia, in their theatrical treatises, to be cultural. Their call for a total reform of theatre is more particularly a call for the reform of Italian theatre; a theatre with its own history, and its own peculiarities. It is their ability to envision the theatre in its totality and to break it down into its parts that distinguishes their work. Respected in his day, Algarotti, was able to influence the development of academies, art collections, and theatre design and reform in his own and other countries. His impact was felt through the importance of his published work but also by the magnitude of his connections with some of the most remarkable people of his time. Milizia was also made famous while still alive, and was known for the logic applied in his system of categorization. "As late as 1824 Thomas Jefferson could describe Milizia as the most reliable source on architectural aesthetics."⁴⁰ The work of these two men, Milizia and Algarotti, when considered together, demonstrates the existence of a school of thought, influenced by the architectural principles of Carlo Lodoli but driven also by the need to create order in a corrupt society. By applying Lodoli's rigorist principles to a re-analysis of the prototypes

³⁸Maurice Vaussard, *Daily Life in Eighteenth Century Italy*, p.160.

³⁹Vaussard, p. 159.

⁴⁰Kruff, p.203.

provided by Vitruvius and Aristotle they questioned the state of theatre as a building and as an event. Their desire was to return this institution to its honoured position in society, thereby allowing it to carry out its original function. Their reforms were of such a nature that, while extolling the role of the poet as the unifying force necessary to the success of the enterprise, such a person would have had to possess a keen, architecturally-trained mind capable of envisioning a theatre that stood on firm foundations both physically and materially. Both men embodied the abilities of the Architect-Poet thus creating places for themselves in both architectural and dramatic histories of the eighteenth century.

This dissertation thus uses the Lodolian idea of functionalism as the basis by which Algarotti and Milizia dissect the theatre in respective treatises dedicated to analyses of that social phenomenon. Both had previously utilized Lodoli's methodology in breaking down the elements of architecture and both were to apply this methodology once again in their analyses of theatre. In so doing, they questioned time-honoured traditions while examining the place of these traditions in the overall function of the theatrical event. Their treatises on theatre, accordingly, are broken down into chapters dealing with each specific element but always attempting to locate the element in the greater whole with respect to its logical function. In doing this, much ancient wisdom could be re-validated but much was also found to be irrelevant to the society of the mid-eighteenth century. Clearly the treatment by both authors of the opera as man's highest dramatic achievement bespeaks the need to single out this specific art form for special consideration. It was an achievement of both men to utilize the arguments of Muratori,

Martello and Zeno in developing treatments of the types of theatre in which the opera is prominently, and separately, considered in its entirety as a new and independent genre.

In order to give an idea of their contributions to the fields of architecture and dramatic theory, this dissertation separates Algarotti's and Milizia's treatment of dramatic theory from that of architectural theory. In so doing, it remains faithful to their conceptions of theatre, which include design as one of many parts, and yet separate from the rest. As such, the present work is separated into four chapters each dedicated to a particular analysis of theories of architecture and drama as proposed by Algarotti and Milizia in their treatises. I deal with Algarotti first because his treatise on theatre predates Milizia, whose own treatise is influenced by the work of the former.

CHAPTER I

Algarotti And Theories Of Architecture

Equally respectable in arts and arms, the English nation claims the superiority also in the world of science; particularly with regards to the cultivation of those arts, which contribute most to the strength and splendour of a state. These are Agriculture and Architecture; one the sovereign mistress of the polite arts, the other a nursing mother to all.¹

In light of debate regarding the eclipse of Italian artistic hegemony in the early eighteenth century, no person, perhaps, did more than Francesco Algarotti (1712-64) to enhance the international reputation of contemporary artists and academics, living and working in the peninsula. By the time that Winckelmann published his work on neo-classicism, Algarotti had already penned the bulk of his treatises dealing with subjects as diverse as painting and Newtonian optics. Although he is often referred to as an opportunist and dilettante in critical literature, both contemporary to his own and to our times, it cannot be denied that this educated Italian cosmopolitan was respected by some of the most active and influential minds of his day. Among these admirers can be counted Frederick the Great of Prussia², Tiepolo, Augustus III of Saxony and Poland, and a host of others. In fact, after having published *Il Newtonismo spiegato alle donne*

¹Francesco Algarotti, Preface to *An Essay on Painting*, p. iv.

²Count in 1740; since Algarotti was childless and likely to remain so, the title was also conferred on his brother Bonomo and his heirs. Algarotti was a member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences and in 1747 was made Court Chamberlain and decorated with the Order of Merit, the highest Prussian decoration. Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p.330, note 45.

(1737), his presence at many of the most progressive courts in Europe was considered an honour. In 1740 he was invited by Frederick the Great to come to Berlin to become a well-paid member of the Academy of Sciences and Letters, along with other European intellectuals.³ "His writings were quickly translated and circulated throughout the most important salons, often having more success abroad than in Italy."⁴ His works, especially those dealing with a criticism of the arts, for generations after his death, were available and read by a diverse group of European artists.⁵

Most of what can be said about Francesco Algarotti, with regard to his interests, his talents, his connections, his charms, and his defects, can be deduced from his selection of friends and his use of these people to help further his career in the upper echelons of European society. He has left a vast amount of correspondence with some of the most remarkable people of his time, many of whom treated him as a friend and confidant. Algarotti was much involved with Voltaire whose *Eléments de Newton* was inspired by Algarotti's own *Il Newtonianismo per le dame*. "Twice in their lives the two authors found themselves together, the first time at Cirey for six weeks in the autumn of 1735, then later for the period of Voltaire's stay in Berlin 1750-53."⁶ Much of this

³ Upon taking the throne, "the young king at once pledged himself to a policy of toleration, news that shocked repressive fellow rulers . . . He invited the distinguished French mathematician Pierre Louis de Maupertuis to head a reinvigorated Academy of Sciences and Letters, which was to be 'not for show but for education.'
Robert B. Asprey, *Frederick the Great*, p.145-146.

⁴Paul, *Of Substantiating Nature*, p.7.

⁵Francis Haskell mentions that Algarotti "would have been delighted to know that more than thirty years after his death John Constable whiled away the long winter evenings by studying his works."
Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p.360.

⁶H. Trevor Mason, "Algarotti and Voltaire," *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone*, p. 467.

information has already been chronicled by Ida Treat in her 1913 publication, *Un Cosmopolite Italien du XVIIIe Siècle Francesco Algarotti*. A fascinating study, however, has been done by Robert Halsband on one of Algarotti's closest English connections, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, which gives a penetrating insight into the motivational force behind this cosmopolitan Italian as he wound his way through the lives and hearts of the rich and famous of the eighteenth century. His relationship with Lady Mary, in particular, demonstrates much about his desires and credibility in European intellectual circles.

Algarotti's was truly a strange mix of eager intellectualism and sensualism. Often, it seems, since he lacked the prestige provided by a nation respected for its force of arms, he had to promote himself among his cultural peers in a less than orthodox manner. In a letter dedicated to Frederick the Great, found in Algarotti's *Dialoghi sopra l'ottica newtonia* (1752), Francesco noted that Italians, as a culture, possess a language that "is not, so to speak, either living or dead."⁷ The irony should not be lost that, while seeking to give greater credibility to his home country, in an attempt at rectifying the impression that culture was incapable of modern thought, he should stoop to syrupy sentimentalism with real-life characters who could have populated the melodramas he criticized. Thus, his great contributions to dramatic theory are coloured by the activities to which he resorted in order to get his message heard or, more specifically, published.

⁷Mario Puppo, *Discussione Linguistiche dell Settecento*, p.34.

With regard to the theory of drama, Algarotti demonstrates his cosmopolitan airs in his correspondence with friends throughout Europe. In fact, he can be considered a powerful branch of Italian influence throughout Europe by disseminating the latest Italian theories in the courts, and other rooms of power across the continent. In a way, he can be considered a promoter of the work of the Italian academies, several of which counted him an honorary member. And, certainly, traveling as extensively as he did, he was able to create and strengthen networks between fellow Italian academics living lives of voluntary exile on foreign soil. For example, Algarotti writes a report regarding the work of Steffano Benedetto Pallavicini, Secretary, Adviser and Poet to the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony:

Fermata sua abitazione in Dresda, egli si diede più che mai allo studio delle belle lettere e migliorò d'assai lo stile ch'era stato lungo terr po quasi in bilco tra i vizi del secolo in cui era nato, e la virtù de' buoni autori ch'erano già risaliti in pregio in Italia, mercè principalmente del Gravina che fu un altro Galilei delle lettere umane.⁸

His travels took him to the far reaches of Europe, including Russia, which he visited from England in the company of an Englishman, Lord Charles Baltimore, in 1739. In his travel diary for the voyage, collected as a series of letters written to his good friends Lord Hervey and the Marquis Scipione Maffei, he presents a critical analysis of the customs of the society that he experienced first-hand. As a strong advocate of the new liberal ideas of the Enlightenment, especially as discussed and practiced in England, where he had taken up residence in 1736, Algarotti pitied the

⁸From: *Ragguaglio della Vita e delle Opere di Steffano Benedetto Pallavicini Segretario, Consigliere, e Poeta della Maestà di Augusto III Re di Polonia Elettore di Sassonia*. In *Opere Varie del Conte Francesco Algarotti*, p.226.

Russian people. They were governed by an unenlightened monarch and could not hope to compare in achievement, artistic or economic, with more advanced societies back home. An interesting synopsis of Algarotti's critical stance is provided in a paper which deals with the accounts of his voyage. He "speaks, for instance, of a 'dispotico imperio' . . . in which lives 'un popolo che ignora sino il nome della libertà' . . . 'i contadini sono schiavi' and 'il padrone gli vende, come il bestiame . . .'"⁹

Algarotti had been born privileged. His family had a wealthy merchant background in Venice. As such, he was able to attend the University of Bologna where, among other studies, he became proficient in English and French. This, in turn, prepared him for the international circles he was to mix in when moving to Rome, where his family had connections. Francesco's time in Rome catapulted him into the international milieu that would forever change his life. He made good use of his sojourn there. Halsband provides us with a list of Algarotti's acquaintances that sounds like a who's who of the eighteenth century. In Rome:

he was befriended by Martin Folkes, a prominent member of the Royal Society, who encouraged his enthusiasm for England and especially for Isaac Newton. The following year he moved to Paris, where he devoted himself to other pleasures besides intellectual ones. He soon exhausted the allowance supplied by his brother, head of their fatherless family; and so when Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet, whom he had met, invited him to the Château de Cirey in Lorraine, he joined them. Like them he was studying Newtonian physics and had devised a scheme reducing Newton's *Optics* to a set of dialogues like Fontanelle's

⁹Antonio Franceschetti, "From the Travel Journal to the *Viaggi di Russia* of Algarotti," *The Enlightenment in a Western Mediterranean Context*, p. 101.

Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes. At Cirey he easily impressed Voltaire with his facility in writing verse and his knowledge of Locke and Newton.¹⁰

Algarotti arrived in England in March 1736. "On April 1 he attended a meeting of the Royal Society, and a week later was nominated for membership as 'A Gentleman of great knowledge in all parts of Philosophical and Mathematical Learning.' In May he was elected to the Society of Antiquaries."¹¹ He used his connection with Voltaire to meet Lord Hervey. Through Hervey, Algarotti met Walpole, the Queen, and eventually, Lady Mary. He read to Lady Mary and Lord Hervey his Italian dialogues on Newton and they "helped him to improve his command of English."¹²

Halsband finds Algarotti of interest only as he pertains to the lives of Lady Mary and Lord Hervey. Instead of discussing his work on Newton's Optics, he merely mentions that they are a peripheral activity for Algarotti, taking him away from England where he had found a place in the social lives of those of greater consequence. Thus, in all his discussion of Algarotti, the only mention of his work is found in its unhappy effect on the young Italian leaving England.¹³ Instead, in his discussion of a series of ink

¹⁰Halsband, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 153.

¹¹Halsband, p. 154.

¹²Ida Treat, p. 70.

¹³"During the summer Algarotti took stock of his situation. Although he was enchanted by England, he decided to return to Italy for the publication of his dialogues, which had been as highly praised in London as in Paris."
Halsband, p.155.

portraits done of Algarotti in England, Halsband describes the philosopher's demeanor to be " . . . pensive, almost melancholy; it is the face of a lover who is passive, accustomed to being pursued and wooed."¹⁴

Halsband points out that Algarotti was capable of entering into relationships with members of both sexes, including Lady Mary, possibly Voltaire, and most definitely Hervey himself, who is known to have been fairly open with regard to his homosexuality. The results, of course, were always advantageous to the count, as indicated in Lord Hervey's romantic correspondence with the Italian that Hervey preferred written in French:

Je suis, mon cher, dans une veritable affliction de ne vous voir plus; et il faut bien que vous souffrez l'ennui de l'entendre dire une fois, puisque vous ne le faites sentir mille fois par jour. Tout le monde me trouve d'une humeur exécrable, et me le dit tout net; pendant que je leur reponds avec la même sincérité, avouant que c'est vrai, et que c'est le départ de Monsr. Algarotti qui en est la cause . . .¹⁵

With regard to Algarotti's importance in the European aesthetic debate, his artistic position, has been criticized for its lack of commitment to any specific point of view. It is this very willingness to adopt and transform ideas, however, for which he can be considered representative of the transitional period in which he found himself. The polemic of Algarotti's *Congresso di Citera*, linked philosophically with the work of Montesquieu, is said to be the fruit of his dream for a European synthesis "in cui l'immaginazione italiana al buon senso inglese e alla francese dilicatezza mostrar si

¹⁴ Halsband, p.156.

¹⁵ Letter from Lord Hervey to Count Algarotti, September 20, 1736. From Kensington. In Hervey, *Lord Hervey and his Friends*, p.249.

potesse."¹⁶ As a designer, his views are characterized by a reaction against what he perceived as weakness in the ornate flourishes of late Baroque style. He believed, and put into writing in his *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica*, that excesses in design do to the building what equally senseless stage practices do to the integrity of the staged representation.¹⁷ His work paved the way for a more austere neo-classical style that would come into full light with a more public disclosure of the discoveries of antiquities in Pompeii and Herculaneum in the 1760's, a decade that Franco Venturi identifies as the decisive period for the enlightenment in Italy; a decade that "saw some of the most daring proposals for a reform of Italy."¹⁸

Algarotti's unique personality makes him a fascinating subject to art historians such as Francis Haskell, who sums up in a few words the work of a prolific and enterprising life: "He was a bourgeois, but the intimate friend of princes and patricians; he toyed with 'enlightened' theories, but was closely tied to the old order; he was a Venetian patriot of sorts, though rarely in Venice, and he was in touch with all the most advanced European ideas."¹⁹ His illustriousness contributed to his being chosen, in his *Saggio Sopra L'Architettura* (1756), to lay down on paper the seminal work of Carlo

¹⁶In his introduction to the *Congresso*, Armando Marchi uses Algarotti's dedication to Fontenelle from his *Newtonianismo per le dame*, to demonstrate the writer's cosmopolitan sensibilities. F. Algarotti, dedica Al Signor Bernardo di Fontanelle in *Newtonianismo per le dame (Dialoghi sopra l'ottica newtoniana)*, Torino, 1977, p.166. From Francesco Algarotti, *Il Congresso di Citera*, p.18.

¹⁷ The practice, for example, of seating spectators on the stage, created the impossibility of any stage realism either in acting or scenic representation until 1759 at the Comédie- Française in Paris. "Thanks largely to the propaganda of Voltaire, and the financial assistance of a benefactor, spectators were finally removed [at that time]." Barbara Mittman, *Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, p.77.

¹⁸Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, p. 20.

¹⁹Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p. 347.

Lodoli in the field of architectural design. If not totally faithful to the great man's teachings²⁰ the treatise at least raised pertinent questions regarding the design and utility of urban structures in a changing society. These questions, involving the functions of the multiple parts of a building had already been applied by Algarotti to the design of the structure we call a theatre. The choice of this particular type of public building on which to lavish so much of his attention was not arbitrary. Venice, Algarotti's hometown, had a historical association with the development of theatre both as place and event. In the eighteenth century this association continued in debates fuelled by practical issues rising out of the demands of theatre construction. In Venice alone, seven theatres were built or reconstructed throughout the century.²¹ It is, thus, around Algarotti's architectural treatise, as a repository of Lodolian principles, that his propensity to think in an architectural manner is made clear. His placement of the individual in society, or nature in the arts fulfils for him much the same function as a pediment over a window.

In the *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* Algarotti places his chapter on architecture at the end. I, however, will treat of it first for a variety of reasons. First, in being placed at the end, the chapter acts to sum up an entire functionalist argument regarding the place of theatre in society. This is done primarily through the identification of the theatre

²⁰“Although Algarotti, the count, could not bring himself to renounce the glamor of the late Baroque which he had experienced in all its modifications - in Roman grandeur and German grandiosity, in Venetian exuberance and French refinement, as well as in the fanciful paraphrases of the great English builders - it was to his credit that he understood, and even admired, the visionary ideas of Lodoli, the friar.”

Emil Kaufmann, "Piranesi, Algarotti and Lodoli," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, p.22.

²¹Paul, v.

edifice as the most visible and, therefore, tangible manifestation of the theatre experience. Second, the chapter on architecture, together with the preceding chapter on set design amount to a total of thirty five pages in the Davis edition of 1768. This exceeds even the chapter regarding the unifying role of the poet, which amounts to a mere thirteen pages by contrast. Finally, it is imperative to understand the rationale of Algarotti's rigorist architectural training to clearly appreciate the manner in which he dissects the opera as a complete event. An architect can also be a poet, but the reverse is not necessarily true.

It is important to place Algarotti at the centre of the influences which surrounded him, influences of extraordinary force. Again, it must be noted that Algarotti was one of Lodoli's students at the monastery of San Francesco della Vigna in Venice. There, he was exposed to an analytical mind with research interests in the fields of mathematics and geometry as well as the fine arts and architecture.²² Algarotti could not help but be influenced by direct exposure to the person who, in the *New History of Architectural Theory* is described as the "most revolutionary eighteenth-century Italian architectural theorist."²³ It is clear that his design principles and general sense of aesthetics were transformed by the association. Algarotti's own early taste in architecture, unfortunately, is evident in the design of Villa Algarotti at Carpenedo, near

²²"This school was run on the most advanced, modern lines. Lodoli's favourite authors were Galileo and Bacon; he took his pupils to visit libraries and distinguished scholars. He brought them up on Cicero and Puffendorf on the duties of man. And he had a brush with the Inquisitori di Stato because he insisted on using State documents as suitable subject-matter for grammatical and literary investigation. He was a keen admirer of Vico and he was among those who persuaded the Neapolitan philosopher to write his *Autobiography*, which was first published in Venice." Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p. 320.

²³Kruff, p.197.



Illustration 2: Villa Algarotti at Carpenedo di Mestre, by Francesco and Bonomo Algarotti.

From Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p. 290.

Venice Mestre. This building is said to have been designed by Francesco, together with his father, and is described as: " a barochetto enough little building, with its Tuscan cornices broken by attic windows, flat Tuscan pilasters, and wide pediment - all too robust for the French taste of the time or indeed Francesco's own in a latter day."²⁴

It was during is time with Lodoli that Algarotti began to apply a functionalist logic to the design of buildings as a program to eliminate undesirable over-design. He later applied the same principles to the theatre to rid the theatre-going experience, in its entirety, of excess, or of what he conceived of in his architectonic manner as useless "ornamentation." In so doing, he codified a set of laws in his *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (1755) which was to have a great influence on others attempting the reform of theatrical practices. It "became the manifesto of operatic reform, influencing even in details both the practice and the theory of Gluck."²⁵ Published in Pisa in 1762, the treatise was already translated into and published in English by 1768, a mere six years later. As Algarotti was to succumb to consumption a few years after the Italian printing, this work can be considered one of his most mature.

What stands out clearly in Algarotti's work is the strong connection between his architectural and theatrical treatises. His *Saggio sopra l'architettura* ends in much the same way that his *Essay on Opera* begins. The rationale applied in the one leads necessarily to the next with the lessons learned from architecture used to define ways in which the arts could be used to reform society.

²⁴From Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p. 330, note 52.

²⁵ Donald Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, p.232.

Mercé le conferenze da esso lui frequentemente tenute, mercé i suoi ragionamenti e gli apologhi, sopra tutto, con che gli sarivestire e rendere popolari, è da sperare che l'Architettura si verrà purgando di parecchi errori che vi ha introdotti una cieca pratica. E così egli, conducendo gli uomini nelle vie del vero, contribuirà al bene della civile società; simile all'antico Socrate, il quale fu forse cagione che si emendassero al tempo suo non poche leggi ed abusi ne' già stabiliti governi, se non gli fu dato di poter fondare una nuova repubblica.²⁶

Where Algarotti focussed solely on the opera as a subject of study, Milizia was later to borrow Algarotti's model and apply it to other dramatic genres. Regardless, both were influenced in their initiatives and world outlook by the work of Muratori who had himself written a good deal about the opera. Algarotti gives specific credit to Muratori for initiating the debate which would occupy the peninsula for most of the century. It is again no coincidence that the reform of the opera as the highest dramatic genre is linked in Muratori's, and later in Algarotti's work, to societal reform. Muratori criticized the operatic theatre, which in his day was still a recent phenomenon, for lacking ideals and values that were necessary to maintain the well-being of society. His response to this situation was the publication of a treatise, *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (1706), in which he entered into a debate regarding the superiority or inferiority of the various literary genres. It was Muratori who initiated a call for a new style of tragedy which would be articulated along the rationalistic lines of French classicism while maintaining classical precepts as found in Aristotle. The basis for his work is in alignment with the original mandate of the Academy of the Arcadians which was established in Rome in 1690 as an intellectual response to the need to redress Baroque abuses of aesthetic principles. The Arcadian movement became immediately successful, gaining members

²⁶Algarotti, *Saggio sopra l'architettura*, Giovanni Da Pozzo Ed., p.52.

in every part of Italy and instituting the organs of a national philosophical discourse that is considered to have ushered into Italy the principles of the Enlightenment.²⁷

Thus, Muratori's work paved the way for a national debate regarding language, culture and national prestige. The spirit of this debate quite obviously touched Algarotti deeply, its impact discernible in all of his work. Muratori's arguments have been thought to spring from his frustration with the increasingly obvious ineffectuality of the Arcadian Academy, of which he was a member.²⁸ He proposed to his fellow intellectuals that the languages, and the cultures represented by them, become respected when excellent writers utilize them as vehicles to deliberate the nature of the arts and sciences. This at a time when the French were flooding Europe with enlightened treatises that utilized new forms of reason to reevaluate accepted knowledge. His *Riflessioni sopra il buon gusto intorno le scienze e le arti* (published two years after *Della perfetta poesia italiana*) was intended to carry the new critical spirit into every field of knowledge, pitting reason and experience against every unjustified homage to the authority of the ancients and to traditional prejudices.²⁹ Algarotti contributed directly to this debate with the publication of his *Saggio sopra la necessità di scrivere nella propria*

²⁷ Consistent with the ideas of the Enlightenment, Gravina (Gian Vincenzo Gravina - one of the Academy's founding members) maintains that the functions of the poet, of the intellectual and of the jurist are those of freeing from the darkness of the passions and the body that divine spark which is in everyone, but which in the common man seems dim and dulled by the weight of the body. Thus poetry - and in this sense it recovers its pedagogical dimension - is an instrument of policy for the intellectual, a means of spreading culture and reason, a parallel to the law of the *sapientes*." Carpanetto and Ricuperati, p.86.

²⁸ "Muratori felt the need to propose a new Italian literary society, knowing full well that the Arcadia - despite its expansion - was unable to answer satisfactorily the real problems of culture and Italian intellectualism." Carpanetto and Ricuperati, p.88.

²⁹ Puppo, p. 22.

lingua (1750) for which Mario Puppo rewards him by characterizing him as "modern."³⁰ This characterization is shown as earned by Algarotti for the criticism he aims at traditional ideas of education in cultures where new initiatives are foregone in the mundane exercises involved in researching "classical" information as encoded in classical languages. His arguments always lead back to the need for improvement in some sector of society that has become debilitated in some way. The arts, especially architecture, are necessary for the reconditioning of society, as well as representing the effects of good citizenship. In his *Saggio*, he uses the English system as a model for advanced ideas regarding the importance of language. The issue of civic pride is tied even to the debate on language acquisition. "It was reserved for modern times to have two or three dead languages to learn; so that during the greatest part of that time in which the Ancients were teaching their children to be citizens, we are teaching ours to be little better than parrots."³¹ If good citizenship can be thus envisioned, it becomes even more compelling in the design and maintenance of the buildings that provide the setting for civic life.

³⁰"With the progression of a rationalist mentality and critical spirit in Italy, wider and more radical were the reactions to traditional ideas, more decisive the action for a cultural renovation, more diffuse and convinced the request for a living language that was modern, clear with expressions both simple and direct from the mind and the soul of the writer, free from homage to national models and instead modeled on the example of modern foreign languages, capable of translating with precision and correctness the new concepts. In the middle of the 18th century this "modern" spirit was incarnated above all by Algarotti."

Translated from Mario Puppo, *Discussioni Linguistiche del Settecento*, p. 32.

³¹From "A New Estimate of manners and principles; or A Comparison between ancient and modern Times, in the great articles of Knowledge, Happiness, and Virtue," P. III. In Algarotti's *Saggio Sopra La necessità di scrivere nella propria lingua*. Found in Mario Puppa, *Discussioni Linguistiche del Settecento*, p. 184.

With respect to his views of architecture, as previously stated, Algarotti is firmly entrenched in the school of Carlo Lodoli, although his interpretation of Lodoli's principles was not always precise. The group of disciples around Lodoli is considered quite distinct and has been called collectively the Rigoristi, with Lodoli at the helm. The uniqueness of the school, what differentiates it as a particularly Italian phenomenon was probably Lodoli's "friendship with Giambattista Vico, the exceptional Neapolitan philosopher whose work anticipated certain insights of contemporary phenomenological hermeneutics."³²

With regard to his credentials to pen works on the merits of architectural design in general and design for theatre, of particular importance to this thesis, Algarotti's credit roll is a long one. In the arts in general, he had worked as an art collector for the court in Dresden.

L'Algarotti era certamente qualificato a quell'ufficio per il suo alacre interesse alle cose dell'arte, ben testimoniato, oltre che da molte lettere (Lettere sopra la pittura, Lettere sopra l'architettura), dai saggi *Sopra l'architettura* (1756), *Sopra la pittura* (1762), e *Sopra l'Accademia di Francia che è in Roma* (1763), che restano nella critica d'arte importante documento di un moderato razionalismo classicheggiante.³³

In the art world of the period, his word held great weight, with collector and artist alike.³⁴ His scholarly approach to art emphasized the role of history in the construction and display of a collection of paintings, a revolutionary idea at the time which has influenced the display of art in public galleries ever since. "He wants the gallery to reflect the whole

³²Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, p.253.

³³Ettore Bonora, *F. Algarotti e S. Bettinelli*, p.24.

³⁴ For a discussion of Algarotti as Tiepolo's patron, commissioning and influencing his work, see Francis Haskell's chapter, "Francesco Algarotti," in *Patrons and Painters*, pp.347-360.

history of painting and to include the finest representatives of all schools."³⁵ Even his ideas regarding the importance of collecting historical pieces for display, however, are based on Lodoli, who himself owned such a collection.³⁶

Algarotti's *Saggio sopra l'architettura* synthesizes Carlo Lodoli's rigorist argument, the majority of the treatise revolving around the ideas of functionalism and frivolity. To understand Algarotti's system it is necessary to trace it back to his architectural training under Lodoli. It is clear that Algarotti's ideas regarding the role of the arts in society are greatly influenced by Lodoli. The *Saggio* had been requested of Algarotti by his master as an attempt to establish his "original" ideas in light of the publication of Laugier's *Essai Sur L'Architecture*, which had been published in Paris in 1753. In the introduction to that work, Laugier himself points out that: "Frenchmen, slow to invent but quick to adopt successful inventions, envied the Italians the glory of having revived the splendid creations of Greece."³⁷ Lodoli is said to have been disappointed with the results, which he felt misrepresented his argument against ornamentation and detailing. The primary focus of attention in the treatise, regarding models for emulation, is in the natural archetypes that exist across the arts, with the exception of architecture. This consideration places the work within the concerns of the period; a period characterized by an aesthetic debate that places much authority, in the creation of art, in the return to origins of form. It is from this debate that Algarotti

³⁵Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, p.350.

³⁶"[Lodoli] . . . built up a private collection of pictures covering the period from the Middle Ages, at that time held in low regard, to the Renaissance, grouping according to local schools in order to demonstrate step by step the progress of the art of disegno." Kruff, p.197.

³⁷Laugier, p. 9.

identifies the difference between what is functional in design and what is merely embellishment.

Most architects of the period refer to the "first house" as being the architectural prototype with regard to design and function. The problem is that this first house existed, not in the processes of nature, but in man's ingenuity in creating it according to his own needs. Joseph Rykwert discusses the great debate raging in the eighteenth century regarding the derivation of perfect architectural form from that expressed in the utility of man's first dwellings in the forest. Adam's house in paradise was thus a construction of much speculation and, in light of the connections between aesthetic form and nature, was a central concern of the rigorists. Piranesi separates himself from the debate of the rigorists. "In the *Parere su l'architettura*, Piranesi explicitly attacks the principles of absolute linguistic coherence that are founded on naturalism."³⁸ The attack of this intuitive artist, of course must be made against the rigidity of Lodoli and, to a lesser degree, against Algarotti.

Algarotti's *Saggio* begins with an analysis of the difference between architecture and the other arts. Architecture announces its distinctiveness, he says, because it has no form in nature to imitate. "Quelle [la Poesia, la Pittura e la Musica] non hanno in certa maniera che ad aprir gli occhi, contemplare gli oggetti che sono loro dattorno, e sopra quelli formare un sistema d'imitazione."³⁹ Placing architecture outside of the other processes of nature created an argument for its positioning at the very heart of man's

³⁸Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p.43.

³⁹Algarotti, *Saggio sopra l'architettura*, in *Saggi*, Ed.Giovanni Da Pozzo, p.40.



Illustration 3: Man's first dwelling in the forest: *Adam's house in Paradise.*

From Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture*, frontispiece.

ability to reason since the prototypes for human dwellings were conceived of and built by men. This appreciation of the unique beginnings of architecture was new in its day and had great bearing on the developing awareness of the role of reason in the establishment of architectural principles. And yet, the architectural debate regarding man's natural building principles is caught up and contextualized by a much larger debate that deals with the history and development of the human race. In considering the architectural rigoristi as representing something unique in the Italian contribution to enlightened architectural discourse, the presence of Vico must be noted as an overwhelming philosophical presence which gave shape to the views of the group. "It is a view which takes man to be an active partner in a process involving the individual and society - a continuous society from Adam onwards - collaborating with providence towards the working out of some high, and as yet unknowable, eternal purpose."⁴⁰ In his *Saggio*, for example, Algarotti riddles the text with questions regarding the possibilities of man's natural environment. Thus, with regard to "reason" he argues that wooden construction is the only form that is reasonable. If the nature of stone had been followed, dwellings would have been unnaturally uncomfortable.⁴¹

⁴⁰Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise*, p. 49.

⁴¹Se la pietra fosse posta in rappresentazione egualmente che in funzione, le aperture nelle fabbriche non potrebbero riuscire altro che strettissime. E ciò per la propria natura della pietra, che non essendo tessuta di fibre come è il legno, non può reggere al sovrapposto carico, se sia conformata in uno architrave o sopraciglio di qualche notevole lunghezza, ma tosto si rompe e se ne va in pezzi. Le porte e le finestre sarebbero adunque di una strettezza sgarbata a vedersi, e incomode all'uso; chi non avesse da sovrapporre agli stipiti pietraoni di tal grossezza, che il cercargli sarebbe da principe e gran ventura il trovargli.

Algarotti, *Saggio sopra l'architettura*, p. 41.

This argument can be traced back to Lodoli's design concepts which were heavily influenced by Vico, whose "re-evaluation of history and myth identified man and his creations as a fundamental component necessary to any science of nature."⁴² In his autobiography, Vico points to the connection between man's constructed systems and the culture that is given birth and fostered by these systems. This idea would certainly have been current in Lodoli's education of his young students, and is obviously retained by Algarotti in his ability to criticize all social phenomena.

By means of these principles of ideas and tongues, that is by means of this philosophy and philology of the human race, he develops an ideal eternal history based on the idea of the providence by which, as he shows throughout the work, the natural law of the peoples was ordained. This eternal history is traversed in time by all the particular histories of the nations, each with its rise, development, acme, decline and fall.⁴³

Lodoli's integration of Viconian philosophy, as discovered in the *New Science*, thus, finds its way into the very heart of an architectural debate. The idea that the rustic hut had significance as an original model, with wood being the natural material, is adopted in its entirety in Algarotti's *Saggio*. Man's primary dwellings were made of wood. Man first looked to trees for protection out of necessity. Man's nature is literally carved in wood. "Il legno, che la Natura fa crescer nelle campagne bello ed ornato, contiene in sé, come si è veduto, tutte le immaginabili modificazioni dell'Architettura e quelle ancora che, come le arcate, le volte e la maniera detta rustica, paiono essere il più

⁴²Paul, p. 46.

⁴³Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, Part B, p. 169.



Illustration 4: Man's primary dwelling: the *Rustic Hut*.

From Filarete, *Trattato di Architettura*, folio 4v, 5v, 54v.

della indole della pietra."⁴⁴ Ornamentation that does not spring naturally from man's original condition, and thus reflected in a type of nature, can be considered useless, according to Algarotti's interpretation of Lodoli's rigorist position. "Fermo il Filosofo in quel suo fondamentale principio, che la buona Architettura ha da formare, ornare e mostrare, e che in essa lo stesso ha da essere la funzione e la rappresentazione . . ."⁴⁵

The structure being designed must never lose sight of man's original habitations that satisfied man's utility and comfort in every one of its elements. The theatre edifice, as a natural gathering place of men, must likewise satisfy the set general preconditions of utility and comfort and, by extension, the event must satisfy similar conditions.

Interestingly, with regard to set design, Algarotti's work on the opera treats of the illusion created on the stage in its totality. Chapter four of *An Essay on the Opera* is dedicated to a proper ordering of scenery, together with the requirements of costumes and other miscellaneous that contribute to the overall effect of what is produced behind the proscenium arch. Algarotti singles out the set designer as a qualified painter who must understand the principles of good architecture. In turn, he must take direction from the poet who himself must have "preconceived in his mind every article; and to have omitted nothing that can help to embellish, or make the action he has chosen to exhibit, appear probable."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Saggio*, p.51.

⁴⁵ *Saggio*, p.36.

⁴⁶ Algarotti, *An Essay on the Opera*, Davis Edition, p. 73.

Algarotti advocates Lodoli's functionalist outlook but deviates somewhat from the purity of his teacher's method in his toleration of a degree of ornamentation in design. Indeed, he points the designer to the pediments of classical buildings for ideas that can be applied to performance. Even for examples of costume design, Algarotti believes that classical architectural ornamentation can provide lessons. The study of architecture cannot fail in another respect, of being very useful to the young painter; inasmuch as it will bring him acquainted with the form of the temples, thermae, basilics, theatres and other buildings of the Greeks and Romans. Besides, from the basso-relievos, with which it was customary to adorn these buildings, he may gather with equal delight and profit, the nature of their sacrifices, arms, military ensigns, and dress.⁴⁷

It is important to note that, although Algarotti allows for a degree of inventiveness by the theatre artist, the product must conform to rules of reason and good taste. This deviation from Lodoli's design concepts demonstrates Algarotti's ability to meld the best ideas of his time together. In his allowance for inventiveness he clearly aligns himself with Alexander Pope's conviction, in his *Essay On Criticism*, that permanent truth was "available to the Moderns just as it was to the Ancients."⁴⁸ He gives credit to his English poet associate for a concept that can be applied across the arts.

. . . an ideal Painter, and such alone is a true Painter, resembles the Poet: instead of copying he imitates; that is, he works with his fancy, and represents objects, endued with all that perfection, which belongs to the

⁴⁷Algarotti, *An Essay on Painting*, p. 75.

⁴⁸Tillotson, Fussell and Waingrow, *Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, p.554.

species, and may be conceived in the Archetype. 'Tis all nature, says an English poet, speaking of poetry: and the same may be said of painting, but it is nature methodized and made perfect.⁴⁹

In the *Essay on Opera* Algarotti assigns an importance to scene design that underlines its power to enhance or destroy the integrity of the total product.

The scenery is the first object in an Opera that powerfully attracts the eye, that determines the place of action, and co-operates chiefly to the illusive enchantment, that makes the spectator imagine himself to be transported either to Egypt, to Greece, to Troy, to Mexico, to the Elysian Fields, or even to Olympus.⁵⁰

The state of set design was, according to Algarotti, deplorable even given the number of good examples that had been created in recent history. In relating an anecdote from Book VII of Vitruvius' treatise, Algarotti aligns himself with the Roman architect with the respect to the demand for verisimilitude in set design. He relates the story of an ancient painter employed to design a scene who "introduced some things, that without sinning against verisimilitude, could have no place there." Against the admiration of the citizens, however, a mathematician named Licinius railed against what he saw as fantastical embellishments saying: "Do ye not perceive, my fellow citizens, that, if ye should praise in pictures what can neither stand the scrutiny of the judicious, nor be warranted by taste, your city will run a great risk of being ranked among those that are not remarkable for a keenness of understanding."⁵¹

Tasteful models for set design had been provided by Ferdinando Bibiena, who Algarotti praises for having developed the viewing of scenes by the angle. This

⁴⁹Algarotti, *An Essay on Painting*, p. 82.

⁵⁰Algarotti, *An Essay on Opera*, Davis Edition, p.72-73.

⁵¹Algarotti, *An Essay on Opera*, p. 77.

technique made for fine effects. Unfortunately, Bibiena's school had, with the master gone, developed a style that lacked all architectural probability. His manner was being imitated but the designs produced had become too whimsical. Algarotti asks:

What would that mathematician say, were he now alive, on hearing so much applause lavished by us on those labyrinths of architecture, those crowded buildings, with which our scenes are surcharged, and from which all semblance of truth is excluded: or those unwieldy fabricks, that appear neither to stand upright, nor to have a settled foundation; and where the columns, having their architraves topsy-turvy, and jumbled with the roof, themselves in a sea of cloudy rags, suspended in mid-air.⁵²

Algarotti's chapter discussing the structure of theatres reiterates Lodolian principles of functionalism in general. The argument ultimately leads to a discussion of the applications of these principles to the design of a theatre, a building that receives from and adds to the signification of the event held within.

Architecture, seized by the same contagious distemper, instead of considering the use and intent for which the structure was proposed, thought of nothing but giving a loose to ornamental achievings, and all the expensive pomp of her art; which indeed rendered such edifices beautiful to the eyes of the common beholders, but to the judicious they appeared culpable, because deviating from their intent.⁵³

As with the excesses of the performance and the design of the set itself, he attributes the flaws in theatre design to a simple desire of "pleasing too much." Thus, in not solely addressing the function of the structure, designers deviated from the intention of constructing such a building. The prime concern in theatre design, rather, must be "in erecting a theatre . . . that its sonoreity should be such, as that the voices of the singers

⁵²Algarotti, *An Essay on Opera*, p. 77-78.

⁵³*Essay*, pp.92-93.

may be heard as distinct as possible, and rendered, at the same time, both melodious, and pleasing to the ears of the audience."⁵⁴

In order to fulfil his goal of providing the theatre with good acoustical properties, Algarotti proposes the use of wood in construction, because the best sound properties are so arrived at. In fact, he suggests that the type of wood used should be of the kind which is also used to make musical instruments since such material is "analogous with the organ of hearing."⁵⁵

The size of the building must be determined as well by its use in the Vitruvian sense, and Algarotti cites the ancient master in declaring that the theatre's dimensions should always be in proportion to the multitude of the inhabitants."⁵⁶ It was also clear to Algarotti that the uses of the theatre had changed since ancient times when the performers used bronze vases and masks with megaphone enhancement to project sound to the large community in attendance. On the contrary, in the modern theatre such devices were not presently in use thus eliminating the direct connection between a large theatre space and the need for specific performance styles. The rational architect would thus design a theatre that was smaller so that the unaided voice could be carried without having to be raised to unnatural volumes. "In other words," Algarotti states, "who would be desirous of truth disfigured by a misrepresentation of nature?"⁵⁷ Unfortunately, large theatres were being built due to the desire to impress rather than

⁵⁴ *Essay*, p.94.

⁵⁵ *Essay*, p.95.

⁵⁶ *Essay*, p. 97.

⁵⁷ *Essay*, p. 98.

to common sense. To compensate for the greater distance between the audience and the performers, the stage was advanced several feet out into the parterre. However, according to Algarotti: "the actors, instead of being so brought forwards, ought to be thrown back at a certain distance from the spectator's eye, and stand within the scenery of the stage, in order to make a part of that pleasing illusion for which all dramatic exhibitions are calculated."⁵⁸ In this way, a more realistic illusion would be effected.

The best shape for a theatre, Algarotti states, (later to be concurred with by Milizia), is not the absurd shape of a bell, as popularized by the Galli-Bibbienas and constructed in such projects as Mantua's Teatro Scientifico. The rationale behind this particular design for theatre is attacked by Algarotti, as it will later be attacked by Milizia.⁵⁹ The bell had been proposed as a model in which, despite the size of a theatre, acoustical properties would be enhanced. In Algarotti's estimation, however, the rationale is faulty because the mouth of the bell opens onto the stage itself while the centre box is situated where the clapper would be. Apart from being bad for sound, this system narrowed the parterre in its upper part "thereby screening several boxes from view of the stage."⁶⁰ Rather, and Algarotti analyzes shape from a practical point of view, the best shape for the interior of the theatre is the same one that the ancients made

⁵⁸ *Essay*, p.99.

⁵⁹ In defending himself against these charges, Antonio Bibiena does not employ theory but, rather the validity of his long experience in design:

"Tutti gli oppositori miei confesserano non esservi regole fisse e sicure per rendere sonoro un teatro . . . Io, antico e pratico architetto teatrale, asserisco per esempio che la forma a campana è riuscita in altre note e riguardevoli città di totale gradimento a' musici agli spettatori."

Quoted in Bianconi and Pestelli, *Storia dell' opera italiana*, p.70.

⁶⁰ *Essay*, p. 102.

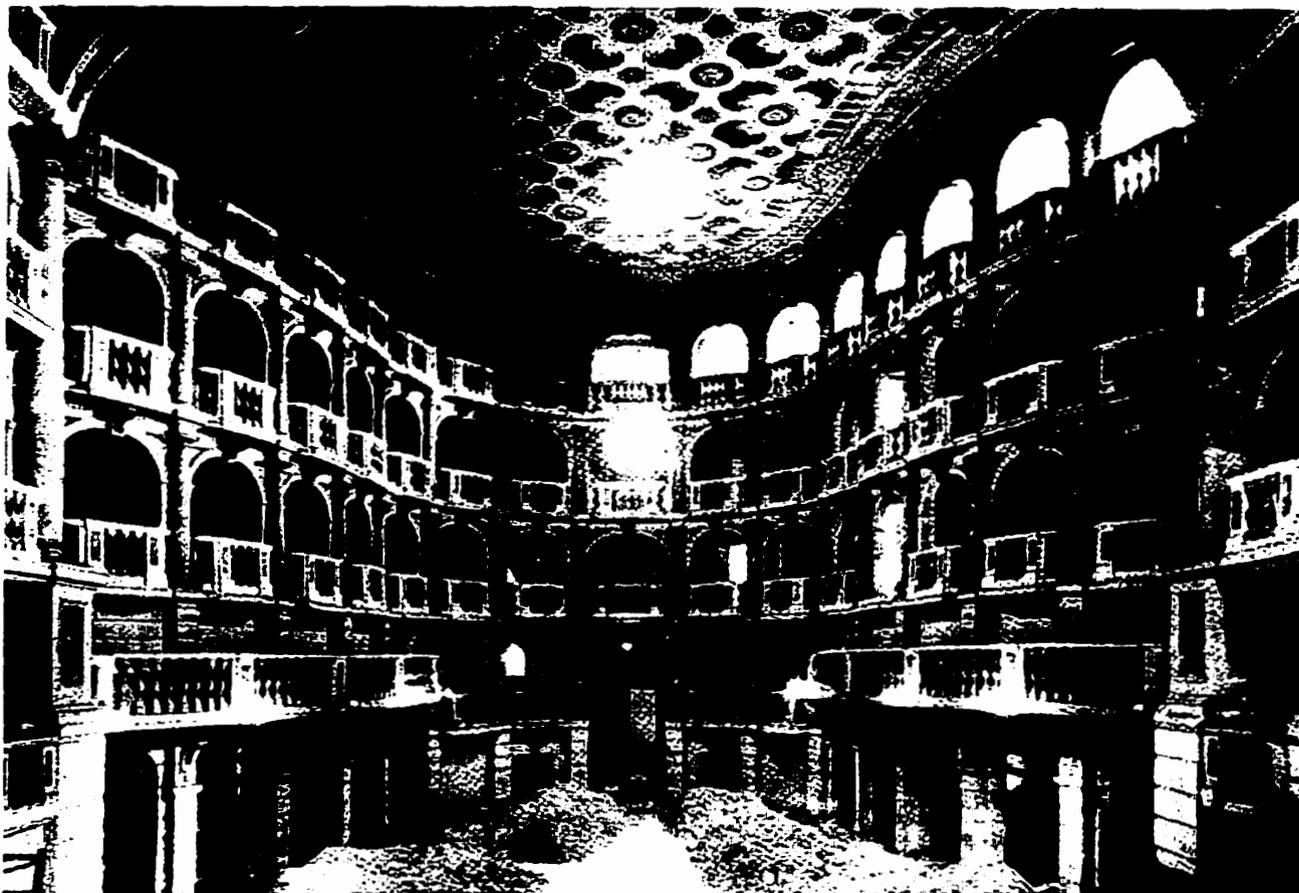


Illustration 5: Bell-shaped Teatro Scientifico, Mantova, by Antonio Bibiena, 1767.

From Giuliana Ricci, *Teatri d'Italia*, p. 180.

use of in their theatres, the semi-circle⁶¹, since "the spectators placed in a semi-circle are all presented in a like manner towards the stage, of which they have a full view; their hearing and seeing being alike uninterrupted."⁶² This ancient wisdom, being the most simple, also proves geometrically best, since, "of all figures of an equal perimeter, the circle is that which contains the greatest space."⁶³ Algarotti criticizes the boxes, not for the vices carried out in them, nor for the way that these activities interrupted the dramatic work being presented, but for the way that their ornamentation lowered the auditorium's acoustical qualities. "The boxes, be they ever so well arranged, have yet one fashionable vice to get rid of, viz. those ornamental parts that have too much relieve, too many swellings and sinuous cavities; because the voice, by such inequalities, is reverberated irregularly, and in part lost."⁶⁴ Among the many functions of the theatre, Algarotti establishes its role in bringing the community together to celebrate its awareness of its own hierarchical system. As each element of the theatre has its place in a successful event so does each member of the audience. An observance of order in the auditorium thus ensures its observance when outside the theatre. In his analysis Algarotti offers no talk of social reform. Rather, he locates the

⁶¹Simon Tidworth, in his history of theatres, notes that Algarotti's solution was just one of many being theorized at the time. Charles-Nicholas Cochin, for example, in his *Projet d'une Salle de Spectacles pour le nouveau Théâtre de Comédie* (1765) proposes an oval shape for the auditorium, but to place the stage on one of the long sides rather than at the end. This in itself created problems of sight lines which Cochin had to work out. Simon Tidworth, *Theatres*, p.98.

⁶²Essay, p. 102.

⁶³Essay, p.102.

⁶⁴Essay, p.104.

Plate II.

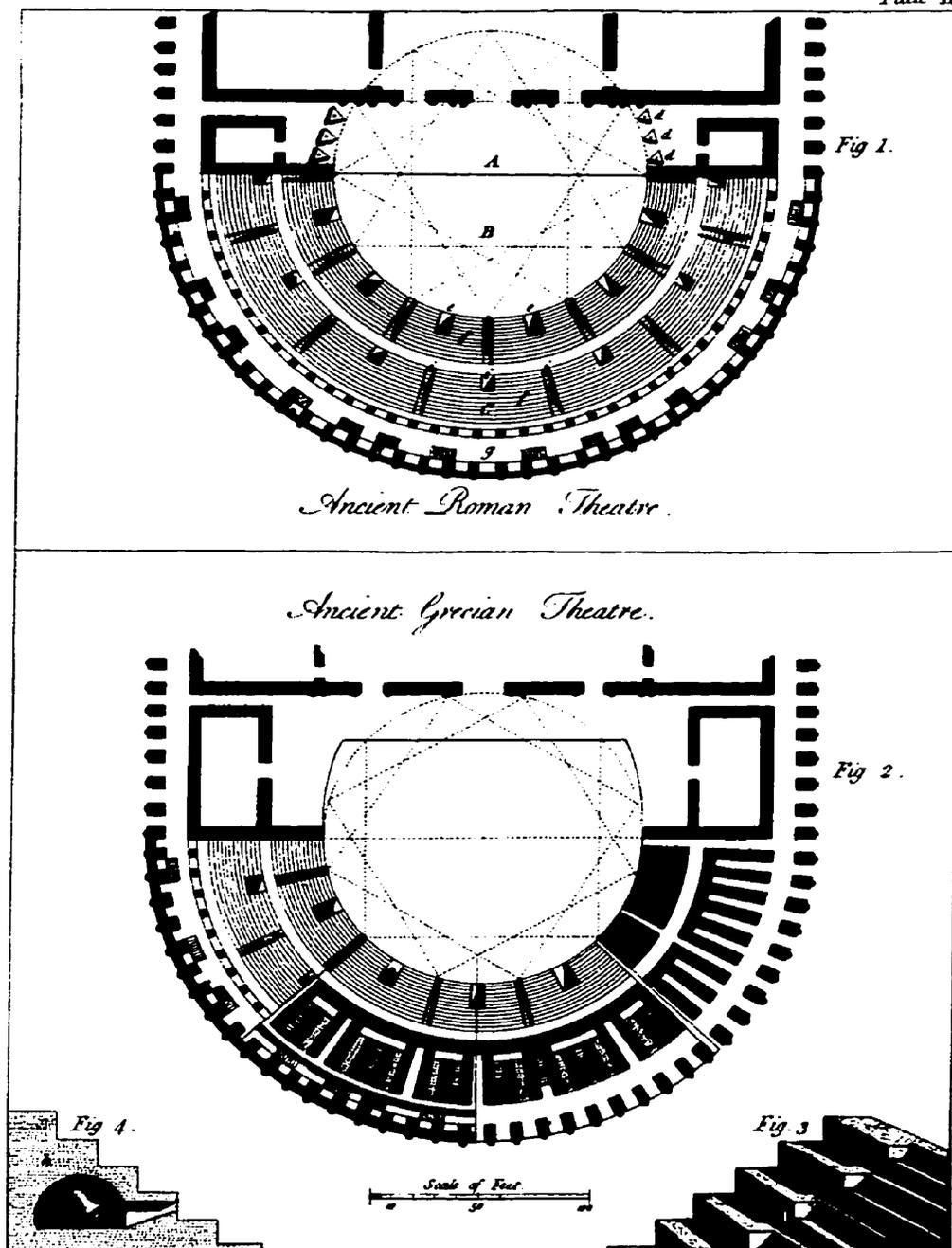


Illustration 6: Ancient Roman and Greek Theatres, indicating semi-circular geometry.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate II.

rationale for this display in the needs of the community itself and suggests to the architect that "the audience may appear to form a part of the spectacle to each other; ranged as books are in a library."⁶⁵ In this endeavour structural refinement would include box supports that are slender with ornaments that are narrow and confined. He calls for no exclusion of ornamentation but merely suggests that it be of a "light and delicate workmanship."⁶⁶

In concluding the *Essay*, Algarotti, as was the custom of the day, gave an indication of which extant modern theatres he thought were closest to perfection. It is noteworthy that he attributes the design of one to Tommaso Temanza "a man of extraordinary merit, and who, by his writings, has given new life to Sansovino and Palladio."⁶⁷ Temanza is perhaps best known for his publication of the *Vita dei più celebri architetti e scultori veneziani* of 1778. This, of course, was the same Temanza who criticized the work of Lodoli and whom Lodoli had loathed for being an insufferable pedant.⁶⁸ It was also the same Temanza with whom Milizia corresponded with regards to issues arising in neo-classical design.

Outside of Italy, Algarotti includes among the best theatres only the Opera House in Berlin which he ranks "among the first-rate ornaments of that imperial city."⁶⁹ This, of course, had been the inspiration of his friend and patron, Frederick of Prussia

⁶⁵ *Essay*, p.106.

⁶⁶ *Essay*, p.106.

⁶⁷ *Essay*, p. 107.

⁶⁸ Middleton and Watkin, *Neoclassical and 19th Century Architecture/2*, p. 296.

⁶⁹ *Essay*, p.108.

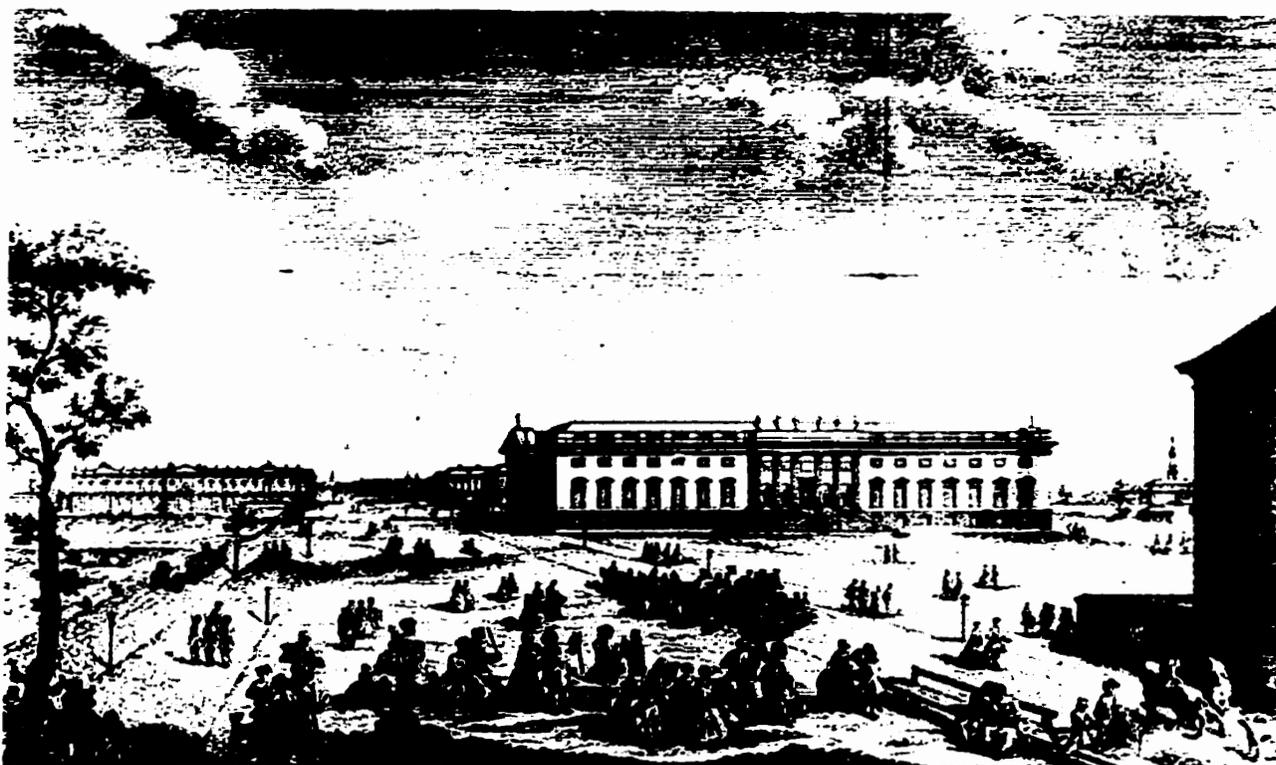


Illustration 7: Frederick the Great's Opera House at Berlin, 1741.

From Simon Tidworth, *Theatres: An Illustrated History*, Plate 85, p. 101.

who had used the building as part of his plan to "elevate his minor kingdom to international prominence both politically and culturally."⁷⁰

Having brought to a logical conclusion his argument for the reform of the musical theatre as a complete event, Algarotti sums up the requirements necessary in the individual who could carry out this reform. One would need to embody extraordinary knowledge, a keen aesthetic sense, an ability to dissect and address multiple components of an integral whole, as well as the clear envisioning of how these components could be re-assembled to optimum effect:

[The opera] . . . would display a lively image of the Grecian tragedy, in which, architecture, poetry, music, dancing, and every kind of theatrical apparatus united their efforts to create an illusion of such resistless power of the human mind, that from the combination of a thousand pleasures, formed so extraordinary a one as in our world has nothing to equal it.⁷¹

To be missing any one of the above requirements, the theatre practitioner would be creating an imbalance in the harmony of total effect. The poet, thus, must do far more than merely create the libretto for a production. The poet must be familiar with design aesthetics and architectural principles to produce an environment for the event that allows it to function at its best. Algarotti thus wrote for himself the theatrical role of the Architect-Poet, and demonstrated his facility with design principles through his essays on architecture and the opera. We now turn to an examination of his analysis of the event for which the theatre is designed.

⁷⁰Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance*, p. 73.

⁷¹*Essay*, pp. 108-109.

CHAPTER II

Algarotti: Theories of Drama in the Opera

La gloria delle lettere va ordinariamente congiunta con quella delle armi. E quando non si teme la spada di una nazione, se ne suol dispregiare anche la penna.¹

An Essay on the Opera, which widely disseminated unique architectural theory important to the design of the modern theatre, can be considered but one of Algarotti's works dealing with enlightened architecture. However, with regard to the reform of theatre as a dramatic and musical event, this work forms the nucleus of his published commentary on the subject. Its relatively quick translation into English stands as testimony to the esteem with which he was regarded in important English circles. The dedication of the treatise to William Pitt suggests that the work was, in fact, meant to be read by his English colleagues, (one of whom was Pitt himself), with whom Algarotti was personally acquainted from his time in England. Algarotti praises Pitt as an "immortal man" who has rekindled in his nation "her native valor . . . [provided] for her perpetual defence, and caused her to triumph, in one year, in the four quarters of the globe . . ."² The dedication does double service for Algarotti since he uses it also to pay homage to his friend and patron, Frederick the Great, who was busily pushing his nation into cultural parity with the rest of Europe, while simultaneously establishing it as one of Europe's strongest states. From the outset, then, Algarotti reestablishes the

¹ Francesco Algarotti, *Pensieri Diversi*, p.48. Thought number 21.

² Algarotti, *An Essay on Opera*, Dedication, p. iii.

connections between an ordered state and an ordering of the arts. Pitt thus becomes the ideal politician whose ability to "thunder in the senate" is observed to stem from an elevation of mind that is firmly rooted in his study of classical culture.

It has become clear that Algarotti the political animal sincerely valued the patronage that he extolls in the introduction to this treatise. Clearly, his own personal and creative status was enhanced by his connections, this further reinforcing his belief in the true royal patronage of an enlightened ruler as an optimal solution to the decline of the arts. That is why he had to go out of Italy so often. It is also the reason for his trans-alpine dedications in his works. In this sense, Algarotti's *Essay*, and the later work of Milizia, offer a clear consensus that the philosopher can provide the ideas but they must be championed by the powerful in order to be effective. The point is carried home in the conclusion of the *Essay* when Algarotti points to the connection between his proposed reforms and the need of an enlightened person of rank with the ability to carry them out:

The doctrine here laid down will be sufficient, whenever it shall be so lucky as to be honoured by the countenance of a sovereign, blessed with a refined understanding and delicacy of taste; because, thro' such a wished-for protection, may be restored to its ancient rank in the public's esteem, a species of scenical exhibition, to whose accomplishment and final embellishing, all the polite arts emulously concur. Therefore, for many other reasons that might be assigned, it is an object not unworthy of a place in the attention even of those who govern kingdoms.³

In observing the need for such a person, Algarotti seeks examples in classical cultures where good government offered stability and growth in the arts; when it was

³*Essay*, pp.109-110.

a matter of civic duty and pride to take the reins of an artistic project and spend personal time and money to achieve a superior result. Such patriotism was considered by Algarotti to be lacking in his own time and place and he observes that: "the persons, who now-a-days take upon them the guidance of these public diversions, do neither enter into a due consideration of particulars, nor pay a proper attention to the several necessary constituents for making an Opera perfect."⁴ To wake the public to the negative realities resulting from such lethargy Algarotti speaks about the need to reform theatrical practices using an orderly military terminology. His vision of a reformed theatre seems to fall into line with the vision of a reformed Italy in general; an Italy in need of order to restore it to its former greatness. Algarotti speaks of the theatre as a type of fortress that can compensate for the loss of the power of the sword with the power of the pen. In his *Military and Political Letters*, he speaks of the inferiority of the Italians to the other nations of Europe in the art of war:

I must confess, that I have very much at heart the honour of my country, which seems more devoted to Pallas with the olive-branch, than with the rested lance. To speak without a metaphor, it appears that our countrymen have more to boast of from their progress in the fine arts, than from their warlike achievements. For the latter, genius alone is not sufficient; a number of concurrent circumstances, in the temper of the times, the qualities of Princes, and fortune of the people, are requisite to get them a name for military prowess.⁵

A restored order would necessarily reinforce the common man's subordination to a leader or administration greater than himself, a leader who could offer noble guidelines, much in the way that the ancient Roman magistrates did when conceiving of a major

⁴ *Essay*, Davis Edition, p.2.

⁵ Algarotti, Letter XXIV, *Letters Military and Political* (1759), pp. 199-200.

theatrical enterprise. An order that follows from dedication to the state creates the sense of a common good for all. This sense of order would exist in an enlightened leader; an entity that would enlist the forces that survived from the glorious past. As this leader was absent from Italian politics, Algarotti's artistic goal was to provide the proper framework to raise one from the mire of musical theatre. Opera was the showpiece of the culmination of various Italian arts and sciences thus offering to Algarotti the possibility of thinking about it as a microcosm of the society that surrounded it. Additionally, he felt that, in the eyes of other Europeans, the Italian opera was synonymous with Italian culture. Both were scrutinized by foreigners as Algarotti observes in his *Essay*. Quoting from issue no. 156 of the English journal, *The World*, he offers an English opinion of the state of the Italian arts:

Among the many unfavourable opinions against OPERAS, which may be cited, is the following from an eminent English writer, and runs thus, - "As the waters of a certain fountain of Thessaly, from their benumbing quality, could be contained in nothing but the hoof of an ass; so can this languid and disjointed composition [the Opera] find no admittance, but in such heads as are expressly formed to receive it."⁶

In the conclusion of the *Essay*, Algarotti lays bare the influence of Lodolian architectural theory on his assessment of the state of the dramatic event housed in the theatrical edifice. As per the evaluation of the building housing a public function, the event too must be deconstructed, its component parts placed back together again in a manner that is both functional and pleasing. This is after having analyzed "the several constituent parts of the musical drama or opera; by which means, the effect will be one

⁶ Algarotti, *An Essay on Opera*, Davis Edition, p. 4.

regular and harmonious whole."⁷ Along the way, abusive excess must be discarded. Thus, clearly, Algarotti's interpretation of Lodoli's architectural principles placed him in a unique position to debate ideas of functionality and frivolous ornamentation in the composition of opera.

We have seen that, in his famous treatise on architecture, Algarotti parts company with his teacher and moves in the direction of aestheticism. In her thesis, Joanne Paul pinpoints Algarotti's about-turn in his acceptance of the beauty of the Greek building which imitates in stone what exists naturally in wood. In the debate between truth and lies, Paul demonstrates that Algarotti opts for the lie when it is more beautiful.⁸ His *Essay on the Opera* has been called a compendium of the ideas that inspired the reform of melodrama as carried out by Zeno and Metastasio.⁹ As such it can be considered an important document outlining an important movement of the eighteenth century. In fact, Algarotti is known to have been in direct contact with Metastasio and, besides this connection, they had a web of correspondents across Italy in common with whom they exchanged letters dealing with artistic issues.¹⁰

In answering the question "Why did Algarotti focus on the opera?" as the chosen dramatic form on which to concentrate his energy, the answer may already seem obvious; opera was the dominant theatrical form across Europe at the time of the

⁷ Algarotti, *An Essay on the Opera*, p. 109.

⁸ Joanne Paul, *Of Substantiating Nature*, p.16.

⁹ Ettore Bonora, *Aspetti della cultura dall'Arcadia all'Illuminismo*, p. 27.

¹⁰ One prominent example is the Abate Frugoni, residing in Parma, to whom Algarotti wrote from Venice on February 27, 1754. *Opere Varie del Conte Francesco Algarotti*, Pasquali Edition, Volume I, p.354.

writing of the *Essay*. Muratori, from his comments in *Della perfetta poesia*, had considered the opera to be so corrupt that it was incapable of reform. Later theorists were to dispute this claim as Apostolo Zeno does directly to the Marchese Gravisi of Capodistria in 1730. The letter recognizes the improbabilities associated with the setting of dramatic action to music but, in acknowledging that such regrettable practices as frequent changes of scenery are a necessity given the nature of the genre, he places the greatest blame on the poet:

who preserves neither the unity of action, nor the conformity of the characters, nor the decorum of the tragic stage, nor the purgation of the *affetti*, nor the movement of these to compassion or to terror, nor the properties of a dramatic development and of the untying of the dramatic knot that is adjusted to good rules.¹¹

As Milizia does in his treatise on theatre, Algarotti praises the opera as the highest, and thus most precarious of artistic genres. "In forming it no article was forgotten, no means omitted, no ingredient left unemployed."¹² Music, acting, dancing and painting are all combined in the production of this one event. The result, ideally, is meant to elevate the audience; "to refine our sentiments, to soothe the heart, and subdue the stubbornness of reason, that cannot help surrendering itself a willing captive to so pleasing a fascination."¹³ The subtext of this argument, reveals the opera as a particularly Italian invention and thus possession. As such, Algarotti's position with regard to this highly developed art form was privileged since the language of the

¹¹ A. Zeno, "Letter to Giuseppe Gravisi on the opera libretto," in R.S. Freeman *Opera Without Drama*, p.30.

¹² *Essay*, p.5.

¹³ *Essay*, p. 6.

creative impulse was predominantly his own, culturally speaking. Joseph Kerman, in his *Opera as Drama* concurs: "In Italy, drama meant the opera, and its librettist Metastasio was the universal laureate, the new Sophocles. Outside of Italy, there was the extraordinary phenomenon of Italian theatres - operatic theatres - flourishing from London to St. Petersburg, in the hands of transient or immigrant Italians."¹⁴ The abuses being perpetrated against this art form, however, had laid it open to ridicule¹⁵; a ridicule that Algarotti showed himself sensitive to, especially when directed from foreign sources. In the *Essay* itself, he quotes Dryden's use of the word "opera" as something denoting stupidity.¹⁶ More importantly, the Italian tragedy had suffered an intense decline and, even with the success of Scipione Maffei's *Merope*, performed by Luigi Riccoboni in Modena, and then in Venice, in 1713 and 1714 respectively, its revival lacked the potential offered by the more vital opera.

The success of the reform of opera was particularly enhanced by the work of Apostolo Zeno and then Metastasio, a protege of the Arcadian, Gravina. Metastasio replaced Zeno at the court of Vienna, and thereafter became Europe's unquestioned master of dramatic poetry. "He succeeded in elevating the text to a position of importance as Zeno's generation of critics had demanded, not only by purifying it of

¹⁴ Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, p.50.

¹⁵ "By 1760, both Italian and French operas were tottering, and their limitations were apparent to composers everywhere. Gluck and his poet Calzabigi . . . sought to salvage the virtues of each tradition and combine them by his own catalyst for the maturing taste of the late eighteenth century." Kerman, p. 71.

¹⁶ "For what a song, or senseless Opera,
Is to the living labour of a play;
Or what a play to Virgil's work would be'
Such is a single piece to history."
Dryden, *Essay*, p. 8.

comic elements and similar non-classical extravagances but also by creating poetry and plots which were interesting in themselves, even without music."¹⁷ The diffusion of the ideals represented in the works of Italy's great minds was further ensured by the correspondence taking place between one European court and another between colleagues who had previously worked together on common native soil. Such an example is found in the letters between Metastasio, from Vienna, and the great singer, Farinelli, who lived and performed in England for a number of years before being invited to reside in Spain by King Philip V. The two were good friends who had risen to fame at the same time in Naples; "Farinelli having performed there in the *Serenata of Angelica*, written by Metastasio in 1723, and in his opera of *Didone*, in 1724."¹⁸

Algarotti had already expressed in his *Saggio sopra la necessità di scrivere nella propria lingua* (1750) his conviction that the genius of the Italian culture could only be expressed through its own language. This idea had already gained a certain popularity in intellectual circles in Italy, especially as put forward much earlier by Muratori and supported through Viconian ideas regarding cultural development. For Algarotti, the fundamental message of the thesis he expounded was that the mentality of various populations being diverse, the genius of the respective language is also diverse. Thus, "one who wants to write in a language not one's own must be like a species of Proteus, capable of assuming a mentality completely new."¹⁹ His message in this *saggio* is

¹⁷ Marvin Carlson, *The Italian Stage*, p.17.

¹⁸ Charles Burney, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio*, Volume I, p.194.

¹⁹ Mario Puppo, Introduction to the *Saggio sopra la necessità di scrivere nella propria lingua*, In *Discussioni Linguistiche del Settecento*, p. 181.

extremely clear and its message is directed towards the intellectuals of his culture who might have already accepted the imposing French hegemony in the publication of treatises dealing with advanced artistic or scientific subject matter. It is to be remembered that the genius of a language is directly linked to the genius of a nation. The Romans, for example, disdained to write in a language other than their own.²⁰ To hammer his point home, Algarotti himself published one complete libretto and the plan for another. In *Iphigenia in Aulis*, he admits that he has borrowed from the work, both of Euripides' original and of the neo-classical adaptation by Racine. In his adaptation he follows Racine's lead in concentrating on "great crises of emotion, shifts of emotion, clashes of will (or ideas), crucial dilemmas and decisions."²¹

In writing a libretto that adhered to the rules which he had formulated to correct deficiencies in the opera, Algarotti meant to prove that improvement was possible. But the libretto was merely one of the many component parts of the event. Many of the "thoughts" in his *Pensieri Diversi* indicate a real knowledge of, not only the individual parts of the operatic performance but also of capabilities of practitioners of his day to rise to the occasion. Algarotti muses that excellence does indeed exist in its independent parts. A skill is necessary to bring these parts together so that the individual geniuses currently practicing in various arts of the peninsula can, in concerted cooperation create perfection. In thought number fifty-two, Francesco gives examples

²⁰ " . . . sdegnando di scrivere in altra lingua fuorché nella propria; e in quella lingua trionfale e sovrana, che dal Campidoglio dettava all'universo." *Saggio sopra la necessità di scrivere nella propria lingua*. In Puppo, p. 184. Puppo uses the edition of *Opere Scelte* di F. Algarotti. della Soc. Tipografica dei classici italiani, Milano, 1823. Vol. I.

²¹ R.C. Knight, *Jean Racine: Four Greek Plays*, p. viii.

of the ideal poet, Carlo Innocenzo Frugoni; composer, Leonardo Vinci; and set designer, Ferdinando Bibiena. In this particular analysis Algarotti suggests that the complete work would be ideal if the contributions of the first two were of the same fantastical nature as the third.²²

The abuses associated with the performance of opera, as practiced by Algarotti's contemporaries, were many. In his introduction, Francesco lays them out clearly. The poet has erred in both his choice of the subject for their dramas as well as in the way that the words are adapted to a musical score. Verisimilitude is lacking in the singing and recitative as well as in the use of dance within the main business of the drama. The scenery has also been designed, often not in keeping with the theme of the play.²³ With all of these defects, it can be no wonder that the purity of opera as an exalted dramatic genre had been neglected by a population itself in need of reform. The abuses of opera are several and Algarotti is quite pointed in his condemnation of the performers who are most at fault; "a mutinous band of people" who perpetuate "frequent acts of slight and misbehaviour."²⁴ These people are scorned by Algarotti who characterizes their concerns as trivial and damaging to the greater good: "What frequent jealousies and

²² [52]Quante volte non avviene nelle cose le più importanti quello che nell'ordinare l'opera in musica si praticava altre volte in una corte d'Italia? Il compositore e il poeta doveano mirare unicamente a formare una dramma, per modo che prima di tutto si vedesse una vasta pianura in riva di un fiume con tende in lontano, poi un magnifico gabinetto, appresso una deliziosa veduta, dopo un'orrida carcere, poscia una sontuosa reggia con logge, illuminata di notte tempo e via discorrendo. Frugoni e Vinci doveano unicamente servire alle fantasie di un Bibiena. Francesco Algarotti, *Pensieri Diversi*, p.60.

²³ Even with regard to set design, reason had to be exercised in the "staffage" or addition of figures in a represented space. The Galli-Bibiena family was, of course, instrumental in the raising of this art to the level of architecture. A discussion of Francesco Bibiena's *Civil Architecture prepared on Geometry, and reduced to perspective*, of 1703, can be found in Werner Oechslin's "The Theatre of Invention," pp. 66-77, *Lotus International*, 17. December 1977.

²⁴ Algarotti, *An Essay on the Opera*, p.10.

wranglings arise among the singers, on account of one person's having more ariettas than another, a loftier plume, a longer and more flowing robe . . ."25

The implementation of an orderly system to correct such abuses is the task that Algarotti offers those thinking to produce opera. He puts forward the idea that the poet must resume the reins of power that have somehow escaped him and, "being restored to his rightful authority, he may diffuse through every department good order and due subordination."²⁶ The poet, of course, is Algarotti, and the reform of the product begins with a new excellence in the literary output of his countrymen. The restoration is the restoration of Italian greatness in the arts to its former position.

Furthermore, as practice suggests, the lone artist cannot hope to move forward in a society peopled and ruled by imbeciles. Therefore, as in the case of Metastasio in Vienna or Algarotti himself in Berlin, the poet must be offered the patronage of an enlightened ruler who will, as in the case of Frederick, provide a fostering environment for the pursuit of the artistic ideal. "Under such a guidance, and never otherwise, shall we see the performers reduced to proper order and discipline; or we, in consequence, become spectators of dramatic compositions, not inferior to those exhibited at Athens and Rome . . ."27

We know that Algarotti was indebted, in his appreciation of the artist/critic, to the work of Dryden, which, in itself, takes over from Corneille who startled his

²⁵ *Essay*, p.10.

²⁶ *Essay*, p.10.

²⁷ *Essay*, p.13.

contemporaries by heading each volume of plays "with a discourse or theatrical treatise, followed by an examen of all the plays contained in the volume, subdivided by play titles."²⁸ Dryden, in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, nourishes the seedling planted by Corneille, which will later be harvested by Algarotti in his neo-classical argument.

"There are so few who write well in this age," says Crites,

"that methinks any praises should be welcome; they neither rise to the dignity of the last age, nor to any of the Ancients: and we may cry out of the writers of this time, with more reason than Petronius of his . . . you have debauched the true old poetry so far, that nature, which is the soul of it, is not in any of your writings."²⁹

In a series of letters written from Venice, Algarotti demonstrates his knowledge of and interest in English literary theory, especially when the theorist in question has indicated some awareness of contemporary Italian intellectual output. In this regard, Francesco specifically mentions " . . . Il Dryden famoso poeta Inglese, intelligentissimo delle cose nostre, e che ha tradotto anch'egli Virgilio . . ."³⁰ With regard to the poetry of the operatic piece itself, Algarotti prioritizes this element and dedicates his first chapter of the *Essay* to an examination "Of the Poem, Argument, or Business of an Opera." In architecture, the choice of the plan dictates the final outcome of the building and, in just such a way, the choice of the subject in a dramatic work is important since ". . . the success or failure of the drama depends, in a great measure, on the good or

²⁸ George Watson, from the introduction of Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesy*, Vol.I, p. vii.

²⁹ Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, p.23.

³⁰ *Lettere Di Polianzio Ad Ermogene Intorno Alla Traduzione Dell'Eneide Del Caro*. Lettera Seconda. Venezia 16 Novembre, 1744.
From *Opere Varie del Conte Francesco Algarotti*. Vol.I., p.251.

bad choice of the subject."³¹ The poet, however, in Algarotti's configuration, is far more than the person who pens, as in the work of Dryden, the piece that will be performed. This difference is what makes the Italian literature of the period dealing with the reform of theatre so unique. The Italian poet is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the dancers, the painters, the machinists; even the design of costumes.³² For the theatrical representation to be successful, therefore: "the poet is to carry in his mind a comprehensive view of the whole of the drama; because those parts, which are not productions of his pen, ought to flow from the dictates of his actuating judgement which is to give being and movement to the whole."³³ Algarotti is quite clear, in the *Essay*, as to his indebtedness to Metastasio for the idea of what is attainable given correct choices on the part of the poet, and pays homage to the master.³⁴ We know, of course, that criticism of the opera was not new to Algarotti. The satire of Benedetto Marcello had already, much earlier in the century, condemned the practitioners of musical

³¹ *Essay*, p.14.

³² Anna Migliarisi, in her doctoral dissertation, examines the Italian idea of the "corago", or director, in an anonymous treatise of the Early Baroque period. In her work she offers compelling evidence of the tradition in Italian theatre of expecting the director to be a jack-of-all-trades. The author of *Il Corago o vero alcune osservazioni per mettere bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche* (c1628) posits the director as "the servant of the poem" who requires facility in the following: "i) the arts of carpentry and masonry to oversee the design and construction of the stage, ii) the art of architecture for the design of the scenic houses, palaces, temples and the like, iii) the art of perspective painting for the scenery and perspective vistas, iv) the art of dressmakers and tailors to provide the performers with beautifully designed costumes, v) the art of acting in order to instruct and guide the actors in the scenic action, vi) the art of music, whether instrumental or vocal, vii) the art of dance for the choreography of *balli*, processions and choral formations, viii) the arts of combat and fencing for tourneys and scenes of warfare, ix) the art of mechanics for the display of marvellous effects on land, sea, and in the heavens and, x) the art of lighting for basic illumination as well as the creation of special effects." Anna Migliarisi, *Theories of Directing in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy*, pp. 259-60.

³³ *Essay*, p.15.

³⁴ *Essay*, p. 25.

theatre. According to his *Il Teatro alla Moda*, practices which contributed to the decline of the Venetian opera included:

shortening recitatives and even arias if they did not afford the virtuoso opportunities for vocal display; the practice of "stretching" a scene by inserting material by other composers in order to give the stage crew sufficient time to prepare an especially elaborate machine or decoration for the next scene; the many violations of the laws of reason and logic in decorations and costumes; the carelessness with which accompaniments were executed by the orchestra; the sacrificing of the opera as an artistic whole in order to please the whim and vanity of the executants.³⁵

Algarotti examines the roots of the movement which spawned the opera. The subtext, of course, indicates that these roots are Italian roots and that the dramatic event being resurrected by this invention is no less than Greek tragedy. It is forgivable then, that spectacle ranks high in the creation of opera since it follows in the footsteps of the ancients; the heroic subjects of whom, in being re-represented, had to be accompanied by the rightful pomp and spectacle. The whole, however, becomes an apology for the excesses of operatic spectacle by virtue of the fact that, in recreating the heroes and myths of the ancients, surprising and wonderful events had to be shown to take place. "Every circumstance being thus elevated above the sphere of mortal existence, it necessarily followed, that the singing of actors, in an Opera, appeared a true imitation of the language made use of by the deities represented."³⁶ Because the intent of opera was so high-minded, and because Algarotti links high-mindedness to nobility of birth, it is no surprise that he should defend the initial operatic performances as having been presented as celebratory ritual in the halls of great princes and

³⁵ Reinhard G. Pauly, "Benedetto Marcello's Satire on Early 18th-Century Opera," p. 227.

³⁶ *Essay*, p. 17.

sovereigns.³⁷ With their ability to pay for the expensive machinery and properties necessary to the staging of good opera "not an article was omitted that could excite an idea of whatever is most wonderful to be seen either on earth, or in the heavens."³⁸

The rise of public opera coincides for Algarotti with a decline in the good taste necessary to its staging. This was primarily due to the lack of financial resources at the disposal of the owners of the public houses. From this time mythology as a subject began to be renounced for subjects dealing with the history of man, since the costs in mounting these works would obviously be far less. At this point the costly pomp was replaced by a more humble regularity and by poetic diction. Algarotti attributes the initial rise of interludes and ballets as thrifty devices to compensate the audience for the subtraction of costly spectacle from the performance. Given the newer restrictions placed by necessity on the opera, Algarotti logically concludes that the role of the poet had also changed and that good judgment had to be displayed in the choice of subjects which have only two desirable traits: that they be extremely simple and not unknown.³⁹ The best advice that Algarotti can give the poet is already found in common usage, especially amongst the French, "to make choice of an event that has happened either

³⁷ To be sure, the rise of opera in the courts was accompanied by the development of music and the ballet. From this point of view, the opera can be thought of as the mother of invention for the arts involved in its composition. Dance historians, for example, attribute the rise of ballet in France to the *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, presented by the Italian musicians and dancers brought by Catherine de Medici with her to Paris. According to dance historian Richard Kraus, "from this point, France was viewed as the centre of the development of ballet, while Italy served as the home of the developing opera of the Renaissance." Kraus, *History of the Dance*, p.71.

³⁸ *Essay*, p.13.

³⁹ *Essay*, p.24.

in very remote times, or in countries very distant from us, and quite estranged from our usages, which may afford various incidents of the marvellous."⁴⁰ It is in the context of the opera, with its emphasis on spectacle that this advice truly makes the best sense.

Further, the beauty of the idea is that:

the great distance of place, where the action is fixed, will prevent the recital of it to musical sounds from appearing quite so improbable to us. The marvellousness of the theme will furnish the author with an opportunity of interweaving therewith dances, choruses, and a variety of scenical decorations . . .⁴¹

Clearly, Algarotti placed musical composition second to the composition of the libretto, and as such, his chapter, *On the Musical Composition for Operas*, follows after that on poetry since "music derives its greatest merit by being no more than an auxiliary, the handmaid to poetry."⁴² Connections between the different artistic disciplines had become severed since ancient times when, as Algarotti observes, poets were multi-talented and, in designing a theatre performance for competition at a Greek festival necessarily demonstrated a proficiency in musical orchestration as well as the other skills required for a full performance. The composer of Algarotti's time, representing only one part of a much fuller integration of the drama, must fulfill his part,

⁴⁰ *Essay*, p. 24.

⁴¹ *Essay*, p. 25.

⁴² *Essay*, p. 31.

under the direction of the poet by predisposing "the minds of the audience for receiving the impression to be excited by the poet's verse."⁴³ The ideal, for Algarotti, thus exists in:

the modest discretion of a composer, who will not think it beneath him to receive from the poet's mouth the purport of his meaning and intention, who will also make himself a competent master of the author's sense, before he writes a word of music, and will ever afterwards confer with him concerning the music he shall have composed . . .⁴⁴

Such ideas were being bandied about by hugely influential Venetian theorists of Algarotti's day such as the composer Benedetto Marcello who disdained "the artificiality of the singing and the facile glibness of the orchestral music in operas of his day."⁴⁵ Algarotti makes reference to Marcello in this chapter on musical composition and praises the maestro for having expressed, "in a wonderful manner, not only all the different passions of the heart, but even the most delicate sentiments of the mind."⁴⁶ Algarotti seems more directly touched, however, by writings of Muratori which had been recently reprinted. In fact, Algarotti's demand for the return of the theatre to the poet is a direct reiteration of Muratori's outrage in his *Della perfetta poesia italiana*. In this work, Muratori rails against the opera as a useless, frivolous event. Once worthy, it had, according to the author, been tainted by effeminate elements such as the use of particular notes, the use of castrati and even the introduction of women in singing

⁴³ *Essay*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ *Essay*, p.33.

⁴⁵ See Eleanor Selfidge-Field, *The Works of Benedetto and Alessandro Marcello*, p.20.

⁴⁶ *Essay*, p.52.

roles⁴⁷: "Certo è, che la Moderna Musica de' Teatri è sommamente dannosa a i costumi del popolo, divenendo questo sempre più vile, e volto alla lascivia, in ascoltarla."⁴⁸ The resulting product of such abuse was also observed by the ancients such as Plato, Cicero, Quintilian and Plutarch whose arguments Muratori cites in his battle against such music because it strips the audience of courage, spirit and especially virtue; which has the unfortunate result of weakening their defences against vice. Thus, Algarotti expands on Muratori's argument for the placement of the poet at the centre of a complete composition so that the time spent at the theatre will be pleasing to the souls of the audience and not only to their ears.

Algarotti has some very specific advice to the author of the opera with regard to the composition of the recitative and the reasonable construction and placement of the aria within the text. The precision of Algarotti's advice is unique in light of other works of reform literature of a like kind in its suggestions for improvements to the dramatic text. In speaking of the construction of the recitative, Algarotti quotes Jacopo Peri from his preface to *Euridice*: "Peri observed the Italian words, which are capable of intonation, or consonance, and those which are not."⁴⁹ To design an opera that observed some rules of proportion and verisimilitude, connoisseurs of the day saw the need to establish a rhythm, whereby the recitative does not break suddenly into a

⁴⁷ Of course, women had already been present on the Italian stage as commedia performers since the sixteenth century, most famously Isabella Andreini of the Gelosi troupe. Rosalind Kerr, in a chapter that outlines the career achievements of this great actress, analyzes the implications of a female on-stage presence in an otherwise restrictive society. See R. Kerr's Ph.D. dissertation: *The Actress As Androgyne in the Commedia Dell'Arte Scenarios of Flaminio Scala*, pp. 63-95.

⁴⁸ Muratori, *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, Tomo Secondo, p.575.

⁴⁹ *Essay*, p.35.

spirited arietta. It is the successful integration of the aria, therefore, that to Algarotti provides the key to the well-balanced opera. "The surest method to bring about a better understanding among the several constituent parts of an Opera, would be not to crowd so much art into the airs, and to curb the instrumental part more than is now the custom."⁵⁰ Oddly, such an organization of the theatre event agrees with recent trends in thought such as those of the well-known cognitive researcher Derrick de Kerckhove who contends that, in an advanced literate society, the eyes are the focus of the point of perspective and it is to this sense that all the others must bow. Musicians, according to Algarotti, have the ability to satisfy and even delight the ears "but not at all either to affect the heart, or to kindle the imagination of those who hear them; wherefore, to accomplish their favourite end, they frequently bound over all rules."⁵¹ Thus, the order recognized by Algarotti as necessary to the rational, and therefore successful, presentation of opera is the very order that de Kerckhove identifies as being rebelled against by society in the process of organizing our minds in an autonomous and systematic way.⁵² The composer is guilty of subverting a rational order as put forward by the poet by treating his words in a manner that is not consistent with their emotional charge. The most offensive obstruction in the work, however, is found in the aria which promotes, in its execution, the repeated musical passage known as the *ritornello*.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Essay*, p. 39.

⁵¹ *Essay*, p.44.

⁵² de Kerckhove proposes the argument that societies naturally rebel against the processes of organization with regard to cognitive structures.

⁵³ David Kimball, in describing the development of the ritornello in the Italian opera tradition, argues that its use demonstrates the composer's almost architectural formation of the work as a system

Algarotti clearly abhorred this practice since: "when the sense of an air is finished, the first part of it ought never to be sung again; which is one of our modern innovations and quite repugnant to the natural process of our speech and passions, that are not accustomed to this turn about and recoil upon themselves."⁵⁴ In Algarotti's own composition of *Iphigenia in Aulis*,⁵⁵ which had been performed in Berlin and was presented in his *Essay* as an example of reform opera, we see that he puts into practice his desire to curb the da capo aria, replacing it instead with what he calls "half-airs." This development we can link to reforms being put into place by his friend and patron, Frederick of Prussia, whose own *Montezuma* is considered historically important for its "preponderance (in the ratio of about two to one) of the "cavatina" over the traditional da capo aria."⁵⁶

Opera reform was a huge issue in the 1750's and 1760's and Algarotti, largely due to the importance of his *Essay*, is a central figure, known and admired by many of

to be consumed by the listening audience. "They [ritornelli] are attached to individual songs and choruses; they provide a frame that sets these movements clearly apart from what preceded them, and they introduce a strong element of patterning within that frame." Kimbell, *Italian Opera*, p.76.

⁵⁴*Essay*, p. 45.

⁵⁵[Algarotti] ". . .took the practical step of providing a model libretto, perversely but prophetically in French . . .it was indeed an Iphigenia in Aulis, in which elevated feelings, the spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice, inform characters who vary between the innocent and the heroic (Iphigenia and Achilles), the subtle (Calchas, the priest), and the mature and complex (Clytemnestra, Agamemnon). Instead of the opera seria formula, a tangled situation unravelled by improbable changes of heart, the characters accept their destiny, their inevitable collision averted by divine intervention . . . Algarotti was impressed by French staging and flexibility of musical forms, and accordingly employed the choral and dance elements neglected in opera seria." Julian Rushton, *Classical Music*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ Walther's *Lexikon* (1732) defines cavata as a short arioso passage, occurring usually at the end of a recitative, in which the mood or meaning of the recitative is concentrated or drawn forth. Cavatina (the diminutive of cavata) is used in the eighteenth century as opposed to the aria in the sense of a vocal number which "gathers together" an aria (that is, a da capo aria) in shorter and simpler form, without much text repetition or coloratura." Donald Grout, *A Short History of the Opera*, pp. 211-12.

the most important reformists of his day. Reform of course meant a reform of the opera seria as brought to its most perfect form by Metastasio. Interestingly, Algarotti, who decries the use of the da capo style, offers no criticism of the famous poet himself. Gluck, in his dedication to *Alceste* (1769) offers a criticism of opera seria practices that is thought to be derivative of Algarotti's:⁵⁷

I have striven to restrict music to its true office of serving poetry by means of expression and by following the situations of the story, without interrupting the action or stifling it with a useless superfluity of ornaments; and I believed that it should do this in the same way as telling colors affect a correct and well-ordered drawing, by a well-assorted contrast of light and shade, which serves to animate the figures without altering their contours. Thus I did not wish to arrest an actor in the greatest heat of dialogue in order to wait for a tiresome *ritornello*, nor to hold him up in the middle of a word on a vowel favorable to his voice, nor to make display of the agility of his fine voice in some long-drawn passage, nor to wait while the orchestra gives him time to recover his breath for a cadenza. I did not think it my duty to pass quickly over the second section of an aria of which the words are perhaps the most impassioned and important, in order to repeat regularly four times over those of the first part and to finish the aria where its sense may perhaps not end for the convenience of the singer who wishes to show that he can capriciously vary a passage in a number of guises; in short, I have sought to abolish all the abuses against which good sense and reason have long cried out in vain.⁵⁸

Algarotti raises the argument that human nature must also be considered in producing opera for the public. The process itself must be dissected, examined and then put together in a way that is true to the nature of the subject being depicted, and yet still remain highly entertaining. The genius of the Italian contribution to the genre, thus, does not stop with its invention but continues in its development into a form of art

⁵⁷The resemblance between Algarotti's book and Gluck's preface to *Alceste* leaves no room for doubt on this point." Grout, p.232.

⁵⁸Gluck, "Dedication for *Alceste*," in Strunk's *Source Readings in Music History*, p. 933.

that can capture the essence of man's condition, creating either laughs, tears, or both. In this regard, Algarotti displays pride in the success of comic opera, which he considers to be Italian in nature and had done much to enhance the reputation of the Italian artist abroad. The spread of this style, although acknowledged by Algarotti as "plebeian," is characterized by the author as a triumph, spreading "our musical fame on the other side of the Alps among the French."⁵⁹

Many of the greatest abuses occurring in the opera are attributable to the singer him/herself and to their manipulation of moments in the performance in which to shine, creating dead time on stage, which in turn encourages a lack of attention on the part of the audience. To these abuses Algarotti directs a great deal of criticism, dedicating chapter three of his essay to the proper use of the recitative and singing in the greater operatic construction. With regard to the use of recitative by the performer, the author observes that there is a need for dependence on the individual skills and discretion of the actor/singer⁶⁰ but that these talents must be managed by the poet/director so that the import of the words is not lost on an audience which has been trained to turn to other activities during such scenes.⁶¹ The theoretical works of Quintillian were still a

⁵⁹ "As a separate genre, comic opera appeared in Italy only after the classicizing reform of Zeno and Metastasio (who eliminated farcical elements from opera)." (Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, p.74) Opera Buffa relied on singing actors rather than expensive virtuosi, and encouraged the development of the ensemble leading to Mozart's comic masterpieces.

⁶⁰ The anonymous author of *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per mettere bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, observes that in the performance of musical theatre "sloppy articulation, displaced accents and improper lengthening of syllables will obscure the meaning of the poem, boring or confusing the listener, and compromising the efficacy of the performance in its entirety." See Migliarisi's *Theories of Directing* . . . , pp.278-79.

⁶¹ The function of gestures was to indicate or to describe the objects, on stage or off, real or imaginary, which were referred to by the words; to express by face and hands and posture the passion which moved the character: to emphasize important words; to announce the beginning, and the ending

source of training for singers. There are many ways in which these dead spaces can be enlivened since, "besides the gestures, which entirely depend on the actor, there are certain suspensions of the voice, certain short pauses, and a certain insisting on one place more than another, that cannot be communicated and, therefore . . . [are part of the actor's craft]."⁶² In practice, however, preposterous conduct carries the event, ruled by the individual desire of the performer to capitalize on the close, interactive audience-stage relationship that characterized the moment and, in Italy at least, was encouraged by local acting traditions embodied in the public performance of *commedia dell'arte*. Different responses had presented themselves regarding the abuses which this acting style encouraged. Two notable advocates of a reform of theatre, comparable to Algarotti, were the influential Luigi Riccoboni and Carlo Goldoni. Both saw pandering to the audience as overcoming concerns for truth and nature in dramatic art. In his *Dell'arte rappresentativa* (London, 1728), Riccoboni divides his advice to actors into six cantos which include timely advice for the study of the art of acting and the comportment of the actor on stage. In this advice Riccoboni states that it is wise for the actor to demonstrate humility in his approach to his craft, both on and off stage. Most importantly, however, the actor must attempt to play his part truthfully and the best method to do so is that the actor "feel what he acts . . . love, anger, jealousy; feel like a king or like Beelzebub, and if he really feels all these emotions, if 'with his heart he measures his movements' they will of themselves germinate in him and move him to

of a passage or speech, and to perform certain other similar specified functions. Dene Barnett, *The Art Of Gesture*. p. 18-19.

⁶² *Essay*, p.56.

the right action."⁶³ Goldoni, in the reformist messages embodied in his *Teatro Comico* of 1751, advocates a new naturalism in acting and uses the characters of the play to relate his thoughts. Thus Orazio, in the third act teaches the would-be poet: "Drama is an imitation of nature, and in it one should do only what is plausible. And as for gestures, they too should be natural."⁶⁴ Breaking the action occurring on stage for any reason is not natural. Thus, Goldoni, through Orazio, advises: "when an actor's alone on stage he must suppose that he is neither heard nor seen. Addressing the audience is an insufferable habit, and should never be permitted."⁶⁵

Algarotti clearly supports the Goldonian view of naturalism in acting on stage but couches his argument more in the need for such a reform to create a different impact on the audience; in other words, in terms of a theory of reception. His observations of the state of acting thus reflect the advice given by the two practitioners mentioned. In his *Essay* he observes that "instead of one actor minding what another says to him, and marking, by the different modifications of gestures and features, what impression it has made upon him, he does nothing but smile to the boxes, and bow to the company there, with several other such pretty impertinences."⁶⁶ The abuses prevalent in the physical activities taking place in the auditoriums of opera houses, then, are attributed by Algarotti to the audience's reaction to poorly performed recitative, on the part of the

⁶³ "Riccoboni's Advice to Actors", translated and paraphrased from *Dell'Arte rappresentativa* (1728) by Pierre Rames. Reprinted in *Actors on Acting*, pp.59-63.

⁶⁴ Carlo Goldoni, *The Comic Theatre*, III, iii, p.67.

⁶⁵ Goldoni, III, ii, p.61.

⁶⁶ *Essay*, p.57.

singer/actor. "When the songs are well acted as well, then people will pay attention."⁶⁷ If the songs are not well acted, the audience will seek other types of amusement which take the form of chattering, visiting from box to box, taking meals in the box, and "that other remedy which is a thousand times worse . . . gaming."⁶⁸

It is important to note here that techniques were already recognized in the eighteenth century which distinguished operatic acting styles performed during recitative from that performed during an aria. In his study, *The Art of Gesture*, Dene Barnett notes the difference between the two. "During the recitative, the techniques of expression a singer employed were those of an actor, in the aria, those of a musician."⁶⁹

In the actual singing itself, Algarotti notes that the virtuoso is guilty of trying to attract the attention of the audience by the gratuitous use of vocal skills to demonstrate a level of difficulty that will be considered impressive. The impact was intended to accumulate accolades from the audience. The damaging effect of this practice on the integrity of the whole is characterized by Algarotti in one word, "ridiculous!" Restraint and good sense demonstrated by the performer on stage and guided by the artistic abilities and dramatic excellence of the poet will have a civilizing effect on the audience, which cannot really be blamed for finding some alternate activity to occupy them during a dull recitative, while waiting for the dance to start.

⁶⁷ *Essay*, p. 57.

⁶⁸ *Essay*, p. 59.

⁶⁹ Barnett, p.15.

It is not to be doubted, that whenever music shall be restored to her pristine dignity, Operas will be honoured with the attention of the public, and be heard with the greatest delight from beginning to end, because then a grateful silence will be imposed on all the spectators."⁷⁰

In keeping with other current European theories regarding verisimilitude in the drama, and with a respect for historical detail springing from a Viconian education, Algarotti puts forward the neoclassical argument for an attention to historic detail in the scenery and costumes constructed for the theatre. Regarding the dress, it should "approach as near as possible to the manners of the times and the nations which are represented."⁷¹ The design of the set we have already treated of in the preceding chapter.

Algarotti's ideas for a reform of an opera that was imbued with the potential to be the most perfect of man's dramatic arts is couched in terms that expose his desire to return the Italian cultural achievement to what he envisions as its rightful place among the nations of Europe. His discussion of the beauties and flaws of this art form is riddled with examples of independent genius still functioning in the creations of Italian men of science and art, such as Metastasio or the Bibienas, who lacked only a rational, unifying force that would, out of their separate contributions, construct a complete work of integrity which would give to the people of the peninsula, with its accompanying imposition of order, a sense of pride in their achievement. The underlying logic of the cause argues for an early attempt on the part of a well-travelled Italian at awakening the slumbering spirit natural to the genius of a traditionally creative people, offering to

⁷⁰ *Essay*, p.66.

⁷¹ *Essay*, p. 74.

them a vision of what nationalism had done for the reputation of great European states, and reminding them that their cultural claims were just as valid. The reform of Italy's dramatic traditions, then, through the re-instatement of an order in the design of that society's greatest cultural signifier, the theatre, as both building and event, is meant to pave the way for far greater reforms.

CHAPTER III

Francesco Milizia and Theories of Architecture

Francesco Milizia (1725-1798), in outlining the criteria and uses of the arts, was keen to place architecture first among the beaux arts. His observations were first published in his *Memorie degli architetti antichi e moderni* (1768) and are most elaborately laid out in his influential *Principi di architettura civile* (1781) where he states that architecture:

1. Come la base e la regolatrice di tutte le altri arti. 2. Ella forma il legame della società civile. 3. Produce ed aumenta il commercio. 4. Impiega le pubbliche e le private ricchezze in beneficio e in decoro dello Stato, de' proprietari e de' posteri. 5. Difende la vita, i beni, la libertà de' cittadini.¹

He makes it very clear that, in cultivated nations, when architecture is encouraged, the other arts, ranging from painting to gardening, all stand to benefit. The elevation of the arts was, for Milizia, synonymous with the elevation of the general standards of society and, as the two went hand in hand, it is no accident that a great amount of his work deals with the theatre, both as building and as event. Where better, he reasoned, to effect change, both artistic and social, than in the building that housed the communal event of an entire society? His contributions are generally thought to centre around an enlightened awareness of the potential of architecture to affect people's lives which was not fully appreciated before the work of Emil Kaufmann who, in an essay entitled "Three

¹ Francesco Milizia, *I Principi di Architettura Civile*, p.3.

LE VITE
DE' PIU' CELEBRI
ARCHITETTI
D'OGNI NAZIONE E D'OGNI TEMPO
PRECEDUTE DA VN SAGGIO
SOPRA
L' ARCHITETTURA



IN ROMA
*nella Stamparia di Paolo Giunchi Komarek
a spese di Venunzio Monaldini Libraro
col permesso de Superiori 1768.*

Illustration 8: The origin of architecture.

From Francesco Milizia, *Le vite de' più celebri architetti*, frontispiece.

Revolutionary Architects," initiated a discussion of the significance of architecture with reference to historical changes in design practice and the implications of these changes for the signifying aspect of the structure.²

Milizia was famous in his time, and to this day, for his work as an architectural theorist. The *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Architettura e Urbanismo* refers to him as "uno dei personaggi italiani più significativi tra quanti parteciparono al rinnovamento culturale che nella seconda metà del sec. XVIII impegnò tutta l'Europa . . ."³ The recently published *History of Architectural Theory* acknowledges him as the most influential Italian architectural theorist of the late eighteenth century.⁴ We also know that Milizia's work was read in his own day as illustrated by the fact that his *Memorie degli Architetti Antichi e Moderni* was translated soon after his death for Sir John Soanes, the great British architect. Soanes was struck by the fact that no biographical history concerning architects, ancient or modern, had ever been published in England. Milizia's book, as outlined in the preface, was chosen because of the reputation it enjoyed on the continent, "no other author having collected so much information, or exhibited such sound judgement, both with regard to historical research and to critical remarks."⁵

² Richard Patterson analyzes the significance of Kaufmann's contribution in an essay entitled "Three Revolutionary Architects" found in *Architecture and the Sites of History*. Ed. Iain Borden and David Dunster.

³ From *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Architettura e Urbanistica*, Vol IV, p.54.

⁴ *A History of Architectural Theory From Vitruvius to the Present*. Ed. Hanno-Walter Kruft. Princeton Architectural Press, 1994.

⁵ See Mrs. Edward Creasy's 1826 translation of *The Lives of the Architects*, vii.

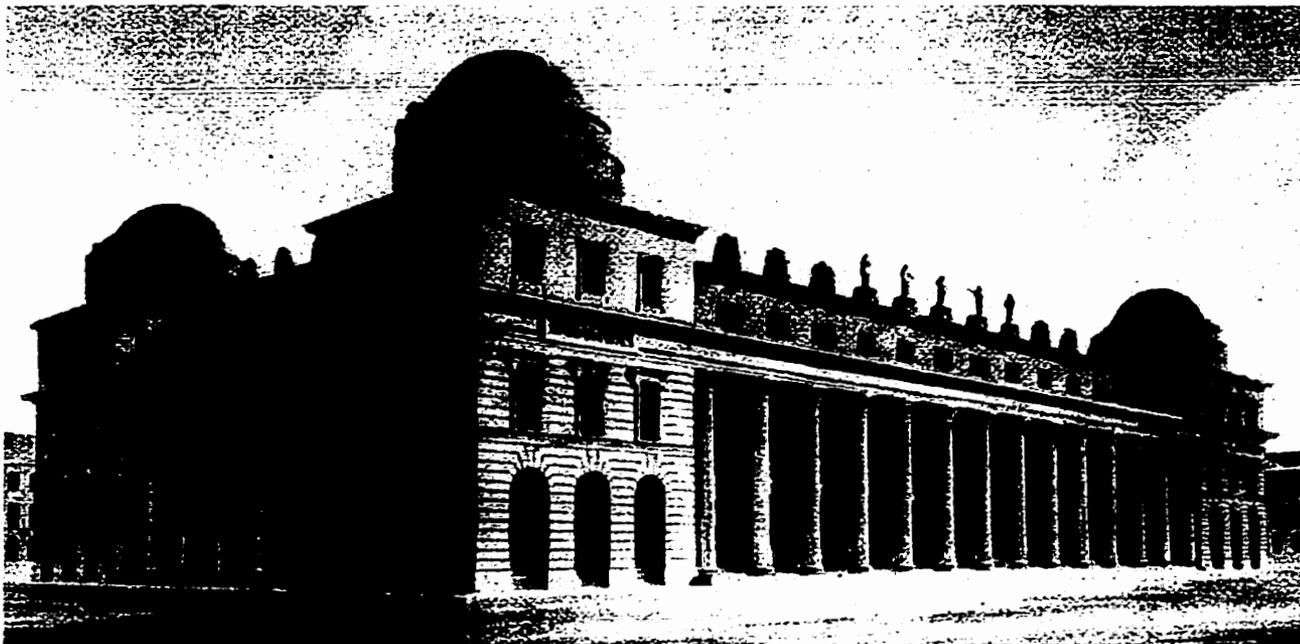


Illustration 9: Sire John Soane's neo-classical design for an opera house on the north side of Leicester Square in London, c. 1789.

From Simon Tidworth, *Theatres: An Illustrated History*, Plate 103, p. 120.

In light of the esteem in which Milizia is held, for his contributions as an architectural theorist and historian, it seems strange that his work is given so little attention in most non-Italian architectural histories. This can, perhaps, be explained by the generally accepted view that, in eighteenth century Europe, the mantle of honour in architectural theory had already passed from Italy to France, where the French had improved on the Italian system.⁶ This does not, however, mean that real contributions were not still being made in Italy. Algarotti had already to an extent popularized Italian theory through the success of his published work in England, France and Germany. Milizia followed Algarotti's lead by analyzing the theatre event in even greater detail, making observations regarding its flaws and suggestions for its improvement, both with regard to the design of the building and of the dramatic work staged. Whereas Algarotti, however, left off at a specific study of the practice of opera, Milizia applied his criticism to the tragedy, comedy, and pastoral as well. Also, while Algarotti clearly envisioned new design practices that would eliminate unnecessary ornamentation in the theatre structure, Milizia has left us plans for an entire entertainment complex, along classical Roman lines, which included a facility specific to the production of drama.

The designs of Italian theatres were justly renowned at the time and were studied by the most influential theorists of Europe. For example, the Teatro Regio of

⁶ In terms of stage technology, the French had improved the efficiency and precision of stagecraft while, at the same time, creating the need for fewer stage hands. More importantly, however, the new scheme was represented by Diderot and d'Alembert in the *Encyclopédie*. According to George Izenour, "It was this publishing event that brought the French to the forefront of contemporary stage technology. French stage technology thus achieved ascendancy over Italian stage technology." George Izenour, *Theatre Technology*, p.17.

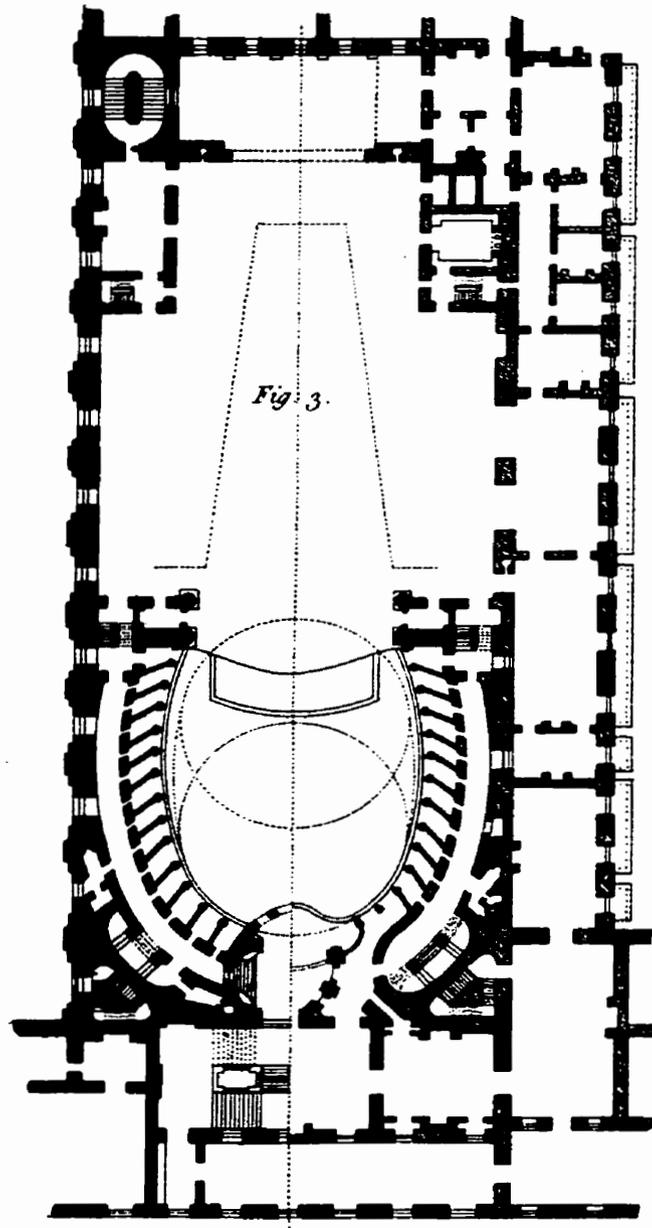
Theatre at Turin.

Illustration 10: Teatro Regio, Turin. The design is based on the ellipse.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate VI (partial).

Turin (1740) is known to have been admired by Diderot and Pierre Patte an advocate of the ellipse for theatres who based his own ideal plan upon the design of this theatre.⁷ The theatre, in fact, was highlighted by Diderot in his *Encyclopédie*, with a complete set of working drawings.⁸ Apart from publications, the French had been sending promising architects to their Academy in Rome since 1720 and, with regard to the output of Roman architectural academies, it can be argued that the French took their cues from the Italians for much longer than has been assumed.⁹

This chapter is devoted primarily to Francesco Milizia's contributions to theatre design and to general architectural theory in an era of social unrest and intense academic debate regarding the meaning and uses of the arts and sciences. It is also meant to redress the neglect that he has suffered, particularly at the hands of modern theatre specialists. Milizia's name can be found in neither the *Oxford Companion to Theatre* nor in the comprehensive Italian *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*. The impact of his *Del Teatro* (1772), later republished as *Trattato Completo, Formale e Materiale del Teatro* (1794), on the architectural and dramatic movements of his day, has never been given a full examination nor has the work ever been translated into English, although many

⁷Forsyth, *Buildings For Music*, p.80.

⁸Thomas van Leeuwen, "The Theatre of Movement" *Archis*, (June 1995) p.27, observes that: "Although Alfieri's building, completed in 1740, was no longer a novelty, it was seen as the only, albeit imperfect, prototype of the urban theatre of the future. It was, however, rough, and as yet 'unenlightened' and the accompanying entry makes frequent references to its disadvantages."

⁹"So potent was their example that the French, who once felt there was nothing useful to be learned from outside their sphere, accepted Roman influence in reforming their own efforts. It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that the two institutions can finally be said to be following roughly parallel lines of development, with some contact running between them, and only later will the French academies rise to preeminence." Gil Smith, *Architectural Diplomacy*, p.222.

of his other treatises have. These treatises, however, exist as important documents outlining Milizia's intense interest in theatre design, wherever it demonstrated itself as superior. This is evident from his analysis of Europe's major theatres according to their abilities to function rationally as containers promoting higher societal values. In condemning the flaws of contemporary theatre buildings, Milizia created a strong argument for a standardization in theatre design practices. His voice, heard across Europe, echoes through the works of other influential theorists such as George Saunders who, in his *Treatise on Theatre* (1790), observes, twenty years after Milizia's work, that: "No certain rule has been found, whereby an architect might proceed; in consequence of which, we find a different form in almost every theatre, and as many different opinions as there are persons who have written or spoken on the subject."¹⁰

It is clear from Milizia's writings that he was concerned with theatrical performance as a basic human need and, apart from the full attention he gives to the subject in his *Trattato Del Teatro*, in his *Principi di Architettura Civile* he devotes a long chapter to the description of buildings used for various types of performance.¹¹ His arguments tend towards the analysis of the theatrical edifice in light of its signification as a social, and socializing structure. He laments the sidelining of the actual dramatic event for which, presumably, these buildings were constructed and creates a case for the redesign of the theatre with a new awareness of the Lodolian premise of

¹⁰ George Saunders, *A Treatise On Theatre*, viii.

¹¹ See Milizia's *Principi di Architettura*, p.125.

functionalism versus form.¹² The questioning and redeployment of classical form, which exists at the core of all his artistic treatises, is vitally central to the concerns of the entire late eighteenth century, as convincingly outlined by Emil Kaufmann.¹³ The implications this argument had for architecture were revolutionary and, in the age of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, when Baroque artistic excess was being questioned and the role of the arts in society was being forced to justify itself, this argument meant a great deal for theatre, both as building and event. Prozzillo suggests that to understand Milizia one must also be familiar with Nicolò Fasolo, whose vision of architectural aesthetics revolved around the belief that art is imitation and all the arts have their respective model. The model, he maintained, must be nature because all knowledge is derived from this source. The genius of Milizia's work was its attempt to reconcile the possibilities provided by the advances of mathematical and scientific knowledge with basic human impulses. This meant that, unlike Lodoli, he would not subjugate human interests completely in an attempt at greater design efficiency. However, his proposed reforms demand a serious assessment of design abuses which, in turn, were responsible for the undermining of a building's human function.¹⁴ In an age of enlightened reform, theatres, not only in Italy but throughout Europe, could no longer

¹² Lodoli's ideas, due to his hesitations to publish, come down to us largely through Memmo in his work *Elementi dell'architettura lodoliana o sia l'arte del fabbricare con solidità scientifica e con eleganza capricciosa*. A full discussion of the indebtedness of Memmo, Milizia and Algarotti to Lodoli can be found in Italo Prozzillo's *Francesco Milizia teorico e storico dell'architettura*.

¹³ Emil Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, p.102.

¹⁴The innovation of Milizia's approach, as observed by Aldo Rossi, is the way he "distinguished form, as the final manifestation of structure, from the analytical aspect of the structure; thus form had a 'classical' persistence of its own which could not be reduced to the logic of the moment." Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, p.53.

justify expensive design flourishes that were not integral to the function of the building.

Milizia's *Trattato*, widely read in his day, insisted that the building's construction and maintenance had to be reformed along with the dramatic event for which these edifices provided space. Though, to us, who are the beneficiaries of the historical evolution of architectural thought over the past two hundred and fifty years, this may seem a basic principle, it must be remembered that, in the Europe of Milizia's day, design practices were tradition bound.

What little we know of Milizia's personal history comes from the preface to the second edition of his *Principi di Architettura Civile*.¹⁵ From this preface we discover that Milizia was born into a noble family in Oria, a city in an "unimportant" territory in the Kingdom of Naples in 1725. At the age of nine he was sent to his uncle, a doctor in Padua, to study the Belles Lettres for nearly seven years. After a falling out with his uncle, he returned to Naples where he completed his studies. In Naples Milizia studied logic, metaphysics, geometry and medicine, among other subjects. However, as he confesses, his desire to see other countries, especially France, was all consuming and he left Naples secretly with the intention of travelling but got no further than Leghorn before running out of money. His father, apparently would not fund such puerile escapades and Milizia was forced to return to Oria where he was to apply himself to scientific pursuits.

At the age of twenty-five, Milizia married Donna Teresa Murzia, and took up

¹⁵An English translation of Milizia's autobiographical writing can be found in the preface to Mrs. Edward Creasy's translation of *The Lives of the Celebrated Architects*, London, 1826.

abode in Gallipoli, the town from which his noble spouse hailed. After the death of his father, Milizia found himself more financially secure and, accompanied by his wife, visited Rome for a year and a half. After returning briefly to Gallipoli, another visit to Rome was made, this time for a year's duration in 1761. Of this visit he writes:

The admiration excited in my mind by the venerable antiquities, and by the more modern erections of the 'eternal city,' drew my attention towards architecture, although I was entirely unacquainted with drawing; and after some study and consideration on the subject, I published the *Vita degli Architetti più celebri*, the first edition of which appeared in Rome 1768, and met with a favourable reception from the public, notwithstanding the severity of my criticisms, and the want of elegance in my style.¹⁶

His relationship with Rome is an important one since it was through that city's architectural achievements, and the learned group of artists and scholars he became intimate with there, that he was introduced to the new neo-classical school of thought. His aesthetic views were to be permanently influenced by revolutionary theorists such as Mengs, Winckelmann, Canova and Nicolas de Azara¹⁷. His work diffuses their doctrines, particularly, as in the case of Mengs¹⁸ and Winckelmann, where they intersect.

The *Vita*. . . was followed by a diverse publication record which included a translation

¹⁶English translation from the preface to Mrs. Edward Creasy's edition of *Lives of the Architects*, p. xiii.

¹⁷These authors were well acquainted with each other's work as is evident by Milizia's *Delle Belle Arti* . . . , and D' Azara's *Opere Di Antonio Raffaello Mengs* (1783) in which he states that "per formare queste mie Osservazioni mi sono approfittato sempre degli Scritti di Mengs." (Tomo I, p.87)

¹⁸Milizia's work *Delle Belle Arti*, fuses the contributions of Mengs and Sulzer, himself cited in *A History of Architectural Theory* as making "the most important contribution in German to the theory of art during the second half of the eighteenth century." (p. 188) Sulzer's ideas of architecture and antiquity are very similar to those put forward by Winckelmann.

for Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, a treatise on medicine, and the *Elementi di Matematiche pure secondo Abate de la Caille*. This was followed by his *Treatise on Theatre*¹⁹ to a large extent duplicated in the *Elementi di Architettura Civile*, which Milizia claims to have written "when a little further advanced in the art of architecture."²⁰ His interest in Roman antiquity next led Milizia to write a treatise on the *Belle Arti*. Utilizing the work of Mengs, a foreign artist, and good friend, employed in the design of various important construction projects throughout Italy, Milizia compiled a list of reflections on the quality of Italy's most famous classical sculptures. His conclusions can be found in *Dell' Arte Di Vedere Nelle Belle Arti Del Disegno Secondo i Principii Di Sulzer*²¹ *E Di Mengs* where his first and most important rule regarding all of the fine arts, that they please,²² is outlined. This was followed by *Roma nelle Belle Arti del Disegno*, a work commissioned by the ambassador of Venice at Rome, the Cavalier Zulian "a far

¹⁹Unfortunately for Milizia, and to the discredit of the Papal authorities of the time, the first edition of the *Trattato*, published in Rome in December 1771, was never allowed to circulate as, on January 11, 1772, an order was given to prevent its sale. It was to be another two decades before the *Trattato* was republished, this time in Venice, in 1794. Milizia, in the preface to the first Venetian edition, gives an idea of his frustration with the situation in Rome:

non era più vendibile alcun esemplare; non già perchè tutti si fossero venduti, non se n'era anzi venduto neppure uno; ma perchè furon tutti ritirati per ordine del Maestro del Sacro Palazzo Pontificio, e passati in potere di Don Baldassare Odescalchi Mecenate del libro, con condizione di non fargli vedere più luce. Le cause di questo fatto sono note in Roma, nè debbono esserlo altrove.

From Preface to the 1794 Venetian edition of the *Trattato*, p.3.

²⁰Preface to Mrs. Edward Creasy's translation, p. xiv.

²¹Sulzer contributed several articles to the revised *Encyclopédie* which were excerpted from his *General Theory of the Fine Arts* (volume I:1771, volume II:1774). For a full discussion see: "The *Supplément* and Sulzer's Contribution to the *Encyclopédie*," in Kevin Harrington's *Changing Ideas on Architecture in the Encyclopédie, 1750-1776*.

²²"Il primo effetto di tutte le belle arti del Disegno è il piacere della vista; e in particolare il primo effetto della scultura è il piacer della vista per mezzo di effigie scolpite in marmo, in bronzo, e in qualunque materia solida." Milizia, *Dell' Arte Di Vedere*, p. 33.

conoscere le bellezze e le deformità di Roma antica e moderna."²³

From architecture, Milizia turned to the study of natural history with the publication of an *Introduzione alla Storia Naturale* followed by a translation of the *Geografica Fisica di Spagna di Guglielmo Bowles*. He went on to abridge Bailey's *Astronomical history* and then returned to the fine arts with his *Dizionario portatile delle Belle Arti del Disegno*, published in two volumes. After this, Milizia worked on compiling the works of Mengs before completing a *Dizionario di Medicina domestica sulle tracce di Guglielmo Buchan, Medico Scozzese*. From such a record of publication it cannot be denied that Milizia was most eclectic and well-informed in the breadth of his interests.

Milizia's combined enlightened political discourse with the eighteenth century naturalist debate regarding the value of art and its creation as imitation. The implications of this union were several for a pre-nationalist Europe where the great thinkers were seeking to transform the status quo by seeking new rationales for man's existence, using classical models of inherited culture. Milizia's analysis of the crosscurrents presented to him, with respect to his neo-classical interests and his search for the roots of architectural form offered him the ability to conceive of ways that architecture could advance to new goals. And architecture was in the process of being redefined in light of its connection to nature. Winckelmann headed the debate and offered the analogies that would feed into Milizia's analyses of the roots of architecture.

²³ *Principi di Architettura Civile*, preface xi, Milano, 1847.

In a letter to his patron Bianconi, Winckelmann discusses the importance of sculpture to architecture:

Architecture was not formed of something in nature which resembled a house; on the other hand, the sculptor had a perfect and determined archetype offered by nature. We must therefore agree that the rules of proportion are taken from the human body, and established by sculptors.²⁴

Therefore, for example, reflecting on the torsos of Hercules or Apollo, or other Greco-Roman sculptures acquired and praised by European collectors²⁵, Milizia's argument that the artist who imitates nature as it is will entirely miss the point, takes its place in a larger discussion.²⁶ His personal conclusion is that there is little value in representing that which is constantly in front of one's eyes. The real value of art is to show that which one never sees united in one subject.²⁷ Thus, Milizia also places an importance in the imposition of a beneficial visual ordering that we have already associated with Algarotti and de Kerckhove in chapter two. It is for such reformist observations that Milizia is considered important and, in a seminal work dealing with his theories, Giuseppina Fontanesi labels him "uno degli uomini meglio rappresentativi" of his generation.

²⁴ From Rykwert's *The First Moderns*, p.352.

²⁵ "For many centuries it was accepted by everyone with a claim to taste that the height of artistic creation had been reached in a limited number of antique sculptures. These were to be found at first in Rome and, later, in Florence, Naples and Paris. They were repeatedly copied in every medium, and their forms and names thus became familiar to educated people throughout the Western world."
Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, xiii.

²⁶ From Milizia's *Dell' Arte Di Vedere*, p.35.

²⁷ "... infatti, in Milizia troviamo un concetto simile a quello aristotelico, per cui 'la realtà' non è un imperfettissima copia dell' idea . . . ma contiene già in sè virtualmente l'idea, perchè è sintesi di materia e forma. L'arte è, quindi, imitazione non del fenomeno sensibile, ma attività che cerca di cogliere l'essenza intima delle cose e perciò si più vicina alla filosofia."
Fontanesi, p.39.



Illustration 11: An example of classical sculpture: Hercules.

From John Winckelmann's, *History of the Art of the Antiquities*, in Marianne Gross (Ed.) *"... die Augen ein wenig zu öffnen": eine Anthologie mit Bildern aus Johann Joachim Winckelmanns Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, p.39.

Voltaire, of course, had paved the way for the reordering of the physical manifestations of a virtuous society and in his essay, "Des embellissements de Paris," written during the 1740's, he called for Paris to transform itself and to "bring light, health, space and beauty" into a city that was still a clutter of a medieval lack of planning. In this transformation, as the leading theatre figure of his time, he encouraged, as a manifestation of civic culture, the construction of theatres on both a monumental and private scale. Like Algarotti, Voltaire's visit to Berlin, with its new opera house that had opened in 1745, inspired in him an understanding of what good civic architecture could do for the morale and reputation of a nation. In France he observed:

We attend the theatres and are shocked to have to reach them in so inconvenient and disgusting a manner, to be accommodated in them in so uncomfortable a fashion, to see these buildings so poorly constructed, so badly laid out, and to leave them with even more suffering and embarrassment than was felt upon our arrival.²⁸

This general importance of good architecture as a sign of illuminated thought, as observed by Algarotti and Voltaire, is much further analysed by Milizia. He celebrates this art in the third chapter of his *Dell' Arte Di Vedere Nelle Belle Arti Del Disegno* (1781) as the most important science; queen of all the others. "Per quello poi che spetta al suo meccanismo, ella rileva tutto dalla fisica, e chi dice fisica, dice matematiche, chimica, storia naturale ec."²⁹ The signification of the reordering of the urban fabric had previously found exponents in France, Laugier, in England, Shaftesbury and especially in Rome in the person of Piranesi, another member,

²⁸Voltaire, "Des embellissements de Paris," *Oeuvres*, 23:297-98. Translated by Marvin Carlson in *Places of Performance*, p. 74.

²⁹*Dell' Arte Di Vedere*, p. 130.

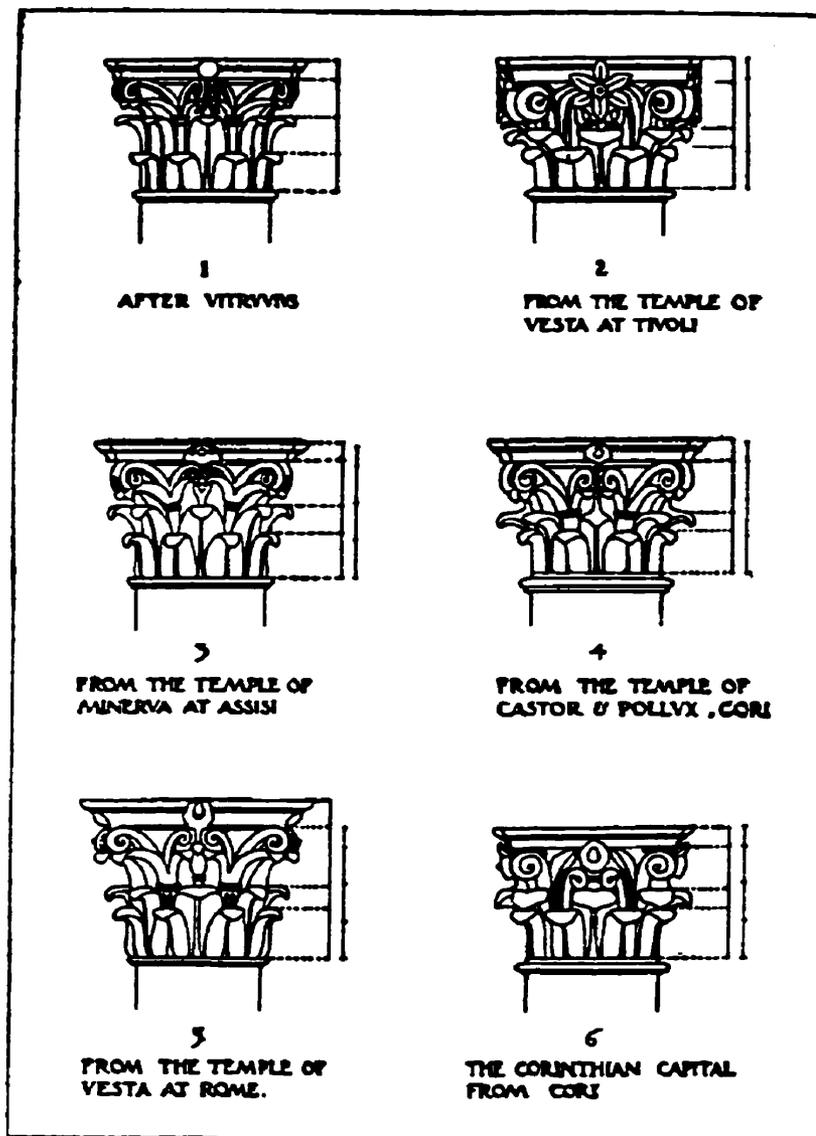
together with Milizia, of the Bottari circle which advocated cultural reform. Piranesi, whose works largely predate Milizia's, would have been a great influence in his accusation of the Roman aristocracy and authorities of "ignoring the need for an urban reorganization founded on great public works."³⁰

Rome itself, city of classical antiquity and modern dilemma, offered to the aesthetic debate of the eighteenth century the materials on which to base universal theories of art. Scientific and artistic thought was revolutionized there by important archaeological discoveries that produced classical work which had previously been misunderstood. The impact of these discoveries was enormous on the academies that existed there and throughout Europe with regard to publications that, in turn, spawned debate. As characterized by Wittkower, the realization was made that "truth and simplicity must dictate an artist's approach to his subject and that the purpose of a building must be expressed in all clarity by its architecture."³¹ The realization was made with the ability to compare Roman architecture to Vitruvian theory, with the accepted understanding that Vitruvius had set down the orders of architecture derived from the divine model which united the perfection of all the orders in one.³² Classical architecture was therefore the only true architecture, not only because it conformed with reason - in the way the ancient authors had set out - but because it was directly based

³⁰From Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p.29.

³¹Rudolph Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750*, p.243.

³²Norberg-Schulz advises that it was generally assumed that the three classical orders of architecture (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian) were capable of expressing all basic characters, as they comprise two extremes and a mean. See Norberg-Schulz, p.17.



THE CORINTHIAN CAPITAL OF VITRUVIUS COMPARED WITH THE MONUMENTS

Illustration 12: The origins of the three orders: The Corinthian capital of Vitruvius compared with monuments.

From Morris Hicky Morgan, trans., *Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture*, p. 105.

on divine revelation.³³ The past, and the values associated with it, were exhibited most prominently in Rome. To the extent that man's progress was measured against these ideas, as argued by Riseboro, Rome was therefore the centre and key to man's future.³⁴

Milizia's belief in the importance of the theatre is underlined by his observation that such buildings are found only among "cultured nations." "Non si veggono teatri che presso le nazioni colte. A misura che l'Europa si è più incivilta ed ha appreso a gustar le delizie della vita sociale, il numero de' teatri si è da per tutto moltiplicato."³⁵ In such civilizations, the theatrical spectacle provides the architect with the most satisfying work since "all of the fine arts, and the most useful sciences have contributed to their formation."³⁶ In antiquity, according to Milizia, the only two existing models for theatre can be found in the building programs of Greece and Rome. According to Pérez-Gómez, "the main problem of architectural intentionality is the genesis of form."³⁷ The study of these two societies as repositories of wisdom is, therefore, justified by Milizia's contention that they were the only two populations that could extend and refine human intentions, in terms of establishing natural form. On this basis, he laments that: "We hold our festivals in insignificant places; the ancients held them in immense structures

³³As outlined in Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p.9.

³⁴Riseboro, p.161.

³⁵*Architettura Civile*, p.369.

³⁶From Milizia's *Principi di Architettura*, 369.

³⁷Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, p.7.

of marble."³⁸ Along this line of reasoning, Milizia proposed a global reform of theatre which was meant to place the architectural design of the building alongside the profession's literary and artistic components. His *Trattato Completo, Formale e Materiale del Teatro* was inspired by the principles of rationality, clarity, order, decorum, morality and function and, as observed by theatre historians, delineated the image of a new type of theatre for which he dictated the architectonic ideal.³⁹

For Milizia, the purpose of theatre consisted in moral values being placed in action to instruct and animate the spectators to virtue. This argument, of course, was already being put forward in the bourgeois comedies of Goldoni, the effect of which was to arouse debate in Venice regarding the need to protect the purity of Italian theatre traditions. Against these traditions, Goldoni posits the need to offer to the public examples of good citizenship, exhibited through the representation of positive role models from real life rather than corrupted commedia figures. Milizia aligns himself with such reformist thought as Goldoni's and thus demonstrates a liberalism of thought that was challenging to the old order. Toward such ends, Milizia promotes his belief in the utility of architecture which must be informed by, and nourish, its own necessity. As a disciple of Lodoli, Milizia remains true to his master in asserting that the beauty of architecture is born solely of necessity and utility. The ends of neoclassical art, it then follows, must be the "vero utile."

³⁸*Principi di Architettura*, 368.

³⁹Pinelli, p.60.

Milizia demonstrates the connection between the decoration and construction of the theatre and the enjoyment of the performance itself. In doing so, he examines the theatrical edifice as a signifying structure with influence on the public's reaction to the event. The result is an architectural analysis of theatre dynamics which is given greater relevance today by the recent semiotic work of Fische-Lichte and Marvin Carlson who, in his *Places of Performance* sets out the importance of studying the implications of the physical surroundings of performance

. . . by way of demonstrating not only how such surroundings reflect the social and cultural concerns and suppositions of their creators and their audiences, but even more important, how they may serve to stimulate or to reinforce within audiences certain ideas of what theatre represents within their society and how the performances it is offering are to be interpreted and integrated into the rest of their social and cultural life.⁴⁰

In fact, Milizia, in all his architectural treatises, makes a case for the practicality of a thorough analysis of the theatres of the Greeks and Romans not as "an exhibition of useless scholarship but, rather, to inspire some useful imitations."⁴¹ In this pursuit, his work appears inspired by the philosophical observations of Diderot who, in his writings about the Salon of 1767, names a "true line," an ideal model of beauty, which "all but vanishes with the man of genius, who over a certain period shapes the spirit, character, and taste of the productions of a people."⁴² This line, as followed by Milizia, cannot be attained by working after a copy, but by questioning the copies. In this sense, Milizia's classification as a neo-classicist is a misnomer as he was clearly affected by the fathers

⁴⁰Carlson, *Places of Performance*, p.2.

⁴¹*Principi di Architettura*, 367.

⁴²*Diderot on Art: II, The Salon of 1767*, p.13.

of the French revolution in their attempt to approximate nature, and not only the remains of the ancient past. As Kaufmann notes: "Milizia was no true classicist. He thought that even the Greeks had gone astray by disregarding nature, and art had declined by imitating the Greek . . . He believed that it made no sense to copy classical art, and that one could not revive it by the device of petty alterations."⁴³

Milizia differentiates between theatre architecture and set design. Likening the set to the costumes, Milizia calls for a verisimilitude in portrayal. Approximation of the customs of the period, the nation and the subject is encouraged as much as is conveniently possible. With the scenery, every residence must exhibit characteristics of the person living in it. The ancients adhered strictly to the unity of place and constructed the tragic, comic and pastoral species of set design to indicate clearly the genre being represented. Milizia observes the change in set requirements which, in his day, had culminated in the creation of pure spectacle with the consequential necessity of many scene changes.⁴⁴ The resulting chaos on the stage, as found in the works of Ferdinando Bibiena's disciples, was characterized by a bizarre disregard for architectural reality which Milizia satirizes. "Le colonne invece di regere un architrave

⁴³Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, p 102.

⁴⁴For the opening of the San Carlo Opera house in 1737, Vincenzo Re was chosen to design the set for Metastasio's *Achille in Sciro*. Multiple set changes were required for this hugely successful staging. Marvin Carlson provides a description of the opening scene which was one of the most impressive: a baroque temple with two lofty flights of stairs surrounded by porticoes forming an open piazza. Through the colonnade a sacred wood could be glimpsed on one side, the court of Sciro on the other. Carlson, *The Italian Stage*, p.28.

Re is considered to be the "most brilliant scene designer of the eighteenth century in southern Italy . . . who established the tradition of scenic excellence at the San Carlo." Donald Oenslager, *Stage Design*, p.81.

ed un soffitto, si vanno a perdere in involuppo di panneggiamenti posti a mezz'aria."⁴⁵

Milizia proposes that the illusion of the scene represented must be maintained. The simple solution for doing so would be in a correct placement of objects on stage in order to give the audience the impression of the consistency of dimensions. Toward this end, convenient styles of architecture should be used to avoid fantastic excess. This means that if, for example, a scene requires a garden or rural vista, choices should be made from known styles. Milizia suggests the availability of such prototypes in the contemporary fad for Chinese or English gardens. Such a choice would alleviate the need of the set designer to create from the imagination thereby ensuring a more realistic representation. What is not to be found in extant architecture could be found in the works of art of such masters as Titian and Possino.

With regard to the construction of the theatrical edifice, Milizia demonstrates the scope of his knowledge of architectural history with a thorough examination of architectural styles dating back to the time of Aeschylus, when a magnificent theatre was built in Athens. The form of this theatre, we are told, was dictated by that of a pre-existing natural theatre, set up on boards amongst the trees.⁴⁶ This prototype is lauded for its functional simplicity by Milizia.

La figura semicircolare costante in tutti i teatri antichi, e tutta intorno gradinata da fondo in cima, era della più mirabil semplicità, affinché tutti si disponessero con comodo per mirare e per udire ugualmente; in tal guisa ciascuno vedeva tutti, ed era da tutti veduto.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Trattato . . .*, p.70.

⁴⁶ *Trattato . . .*, p.72.

⁴⁷"The constant semicircular figure in all ancient theatres, and the interior stepped down from top to bottom, was of the most admirable simplicity so that everyone was comfortably disposed to see and hear equally well; in this manner each person was able to see everything, and everything was seen by everyone." Milizia, *Principi di Architettura Civile*, p.378.



Illustration 13: Set design by Burnacini (1606 - 1707) for a garden theatre festival.

From *Theatre Arts Prints*.

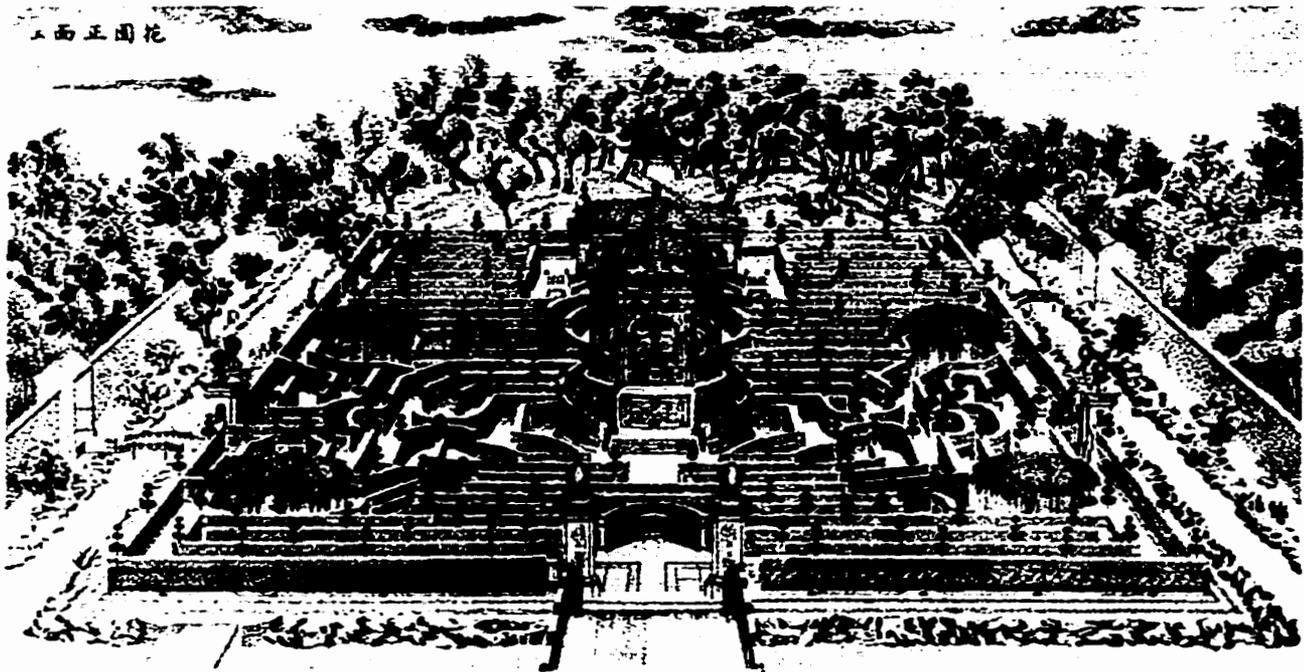


Illustration 14: A Chinese maze garden in Yuan Ming Yuan, laid out by European artists and scientists for the Ch'ien Lung Emperor. The maze was called Tuo Huang Hua Teng (*garden of many lanterns and yellow flowers*).

From Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns*, p. 180

Milizia notes that this style of theatre construction existed to the time of Vitruvius, the great Roman architect, who then formalized the rules of theatre design on the basis of the Greek past. These rules were, throughout the Renaissance and into Milizia's period, considered sacred to the architect. It is important to note, therefore, as does Milizia, that, from the time of Vitruvius, the theatre was conceived of, by architects, as a space dedicated to the pleasure of the population.

In his assessment of the internal layout of the ancient theatre Milizia highlights the democratic roots of the communal theatre event and applies these concepts to potential design in his own time. In so doing, he emulates the architectural model put forward by Algarotti but shows himself much more prone to the appreciation of the mathematical formulae involved in the working out of proportions. The function of the theatre is simple, it must accommodate every spectator in their attempt to view the performance. "Real theatrical convenience," he again emphasizes, "consists of a situation where one can see and hear equally well."⁴⁸ Thus the function of the theatre is dictated by form in a very real way. This realization was revolutionary in the eighteenth century where intentionality in design was perceived of as symbolic. Metaphor, and not mathematical equations, were the rule of the day. As observed by Pérez-Gómez, the thrust of Milizia's argument in the third part of his *Principi di Architettura Civile* is that architects should know something of experimental physics and mathematics. "It was essential for practice to bear in mind the precepts of theory in order to 'reflect, observe, confront, and even experiment,' thereby establishing certain

⁴⁸*Principi di Architettura Civile*, p.372.

rules and contributing to the progress of art."⁴⁹ It must be noted, however, that, when talking of Milizia's idea of the application of geometry and mathematics to architecture, eighteenth century conceptions of natural proportions and harmony overrode a purely functionalist assessment of a building's solidity. Rather, numbers were still conceived of as encoding natural proportions and, mathematics therefore were conceived of as a method of decoding the relationship between aesthetic theory and solidity. This concept, of course is born from the role of nature in artistic theory, and Milizia is quite explicit, in his *Trattato*, in aligning himself with other major theorists, such as Alexander Pope:

Or le Belle Arti fanno quello che la Natura non fa. L' uomo di gusto e di genio, dopo avere ben osservata e studiata la Natura, sceglie le parti che a lui sembrano le migliori sparse qua e là nelle produzioni naturali, e ne forma un tutto compiuto. Questo tutto così compiuto e perfetto relativamente a noi, è quello che si chiama la *Bella Natura*: Tutto immaginario, ma il fondo però è intieramente naturale. Tutto è Natura, dice Pope, ma natura ridotta a perfezione ed a metodo. *Tis Nature all, but Nature methodized.*⁵⁰

Believing that the ancients had succeeded in harmonizing the spatial components of design with aesthetics, Milizia analyzes the forms and spatial divisions of historically significant theatres and the implications these divisions had socially. In fact, his most original observations deal with the dissection of the theatrical edifice according to its functioning parts. In particular, he observes that the ancients used the stairs as barriers which divided the social classes in sections.

⁴⁹Pérez-Gómez, p.252.

⁵⁰*Trattato*, p.9-10.

In the portion of his *Trattato* dedicated to theatre architecture Milizia clearly lays out the origins of the building type, descriptions of exemplary ancient models, and a survey of contemporary European theatres of note; including those of Italy such as at Milan, Bologna, Rome, and foreign theatres such as those at Lyons and Berlin. He makes it clear that, in his opinion: . . . il Teatro antico era per il formale assai più attraente del moderno, e per il materiale ancora dovea incomparabilmente sorpassarlo.⁵¹ By comparing the modern theatre to the ancient ideal Milizia next exposes the defects of the former. Finally, a plan is put forward for a reformed theatre which, more closely designed as a building in line with Milizia's vision, its function becomes at least a model for the container of an event which evokes both utility and pleasure.(See Illustrations in Appendix)

Milizia breaks the ancient theatre down into three major divisions. What predominates is the part which he names "theatre," the space which accommodates both the representation and the spectators. Secondly, he isolates the portico under which the audience waited for the performance, and also sought cover in the event of rain. Finally, to aid in the process of creating the event, Milizia highlights the pleasure gardens in which the audience could take delight both before and after the spectacle.⁵² These parts were laid out by Roman designers who, according to Milizia, deviated only in terms of size and grandeur from the original theatre plans of the Greeks. The great theatres of Marcellus and Pompeii thus become the prototypes against which all

⁵¹ *Trattato*, p.74.

⁵² *Principi di Architettura*, p. 371.

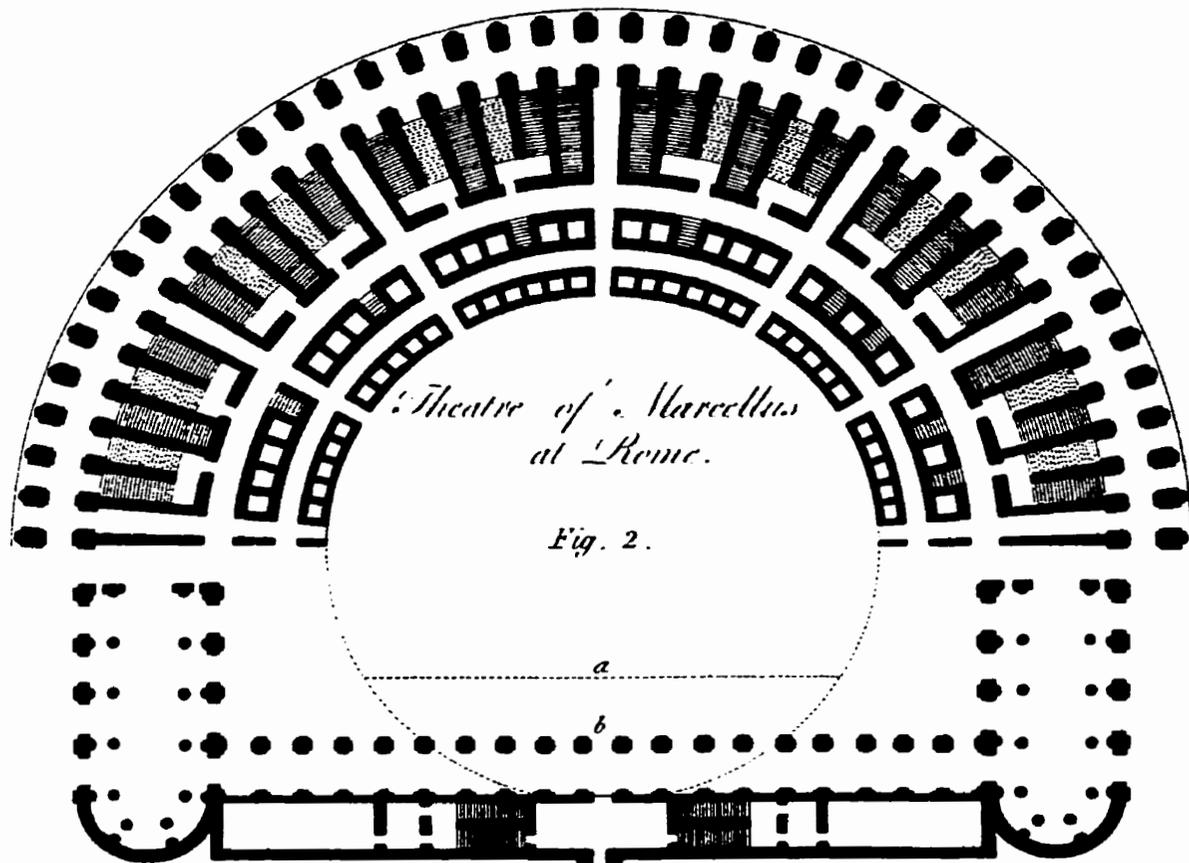
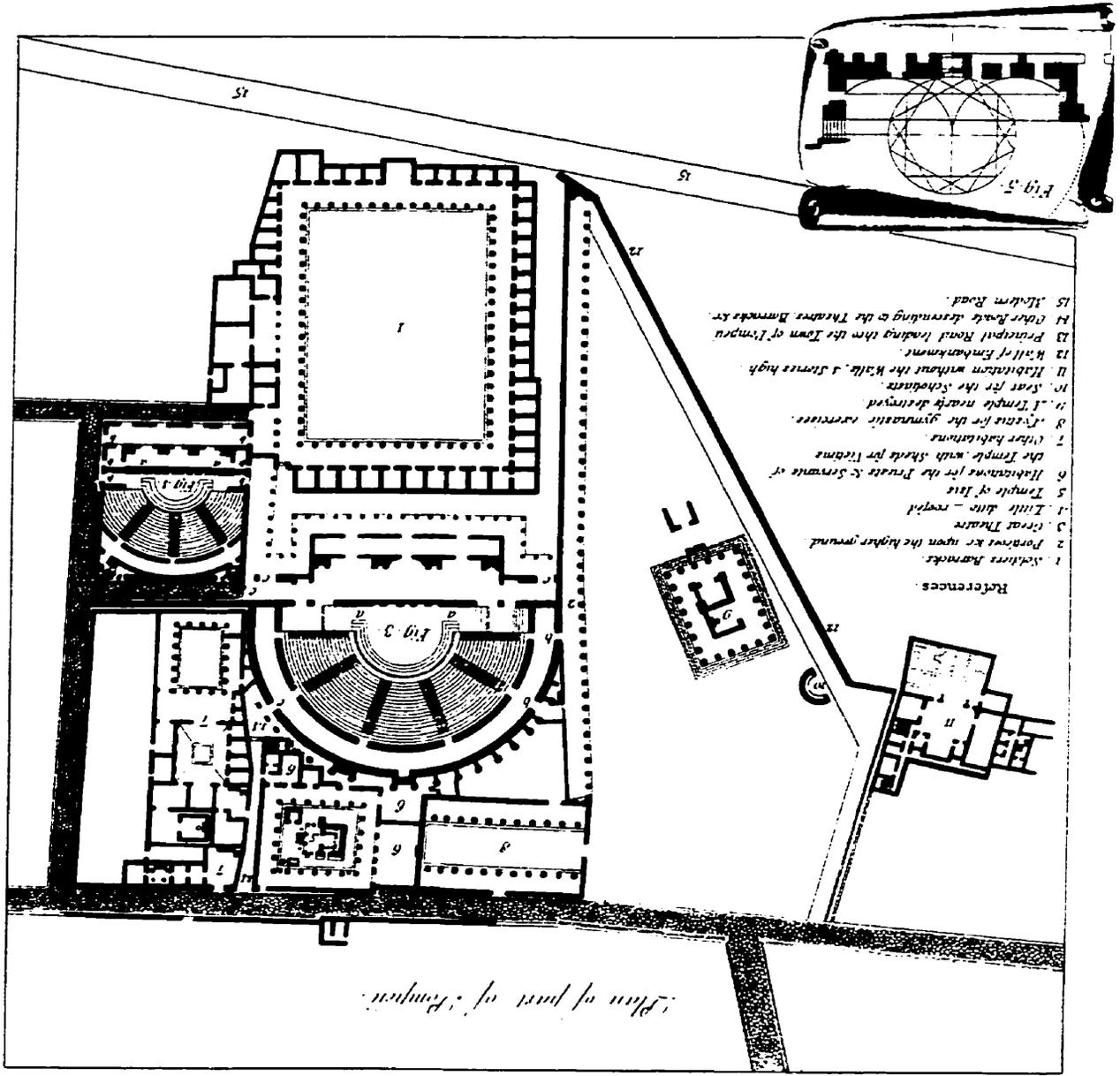


Illustration 15: Theatre of Marcellus, Rome.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate III (partial).

Illustration 16: Partial plan of Pompeii showing the Great and Little (roofed) Theatres. From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate III (partial).



modern theatres are judged. The interior of the ancient theatre, as observed by Milizia, was semi-circular, terminated in one part by a semi-circle and in the other by a straight diameter. In the centre of this enclosure was a piazza, which is what we call the platea or parterre, and what the Greeks called the orchestra, because it was the place for their dances. The Romans continued to call it an orchestra, although it no longer served for dancing but, rather, was used to seat the more distinguished people.

At this point in laying out the first major division of the theatre, the space for representation and spectators, Milizia again breaks down the category by concentrating first on the space for the spectators and then on that for the performance. Around the semi-circle rose a staircase, on which sat the regular spectators. The steps of these auditoriums were not less than twenty nor more than twenty two inches high. Their width was fixed at between two and two and a half feet. In the larger theatres this flight of stairs was interrupted, in proportion to the size of the theatre, by one or two landings called *prescinzioni*. At the top of each staircase there was another landing, inside of which was repeated a portico the same height as the stage. This portico also had steps for the use of the spectators, especially the women. All of the steps and landings of the above-mentioned staircase were laid out in such a way that a line traced from the first to the last step must not touch any of the tops of the corners. The reasoning behind these proportions was that, in this way the voice would not be reflected and could be heard equally well everywhere. The Greeks were advantaged, says Milizia, in being able to locate their theatres on the slope of a hill. This situation was solid and economic, furthermore, they saved on the porticoes, the facades and the supports for the steps and the staircases. But, he says, where one does not have such an



Illustration 17: The Greek theatre at Siracuse, built into the side of a hill.

Reprinted in Giuliana Ricci, *Teatri d'Italia*, p. 34. From Domenico Lo Faso Pietrasanta da Serradifalco, *Antichita di Sicilia*, Palermo: 1842.

advantageous situation, or does not want to use it, as in Rome, it is convenient to place the steps on vaults and corridors. Therefore, to ascend to the seats, there should be different smaller stairs for the internal stairs, each set leading to a landing. These small stairs in turn divide the seats into many sections, which, from their form are called *cunei* (wedges), intended for the differentiation of the levels of society; the magistrates, the cavaliers, the young, and the plebeians. Regarding the orchestra, one enters on ground level corridors called *vomitori*. Finally, the last detail of which Milizia talks, are the formed niches in the steps themselves in which bronze vases are located, or clay figures suitable for the enhancement of voice.

The part of the theatre dedicated to the performance itself, the stage, which Milizia calls '*pulpito*' or '*proscenio*,' is located at the diameter of the semi circle. The height of the stage is fixed at five feet, which allows those seated in the orchestra to view the actors comfortably. Behind the '*proscenio*' at a distance equal to the radius of the semicircle of the orchestra was the *scaenae frons*, which also acted to form the front of the theatre building itself. The length of this structure was equal to the entire diameter of the orchestra. Regarding the scenery, it was, of course, impossible for Milizia to make claims from direct observation. It is obvious, therefore, that, at this point, his study of Vitruvius makes itself apparent.⁵³ Accordingly, the scenery is described as being of three types: tragic, comic, and satiric . The ancients were scrupulous in their representation of place. Tragedy was represented by a royal palace with some temples

⁵³Milizia, in a footnote in his *Trattato*, gives some of the sources of his knowledge of the differences between ancient theatres, especially between those of the Romans and the Greeks. Among others, he acknowledges research spanning from the ancient Pausanias, to Maffei's *Verona Illustrata*.

supported by magnificent columns, frontispieces and statues. The comic form was complemented by a street with common houses. Finally, the satiric, a type of pastoral, included a forest with paths, views of towns, mountains, caves, and similar woodland things.⁵⁴

Regarding the proportions of the set, Milizia indicates that the height of the scaenae frons was relative to the size of the theatre. He makes note that, ordinarily, in large theatres, the set was of three orders, in smaller, two. Milizia also observes the Greco-Roman tradition of placing three doors in the set, with the royal door (*porta reale*), in the centre and the two on the side reserved for the entrance and exit of foreigners. As for set change, Milizia notes the existence of "triangular, versatile machines" at the two sides of the set. On these prisms were scenic representations of streets, squares, or countryside, as would be called for in each genre of performance. In short, Milizia describes the theatres of the ancients as "superb" buildings in which were united both utility and pleasure with a magnificence that transmits, even to posterity, an idea of their magnificence. Thus, when speaking of modern theatres, Milizia's judgements are harshest with regards to the contemporary theatres of Rome itself. He reasons that, because the Romans are surrounded by their proud remains, they should benefit from their proximity. Instead, Milizia categorizes the theatres of Rome as being the worst in Italy:

⁵⁴Vitruvius was quite specific in his delineation of the three kinds of scenes and his rules were to have great influence on set design in the 18th century.

"Tragic scenes are delineated with columns, pediments, statues, and other objects suited to kings; comic scenes exhibit private dwellings, with balconies and views representing rows of windows, after the manner of ordinary dwellings; satyric scenes are decorated with trees, caverns, mountains, and other rustic objects delineated in landscape style." Vitruvius, Book V, Chapter VII, p.150.

È incomprendibile, come Roma moderna abbia saputo sì poco approfittarsi, specialmente nell' Architettura, di tanti suoi tesori antichi, che sono pure i maestri di tutte le nazioni Europee. Ella ha certamente grandi e ricchi edifizii pubblici e privati, e supera in ciò qualunque altra capitale; ma la grandezza e la ricchezza non hanno punto che fare colla bellezza dell'Architettura, e la piccola Vicenza col solo Palladio è incomparabilmente più bella della grandissima Roma, non ostante i suoi Bramanti, San Galli, Buonarrotti, Peruzzi, Vignoli, posti già in oblio per Fontana, Mademi, Bernini, Borromini, seguiti da uno stuolo, che alla Tartara calpesta la bella Architettura Greca-Romana.⁵⁵

Of the major modern theatres of Europe, Milizia has very little good to say: "I Nostri Teatri non soffrono descrizione, che per fari arrossire, e per animarci a correggerli. Da per tutto povertà, difetti, abusi."⁵⁶ In particular, Milizia criticizes the thoughtless geometrical proportions of the interiors which, according to his calculations, allowed for only one-fifth of the audience to see and hear the performance in comfort from the boxes.⁵⁷ In terms of inclusiveness, Milizia's analysis of modern theatres proves much the same in his *Architettura Civile* and in his *Trattato*. Both lay out the same design defects. While the *Architettura Civile* skips directly to a discussion of what Milizia considers to be the three necessary requisites of modern theatre architecture, solidity, utility, and beauty, the *Trattato* provides the reader with a more specific case study of what Milizia believes to be the state of Europe's major theatres.

Wood construction, bad design, misuse of geometrical principles which, in turn create problems of acoustics and vision; these are the common faults of Europe's

⁵⁵ *Trattato*, p.87.

⁵⁶ *Trattato*, p.77.

⁵⁷ Milizia criticizes the boxes on several counts. Their positioning created many angles which dispersed sound and also disrupted sight. The socializing encouraged by such seating also acted to destroy formal theatre. *Trattato*, pp. 90-91.

theatres. From the misery, however, Milizia raises a select group which, constructed of stone, and offering some level of comfort, with attention paid to design details, can be thought to approach the ideal. Among these are the opera houses of Torino, Naples, Bologna, and Berlin, which Milizia describes as being the most sumptuous in all of Europe. Even these, however, sin with regard to their interior shapes, which are irregular and uncomfortable. They also make the most inconvenient use of the boxes (palchetti). In fact, the only modern innovation to theatre of which Milizia approved was the roof, which both covered and embellished the auditorium. The lack of a covering is, in fact, an instance where Milizia is very critical of the ancients who: "piú robusti di noi, non coprivano i loro Teatri. Or la copertura a un teatro semicirolare e quella bocca del palco scenario, largo quanto è il diametro di esso teatro, sono cose ben imbarazzanti."⁵⁸ Even this improvement, however, was not flawless, since it:

also creates unhealthy conditions, as the closed air is filled in little time with a great quantity of animal odours very damaging for their quick corruption; so that within one hour one breathes nothing but human odour: into the lungs is introduced infected air emanating from thousands of chests, and expelled with all the corpuscles often contaminated and foul smelling, that is able to be transported to the insides of many people.⁵⁹

The only modern theatre that Milizia esteems as worthy of being called good is the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. Designed by Andrea Palladio in 1583, the theatre remains true, for the most part, to Vitruvian architectural principles in accommodating both the spectator and the spectacle. "La pianta si rifà a una complessa costruzione

⁵⁸Letter from Milizia to Tommaso Temanza. Roma, 30 Marzo, 1771. From *Lettere di Francesco Milizia a Tommaso Temanza*, p.31.

⁵⁹*Trattato*, p. 89.

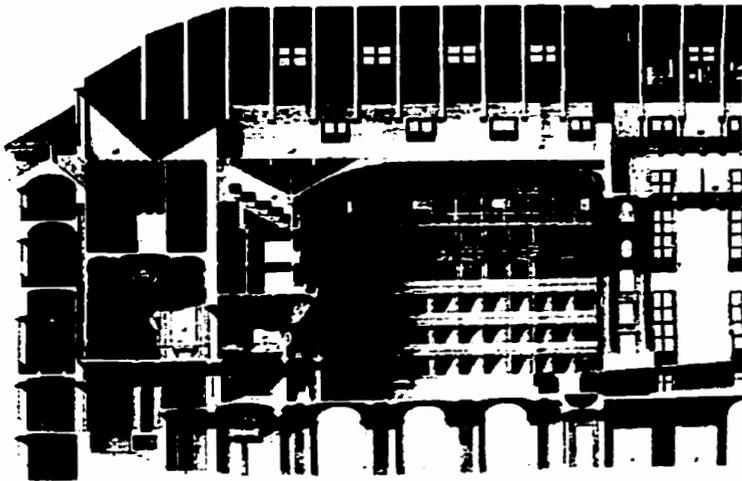
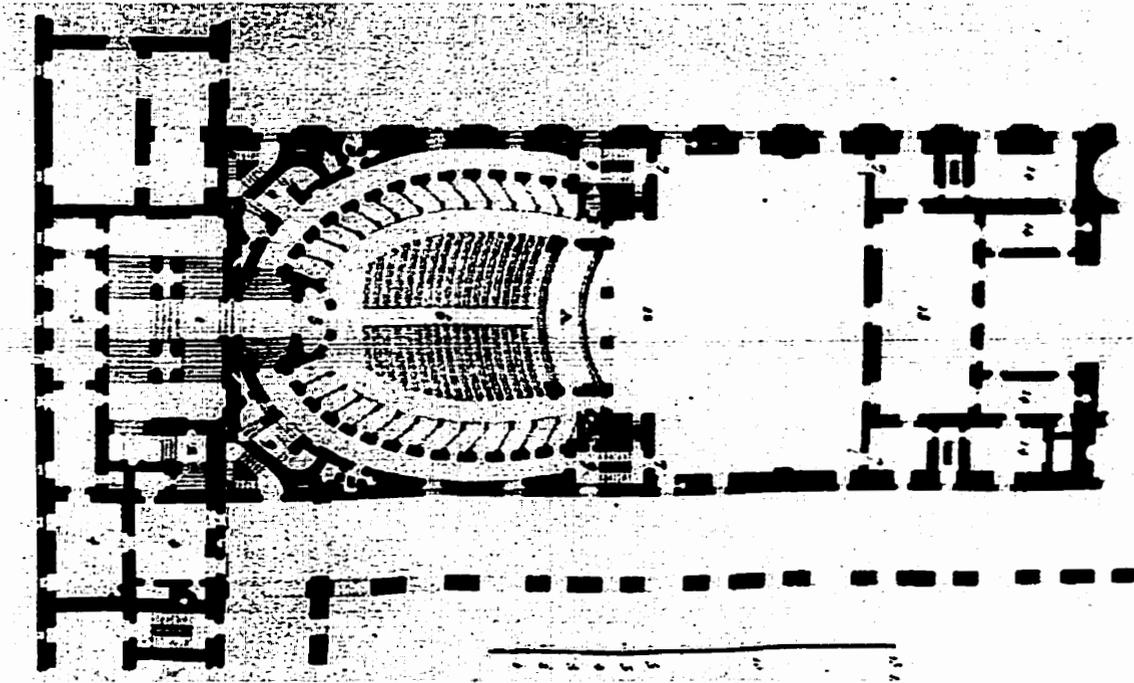


Illustration 18: Teatro Regio, Turin as illustrated in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.

From Simon Tidworth, *Theatres: An Illustrated History*, Plates 73-74, p. 88.

Theatre of San Carlo at Naples.

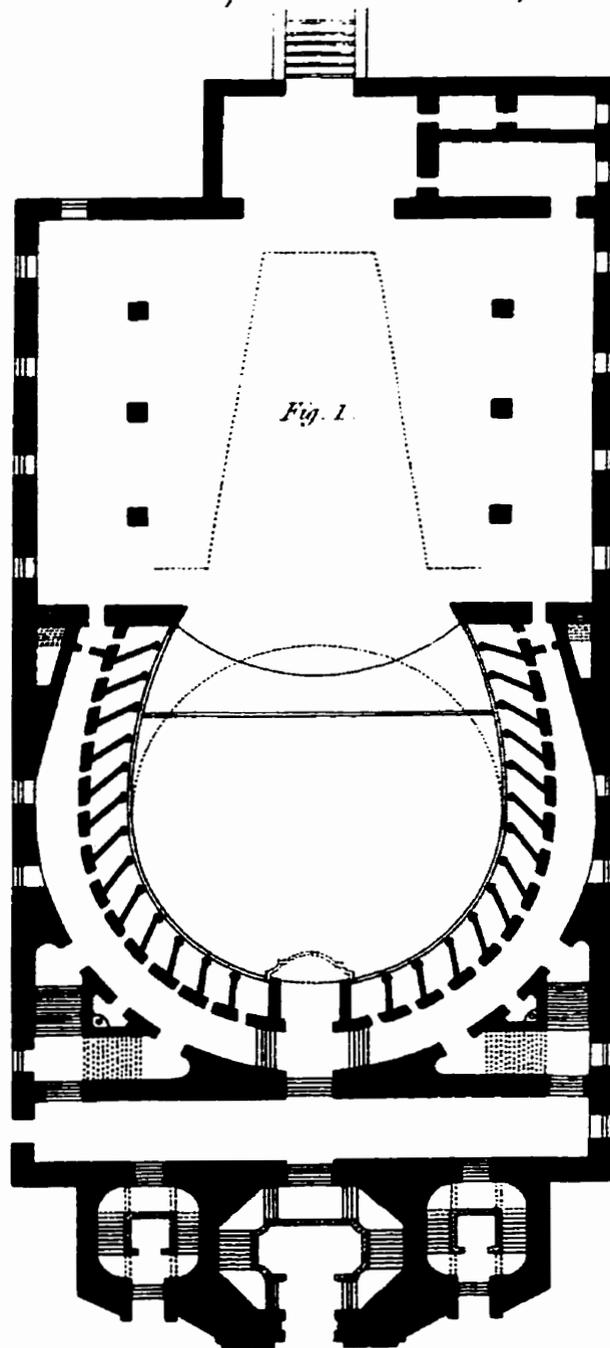


Illustration 19: Plan of the Theatre of San Carlo, Naples.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate VI (partial).

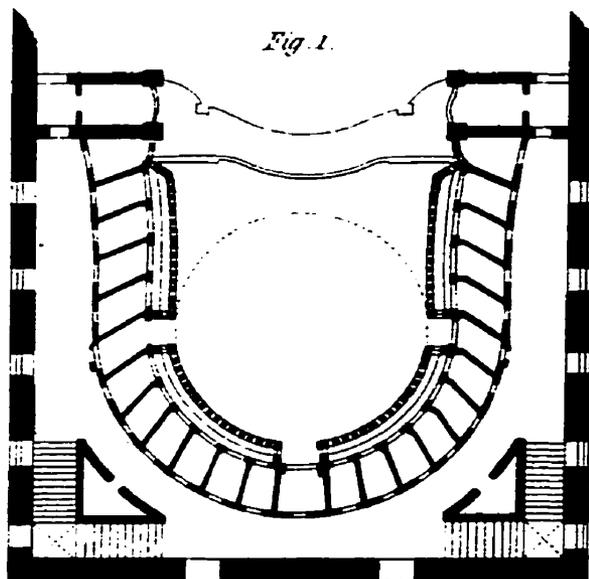
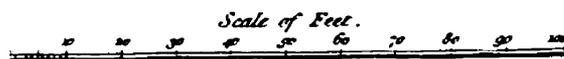
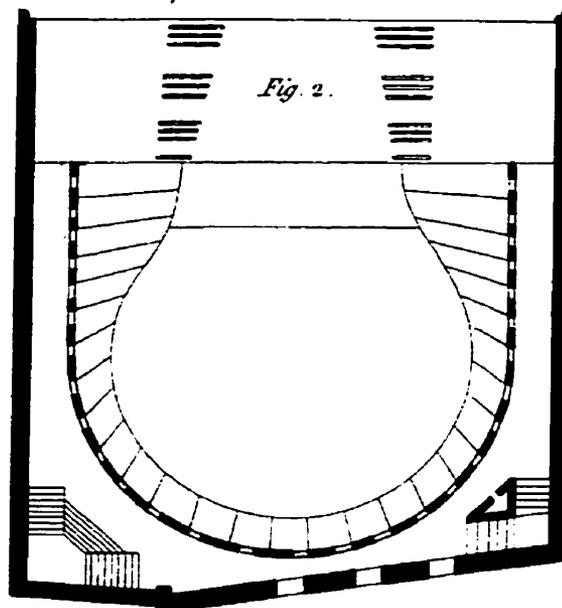
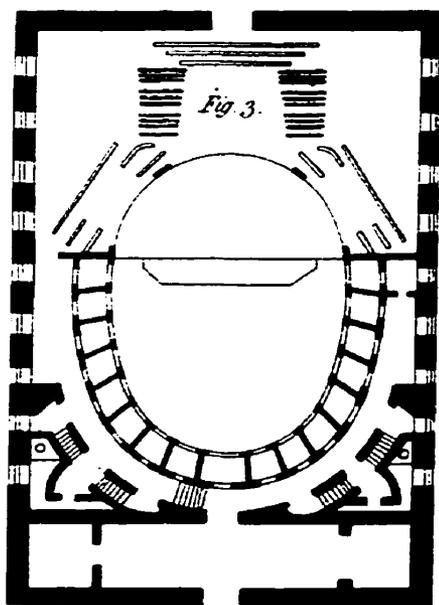
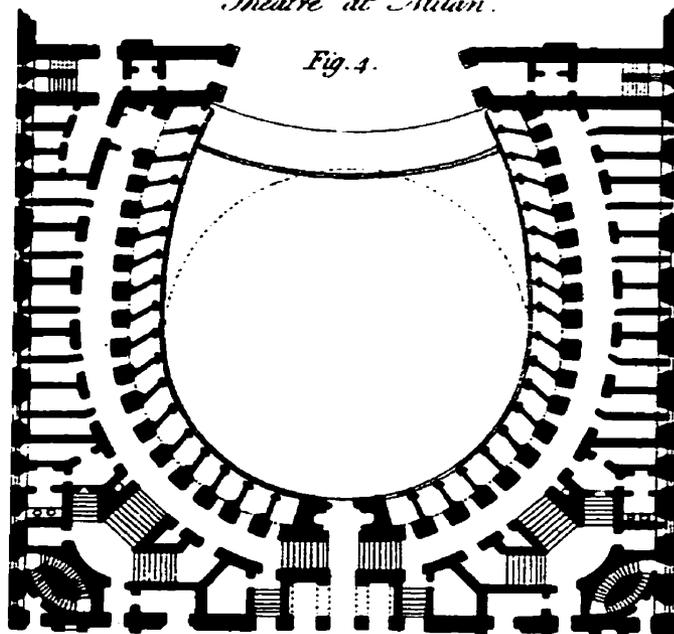
Theatre at Bologna.*Theatre of San Benedetto at Venice.**Theatre at Imola.**Theatre at Milan.*

Illustration 20: Plan of the theatre at Bologna.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate VII.

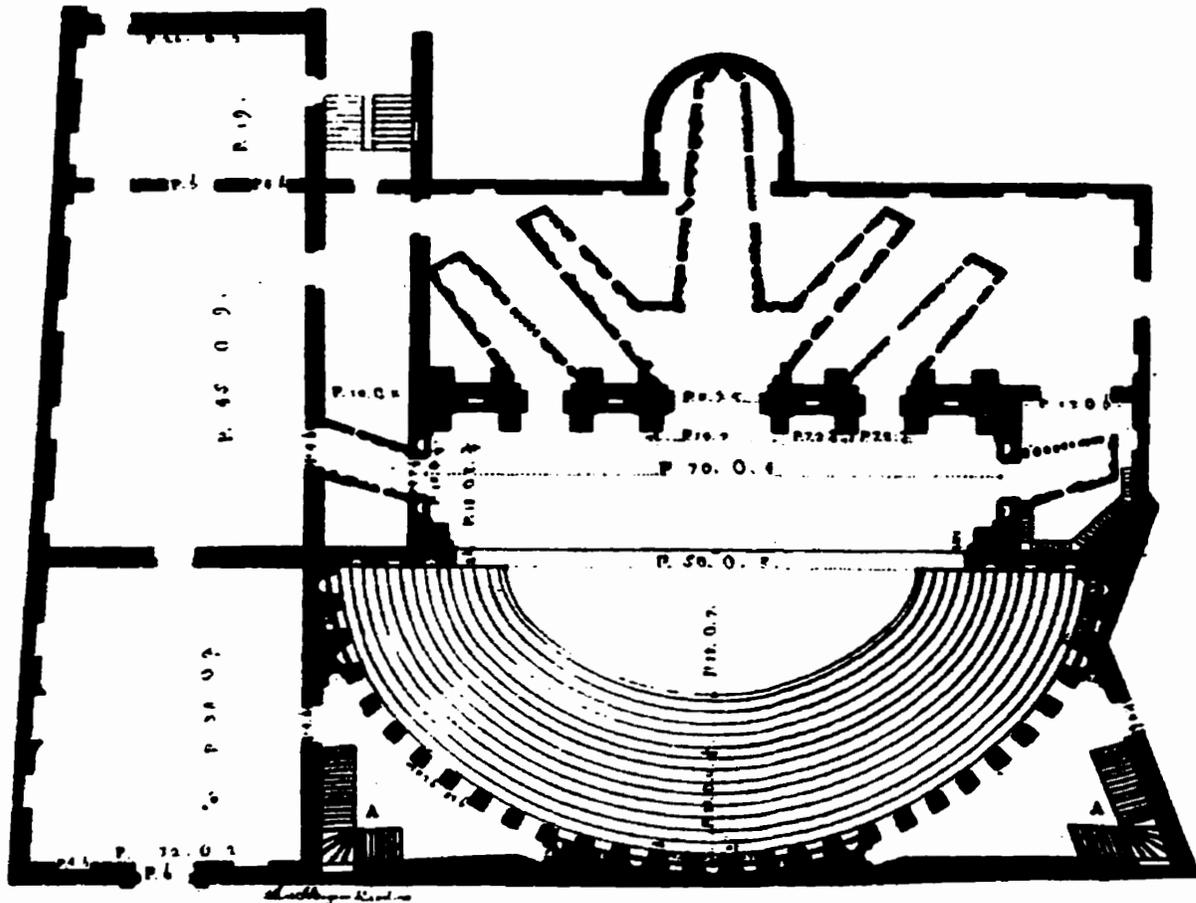


Illustration 21: Plan of the Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza. By Palladio.

Reprinted in Giuliana Ricci, *Teatri d'Italia*, p. 96. From O. Bertotti Scamozzi, *L'origine dell'Accademia Olimpica di Vicenza. Con una breve descrizione del suo teatro*, Vicenza: 1790.

geometrica la cui matrice risale alla riscoperta rinascimentale degli studi classici di Vitruvio."⁶⁰ The shape, Milizia correctly explains, remains the exception to Vitruvian design, being semi-elliptical rather than semi-circular. This difference, however, was unavoidable, given the irregularity in narrowness of the selected site. The variance, therefore, is through no fault of Palladio's.

The semi-ellipse of the auditorium is encircled by banked seating on fourteen levels, constructed of wood, for the spectators, interrupted neither by little stairways nor by vomitories. For sight and acoustics, Milizia prefers this configuration to the box system found in other modern theatres. The greatest diameter of this sweep is ninety-seven and a half Parisian feet; the smallest, ending at the *scena*, is, according to Milizia's calculations, about fifty-seven and a half. At the top of the seating runs a loggia of Corinthian columns which, because of the narrowness of the site, were not allowed to be everywhere isolated. To compensate for this, Palladio took advantage of previous practice by locating statues in niches in the middle and at the extremes of the banking. In addition to this, the entire loggia is crowned by a balustrade that is itself enriched with statues.

The *scena* is constructed of stone in the style of the three orders. The first two orders are Corinthian, highly irregular, according to ancient practice, and something that Milizia cannot account for. The third order is Attic. Each level is ornamented with what Milizia terms "varietà e . . . ricchezza."⁶¹ The permanent set includes three frontal exits

⁶⁰ Guaita, *I teatri storici in Italia*, p.39.

⁶¹ *Trattato*, p. 79.

and two on the sides; each one with internal views, laid out, as we know, according to the laws of perspective. Therefore, from the extreme ends of the seating, the complete set cannot be seen. In total, Milizia believed the Teatro Olimpico to have been ingeniously designed, with one qualification: the building lacked convenient exterior decoration. Giving a defense even to this defect, however, Milizia again supports the ideal of a centralized, enlightened ruler with the power to support the arts. The flaws in the building, therefore, must be forgiven since it was constructed "non a spese del Senato, o degl'Imperadori Romani, ma di alcuni Cavalieri Vicentini dell'Accademia Olimpica."⁶²

The theatres of the city of Venice, though numerous, and opulent, were never capable of true greatness, being erected "above the ashes of burnt down houses" by patrician families. Thus, rather than being well planned, or erected as part of a responsible urbanization, the theatres were constructed cheaply "between houses, and streets that are the most abject and narrow in the city." Far from contributing to the beautification of the built environment, these theatres restricted their magnificence to their interiors. Although precedence had been set in Venice by a long-standing record of excellence in spectacle and pomp, and even though the city supported such acclaimed acting companies as the Accasi, Sempiterni and the Calza, at present, the condition of theatres in that city is no better than in many her inferior. The sixteenth century had seen an exemplary theatre built in Canareggio by the architect Sansovino, and one built at the Carità, for the Calza company, by the great Palladio himself. These

⁶²*Trattato*, p. 79.

theatres, however, were built to be temporary, and their memory did nothing to remind modern theatre designers that the ideal shape for a theatre should be semi-circular. Even the great theatre of Saint John Cristosomo, celebrated throughout Europe for its musical dramas, had, in Milizia's eyes, lost esteem due to the restructuring of the auditorium to accommodate greater numbers of spectators, so that greater revenue could be generated. As a result, three boxes were added to each level at the sides of the proscenium, thereby lengthening the theatre and destroying the proportions that had created its reputation.

The other six theatres in the city are assessed by Milizia as having the same defect. With the passing of the years, the number of boxes had augmented to a crescendo. The need, therefore, to generate greater income, originally altering the designs of previously well-proportioned theatres, had become a fixed design consideration which, with regards to acoustics and sight lines, was seriously flawed. The most recent example, in Venice, could be found in the newly constructed theatre of San Benedetto, the most famous in Goldoni's time, which, while well decorated in the interior is, in its shape, not better than the others. Thus, Milizia sums up his analysis of Venetian theatres with the sad conclusion: "Così Venezia, che fu la prima delle città di Europa, ch' ebbe i bei Teatri sulla foggia degli antichi, e che in ciò fu forse la maestra delle altre nazioni, oggidì è alla stessa condizione di tante altre città a lei di gran lunga inferiori."⁶³

⁶³*Trattato*, p. 78.

Of the other major Italian theatres, Milizia mentions, in order of importance: the Farnese Theatre in Parma, the theatres of Milano, Fano, and Verona, the theatres of Rome, with particular emphasis on the Tordinona and the Argentina, the Royal Theatres of Naples and Torino, and, finally, the Teatro Comunale of Bologna. Of the theatres of France, Milizia refers to that of Lyons,⁶⁴ designed by Soufflot in 1756, the one in Montpellier, the rebuilt Paris Opera House, and the court theatre at Versailles. England has only two worth mentioning, both in London: the theatre of the Opera, and the Covent Garden Theatre. Finally, Milizia talks of the theatre in the Imperial Palace in St. Petersburg.

The Farnese Theatre, which Milizia misattributes as being designed by Gio. Battista Magnani, was undeniably famous. Among its virtues is its great size and its shape, which is semi-circular "cui infelicemente si congiungono due lati retti."⁶⁵ The seating area is well-proportioned, with a raised balustraded stairway of fourteen banks. These seats are well serviced by two entrances, one on each side, with a grand ducal box which is in turn equipped with two access stairways. Above this initial banking of seats rise two majestic loggias, one Doric, the other Ionic, each equipped with a further seating area of four steps. Architectural disharmony disrupts the simple elegance of the classical proportions, according to Milizia, when the architect added arches to the areas between the columns, supported by other, minor columns which "rende

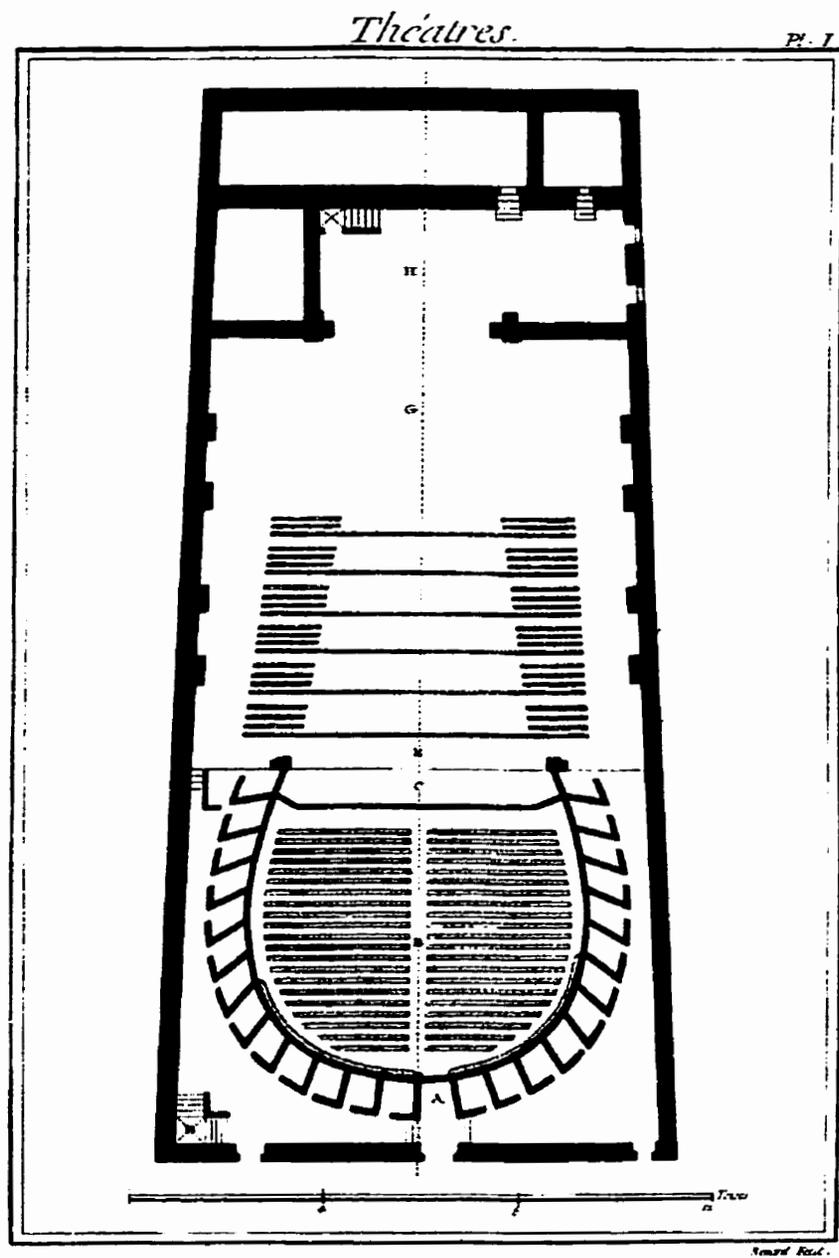
⁶⁴It is obvious that Milizia used Diderot's *Encyclopédie* as a design source precisely because of his heavy emphasis of the Teatro Regio in Turin and Soufflot's Theatre of Lyon. Both of these theatres are well represented by the engravings in that source. See *Theatre Architecture and Stage Machines: Engravings from the Encyclopédie*.

⁶⁵*Trattato*, p. 79.



Illustration 22: Farnese Theatre of Parma.

From Gianni Capelli, *The Farnese Theatre of Parma: Architecture, Scenes, Performances*, p.18.



Salles de Spectacles, Plan du Théâtre de Tordinone à Rome

Illustration 23: Plan of the Theatre of Tordinone, Rome.

From Dennis Diderot and Jean Le Rond D'Alembert (Eds.), *Theatre Architecture and Stage Machines: Engravings from the Encycloèdie*, p. 16.

Theatre of Argentino at Rome.

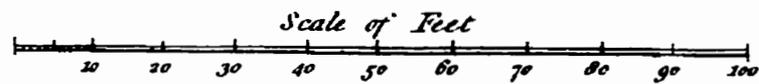
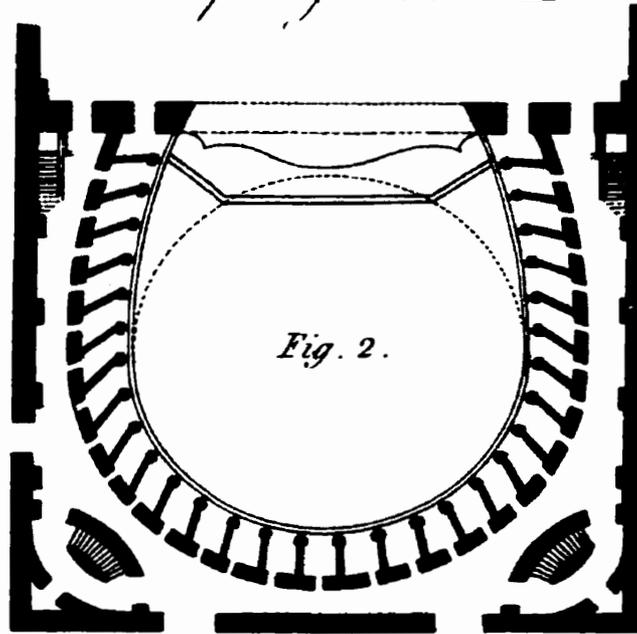


Illustration 24: Plan of the Argentina Theatre, Rome.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate VI (partial).

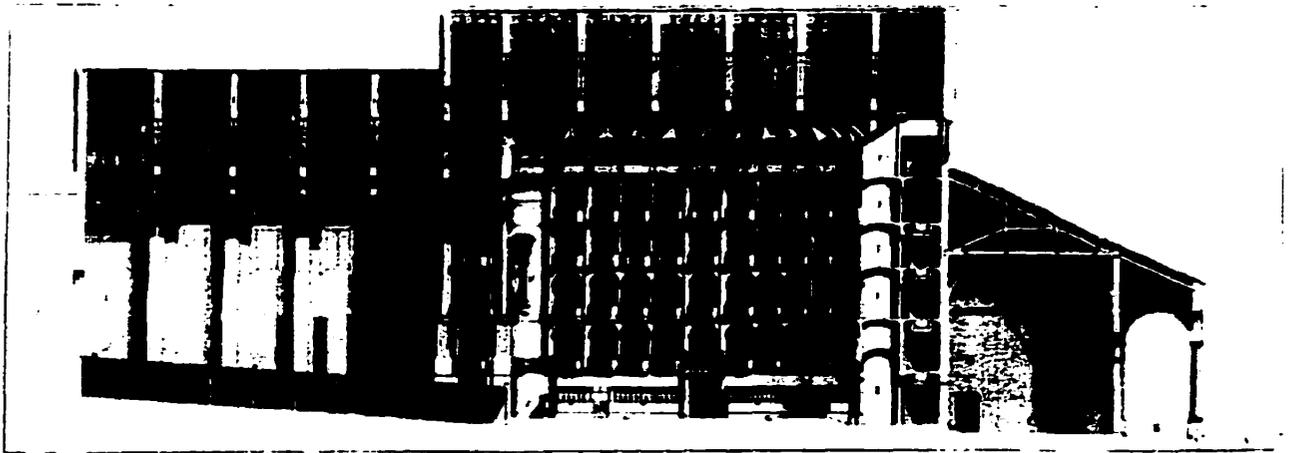


Illustration 25: Sectional drawing of the Teatro Comunale, Bologna.

Reprinted in Giuliana Ricci, *Teatri d'Italia*, p. 176. From Longhi, *Pianta, e spaccato del nuovo Teatro di Bologna*, Bologna: 1763.

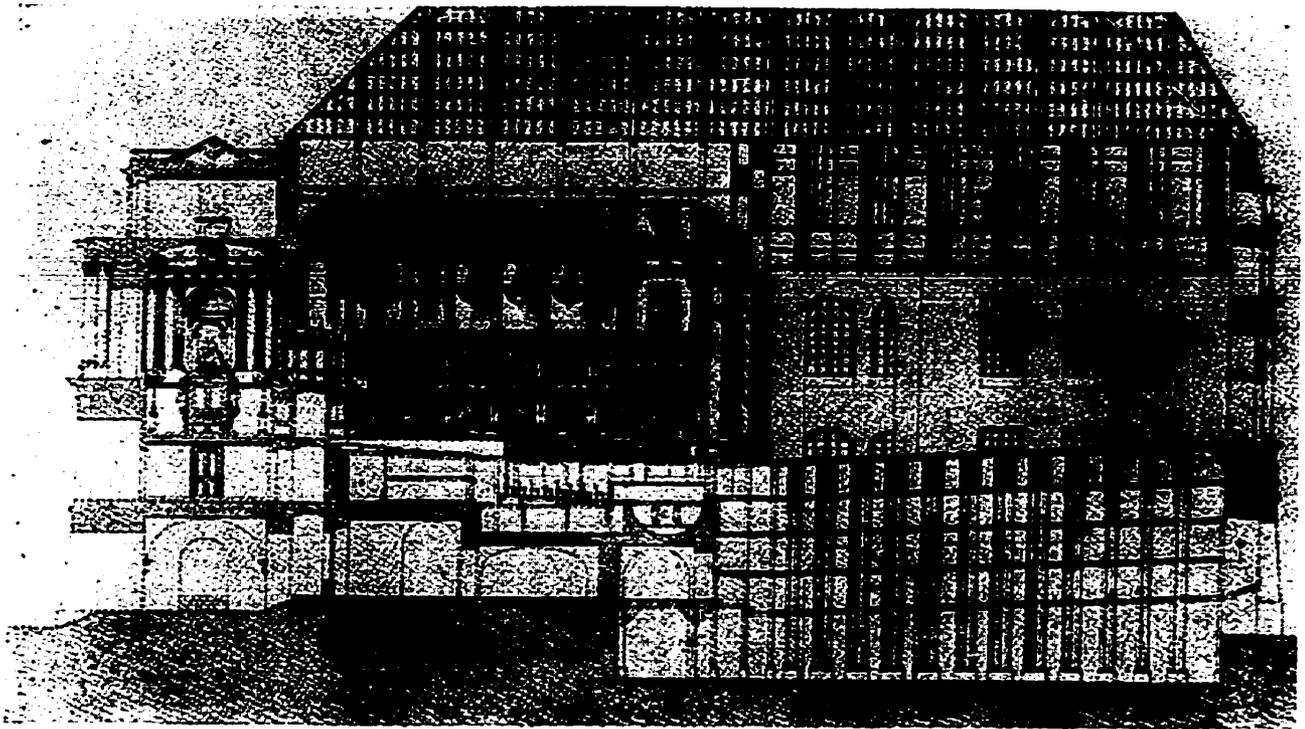


Illustration 26: Sectional drawing of the Court Theatre at Versailles.

From *Theatre Arts Prints*.

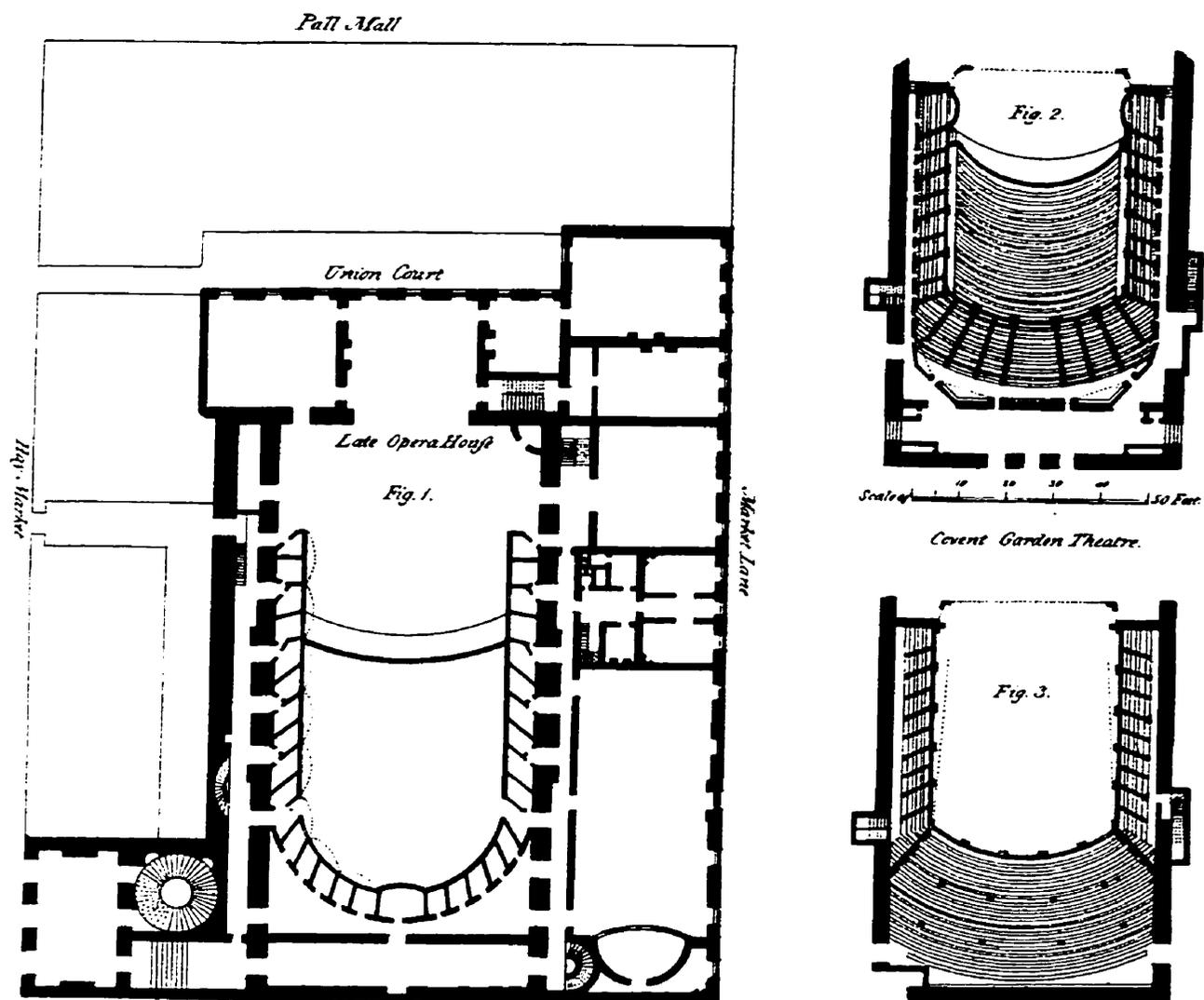


Illustration 27: Plans of Covent Gardens Theatre, London.

From George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres*, Plate X.

confusione all'architettura, ed impedimento alla vista degli spettatori che sono dentro esse loge."⁶⁶

Worse effect is produced by the two large side entrances, between the seating and the proscenium because of the orders with which they are ornamented. The result is a repugnant clash both with the proscenium and with the theatre. Above these entrances can be found pedestals on which are placed equestrian statues, another blow to responsible ornamentation, offending both orchestra and proscenium. But the greatest design flaw in the theatre can be found in what Milizia calls the "bocca del palco scenario," excessively narrow, and much too far from the audience. With some renovations the stage could be enlarged and made to extend closer to the spectators but, regarding the shape, the spectators sitting on the sides stand little hope of seeing more than a small part of the scenery. The spatial configuration is also maladapted to acoustics for, as Milizia notes: "la struttura, sia per artificio o per caso, è tale, che parlando sotto voce da una parte, l'altro situato nella parte opposta sente distintamente."⁶⁷

Finishing his separate analyses of theatres modern and ancient, Milizia, in both the *Trattato* and *Principles of Civil Architecture*, compares the two periods and devises a list of the principal requirements of a theatre based on the successes of the one and the failures of the other. The first of these requirements is solidity of construction, basic to the safety of the spectators. Because wood easily rots and starts on fire, Milizia opts

⁶⁶ *Trattato*, p. 79.

⁶⁷ *Trattato*, p. 80.



Illustration 28: Equestrian Statue at the Farnese Theatre, Parma.

From Gianni Capelli, *The Farnese Theatre of Parma: Architecture, Scenes, Performances*, p. 26.

for buildings in stone. Secondly, comfort should be considered in both accommodating and welcoming the spectator. Milizia demonstrates his interest in urban planning by identifying the theatre as an important nodal point in the classically planned city. The building, according to this reasoning, should be centrally situated for greater access, and, ideally, located on a piazza where carriage traffic could be accommodated with greater ease. Real comfort in the theatre, however, consists of the placement of the spectator in a position from which they can see and hear the performance. In this regard, the semi-circular form of theatre, as devised by the ancients, had never been bettered by the moderns. As a suggestion for the reform of the theatrical space, this reversion to tested classical proportions was both beautifully and essentially simple as well as democratic in its facilitation of a more equalized experience for the entire audience. As conditions stood in Italy, such a democratization was not even approximated in the major theatres. In the Pergola Theatre, built in Florence in 1755, for example, there were about fifteen gambling rooms preceding the hall which could be accessed from the boxes.⁶⁸ The boxes in most Italian opera houses were shuttered, further enforcing the distinction between the spectators occupying them, and those in the pit. In practice, however, the shutters were seldom closed since ostentation was exercised by the occupants. "Young men of wealth could flaunt their mistresses and members of the aristocracy could see what other people of their social position were present and decide which boxes to visit during the evening."⁶⁹ The spectators in the

⁶⁸Vaussard, p.160.

⁶⁹Carlson, *The Italian Stage*, p. 5.

parterre were of a different breed entirely. This space was reserved for the more common classes who exhibited an earnest, although noisy attention to the play being presented. An amusing commentary on this group, in Venetian theatres used by Goldoni, is presented by Marvin Carlson in *The Italian Stage*:

Wooden benches were provided for them in the fore part of the theatre and an occasional guard appeared if they became too boisterous, but the pit remained nevertheless in constant movement and commotion. The benches were insufficient for the crowd, and directly in front of them an empty space was provided for 'women suffering from an incontinence of urine,' hardly encouraging audience members to come close to the stage. Further back, they were subjected to the spitting and the dropping of orange peels, candle ends and other debris from the boxes, so it is little wonder that they remained in constant turmoil.⁷⁰

The third requirement of theatre is that the decoration be appropriate to the nature of the building. Beauty could be created through the application of the classical orders in a tasteful manner. For Milizia, it is an embarrassment to talk about the facades of modern theatres. The practice of his day, which he abhorred, was to compensate for the austerity of the exterior by the extravagance of the interior. The facade, rather, should immediately announce the function of the interior.

Solidity

Solidity is neglected but, in every building that is crowded and where the incidence of fire is familiar, it is essential to ensure the safety of the people. For this reason Milizia advocates the use of stone as a primary building material. "After thousands of years the ancient theatres will still exist whole if our neglect and greed

⁷⁰Carlson, p.5.

does not succeed in destroying or disfiguring them. In making them of stone they are made eternal, although little to nothing has the fear of catching fire, because all was operated by the light of the sun."⁷¹ Modern theatres, however, are operated using torches and, for a better display, live fires are lit using combustible materials of wood and fabric. The resulting fumes are identified by Milizia as a health hazard for the spectators, when breathed in during performances. Summing up, regarding solidity, Milizia criticizes modern theatres as fire traps which, even if escaping fire, will live no longer than fifty years.

Convenience

If, Milizia postulates, the theatre is created for the pleasurable instruction of the public, it is clear that it must be situated in a place and in a style that is most convenient for the access of the citizens. Therefore, it desires to be in the centre of the city. As evidence of the importance of the theatre as an urban nodal point, Milizia observes that the Colosseum, as well as the theatres of Pompey and Marcellus, were not in remote corners of Rome. In modern Europe, where a multitude of carriages were used to transport spectators to the theatre, certain conveniences were necessary to the accommodation of this spectacle. Apart from central locations, Milizia extends the sphere of the theatrical experience to streets that are wide enough to accommodate carriages full of spectators and porticoed piazzas which, like the porticoes of the ancient theatres, would be able to offer shelter and security to those who walked.

⁷¹*Architettura Civile*, p.372.

Access routes to the theatre must also be duplicated by convenient access points into the theatre so that the building could be filled and emptied with expediency. Here again Milizia turns to the ancient theatre to provide the example. "A look at the ancient type, furnished with many doors, with passages (vomitorii) and stairs, would make us recognize the embarrassment that is suffered in the access to our modern theatres."⁷²

Real theatrical convenience, however, the issue that forms the base of Milizia's proposed reform, consists of a situation where one can see and hear equally well. Here, the paradigm is unequivocally found in the more democratic auditorium design of the classic theatre.

The constant semicircular figure in all ancient theatres, and the interior, stepped from top to bottom, was of the most admirable simplicity so that everyone was comfortably disposed to see and hear equally well. In this manner each person was able to see everything, and everything was seen by everyone.⁷³

In modern theatres, however, the different and strange forms of the auditorium, and especially the absurd use of the boxes (palchetti), stacked one on top of the other, allow "little to be heard, less to be seen, and no comfort in their arrangement."⁷⁴ This situation is, in many theatres, brought to such excess, that the stage is drawn forward into the orchestra, in order to diminish the inconvenience of hearing too little. The result is that, from many boxes, the actors can be seen only from the back.

⁷² *Architettura Civile*, p.372.

⁷³ *Architettura Civile*, p.372.

⁷⁴ *Architettura Civile*, p.372.

Beauty

Beauty, at the present time, something that should go hand in hand with convenience, is, according to Milizia, lacking in modern theatres. The Theatre of Marcellus, on the contrary, even though it was a small theatre, had a beauty of order and nobility that made its character easily evident from the exterior, and made it possible to have an idea of the sumptuousness of the interior. Modern theatres, on the other hand, if not labelled as such, would be unidentifiable for what they are. "Worse, the entrance, the stairs, the corridors seem to lead, not to a place of noble recreation, but to a prison, and a brothel."⁷⁵ This meagreness with regard to external design was, as pointed out by Milizia, thought to be compensated for by an opulence exhibited in the interior. The artificiality of the painted, gilded interior, with sculptural copies in crystal and wax, though providing enchantment for the eye, are condemned by Milizia as being childish delights when compared to the solid decorations of the ancients. The porticoes ornamented with columns and statuary, the marble steps, separated by landings and alternatively divided in the shape of wedges, these, Milizia speculates, must have created a grand effect, especially when the theatre was full of spectators, who themselves formed another part of the spectacle. "Our boxes," he compares, "do not display but chaos and half figures."⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Architettura Civile*, p. 373.

⁷⁶ *Arch. Civile*, p. 373.

The Boxes and Their Negative Effects

Regarding the box system, in use since the first Venetian opera houses were built, Milizia speaks out with sarcasm in an attempt to ridicule both the design flaws of the device, as well as the bad socializing effect that it has on its occupants:

having noble comfort and freedom for movement, staying still, leaning forward, withdrawing, hiding, and doing whatever one wants, as if one was in their own toilet feeling at ease to enjoy the theatre, and at the same time to enjoy a particular conversation, that is continually repeated. Admirable, applaudable invention!⁷⁷

His arguments are shared by many, but with notable counterarguments proposed later by the influential French architect Pierre Patte, in his *Essai sur l'architecture théâtrale* (1782), who argues for the economic benefits of the box system: ". . . c'est la location des loges à l'année qui produit le revenu le plus assuré des Théâtres permanents dans les grandes villes; et peut-etre se soutiendroient--ils difficilement sans leur secours."⁷⁸ The boxes, to Milizia, however, are both creator of and symptomatic for all the problems of modern theatre. He systematically numbers these problems as five.

Problem One: Sound

The boxes, defined by Milizia as a "multiplicity of holes and partitions," cut the sound of the "sonorous aria" in a thousand ways reverberating it in various directions and thereby weakening and confusing the acoustical quality. The essential defect created is a poorness in sound. The ancients in their large stone theatres, of course, as

⁷⁷ *Trattato*, p. 89.

⁷⁸ Pierre Patte, *Essai sur l'architecture théâtrale*, pp. 165-166.

outlined by Milizia, used two methods to enhance sound quality: bronze vases situated in various locations on the theatre steps, and the stylized masks for the actors, the mouths of which acted as megaphones which increased the carrying capacity of the voice.⁷⁹ "Our theatres," writes Milizia, are "much smaller; they are covered; they are constructed of wood, a material better adapted to carry sound . . . and meanwhile result in such poor sound."⁸⁰ The irregularity of the shape is cited as a reason, but Milizia places the bulk of the blame on the numerous apertures of the boxes, which create many angles in the interior.

Problem Two: Sight

According to Milizia, it requires no proof as to the visual impediment created by the box system. He proposes the simple solution of removing the side partitions up to half of their height or, simply, removing them completely. The effect would be excellent, "especially in the higher levels, from where the stage is viewed in the poorest manner."⁸¹

⁷⁹Until the late nineteenth century . . . little was understood about the principles of room acoustics. Acoustic successes, when they occurred, were due to a combination of intuition, experience, and luck, both in overall planning and in the use of construction materials. For instance, architects advocated to good effect, but without understanding the scientific principles involved, that theatres and opera houses should be lined with thin wood panelling, which absorbs the boomy medium - to lower - frequency sound so as not to mask the detail of both the elaborate aria and the recitativo secco. Forsyth, *Buildings for Music*, p.13.

⁸⁰*Trattato*, p. 90.

⁸¹*Trattato*, p. 90.

Problem Three: Harmonic Disproportion

The architectural decoration of the interior is affected by the interference of the boxes. The majestic orders, as observed by Vitruvius, when adapted to the support of small and numerous boxes becomes ridiculous. The result is a "pygmy version more ridiculous than what can still be seen in Rome in the barbaric cloisters of St. John Lateran, St. Paul, or St. Sabina."⁸² Apart from the visual irregularity, the interruption of projection of capitals and cornices creates a fractioning quality that disperses the voice.

Problem Four: Minimization of Socializing Quality

According to Milizia, one of the greatest advantages of public theatres is giving the spectator an opportunity to interact, in public, on a higher social level:

In one's own home, and amongst one's family, each person unbridles their passions, but people begin to restrain themselves when the number and quality of onlookers around them increase; in order that each person shows himself in public with the image of moderation and civility, which in private they don't demonstrate, and they force themselves to behave in the way they really should behave. Therefore, outside of the home, and in company, they show off those magnificent clothes and those smart things which usually in their homes, they don't wear. As are the clothes of the bedroom to formal wear, so is the internal morality to the external. Now, this beautiful exterior demeanour is very useful to society, and to individuals could penetrate to the interior of the soul if such occasions to interact in public are multiplied. By force of habit, apparent goodwill and courtesy could convert them truly and really.⁸³

If this didactic socializing function is, as Milizia claims, one of the prime benefits of theatre, then, as he justly argues, the separation and concealment of one party from the other robs the theatre of this potential advantage.

⁸² *Trattato*, p. 90.

⁸³ *Trattato*, p. 91.

Problem Five: Negative Influence on the Dramatic Event

The entire ruin of formal theatre is ascribed by Milizia to the freedom of the uncultured spectator to move from box to box in pursuit of conversation. It is this convenience, primarily, on which he blames the demise of good tragedy, comedy, and musical theatre. Good drama requires attention to follow it from beginning to end and it is here that the box creates confusion since it offers the user the possibility of using the device as a kind of peephole from which to observe the different loggias. In fact, Milizia postulates that the boredom of bad drama produced the active life of the boxes but, conversely, the existence of the boxes has increased the absurdity of the drama and created a situation in which the drama itself is no longer the pretext to go to the theatre. "Therefore, to destroy the boxes would be the most commendable end for the most noble of spectacles, or else they convert it into a bundle of nonsense, and deface the theatre itself."⁸⁴

The Idea of a New Theatre

The design of an entire recreational complex (see Appendix, Table I), concocted by Milizia together with his cohort, Mr. Vincenzo Ferrarese, has been chronicled in several books dedicated to the architecture of the eighteenth century. This design was meant to borrow the best from the ancients and apply it to the needs of a modern society. With this in mind, Milizia and Ferrarese set out to correct the defects of modern

⁸⁴Milizia, *Trattato*. . . , p.91.

theatre by an application of the principles of the classic.⁸⁵ In this scheme, Milizia observes the general geometric configuration of the ancients with an internal circle where half is dedicated to the spectators and the other half to the stage itself. The theatre was designed to accommodate five thousand spectators; all seated comfortably and with the ability to see and hear with equal comfort.

Regarding materials, a solid stone structure is required which is to be overlaid, as much as possible, with wood. The entire theatre, therefore, is planned to be covered by a false vault made of wood so that the sound will be more resonant.

The seats are distributed so that all can see comfortably over wooden seats placed on steps half a foot high. This is an innovation over ancient theatres such as the one discovered at Herculaneum, and over interpretations of Vitruvian principles which would, by placing two walls at the end of the steps contiguous with the stage, have impeded the view of the stage for a large number of spectators seated in that part of the steps. As the steps, in ancient theatres, formed a great mass, to the detriment of acoustics, Milizia proposes constructing a continuous ramped vault under this mass, with openings corresponding to certain shafts under the vault, at the wall at the lower

⁸⁵There was some question as to who actually designed the ideal theatre. Milizia, in a letter to Temanza, takes full credit; claiming that Ferrari was his student rather than collaborator:

"... E chi mai le ha detto che l'autore dell'idea del teatro sia Vincenzo Ferrari, scolari del Pozzo? Quella idea, qualunque si sia, è mia, e la ho fatto eseguire da un giovane, che si chiama Vincenzo Ferrarese, il quale è da molti e molti anni che vive con me e non ha avuto altro maestro che i Monumenti antichi, Vitruvio e Palladio, su i quali mi sono ingegnato di dirigerlo alla meglio che ho saputo . . ."

Roma, 18 Aprile, 1772.

Lettere di Francesco Milizia a Tommaso Temanza, p.45.

springing point of the vault. If all the interior steps of the theatre are then covered in wood, the whole will be rendered sonorous without producing an echo.

With regard to the architectural orders represented on the stage, Milizia chooses simplicity, with only one order, in the guise of a triumphal arch.(Appendix, Table V) The entablature and base of the order recurs inside, all over the theatre, and the spring of the great half-arch recurs as well, making a division of the minor orders that are located in the loggias and in the niches of the stage.(See Appendix,table IV) Through the three doors, or arches, of the stage can be presented mobile scenery (Appendix, table II) that varies according to the requirements of the drama.

The stage facade traditionally expresses in its design the ability to support the weight of the roof. But, as in this case, if it is desired to construct from wood, then it would be possible to remove the intercolumnations of the small order at the entrances and thus acquire greater space to exhibit the mobile scenery. The management of this scenery is meant to be simple and fast, using a system of wheels or counterweights, with each machine either travelling in a line up and down, or sliding quickly onto the stage. "Why," Milizia asks, "employ a multitude of men to do with danger that which can be done easily, securely and readily by few?"⁸⁶

Finally, anticipating an attack over the fact that, in his theatre, not all the spectators can see each other, Milizia offers a defence. Even though those in the loggias cannot see the crowd above them, the majority can see each other. Most

⁸⁶*Trattato*, p. 94.

importantly, however, all can see the stage, which should be the principle objective for one who goes to the theatre.

Milizia thus offers a clear program for the reform of theatre as a physical space that would return it to a more purposeful use in society. Borrowing from the same functionalist argument as Algarotti, he demonstrates himself as a fully committed practitioner of the reforms that he preaches. Thus, as one of the great Architect-Poets of the eighteenth century he acts to complement the contribution of Algarotti who left us a small collection of libretti in his theatrical treatise. Here, Milizia offers us a set of plans. But he too appreciated fully the poetic and practical requirements of theatre-in-practice which allow us to identify him as a theorist of the total event.

CHAPTER IV

Milizia and Dramatic Theory

Milizia's exposition of theatre was incomplete without a clear idea of the function of this structure in society. He had already included the theatre as one of the public buildings, necessary to the functioning of a healthy urban environment, in his study *The Principles of Civic Architecture*. In so doing, he adhered to Vitruvius' classifications regarding what constituted an important building. His *Treatise on Theatre* was an extension of that study which concentrated on this one community event and the building that housed it. Thus, his interest in theatre as a moral event was dictated by his involvement in the rediscovery of classical democratic principles encoded in the layout of Greek and Roman theatre structures. Theatres were built so that performance could take place. The design of the building itself, therefore, should be guided by considerations of how best to accommodate the activity therein taking place. To do so, Milizia realized, it would be necessary to study the drama, a human creation, to reveal the nature of its relationship to society; its function, so to speak. If the primary function of the whole could be determined, just so could the independent contributions of each of the constituent parts of the drama be re-assessed in light of their effect on the final product. Thus, his rationale follows that of Algarotti with regard to their common method of envisioning and addressing the problems at hand.

With regard to his body of work devoted to the dramatic element of theatre, Milizia is less prolific than in architecture, and certainly less well known. It is as an

architect that we primarily consider Milizia. As an architect he rose to fame, especially due to his *Principi* which “form the major theoretical basis of Italian Neo-classicism.”¹ In dealing with dramatic theory, one work, published under several titles, stands out: *Del Teatro*. Given that Milizia has been considered primarily as an architect, it is understandable that he has not yet been considered in histories of the theatre. Even in such authoritative surveys as Marvin Carlson's recent *Theories of the Theatre* (1984) we cannot find Milizia's name.²

As previously mentioned, the first edition of Milizia's treatise on theatre, published in Rome in December 1771, was never allowed to circulate. The subsequent publication took place in Venice, a far more enlightened state, in 1794. In weighing the impact of the work, this delay in publication is important to note since, unfortunately, it placed the general circulation of Milizia's work behind, rather than in front of, the French Revolution (for which some of his statements have been criticized; seeming ludicrous after this major event). Milizia's comments on the situation, already recorded in the previous chapter, are condemning of the Roman Papal administration which removed Italian intellectual contributions from the shelves in the eighteenth century.

¹“Under the influence of Milizia architectural historians, the majority of whom were also architects, attempted in their writings to promote a Neo-classical conception of architecture. Examples of such works are the collections of biographies by Tommaso Temanza (1778) and the measurements of the works of Palladio by Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi (1776-83), in which the latter attempted to guide his own age back to the ‘*veri principi della bellezza Architettonica*.’ Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, pp.206-207.

²In five sentences, Carlson summarises the contributions of Goldoni, Alfieri, Crescimbeni, Gravina, Conti and Varano. The general achievement of these writers, in Carlson's view, was to follow the direction of French neoclassicism, “supporting the unities, strict separation of genres, elevated language for tragedy, decorum, and moral uplift.” Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre*, p.198.

Although it can be argued that many of Milizia's ideas regarding the design flaws of the material theatre may be derivative, it cannot be contested that his fusing of both architectural and dramatic theory into one work, *Del Teatro*, was both ambitious and original. In light of the desire for reforms of theatre that we have already seen circulating in the period, this treatise is a valuable resource that connects the problems on the stage to those in the auditorium. The auditorium, of course, extended beyond the doors of the theatre and change in the theatre could effect change in society, according to the reformist discourse of Milizia, and Algarotti before him. This connection is fundamental to an appreciation of Milizia's contribution to the criticism of the drama. Like Algarotti before him, and like many of his reformist contemporaries, Milizia himself was a product of a unique intellectual environment that fused concerns with the nature of the arts and science with concerns for an overhaul of corrupted societal institutions. In Chapter One of his *Trattato*, he pays homage to some of the sources from which he has compiled his argument ". . . per fare questa analisi, e dire quanto si conviene in questa materia, ci vuole un foraggio generale, anzi un saccheggio sopra molti libri. Muratori, Algarotti, Batteaux, d'Alembert, l'Enciclopedia, le Memorie dell'Accademia delle Iscrizioni, e quanti ci verranno per le grinse . . ."³

Milizia, like Algarotti, identifies the theatre as one of the most important of society's institutions, with roots reaching to the dawn of creation. Like Algarotti he examines the flaws of this institution but, more importantly, he brings a scientific gaze to bear on the ways that theatre as event can affect human behaviour for better or

³*Trattato*, p. 8.

worse. What is perhaps most unique in his contribution is the quantity of detail with which he analyzes the theatre's component parts. Speaking of the drama as a species of poetry he lays out and examines the artistic and social roots of tragedy, comedy, the pastoral, and the opera; these art forms being of relevance to the well-being of the society that produces them. The idea was current to dialogues being written in all parts of Italy and is certainly well-expressed by Gasparo Gozzi, editor of the *Gazzetta Veneta*, who wrote that: "un popolo, che ha buon gusto nelle belle arti, ama anche l'ordine e la simmetria in ogni cosa."⁴ Milizia's historical analysis of the psychological impact of these art forms places them at the centre of codes and morals of a society. As such, any proposed societal reform would by necessity be inclusive of a reform of theatre and Milizia believed that both needed reforming.⁵

For Milizia, as previously stated, the theatrical edifice existed to provide a location for performance with one great objective "che consiste nella Morale posta piacevolmente in azione per iscuotere ed animare gli spettatori alla virtù."⁶ This activity would logically be sponsored by an enlightened ruler since: "...in una costituzione fondata sulla giustizia e sulla beneficenza, non si ha timore d'estendere la ragione

⁴Se considerate che il buon gusto di tutte queste arti non è altro che un amore dell'ordine e una simmetria e un concerto di parti, che hanno relazione col tutto, una regolata varietà, che trae a sè l'occhio, l'orecchio e il cuore della gente, voi vedrete che a poco a poco pel mezzo di esse s'introduce una certa finezza e civiltà ne' pensieri e nel cuore degli uomini, che non ve la introdurrebbero in un paese privo di queste grazie tutti i maestri del mondo. Gasparo Gozzi, *Ragionamenti e dialoghi di morale e di critica letteraria e Sermoni*, Part II, Dialogue 10, p.73.

⁵In a note on the life of Metastasio, Domenico Pietropaolo relates that his mentor, Gravina, "began to tutor him in the austere philosophy of art and life of which he was a master, keeping him away as much as he could from the corruptive influence of contemporary dramatic fashion, especially opera." Sidnell, *Sources of Dramatic Theory*, Volume 2, p.31.

⁶*Trattato*, p.9.

d'illuminarla, e di nobilitare i sentimenti d'una moltitudine di Cittadini, de' quali la professione stessa esige sovente mire nobili, sentimenti delicati, e spirito culto."⁷ Thus, in a constitution founded on justice and illuminated beneficence, everyone benefits as the natural pull becomes progressive and positive. There can be no political interest in maintaining a population that has a depraved love of bad things and a sluggishness of the spirit. It is for this reason that, in Milizia's scheme, farce must not be permitted, even to the lowest classes, since it is a destructive force. In his words:

a good material theatre requires an equally good formal theatre, namely a collection of good drama. True drama is a school of virtue. In that moment theatre becomes a school of morality, a school in which morality is put into action with all of its grace and all of its pleasure, to instruct and incite men to virtue.⁸

Milizia's ideas, corresponding in time to the reformist dramatic theories of Voltaire, Goldoni and Diderot, and influenced in form by Algarotti whose functionalist approach he adopted, were inspired by an understanding of the mistakes and abuses which had reduced theatre, especially in Italy, to a pitiable state. All three examined the didactic function of theatre; the function of theatre being, to their minds, didactic. "The moral lessons to be taught were, of course, those of the Enlightenment - civilization, benevolent royalism, and enlightened religion."⁹ Milizia was also influenced, with regard to his belief in the elevating effect of art on society, by an English predecessor, Shaftesbury, a man who spent the last years of his life in Italy studying the great

⁷ *Trattato*, p. 34.

⁸ Milizia, *Principles of Civil Architecture*, p. 375.

⁹ Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre*, p. 147.

masters. Shaftesbury, believed that the human mind was naturally constituted in such a way as to respond favorably to images of virtue and unfavorably to images of vice, with the true happiness that virtue brings fulfilling our natural longings. For him, as for Milizia, this natural fulfilment was exemplified by the Ancient Greeks in their theatres by "conforming to truth and to nature." Their poets:

...formed their audience, polished the age, refined the public ear and framed it right, that in return they might be rightly and lastingly applauded...Our modern authors, on the contrary, are turned and modeled (as themselves confess) by the public relish and current humour of the times. They regulate themselves by the irregular fancy of the world, and frankly own they are preposterous and absurd, in order to accommodate themselves to the genius of the age."¹⁰

It is in this respect that Milizia's originality begins to become apparent. Through his association with Algarotti's interpretation of Lodolian design principles, Milizia had always seen architecture as a form of representation and had questioned the basis for this representation. Correct function and its representation thus become the key artistic principles he eschewed and these had been defined by Algarotti.¹¹ Finally, he decided that there existed no natural prototype of the "original" structure but that, with regard to architecture, man himself created this structure. This opened the argument up considerably.

"...the ultimate truth for Milizia was an imitated artificial object... *Everything must be founded upon truth or its similitude.* This verisimilitude, coupled with free inventive imitation, came to Milizia from

¹⁰From Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, p.172. (p.I.172)

¹¹"Solidity, proportion, convenience and ornament are all dependent on these. Function and its expression are here considered to be the main task of architecture; they are identical. Ornament is not essential but accessory, and may be used to emphasize correct function and its representation." Kruff, pp.198-99.

the school of Jacques-Francois Blondel in his *Cours d'Architecture* (1750). In their effort to determine a new architecture beyond abuse while still retaining the ideals given in traditional rules, Blondel and Milizia departed from true architecture looking for that which is almost as good - *Architecture vraisemblable*.¹²

Milizia's treatise on theatre, then, is best examined as a detailed analysis of a revitalized didactic drama that he wanted to see represented in a theatre ideally built upon the classical principles handed down from Vitruvius. From a patriotic, artistic point of view, encouraged by the work of the academies, it bothered Milizia that, from Roman times, the Italians had excelled in building theatres but had no similar reputation in creating drama.¹³ An apologist strain of reasoning had been around since well into the previous century and is exemplified by Luigi Riccoboni who presents the French academies with a counter-argument, stating that Italy, indeed, had a store of dramatic work.¹⁴ The Arcadians had begun the work of promoting the resurrection of Italian arts and sciences but had become, in Milizia's words, an "academia di futilità e di parole."¹⁵ Armed with a belief in ideal art as having its basis in nature, and with the challenge

¹²Paul, p.16.

¹³ "Così poi i Romani, imitando i Greci, ebbero gran Teatri, ma non mai gran Drammi; fatalità che ancora dura." Milizia, *Trattato*, p. 23.

¹⁴"...it would not at all derogate from the Merit of the French Theatre, should their Authors examine the state of the Italian for an Age or two before ...It was in order to dissipate this Mistake which so generally prevails in France, that I have given to the Public the long Catalogue of Tragedies and Comedies in my History of the Italian Theatre." Luigi Riccoboni, *A General History of the Stage*, p. 67.

¹⁵Letter from Rome, August 17, 1776. *Lettere Inedite di Francesco Milizia al Conte Fr. Di Sangiovanì*. Letter xxviii, p.88.

presented in the treatises of earlier Italian theorists such as Muratori and Riccoboni,¹⁶ Milizia calls for a reform in dramatic practices that would result in a more realistic representation. Indeed, his arguments introduced a neo-classical preoccupation with form into an analysis of the theatre as both event and structure. Just as the design of the building must be predicated on the rationality exposed in historical models that are "natural" to humankind, so too the drama must be analyzed, in all its component parts, in a rational way, bringing light to the roots, the prototype, of the event and discovering its true function in the history of mankind. The approach is that of Algarotti, the influences resulting in the socio-historical analysis clearly deriving from the same sources. What sets Milizia apart is his scientific analysis in creating a treatise which discusses the drama, with all of its manifest flaws and potential for the betterment of society, in a manner that places him at the forefront of a self-aware attempt to establish an autonomous Italian contribution to the application of reason that was transforming European society.

In his *Trattato* Milizia begins by describing the nature of theatre and then immediately launches into a discussion of its two major effects, pleasure and utility. His style is that of the *Encyclopédie*, in its attempt to outline every aspect of the theoretical event. Thus he defines pleasure as coming from the ability to measure the representation of some interesting and curious action in human life to see it is done in

¹⁶We know from Milizia's letters to Tommaso Temanza that Milizia was active in collecting the published works of such authors. He specifically mentions his search for Riccoboni's *Rellexions sur les Theatres* in the bookshops of Rome in a letter dated July 4, 1772. *Lettere di Francesco Milizia a Tommaso Temanza*, p.54.

a manner more alive and more natural.¹⁷ An example of this is the delight found in recognizing living expression in cloth or in marble in some manmade or natural work. With regards to utility, a representation "warns spectators to correct their vices and defects and to suffer with patience their misfortunes."¹⁸

Milizia broke down the principle species of theoretical representation into the three traditional categories of tragedy, comedy, and pastoral adding a detailed assessment of the opera as a newer, but already abused genre. The principle guideline for each of these types of dramatic poetry he defines "l'imitatione della bella Natura espressa con discorso misurato a fine d'istruire e di dilettere."¹⁹ Milizia believed that nature doesn't produce anything perfectly bad or good. It takes pleasure in mixing and confusing, in the same subject, the beautiful and the ugly; the bad and the good. In assuming his position regarding the place of nature in the arts, it must be noted that Milizia's philosophy had already been laid out in his *Delle Belle Arti* . . . , in which the

¹⁷Carlo Gozzi, in his *Useless Memoirs*, rages against the lack of art portrayed in the performances of Venetian actors:

In what concerns the practice of their art, all that these people know is how to read and write; one better and one worse. Indeed, I have been acquainted with both actors and actresses who have not even had the minimum of education, and yet they carried on their business without flinching . . . Keeping their ears open to the prompter, they entered boldly on the stage, and played a hero or a heroine without a touch of truth. The presentation of such characters by actors of the sort I have described abound in blunders, stops and stays, and harkings back upon the leading motive, which would put to shame the player in his common walk of life.

Useless Memoirs of Carlo Gozzi, Chapter 30, p.190.

¹⁸Milizia, *Trattato*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁹*Trattato*, p. 9.

influence of the neo-classicist artist, Anton Mengs, can be seen: "The arts, then, must make what nature doesn't make."²⁰

Milizia, as most of Europe at the time, was influenced by Voltaire in the development of his concern with nature, man's control of nature, and nature's influence on art but nature, and man's relation to it, was beginning to be understood differently. Milizia subscribed to a Viconian analysis of culture as governed by man's will, especially with regard to theatre - which was a building, after all, with a human function. Therefore, as theatre has its function, so too does man have his in daily life. Hierarchy and protocol must be observed and adhered to, once uncovered. This informs Milizia's analysis of theatre. According to Berlin, Voltaire's envisioning of the growth of science as providing knowledge of all there was in the world and in the mind, and of how it worked, was taken up by all enlightened thinkers.²¹ It would also tell men what their natures - part of the vast harmonious whole called "nature" - needed; how to obtain it by most painless and efficient means; and therefore how to be wise, rational, happy and good.²² This led to a view of the moral purpose of theatre from which Voltaire asserted that:

²⁰"...le Belle Arti fanno quello che la Natura non fa." Trattato, p. 9.

²¹Milizia is known to have read Riccoboni, who, in his *General History of the Stage*, applies the concept of nature to stage craft, with the proviso that the artist be fully knowledgeable with regard to classical precedent:

"It is true, that when we reason upon an Art which derives its Principles wholly from Nature, a Man tho' of a very indifferent understanding, may acquire it of himself, but never can acquire it so as to excel; for tho' in Oratory the Uninstructed finds in his Mind every Faculty which is requisite to have a clear Conception of the fundamental Truths of that great Art, yet, would he be completely Master of them, he must be directed by Acquirements unattainable by an untutored Capacity." p.4.

²²From Berlin, p.114.

True tragedy is the school of virtue, and the only difference between purified theatre and books of morality is that instruction in the theatre is through action which engages the interest and is embellished by the charms of an art originally invented only to instruct the earth and bless heaven.²³

Theatre must be performed for all, with benefits occurring to all; but it has to be administered by the enlightened. Milizia also dedicated his *Trattato* to every sort of person; "Le persone civili, la Nobilità, i Ministri di Stato, i Sovrani."²⁴ In his conclusion, however, Milizia reveals the scope of his belief that a flowering of civilization could occur through the enlightened administration of one beneficent prince. This belief in the benevolence of rulers places him directly beside Algarotti in terms of the limits of their envisioned reforms. To his thinking, such a leader would surely carry out the changes necessary to redeem the theatre.²⁵ The idea had found currency in France where the honour and integrity of the heroic citizens of Greece and Republican Rome were being represented in the arts.²⁶ It seemed, in Italy, for a short time that such leaders had presented themselves. The great building schemes of such families as the Bourbons in Naples activated a heady architectural splurge which proved to be short-lived, and was never particularly enlightened.²⁷ It was in such people, however, that Milizia placed

²³Dissertation sur la tragédie from preface to *Sémiramis*, quoted in Marvin Carlson's *Theories of the Theatre*, p. 147.

²⁴*Trattato*, p. 7.

²⁵"Most writers believed that the most effective way of achieving reforms was through the activity of a powerful ruler who was wise enough to heed the counsels of men like the philosophers." Garland, Grimsley, Preston, and White, p. 20.

²⁶Hall, p.347.

²⁷Middleton and Watkin, p. 293.

his hopes. In retrospect, it is easy to criticize such expensive projects as those of the Bourbons as the attempts of a corrupted aristocracy to legitimize itself through the arts, but such reasoning would have been exceptional in Milizia's day.

Regarding drama, Milizia treated the subject in an exhaustive manner. Versification, he believed, formed neither the essence nor the foundation of poetry, but was simply an embellishment to add colour. Milizia next divided poetry into two big parts: Epic and Dramatic Poetry. The Greek word, *Dramma*, signifies the act of acting. With this in mind, Milizia defined "Poema Drammatico" as an imitation of chosen actions, marvellous, heroic or everyday, expressed with measured speech, with the intention to instruct and to delight. Versification is not absolutely necessary in poetry. It is not essential in tragedy although comedy can be expressed well in verse.²⁸

Milizia sets out some general rules regarding dramatic poetry. First and most important of these rules is that the drama must "delight and instruct, always together." The end of poetry is pleasure and this pleasure must move the passions. "The horror of crime, behind which walks Shame, dread, repentance, with a long train of other torments" should be elicited but, says Milizia, "La Poesia non è già fatta per fomentare la corruzione ne' cuori guasti, ma per essere la delizia delle anime virtuose."²⁹

The subject of the drama must be extraordinary and marvelous in order for the impression to be strong and new. There must be a unity of subject, place and of time

²⁸Here Milizia distinguishes verse from rhyme. Rhyme, he believes to be the invention of barbarian peoples. According to him, it was currently being used to excess by the French who "senza Rima resterebbero quasi senza versi." The study of the ancients, especially Virgil, Horace, Lucrezio, Catullus, and Terence, did not stress rhyme but, rather, the conditioning of their verse with rhythm and with harmony. *Trattato*, p. 11.

²⁹*Trattato*, p.12.

since the human spirit cannot embrace more than one action at any given time. Also, within the space of the four or five hours spent at the theatre it is reasonable to confine events to the space of a single day. It must be noted that Milizia could not help but be affected by Diderot's influence, especially in light of his contribution to the *Encyclopédie*. Milizia's argument that the poet must be a moralist bears a striking resemblance to Diderot's *On Dramatic Poetry* which was appended to his *Le Père de famille* of 1758:

"But who shall skillfully paint the duties of man for us? What would be the qualities of the poet who gave himself that aim? He should be philosophically minded, should have examined himself, have observed human nature, be profoundly instructed in the conditions of society, and know its workings and consequences, its drawbacks and advantages."³⁰

Believing in the power of theatre to be a vehicle of social reform, it is not surprising that Milizia would so intensely embrace theoretically its didactic functions. Not all reformists were so keen on this idea as Milizia was. Beaumarchais, as a poet concerns himself more with the audience's entertainment and less with their well-being. In his *Essay on the Genre of Serious Drama* (1767) he too demonstrates an indebtedness to Diderot in his advocacy of a middle drama called "serious drama." However, while Diderot calls for didacticism in drama on moral grounds, Beaumarchais advocates the rights of the people in a new society.

"... the assembled public is nonetheless the only judge of works destined to amuse them. All are equally submitted to them, and to wish to stop the efforts of genius in the creation of a new type of spectacle, in the

³⁰Diderot, *On Dramatic Poetry*, [*On Serious Comedy*]. In *Dramatic Essays of the Neoclassic Age*, p. 351.

extensions of those they already know, is an attack against their rights, an enterprise contrary to their pleasures."³¹

Thus, while Beaumarchais and Diderot argue for the utility of a completely new genre, Milizia is much more cautious, and less forgiving of the tastes of the masses, and will only go as far as advocating new subject matter to fit into old genres. The two movements meet only in the desire to create new subjects for the drama as best expressed by Beaumarchais who asks: "What do the revolutions of Athens and Rome matter to me, a peaceful subject of a monarchic state of the eighteenth century?"³²

Naturalness and variety must be observed in dramatic presentation; but it must be noted that the constitution of the "natural" includes a process by which the meaning of the term is redefined in every new artistic period. Thus, when we have spoken about concepts of representations of nature, it must be acknowledged that the underlying rationale often supported societal beliefs, and nowhere more so than in Milizia's ideas regarding the representation of women on the stage. As per Rosalind Kerr's discussion of popular suspicion of the actress, Milizia too delineates the boundaries of the natural in the tragic heroine, and in so doing, means to set an example for the audience to emulate. Thus: "Where women appear on stage, their chastity is certainly more exposed, and therefore Helen makes herself more glorious in preserving it, and it is preserved better if not discouraged with contempt, and it is preserved even better if

³¹Beaumarchais, *Essay on the Genre of Serious Drama*. In *Dramatic Essays of the Neoclassic Age*, p. 368.

³²Beaumarchais, p.372.

encouraged with honour and rewards, as infamy and punishments are depreciated."³³

If a male actor, for example, should portray a female, this too must be done with utmost attention to verisimilitude. The practical applications of what might appear to us as a basic observation were, in the eighteenth century, a matter of artistically revolutionary proportions. A good example of the application of this rule can be found in a letter from Metastasio to Baron Diescau at Dresden, where he discusses the placement of the players on the stage according to their importance:

It is a great mistake, in my opinion, to imagine that the right or left side of the stage determines the pre-eminence of theatrical characters. These places ought to be occupied according to the necessity of the actors. It is necessary, for example, that the actor should be near the person to whom he would speak, or whom he would detain, assault, defend, or transact any kind of business with, that would be difficult or ridiculous to perform in any other situation. Wherever a great personage happens to be, will become the principal place ..."³⁴

Milizia believed that, to avoid confusion, the number of actors present on stage must be set according to the need of the subject and, as another rule, these characters must be distinct, as nature prescribes. Each character must form a contrast with the others on stage. Of great importance, however, is that all is done with a spirituality in representation that will provoke thought in the audience. Trite representations of mythological figures that have no bearing on the lives of the audience cannot do this. "Giove fulminante, Nettuno col Tridente, Apollo . . . sono immagini decrepite, che

³³*Trattato*, p. 100.

³⁴Burney, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Abate Metastasio in which are incorporated Translations of his Principal Letters*. Letter to Baron Diescau, at Dresden (Vienna, Feb. 21, 1748), p. 227.

parlano all'immaginazione prevenuta da un falso sistema . . ."³⁵ Thus ends Milizia's outline of the main features of drama.

With regards to tragedy, which he considers the most perfect dramatic form, Milizia first takes pains to describe it as the imitation of the life of a hero with subjects that elevate the audience's passions violently and then lead to catastrophe. "L'Eroismo è un coraggio, un valore, una generosità, al di sopra delle anime volgari."³⁶ Even the vices of heroes, as the strength of Medea, are heroic vices. When the poet presented great personages being preyed on by bigger forces, one must feel terror and compassion. The beginning principle of tragedy, then, according to the logic of Milizia, is human sensibility.³⁷ Terror is a sentiment that exists according to each person's weakness when seeing a great danger. Compassion, however, must accompany terror when we see a certain parity between the unfortunate and ourselves. It is natural that we should suffer with the actor. Milizia's major point then is that this mix of compassion and terror creates tragedy. The ends of viewing the disgrace of the great are to elevate the soul, to form the heart, to teach us piety and to render us prudent.

In the academic manner of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, Milizia insists on creating a specific number of rules. The rules for tragedy number seven in Milizia's scheme. Most

³⁵ *Trattato*, p. 14.

³⁶ "Eroico vuol morire per Marziano. Pulceria dice all' usurpatore Foca con una fierezza degna della sua nascita, Tiranno, discendi dal Trono, e da luogo al tuo padrone: questi sono tratti eroici." *Trattato*, p. 15.

³⁷ Human passions are the necessary winds with which we sail the sea of life; and if our journeys are to be prosperous . . . we should study the art of advantageously using them, gathering or opening our sails to this one or to that one, in accordance with the useful or harmful efficacy that they exhibit as they lead us along a straight route or as they force us away from it. Metastasio, "Extract from the Poetics of Aristotle and Considerations on the Same." In Sidnell, *Sources of Dramatic Theory*, 2. p. 32.

important is the subject, which must be noble and heroic. Milizia believed that the loftier the character, the stronger the impression created on the audience. In this, Milizia exposes his tendency to look to royalty for moral guidance. In his scheme, since the primary objective of the arts is to beautify nature, then the elite, the sovereigns, must be chosen for representation. It is also important that the character be respectable in order that compassion can be elicited in the audience. The subject should be familiar but exist at a distance either in space or time, since Milizia shares the neo-classical belief that antiquity and distance render more estimable the personage. Thus, characters from times too recent could possibly excite hatred. Finally, the characters Milizia puts forward must be interesting, together with the incidents which distress them.

Modest love, portrayed with sobriety can be admitted in tragedy but with dignity and with some indication of avoiding it or directing it. Milizia places equal importance in the well-regulated representation of events that create terror and compassion. It must be kept in mind that the errors of the great are public calamities. Arguing from this point of view, Milizia goes on to condemn tragi-comedy as a defect of theatre: "La Tragi-Commedia dunque è una composizione mal intesa; perchè volendosi far piangere e ridere a vicenda, si eccitano movimento contrarj che rivoltano il cuore."³⁸

With regard to the spilling of blood, Milizia is in agreement with Horace who excluded from the stage the sight of actions which were inhumane. Speaking from the position of a theorist who did not see a didactic function in staged violence, Milizia believed that tragedy was meant to inspire terror and pity but not horror. Bloody

³⁸ *Trattato*, p. 18.

spectacles, he argued, are barbarous and offend humanity, although the ancients dabbled in such presentations and the contemporary English stage preserves such scenes. The one allowance Milizia makes is in accepting the necessity of death scenes, as long as they are not prolonged.

Milizia's notion that tragedy was first amongst the dramatic genres was reinforced by his underlying belief that its representation was invented as a socializing tool, to create a hatred of vice and a love of virtue. This, to Milizia, is the greatest use of theatre and he repeatedly reminds the reader that the sole purpose of theatre is didacticism. The style with which tragedy is to be conveyed is to be serious and full of noble and grand sentiments. The words should be simple and spoken slowly in the manner of grave personages consulting about important affairs.³⁹ If the author clearly understands the philosophical principles of truth, simplicity and nature, and keeps these clearly before his eyes, he will write well. Thus, for Milizia, style too has great bearing on the way a play will be received by the audience, the minds of which must be exercised in a positive and educative manner. Riccoboni makes a strong case that argues for Milizia's connection between drama and reason:

...Most Part of Spectators in France are incapable of discerning that which may be called the Justness of Action. They are early accustomed to Theatrical Declamation: Young People do not trouble their Heads much about Reasoning, and they grow old before they make any Solid Reflections upon this Point. If an Audience thus disposed is touched in

³⁹At this point, Milizia adds a very long footnote outlining the principle arguments regarding the type of language to be used. His particular struggle is against those who adhere to a respect for the classic Latin tongue thus halting the progress of modern Italian. In this regard, Milizia praises English as a liberated language freely borrowing from others and creating new words. This was the natural progression that Milizia encouraged in his native Italy.

seeing a Tragedy, it is because they are under an habitual Illusion, in which Truth has no share.⁴⁰

If tragedy is an examination of vice as a hateful thing then comedy, in Milizia's scheme, looks at it as something ridiculous. "Il Ridicolo consiste ne' difetti, che cagionano vergogna senza cagionare dolore . . . scelto con destrezza, espresso con motteggi fini e leggieri, e rappresentato nell'aspetto più piccante, ci fa ridere, perchè le sciocchezze, che non hanno conseguenze dolorose, sono ridicole."⁴¹ The pleasure derived from comedy Milizia sees as explained by a feeling of pride in the spectator in comparing himself with an inferior on stage, since we view the defects of those similar to us with kindness mixed with contempt. It is this observation that leads Milizia to conclude that: "Il fondamento dunque, e il principio della Commedia è la malignità umana."⁴² For this reason, Milizia treats comedy as unavoidable but clearly secondary to tragedy. He considers that it would be most advantageous to be able to eliminate this human maliciousness but, given the unlikelihood of doing that, at least one sure benefit could occur by using this vice to help correct the many other human vices. In his words: "presso a poco come s'impiegano le punte del diamante a pulire il diamante stesso."⁴³ In this endeavour, Milizia breaks down comedy into three distinct divisions.⁴⁴ The least

⁴⁰Riccoboni, *A General History of the Stage*, pp.28-29.

⁴¹*Trattato*, p.25.

⁴²*Trattato*, p. 25.

⁴³*Trattato*, p. 26.

⁴⁴It is important to note that, in the work of Italy's reformist playwrights, social distinctions were being brought to bear in the depiction of the ridiculous. Heinz Riedt, in assessing the contributions of Goldoni to 18th century theatre reform, observes his tendency to portray society on three levels:

distinguished of the three types is the "comedy of situation" which evokes the kind of laughter one would experience when witnessing someone tripping. The second type, "pathetic comedy," renders common virtues loveable and the exposure of these traits to danger creates interest. The third type of comedy, however, "comedy of character," is the most difficult and therefore the most rare. This is also the most useful type of comedy, says Milizia, because it presents a mirror to man which makes him blush according to the image he sees in it. "What is the end of philosophy," asks Milizia, "if not to strike us with the fixed point of virtue?" Following this line of reasoning, Milizia considered the character comedy even more admirable when united to the comedy of situation; "cioè se le persone infangate di vizi e di errori sono messe in circostanze umilianti, onde si esponano al riso ed al disprezzo degli spettatori."⁴⁵

Milizia breaks down the representation of the comedy of character into three different manners. The "comico nobile" represents the vices of the grandees which are less coarse and are coloured with a politeness that forms the character of a likeable person. The "glorioso," ignorant of true glory, falls into this category. The second group is classified as the "comico cittadino," representatives of the merchant class. These characters reek of pretension and, although, in style, they approximate the nobles, their coarseness hasn't the air of the "Bel Mondo." Finally, the "comico basso" embodies the merit of the truth as he imitates the basest level of society. Low comedy, however, must

(1) the decadent aristocracy, with its "condescending mannerisms," its pretentiousness ("What good are titles? Why all this vanity? Nothing but prejudices!"); (2) the aspiring middle class with which he felt at home, but criticized wherever necessary (he takes us into their houses, not into the luxury dwellings of the aristocracy); (3) the common people, whom treated him with affection - and as a valid partner, on stage as well as life. Heinz Riedt, *Carlo Goldoni*, p. 22.

⁴⁵ *Trattato*, p. 27.

not be confused with coarseness as in it one can find a kind of grace that, according to Milizia “is open to every honesty and every delicacy.”

As he did for tragedy, Milizia devised a specific set of rules for comedy by means of which he hoped to govern its presentation. With regard to levels of subtlety in the ridicule, Milizia is quite firm in stating that coarse ridicule must never be exhibited in the theatre. Rather, in didactic fashion, the multitude must be elevated to laugh with finesse and with spirit. In recounting the history of comedy, he criticizes the ancient Greeks for their abasement of comedy by recourse to personal satire, as in Aristophanes: “Atene maestra d'ogni cultura, si abusò per lungo tempo della Commedia col convertirla in una Satira personale: ed in questo difettoso genere brillò falsamente Aristofane.”⁴⁶ Milizia clearly possessed the critical acumen by which to choose between what was useful and what was not amongst classical dramatic works. With respect to comedic presentations, it was easier for him to be critical than reverential.

Because comic subjects are more familiar to the audience than tragic ones, defects in verisimilitude are more easily discovered. For this reason Milizia emphasizes as his second rule that verisimilitude should be approximated with a pretense of reality. He acknowledges that comedy is an exaggerated imitation but even this exaggeration has its limits. For him, then, the picture presented on stage becomes wrong if the spectator perceives that nature has been surpassed and this argument too is indicative of the theorist’s perception of the dramatic event as impacting on the rightful ordering

⁴⁶*Trattato*, p. 30.

of the spectators' minds, as we have previously discussed with relation to Algarotti and de Kerckhove.

As with tragedy, unity and continuity must be demonstrated in the portrayal of a character. Ease and simplicity in the weaving of the plot must be exhibited. Truth of sentiment is also necessary for, as Milizia says: "se il fine principale della Commedia è d'istruire, come mai si può istruire senza verità?"⁴⁷ The dialogue must seem natural. Also, all sense of art must be concealed in the linking up of the situations. From this artifice results the illusion of the theatre. Finally, the comic style must be humble and modest according to the habits of the language in which the comedy is performed.

In establishing the above rules Milizia was applying, to a social phenomenon, his rationalist concepts in an attempt to create a more perfect system for all. In answering the question, "what does the quality of the entertainment matter?", he first defines what he perceives to be the three levels of society. Milizia's theories were based on a very clear delineation of the classes of society. The lowest class he characterizes as plebeians who are lacking in both taste and spirit. Their needs are few. The second level contains the honest and polite folk who demonstrate, in the decency of their costume, a certain intelligence and delicate sentimentality. Finally, the third class attempts to exhibit the gentility of the second in what Milizia labels a display of vanity, but in reality, this class is pulled toward the lower classes by a natural force. It is against this force that Milizia has positioned the theatre and out of this conceptualization arises his belief that farce must not be permitted, even to the lowest classes, since it is a

⁴⁷ *Trattato*, p. 29.

destructive force. It must be remembered that Milizia derives his interest in dramatic theory from the very real civilizing effect the theatrical experience has on the audience which chooses to enter a theatre. The *Trattato*, thus, dwells on the theatre as a civic signifier in the sense that "ciascuno comparisce in pubblico con un'apparenza di morigeratezza e di civiltà, che in privato non sa possedere, e si sforza di comparire qual realmente dovrebbe essere."⁴⁸

About the pastoral Milizia has very little to say, although he has taken the pains to classify it as a category of dramatic poetry. It is mentioned merely as a non-offensive rustic representation of the "età dell'oro" in which a momentary silence of passion creates peace and tranquility. The basic rule laid out by Milizia is that the representation must be simple and natural. Perhaps because it is not instructive, it comes closest to pure entertainment.

What Milizia dedicated more ink to is the outlining of the opera and the contribution of music to the drama. He labels tragedy, expressed in verse and set to music, as lyric poetry which is popularly known as opera. Opera, for Milizia is a musical tragedy; a hyper-version of the regular tragedy.

Tutte le belle arti sono poste al crociuolo per questo spettacolo. Se la Merope del Maffei mi tocca, m'intenerisce, mi fa versare della lagrime; bisogna che nell'Opera le angosce, i mortali spaventi di quella madre sfortunata, mi trapassino tutta l'anima; bisogna che tutti i fantasmi, de' quali ella è assalita, mi atterriscano, e che il suo dolore ed il suo delirio mi squarcino e mi strappino il cuore. Sarà dunque l'Opera il capo d'opera degli spettacoli, il non plus ultra del diletto e dell'utile.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Trattato*, p. 90.

⁴⁹ *Trattato*, p. 39.

The justification for this genre is given by the importance which the ancients placed on music as presented in their spectacles where the esteemed language of the gods was expressed in music. Milizia devotes many words to the description of opera as it forms the culmination of all other forms of theatre. To the opera, therefore, he admits supremacy over all spectacles, with no other comparing in delight and utility. It is only in this form of performance where all of the arts can be found combined.⁵⁰ Milizia makes the point that the French have been careful to conserve the precious gift of opera which was brought from Italy by Cardinal Mazzarin and took up residence in Paris.⁵¹ The Italians, on the other hand, are prone to quick changes in tastes and, through the history of the opera, had, by unfavourable change, debased the dramatic form. In setting the drama to music, however, there is a basic set of rules which Milizia adheres to in order to make this complicated grouping of the various arts successful.

Fundamental to the operatic work is the choice of a libretto, or subject of the drama. Milizia implies that no clear improvement had been made with regard to the control of the operatic event by the poet since Algarotti's treatise on the opera.⁵² The reform opera, since that time, had established itself as a new genre, the rules of which

⁵⁰"E che sarà questa Tragedia Musicale, corredata di Danze, di Pittura, di Scultura, di Architettura, e della più pomposa ricchezza di vesti, e d'ogni più bella decorazione?" *Trattato*, p. 39.

⁵¹ In Lully, for example, "recitative is still the climactic centre of attention, and the vital subsidiary role is taken by the chorus, while little songs or "airs" are of mainly decorative interest. Venetian opera, meanwhile, had completely debased recitative in favour of still rather primitive arias, and had completely eliminated the chorus." Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, p. 54.

⁵² "The contrast between the domain of public affairs and generally agonized, occasionally rapturous, expression of personal feelings is as typical of reform opera as of *opera seria*. The new genre particularly suited subjects in which an individual must be sacrificed for the common benefit; hence Algarotti's choice of *Iphigenia in Aulis* as an ideal subject for the reform opera." Julian Rushton, *Idomeneo*, p. 63.

had been experimented with a long time before by Algarotti, Calzabigi, and Gluck. Milizia demonstrates his indebtedness to Algarotti in repeating his call for a poet who would act as the foundation for the construction of an opera; on top of which must be erected the integral parts of the drama: the music, dance and decoration. The poet, as author of the libretto, becomes the director of all these parts. As such, Milizia insists that the poet reflect on two principles of the opera. Firstly, he must remember that the drama is to be put to music. This means that a subject must be chosen to which music is applicable.⁵³ This is the greatest difficulty.⁵⁴ The poet has recourse to mythology and to fables, since it was supposed that the language of the gods was different from that of men and much more adaptable to music. However, Milizia raises the issue that the time for the presentation of such deities had passed. In an age ruled by human reason, the arbitrary and unexplainable acts of the gods are not a fit subject for the masses.

Poichè, supposto che la collera o la benevolenza d'un'efimera Deità influisca sulla sorte d'un Eroe, qual parte si può prendere in un'azione, ove niente accade in conseguenza della natura, e dell'ordine delle cose? Ove la situazione la più deplorabile può divenire in un batter d'occhio, per un colpo di bacchetta, per un cambiamento subitaneo di volontà, la situazione la più felice e per un altro capriccio ritornare in un istante funesta?⁵⁵

⁵³The recitative required even more than did the melody that the verbal expression should be as simple, concise, and natural as that of the regular tragedy was the reverse; and, above all, it required that the action of the play should be rapid and strongly marked. Lee, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, p. 40.

⁵⁴Vernon Lee, in his *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, observes that "All political subjects are excluded because there is no political interest in a country cut up into little despotic governments, mostly of foreign extraction." (p. 37)

⁵⁵*Trattato*, pp. 41-42.

Milizia does himself credit by throwing away mythical fables as a fit subject for the opera and in seeking libretti that are based in truth, with messages that are of relevance to the society of his day. In instructing: "all the study has to be in undeceiving the common people, not in feeding them errors and prejudices; truth always, and in the Theatre above all, interesting truths."⁵⁶

The other popular choice for the subject of an opera was found in history but Milizia believed that historic subjects were not adaptable to the music. "Veramente un Catone, un Attilio Regolo in ariette e in trilli, è un rovescio de' loro caratteri."⁵⁷ Comments on the strangeness of such a juxtaposition had long been made, especially abroad, where criticisms were raised against the Italian opera. Addison, for example in *The Spectator* notes: "There is nothing that has more startled our English Audience, than the Italian Recitativo at its first entrance upon the stage. People were wonderfully surprised to hear Generals singing the Word of Command . . ."⁵⁸

In choosing the subject, the other important consideration for the poet regards the placing of the required dance in the piece. The dances, thus, must be linked with the subject of the opera. Thus, given many historical subjects, dance would be unsuitable. "If, for example, in Titus the dance included Roman Soldiers, such a dance

⁵⁶ *Trattato*, p. 42.

⁵⁷ *Trattato*, p. 42.

⁵⁸ In the introduction to John Gay's *The Beggars Opera*, the editors quote Addison to explain the sentiment behind the growing English desire to satirize Italian opera. *The Beggars Opera*, ed. Loughrey and Treadwell, p. 8.

would always be artificial and unsuitable . . . because dance is not an integrated part of the action."⁵⁹

Given the unsuitable nature of the above choices, Milizia advises that the subject must be chosen to delight and instruct but without offending decorum. The action must therefore occur in a remote and different place. If, however, the subject is very rare and difficult to understand, it is best not to put it to music. Otherwise, the choice of a remote place and simple subject allows the poet greater latitude in constructing a piece that incorporates music and dance. Proper examples are cited by Milizia as having been created by Metastasio. Thus, one need only study the work of the famous Italian to find proper subjects. Milizia lists *Achille in Sciro*, *Didone Abbandonata* and *Alessandro nell'India* as three of the librettist's best.

Milizia suggests the Orient as a good setting for opera since this presents the opportunity for exotic costumes and scenery. "In addition, there remain many subjects to be extracted from the modern history of the East and West Indies that would present a good contrast between our customs and those of nations very dissimilar to our's."⁶⁰ In deciding how much is too much, Milizia instructs that it is enough to remember that the essence of good art is the imitation of the best of nature. In defending the grandeur of operatic spectacle he thus cites great artistic creations such as the Farnese Hercules and the Apollo of the Belvedere and asks where, in the real world, one could find men

⁵⁹ *Trattato*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ *Trattato*, pp. 42-43.

such as these.⁶¹ The argument Milizia enlists to defend the opera against critics who claim that it does not have roots in nature and is therefore both artificial and irrelevant, is one in circulation at the time. If the opera is not a representation of nature, then neither are any forms of poetry or drama. "It is enough that men naturally sing and dance on certain occasions; art can make use of these natural operations to combine, in all its marvel, pleasure and utility, in that which does not naturally exist."⁶² The reasoning presented in this argument is a synthesis of the classical ideal, as present in Greek art and put forward by the very influential Winckelmann, whose work Milizia would have been very familiar with. In his *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755), Winckelmann reveals the basis of Greek concepts of beauty and nature in art as the attempt to "form a just resemblance, and, at the same time, a handsomer one."⁶³

The rules of the application of music to drama are different, of course from those pertaining simply to the regular tragedy. Milizia observes that, since the components are more numerous and diverse in the musical drama, then the rules must be even more rigidly adhered to in the attempt to create order and harmony in the event. Milizia lists six considerations of importance to the poet:

⁶¹"Poichè, dove, e quando mai si è trovato un uomo di quella robusta simmetria che si ammira nell'Ercole Farnese, ed un giovane di quella svelta eleganza dell'Apollo di Belvedere?" *Trattato*, p. 43.

⁶²*Trattato*, p. 43.

⁶³Winckelmann, "Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture." Found in Lorenz Eitner, *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850*, p. 9.

- I. Fill the subject with interest, and arrange it in the simplest manner.
- II. All must be shown through action, with a tendency towards great effects.
- III. Since rapidity is inseparable from music, the pace of the Lyric Poem must be rapid. This is because long and boring discourses are not convenient . . . The poem must unravel as it runs, developing with all its power, without embarrassment and without interruption; all successive developments must be presented to the eye of the beholder.
- IV. Every scene must offer an interesting situation; and offer true occasions to sing.
- V. The Aria must be reserved for grand scenes, and so that it has its fullest effect, it must be used with taste and judgement, and be correlated to the depth of a subject. The secret of grand effects here, as in painting, does not consist of the boldness of colours, so much as in the art of the gradation of colours. A series of extremely expressive and varying Arias, without interruption and rest, would soon be wearisome to the ear, the more it continues and the more passionate the music. The passages from Recitative to Aria, and from Aria to recitative, are those which produce the great effects of Lyric drama. Without this alternation, Opera would certainly be the most annoying and false of spectacles.
- VI. Equal to the management and development of the subject, the lyric style must be simple and swift, without verbosity, without imposed eloquence, precise, of few words, strong, natural, easy, gracious, and distant from those treatises of spirit distilled in Epigrams and Madrigals.⁶⁴

Since the opera relies on music as a setting for poetry, Milizia is very careful to outline the effects of music on the human senses and devotes several pages of his treatise to a discussion of the essence of music. Joseph Kerman, in *Opera as Drama*, asserted that, in an opera, "a libretto provides the framework, but the essential dramatic articulation is provided by the music."⁶⁵ Milizia, certainly believed that the musical accompaniment ideally reinforced the verbal message, but argues for the primacy of

⁶⁴ *Trattato*, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁵ Kerman, p. 34.

the poetry over music.⁶⁶ His assessment of musical properties is couched in the language of science. "Music is the science of sounds that pleases the ear . . . a movement of vibrations through the air that gratefully reaches the organ of our sense of sound either through song, voice, or musical instruments."⁶⁷ It was Milizia's belief that music could have a moral effect on human beings and could civilize savage people if presented with unity, clarity, simplicity, vivacity, novelty and elegance. Lyric poetry could not be properly written without a knowledge of music. In creating music for the opera, however, it is imperative that the music be adapted to fit the poetry because, without the poetry, the music would be too vague and indecisive.⁶⁸ Just so, the actors are expected to adhere to the lines given to them by the poet. They must not add more or break off from what was intended.

Instrumental and vocal music, it is observed by Milizia, is a primitive creation of man that is true to his nature and, as such, has the power to express his inner emotions. Music, thus, touches the inner soul. "Every living thing is called by the sense of its existence to utter at certain instances more or less melodious accents according

⁶⁶In the travel notes compiled by Charles Burney during his visit to Italy in 1770, he formulates an interesting application of the proper relationship of the music to the poetry in the opera. Finding himself, in Naples, present at the first rehearsal of a new opera by Jomelli at the San Carlo theatre, he remarks that "the talents of the performers, who tho' all good, yet not being of the very first and most exquisite class are more in want of the assistance of the instruments to mark the images and enforce the passion which the poetry points out." Burney, *Music, Men, and Manners in France and Italy 1770*, p. 186.

⁶⁷*Trattato*, p. 45.

⁶⁸Milizia cites, as an example of the use of music, Rousseau's *Pigmalione*, where music successfully contributed to the depiction of situations. *Trattato*, p. 54.

to the characteristics of its own sound organs."⁶⁹ Singing having become a part of every important ritual of the ancients, its incorporation as an art form followed. "From it the ingenious artist has made imitative vocal music which is a language, an art of imitation, to express with melody every sort of discourse, of accent, of passion, and to imitate sometimes even physical effects."⁷⁰

The development of instrumental music is itself reliant on the imitation of natural sounds produced by the human. "There are many instruments invented and artfully inclined to express sounds in the absence of voice, or to imitate the natural voice of man."⁷¹ Even the drum has a basis in the physiology of the human body. As studied by Milizia, it was invented to imitate the sound of slapping on an empty stomach. Each musical sound thus has a correlative human emotion associated with it which, as Milizia observes, must be taken into consideration when composing music for a particular libretto. "The low and lugubrious sounds of the horns," for example "announce in a terrifying manner the apparitions of ghosts and shadows."⁷²

The validation of music as an instinctual, and thus natural, outgrowth of man's original condition is given by Milizia in the form of a plethora of examples from the ancients. The Greeks especially held music in great esteem as they believed "that music was one of the most valid and effective means of sweetening customs, and of

⁶⁹ *Trattato*, p. 45.

⁷⁰ *Trattato*, p. 45.

⁷¹ *Trattato*, p. 46.

⁷² *Trattato*, p. 46.

humanizing those peoples naturally rough and savage."⁷³ Milizia adds weight to his argument by observing that all of the classical philosophers agree that the most effective way of reminding man of his moral duties and to encourage him to practice them was through music.

It is for this that Plato contends that one cannot change Music without producing changes in the constitution of the state; and he maintains that one can assign the sounds capable of eliciting the baseness within the soul, insolence and that which is contrary to virtue. Aristotle . . . is of the same opinion.⁷⁴

Milizia continues to theorize about the "essence" of Music. The essence of music, it seems, bears great similarities to the essence of painting. Both must be executed with taste and decorum; painting expresses the appearance of animate and inanimate objects; music expresses verse, or expressions of poetry. "Therefore, Music can be divided into two parts; either it imitates and expresses non-passionate sounds, corresponding to that which in painting is landscape; or expresses animated sounds that give sentiment, as does the narrative painting."⁷⁵ In either case, Milizia's reform of the opera insists that the composer pay proper respect to the poet, whose words form the base of the sentiments to be expressed and thus must be taken into account with all earnestness when composing.

Music must by necessity follow poetry because music does not have distinct means to explain the motifs of its varied impressions. Where the imitations of nature and passion would be without poetry is very vague and indecisive. Arias, tender and sweet, that could express love, could

⁷³ *Trattato*, p. 48.

⁷⁴ *Trattato*, p. 48.

⁷⁵ *Trattato*, p. 50.

equally express parallel sensations of benevolence, friendship and pity. and how could the rapid movements of scorn expressed in Music be distinguished from those of terror and of other violent agitations of the soul?⁷⁶

Modern composers, laments Milizia, have lost respect for the librettist and enlist the help of the worst of them in composing insignificant verse to add to an already composed score. The aria is the part of the opera where the composer is most guilty of such a practice, so much so that the opera can be called "music without poetry." The proper adaptation of music to poetry is thus the most important step in the resurrection of the opera of his time.

Within the music for the opera Milizia discusses three particular moments important to the proper forwarding of action: the overture, the recitative and the aria. With regard to the overture, Milizia observes merely that, in common practice, they have very little to do with the setting of the proper emotional intensity and, in fact, are so inconsequential in the overall scheme of the performance that it is often difficult to tell one from another. The recitative, as already discussed with reference to the aria, must be performed in a more natural manner; with attention paid to the quality of the discourse and to the breaks between its recital and the commencement of an aria.⁷⁷ The aria marks emotional climaxes in the opera which require a performer who is qualified as both an actor and a singer. Such performers, observes Milizia, are very

⁷⁶*Trattato*, p. 51.

⁷⁷It is strange that Milizia expresses admiration for the work of Metastasio while, at the same time, especially with regard to the juxtaposition of aria and recitative, argues for a reform of the excesses promoted by this very style. Metastasio created a style of libretto that relied on a series of short scenes, in which *secco* recitative was used to present new information, each scene building to an aria; often with the result, characterized by Kerman as "the constant shock of arias jarring in and out of recitative." Kerman, p. 63.

rare. In any case, with stupidities such as the ritomelli for which the virtuoso must wait, hands in pocket to finish, in order to resume what had been a subtle outpouring of emotion of the soul, the integrity of the scene has already been destroyed through no fault of the actor.⁷⁸

The dance in opera had, by Milizia's day, become a problematic part of the performance. On the one hand, the dances were hugely popular and enjoyed by the audience; on the other, they had become distractions in themselves, detracting from the dramatic integrity of the work and creating a lack of balance in the whole. Especially in France, a new category of performance, the opéra ballet, had arisen, "employing music throughout but lacking a continuous plot; in it, drama was clearly sacrificed for display."⁷⁹ Given this development, dance specialists of the early classical period proposed a reform of dance itself; a new 'ballet d'action,' which provided theorists with the tools to criticize the dancer for a perceived lack of discipline.⁸⁰ In Italy, Milizia observed that, in the opera, the dance should be subject to the spirit of the music but

⁷⁸In Mozart's reformist opera, *Idomeneo*, the results of a careful attempt at better integrating the aria and recitative, as set out by Algarotti, are brought to fruition. The nature of the relation of the recitative to the aria, and the diminishment of the ritomello were central concerns of the opera reformers. Julian Rushton demonstrates the amount of work that went into the successful integration of the recitative 'Quando avran fine ormai' and the aria 'Padre, germani' from *Idomeneo*. "The closure of the recitative into the first bars of the aria marks the channelling of Ilia's problems into the emotional therapy of measured music." Rushton, *Idomeneo*, p. 107.

⁷⁹The first important opéra-ballet, *L'Europe galante* by André Campra (1660-1744) was given at Paris in 1697. See Grout, p. 133.

⁸⁰The leading advocates of *ballet d'action* were Gaspero Angiolini and Jean George Noverre. Angiolini is perhaps best known for his collaboration with Gluck in Vienna, staging the dances in the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Noverre, in his *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* (1760), argues that ballets should be unified works of art in which all aspects of production contribute to the main theme, that technical display for its own sake should be discouraged, and that such impediments to movement as heeled shoes and bulky skirts should be discarded. Jack Anderson, *Ballet and Modern Dance*, pp. 60-61.

that, in reality, the dancers were more prone to be directed by the sound of applause: "Such beautiful Opera is cut by two Dances - for which all the spectators are attentive and mute, as if seeing them with their ears - the dancers jumping more and contorting their feet and lives more, the more applause they receive. The second Dance finished, although a third of the drama still remains, the major part, if they don't leave, all take a break.⁸¹ This is the unfortunate effect of an improper balance in the union of the dance with the poetry and the music "which all have one principle in common; the imitation of nature."⁸²

Milizia speaks in terms of a connection that existed between the decoration and construction of the theatre and the audience's enjoyment of the performance itself. It is only recently that semioticians such as Marvin Carlson are beginning to analyze the relationship between theatre architecture and the reaction of the audience to a performance.⁸³ Milizia, however, was well aware of this relationship in his own time and raised issues now considered "semiotic" two hundred years before Carlson. In his analysis of ancient theatre building practice, especially in his *Principles...*, Milizia makes the case that examining the constructions of the Greeks and Romans is not "an exhibition of useless scholarship but, rather, to inspire some useful imitations."⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Trattato*, p. 40.

⁸² *Trattato*, p. 67.

⁸³ Carlson's *Places of Performance* offers an interesting examination of the dynamics of the theatre experience from an architectural point of view.

⁸⁴ *Principles...*, p. 367.

With costume, Milizia calls for a verisimilitude in portrayal. Approximation of the use of the period, the nation and the subject is encouraged as much as is conveniently possible. The same rule applies to the construction of the scenery. Every residence must exhibit characteristics of the person living in it. The ancients adhered strictly to the unity of place and constructed the tragic, comic and pastoral species of scene design to indicate the genre. Milizia observed that, in his day, however, the creation of spectacle demanded many scene changes with the result that, in the words of Ferdinando Bibiena's disciples, the bizarre has started to take hold in set design, with no regard for architectural reality.⁸⁵ To remedy this, Milizia insisted that the illusion of the scene must be maintained by the correct placement of objects in order to give the impression of the consistency of dimensions. Convenient styles of architecture should therefore be used to avoid fantastic excess. If, for example, a scene requires a garden or rural vista, adequate examples can be found in Chinese or English gardens thereby alleviating the need to create from the imagination. Other examples could be found in the works of art of such masters as Titian and Possino.

Unity and attention to function become, for Milizia, the central principles to be observed in attempting to reform the theatre, both as cultural icon and social event. In systematically deconstructing the event according to its various genres and then creating a series of subcategories which conceive of the individual purpose of each element as a contribution to the greater effect of the whole, Milizia demonstrates an

⁸⁵"Anche l'Architettura poi vi resta in tutto mal concia. Le colonne invece de regere un architrave ed un soffitto, si vanno a perdere in inviluppo di panneggiamenti posti a mezz'aria." *Trattato*, p. 70.

affiliation to principles of functionality that find their basis in the artistic debates of the circle surrounding Lodoli. The idea of questioning the function of societal convention, in all of its manifestations, had been put forward by Lodoli, who in turn had been greatly influenced by Vico in his development of a curriculum that was meant to educate the young Venetians around him to question the place of traditional institutions in a decaying society. The drama, from its inception, is interpreted by Milizia as being intended to serve a utilitarian function in society by arousing, through the compilation of its component parts, emotional response in the audience which, in turn will encourage an improving psychological phenomenon. With a rational imposition of the laws of decorum by one unifying force (in theatre: the poet; in society: the enlightened ruler), man's greater good is being served.

Conclusion

The work of Francesco Algarotti and Francesco Milizia has much in common. Both men wrote treatises that were unique in their time. Both men also concentrated on the study of theatre as a complete event, breaking it down into its component parts which ranged from the type of building materials used to the role of the poet in coordinating the staged event. As Architect-Poets, they infused into both their architectural and dramatic treatises a rationale and rhetoric which revolved around their dedication to the principles of Lodolian functionalism. For them the word "function" signified the use of a raw material in accordance with its properties. This they borrowed from Lodoli who thought of representation in architecture as the "individual and total expression that results from the material used if the latter is disposed according to geometrical, mathematical and optical laws for the desired end."¹ The term, and the design concept that it represented, were useful to Algarotti and Milizia by virtue of the number of applications to which it could be put to use. Thus, in their treatises we see the idea of functionalism applied equally to the study of the theatre building and to the study of artistic elements of theatrical production. With regard to the building, architectural representation is derived from the inherent limitations and potentials of its materiality. Each architectural material has an inherent disposition that dictates its order. Both Algarotti and Milizia, for example, speak at great length regarding the differences between stone and wood, each of which allow for construction at a different scale, and each of which is predisposed to accept ornamentation differently and to be

¹ Krufft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, p. 199.

used in compression as columns and arches in the creation of a loggia, or as beams spanning horizontal lengths. Likewise, in the theatre, each genre is subject to a specific style of dramatic representation, each with specific requirements involving the structural supports of poetry, music, dance, costumes, etc.

Both Algarotti and Milizia had received educations that included elements of Lodolian functionalism, together with a Viconian understanding of the importance of man-made artifacts as the repositories of the cultural systems that created them. Being self-conscious with regard to ostentation in design, especially as evidenced in the display of Baroque and Rococo exuberance that had left its imprint in the palaces and churches of the urban centres they occupied, Algarotti and Milizia advocated a new approach to conceiving of their environments which even today informs the work of such famous architects as Aldo Rossi. Exploring the uses of the different parts of a building, and event, they pared away the dysfunctional encrustation of structurally meaningless ornamentation to re-compose the subject with a heightened knowledge of its true function. In so doing, they began to perceive the representational qualities inherent in the arts as something vital to the well-being of society. Borrowing Lodoli's formula, they applied it to the exploration of the theatre, exposing the individual parts and revealing the harmony that could exist in the event of a more rational participation on the part of all those involved.

The nature of their work was, of course, influenced by the social and political climate of their times. Italy, in the middle of the eighteenth century, was merely a collection of largely foreign-dominated states. The need to create a type of national

dialogue had led to the formation of networks across the country, most notably that of the Arcadian Academy, based in Rome and supreme among the many others. The realization by many Italians that there could be real benefits to the implementation of intellectual and economic reforms is characterized by Vernon Lee, a known Italophile, as : “a gradual waking up from lethargy and a shaking off of its bad effects.”² What, however, had become clear at the very outset of the academic debates taking place was that there was a great need to reintegrate the arts with the society that surrounded them. To do so would require some re-education as to the fundamental purposes of these arts, especially after such a long encounter with the excessive design flourishes of the Baroque period. This was best done through the development of new criteria by which the arts, in their multiple forms, could be judged as good or bad. Algarotti and Milizia stepped into the large openings created by these needs, revealing themselves fully able to provide guidelines, representative of a new system, by which to evaluate the quality of art. In so doing, they established themselves in the wider European debates of their day as two of the greatest Architect-Poets of the eighteenth century. The contributions made by these theorists are among the first examples of a functionalist approach to arts criticism.

With a growing trend in the research of theatre semiotics, the theatrical treatises of Algarotti and Milizia have become more pertinent to the present day. As modern theorists apply new approaches to the analysis of theatre as a total experience which

² Vernon Lee, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, p.32.

can be deconstructed into its component parts, which in turn can be explored for their cultural signification, we are reminded of the techniques of the two eighteenth century Architect-Poets who, more than two hundred years before, had done something very similar.

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APPENDIX

Note to the Appendix: I have followed, in this translation, the format layed out by Milizia in the *Trattato* of 1794. Accordingly, page numbers located in the upper-left corners refer to Milizia's original pagination system.

TRATTATO
 COMPLETO, FORMALE E MATERIALE
 DEL
 TEATRO
 DI
 FRANCESCO MILIZIA.



IN VENEZIA,



NELLA STAMPERIA DI PIETRO Q. GIO: BATT. PASQUALI.

M D C C X C I V.

CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI.

**TRATTATO
COMPLETO, FORMALE E MATERIALE
DEL
TEATRO**

(THE COMPLETE, FORMAL AND MATERIAL TREATISE ON THEATRE)

**BY
FRANCESCO MILIZIA**

**Published in Venice
Printed by DI PIETRO Q. GIO:BATT. PASQUALI
MDCCXCIV (1794)
Licensed by the Superiors**

(This Edition published by Forni Editore, Bologna, 1969)

[page 3]

PREFACE

The first edition of this book published in Rome on the 25th of December, 1771, disappeared quickly; from the 11th of January, 1772, it was no longer for sale or displayed; not for the reason that they were all sold, on the contrary, not even one was sold, but because all were recalled by order of the Master of the Sacred Pontifical Palace and they passed into the control of Don Baldassare Oldescalchi, Patron of Books, on condition that they would never again see the light of day. The causes of this event are noted in Rome, not to be found elsewhere. What displeased the author was that the critical reviews, already prepared, would no longer be published in the new journals of Rome. He would have been grateful to the Critics, because he would have profited from the insights of these valiant men for correcting his errors. Nevertheless this abortive censorship gave birth to some profit; he became his own critic, and he corrected as best as he could various passages of this work, modified others, and made some additions. He hopes for others, that the same

[page 4]

literary journals honour them with their learned criticism, like he was honoured in a newspaper, as printed in Venice by Fenzio with the title of "Literary Europe" [Europa Letteraria]. He loves the critics and is not offended by valid criticism rendered against his work; it bothers him as little as seeing his domestic servants beating the dust out of his clothes to protect them from moths. Therefore he asks with sincerity to be granted this grace, and he would be greatly obligated, as much as anyone can be, in the search for the truth.

Pleasures, other than to learn, cannot be found.

[page 5]

CONTENTS OF THE WORK**CHAPTER I**

On Theatre in General
Opposing Views with respect to Theatre
Ideas to Reconcile these Views
Origins of Theatre
Its Purpose
Its Divisions
Poetry
Beauty
Drama
Rules Common to each Drama

CHAPTER II

On Tragedy
Rules of Tragedy
History of Tragedy

CHAPTER III

On Comedy
Rules of Comedy
History of Comedy

CHAPTER IV

On the Pastoral

CHAPTER V

On Musical Works

CHAPTER VI

On the Subject of Musical Drama

CHAPTER VII

On Music
Influences of Music
Essence of Music
On the Symphony
On Recitative
On Arias
On Choirs (Chorus)
On Burlesque in Music

[page 6]

On Actors	CHAPTER VIII
On Dance	CHAPTER IX
On Decoration	CHAPTER X
	CHAPTER XI
On the Material Aspects of Theatre (Buildings)	
Descriptions of Ancient Theatres	
Descriptions of Modern Theatres	
Comparison of Ancient and Modern Theatres	
Concept of a New Theatre	
	CHAPTER XII
Causes of the Defects of Theatre, and methods to reestablish it	

**WE REFORMERS
OF THE PADUA OFFICE**

We give license to Pietro Pasquali, Printer of Venice, the right to re-print the book *entitled: Trattato, Completo, formale and materiale del Teatro*, by Francesco Milizia; observing the laws in printing matters, and presenting customary copies to the Public Libraries of Venice and Padua.

Dated June 6, 1794

(Paolo Bembo Rif.
(Piero Zen Rif.
(Francesco Vendramin Rif.

Registered [in libro a carte] 573, number 16.

Marcantonio Sanfermo, Secretary

[page 7]

CHAPTER I **On Theatre in General**

Theatre stands between the criticism of the serious world and the applause of high society. The moralists, both theological and philosophical, do nothing but perpetuate that foolishness, dissipation, and scandal, result, finally, in a source of sin and vice, and cry out at the destruction. Meanwhile the theatres are always crowded with every rank of person; and the ordinary citizens, the Nobility, the Ministers of State alike experience one of their principal delights: a delight boastful of innocence which is, on the contrary, one of utility.

Between these two extremes would one ever be able to find again something half virtuous, that would reconcile the two divided opposites? It would be a thing to satisfy everybody. Let us put it down to a search for this Philosophical Stone.

One cannot deny to the venerated moralists that the theatre, if it is full of defects, causes great harm. Therefore it should be destroyed. But it does not appear that it will allow itself to be destroyed: on the contrary, one continually erects new theatres, and a city, if deprived of theatre, is reputed a very wretched city: because not even one can deny, that the theatre is a great delight. Thus the reform. Theatre should be eradicated of the defects that infest it, and it should be reduced to the maximum usefulness, to the maximum capacity to please.

If this reform is possible, if it is practical, and if it will be happily followed and maintained, there will be no further disputes, everyone will be content, and each party will gain.

[page 8]

Instead of vainly employing their time in sterile declamation, those critics will gain, who will occupy themselves in keeping close watch over the amendments to theatre, to conserve the purity, and enjoy the fruits of their toil. The merry world will gain even much more by not being further disturbed in its recreation by scruples; a recreation in which they draw both pleasure and utility, and the one quality more exquisite is that until now it has not been dealt with.

The project of such a reform demands an analysis of theatre. But to carry out this analysis, and to say how much is necessary in this matter, we need one general forage; indeed a pillage upon many books. Muratori, Algarotti, Batteaux, d'Alembert, the Encyclopedia, the Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions, and many more to come into our possession. They will all be plundered, and they will bring back whole passages with them, without other citations, useless to the learned, and to the ignorant reader, and even more useless, in the case that it speaks to reason that the authorities must be silent. But why laugh at what has already been said? As long as the same abuses exist, everyone has the right to preach, and to laugh like children, many times at the same things.

The theatre, like many other things of this world, traces its origins to boredom, the general and powerful spring which excites the biggest movements in the human breast. Someone extremely bored (as many princes surely have been) had the first idea to represent on boards the misfortunes, errors and foolishness of our fellows to pass the time and to feel the insipidness of one's existence a little less.

You need not spend a lot of time to notice that others' misfortunes or stupidities, represented like this, consoles, or cures people from their own. The actors render human life for the spectators, and by it they feel the weight and bitterness of their own life lessened.

The first effect of theatre, then, is to be like a plaything given to adult children that are suffering, that is a pleasure to distract from the boredom, from the inertia, and from the disgust of life. This pleasure, that in its origins can be regarded as negative, has become afterwards, positive and real, to measure the representation of some interesting and curious action of human life and see if it is done in the manner most alive and most natural: exactly as in the way that the recognition of living expression on canvas or in some marble production of man or of nature gives true delight.

[page 9]

The second effect of theatre is utility because one such representation necessarily warns the audience to correct their vices and defects, and to suffer with patience their own misfortunes.

These two effects, pleasure and utility, always united, and amalgamated together, form the object of theatre. Its greatest object consists in the moral posted pleasantly in action to rouse and animate the audience to virtue.

There are four principle kinds of representations that are produced in the theatre: tragedy, comedy, pastoral, and opera.

1. *Tragedy* is the representation of a heroic deed, to excite terror and compassion.

2. *Comedy* is a feigned (simulated) action, in which is represented the ridiculous, to correct it.

3. *The rustic life*, represented with all its charms, forms the *Pastoral*.

4. *Opera* is tragedy, or comedy, placed in verse and in music, to excite a stronger impression. If a tragedy in verse is represented in music, it is called clearly opera; and if a comedy is in verse and in music, it is called burletta (burlesque).

These four kinds of theatrical representation form that part of poetry that is called dramatic poetry. For a greater understanding it is necessary to develop all the definitions.

Poetry is the imitation of nature expressed with measured discourse with the purpose of instructing and delighting. Prose or eloquence is the same nature expressed with free speech.

To imitate nature is the same as to imitate a selection of naturally perfect parts, which is not provided in nature. All the arts are used to imitate nature for our utility or pleasure. But nature does not produce anything (at least observable to us) that is perfectly good or bad, beautiful or ugly. She takes pleasure in mixing and confusing in the same subject the beautiful and the ugly, the bad and the good. The fine arts make that which nature does not make. The man of taste and of genius, after having well observed and studied nature, chooses the parts that to him seem the best, scattered here and there in natural production, and he forms a total work.

[page 10]

This complete work is perfect, relative to us. It is what is called the beauty of nature; totally imaginary, but the foundation, however, is entirely natural. Everything is nature, says Pope, but nature reduced to perfection and to method.

Tis Nature all, but Nature methodized.

Perhaps since the world is the world, it has not given us a beautiful thing like the Venus de' Medici; nevertheless all the parts of this statue are lovely, though in reality they exist only separately in nature, and the artist must do no more than to choose judiciously and unite them together, to form one beautiful work. In this way Zeusi, to paint a perfect beauty, did not make just the portrait of one beautiful woman, but from many beautiful women he chose the most beautiful traits. In the same way the Miser of Moliere is a perfect miser, who in the world does not exist. Therefore, it is said that the fine arts are those which have as their object the beauty of nature. The story and eloquence represent nature such as it is, and make an image of it; but poetry exhibits nature as it should be, it makes the description.

Therefore, the imitation of the beauty of nature is really the essence of poetry. The other of its parts then, *expressed with measured discourse*, namely the versification, do not make the essence and the foundation of poetry but are simply an embellishment, and for this reason are called the colouring. They can, therefore, form part of poems in prose, like the Adventures of Telemaco; and there are things that are not poems in verse, like that of Lucretius' Of the Nature of things.

Poetry is divided into two general categories. Poetry either tells of things that happened elsewhere, and this is the object of the Epic Poem; or represents things as they would actually happen before your eyes, and this is the object of the Dramatic Poem.

The Greek word, *Dramma*, means *to act*. This type of poetry has been given such a denomination because the action is not narrated but is performed by people who act and represent action.

And therefore the dramatic poem is an imitation of chosen actions, marvellous, heroic, or everyday, expressed with measured speech, with a purpose to instruct and delight. And since versification is not absolutely necessary to poetry, by extension it is essential neither to tragedy nor to comedy.

[page 11]

These can be well done in prose, although, however they are a good deal better in verse (*).

If nature desired to show herself to mankind in all her glory, that is, in all her possible perfection in every subject, merely imitating her would have been all the value of art. But since she has played the game of mixing her best traits with an infinity of others of inferior type,

(*) Verses, but not rhymes. To all it is well known that rhyme is an invention of barbarous peoples, these not knowing how to mould the verses harmoniously, they felt some type of pleasure in the rhyme. In fact in the most uncultured quarters of Asia, America, and the Laplands, rhyme is found firmly entrenched. And perhaps it existed even in Greece in times preceding Homer. At the meeting of the elegant Greeks and the Latins, *quibus dedit ore rotunda Muse loqui*, they escaped it with equal study, with which their ancestral inculcations, and the other rudenesses were looking. With the launch of the Latin Empire, rhyme came from Scythia to take Latium by storm, and with troops with duels, with feuds, and with many other barbarities, that are inaccurately called Gothic, in more foggy times the Leonine Verses disappeared, which would have made Virgil and Horace die in spasms. But Dante, Petrarch and all the modern poets, imitators of this rustiness, liked it very much. In this way rhyme was introduced close to us, that we might conserve it dearly in spite of our supposed good taste, and of our progress in every sort of culture. So great is the strength of habit!

But if rhyme is disgusting in prose, how can it become beautiful in verse? It will please only those who have taste, and a spirit altered by habit. In effect it is worthwhile to have an abundance of spirit, only to lose it in the frivolous, obscure search for rhyme, which enfeebles the thoughts, and often says that which was not intended.

And why go like this of good need to knock against many rocks to slice trifles? He who attempts to surmount a difficulty solely for the merit of surmounting it, is crazy, on par with some charlatan who strings grains of millet through the eye of a needle. How extensive is the difficult inutility! The motto of good sense is,

Nisi utile est quod agimus, stulta est gloria.

Rhymers, song writers, you already know, that your Homers, Anacreons, Theocritus's, Euripedes', never dreamed of adorning rhyme, nor to hinder verses in a number capriciously prescribed. Their study and the study of Virgil, of Horace, of Lucretius, of Catallus, of Terence, was not of rhyming; but to season their verses with rhythm and with harmony. But the poor French without rhyme would remain almost without verse. They think so. But our greatest Italian poets have rhymed, they were liked, and are liked; therefore rhyme is followed: Here is the language of those who do not want taste subdued to reason.

[page 12]

there is necessity, therefore, of a choice; and this choice has demanded some rules regarding taste.

The drama, therefore has its rules, some of which are general and applicable to every form of drama, others are particular to each of the four types.

Rules Common To Every Form of Drama

I. *Delight and instruction always together.* In nature and in the arts things touch each other much more, how much greater rapport they have with us. Whence the works will have with us the double rapport of utility and of pleasure, and will create a sensitivity to those who do not have but one of the two:

*Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit Utile Dulci,
Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo.*

The end of poetry is pleasure and pleasure moves the passions. But to give us a pleasure both solid and perfect, one must never be moved except by those passions that make us feel alive, and not those which are enemies to wisdom. The horror of crime, behind which walks shame, dread, repentance, with a long train of other torments; compassion for the unhappy, of a great benefit to all humanity; the admiration of great examples, which leave in the heart a stimulus to virtue; pure love, and by consequence legitimate: these are the passions, which for their unanimous and constant consensus in all the world, must be dealt with in the drama, and in general with poetry.

Poetry was not made to foment corruption in corrupt hearts but to be the delight of virtuous souls. Virtue situated in certain situations will always be a moving spectacle. At the bottom of even the most corrupt hearts there is a voice that speaks always for it, and which the honest understand with much great pleasure, much more that they find a proof of their perfection.

The great poets have never claimed that their works, fruit of much vigilance and perspiration, would be destined to entertain the lightness of a vain spirit or to awaken the drowsiness of a lazy Midas. With such an aim how could men be great?

The tragic and comic poems of the Ancients were examples

[page 13]

of the terrible vengeance of the gods, or of the just censure of men. They made understood to the audience that to avoid the one and the other they had need not only to appear good but effectively to be good. They were, moreover, a cheer for and a pleasant school of integrity and decency. And such they must always be, dramatic works.

II. *Subject Extraordinarily Marvellous.* Actions that are ordinary, common, trivial are not very notable; the marvellous and extraordinary give strong and new impressions. The extraordinarily marvellous consists either in the things that are done or in the means that are employed to do it.

III. *Unity of Subject, Place and Time.* What is drama? An action. And why not two, three or four actions? Because the human spirit can not embrace more objects at one time. If more, the interest divided is enfeebled. Therefore a play can have but one subject.

The unity of subject demands that of time and of place. One plots against Caesar? If this conspiracy took place over a month, it would be necessary to recount everything that happened in all the month, and the conspiracy would not go along quickly anymore. The spectator does not stay in the theatre but four or five hours; a long time, then, would the action last, or more and more extend to the duration of a day. And since the spectator does not change place, therefore everything would have to happen in the same space that is in front of them, that is in a piazza, in a street, in the courtyard of a palace. To begin an action in Rome, and to go to Mexico to finish it, is to weaken by travel. The marvellous then is in the *Threefold Unity*.

IV. *Simplicity and Variety.* It is not enough that an action be singular, it is also necessary that it be neither too complicated so to puzzle the spirit nor too simple so to weaken it.

Its situations, its characters, the concerns if made too uniformly would be disgusting. But if the action was crossed by some foreign element, and poorly intersected at that, the pleasure would be interrupted, because the soul set in motion does not like to be arrested, and greatly deviated from its aim.

It is necessary then that the action be within time, of the same variety and solitary; it is worth saying that in all its parts, although with differences between them, are mutually linked, in order to compose one whole that appears natural.

Therefore the cross-dressing of men as women and of women as

[page 14]

men must be done with great parsimony and with verisimilitude. And who can not perceive in the voice, in gestures, in the physique that one is not a man?

Very often a dramatic character in some prison or garden says that he wants to sleep and suddenly the good, kind sleep invests his eyes, and he sleeps melodiously. Where is the naturalism here? And what kind of naturalism is there in the frequent suicides that they look to make in the name of love? And for love to renounce frequently kingdoms, I do not know if this ever happened in the world of the rulers.

V. *Number of Actors according to the need of the Subject.* A big variety brings confusion: a very small number, insipidness.

To make use of useless characters, to fill up space and then to make them disappear or remain, without being called for of necessity by the action, is contrary to the principle of unity.

VI. *Distinct Characters.* It is nature which prescribes this. She has posted a notable distinction in all things. Hence every author will have his particular character distinct from the others; each always maintains his own, after the principal he has manifested, and each one will create that which he must create.

VII. *Contrast in the Characters.* It stands out greatly the difference of characters and the paragon best made if you introduce, for example, one indulgent brother and the other inflexible, a miserly father to face a prodigal son, a fierce hero and a humane hero, namely a false hero face to face with a real hero.

VIII. *Spiritual Images.* Jove thundering, Neptune with his trident, Apollo, the Aurora, Venus, Diana, these are decrepit images which bespeak the overused images of a false system. On the contrary, for us they are insignificant and insulting. The description of material things, of spring, of a storm, speak only to the eyes but they do not instruct. It is the images of the spirit which enchant us, teach us, and which talk to the heart. To call sycophants *tyrannical idolaters of the King*, what a beautiful spiritual image! Everybody sees that the flatterers do not adore the Kings, but use them in the service of making themselves masters.

These are the primary general rules common to every species of drama.

True drama, therefore, is a school of virtue, and all the difference between the well-purified theatre and the books and lessons of morality consists in the fact that, in the theatre, the teaching is in action, is interesting, is demonstrated through grace and delight.

You now enter into the details of each type of drama.

[page 15]

CHAPTER II. On Tragedy

Tragedy is the imitation of the life of heroes, the topics for the most part because of their elevation to more violent passions and catastrophe.

The action is heroic if its effect on a soul elevated to an extraordinary degree stops at a certain point. Heroism is a courage, a valour, a generosity over and above that of the common spirit. Hercules wants to die for Martian. Pulcheria speaks to the usurper, Foca, with the fiery pride of her birth: *Tyrant, descend from the Throne, and give the place to your master.* These are heroic traits.

Even vice enters heroism, and the vices are heroic when they have as their principle some quality that supposes a boldness and a steadfastness which are uncommon, such as the boldness of Catalina and the strength of Medea.

When the poets show us great men preyed on by bigger agitations, one must of necessity feel terror and compassion.

The principle, therefore, of tragedy is human sensibility. Terror is a sentiment living in its own weakness at the sight of a great danger. Terror is found between dread and despair. Dread leaves us dimly, at least confusedly the means to avoid the danger.

Despair throws us into the danger all the same. Terror hits the spirit, destroys it in some manner and cuts off the use of all one's faculties in a way in which you cannot escape the danger, so you throw yourself at it. A bolt of lightning will create fear, but the misfortunes of humanity afflict us.

Compassion is a necessary accompaniment to terror when the misfortune of those similar to ourselves is the cause. The misfortunes of others terrify us and render us compassionate because we see a certain parity between the unhappy and ourselves being the nature that suffers the same in the spectator and in the actor. It is a moral instinct that carries men to compassion like the physical instinct which pushes them to nourish, propagate, and preserve themselves.

This mix of compassion and of terror makes tragedy. It will be truly tragic when a virtuous man, or at least more virtuous

[page 16]

than depraved, is a victim of his duty, or of his own weakness, or of other peoples' passions, or of a certain fatality. By fatality, however, one must not take it to mean more than a contest of unexpected and unknown causes, to which all men are subject.

If the atrocity of the action unites with the splendour of the greatness and with the elevation of the personages, the action will be tragic and heroic at the same time and will produce in us a great compassion mixed with a terror more sensible because we see men, and men grander than ourselves, more powerful more sublime personages, princes, kings, oppressed by the misfortunes of humanity.

In this way one has the pleasure of excited emotion which does not end in pain because this is the sentiment of people who suffer: but the excited emotions that to put it this way, is to cause reflection; it stays at the point in which it must be to give us pleasure.

The poets have profited from these two phenomena that is in the misfortunes of the great, and the sensibility of the spectators to excite horror to great delight and the love of sublime virtues. This is the great goal of tragedy.

Therefore the subject of tragedy consists in misfortunes, in perils, in extraordinary sentiments and in the hateful vices of great men. Its end is to elevate the spirit, to form the heart, to humanize us to compassion, to make us prudent and upright. The means to conduct us to this great end are terror and compassion. The rules, therefore, of tragedy must be relative to its principle, its method, and its ends.

Rules Of Tragedy

I. *Noble and heroic subject.* The more the subjects are elevated, the more they are interesting. Therefore the choice of characters, and above all the protagonist, must fall upon people of high status, who once involved in the gravest of misfortunes, will make a bigger impression.

Even the mediocre ranks are subjected daily to tragic occurrences: and, therefore, the greater number of spectators, who are in middling condition, and nearer to the unhappy who suffer, would seem to have more interest in a citizen-like tragic event than in an heroic tragic event. Therefore, should we write tragedies about the merchant and the blacksmith? Tragedy does not consent to

[page 17]

this degradation. The object of the fine arts is to embellish nature; whence the tragedy must incline to the great, the noble and its subjects are always sovereigns or gentlemen of the first sphere, on these to attach more strength and more happiness, and they are the means more valid to augment terror and compassion.

II. *Respectable Personages.* One cannot have interest in someone whom one does not first hold in esteem. If, therefore, the poet wants us to have interest for his characters, he will render them likeable and estimable first, and then make them unhappy; and in this way we are inspired to a veneration for them which makes us want to cry.

Therefore, the principal character in tragedy must never be a wicked one for whom one cannot have an automatic compassion; he will be an unhappy hero for someone else's sake. A wicked person can enter the scene to contribute more to the principal subject.

The less interesting misfortunes are those which occur by pure fate, like those of Oedipus. These cause a certain horror but do not interest anybody. From Oedipus and from other similar tragedies one does not take away anything but a disgusting and useless knowledge of the miseries of the human condition.

III. *Well-known Subjects, but distant or ancient.* Antiquity and distance render the personages more estimable: for the near and especially for the contemporary one does not have great respect. Therefore the choice of subjects and characters of some antiquity but traditionally well enough known will always be the most suitable for tragedy: characters of recent times could introduce the excitation of hate.

IV. *Interesting Characters.* Not only the character of the principal personages must be interesting but the mishaps that they will have must be so great as to reasonably distress and dismay a courageous man.

An action either is heroic for itself alone, when it has a great topic such as the preservation of a sovereign, of a city, of a nation: or is heroic by the character of those who create it, when they are monarchs or subjects of the highest class. That a Roman Emperor 40 years old despairs to have to forsake a woman beloved by him for a long time, will this ever awaken great compassion? And tragic Tito will be historic Tito? It would be the same to paint Cato a gallant and Brutus a dandy.

[page 18]

V. *Love that is modest and with sobriety (Moderation)*. Of all the human passions the most general is that of love. There will not, perhaps, be anyone who has not felt it at least once in their life; more than enough to interest them in the representation. But so that the love will be worthy of tragic theatre it is necessary to be the essential knot of the argument, and not only pull you by force to fill up some vanity. It must, therefore, be either a passion really tragic, regarded as weakness, and troubled by remorse; or it must lead to misfortune and to crime, to make us see what a dangerous beast it is.

The theatre, nevertheless, can be wonderful without some shadow of love. The ancients never admitted it to the drama perhaps because women did not act. We have introduced it to you both directly and indirectly, we fostered it, and with too much cowardice. Therefore, not to wrong our tragedies they are blamed for lessons of love, and much more how much better they are judged. One is characterized pure love but with dignity, and it teaches you to evade it or to guide it well.

VI. *Terror and compassion*. The errors of the great are almost public calamities.

Delirant Reges, plectuntur Archivi.

Therefore, the tragedy must make us cry.

Tragi-Comedy, therefore, is a composition in bad accord because it wants to make one cry and laugh in succession. It excites contrary movements which turn the heart inside out. All which we arrange to participate in delight, impedes us from passing quickly to distress and to pity. This taste, although palpably bad, reigns together with many other defects in quite a few Theatres.

But to excite the tragic sentiment it is not necessary to shed blood. Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus, is in a position more cruel than if she had been massacred. And how many punishments are more terrible than one's own death?

It has been questioned if it is permitted to bloody the scene. The ancients, accustomed to ferocity, did not have any scruples about it. Horace, however, excludes from the view of the spectators events too inhumane; and with reason, because tragedy proposes to inspire terror and pity, but not horror; and bloody spectacles are horrendous and barbarous and offend humanity. They offend

[page 19]

also the morals and harden the heart, as happens to the butchers and to the surgeons. The ancients dabbled in these cruelties and the English have conserved in their theatres some gradient of this fierce taste.

One can more and more suffer in theatre some quick death, like some suicide; because such mishaps are extremely vivid and instantaneous, and the spectators are not much disturbed by it, especially when the dead are quickly carried out of view.

VII. *Hatred of vice, love of virtue.* Here is the great object of tragedy. This is its primary and indispensable obligation. The biggest use of theatre is to render virtue lovable to men, to accustom them to it, to make it interesting for them, to give this fold to their hearts and to propose to them grand examples of firmness and of courage in their misfortunes to fortify them, and to elevate their sentiments. If the vice stays at times unpunished it must always go highly detested, and be rendered very odious; and virtue, if it cannot be always triumphant, will be always lovable and glorious (*).

(*) The style of tragedy must be solemn, and composed of noble and great sentiments, and not overly clever and far fetched. The words will be level and simple, as becomes serious people, who consult among themselves regarding very important affairs: no thing is more unbecoming to them than the desire to make clever display.

In Italy a certain affectation called Purity has erected a tribunal that pronounces a sentence of *barbarism* on anyone whose writing does not serve of the words registered in a fat book named for a tired metaphor the Dictionary of the Crusca. (Accademia della Crusca) A living language is a form of mercury that all the Cruscas of the universe do not know how to fix. Some ancient words out of necessity are abolished, *verborum vetus interit ætas*, and of them are born the new, *et juvenum ritu florent modo nata, vigentque*; or because the concurrence of circumstances shows other words with other peoples which seem more expressive; or because it improves the national ear, ancient pronunciation is corrected to disfigure the word, to give more harmony. And who would like to use now *unquanquo*, *guari*, *chenti*, *vaolo*, and other out of date words? And why does one not use words that are new and rare, so that they will be understood by every Italian and will explain the thought well? The principal end of the Dictionary is not to teach languages but to explain the significance of voices and their strength; in this way the Crusca is a reservoir of terms and phrases that were and are generally in use; whence one should at least every twenty years reprint with the addition of new expressions. The Neapolitans believed the Italian language to be dead (now they believe it alive) and they. . .

[page 20]

These are the principal rules of tragedy. These together with many others are not learned from the pedantry of poetic precepts but from the original works left by the great poets.

History Of Tragedy

And who would believe that the majesty of tragedy traces its origins to drunkenness?

While Greece was, so to speak, an infant, certain sacrifices were offered to Bacchus, consisting of a goat which, before the sacrifice, was carried around the streets amongst a crowd of cheerful people, singing and jumping, at the head of which, appearing on a donkey was a man disguised as Silenus. The march became joined by others, that soaked in mud and climbing over some

. . . are therefore compelled to write, as if they lived in the 15th century, esteemed as the Golden Century, although it was like the Iron Age. How many phrases and words French, Spanish and Provençal are not seen clearly in Boccaccio and in other writers which we call classics? And now for us they will be deadly sins the Gallicisms, The Anglicizations?

Woe to that language, which is not enriched continually with new words! If it is true that words are signs of ideas, it will be likewise that at the rate at which ideas increase, so should the number of words increase at the same rate. So it has been for some 50 years now that we have seen prodigious progress made in the science of reasoning, calculus, geometry, mechanics, astronomy, metaphysics, experimental physics, natural history, commerce, war, and styles! This is a marvellous source of new terms unknown to ancient languages. And if the new ideas are drafted by foreign peoples why does one have loathing to adopt a new vocal sign? The words, therefore, cannot be but in a perpetual mobility, as well recognized and expressed by Horace:

*Multa renascentur, quæ jam cecidere, cadentque
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi.*

And what of this novelty, this use, this freewill born, if one does not have the courage to get out of this servile pedantry? The English, free in everything, want also to liberate their language which is, therefore, the richest, the most epic, the most energetic, borrowing from all languages, all the arts, all the sciences, the words, the transpositions, the inversions, that are necessary for them. All is naturalized

[page 21]

carts, with glasses or with jugs in hand, and half drunk howled the praises of the god of drinkers, with all the crowd making the chorus. From this time comes the most noble of the dramatic poems.

To vary this shapeless type of song Thespis thought to introduce to it an actor. The applause to this, his invention, inspired the genius to establish two. That created dialogue.

Aeschylus was then the first to give a little more of an order to this representation; when from the praises of Bacchus and of the other gods, he extended it to represent the actions of the heroes; yet nevertheless always conserving the denomination of its origins calling it tragedy which means *Song of the Goats* or of the Billy Goat. Aeschylus moreover invented the decorations and the machines. He adorned the scene with pictures, with statues, with altars, and with tombs. He introduced the shadows and the Furies with snakes for hair. He brought us the sounds of trumpets, and the crash of thunder. He gave to his actors honest masks, their shoes the cothurnus, and the clothes of

among this nation free and learned. And we that adopt the most frivolous styles, why don't we imitate one with reasonable liberty? Excessive respect for the Latin language has made us neglect the progress of our Italian, which would be very enriched and improved if Italian authors were to always write in Italian like the Latins always wrote in Latin and the Greeks always in Greek. And more than that, our Italian speech would be spread in all Europe, and even a little further than that if Rome, instead of its barbarous Latin, would use it on all its documents. Italian music has done our language such service. The principal care of a writer must be clarity; one does not talk but to be understood. But the precision of terminology is the distinctive character of great writers. So how can one use the property or convenience of words when one does not have the liberty to choose the most expressive and the most suitable wherever they can be found? Everybody knows that real synonyms are not given and that delicate difference that is observed in natural things that seem the most similar one discerns also in the words which appear the same but are not. Therefore the property of the diction requires novelty and abundance of words. From this property then is born precision, elegance, energy, according to the nature of the subjects which are dealt with, or of the objects that they would depict.

In order to write well it should be philosophy that enriches us with ideas. Truth, simplicity, the natural; these are what every writer must always have in front of his eyes. Therefore, farewell Crusca. Farewell rhetoric. Farewell poetics. Pedantry . . . farewell.

[page 22]

skin so majestic that these theatrical clothes were converted to priestly use on days of ceremonies. Aeschylus did not have need of a Master of the Chapel since it was the same person who composed the music and the dance for his tragedies. By order of the magistrate he diminished the chorus, reducing it to fifteen people, because of the discomfiture produced by the *Eumenidies* which was composed of fifty people representing furies in a manner so terrible that many women and children died of fear.

Sophocles reduced it according to the rules of decency and truth, and taught them to be content with a noble and quiet bearing, without pride, without pomp, and without that gigantic fierceness that is beyond the truly heroic. To engage the heart in all the action, he worked the verses with success. He raised the event with his genius and his study to a point that his works have become the true rules of beauty. The applause of his master work, *Oedipus*, made him die of joy. He was, however, in his 90th year.

Euripedes marched down the same beautiful tracks, and enriched his works by the maxims of Anaxagoras his teacher. Socrates was never missing at any new representation of this great poet. Cicero always carried in his pocket his [Euripedes'] tragedies, and when the hired assassin arrived who killed him, he was reading the *Medea* of Euripedes. Singing the verses of Euripedes saved the lives of those Athenian soldiers who were defeated in Sicily on an unhappy expedition with Nicias. Having returned to their country the first care that they had was to run to the house of the author of these wonderful verses, to which they owed life and liberty. The rejoicing which was shown Euripedes is the greatest which can be felt in the human heart.

Greek tragedy is simple, natural, little complicated, and easy to be judged. The action is prepared and unravelled without effort. It seems that it was made without art and, therefore, it is the paragon of the work of art and genius. Such it must be.

Hence it appears that dramatic poetry does not come from Egypt, from where almost all of the arts and sciences sprang. The Egyptians and the Hebrews never knew the theatre, as is claimed by M. Racine when he says that Moisé gave the first idea of drama in the book of Job, for the magnificent reason that this book was written in a type of dialogue. It is true, however, that Jerusalem had a theatre and even an Amphitheatre, but not in the great age of

[page 23]

Solomon but under Herod the Great when it was under the subjection of Rome.

Rome knew the drama very late. 390 years had already passed since its foundation when, afflicted by a fiery pestilence, it appealed to the gods. In order to satisfy the gods, the wise Senate did not find a better expedient than to bring from Etruria the histrionics, so called because they played the flute, which in Etruscan is called *hister*. These people, without reciting some verse and without imitation, using discourse, danced to the sound of flutes and gestured in various ways. The young Romans then followed in the imitation of these histrionics, adding verses without measure and cadence, verses which made even the dogs possessed. From this was born the satire, of which this is not the place to argue. Finally Livio Andronico (Livy), of Greek birth, brought to Rome, 514 years after its foundation, the knowledge of dramatic poetry. In this way the Romans, imitating the Greeks, had great theatres, but never great dramas; a fatality which still endures. Such is the ordinary destiny of imitators. The Romans were original in the art of war and in commanding subjugation of a big part of the world, but in the sciences, and in the arts, they were the disciples of the Greeks. They never had any worthy men, and of those few who existed, Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Titus Livy, Vitruvius, Seneca, Plinius, not one was really Roman. Modern Rome has the same destiny. She cannot take pride but in a Metastasio, and a Giulio Romano, although top men in every manner, being foreigners, have always lived among the seven hills. The Latin tragedies were poor and Seneca, next to Euripedes, is a child.

Up sprang a good dozen centuries of darkness (*). In France

(*) After Justinian until the 15th century one does not find either tragedies or comedies composed. In the 12th century there was an operetta entitled *Ludus Paschalis de adventu et interitu Antechristi* staged. Put into the scene was the Pope, the emperor, the kings of France, of Germany, of Greece, of Babilonia and company, the Antichrist, and the Synagogue. Many kings were left fascinated by the Antichrist, but at the end the Antichrist is always defeated. It is not known if such elegant drama was performed.

In these very dark times saltimbanks, histrionics, charlatans, mimes, and poets of the people were very popular. Clowns of every type, they assaulted the crowds at the courts, especially during the great feasts. As reward they were given arms, horses, cloths, money; and the princess and the great ladies added frequently their favours. Like rascals, although in abjection, nevertheless they existed almost everywhere.

[page 24]

in the last century the great Corneille restored tragedy to its Greek base, raised even more controlled by sweet Racine, and maintained in a rich progress by Crebillon, by Voltaire and by other philosophical poets.

At the same time Shakespeare in England dealt with it with astonishing greatness, and with insufferable defects. Johnson took away many irregularities; Addison laid down all the corrections; and now the two rival nations compete and ape each other for enjoyment and they enjoy a noble and purged tragic theatre.

Italy, which in the rebirth of the sciences and of the fine arts has emulated Greece in training the European nations, had good tragedies before the others and she has yet those of the famous, like the *Sofonisba* of Trissino, the *Rosimonda* by Rucellai, and the *Merope* by Maffei. But they are condemned in the libraries to the entertainment of the moths. In public theatres they are no longer suffered. In Italy it has been implanted like an axiom that at the theatre one must go to laugh and to cheer up and not to be inflicted and to cry. Crying is an embarrassment.

In France the populace which certainly does not suffer from melancholy, loves to be entertained more by crying than by laughing; and it is marvelous that the Italians, apers of the French in many puerilities, blush then to cry at a tragedy.

But what does the tear or the laugh matter, provided that it gives pleasure and instructs? Some, however do not understand how tearful tragedy can bring delight. It is very easy to understand it. Tragedy is an imitation, and every imitation is always pleasant. We like in a painting objects of the greatest melancholy and the greatest terror for no other reason than they are well imitated. Moreover, we like the novelty and the extraordinary greatness of objects, and we like much more, when our curiosity is piqued with the challenge of unravelling them. The difficulty augments more of our passions; it makes us more attentive, producing in us a pleasant excitement. Hence it is that every pain, whether pity, or indignation, or tears, that the poets, the orators, the musicians, the painters can cause us; every sadness, in short, produced by the fine arts, entertains us a lot, and brings us great delight.

But also here the *ne quid nimis* has a place. Therefore, a havoc of death and of blood will convert, as it is said, sad pleasure to an unpleasant horror. Tragedy, then it is well agreed, afflicts us too. It terrifies us. It makes us pour out tears; but it gives us delight and it will be useful to us.

[page 25]

The shame, then, of crying is a false shame. The greatest heroes are never ashamed to scatter tears. Achilles, Alexander, Marcellus, Scipio, and Hannibal knew how to cry. And how can crying dishonour a great man if the sensibility it produces is a virtue? The tears shed by Aneas, for his joyous feelings to see honour returned to his country and to its brave warriors who were courageously defending it, were tears of a well-born soul. *Sunt lacryme rerum* says Virgil. From this spring are derived tears, whether of sadness or of tenderness, of joy or of admiration, it will always have the quality of its origin; and will be virtuous, and commendable, if such will be the cause of it.

The first reproach, then, which the Italian theatre rightly merits, is to be devoid of tragedy, a useful and beautiful part of dramatic poetry.

CHAPTER III On Comedy

If tragedy examines vice with respect to how much it is hateful, comedy examines it in so much as it is ridiculous.

The ridiculous consists in defects that cause shame without causing pain: it is a deformity of customs which offends propriety, the accepted traditions, and also the morals of the polite world. It consists, in short, in an assortment of things, which were not made to go together. Stoic gravity would be ridiculous to a child as gallantry would be to a magistrate.

This ridiculousness, chosen with skill, expressed with jests, refined and light, and represented in a most spicy aspect, makes us laugh, because foolishness, which does not have painful consequences, is ridiculous.

The laugh derives, ordinarily, from pride. Comparing ourselves with an inferior raises in us a secret elevation, that causes laughter. The foundation, then, and the principle of comedy is malice, and human malignancy. We view the defects of our peers with a satisfaction mixed with contempt, when these defects are neither afflictive enough to give us compassion nor shocking enough to arouse terror. The images of such defects make us smile, if they are depicted with finesse; make us

[page 26]

laugh, if the traits of this malicious joy are sharpened by surprise.

It would certainly be more advantageous to change our depraved satisfaction to a philosophical pity; but it is found greatly easier and sure in employing human malice to correct the other vices of humanity, more or less like employing points of diamonds to clean the same diamond.

The ridiculous, then, is essentially the object of comedy. The philosopher reasons against vice. The satirist takes it up again with sourness. The orator combats it with fire. The comic attacks it with derision, and succeeds in this often better than those others who use a stronger argument. With its ridicule, comedy tends to clean the customs and to correct the exterior. It raises us in the part of the mask and presents to us skilfully the mirror.

Comedy has three major divisions. 1. If it puts men in a succession of events, it is called *Comedy of Situation*. This type is the least enjoyable because it makes us laugh as one who laughs at the improvised fall of somebody.

2. Called *Pathetic Comedy*, when communal virtues are represented with traits which render them loveable, and are exposed to dangers and to disgrace, which renders them interesting. Such a style of comedy instructs because it interests us, and the examples that it proposes to us move us more sensibly.

3. When one depicts vice to render it ridiculous and contemptible, it is called *Comedy of Character*. This returns to the source of vices, and attacks them in their course; therefore this is more useful than the others. And it is this which presents the mirror to men and makes them blush in their exact images.

This third type of comedy is the most difficult, and as a consequence, the most rare. Expecting of its author an accomplished study of the customs of his times, a just and ready discernment, and a strength of imagination, which will bring together in only one point of view the traits which his penetration could not understand as separate.

One needs, then, a philosophical eye that connects not only the extremes but also the middle of things. Between the wicked hypocrite and the credulous devout person is interposed the upright man who unmask the wickedness of the one and who pities the credulity of the other. Between the corrupt customs of society and the ferocious integrity of the misanthrope, appears the

[page 27]

moderation of the sage, who hates vice but does not hate mankind. What is the end of philosophy if not to strike us with the fixed point of virtue?

Comedy of *Character* becomes even more admirable if it is united with that of *Situation*, that is, if the people splattered with vices and with errors are put in humiliating surroundings whence they are exhibited to the laughter and to the contempt of the spectators.

Who knows well to study the customs of the times, finds an inexhaustible fount of Comic subjects of *Character*. To unmask the *Hypocrisy of Virtue*, the *Friend of the Court*, the *Magnifico living in poverty*, the *Short-lived Modesty*, the *Mistrustful (person)*, the *Fashion Plate*, the *Sybarite* . . . and where does not one find the ridiculous? Politeness veils the vices with a type of fine drapery, the opposite of which the great masters know to draw the nude.

The ridiculous is found everywhere. There is no action, thought, gesture, word, manner, that is not susceptible. Hence it is that each of the above-mentioned types of comedy can be treated in three different manners that can be called: 1. *Noble Comedy*, 2. *Civic (Town) Comedy*, 3. *Low Comedy*.

1. *Noble Comedy* depicts the customs of the great, which are not differentiated from those of the populace except in the form: The vices of the great are less coarse, and for this are more well-coloured with politeness, that succeed in sometimes forming the character of a likeable man. They are candied poison that the spectator shares. But few are capable of studying them, and even fewer understand them.

The greatest part of the ridicule of the great is so well composed that it is barely visible. Their vices have, I do not know what of the majestic, that escapes the jest: they put the usual situations in play and then betray them.

The *Intriguer* who cowardly creeps over the land to better his position, the *Swaggerer* ignorant of real glory, the *Feigner of Sincerity*, the *Mysterious One* of frivolous trifles, etc. Are they not good subjects for a noble comedy?

2. The *Civic Comic* consists in a false air and in pretensions. The progress of the polish and taste he has approximates the *Noble Comic* but without uniting it and confusing it together. The vanity which he has taken in citizenship raises him a thunder higher than before, he treats as boorish everything that does not have the air of the refined world.

3. The *Low Comic* imitates the customs of the low populace namely of those called plebs. This style can have, like Flemish painting, the merit of vivacity, of truth, of joy,

[page 28]

like also he has the finesse of grace, and is susceptible to every honesty and to every delicacy: and gives also a new force to the Civic Comic, and the Noble Comic, when contrasted with them. You must not, however, confuse low comedy with coarse comedy: This is a defect of all the types, as now you shall see.

The three types of comedies, treated in three separate ways, have the following principal rules.

Rules for Comedy

I. **Subtlety of Ridicule.** There is a certain vile ridicule, which either annoys us or makes us nauseous: this is *Coarse Ridicule* which must never have access to the theatre. The true ridicule that is dramatized, must be always pleasant, delicate, and never productive of some worrisome secret. The most pleasant and most difficult comedy is this, that is only comedy of reason. This beautiful species of comedy does not look to excite awkwardly an immoderate laugh in a coarse multitude, but elevates, rather, this multitude almost in spite of itself, to laugh with finesse and with spirit.

II. **To approximate with verisimilitude the pretence of reality.** The tragic action has often some element of truth: at least the names are historical. On the contrary in comedy everything is pretence, and even the names are fake. This pretence, however, in order to make a profitable impression, must all be likely. And because comic subjects are more familiar than tragic ones, the defect of resemblance is easier to discover in comedy than in tragedy; whence, also, for this other motive, it requires an exact and rigorous verisimilitude.

It is true that the comedy is an exaggerated imitation but this exaggeration, however, must have its limits. The perspective of theatre demands a strong vividness and big gestures, but in just proportions, such that the eye of the spectator can simplify without compromising the truth of nature: In this way then the formal theatre has its optics, and the picture is wrong if the spectator perceives that nature has been surpassed.

III. **Unity and continuity of character.**

IV. **Facility and simplicity in the weaving of the plot.**

[page 29]

There is not a combination possible in strict rigour, but a natural range of familiar events from which the intrigue of the comedy must be formed.

V. Truth of sentiment. If the principle end of the comedy is to instruct, how is it possible to instruct without truth?

VI. Naturalness of Dialogue. Therefore the soliloquies, the asides, the ambiguities, born from resemblance or from parody, are nonsensical.

VII. Hide every art in the linking of situations. From this artifice results the theatrical illusion. That which happens in a scene must be such a natural picture of the society that it makes us forget that we are at a performance. The prestige of art is to make artifice disappear in such a manner that the illusion not only precedes every reflection but repulses it and distances it.

VIII. The comic style must be humble and modest, with those habits, however, with those graces, with that taste of the urbane, and with those jests that are suitable to the language in which the comedy is written.

If comedy, especially if it is a mixture of *Character* and of *Situation*, is treated morally and decently according to the prescribed rules, its sweet usefulness is of the greatest evidence. To call it into doubt, and to pretend that men will be insensible to contempt and to shame; is to suppose they cannot blush nor correct themselves of the defects about which they blush; is to make the characters independent of proper love which is the soul and the motive; finally placing oneself above public opinion by whose weakness and pride are enslaved, and from which the same virtue has great trouble to extract itself.

Each nation has its own particular comic taste dependant on its particular constitution of government, and on its own customs, on fashions, on manners, etc. and so what is ridiculous for one country, will not be for another, although the foundation will be always, for everyone, the same, that is utility and pleasure. There are, however, subjects commonly comic for all nations. These are planted in the common characters, and in the radical vice of humanity. The miser of Plautus has his eccentricities even now for everybody, and he will have them always. *Stinginess*, that insatiable greed that one deprives all in order to miss nothing; *Envy* mixture of esteem and of hate for advantages that one does not have; *Hypocrisy* vice disguised in virtue; *Adulation* infamous commerce of baseness, and of vanity;

[page 30]

all of these and infinite other vices exist perpetually wherever there are men. Everyone will disapprove, in their peers, of these defects, of which one will believe himself free, and will take a malicious pleasure in seeing them humiliated; this assures forever the success of the comic, who attacks common customs.

The local and contemporary comic then, is restricted to place, to time, to the circle of the ridiculous that he attacks; and this is frequently more laudable, and more effective because destroying his models hinders ridiculousness from spreading itself and perpetuating itself.

But one will contest, perhaps, the utility of comedy for the reason that men do not recognize their own images in the defects of others? False reasoning. One believes to deceive others but never deceives oneself. And one who is expecting a position, would dare show himself to the public, if he believes himself to be as well-known to others as he knows himself?

Moreover, everyone can be made better through comedy. Make good comedies and you will see frequent corrections similar to those we have already seen. If the interior is incorrigible, at least you will see the exterior; an advantage that is not insignificant. Men, for the most part, whence the superficial, therefore there would not appear a small profit if they could reduce the depraved and ridiculous people to not be that way except in themselves. Good theatre is for vice and for the ridiculous that which for crimes are the courts and sentences. And if the vices, crimes, and repugnant situations subsist nevertheless and will subsist as long as there will be a world, therefore theatres, laws, sermons, and history are not useless.

History of Comedy

But did comedy never exist, written in any country with its double praiseworthy object, and in all regularity?

Athens, teacher of every culture, abused the comedy for a long time by converting it into a personal satire: and in this defected manner Aristophanes shone falsely. Finally the magistrates banished from the theatre this bitter and indecent imitation of persons, and the comedy was restricted, like every necessary insistence, to the general depiction of customs: And in this praiseworthy genre Menander rose to the most glorious celebrity.

Rome had almost the same destiny. From the beginning its comedy

[page 31]

was satirical and obscene; and Plautus bore unhappy resemblance to Aristophanes. Then it was corrected and Menander served as model to Terence.

The despotism of the Roman Empire, disastrous to itself, to reason, to taste, barbarized comedy in an absurdness of mimes, pantomimes and histrionics, and in that comic coarseness, poisonous to the spirit and to the heart; and until the 16th century Europe no longer knew what comedy was.

Finally, in Italy, the fine arts rose again (*). Comedy was also revived, but irregular and licentious; and as such was diffused throughout Europe with a train of defects corresponding to the respective character of each nation.

In France around the middle of the last century it was rendered pure and irreproachable by the works of Moliere, who would have been admired by Terence and Menander themselves, and that other Raphael in painting it

(*) The restabilization of the sciences and of the fine arts in Italy is fixed after the fall of Constantinople. It has been thought that some Greek refugees came to be doctors in Italy, and to transport to us the seat of literature. But in Constantinople there was little science and little art to carry away, and these few wandering Greeks could not teach more than a little Greek. Already, some centuries before, the Italian geniuses were woken because after a long sleep it is suitable to wake up, and the causes, that shook this great lethargy, were the good effects of the fanaticism of the Crusades. From that chasm of many millions of Europeans, derived healthy effects, that is it began to weaken the barbarous feudal system, and to raise the commercial, and in consequence the legislation, and the culture. The great epoch then of happy change must be fixed in the 11th Century. In that time occurred the invention of paper. An extremely important invention, although now it appears to us as nothing. Before this time they could no longer have the papyrus of Egypt. Because of the Arabs one could not write but on parchment, which was so expensive, that very often they were made of sponge, and old parchments, already written on, were shaved in order to rewrite something new on top. In how many codices are there not found the old characters not well erased with other new ones on top? Here is one of the many causes of the loss of many ancient works. And who knows if the works of Livy and Tacitus were not erased, to give place to monastic legends. Paper, then, with commercial refinement and with the other good effects of the Crusades, was the most effective medium to reawaken the Italian talents, whence the Dantes, the Petrarchs, the Boccaccios, the Bartolis, the Baldis, the Brunelleschis rose before the fall of Constantinople, and Italy continues then to flower for the other very interesting invention of printing, and for the care of the Medici, of the Popes and the generous patrons, that we could use now.

[page 32]

became the model of true comedy. Even England knew how to form a comic theatre that is simple, natural and reasonable, that observes a rigorous verisimilitude, although often at the cost of decency.

And Italy, one time legislator of every taste and of every literature in all of Europe, how has she treated so carelessly the role of drama? I can not speak it without the most melancholic blush. The intrigues of the lovers, the mimed grimaces, the cunning tricks of the servants, have made the essence of its comic subjects. It is believed to be adorned and heightened with an opposition of national customs coming from the communication and from the reciprocal jealousy of small states, into which Italy, for better or worse is divided. It is shown in the same entanglement the Bolognian [*Dottore*], the Venetian *Pantalone*, the *Pulcinella* of Naples, the *Arlecchino* of Bergamo, etc. each one with the dominant ridiculousness of his country, and everybody exaggerated in their mottoes, in misunderstandings, in blunders, in scurrility, in clothes and gestures of buffoonery, which turn men into a monkey.

Such a peculiarity for its novelty: and like this Italian comedy after the *Calandr(i)a* of Cardinal Bibiena, and the *Mandragora (Mandragola)* by Machiavelli, was condemned to the coarse type containing all the defects of drama, to an interweaving devoid of art, of sense, of spirit, of taste, so that in its immense collection there is not one comedy of which a man of spirit could support the reading.

But this barbarism perhaps existed once. Once the other nations are cleaned up, Italy herself, the worshipper of trans alpine styles, will have purified her comic taste. In fact, Moliere was translated into Italian and represented in almost all of our theatres. In Milan there are some comedies presented by Maggi full of continuous honest laughter, and of a solemn correction of customs. Thereafter, Goldoni and some other poets attempted to reform our comedy in some manner, and their productions were received by the public with applause. But, meanwhile, the histrionics, the puppet-shows and the most villainous comic, rampant, silly, indecent, in a word the farces exist nevertheless, and exist imperiously and making their way as far as our most conspicuous capitol cities.

The Spanish theatre is pitiful. The *Autos Sacramentales*, those absurd mixtures of the sacrosanct and clownish, were once liked, but are liked no more, one of which was used to

[page 33]

celebrate the mass, on the stage between devils, angels, and whores, and then to finish the representation, *Ite comædia est*.

It seems certainly incomprehensible, that reasonable creatures can be grateful for a representation in which all the laws of verisimilitude, moderation, suitability, and good sense are trampled: and what triumphs is only the extravagant and the absurd. And also a taste so twisted is given. The Roman populace deserted the theatre of Terence to run to the zannis (clowns) as now it abandons the *Merope* and the *Pamela* to throng to Pulcinella and to Arlecchino. And how is it they like similar silliness? Here is the reason. The farce, that is, insane comedy, remains, creates laughter, and does not occupy at all the spirit. On the contrary a reasoned performance exacts some attention and mental fatigue. One goes, therefore, to the farce because one escapes cares. As well, the spirit has its libertinism and its disorder, in which is found more comfort which it takes without noticing a mechanical and coarse taste. Habituated once to this incorrect taste, the spirit no longer feels that of the good, useful, and honest; in this way, it loses the habit of reflecting and the soul becomes muddy, and marries with an idle indolence. The farce exercises neither the taste nor the reason, hence it is likeable to lazy animals; and, therefore, it is a harmful spectacle, since having nothing attractive, it will be none other than simply bad. A foreigner of spirit observing in one of the most outstanding cities in Italy a perennial concourse of the distinguished? At a theatre, where everyone was torn apart by laughter for their Pulcinella, he would write inside *Risus abundat in ore stultorum*, and at the outside entrance he left this other inscription *Paragone degl' Insensati*.

And some say: *what does the quality of the entertainment matter?* It is enough that the public is amused, enough that one laughs with an open mouth at the theatre. This is the same as saying: *And what should it matter to the parents the quality of the food of a child? It is enough that he eats with pleasure.*

But at least for the people, a few coarse pleasures, like food, are needed. To understand if this is true, consider the populace in its three classes. The first embraces the plebes, without any culture of taste and of spirit, but which is very susceptible in some degree, and which would have much need. The second contains the honest and polite people, who unite to a decency of customs a purified intelligence, and a delicate sentiment of good things. In the third class is the state of the middle,

[page 34]

larger than is believable, which for vanity strain to be like the cultural and honest class of people but for a natural slope are transported in the direction of the plebs. The politics of tyranny consist in rendering humans beasts; everything, therefore, must tend to ignorance, to stupidity, to slavery. But in a constitution founded on justice and on beneficence, one has not fear of expanding reason, to illuminate it and to ennoble the sentiments of a multitude of citizens, of which look at the same profession requires often to nobles, delicate sentiments and cultured spirit. There is no political interest, then, in maintaining in the populace the depraved love of bad things, and a sluggishness of spirit. The farce then must not be permitted not even to the most vile dregs of the populace: [Teatruccoli], histrionics, puppet masters, zanni (clowns), saltimbanks, etc. poisons of taste and of morals, uproot them and destroy them and plant and propagate the regular comedy, directly to a noble pleasure, and to the correction of morals.

In Germany the theatre is ordinarily fed by French translations without discernment. But from approximately 20 years ago it has begun to make some progress, after the reform that brought about some national literary figures: Gattoched among the other tragedies, produced *Cato*, depicted with traits worthy of Addison himself. Gellert created some comedies, among which the *False Sincerity* and the *Sick Woman* are very much well conducted ingenuities, gay and with good dialogue.

The theatre of Denmark was, until now, without tragedies, but has many volumes of comedies by Baron Holberg; these comedies are all in prose and have merit.

But since many are in the fine style of Magot of China, it would be suitable to say something also about the dramatic taste of that immense nation. The Chinese do not have material theatre, but for more than three thousand years, they have enjoyed rather comic and tragic dramas, mixed with songs, in which in the middle of ordinary declamation they come to improvised songs, this song tends to express the great movements of the soul, joy, pain, anger, desperation. These dramas are without the lace-work of unity, and devoid of the other essential rules, like the monstrous farces of Shakespeare, and of Lope di Vega that are said to be tragedies; but their aim is to touch the heart, and to inspire the love of virtue and the horror of vice. They are then of the troupes, each one composed of five or six persons who create the mystery of

[page 35]

representing dramas, and they are called for by the Mandarins and by other gentlemen of quality to the great feasts, which they give in their homes. After the dinner the players come, introduced into the great banquet room, and amongst great ceremony, in which the Chinese are perpetually absorbed they present a book containing various dramas; this book travels ceremoniously through the hands of each of the guests, until a drama is chosen to the taste of everyone. The representation is without apparatus, reducing all the decoration to a carpet that is layed-out on the floor of the room; from a nearby room exit the actors, and the women and the servants crowd to the doors of the other rooms to see. In the great account that the Prince of Halde gave about Chinese things, there is a tragedy entitled the *Orphelin de Tchao*, that has then produced the *Eroe Cinese* by Metastasio, and the *Orphelin de la Chine* by Voltaire. The dramas of Japan are of the Chinese taste.

If one searches the dramatic poetry among the Persians and the Indians, that pass for inventive peoples, one will search in vain: it never arrived. Asia was always content with the tales of *Pilpay*, and of *Locman*, which contain all the morality, and with allegories instruct all the nations and all the centuries. Although it seems, that after having made the plants and the animals talk, one will not have to make but a step to make men talk, to introduce them to the stage, and to form dramatic art in the meanwhile those ingenious peoples never think about it. Africa with all its Memphis, Thebes and Carthages never saw theatre; and probably not even America has seen it, although in Peru it is believed some traces are recognized. Therefore one must infer that the Chinese, the Greeks, the Romans are the only ancient peoples who knew the true spirit of the society. No custom, in fact, renders men more sociable, softens greatly their customs, perfects their reason more, so uniting them, to create their taste together the pure pleasures of the soul. In Russia, scarcely civilized, St. Petersburg was constructed, theatres were established; and more than Germany it is cultivated, and has adapted more of the scenic spectacles of the other more cultured nations.

[page 36]

CHAPTER IV On The Pastoral

Rural life, represented with all its possible charms, is the object of pastoral drama. But it is not enough to wreath some subject with flowers, huts, and sheep: rural life must be put in a living picture, ornamented only with those delights which it can receive.

Rural life consists in tranquility, accompanied by a moderate abundance, by a perfect freedom, and by a sweet and sincere mirth. It is a representation of what is called *Age of Gold*, available to all men, and rid of all strangeness and extravagances by which the poets have burdoned it with description. It is the kingdom of liberty, of pleasures, of peace: real blessings, for which all men feel born when they recognize themselves in some momentary silence of their passions. It is, in short, a tranquil and pleasant withdrawal of a man, who has a simple and delicate heart, and who has found the means to make return for him this happy age,

Quando era cibo il latte
Del pargoletto Mondo, e culla il bosco:
E i cari parti loro
Godean le greggie intatte,
Nè teme il Mondo ancor ferro nè tosco. (*)

Therefore all that happens in the countryside, is not worthy of pastoral drama. One must not represent and paint

(*) In *Europa Letteraria*, a journal that is printed in Venice by Fenzo; this is an extract of this booklet *del Teatro* of the first Edition, and between the censors all judicious and civil, there is this: *We dislike to find out that our Author, who seems to intend the truth of the ridicule of things not universally derided attempts to describe the golden age with these verses:*

*When milk was food
Of the Childhood World, and forest the cradle, etc.*

This creates the childhood world, and puts it to sleep in a cradle in a forest, which must have been very big, and outside the world where probably

[page 37]

that which cannot please and interest. Therefore exclude coarseness, hardness, the minute details, the useless and mute images, and all, in short, that does not have the spicy and the sweet. With stronger reason they must exclude atrocious and tragic occurrences, improper to the life of the shepherds, who must not know the vehemence of such passions. They must be all moderate. A wicked man, a notorious sly man, would be unbecoming to this type of poetry. A shepherd would be insulted if he saw this with his eyes.

Shepherds deign to be simple and natural. All their actions and conversations must not have anything unpleasant, anything affected, anything too subtle; but at the same time they have to demonstrate discernment, skill, and more spirit, but all naturally.

Rural characters, although generally uniform, are, however, susceptible to great variety. Form the taste alone of the tranquil and of innocent pleasure one can bring to life all the passions, fear, hope, sadness, joy, love, friendship, hate, jealousy, generosity, compassion; and all these one can diversify some more according to the times, the sexes, the places, the occurrences, and can embellish it with dances, music, songs, games, parties and with the ornaments which administer this simple life according to the variety of the seasons.

forests are not found, seems to me a crazy quarrel, that can be pleasing to the ears, not to the reflection. Also to use these verses seem always ridiculous, and I wanted to refer to them expressly, to show what were our most famous Italian poets. These verses are from Guarini's Pastor fido 4th Act. The Chorus. If I had cited the author, perhaps it would not have developed the gracious censure of the journalist. Without the great names, that many impose, how many good critics more would there not be! I am very obliged to the Author of the above-mentioned extract, although he will not be convinced demonstratively of the perfection of his work, that is this worthless book, much less am I convinced about it; and although the Gallics, and the Roman (in his words) give little thanks the sound style to who has taste of good language.

I thank the journalist of this good announcement, and I will make every effort to derive profit from it by reading the best Italian authors to learn, if it is possible, a style less thankless to delicate ears. I thank again this favourable extract, that he was compelled to create this poor rhapsody: and I congratulate with him his doctrine and good taste.

[page 38]

The style of pastorals wants to be simple, that is, ordinary words and phrases without ostentation, without apparatus, without aiming to please; but at the same time it must be sweet and gracious, and without the appearance of being studied. It is a difficult style, so difficult that it cannot be executed but by men of spirit, who with difficulty know to hide it.

The ancients who had excellent writers of pastoral poetry, (Theocritus, Mosco, Bione, Virgil), did not know this species of drama. They had, instead, the satirical theatre that consisted of a comic representation created by satyrs, Silenus's, gods, semi-gods, and by heroines. This served at one time the intermezzo of the tragedy, as to moderate the sadness. Afterwards it was executed separately and alone.

Italy has some pastoral dramas, and the *Aminta* of Tasso, and the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini are notable, of which, for their completely amorous and little-purged subjects, do not seem created for theatre, although at one time they were put on stage. France also has made dramas, and there are many pleasant ones by the celebrated Fontenelle, if, however, they merit the name of pastoral, since in reality they are no others but the witty courtesans of Versailles costumed as shepherds. The theatre, in sum, is entirely devoid of one beautiful representation which would now succeed more than ever before, since agriculture is in great esteem, and the life of the city-person is much poisoned by the dissoluteness of luxury.

CHAPTER V On Opera

Tragedy expressed in verses such as to be represented in Music, makes the *Lyric Poem*, and is called *Opera* for excellence.

That the ancients knew this spectacle in Music, is proven by the importance that they placed in their spectacles, in the great account that they made of Music, and of the immensity of their theatres. But the little import of drama in music of the ancients: we see that it is near us.

To resurrect the fine arts, some Italian poets, Orazio Vecchi Modenese, Ottavio Rinuccini, Emilio del Cavaliere with the beginning

[page 39]

of the last century, began to compose dramas, drawing on the subjects of mythology. Only the marvellous was put into action. Posted in motion all the divinity of Gentilism, the spectator's sight was transported to upon Olympus, or in Elysium, or down in Tartarus. They made dramas that were in music, esteemed language of the gods, and represented them in the courts of princes, and in palaces of great gentlemen, to celebrate nuptials, intervened with numerous choruses and dances of various sorts.

Cardinal Mazzarin transported this species of opera to France, where, above all, it is conserved, and all the other nations have had a similar opera in music in their language.

But in Italy tastes change very quickly. Perhaps these celestial personages cost too much to make them come down to earth; and perhaps seen from nearby they conserve little of their celestial majesty. So they thought, therefore, to abandon this superhuman marvel; and the opera in music was reduced to a real tragedy, displayed with pomp by the music, by the dance and by a variety of even richer decorations. This is the Italian opera elevated to this grand concept, that rules the theatres of Europe, apart from France. It will certainly be a great, beautiful thing.

If tragedy is in itself the most sublime production of dramatic poetry, to bring one to detest vice with horror, and for inflaming the soul to the most masculine virtues; how will it be expressed with music? By that art of the enchantress, by which Orpheus drew behind him men, the wild beasts, the forests, the cliffs, and for which he built cities, penetrated into hells; he bent the judges of that rigorous voyage, suspended the torments of the unhappy, overcame the barriers of death, transgressed the irreparable decrees of destiny. And what will be this musical tragedy, equipped with dances, with painting, with sculpture, with architecture, and with the most pompous richness of clothes, and of every most beautiful decoration? All the fine arts are placed in fusion for this spectacle. If the *Merope* of Maffei touches me, moves me to pity, moves me to tears, it is necessary that in opera the anguish, the mortal fears of that unfortunate mother, pierce me to the soul. It is necessary that all the phantoms, by which it is assaulted, strike me, and that its sadness and its delirium, tear me and rip the heart. The *Opera* will then be the leader of the work of spectacles, the *non plus ultra* of pleasure and of utility. Let us go in to see it.

Here is a vast well, whose space is ruined by people

[page 40]

who talk, who turn their heads from side to side, who read, who drool, and there are also those who sleep. The surroundings are in great part from bottom to top all perforated with tiny cells, and in each one is found at least one woman surrounded by a buzzing of men all armed with telescopes, that serve them like a compass to jump from cell to cell, chattering, eating, sipping, playing. And the opera, the great opera, where is it? There in the background, and there from that double battery of instruments that can be seen to move, or to go forward, and behind some figures in extraordinary clothes never used by any race, and each one enjeweled in a way that taken all together the sovereigns of the world do not possess so many gems. From these strange figures one hears now and then leak out some delicate voice, words are never heard, the words are visible, but never the gestures. The opera goes to the stars. In the four or five hours of its duration the major part of the spectators give indication to want to hear only the part which for half a quarter hour presents a solo, or a pair of the actors. This silence is followed by a solemn clapping of hands, and by some shout of the very civilized audience, inventress of this anti-soporific. Such beautiful opera is cut by two dances, for which all the spectators are attentive and mute, as if they seeing them with their ears; with dancers who jump more, and contort more their feet and life the more applause they receive. The second dance finished, although a third of the drama still remains, the major part, if they do not leave, all take a break.

If there is in the world of spectacle that which can be said

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

it is certainly the Italian opera; magnificent folly, prepared with great study and with great expense, but always folly. Such folly can be compared to the water of that spring of Thessaly, which for its stupefying property, could not be contained but in asses skulls. (*)

But from whence does it come that from a thing so excellent in itself, as is tragedy, united with many seasonings, each in itself exquisite, instead of resulting in a perfect whole, what emerges is a spiritless dead head of complete uselessness?

(*) Apostolo Zeno condemned the lyric drama, although many had been written, because they were all full of abuses, and contrary to every good taste, not searching for more than a vain auricular pleasure.

[page 41]

In examining the opera part by part, the drama, the music, the actors, the dances, the decorations and the theatre itself, one can discover the seat and the quality of bad in all these parts, and can apply the proper remedies.

CHAPTER VI

On the Subject of the Musical Drama

The choice of subject, or that of the libretto, is the foundation of the musical opera. Above this foundation, as if planted a building, so you have to erect the music, the dance, the decoration. These things are integral parts of the drama, and must create a total work. Therefore the poet, author of the libretto, will be the director of all these parts, that is, the Master of Chapel, of the actors, of the dancers, of the machinists, of the painters, and the decorators. Each one of these will follow his respective task, according to the mind of the poet, who alone understands the whole of the drama, and those parts, that are not executed by him are nevertheless by him foreseen, dictated, and directed.

To this effect the poet must reflect on two principal things.

1. That his drama has to be placed in music. Wherefore he needs to choose a subject for which music will be applicable. Here is the great difficulty: The subjects taken from mythology are very much suitable to music, because it supposes the language of the gods different from that of men. Apollo and Venus singing amidst loves and graces dancing, becomes a wonder. But such subjects might have been good once, like religious festivals for those peoples that foolishly worshipped those deities. For us they would be silly and puerile masquerades. With good reason, therefore, we have abolished them, and if the French nevertheless enjoy them, they are not enviable in this their taste. Since it is supposed that the anger or the benevolence of an ephemeral deity influences the destiny of a hero, what part can one take in an action if nothing happens by consequence of nature and by the order of things? If the most deplorable situation can become in one flutter of the eye, by one stroke of a word through sudden alteration of will, the happiest situation, and then another

[page 42]

caprice returns it to affliction? In this way not only is the wise precept of Horace *Nec Deus intersit* overturned, but the entire opera remains without unity, and more than that, is converted into a series of incidents free of every bond. What stupidities are these apparitions of gods, of spectres, of shadows, of wizards? One must not believe things that are not, and must hate things that can not be believed: *Incredulus odi*. All endeavor has to be in undeceiving the common people, not in feeding them errors and prejudices. Truth always, and in theatre above all, interesting truths.

Therefore the poet, having given a kick to mythology and fairy tales, cannot but resort to history from which to draw his subjects. It is worth saying, he must create a tragedy. But historic subjects are not very adaptable to music. Really, a Cato, an Attilio Regolo in ariettas and in trills, is a denial of their characters.

2. The other principal object of which the poet must never lose aim is that the dances must be linked with the subject of the opera. Or is it possible that a dance could refer to a historical subject? If, for example, in Titus the dance included Roman soldiers, such a dance would always be artificial and unsuitable like an English *patetù*, because dance is not an integrated part of the action.

What subject, therefore, must the poet choose to achieve his principle ends without difficulty; that is to delight and instruct without offending decorum?

There is no choice but to select an action occurring in time, or at least in countries, that are remote and distant from our own so that it gives a place different kinds of marvels. So too it must be simple and well known. If the action is very rare for us, it will seem improbable to us to hear it recited in music. That which is marvellous out of that action will give freedom to the poet to intertwine it with dances and choruses, and to introduce various kinds of decorations; and the fact that it is both simple and known reduces the preparations that the poet has to complete in order to make his characters understood. In this way he will have more time to place their passions in motion and this is the source, teacher and soul of theatre. Achilles in Sciro, Abandoned Dido, Alexander in the India of the renowned Metastasio, these are proper subjects for a work in music. In addition, there remain many subjects to be extracted from the modern history of the East and West Indies that would present a good contrast between our

[page 43]

customs and those of nations very dissimilar to our own. It would explain, in this way, how much the surface of this globe contains of the magnificent, rare, and remarkable. Song and dance in such subjects would not seem unsuitable.

But there will emerge here a great objection, already held against the singing of our opera. And when, and where, those people say, do men sing when they speak, and sing as well in their greatest anguish, and finally when they are going to their death? These are objections that are more noisy than powerful. It is enough to reflect that the essence of fine art is the imitation of nature. It is enough to remember what is natural, and all of the difficulty is soon dispelled. Where and when will there ever be found a man of the robust symmetry that one admires in the Farnese Hercules, and a young man of such svelt elegance as the Apollo of the Belvedere? And where have ever occurred these events so intertwined, and these traits of characters that the poets compose in their poetry and in their dramas? And in what country and in what time did men make their lengthy discourses in verse? Art does all that which nature does only in part. And art is joined to its aim if one knows how to choose and combine well the parts close to nature. It is enough that men naturally sing and dance on certain occasions; art can make use of these natural operations to combine, in all its marvel, pleasure and utility, that which naturally does not exist. It will shortly be seen that we will be completely freed from this objection. For now, it must be examined how it is possible to suitably apply music to drama.

In order that this application can be well executed, it is necessary that the poet keeps the following considerations always in view:

- I. Fill the subject with interest, and arrange it in the simplest manner.
- II. All must be shown through action, with a tendency toward great effects.
- III. Since rapidity is inseparable from music, the pace of the lyric poem must be rapid. This is because long and boring discourses are not convenient. *Semper ad eventum festinat*. The poem must unravel as it runs, developing with all its power without embarrassment and without interruption; and all of the successive developments must be done under the eye of the spectator.
- IV. Every scene must offer an interesting situation; and there must be those that offer true occasions to sing.

[page 44]

V. The aria must be reserved for grand scenes and, so that it has its full effect, it must be collocated with taste and judgement, and always treated from the depth of a subject. The secret of grand effects here, as in painting, does not consist of the boldness of colours, so much as in the art of the gradation of colours. A series of extremely expressive and varying arias, without interruption and rest, would be soon wearisome to the ear the more they continue and the more passionate the music. The passages from recitative to aria, and from aria to recitative, are those which produce the great effects of lyric drama. Without this alternation, opera would certainly be the most annoying and false of all spectacles.

VI. Equal to the management and development of the subject, the lyric style must be simple and swift, without verbosity, without imposed eloquence, precise, of few words, strong, natural, easy, gracious, and distant from those treatises of spirit distilled in epigrams and madrigals.

But what do you mean, more rules? The true rules of the lyric style are the dramas of Metastasio, which would be a perfect legislator if there were less love spread, and if there was more liberty enjoyed to conduct and articulate tragic subjects. The bizarre tyranny of our impresarios has already been noted. Moreover, the Emperor Charles VI had a complete aversion to the catastrophes of tragedy, and desired that everyone exit from the opera happy and tranquil. Therefore, the poet Cesareo had to accommodate all to this end, and the construction of his poem was necessarily influenced by these bonds, and the force of custom necessarily vanished with this predicament.

If the right of liberty is never returned to the theatre, no poet, even if he possesses sublime talents, can write lyric poetry if at first he does not have a knowledge of music. Not all poems are suitable for music; and to understand which poem is, one must be capable of easily understanding the elements, taste and the delicacy of music. Therefore, we will begin an examination of music.

[pg. 45]

CHAPTER VIII On Music

Music is the science of sounds that please the ear. By sound I mean a movement of vibrations through the air that gratefully reaches the organ of our sense of sound, either through song, voice, or musical instruments. Hence, the distinction between vocal music and instrumental music.

Vocal music, naturally, preceded instrumental music; because man, of course, must have made observations on the different sounds of his own voice before finding another instrument of sound. However, he must have also learned from the natural song of birds, namely, how to modify his voice and throat in a pleasant manner. Every living thing is called by the sense of his existence to utter at certain instances more or less melodious accents according to the characteristics of its own sound organs. And in the midst of so many singers man should have been expected to remain silent. Joy probably inspired the first songs. In the beginning, songs were likely sung without words; then later, man sought to adapt to the song some words that conformed to the emotion that he needed to express, and this is song, dictated by simple nature. The ingenious artist then studied man in his different situations and noticing that he raises his voice, and that he gives it intensity and melody as our soul comes out of its ordinary state, and seeing that singing is a part of life's every important occasion, and that every passion, every affection has its accent, its inflections, its melody, its very songs, from it the ingenious artist has made imitative vocal music. This is a language, an art of imitation, to express with melody every sort of discourse, of accent, of passion, and to imitate sometimes even physical effects.

It did not take long thereafter to invent instrumental music. The first musical instruments must have been of the wind type. Hearing the whistle of the wind in tubes of cane, and in other tubes of vegetation, men must have created out of necessity flutes, horns, trumpets, etc. Sonorous strings are so common that everyone must have noticed their different sounds, and here is a list of string instruments: lyres,

[page 46]

psalteries (zithers), harpsichords, violas, violins, etc. Finally, the sonorous din of hitting an empty stomach led to the invention of percussion instruments, drums, timbals (kettle-drums), etc. All these instruments are none other than different voices that speak to the ears. There are many instruments invented and artfully inclined to express sounds in the absence of voice, or to imitate the natural voice of man. There does not exist a phenomenon in nature, a passion or feeling of the human heart, that cannot be imitated by musical instruments. However, not all instruments are equally appropriate for some imitations. If the acute sounds of the little flutes make themselves heard as the interval in the painting of a tempest, they express it with much truth. The low and lugubrious sounds of the horns announce in a terrifying manner the apparitions of ghosts and shadows. With the string instruments one must at times sustain sounds and at others touch the strings, to express different effects.

The union and pleasant accord of several sounds is that which is called harmony, since melody is the ensemble of pleasant songs. Therefore, all the perfection of music consists of the expression of every effect both physical and moral with melody and harmony united together.

The Influence of Music

Music has a great influence in the physical and moral. Considered trembling vibrations sent through the air by the voice and by instruments, music influences both inanimate and animate bodies.

Mersenno and others, basing their work on obscure steps taken by Saint Augustine, and other fathers of the church, have dared to say that the fall of the walls of Jericho, which was a prodigy, was completely natural, and caused by the sound of trumpets and other instruments. What instruments! What walls!

The effects of music on animals are even more notable. With music, bears are tamed, and donkeys are made to dance to the sound of certain instruments. Camels in the orient sustain long and painful trips as a result of certain sounds

[page 47]

which, when stopped, the camel's pace slows down, and sometimes they stop completely. In our own environment, we put bell-ringing collars on our coach animals. Some music offends many animals as soon as they hear it. There is the case of the dog that, upon hearing the acute sound of the violin, screamed out with terrible lamentations to the point of convulsions, spasms and finally death as the music continued to play in efforts to see its final effect on the dog.

But particularly, in that animal called man, music exerts physically its major influence. A certain Cavalier Guascone could not hold his wine at the sound of the bagpipes. Boerhaave speaks of a deaf man who felt tremors throughout his entire body every time an instrument was played beside him. Pythagoras, great promoter of music, was the first to apply it to medicine, and the history of antiquity boasts of admirable healings. Sciatica, gout, hysterical effects, phrenetis, phthisis, and even the plague; they find in music an allegedly sure antidote. Even now we know its effects on those bitten by the spider from Puglia called the tarantula, and it is also accepted as effective against venomous snake, scorpion and rabid dog bites. In the history of the Scientific Academy in Paris, there is mention of a musician healed of his violent fever by a concert played for him in his room. The Americans use music to treat practically every illness, to reanimate the courage and strength of the afflicted, and to dissipate the fear and anxiety brought on by illness, often more fatal than the illness itself. We Europeans, who have spoken so badly and well of America, could have transported even this detail, which might be more effective than any cure of our Aesculapii, who are all determined to cure us, *tuto, cito e jucunde*. But in reality the smallest of illnesses are made gigantic by the nauseating apothecary shops, by the flooding of waters, by the severing of veins, and by brooding on the illness in gloomiest melancholy. Terminally ill Queen Elizabeth had several musicians enter her room to mitigate the horrors that in the social state are produced by the termination of life, and by the dissolution of the machine, this terrible change is considered in every aspect.

It is in the morality of man that music must explain its major influences. Music was held in the greatest esteem by the people of antiquity, and especially by the Greeks.

[page 48]

This esteem was proportional to the power and the effects that are attributed to it. They believed that music was one of the most valid and effective means of sweetening customs, and of humanizing those peoples naturally rough and savage. They attributed the sweet sobriety of the Arcadians to music, though they lived in sad and cold air, whereas the people of Cinete, because they neglected music, surpassed all the Greeks in cruelty and crimes.

Music was a principal part of the study of Pythagoras who used it to excite the laudable spirits and actions, and to ignite the love of virtue. Narrasi, whom Pythagoras saw as a possessed man, in the act of lighting the house of his unfaithful lover on fire, had a spondee sung, and the gravity of that music quickly calmed the anxieties of the desperate lover.

In ancient times there existed two types of musical arias; one was called Frigia, which excited fury, anger, and courage, and was likely made use of on the Field of Mars. The other, called Dorica, inspired the opposite passions, and brought the agitated spirits to a state of tranquility. Consider Galeno, who after infuriating a group of drunk young men with an aria Frigia, began to play a Dorica and they immediately calmed down. Ateneo assures us that all human and divine laws, the exhortation of virtue, the cognitions that concern God and man, the lives and the actions of illustrious figures, in short, all things most remarkable, were written in verse, and sung publicly by a chorus accompanied by the sound of instruments. It is for this that Plato contends that one cannot change music without producing changes in the constitution of the state, and he maintains that one can assign the sounds capable of eliciting the baseness within the soul: insolence, and that which is contrary to virtue. Aristotle, who it seems wrote his Politic for no other reason than to oppose the feelings and thoughts of his teacher, is nevertheless of the same opinion. So all of the classical philosophers and historians agree that music is the most effective means of impressing on the soul of man the principles of morality, and to animate him to practice his duties; and it was even used as an anti-venereal measure. Absent husbands, instead of maiming their wives or fitting them with chastity belts, a very popular practice in many countries right now, would leave them with musicians in the countryside whose song and music would placate their desires which would otherwise

[page 49]

have been satisfied at the expense of their honour as husbands. Take the case of Egistus, who, when trying to seduce Clytemnestra, killed her musician, Demodaco, left to her by her husband Agamemnon to guard her pure heart with music. These and similar stories seem like fairy tales to us. Our music is very different from that of the ancients! One should not believe, however, that classical music was always managed with useful robustness. Even the ancients used soft music, producing bad effects; and this is what Plato, Quintilian and Plutarch detested so much.

And what influence does modern music have on our hearts? It gives us a sterile delight, and nothing more. But is there much diversity of effects between one and the other?

Those who have analyzed both ancient and contemporary music, have found that classical instrumental music is significantly inferior to our own, both for its imperfection and its number of instruments. The ancients knew little or nothing of counterpoint, that is harmony, the true foundation of melody and modulation. Therefore, modern music (meant to mean Italian) is in all its parts farther reaching, richer, and more learned. How is it then that with all of these advantages it is poorly influenced.

It is precisely from its richness that its disadvantage derives. The confusion of the parts, the multitude of different instruments that appear to insult one another, the noise of the accompaniment that confounds the voices without sustaining them, is the beauty of our music. What energy and what effect can remove it from this chaos? The ever simple music of the ancients, entirely imitative, went to the heart and effectively moved the passions. Our uproarious and insignificant music does not make it past the ears. Classical singers sang without straining themselves and so they knew how to soften and delight the heart. Now the false and empty sounds, and the sounds of a voice that exceeds itself, do nothing more than skin the ears, and upset the spirit. Our music will always be a vain noise if you professors do not penetrate profoundly to consider its essence.

[page 50]

On the Essence of Music

The essence of music lies in imitation. The essence of imitation lies in the true expression of sentiment that wants to manifest itself. Every expression must be exactly those things that one has to express; it is like a suit cut upon one's body. Whence every expression requires unity, truth, clarity, simplicity, vivacity, novelty, elegance. Painting with delineation and with colour expresses the appearance of an infinity of animated and inanimate bodies. Poetry with its verses expresses that which is in nature. Music, with its songs and sounds, expresses verse, that is, expressions of poetry. Therefore music can be divided in two parts. Either it imitates and expresses non-passionate sounds and so corresponds to that which in painting is a landscape, or it expresses animated sounds that give sentiment, and so is a narrative painting.

The composer is not freer than the painter. He is always subjected to the comparison made between his works and those of nature. If he has to paint, for example, a storm, a stream, a zephyr, his tones are in nature; it is from there that he must take them. And if he has to paint something which does not exist in nature, like a lowing of the earth, or a shiver of a shadow coming from a tomb, his ideas must always correspond and assimilate natural things. Art can neither create nor destroy expressions. It cannot be removed from nature. It only regulates expressions; it fortifies them; it cleans them, but the base must always remain natural.

Or if music is a painting, what painting would it be, where the painter would have thrown bold sketches on the canvas and masses of the most vivid colours without any resemblance to any notable subject? So what would songs and sounds be that express nothing? Music most monstrous would express everything contrary to that which it should mean. Music is a universal language that speaks by means of sounds. If used for what it is not intended, this is an infallible sign that art has failed nature. As much as nature is enriched by composers, if one cannot comprehend the meaning contained

[page 51]

in their expressions, it is no longer riches, it is an unrecognizable idiom, and in consequence, useless.

Music must by necessity follow poetry, because music does not have distinct means to explain the motifs of its varied impressions. Where the imitations of nature and passion would be without poetry, is very vague and indecisive. Arias, tender and sweet, that could express love, could equally express parallel sensations of benevolence, friendship and pity. And how could the rapid movements of scorn, expressed in music, be distinguished from those of terror and of other violent agitations of the soul? Music, therefore, must always be faithfully attached to poetry; and as such was ancient music, that followed it step by step, neither exactly expressing the number and measure, nor was poetry applied except to give the music more splendour and dignity. If the declamation, better still, the simple reading of an excellent lyrical drama digs up our tears, what energy should not be acquired from the spell of music when it is embellished without oppression? And what impression should not be produced in a sensitive audience?

But our music that once was from subordinate performers, and must be from poetry, has become despotic and tyrannical. The current musicians no longer intend art to imitate the harmony of verse, and to exhibit poetic grace. They ask instead for small verses from poets that are cut down, mundane, irregular, without number or harmony; and at times they join them with such extravagance, that they first compose their arias, and then set them on fire with words that are the fantasy of some bad poet, so that it is soon discerned that our opera is sung in verse, and can with reason be entitled *music without poetry*.

Since our music has shaken the yoke of poetry it is no longer imitative. Nothing more is expressed, and no more effects are produced. It became a collection of thoughts, excellent, yes, but without connection, meaning or convenience; in fact like the Vatican arabesques of Raffaello, very precious and very irrational. Music, better calculated in all its thunder, more geometric in its harmony, if it does not have any meaning, will be like a prism that presents the most beautiful colours but does not make a picture. It is pleasing to the ears, and surely annoying to the spirit.

So then if one wants to reestablish music to its double objective of delighting the senses and moving the heart to beautiful virtues,

[page 52]

one should let oneself be directed by poetry that expresses sentiments. Then the common criticism that the heroes of opera are troubled, and go to their death singing and trilling would stop. Such a criticism is founded upon the incoherence that ordinarily alternates between songs and words. Where the passions speak, the trillings must remain silent. If music were well adapted to poetry all improprieties that currently nauseate in opera would disappear. But to do this it is necessary that either the poet is a composer, or that the composer is a poet. Without reuniting these two rare talents, the composer must at least have the fine discretion to understand the poet, and to persuade himself once and for all, that music is a stronger, livelier, warmer expression of concepts and effects of the soul expressed in poetry. Lulli, in fact, depended upon Quinault; Vinci on Metastasio. If the composer conducts himself in this manner he will be secretly pleased with his music, which will be more expressive, and in one sense more definite without ambiguity or obscurity. The worst music is that which does not have any character.

Finally our Italian music must guard itself against another evil: that is the one of continuous newness. Music that was well liked twenty years ago is not now tolerated. Once in the theatre, even Apollo as composer of an opera would be God if brought back twice within thirty years. The same drama may be presented as many times as desired, but the music must always be different. This is one of the main reasons why music has become a passing fashion, full of daydreams and whims. It is asserted that after Vinci and Pergolese, music fell like architecture did after the time of Borromini. That is, the desire to surprise with novelty has led music astray from its straight path of imitating nature to please and to be useful.

After these preliminary notions about music, let us consider its application to the various parts of the drama.

The Symphony

The symphony is the opening of our opera, and its first disturbing circumstance as well. A couple of allegri, an austere element, and a deepening uproar are the ingredients of every symphony. If you

[page 53]

have heard one you have heard them all. It is meaningless to permit it at every drama.

It is no less obvious that the symphony should be like the exordium of the opera; and everyone knows that the exordium must be taken from the essence of the subject that is to be represented. As a result, two necessary consequences arise.

1. (That) each opera should have its own particular symphony which announces the action in a particular way and prepares the audience to receive the impressions of affections that result from the drama.

2. (That) every symphony must be meaningful.

Our current symphonies are not that meaningful as is evidenced by the fact that any one symphony can be applied to any type of drama. Any music that does not depict, is nothing but an uproar, and music that perverts nature would not provide pleasure but from harmonies and sonorous words, lacking order and connection. The famous Tartini did not compose song that neither expresses some Petrarchian composition nor loses focus of the subject at hand. These songs however, for all their meaningfulness do not have but a half life, lacking the expression of song that is the soul of music.

On Recitative

The recitative follows the din of the symphony. It is so ignored and neglected by composers and actors alike that no one bothers to listen to it anymore. It is truly insipid and intolerably monotonous. And yet it is the foundation of opera. All things of this earth, particularly human passions, have their moments of rest and intervals. The art of the theatre thereby follows in the way of nature. One can neither always laugh nor cry at the theatre. The main characters are not always agitated by the same intensity of passion; they have alternative passions and calmness. The secondary characters, as much as they may be involved in the action, can never exceed the passions of the heroes. Finally, the most pathetic situation does not become so if not in stages. It requires preparation, and its effect depends in large part on the things that preceded it and conducted it.

There are two distinct states of the opera:

[page 54]

the tranquil state and the impassioned state. All the care of the composer, then, must consist of finding two genres of music both different and unique. The first must render the discourse tranquil the second must express the language of the passions in all their strength, in all their variety, and in all their disorder. The latter of the two modes constitutes that which is called aria, and the former is that which is called recitative.

When characters reason, deliberate, remain together and create dialogue, it would be quite unseemly if they were to sing and trill, so they must act. But what will their recitative be like? Performing it in the usual manner is boring enough to put you to sleep; perform it by simply speaking, one cannot. An opera, part sung and part spoken, would create a discrepancy like that between ice and fire. How then should it be conducted? (*)

The teachers of the art have proven that the foundation of recitative must be a harmony that follows nature step for step; that is something in between ordinary speaking and melody. It must therefore be varied, and must take its form and soul from the quality of the words. It must sometimes run with speed equal to that of the discourse, and sometimes proceed slowly. Above all it must pick out those inflections and emphasis that the violence of affections has the power to impress in the expressions.

In order to convince oneself of this truth one need only look to the recitative, accompanied by instruments, and called the *obbligato*. Why does one listen to it with attentiveness and pleasure, if not for its naturalness? So all recitative should be done like this and it will be converted from boring to delightful, so much more delightful, as well as so much more natural and expressive.

Another advantage would result from a harmonious recitative, and that is the fact that it would avoid the unpleasant separation that exists between ordinary recitative and the aria, which burst suddenly on the scene like an uncontrollable rocket. There must certainly be a notable difference between the recitative and the aria, but not such a difference as large as the

(*) In the lyrical scene of *Pygmalion* of the one and only M. Rousseau, performed at Lyon with great success, the words were not at all sung, and the music did not serve but to fill the rest intervals necessary to declamation. Rousseau wanted to give with that performance a sense of the *Meloepea* of the Greeks, and of their ancient theatrical declamation.

[page 55]

distance that separates the ground and the sky. Who engages in transports of passions without first having experienced it for some time to varying degrees?

On Arias

The aria is the development of an interesting situation. It is the pleading and recapitulation of the scene. With a few small verses administered by the poet, the musician seeks to express not only the principal idea of the character, but also all of his accessories and degradations. The better the composer captures the most secret of the movements of the soul in each situation, the more beautiful the aria will be. This is the point at which he must explain all the richness of his art, reuniting the enchantment of harmony to the charm of melody, and reuniting the prestige of the voice to that of the instruments. The performance of the aria then, is divided between song and gesture; since it requires not only an able singer, but also a skilful actor. This is what the aria should be. Let us look at what it actually is.

The Aria begins, not at the point of singing, but from the start of the preliminary ritomelli, always useless, and often inopportune, debilitating the whole action; since that character is in the meantime forced to remain with his hands at his side; waiting for the ritomello to end, (that does not finish at all soon), to give release to the passion that burns within his heart.

He sings finally, but a crowd of instruments oppresses the voice so much that it is heard only from time to time as distant shrieks and screams. And why is there such a rabble of violins? And why banish the violette [small violins with three strings], which are something between the violins and the basses? And why not put back the lutes and the harps, which with their pizzicati give the ripieni a certain spice?

The arias then, in which the voice competes with a trumpet and an oboe, and between them exchange blasts and responses to the point of exhaustion, receive applause. But what is being imitated? What poetic affection is being expressed? Every aria should be soberly accompanied by different instruments in such a way that each instrument should suit the nature of the words in order to capture the right expression of the affection.

The singer who gives more in the high notes is thought the most talented, even though the least melodious,

[page 56]

(and) who does not see that the high notes are to Music what strong lights are to painting?

And those frequent passages from one extreme to the other, when they are not called for by the passion and the words, are true interruptions of the musical meaning.

And those eternal repetitions of words, verses, and parts that are obstructive, disorderly, and re-mixed, are always a labyrinth. The words are not to be replicated, if not dictated by the order of passion.

The first part of the aria seems like fireworks, the second part seems like a cat's lamentation, after which a return to the first part is made which is repeated in its entirety four times, and separately in indentations without number until each spectator leaves, each having had their fill. The most intelligent in the musical field cannot tolerate this much music.

Ordinarily the Masters of the Chapel are extremely careful to express the words of the aria. They sweeten the notes for the words *calm*, *groom*, *father*, they express the word *heaven* with loud thunder, and the words earth and hell with lows; they hurry impetuously over the words lightening and thunder, and with a dozen vocal hurlings they explain the term *furious monster*. But it is not this and other similar childishness that express the situation of the soul, and the meaning of the aria; these do not explain more than a few words, and they completely spoil the meaning. The same drawbacks are found in the duetti.

The choruses are performed in an even worse manner. They have become so insipid that nobody can bear listening to them. Even if they were to be destroyed by the poet, and they were to express with simplicity the sentiments of a people who detest short curses, and the cruelty of a tyrant, or applaud with acclamations of joy a beneficent hero, they would become pleasant and interesting, if however, they were performed with expressive music.

Even in tragedies, the choruses can sing, as was common at one time at Ferrara in Gherardi's *Egle*, in Lollo's *Aretusa*, in Tasso's *Aminta*. These tragic choruses should always go about praising virtue, to condemn vices, to comfort the unhappy. These choruses should be joined by music that is sometimes mournful and sometimes joyous, sometimes mixed, according to its different subject. This gives pleasure and relief to the listeners, at times tired and full of vigorous effects, that tragedy impresses: this way they breathe and rest at the end of the acts,

[page 57]

-serving those choruses as befitting intermezzi, and not as those improper ones that are currently used in tragedies and comedies.

From what has been said so far, it is easy to see that the great evil of today's Italian music is its excess. This excess has caused ornamentation, cuttings, bits, centrings, peculiarities, that have made us lose sight of the principal object of music, which consists of expressing in the most natural and simple way the sentiments of poetry, so that the heart is touched more vividly. Do you really want touching little arias, so that they engrave themselves in everyone's memory? Make them so that they depict and express the sentiment of the poet; make them as natural as possible, and as is often said, *Parlanti*. Only beautiful simplicity can imitate nature. It was this simplicity that made Vinci and Pergolese famous. The desired ornaments of art surprise, but do not go to the heart.

If one wants music to be simple and touching, more melody should be used, and less counterpoint. *Contrappunto* is made up of various parts: one of acute and quick movement, the other, serious and slow, and both must work together and assault the ear at the same time. How then can the counterpoint move within the soul such a determined passion, which requires a determined movement? Mirth requires fast movement and intense and acute tones; sadness requires slow movement and serious and reserved tones. At the meeting the melody proceeds always at a pace and tone to the same end, and it is for this that melody is so helpful at activating every passion within us. Melody does not need much profound doctrine, like counterpoint does, but demands instead a fine taste and an unlimited amount of wisdom.

Proof of this are those musical intermezzi,

[page 58]

and those operette buffe, which please more than the heroic ones, because in the former, music is more simple, and it expresses the argument better in its whole and in its parts. To these operettas more simplicity is applied, because they are ordinarily concerned with characters that are very mediocre, to which all of the secrets of the art, and the treasures of science cannot be given to perform. The masters are therefore obligated to follow that which is simple, and with the simple, imitate nature. It is the burlesque opera, *La Serva Padrona*, that led to the triumph of Italian Music in France.

Therefore, to compose an opera in music properly is not the business of a certain number of hours exhausted by libertinism, as some composers boast. In order to understand and express well the whole and the parts of the drama, a long and serious meditation is necessary.

On Actors

If the composer must be subordinated to the poet, the actors must be subordinated to both of them. It is not enough that something has been well conceptualized, it is still necessary that it be well executed; and the execution depends on our virtuosos. The first virtue that they must possess is an exact and docile resignation for what the poet has expressed in verse, and to the well-known Master of the Chapel.

They must not, therefore, take the minimum liberty to add, remove or alter any of the arias; and this is precisely where they take the most unrestrained license. In the cadence, especially, is distilled the most virtuous of all his musical treasures, thinking that the cadence is as the Girolandino of Saint Angelo's Castle. But the cadence must be dealt with from the heart of the aria itself, of which is like the epilogue. It is up to the master to dictate it, and the musician to execute it.

It is still the responsibility of the master to make the arias singable for all that must be sung, according to the sentiments

[page 59]

of the poet, the musician executes it. Liberty can be accorded only to that rare Apollo who is the master of his voice and understands poetry and music perfectly.

It is an axiom in music that he who does not know how to control the voice does not know how to sing. And in fact, how is it possible to cause effects if one cannot hold oneself up and carry the voice at will? Nevertheless, most singers do just the opposite: their principal plan is to cut up the voice, hopping from note to note, warbling, harping, and with passages, trilling, fragmenting, and rushing to embellish, cover and disfigure everything of beauty. In this way, one is no longer singing, and all of the arias resemble those of the women of France who, with their lipstick, all look like they are in the same family.

In addition to singing, singers must learn the pronunciation of the Italian language, articulating the syllables well, not cutting words in half, not squandering the endings. He must present the intention in a way that the listener will have no further need of the inconvenient libretto, when nonetheless, all that he is twittering is intended.

But what is of the greatest importance is that music must remember that is representing a character. It must, therefore, move in correspondence with this character, and what is being acted. If the appropriate actions are missing, all of the most excellent poetry correlating with the most well intended and well executed music is betrayed and unsuccessful. Demosthenes made all of the force of the art of oratory exist within the actions, in the tone of the voice and in gestures. It is probably because of this that ancient eloquence was much superior to the modern. What is the passage with which Cicero, in the oration pro Ligario, made the hand of condemnation, already resolved, fall on Caesar? One cannot make such a request unless, with words, it is possible to transmit the tone and gestures of an orator.

To be further convincing of the importance of action, it is appropriate to reflect on the fact that men have three manners with which to express their ideas and sentiments. One is the word, another is the tone of the voice, and the third is gesture, which consists of external movements and in the attitude of the body. The word expresses more minutely and particularly, to instruct, to convince, and is the organ of reason, and a language founded especially to communicate ideas. But the tone of the voice and the gesture are of a more natural and extensive use, common to all people,

[page 60]

barbaric or cultured. They are a living and direct language, that with energy speaks directly to the heart. The word cannot express passion without designating itself, *I love you, I hate you*; but without tone and gesture words express more an idea than a feeling. At the meeting of a motion, a look, an accent, passion is quickly demonstrated. If the curse of abandoned Dido is read coldly, without any inflection in the voice and without gesture, the heart will remain cold, and to warm it up, there are motives in tone and gesture that one can imagine would accompany these words in a furious person. Tone, therefore, and gesture are of the utmost importance in theatrical representation. It is to their infrequent use that our Rosci can in great part attribute the boredom of our opera. A single tenor, all the rest castrati, and women are the performers of our operas. And why do serious characters have the feminine voices of eunuchs? It would offend humanity less if suitability was better observed. And now the device will be seen to make musicians excellent actors.

CHAPTER IX On Dance

The principal part of gesture is dance, which consists of regular movement, jumps, measured steps, done to the sound of instruments or the human voice.

If feeling produced song, sound and gesture, stronger feelings, happy or sad, must have produced a certain extraordinary excitement in the body. The body thus excited, the arms were either opened or closed, the feet would have taken slow or quick steps, the features of the face participated in these different movements, and the entire body corresponded in position, attitude, and shaking to the sounds which touched the soul. Therefore, dance is a development of these strong feelings, which are roused by sound and song. So dance is as natural to man, as is song and gesture. Therefore, if there was dance at the beginning of the world, there has always been dance. Ancient dance was sacred accompanying joyful songs of praise and thanks offered to the beneficent Creator.

The word *Ballo* has been derived from *balla* or *palla*, to which game the Greeks united dance, always attentive to accompany the pleasant

[page 61]

with the useful, and more attentive to shape the body to make it agile, robust, and at the same time gracious in its movements.

The way to produce dance that is exhibited clearly is that every dance must have a meaning, and as one cannot have sound or song that is not imitative and expressive of some sentiment, so one cannot have gesture or dance that is not an imitation. Dance, then, has to imitate and express, by the method of the musical movement of the body, the quality and affects of the soul. It has to speak to the eyes, and to paint with motion and gesture. With great reason then, Simonide calls dance a mute poetry, and as such, has to instruct and please.

Dance was without doubt in early times an irregular combination of running, jumping, and postures crudely expressing passion that excited the dancers. But there was not much delay in imposing laws on these movements of measure and regulated cadence, that has its origin in nature, that is in a certain way mechanical for our body, from which comes this inclination to repeat the same sounds with some type of equality and the same gestures as are observed in children and animals. This cadence, either with the sound of the voice or with the percussion of other bodies, was evident from the beginning. This type of cadence is not unknown even now by the most savage people.

These origins of dance are very similar to those of Lucian who derived the motion in cadence of the heavenly bodies, the different conjunctions of the planets, and the fixed stars, and the harmony of the celestial bodies.

The strict union of dance and music does not have the permission of these two arts to have separate processes. They have taken an equal step toward that level of perfection that connects them with more cultured people. As music, so dance, are both received in the ceremonies that compose religious culture, military functions, weddings, harvests, and in all that has a special rapport with the most notable joy.

With the Greeks, dance reached such a great majesty that Themistocles danced with his triumphal corps; the grave Lacedemonus never tired of dancing, and finally in the marches and parade grounds, terrible and exhausting Phyrus exercised, that military dance in which in cadence to the sound of flutes, all the

[page 62]

battle methods, for attack as well as defence, are practised. Even Socrates attempted to learn to dance. But what dances must these have been? They were dances that had found a place in the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch and Lucian, in which they had viewed dance as true imitation, executed by single movements of the body to represent human action and passion, imitated with steps and figures, and indicated with gestures, all subjected to regulated cadence. In good times in Greece this type of imitation was not applied except to proper subjects that inspired the most commendable passions, and to regulate customs. The prostitution, then, of dancers by the most despicable people, corrupts and serves to reawaken and nurture the most sinful passions.

If dance has as a subject the common feelings of life, it can be called comic; but if it has as a subject, heroic feelings, it is called tragic. The Greeks, in fact, applied it to both tragedy and comedy. But in Rome under Augustus, one or another brought to excellence the work of two celebrated dancers. Batillus of Alexandria invented dances representing cheerful action, and incorporated them in comedy. Pilade introduced dances representing pathetic and grave actions in tragedy. These dances came to be performed by pantomimes, who are professional in natural representation, and paint, so to say, with gestures, attitudes and the motions of their face all the actions of man.

Lucian required great quality in forming the merits of such a pantomime. He wanted a dancer of this type to know perfectly poetry, music, a tint of geometry and philosophy, borrow from rhetoric the secrets of expressing passion, and the diverse motives of the soul, take gestures and attitudes from sculpture and painting, so that they did not give in to either Phidias or Apelle. But above all, they needed a great fund of memories, to represent the principal events of fables and history faithfully, which were usually the two sources from which subjects were supplied. He must understand how to exhibit to the eyes with gestures and movements of the body the concepts of the soul and its most hidden sentiments, observing for all its suitability. He must be subtle, inventive, judicious, and have a fine ear to judge the cadence as well as the verses of the music. The perfection of his art consists, therefore,

[page 63]

in imitating well that which he wants to express, so that he never makes a gesture or assumes a position that is not connected, and without ever abandoning the qualities of the character being represented. In summary, the pantomime makes a profession from the expression of the customs and passions of man, and the imitation of fury, affliction, love, or anger and the two opposites practically at the same time.

Lucian, to justify the praise he gave to this type of dance, recounts what happened in Nero's time to Demetrius, a cynical philosopher, who condemned this art sustaining that it was not but a useless accompaniment to music with which are associated vain and ridiculous postures to entertain and surprise the enchanted spectators with the beauty of the masks and costumes. Then a pantomime, who was outstanding in his art, asked the philosopher to condemn it after having seen it. And imposing silence on the voices and instruments, he settled on the representation of the love of Mars and Venus, expressing the Sun that discovered them, Vulcan who intended to trick them and catch them in a trap, the Gods who watched the scene, Venus bewildered, Mars amazed and suppliant, and the rest of the fable expressed with such vitality, that the philosopher exclaimed that it seemed that he had seen the real thing, and not just a simple representation but one in which his entire body spoke.

Lucian adds that a prince of Pontus came to Nero's court for some of his affairs and saw this famous pantomime dance with all of his art. The prince asked the Emperor to give him this dancer to bring back with him, and when Nero demanded to know for what use he wanted him, this prince responded: *My state borders a barbarian people, with whom no one can communicate, but this man will be able to interpret for us by means of gestures.*

Also dance requires its exposition, its heart, its freedom, and must be a hearty compendium of actions executed rapidly in a variety of situations. And as it is not natural that in opera one sings from the beginning to the end, it would be of similarly unnatural in dance for one to be always dancing. Dance must also have tranquil motions, and very passionate motions: they must be distinctly two manners to express two moments so diverse.

Dancers, therefore, dance in the moment of passion, a moment that is real in nature of violent and rapid motions.

[page 64]

The rest of the action then will be executed by the dancers with simple gestures, and with poetic steps and in rhythm. This musical promenade is like recitative; their little aria will be dance. But this dance will not be a minuet, a sarabanda, a contradanza that means nothing. It will be a quick movement expressing passion of the drama executed in dance.

Dance, therefore, cannot be dictated but from the poet, it wants to be regulated from a sound composed from a master hand, and it would turn out even more expressive if it were animated by some choir of singers. In this the French understand better than us. If the dance teacher and the dancers know the depth of their profession, they will find sound in all of their gestures noted with the succession and the gradation of all movements, that are not certainly pirouettes, capriole, nor vulgar jumps and without end.

Of that which dance should be, it easily appears that our's is a complexity of absurdities. At the end of an act, the stage gets filled up with dancers who start to jump until they are out of breath. After a concert a few young men become detached from the troupe, that play various jests, that steal a bouquet of flowers, go into rage, make peace. Each invites the other to dance, and they dance; that is, jumping around the whole theatre in obscene ways, and often dishonest. After come the bigger ones called coryphaeus to do similar insipid movements in twos or in threes; and finally it closes with another concert or contradance of the same taste as the first. Who has seen one, has seen them all. The costumes of the dancers change, some pantomime changes, but the character of the dance is perpetually the same. Ordinarily the dance of opera has much connection with the argument of the drama, as much as dreams have with the lottery. The action will be in Carthage and the dance will be a Venetian masquerade.

Our theatrical dances are instead academies of dance, where mediocre subjects are practised in representing, breaking up, reconfiguring; and the older dancers demonstrate the most difficult studies in different aptitudes, gracious, quick and learned. But what would one say of those painters and sculptors who in a public exhibition of their works would display studies of heads, arms, legs, and perspectives without ideas, without application, without precise imitation? All these things certainly have their virtue. They are necessary studies from which paintings are made; but in the public's eyes school studies should not be exhibited.

[page 65]

One should exhibit complete works that are the result of various detailed studies.

Even if the dancers are liked, and they are well liked, so that many only go to the opera to enjoy the dances, enjoyed equally are the [Magot Cinesi], tightrope walking, and other deformities. The empire of bad taste is most vast of all empires.

Theatrical dances are subject to two large inconveniences. One is in its significance; and the other is in its application to drama. In opera, there should be, like in all things, unity where the dance, instead of consisting of two isolated intervals, each one composed of a complete cessation of the drama, should be, on the contrary, an integral part of the drama. The dance should intertwine itself with, and incorporate itself within the drama, and the dancers and actors of the opera should be a compound; all the more when considering the character of the little aria, it is evident that it is principally designated equally to the expression of gesture, as well as song. Where an actor, or an intelligent pantomime will find all of his gestures in the instrumental part of the aria, all of the successions of his movements noticed with great refinement. Passion does not only elevate the voice, nor does it only vary the inflection, but it puts the same variety and warmth even in gesture, and the movement of the body, which are the elements of dance. As the moment of passion must be found in the union of song and dance. Therefore, in opera in music, the actor and the dancer must be one and the same thing.

An impossible union, most would quickly say. Singing is such a difficult art, and requires much study and application, that one can hardly hope that a great singer could be a great actor, much less could succeed as a great dancer? The execution and expression of song already occupies a singer too much to permit him to give the same attention to the action. Often the movements that the situation requires are so violent that they do not permit singing with grace or with the necessary force. Especially in the last throes of passion, how can the same singer sing with warmth and the necessary enthusiasm, and at the same time, lose oneself in dance to delirium, and the great confusion of passion? And who then could execute this? Who for the magic of the voice has made the biggest sacrifices, for which he is rendered shapeless and cadaverously married?

[page 66]

The usual followers conclude, then, that this reunion is of a palpable impossibility.

Pondering upon this impossibility, it seems at first sight impossible that which sometimes reflection or chance afterward renders feasible; Andronicus, a famous Roman actor who is both a singer and a pantomime, becomes hoarse, not only for affectation, but because of the applause that demanded more encores. The public no longer knew how to enjoy theatre without Andronicus. He performed again the next day with all his hoarseness, gesticulating and dancing, and he made a young man situated below in the orchestra sing for him. This expedient was liked, and from then Andronicus was dispensed from ever singing, and dedicates himself with more intensity to gesture and dance. From that instant, Opera was performed in Rome with two types of people, that represent the same subject at the same time, with the same arias, with the same measure, in the same scenes: one by means of song, the others by means of gesture and dance, and these were the pantomimes. The pantomime does not sing except with his hands, the singer does not gesture more than with the voice. Voice in agreement with sound explains the singing of the subject, meanwhile dance in agreement with the measure of song and sound executes the same subject with gesture.

That which a risk established one time at the theatre of Rome, should be adopted in reasoned imitation in the execution of our lyric poems. Our castrated singers, who are ordinarily excellent singers, and terrible actors, and all other singers could be positioned immobile in the orchestra like speaking instruments. They would perform like this the part of song with a superiority impervious to distraction, meanwhile the dancers would perform the part of the action with expressive manners and intensity.

More than it penetrates the spirit of opera in music, more fervour is derived from this idea. Opera executed like this will not (as it actually is) an auricular entertainment for those few excessively sensitive and intelligent about music. It will be an incantation that will touch the heart of the most ignorant of the common people; because the concern of the pantomime would be to translate the music word for word, and to render intelligible to his eyes, that which to his ears he could not comprehend.

This manner of executing lyrical drama would render to the poet and to the composer the command, that they have usurped the singers and the impresario. All that is not born directly

[page 67]

from the depth of the subject, is no longer tolerable in such theatre. The whole figured and epic style would disappear from dramatic opera. And which gesture the pantomime would find for the expression of such words and of such arias? And how, without giving in to the ridiculous, would one know how to express himself, to resemble an indomitable steed, or a ship left abandoned in icy waves? Pathetic situations would no longer be weakened by cold and subaltern episodes. The poet, little embarrassed by the duration of the performance, and the number of actors, would conduct his argument with an intrigue, simple strong and rapid, to the catastrophe indicated in the story or from the nature of things. Rendered like this, all animated, united and collected, opera would make a more profound impression, more entertaining, and more useful than the theatres of Rome and Athens have ever done.

For a long time it has been said of poetry, music and dance, that the three are fine arts with a common principle which is the imitation of nature. They also have a common end which is to communicate to others the ideas and feelings of our spirit and our heart. Therefore, maximum grace rests in their re-unification. Artists can separate these three arts, but only to cultivate and cleanse each with particular care and attention. However, they must never lose sight of the first principles of nature nor believe that the one can stand alone without the others. Nature and good taste require that all three must always be harmoniously united. This union, however, also has rules that regulate it.

In all things a common centre must be found; a point of recall that will hold together the most remote parts. If it is poetry that provides the basis for the spectacle, then poetry must dominate this centre. Music and dance must not enter it, except to give a more rigorous expression to ideas and feelings already expressed in the verses of the entertainment. Music and dance must make poetry stand out, not obscure it. And this is the case with opera.

If it is the case that music (permitting this digression) forms the basis of the spectacle, as in some resounding sonata; it would be a very cold experience without at least some light poetry to explain it. In fact, what do these great sonatas say to the heart? *Sonate que me veux . . . tu?* says Fontanelle. If there are sonatas and singing together as in music of the church, in the oratories, etc, the effect is weak because it is lacking the essential part of dance, using gesture,

[page 68]

which is the soul and life of every spectacle. It is not necessary to speak of the hundreds of sounds and songs which are dead and without action, as the academies do. If these are studied as exercises, it is fine; but if they are performed for pleasure, in ordinary practice, it would produce a false pleasure.

Finally, if it is dance that provides the celebration, music must not shine with prejudice to it; but only to take it by the hand to distinguish its character and movement with more precision. But how is the dance born as an expression of joy if this joy is not first prepared and inspired by some subject? One goes to a festival to dance; and one dances for the desire to move one's body, or to demonstrate one's ability and agility; or also for mere civility. As for the rest, the dance is never produced by its true cause, which is a feeling of excited happiness and those measured movements that express these internal sensations. It would be necessary then that dance proceeds from some bit of poetry which is sufficient to produce it. It is required that first the songs and sounds prepare it, and that the product also accompanies it. At one time, one used to dance to the melody of the voice, and the words had the same measure as the steps. The changes of the sounds, changes made with rules and gradations, would produce a variety of dances, and always significant dances. These would be the dances of the ancients in their celebrations of joy, in which the philosophers would intervene, as would the greatest of the republic, as reported by *Senofonte* who never failed to report with gravity the most minute details of the dances which were practised on these occasions.

Are our celebrations like this? High society studies and spends great sums to amuse themselves. They bore themselves in the midst of the most sumptuous parties, and they then say that they had fun. Even our learned men say that they amused themselves, recreating and stabilizing the reading of certain ancient books that spiritlessly incense and cause death from boredom. The divine Homer, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and many others of our similar divinities. What kind of divinities they are is dictated by common sense.

[page 69]

CHAPTER X On Decoration

It is part of poetry, music and dance to present images of action and human passion. It is part of the wardrobe, the architecture, the painting, the statues, in a word, the decoration, to prepare the clothes, location and the set for performance.

The actors' clothes and ornaments must be as close as conveniently possible for the use of the period, nation or subject portrayed in the scene. Semiramis in hoops, Cato himself in hoops, are both buffoons. However, to refer to the subject, time and place, the same wardrobe should always be used for all the characters, other distinctions being made in colour, embroidery, the length of a cloak, and in an enormous brush of feathers, tufted or thinned.

The same suitability is requested for the set. It is the duty of architecture to form these places, and embellish them with the help of painting and sculpture. All the universe belongs to the arts. It may be arranged with all the beauty of nature, but only according to the laws of appropriateness. Every residence must have the image of he who lives there, in accordance with his rank, fortune and taste. This is the rule that must guide the art of the construction and embellishment of places.

The ancients had three types of sets. The *Tragica* for tragedies was representative of a royal palace with a temple with magnificent columns, building fronts, and statues. The *Comica* for comedies was designed with a street with houses. The *Satirica* for a type of pastoral was representative of a forest with paths, with a views of the countryside, mountains, caves, and of other woodland things. They were scrupulous in observing the unity of scene or place. It was inconceivable that a performance could commence in a place, move to others, and finish in a completely different part, far away. Every subject has a fixed scene. Each comedy of Terence is performed in front of the door of a house, where the actors naturally meet one another. Each tragedy is performed

[page 70]

in the enclosure of a palace. And as the ancients had their principle performances in public, the set was in the open and huge.

Today we want variety at whatever cost, especially in opera where if there are not eight or ten scene changes, it is considered poor. And what sets? We want them to be finished with lavatories, and the prisons, as if the spectators were lynx-eyed and could see everything that they have inside.

At least these sets should be suitably adapted to the places being represented. The scene is in Carthage, and the architecture is Gothic. The set equally with the costumes must be regulated by the poet, and if it is not practical to use the methods of the ancients, consult a professional historian, but always avoid, however, pedants and bores.

Regarding the painting and perspective of the set, Ferdinando Bibiena should be studied, who in this was a grand master. But not to study him as his followers did, who abandoned the fundamentals of art, they gave in to oddness, fantastic displays, more great whims, ramshackle constructions, scalloping, trivialities, perforations and every sort of strangeness; calling small rooms those that serve for enormous halls, and prisons those that seem like a court. Also the architecture is badly developed. Columns, instead of supporting an architrave or ceiling, are lost in drapery placed in mid air. The vaults remain unsteady and decrepit, furthermore, from the side it cannot be seen where they are supported.

Other architecture must not be applied to sets, than that which is masculine and noble, which delivers the antiquities of Egypt, Palmira, Persepolis, Greece and Italy. Also modern architecture can provide some sound ornament. And so it is that for every subject the appropriate architecture can be had.

If the scene requires a garden and a countryside view, one cannot do better than to imitate the Chinese taste, who in this are truly enviable, since they have gathered all that is beautiful in nature in all its variety, their art cannot be compared. Of the same model are the gardens of England. And without having recourse to remote regions, grand masters for all in this genre are Possino, Titian, Marchetto Ricci and Claudio.

It must also be realized, and to be made a point, that the openings in the set be such that the height of the columns

[page 71]

have a just relation to the height of the actors. To make the actors come from the back of the theatre is the most disgusting inconvenience possible, because the size of an object depends on the size of its image combined with the judgement that is formed by the distance from it. In this way images of the same size can be positioned, the object will be viewed as much larger as it is viewed from farther away. Therefore this is why characters that appear at the back of the stage seem gigantic to us, because the perspective and artifice of the set makes us view them as much further away. A measure, then, of what to do in the front, they are diminished, and things nearby become dwarfed. The same is true for the extras, who must never be allowed to go where the capitals of the columns reach their shoulders or waists. The illusion of the scene must always be maintained.

Another extremely important realization, although a great deal neglected, is that of the position of the lights. If instead of illuminating the entire stage uniformly, the lights shine out in groups over some parts of the stage in such a way that the other parts remain without light, these powerful effects will certainly be admired in the theatre; this vivacity of chiaroscuro, this amenity of light and shade that is seen in the paintings of Titian and Giorgione. These groupings of lights could possibly be moderated in intensity with certain oiled paper, as is practised in some small theatres, that go under the name of mathematical optic views, as painting is toned down by the crudeness of its colours, and comes to receive a fading and accord that is enchanting.

First of all, the triple or quadruple row of lights situated along the mouth of the stage must be abolished; a barbarous invention that blinds and distorts the actors with a continuous torment immediately under the eyes. And those ugly mild-jugs full of lights, that are placed at the foot of the stage in view of all the spectators, and transported here and there according to the need, there are none more barbarous. It is an unnatural monstrosity to illuminate from below to above. Worse still is to confuse the effect of these lower lights with that of the upper lights, which are behind the set. Then it is no longer a distribution or an effect of lighting, but a battle between them, that makes everything confusing and ugly. That our theatres are illuminated would report a great advantage over those of the ancients, in which performances could never be held at night.

[page 72]

CHAPTER XI On Theatre Buildings

The first theatres did not consist in all likelihood but of four boards placed amongst the trees, the branches and leaves of which served as the scenery, and opposite were the spectators sitting on the grass amongst the bushes. They then began to take a form more consistent, comfortable and regular; but for a long time they were made of wood, until one was smashed to pieces during an act which compelled the poet Pratinas, inventor of the drama known as satire, in which was represented one of his compositions, the Athenians, to build a theatre of stone.

The architect, Agatarco, in concert with the poet, Aeschylus, built a great theatre in Athens, the description of which existed until the time of Vitruvius, and served as the model for the construction of theatres.

This theatre was different from that of Bacchus, begun in Athens about 330 years before the vulgar era, by the celebrated architect, Filone; then completed by Ariobarsane, and restored by Hadrian. The remains can still be seen. Its greatest diameter was 247 Parisian feet and that of the orchestra was 104. It was all of white marble, and its stairs are in great part supported by surviving stone of the citadel of Athens, by which at times they were sustained.

This particularity is observed in almost all of the theatres built in antiquity. To spare the porticoes and vaults supporting the risers, the ancients had the industriousness to position the theatres on the sides of hills, seating the listeners on the slope, and placing the stage on the flat land at the base. The theatre of Sparta was like this, in which it is observed, moreover, the singularity of its risers sunken in a circle in the place destined to seat oneself, so that the front of the step was a little lower than the back. In the theatre of Argos, which perhaps approximates more the origin of theatres, the steps were extruded from the living stone of the mountain. Similarly those of Pola, Sagunto and many others were of this economic and solid situation.

No nation has ever brought theatres to as great sumptuousness as ancient Rome. Although she was late in having them, and for long periods of time they were not permanent, but made of wood according to particular needs and at the end of the festival, the theatre

[page 73]

was bundled away. But what theatres were these? The most outstanding of any constructed before or after it was that made by M. Emilius Scauro to solemnize his inauguration to the Edilita. This theatre could contain eighty thousand people. The stage was adorned with 368 columns arranged in three levels, the first of which had columns of marble 38 feet high, the second of crystal (a luxury never repeated), and the upper level were of gilded wood. The bronze statues placed between these columns exceeded three thousand. The tapestries, paintings and decorations of every type were of such value that the theatre was dismantled after the performances, and surplus furnishings transported to a country house that Scauro had in Tuscolo, where they were set on fire by malicious slaves such that the damage was valued at one hundred million sesterzi; that is two and a half million of our scudi. Even Louis XIV was not capable of so much abundance.

C. Curione was not able to create so much expense to commemorate the death of his father (the Roman Nobility, at the death of their relatives, gave scenic spectacles; we prohibit them) imagined a grandiose plaything of mechanical wonder. He constructed two ample theatres of wood adjoining each other, and suspended and balanced in the air over pivots, in such a way that they would turn with all the people who were in it above, and the two parts could be joined together to form an amphitheatre. To understand how this mechanism was carried out, see Hist. de l'Acad. des Inscript. Tom. XXIII. To such excesses reached the temporary theatres of Rome.

Pompey was the first to found a permanent edifice of stone, based on the design of the theatre of Mitilene brought from Greece, built with a capacity for forty thousand people. He was also the first to provide seats for the spectators, and carries the blame of the old declamations against softness and innovation. (*)

The theatre of Marcellus was one of the small theatres, containing not more than twenty two thousand people. The largest of ours scarcely manages to contain three thousand. But the population of Rome,

(*) The first theatres of Rome date from 599, after its founding during the time of the Messala Censors and Cassio, but were then sold at auction by Scipione Nasica, and ordered by a Senato Consulto that in the city and for a mile outside of it, one could not construct seats, nor could anyone sit at spectacles. Rome, all military, abhorred every seed of softness.

[page 74]

one answers quickly, was not the population of a city but of an entire nation. Rome contained millions and millions of inhabitants. This is easy to say, but not to comprehend. It seems that the confusion lies between the number of inhabitants of Rome and the number of Roman citizens, who certainly amounted to millions more; but these were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, and not only restricted within the walls of Rome, whose population, due to space limitations, must have been less than that which Paris has at the present time. Its circumference, which was little more than eight miles, was much inferior to today's which has approximately thirteen. The height of the houses could not exceed 60 feet. The palaces were at ground floor level, and isolated in Chinese style with big gardens. The Aurea de' Cesari house was immense. The temples were not few. The streets were rendered spacious and regular; and then the forums, the circles [Cerchi], the porticoes, the baths, the theatres, the amphitheatres, the naumachiae, the gardens, and many other spacious public and private enclosures. It seems to prove that ancient Rome at the time of its greatest luxury could not have contained more than four or five hundred thousand inhabitants, with the inclusion of its suburbs.

Therefore, the exterminated greatness of its theatres must not be regarded by us only in the ratio of the number of its people, but by the pleasure that this populous took in the theatre. So it is seen, in fact, that the ancient theatre was in its formality, much more attractive than the modern, and in the material sense would still incomparably surpass it, if a useful comparison is made.

Description of the Ancient Theatre

The interior of the ancient theatre was a construction of semi-circular shape, ending in one part in a half-circle and in the other in a diameter. The amphitheatre then was an entire circle or an ellipse, it is of value to say it comprised two theatres united together.

In the middle of this enclosure there was a piazza, which is that which we call platea of partere, and which the Greeks denominated orchestra, which means to say *to leap*, because that was the space for their dances. The Romans followed in naming it orchestra; although for them it no longer served for the dances, but for the seating of senators and of the most distinguished magistrates.

[page 75]

Around and around in a semicircle rose steps, hand in hand, on whose risers sat the spectators. These risers were raised not less than twenty nor more than twenty-two inches, and their height was between two and two and a half feet

In large theatres these steps were interrupted in proportion to the size of the theatre by one or two landings called *precinzioni*. At the top of the steps, there was another landing around which ran a high portico, as high as the scenery. This portico also had seats in gradation for use by the spectators, and particularly the women. All the risers and the landings of the aforementioned steps were disposed in such a manner that a line drawn from the first to the last riser must have touched all the tops or the corners. It is thought in this way that the voice could not be reflected at the top, and that it would be heard equally by all.

Every part of the theatre had a separate convenient entrance and exit. To get to the orchestra one went by level corridors, which had different outlets called *vomitoria*.

To ascend to the seats, after having arrived at the landings by the internal stairs, there were diverse small stairways, each leading to its own destination. These stairways divided the seats into many sections, which by their form were called *wedges*, assigned to different orders of people, for the magistrates, for the aristocracy, for the young, for the plebeians. Those who were expelled from the theatre were called the *unwedged*.

In the stairways cells were formed where were placed vessels of bronze or clay, of shapes suitable for making the sound of the voice better.

At the diameter of the semicircle was the stage called *pulpito* or *Proscenio*, on which operated the actors. The height of the stage was five feet, so that the actors could be seen comfortably by those sitting in the *platea*.

Behind the *proscenium* in a distance equal to the semi-radius of the orchestra, there was the *scena* [scenery] properly called, which created the front of the theatre. There its length was as much as the entire diameter of the orchestra. This scenery, as has already been said, was of three species, tragic, comic, and satyric.

The height of the scenery was relative to the size of the theatre. Ordinarily in large theatres the set was of three levels, in small ones, of two. This set had three doors; the largest which

[page 76]

was in the middle was called the Royal Door, and the other two on the sides were used for the Guests; because the houses of the Greeks were effectively such that the entrance in the middle served for the owner, and those on the side for the guests. The Romans were in everything imitators of the Greeks. At the two sides of the stage were situated the decorations consisting of triangular versatile machines that represented three types of decoration, streets, piazzas, or the country, according to that which the subject of the drama demanded.

This Theatre did not have other covered parts but the porticoes at the top of the stairs and also the scenae frons; all the great rest, that is the stage, the platea, the stairs, remained uncovered. The spectators were not night-birds and enjoyed all the spectacles by day; to take shelter, however, from the burning sun and from the rain, they covered their theatres with canvas awnings. But for strong and unexpected rain they took shelter inside the double arcades made expressly long and behind the scenae frons.

From this portico behind the scenae frons one went to certain boulevards and to parterres, where the public walked to wait in attention for the spectacles. Therefore, the interior of the ancient theatre was composed of three big pieces: the part used for representation; the part used for seating spectators; and the porticoes under which to cover oneself until the time of the spectacle.

What is properly said to be theatre was constantly of a semicircular shape so among the Greeks as among the Romans. The Greek theatre did not differ from the Roman, but in the larger orchestra, in the higher stage, and in a few other very small things. (*) The enclosure, therefore, of the theatre interior came to form a figure of one part semicircular and all the rest a rectangle. (**)

What attention was given to the solidity and precision of these

(*) Pausanias put forth another difference between the Greek and Roman theatres. These, he says, exceeded in ornaments those of all the other peoples, and in size that of the Arcadians, that is set in Megalopolis. But in taking account of proportion and of beauty, what theatre can compete with that of the Epidaurians, designed by the famous Polycletus?

(**) Sometimes the total form of the ancient theatre was entirely circular. Pausanias reports that Trajan built a big theatre of all circular parts; and Belli, as Maffei reports in his *Verona Illustrata*, found some of similar shape in Candia.

[page 77]

buildings, is here inopportune to report; and as for their external grandiosity, it is enough to look at the admirable remnants of the Theatre of Marcellus.

Therefore, the theatres among the ancients were superb buildings in which was united utility and the pleasant in a magnificent manner, and able to transmit to posterity the idea of their major grandeur.

Description of Modern Theatre

Our Theatres do not suffer description, but to create blushes, and to animate us to correct them. Everywhere is found poverty, defects, and abuses.

Their exteriors by form, as by the adomments, do nothing to announce that which the interior contains. If it is not written outside *This is a Theatre*, not even Oedipus could divine the use which it was assigned.

The entrances, the stairs, the corridors, seem to lead not to a place of noble entertainment but to a prison and to the most filthy brothel. Even the materials correspond to so much rudeness; being for the most part of wood badly combined, uncomfortable, and for every care, so unsafe that the longest life of a theatre hardly arrives at fifty years, provided it escapes frequent fires.

The interior shape is different in everything, in no way geometrical: all, however, are in accord in allowing to see and to hear as little as possible. They are all divided in more rows of cells, which are said to be 'palchetti' (boxes), that of the two thousand people that can be contained in a vast theatre, hardly one fifth can be situated comfortably to hear and to see.

Such are today's theatres. From this common misery, however, I exclude a few which are constructed soundly of stone, and include some comfort, and also refinement in terms of the accessories; like those of Torino, of Naples, of Bologna, of Berlin, which is the most sumptuous of many theatres existing in Europe. All, however, sin in the interior shape, irregular, uncomfortable, and with the most inconvenient use of palchetti. Only the Teatro Olimpico, which Palladio the Vitruvian embellished his native Vicenza, can be esteemed a good theatre. In confirmation of

[page 78]

what was mentioned, a short description of the principal modern theatres is added.

The city of Venice numbers seven theatres. That Republic was never committed to create a public Theatre worthy of its greatness. Those that there are were casually erected by patrician families; and for the most above the ashes of burnt-down houses or on the ruins of some ancient building. Hence it is that all are between houses, and streets that are the most abject and narrow in that city. All of their magnificence is restricted to the interior. That metropolis, from the most remote times had the highest enthusiasm for spectacles, with pomp, and celebrity of the companies of the Accasi, Sempiterni, and celebrated Calza, is not in a better condition than the other cities of Italy, because they are all of bad shape. Those erected in the sixteenth century by Sansovino in Canareggio, and by Palladio at the Carita for the above-mentioned company of Calza, because they have not existed. Neither the celebrity of these, nor that of their architects was enough to remind the builders of many theatres there then erected, that their shape must be of a half-circle. That which was the least different from it, and was the largest of any other, was the theatre of Saint John Crisostomo, in the past celebrated in all Europe, for its musical dramas always represented with regal magnificence. But who? The great multitude of people, who came together at these dramas, promoted the desire to multiply the number of boxes. Three of them were added in each level on both sides of the proscenium. And this lengthened the theatre, and lost that merit, that it had above all. The other six theatres have the same defect; a defect that almost each year becomes a crescendo for the passion for always augmenting the number of these same boxes. The theatre called Saint Benedetto, not having been built many years, is much decorated in the interior, but in its shape it is not better than the others. In this way Venice, which was the first of the cities of Europe to have beautiful theatres in the fashion of the ancients, and which in this was perhaps the master of the other nations, nowadays is of the same condition as many other cities greatly inferior to her.

1. The Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza built in 1583, was designed by the prince of modern architects, Andrea Palladio, with the taste of ancient theatre. His shape is a half-ellipse, it could not be, because of the narrowness of the adapted site, a semi-circle. This semi-ellipse is encircled by risers of fourteen steps of wood

[page 79]

for the spectators, neither interrupted by landings, nor by small stairways, nor by vomitories, its greatest diameter is $97 \frac{1}{2}$ Parisian feet, and the smallest ending at the stage about $57 \frac{1}{2}$. At the top of its risers runs a loggia of Corinthian columns which, for the same narrowness of the site were not allowed to be placed everywhere; whence the wise architect, with the good advantage of practice, created in the middle and at the extremes some niches with statues. The entire loggia, then, is crowned by a balustrade enriched with statues. The scena is of stone in three levels, the first two are Corinthian (I do not know the motive for the repetition of the same order), and the third is an Attic; each division is ornamented with variety and with richness. There are in the scenae frons three frontal exits, and two in its sides; each one with internal views as required by the perspective. The extremities/ends of the risers do not have a view of the entire stage. Pity that a building in this way ingeniously designed should be without convenient exterior decoration; but it was built, not at the expense of the Senate, or of the Roman Emperor, but by a group of Vicentine Knights of the Olympic Academy.

2. The Theatre of Parma is commonly believed to be a work of Palladio, completed by Bernini; but not even the smallest part was by one or the other. The architect and engineer Gio: Battista Magnani, and Leonello Spada, painter, were by Duke Ranuccio Farnese, commissioned to construct and embellish this famous theatre. Its shape is a semi-circle, that unhappily joins two straight sides. Its length from the wall to the mouth of the proscenium is about 125 Parisian feet, and its width, counting from the wall behind the loggias, is about ninety-three feet. Around the platea which is about forty-eight feet wide, are risers of fourteen steps, with two entrances at the sides, and with the great Ducal balcony in the middle, equipped with two spiral staircases. Above the risers are two majestic loggias, one Doric and the other Ionic, each with risers of four seats. The ornamentation above these loggias is sustained by other single, minor columns; which render confusion to the architecture and impede the sight of the spectators who are in these loggias. Worse effect is produced by the two large lateral entrances which are between the risers and the proscenium, since the two levels which are ornamented, instead of being connected in the best manner, are detached and cruelly contrary with the theatre and the proscenium. In

[page 80]

the middle of the arch above these entrances, above a high pedestal is an equestrian statue, that goes on without reins to precipitate all the rules of convenience. The proscenium and the orchestra are disfigured by large ornaments and arches. The most inconvenient aspect of the theatre can be found at the mouth of the stage. It is excessively narrow and very far from the gallery. Meanwhile it very easily could have been designed more widely and closer to the spectators. In addition the spectators seated on the sides can see very little of the stage; in compensation the sound is amazing because the structure of the theatre is such that those whispering on one side of the theatre can be heard on the other side. This big theatre is not decorated externally and because it has not been used for such a long time, it is in such bad condition that the curious do not view it without having some fear.

3. The back of the Theatre of Milan begins from a curve of 72 feet in diameter, this curve which becomes gradually wider into two straight sides, the stage is seventy-seven feet in width; the opening of the palco scenario is 69 feet and the length of the platea is 140 feet which is almost double its width, that is why it seems so excessively long. The shape of this theatre is completely opposite of the majority of other modern theatres, because all the modern theatre are designed to get narrower in toward the stage while the Theatre of Milan becomes wider. Given that the stage is so wide, the audience can see more. (with irony the author says) *Even though the theatre is not worth such attention.* This theatre is decorated with ordinary boxes. None of the theatre's features are as remarkable as a small closet found in the boxes. Between the boxes and the closets runs a big corridor.

4. The Theatre of Fano is renowned. It was designed around 1670 by the illustrious Giacomo Torelli, and he used his own funds to construct it and the money of five other Cavalieri Fanesi the theatre's shape like the French say "a specchio di tovetta" (resembling a rest room), it is eighty-four feet long and its width is a little more than half the length. There is a comfortable staircase with two ramps that goes up to the fifth level of boxes the last of which form a gallery with a loggia at each extremity of the sides. There are two columns per side of the proscenium, with a little niche in the middle of every interpilastro, where there are the statues of Paude and Minerva, and in the middle there is the inscription *Theatrum Fortuna*.

[page 81]

5. The Theatre in Verona designed by Galli Bibiena under the direction of Marchese Maffei is near the Philharmonic Academy. Its shape is a curve, that gradually enlargens in size becoming the size of the scena. The boxes are in five levels. They jut outwards, and as they jut out they get further away from the scena. This is a very good effect if you are looking towards the scena, but it makes it less desirable if you are looking from the scena at the rest of the theatre. The mouth of the stage could have been wider and better designed. There is a division created between the listeners and the orchestra otherwise the spectators would be too close to the instruments and the stage is in an appropriate place because the actors' faces can be seen.

Between the audience and the scena there are doors leading to the orchestra, as were used by the ancients. The door should not be placed in front of the scena because the sound is compromised, because the voice is low. Aside from its exterior ceiling there is also an interior ceiling made of planks and in certain places it is engraved as a result (this type of ceiling) is instrumental in enhancing sound in the theatre. There are comfortable stairs at the four angles of the theatre; the corridors and the rooms are convenient; but the principle entrance is on the side. In the Philharmonic Academy is preserved a model of a theatre modelled after a greco-roman style. This model was built in the beginning of this century. While they were attempting to construct it, there was a lack of courage, in spite of Maffei and many other erudite aristocrats, with which Verona has always been abundant. They chose a new trend; they abandoned this model and selected Bibiena's model and as a result Verona had deprived itself of a beautiful ornament that would have emphasised its splendour. It would have demonstrated a marvellous ancient style which Verona is capable of preserving.

6. Rome has about a dozen theatres. They should be superbly modelled after the many monuments built by Augustus during the Golden Century, and especially after Teatro Marcello. It should be this way, but it is all to the contrary. The worst theatres in Italy are those of Rome. They are all irregular and indecent in their form, defective and inconvenient in the accessories, and improper to the point of suicide. And in the meantime, Rome thinks she has the most beautiful theatres in the world.

Its largest theatre is the Aliberti, constructed by Ferdinando Bibiena, in an irregular and awkward curve, centering on six levels of boxes. The length of the Platea is almost 55 Parisian Feet, and the greatest width is 51 ½. Poor

[page 82]

entrances, misshapen staircases, impractical corridors, and unpleasant situations.

7. The Theatre of Tordinona, built in the last century by Carlo Fontana, and rebuilt in this century under Clemente XII, has a figure that more than any other comes close to circular. Its greatest diameter is 52 Parisian feet, and the smallest, 48. It has six levels of boxes; the last of which is in the sides. Of the comfortable interior, and the exterior decoration, there are no words to make even an allusion.

8. The most recent theatre of Rome is the Argentina, designed by the Noble Marquis Girolamo Teofoli, with six levels of boxes. Its figure is neither circular nor elliptical, but of those irregular forms that are horseshoe-shaped. Its greatest diameter is 51 Parisian feet, and the smallest, 46. Location, staircases, corridors, entrances, everything is miserable.

None of these three great Roman theatres has a theatrical facade, and they are all made of wood.

9. The Royal Theatre of Naples constructed in 1737, according to the design of engineer and Brigadiere D. Gio. Metrano, is also horseshoe-shaped. The greatest diameter of the platea is approximately 73 Parisian feet, the smallest of 67, and there are 6 levels of boxes, with a superb Royal Box in the middle of the second row. The construction is all of stone, the stairs are magnificent, the entrances, vestibules and corridors are spacious; the main entrance is divided into three parts, and has some decoration that could be the most majestic and significant.

10. The Royal Theatre of Torino, erected in 1740 by the Count Benedetto Alfieri, Gentleman of the Court and first architect of S. M. Sarda, has an oval form. The platea up to the scena (stage) is 57 Parisian feet long, and approximately 50 wide. There are six levels of boxes with wooden partitions which are, perhaps, over-decorated. The Royal Box embraces 5 boxes on the second level, adorned with balusters and a grand canopy, occupies three boxes on the third level, and protrudes externally, in a convex form remaining below the principal entrance of the platea (house). The last level, known as the pigeon-coop, has the parapet of balusters, in the front it has amphitheatrical flight of stairs. For the people without livery, the left side is for the public, and the right is divided for the servants

[page 83]

of the Court and for those of the Ambassadors. At the two extremes contiguous with the proscenium there are two loggias for the people of ordinary service of the theatre: with the exception of these two loggias, the boxes of this last level are not separated by the grand encircling corridor. Under the orchestra is a concave with two conduits at the extremes, which rise up to the height of the stage, to end by render the sounds more sensitive. The ceiling is concave and on top is the room of the scene painters; but the convex form of the ceiling is covered by tenacious bitumen, in order that if water is spilled, the paintings underneath will not be damaged, and at the extremes, cases are formed and continued around and within the cornice smeared with bitumen and filled with the finest sand, to absorb the little water that could fall by accident: a necessary precaution to keep the ceiling paintings unharmed. In all the modern theatres the chandelier ordinarily descends from a large opening in the middle of the ceiling of the house, with grave prejudice of the principle painting, the voice, the sight-lines of the boxes, and above all those underneath who are exposed to dust, dirt and some non indifferent danger. To avoid all these inconveniences, here, the chandelier descends from the middle of the ceiling of the proscenium. The proscenium is decorated with two Corinthian columns on each side, elevated on a simple pedestal; on their intercolumnation, there are two loggias for the actors, one on top of the other: the pediment/fronton on these columns and the principle fronton that crowns the proscenium seem problematic , and not well balanced. The entrances, stairs, rooms of various sorts, galleries and corridors are truly of magnificent intent. For the scenic apparatus there is all the space desirable with convenience to mount beasts on stage, and operate fireworks. There is no lack of pits, drains, storerooms, wardrobes, boilers and they even thought of furnaces with pipes that extend out to the platea to heat it as required. This considerable theatre did not have its own facade, but shares one with the Royal Palace with which it is connected.

11. The Theatre of Bologna, completed in 1763, was designed by Antonio Galli Bibiena, son of Ferdinando. Its interior has the unfortunate shape of a bell section; the length of the platea is 62 Parisian feet, and the width of the proscenium is approximately 50 feet. There are five levels, each having 25 boxes, in addition to an enclosure around the platea

[page 84]

four steps high and capped by a balustrade. The loggias of the first and second levels are located centrally, those of the next two levels, and those of the fifth are made from the lunettes, and are without balustrades. There are four levels over the doors, but these are of a smaller size. The shutters and pillars that separate the boxes are abundant with cartouches and other strange things: the parapets have terrible balustrades and worse overhangs. The two frontispieces of the side entrances terminate in a line of support for the first level of boxes, intersecting sharply with the pillars and the parapet. The other frontispiece of the central entrance is stuck below the principal box, and arrives at the line of support but not more than that interior decoration that is a barbarism of architecture. It is said, that the dispute, opposition, and rebellious satire at the choice of Bibiena's design, has caused very detrimental alterations to the theatre. The exterior facade is decorated with two well delineated orders. The first is of single Doric columns, on whose capitols sit barbarous arches, probably to render the porticos on the same level more distinctive; the second order is of a composite Ionic, interspersed with windows with pediments, which are not missing at the windows either, that are already inside the aforesaid portico.

12. M. Soufflot constructed an oval shaped Theatre in Lyon in 1756, of which the orchestra to the stage was 54 Parisian feet long, and 30 wide, with risers on the perimeter and in the front. There are three levels of loggias, each continuous without interruption and likewise furnished with steps. The second loggia is more inset than the first, and the third more inset than the second. This building is well provided with convenient accessories, and has its facade with three orders of windows with a great railing in the centre, and with balustrades rich with statues on top.

13. Montpellier has a theatre in the shape of a bell, with an interior length of approximately 44 Parisian feet, and a width of 30. The orchestra is surrounded with a portico, over the columns of which rise more levels of loggias with spacious corridors inside, and in the back is full of various steps to descend the stairs, that are inside this theatre, form an ordered edifice which has a good exterior appearance, but that does not announce its internal use.

14. The Opera Theatre in Paris, built in 1769, according to the designs of M. Moreau, is an elongated oval, with four

[page 85]

levels of loggias without interruption, and there are other loggias between the columns of the proscenium. The orchestra is 39 feet wide, and 32 long, and has a flight of steps in front. Outside it has simple decoration, with a convenient portico.

15. Inside the Palace of Versailles in 1770, the architect of the king, M. Gabriel, has erected a theatre in the old fashioned taste, with a semi-circular shape with internal staircases crowned by a loggia. The court occupies the parterre, in the centre of which sits the king.

16. In London, the Opera Theatre is a parallelogram, the orchestra having 37 Parisian feet in length, and 51 in width. In this parallelogram is inscribed in a circular form eleven staircases which serve the parterre, over the last of which rises a loggia of single pillars which are small and unpainted, and within are various stairs, and the same number above, and then rises a second loggia, over which is another staircase which extends and finishes over the corridor of the staircase beneath it. This play of staircases one over the other is very advantageous, to accommodate a multiplicity of spectators within a mediocre enclosure. The sides of the parterre which are attached to the orchestra are cut in straight lines converging toward the orchestra and over these lines, four orders of loggias rise up here and there, each divided into three boxes. Contiguous with these boxes, and precisely as long as the sides of the orchestra, there are three single columns of the Corinthian order with three levels of loggias between the intercolumnation, each intercolumnation contains three boxes, one over the other, and these loggias are for the Royal family. The last of these aforesaid columns form the proscenium, and in the back of the scenery are two single columns of the same order. But between these loggias, the others adjoining, and those of the theatre are missing those necessary occurrence of lines, and this connection of parts, from which results the unity and harmony of the whole building. And otherwise this Theatre is well provided with convenient entrances, staircases, corridors, rooms for various uses, and grand assembly room.

17. The Covent Garden Theatre, which is also in London, is of the same style as the preceding theatre, and has approximately the same capacity. This building, however, has more harmony as the staircases connect in good order, and return in the loggias, and these with the Royal loggia, which are here and there within the orchestra, and the proscenium.

[page 86]

The Royal loggias there are not those that have two columns per part, containing three boxes each, one over the other, with risers. These risers are continuous in the loggias, which are also of three levels. It is observable that the risers, as the parterre, as all of the front of the theatre, are not perfect sections of a circle, but are sections of a polygon, commendably expedient, so that the spectators at the extremities can be seated more comfortably and to view the scene without craning one's neck. This theatre is also copiously furnished with convenient and elegant accessories.

18. In St. Petersburg, under Czarina Elizabeth, a grand theatre was erected inside the Imperial Palace, designed by Count Rastrelli Veneziano. The stage is approximately 72 Parisian feet long, and the rest of the theatre, which is a type of ellipse, has a length of 103 feet. There are five levels of loggias, each one divided into 18 boxes. The first level has a balustrade, the second has boxes with central openings, the third has dressing tables with toilet mirrors, the fourth with lintels, and the fifth is completely open with no divisions. The Imperial Loggia, which is in the front, created by M. della Motte, a French architect, is decorated with four columns which support it and a baldacchino, which extends for all of the third level. The court sits in this loggia to enjoy dances, but to hear the opera better, they sit in a box next to the orchestra. The proscenium is adorned on both sides with two columns and two staircases to facilitate communication between the stage and the orchestra and the house.

Comparison Of Ancient With Modern Theatres

From the succinct description made of ancient and modern theatres, a very humiliating comparison becomes visible for us, which makes the method more evident, if for the principle requirements of theatre are established solidity, comfort and convenience; requirements common to every well-intentioned work of architecture.

1. Solidity in every building is very essential to safeguard the lives of men, especially in theatres, where the gathering is more resounding and the incidence of fire is almost without number.

[page 87]

The ancients had the knowledge to solidly construct their theatres, and it is enough to look at the remains. After thousands of years they will still exist intact, if our neglect and greed does not destroy or disfigure them (*). In making them of stone, they are made, so to say, eternal, even though little or none of it is in fear of catching fire, because everything occurs in the light of the sun. We operate in the midst of torches, and to expose us more to being burned alive, we make them out of combustible materials, of wood and fabric.

No building can be solid, but if it is not protected from humidity, damage will occur no less to the building itself, than to the health of the people. As well, in one particular theatre, as soon as it was completed, it was found that all of its fundamental structure was rotten with humidity, I do not know how many advantages this gives for the health of the spectators. Necessarily it will happen in all of these theatres where the orchestra is equal to or below the level of the streets.

2. Comfort is regarded by many to be of the maximum importance for theatres. If the theatre is planned for public spectacles of

(*) The common Roman attributes the ruin of his noble ancient buildings to the Barbarians. But who has destroyed the beauty of the Theatre of Marcellus by placing an ugly house and villainous shops next to it? Who has transformed the Pantheon into a church, stripping it of its bronzes and marbles, embellishing it with colours, with adding two miniature bell towers on top, and smothered it with a riff-raff of poor houses. The massive structure of Hadrian, the Septizonium, and many other superb structures are no longer recognizable, because they have been stripped of their columns and their ornament in order to make use of them, God knows how, in modern constructions. If Sixtus the Fifth had lived a little longer, goodbye to the Colosseum; it is so badly reduced, because everyone that has had control of it has never cared for its conservation: in worse condition would be the Arena of Verona, if the action of the citizens was not vigilant to conserve it, as is demonstrated by its steps, that are largely modern. The principle thought of Rome is to sanctify the Pagan monuments, and sanctifying the Colosseum, the Baths of Diocletian, and many other antiquities, I do not know what good service this renders to the fine arts. It is incomprehensible, that modern Rome has known to profit so little, especially in architecture, from many of its ancient treasures, that are truly the masterpieces of all the countries of Europe. She certainly has grand and rich public and private buildings, and supercedes in this any other capitol; but the grandness and richness are not to the extent that exists with the beauty of architecture, and little Vicenza with only Palladio is incomparably more beautiful than great Rome, not flaunting its Bramante, San Galli, Buonarrotti, Peruzzi, Vignoli, places already obligated to Fontana, Maderni, Bernini, Borromini, followed by a host of others, that like the Tartars trample upon the beautiful Greek and Roman architecture.

[page 88]

learned instruction, it is clear that it must be situated in a place and in a manner most convenient for the access of the citizens. Therefore it wants to be in the centre of the city. The Colosseum, and the theatres of Pompei and Marcello were not in remote comers.

The multitude of our carriages, an effect caused more by our vanity and weakness, than by our comfort and need, requires in our theatres a situation most favourable. It is not enough that many wide streets conduct them expeditiously to every part, the interior of every square, and various porticoed squares are required, some for covering the carriages and servants, and others for the shelter and security of the majority who make better use of their own legs.

The theatre must be filled and emptied with the utmost speed possible. A look at the ancient type, furnished with many doors, with passages (*vomitorii*) and stairs, would not make us know the embarrassment that is suffered in the access of our modern theatres.

But real theatrical convenience consists of a situation where one can see and hear equally well. The constant semicircular figure in all ancient theatres, and the interior stepped from top to bottom, was of the most admirable simplicity so that everyone was comfortably disposed to see and hear equally well; in this manner each person was able to see everything, and everything was seen by everyone.

Our different and strange forms of theatre, and especially the use of boxes, which are called *palchetti*, stacked one on top of the other, allow little to be heard, less to be seen, and no comfort in their arrangement.

This absurdity is brought in many theatres to such excess, that the stage is drawn forward into the orchestra, to diminish the inconvenience of hearing too little: where from many boxes the actors are only seen from the back.

3. For convenience is intended the use of ornament and proportion that are suitably adapted to the buildings according to their respective use, in order that their exterior and interior appearance is pleasing and beautiful.

The Theatre of Marcellus, even though it was a small theatre, had a regular and noble beauty on the exterior, that made it possible to have an idea of the richness of the interior.

In every building the facade should quickly announce the use of the interior. It is an embarrassment to speak of the facades of our theatres. This miserable exterior is

[page 89]

believed to be well compensated for, however, in the interior which is completely painted, and covered in gold with great copies in crystal and wax that create a wonderful enchantment for the eye; childish beauty beside that virile and solid ornament with which the ancients adomed the porticoes with columns and statuary; and for all of the rest, marble steps separated by landings and alternatively divided in the shape of wedges, must have created a grand effect, especially when the theatre was full of spectators, who formed an ornament and another very charming spectacle. On the contrary, our boxes do not display but a chaos of heads and half figures.

Therefore the ancient theatre for solidity, convenience and beauty is far superior to the modern, as good is to bad, and beautiful is to ugly. One advantage that our theatre has to it is in the roof, that conveniently both covers and beautifies it, (*) but also creates unhealthy conditions, as the closed air is filled in little time with a great quantity of animal odours very damaging for their quick corruption; so that within one hour one breathes nothing but human odour: into the lungs is introduced infected air emanating from thousands of chests, and expelled with all of the corpuscles often contaminated and foul smelling, that is able to be transported to the inside of many people. In our theatres, as in hospitals, prisons, ships, etc. it is suitable to use fans.

But for a great advantage one must still exalt our use of boxes, with continuous corridors, having noble comfort and freedom for movement, staying still, leaning forward, withdrawing, hiding, and doing whatever one wants, as if one was in their own toilet feeling at ease to enjoy the theatre, and at the same time to enjoy a particular conversation, that is continually repeated. Admirable, applaudable invention!

Exactly in this esteemed invention lies (if I do not err) all of the problems of modern theatre: problems which produce the most injurious symptoms. Here they are.

1. These boxes, that is to say this multiplicity of holes and partitions,

(*) Also the ancients had theatres entirely covered. Plinius Book 36, Chapter 15 makes mention of a theatre designed by Valerius of Ostia permanently covered: probably this was a theatre of wood. And Filostratus says, that Erode Attico made one of cedar: *Porro Theatrum Atheniensivus super Regilla, cum laquearibus ex cedro confectis Herodes statuit: Theatrum subaqueatum quod Corintiis edificavit, Atheniensi longe inferius est.*

[page 90]

cut in a thousand ways the sonorous aria, reverberating it in various infinite directions, and its weakness is confusing, in order to create the essential defect of hearing little and poorly.

In the ancient theatres, which were certain to have a floor space much more spacious than ours, that were all of stone and uncovered, and that operated in the daytime, one could hear marvellously, as was related by Vitruvius and other classical authors. However, they used two expedient methods: bronze vases situated in various locations on the theatre steps, and mask for the actors, the mouths of which were in form almost megaphones which increased notably the natural carrying capacity of the voice. Our theatres have neither bronze vases nor masks to magnify the voice: but they are, however, much smaller, they are covered, they are of wood, material better adapted to carry sound, they are used at night, and meanwhile result in such poor sound. What is their great defect? The irregularity of the shape is surely a reason, but the greatest lies in the numerous apertures of the boxes, which create many angles inside.

2. How uncomfortable these boxes are for seeing the scenic representation, and all of the theatre, is not necessary to prove. This great defect could be remedied by removing the side partitions up to half their height, or by removing them completely: if they are so lessened in some manner, but not completely eradicated, especially in the higher levels, from where the stage is viewed in the poorest manner.

3. The boxes impede every architectural decoration, and in consequence each majestic ornament. And what columns, what pilasters can adapt themselves to the support of the boxes? You create a pygmy version more ridiculous than that which can still be seen in Rome in the barbaric cloisters of St. John Lateran, St. Paul, St. Sabina. And the projections of capitols and of cornices interrupt irregularly, and disperse the voice.

But these are not so bad for so-called physical defects; there are much worse.

4. This much praised convenience, that the boxes furnish to flatten and render as invisible, is certainly not an occasion conducting good habits.

One of the great advantages of public theatres is to be in public. In one's own home, and amongst one's own family, each person unbridles their passions, but people begin to restrain themselves when the number and quality of onlookers around them increases; in order that

[page 91]

each person shows himself in public with the image of moderation and civility, which in private, they do not demonstrate, and they force themselves to appear in the way they should really behave. Therefore outside of the home, and in company, they show off those magnificent clothes and those smart things which usually in their own homes, they do not wear. As are the clothes of the bedroom to formal wear, so is the internal morality to the external. Now this beautiful exterior demeanour is very useful to society and to the individuals, and could still penetrate to the interior of the soul, if the occasions to stay in public are multiplied. This apparent goodwill and courtesy by force of habit could convert them truly and really. The boxes therefore rob one of the principle advantages of theatre.

5. But the consequences still worse derive from the freedom to move from box to box, and to make many small clusters and conversation groups in each one. From this is born the entire ruin of formal theatre. Therefore Italian theatre has no more tragedy, therefore good comedy does not flourish, therefore opera in music have been reduced to barely one hundred. And how is it possible to represent good drama, which requires attention to follow it from beginning to end, if our theatre goers do not give their attention except to manage their peepholes for the observation of their stars, to jump from loggia to loggia, and to allow them to be seen up and down! Now they dive, now they are lost, then reappear and perpetually move, cutting up, commenting, complimenting, flirting. Then the farces, the pulcinella, the intermissions; and of the heroic opera, some aria and the duet: these serve for rest, and later as nourishment for chatter.

It's very probable that the boredom of bad drama produced the boxes; but the subsistence of the boxes has increased the dullness and absurdity of drama, and has brought it to such a limit that the drama is no longer a pretext to go to the theatre; the real motive is the conversation. Therefore to destroy the boxes would be the most commendable end for the most noble of spectacles, or else they convert it into a bundle of nonsense, and deface the theatre itself.

The simple consequence of this parallel is, if frivolous conversation groups are not wanted at the theatre, if what exists now is conserved, but if a courteously good theatre is desired,

[page 92]

one does not have to do other than model it on that of the ancients. Of such taste is formed the design added at the end of this worthless book, hoping that it will be appreciated especially by the nobility, in whom is dawning (I am not flattering) a system of education, budding sobriety, useful knowledge, and good taste.

Idea of a New Theatre

To Mr. Vincenzo Ferrarese belongs the idea and the design of this theatre, which is comprised internally of a circle, of which half is for the spectators, and the other for the stage.

The seats on the steps are disposed in such a manner that all can be seated and see comfortably over wooden seats placed on steps half a foot high: this did not occur in all of the parts of the ancient theatre, especially in those close to the stage, as appeared in the plan of that of Herculaneum, and of others obtained from Vitruvius, and of many ancient monuments reported by Serlio. If also such theatres could have been made as presented by us. The Marquis Galiano in his Vitruvius represents two walls at the end of the steps contiguous with the pulpit (stage), that would have impeded the view of a large part of the stage for a good proportion of the spectators seated in this part of the steps. In the plan, that M. Boindin *Mem. de l' Acad. des Inscript. Tom. I.* has given of ancient theatres, these walls are not seen, and then it is fine, because some parapets have been placed there.

The steps formed in the ancient theatre present a great mass, for which there was a necessity of resonant vases. To avoid this inconvenience, under this mass we make a continuous ramped vault without any interruption, and at the wall at the lower springing point of the vault, we make some openings corresponding with certain shafts under this vault. Then, all the interior steps of the theatre are covered in fine woods, and equally seasoned, as also the vault and the loggias, it renders the whole sonorous, without producing an echo.

The set of the ancients conflicted with all the rest of the theatre; neither do I know, nor do I care to know, how it agrees with the versatile decoration, that was behind it. In our design the stage, and the half-circle of spectators form a whole united together, for which we resort to the same orders of architecture, that support a single vault.

[page 93]

The grand order of the scenery is managed proportionally with all the rest of the building; because it is equal to the radius of the theatre, and together with its foundation and the vault forms a height equal to the diameter of the theatre. If the teaching of Vituvius would have been adopted, which said that in round temples the height of a column is as much as the diameter of the entire cella, would here create a gigantic order completely out of proportion with the other parts. If then was imitated the practice of the Pantheon, in the interior of which the columns are not as high as half the radius of this temple, it would have given small ones equally out of proportion with the remainder of the edifice. Who with eyes closed and submissive enters the Pantheon, and joined to the foot of the colonnade, looks from bottom to top, remains struck with the perceivable error that occurs between the smallness of these columns, and all the great rest of the structure, that they support. Therefore, the inconvenience of the attic is caused by the two arches.

To avoid these and other inconveniences, the [scena] is formed by only one grandiose order of architecture, in the guise of a triumphal arch. The stage of the ancients were of two and three orders, and also Palladio used the superimposition of orders, but with required respect to many authorities, it seems a small, trite and confused manner. The entablature and base of our order recurs inside in the entire theatre, and the spring of the great half-arch recurs as well, and makes the division of the minor orders, that are located in the loggias of this theatre, and in the niches of the aforesaid stage. Beyond the three doors, or arches of the stage, are our mobile scenes, to vary according to the variations requested by the dramas.

It is observed, that the set expresses in the design its supposed structure, capacity to support the weight of the roof. But if it is desired to make it of wood, its size would go a long way to diminish, removing the intercolumnations of the small order, that are at the entrance and acquire more space to see the mobile scenery. It is still possible to form the scena with three grand intercolumnations of single columns, disposed in a circle, or also in a straight line, and in such a case it could be convenient to assemble the mobile scenery immediately behind the middle intercolumnations, in a manner in which would be visible from both sides, because they are seen also for the side apertures. To this effect, if such scenes were very wide, as occurs in the great theatres, and it is difficult to manage them over the

[page 94]

carrimatti, it is possible to fold in the manner of a book, and connect at their opening points in all of their width, in order to be seen in both parts. It is still possible to place in the side openings drop-curtains [screens] of little depth painted in perspective, as such to better manage the scenes of the centre openings. The management of the scenery then is very simple and ready by the use of winches, wheels or counterweights, with each machine the scenes either travel in a line up and down, or quickly slide on the stage. This mechanism is noted enough, and in many theatres is executed with all success, but in many others it has not been adopted for some reasons, which are not reasons. And what major irrationality, that employs a multitude of men to do with danger and instinct that which can be done easily, securely and readily with few?

The entire theatre is covered by a false vault made of wood to make it more resonant. Its capacity is close to five thousand spectators that can all be seated comfortably to see and hear with equal comfort. The great theatre of the Aliberti in Rome contains just two thousand five hundred, stacked in the most suffocating manner.

It is true that in our theatre not all of the spectators can see each other, because those that are in the loggias cannot see those above, who cannot even see the rest of the listeners. The majority however can see each other; and all can see the stage, which is the principle objective for which one goes to the theatre.

The other explanations of our theatre are to be read together with the designs.

The most learned Mr. Co. Enea. Arnaldi of the Accademico Olimpico, has provided an *idea for a Theatre similar to the ancient Theatres, accommodated to modern uses*, which is with boxes. Decide between the beautiful ideas of Cavaliere, and those of our Mr. Ferrarese. It has been a long time that the public waits for something beautiful and new of this type from Mr. Co. Girolamo del Pozzo illustrious Cavalier Veronese, that among his rare qualities, candidly possesses good architecture.

To this our theatre is made perhaps an objection that is the stage placed on the diameter of the semicircle, becomes too large. But what problem is caused by this width? On the contrary, it produces a great advantage, which fully accomplishes

[page 95]

the three essential requisites of theatre, which are 1. to hear the voice well everywhere, 2. to see equally well from any point the scenic representation, and 3. to allow the actors to move and present themselves in a more spacious area.

1. Physics teaches that the voice or the sound is not the air trembling movement and vibrating from bodies to our hearing . The air so stroked is moved in infinite circular motion as a stone thrown into still water, that are always more spread out and becoming wider from the centre. However, says Vitruvius, the ancient architects followed the vestiges of nature,

To this effect Mr. Tommaso Temanza, most learned architect of elevated mind and exquisite taste, in one of his ideas for a theatre designed for his home of Venice, and explained to me with his friendly kindness, has made the boxes in a graded manner,

2. Geometry demonstrates, that *in a circle all of the angles at the circumference, that have as their base the same diameter, are equal.* Therefore it is that the only shape convenient for a theatre, in order that from all the points of its circumference the spectators can all see equally the representation of the scene, must be semicircular. Therefore it is that the stage must exceed the diameter of the semicircle.

[page 96]

Geometry demonstrates again that *in a single segment of a circle the angles at the circumference, that have as their base the same chord, are equal*. Therefore the stage must form another semicircle equal and contiguous with that of the spectators, in order that from everywhere they see equally all of the action of the scene in whatever distance from the diameter it is represented. For this effect the shape of our entire theatre is a circle, and in the centre of this circle are the musicians and the orchestra.

3. The stage comprised of a semicircle equal to that of the audience will be a spacious marvel for the actions of the actors: but (some will probably object) not enough for that which is called the backdrop of the theatre. I do not know, if the major theatres actually existing have effectively more. But when the perspective is well treated, the scene appears three and four times more spacious than what it really is. And if a large semicircular backdrop is called for, as is given in our example, the decoration is visible enough.

Those theatres, then, that do not require much space for the scenery, as those usually used for tragedy, comedy and pastoral, could be divided into two unequal segments of a circle; the large segment for the spectators, and the smaller for the scene.

It is superfluous to respond to the difficulty, that could be caused by some sophist in the confusion of ranks and classes of citizens. On the steps, after the example of the ancients, can be established more distinctions than in the boxes, where there are hardly any at all.

Less attention still is merited by the expense, that in a theatre, and especially in ours, so decorated on the exterior, and on the interior enriched with porticoes, gardens, and with other accessories for other games, could appear to be to some small soul excessive, and could ask how much will this building cost? Narrow-minded question. And what was the cost of the Baths of Diocletion, Versailles, St. Peter's Square with many Sistine Obelisks? Dealing with public works,

[page 97]

and particularly those that reunite together utility and pleasure, the cost should never be considered, as the [Lacedemoni] do not consider the number of their enemies. Whatever enormous expenditure of this nature, that is made by the state, would take very long to impoverish it, in fact it enriches it by the multiplication of industry, and for the continuous revisiting of foreigners. Rome, eternal city, that perennial font of richness does not have great works of its ancient and modern monuments? All of the cultured nations of Europe are needed to render them homage and tribute.

It will be said to me (what will not be said to me?) why unite so many other things with the theatre, that have nothing to do with the theatre? To the building for scenic games was attached one for gymnastic games, not because they could not be separate in different places, but in order to collect all in one, and in a conspicuous site in the heart of the city, would be a major convenience for the citizens to meet, and to pass easily from this one to that one. The ancients had a great multitude of gymnastic games. We, probably because we are stronger or always very busy, all of our games are reduced to that of the ball variously modified, in the air, on tables, on the ground; therefore, football, billiards, tricks, bocce. Therefore these and other similar games are promoted, and are added the racing, jumping and especially riding, swimming. The game of the pike and of the flag, that probably traces its origins to Medieval Tournaments, is of a useless and insignificant childishness. That of the shield is left to the barbarians who produced it, and by now it would be also time to free the side of the uncomfortable weight of the sword, also derived from more ferocious times, and removed from peaceful and civilized business. A game is not, nor must it be more than a recreation that is taken from time to time, to lift the spirit and body from tiring occupations. Therefore a game must not produce even the smallest bad effect, on the contrary it must produce good ones, and so these games are excellent that are both pleasurable and useful. Therefore they do not merit the name of games those sedentary with cards, the invention of which creates grand honour to the human intellect, as well as dishonour in its use, often poisonous to the spirit, the body, the possessions, and to the reputation. True games include exercise, playful and healthy for those who

[page 98]

participate, and of innocent pleasure for the spectators. Those who preside over the benefits of society, will know that from the same games are derived powerful means to greatly improve it.

CHAPTER XII **Cause of the Defects of Theatre, and Means** **To Reestablish it**

When the explanation is finished, it appears clear that our theatre is a collection of absurdities. And without tragedy, and without pastoral: comedy turns the stomach, opera with music is a monster: the fabric of the theatre itself is a formation of uncomfortable and nauseating defects. In all it lacks both of its greatest objectives, Utility and Delight. With great reason therefore it is censured by moralists, and with as many reasons it is held in contempt by people of spirit and taste.

And why are many parasitic weeds twisted around to dissect and deform such a beautiful plant, that is purely a parable of virtue, on the contrary virtue itself placed in action and returned in a pleasing manner? The same question can be asked of all the other good things, excellently conceived, and then dreadfully reduced.

As soon as a performance does not serve but for entertainment for lazy people, and to this choice of people in a nation, that is said *Bel Mondo*, it is impossible that this acquisition will ever achieve a certain importance. For how much intelligence is accorded the poet, it is necessary that the execution and a thousand details of his poem feel the frivolousness of his destiny.

Sophocles in the composition of his tragedies, was working for his country, and for the most august solemnity of the Republic. And why? Because among the Greeks performance was an affair of the state. In Athens the Republic carried all of the expense, an archon presided over it, all of the classes of citizens were involved, Socrates was involved. The same occurred in Rome: an Aedile was in charge of its management, special officers collected the taxes imposed on the populace to pay for the expenses of the theatrical representations or for other performances, and it was a capital crime to deviate this money to other uses, including war; all of the magistrates and the likes of Cato himself attended.

[page 99]

Among ourselves, if the government gives a small thought to the theatre, it is for petty external details, and to prevent overindulgence and controversy. The essence is in lucrative art of some lazy people, and the impressario is the despotic lawmaker. What a marvel, then, if it is so full of abuse!

Man's fate dictates that beside his most sublime efforts of genius, his smallness appears. In the most serious affairs is placed much negligence and contradiction, that is not to be surprised at, if more still is placed in an art of pleasure. The fate of the Empire, and the fate of the theatre are the work of hazards, depending all on a jumbled combination of circumstances both good and bad. It seems that in some parts of Europe a truly great prince, acquired after his most benevolent efforts the right to consecrate a glorious holiday to the culture of the fine arts: he will carry his aim to the most beautiful of all, and dramatic art would become under his reign the greatest monument erected to public happiness, and to the glory of human ingenuity.

Therefore, the Academies of poetry, music, and dance were established, not for sonnets, popular songs, concerts and minuets, but because philosophy presides, it directs in all of the perfection of drama, and the approval of the academy serves to reward the production of rivals to enable them to be represented in the theatre. One such useful academy which has already been established in Parma to look after that well-educated sovereign; I feel that every type of drama has flourished everywhere, and so Italy could have in time its own true theatre, as Denmark has where that wise sovereign has established similar measures.

The theatre once purged, and reduced, as it should be, by the schools of virtue and good taste, the actors will also be corrected, who are now much discredited and wealthy. The method is easy to make them aspire to the same honour as poets, of which perform the works. Aesop was honoured equally with Sophocles.

Actors are not disgraceful because they are mercenary. And who does not receive payment from their profession? From the farmer to the monarchs, everyone works for payment. The theatre is not in itself dishonourable, as gentlemen, princes and ecclesiastics, who take much pleasure in being shown on the stage, without telling of blemishes or infamy. Because however, is not the representation of

[page 100]

infamy a theatrical art(*)? This is with all reason, when one aspires to the corruption of customs, or when one who practices them is immoral. If Theatre tries to reestablish its noble ends, it disperses all of the principal cause of its discredit to the actors; and very soon also the second will vanish, if the various magistrates do not permit to be mounted on stage, the moderation of talent in the profession.

Where women appear on stage, their chastity is certainly more exposed, and therefore Helen makes herself more glorious in preserving it, and it is preserved better if not discouraged with contempt, and it is preserved even better if encouraged with honour and rewards, as infamy and punishments are depreciated. In theatre the esteem of distinction aspires to the erection of statues for those who are capable of being excellent and honest artists. The most sublime talents without integrity, are without basis; and the theatre must not aspire otherwise than to virtue and pleasure always joined together.

(*) Each art produces in he who exercises it, both negatives and positives, not only physical, but also moral. Of the physical ills that come from various professions, there is the famous Ramazzini whose notable book is entitled *de Morbis Artificum*. But of the moral influences, to which the professors of any art are exposed, there is not as far as I know (I know but little) not even a short thesis. The argument, furthermore, would be curious and interesting, to promote those professions that have more beneficial moral influences; and to restrict those that have more evil influences or to present them with good corrections. The farmer hunched over the hoe and plow all day, will become stupid and patient, in the company of whoever exercises the most laborious trades. Calm will be the sculptor, and the engraver; capricious and bizarre the painter, the architect will be thoughtful and courageous. All the fine arts, however, ordinarily produce docility and sweetness; and the Theatre, if it should be well regulated, has necessarily to produce a ceremonious and righteous character. The influences of physics, mathematics and especially philosophy, are sweet and benign. Scholars, historians, speakers would become presumptuous and arrogant without a good dose of philosophy, without which doctors, surgeons, and criminologists would be unmerciful; judges hyper-critical and of bad faith, grammarians doltish and constipated, courtiers as clean and stiff as statues. Of those trades, in which the principle ingredients are facility, idleness, and subjection, pestiferous influences must evaporate for society; therefore servants, soldiers, and many other idle slaves, not usually a flower of virtue.

[page 101]

EXPLANATIONS OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

ILLUSTRATION I.

General Plan of a Theatre, and of other adjacent Places for Sports.

- A Theatre with a large Square in front.
- B Magnificent entrance in the Portico.
- C Buildings with four comers for the Academies of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Literature.
- D Ground floor apartment for various shops, with an upper level apartment, as seen in the other plan noted E.
- cc Small squares to create magnificent entrances.
- dd Smooth playing areas for ball games, with conveniences and change rooms at the two ends.
- 1 Colonnades with apartments above.
- 2 Shops over the street.
- E Upper apartments for the Academies of Music, Dance, and for various Sports.
- ee Tennis Courts, and [Volante], with conveniences and change rooms.
- 33 Terraces with balustrades.
- F Soccer stadium
- f Ground floor for refreshment stands, and players' rooms, with similar functions on the upper floor above, and at the other end (g).
- g Upper floor for the pleasures of the Nobility, with a covered Colonnade over the circular staircase, and with a great Room for Billiards.
- h Openings for two wide streets.
- G Great Square for Equestrian games and public spectacles.

ILLUSTRATION II.

Plan of the Ground Floor of a Theatre

- 1 Colonnades, in which carriages can move freely.
- 2 Colonnades for pedestrians.
- 3 Two grand staircases for ascending to the upper floors of the loggias.
- 4 Two entrances to the Platea, to be used before the commencement of the Opera.
- 5 Two stands to hand over tickets before entering, with two small rooms adjacent, and with Public conveniences.

[page 102]

- 6 Office for the Theatre Administration, where Tickets and Keys to the Loggias are sold, with adjacent lavatories under the stairs.
- 7 Three other entrances to the Platea, to open at the end of the Opera, so that people can exit quickly.
- 8 Convenient stairs to go from the Platea to the Cafe, or the Administrative Offices (no. 6), with no exit to the street.
- 9 Two grand Cafes open to the Public, with adjacent lavatories and other conveniences under the contiguous stairs.
- 10 Three wells corresponding to the space within the wall, that support a ramped vault which continues under the steps. These wells serve to make the voice resonate.
- 11 Space within the wall and the fur covered panels close to the wall, to prevent the reverberation of the voice and echos.
- 12 Openings in the wall, that support the ramped vault.
- 13 Walkway
- 14 Orchestra
- 15 Three openings that lead underneath the stage.
- 16 Stage supported by timber, and seen equally by all of the spectators.
- 17 Three openings in the permanent scenery for scenic representation according to the ancients, and according to best taste, that merit to be renewed.
- 18 Suspended scenery
- 19 Two staircases to go under the stage.
- 20 Two entrances that are ramped over the Scenery for the convenience of carts and carriages, that are used in the representation of the Opera.
- 21 Rooms for relaxation of the Actors, contiguous with the entrances to the stage, and furnished with lavatories and wardrobe closets situated under the grand staircases.
- 22 Area for the Extras
- 23 Area for the Guards - and for placing the scenery and other equipment.
 - a Lavatories under the stairs.
 - b Fireplaces that are still used to melt the oil for the lights.
- 24 Double staircases to ascend to the living quarters of the Actors, and for the convenience of the Workers, who go to various floors to arrange and manage the scenery.
- 25 Courtyard
- 26 Wardrobe for the Extras, and for the placement of Theatre equipment, where there is the possibility for two knick-knack shops used during Festivals.
- 27 Two Cafes during Festivals. They can also be used as the living quarters for the Theatre custodians.
- 28 Pedestrian Entrance during Festivals.
- 29 Colonnade for the line of carriages during Festivals.

[page 103]

ILLUSTRATION III
Plan of the First Floor over the Colonnade

- 1 Exterior Colonnade
- 2 Corridor for the Loggias of the first level.
- 3 Dressing Rooms for cupboards and wardrobes.
- 4 First level of Loggias
- 5 Landing of three entrances to be opened after the performance, with stairs at the sides leading to the cafes.
- 6 Staircases which connect with the upper Loggias, with various conveniences nearby and below.
- 7 Landing at the top of the risers.
- 8 Stairway
- 9 Stone risers with continuous bench seating for the Spectators of the Platea
- 10 Other landing, gently sloped like the risers.
- 11 Wooden seating on a slope.
- 12 Walkway to enter the risers
- 13 Orchestra
- 14 Stage
- 15 Three generous openings in the Scenery, which creates a unity with the rest of the Theatre.
- 16 Scenery
- 17 Staircases that lead up over the apartments of the Actors, and over the railings of the Scenery
- 18 Landings which connect the apartments
- 19 Corridors for the quarters of the Actresses
- 20 Corridors for the quarters of the Actors
- 21 For the Ballerinas
- 22 Landings of the principal staircases which lead to the upper loggias of the Theatre
- 23 Quarters for the servants

ILLUSTRATION IV
Plans of the second and third Floors

- 1 Terrace.
- 2 Corridor for the Loggias on the second level.
- 3 Corridor for the third level.
- 4 Corridor for the fifth level, or the railing over the cornice.
- 5 Loggias
- 6 Small rooms in front of the Loggias on the second level
- 7 Landing, or connecting room

[page 104]

- 8 Quarters for the Servants
- 9 Principle staircases
- 10 Rooms for a Cafe and Refreshments
- 11 Gallery on the second floor
- 12 Rooms for games and entertainment
- 13 Small rooms for cloakrooms and conveniences on the second and third floors.
- 14 Courtyard
- 15 Dancehall, also for Opera rehearsals on the second floor.
- 16 Risers for Spectators between the second and third floors.
- 17 Railing at the level of the highest aforesaid riser, for the use of the Spectators and Singers of the rooms below.
- 18 Gallery for rest.
- 19 Terrace.
- 20 Various openings cut in the base of the second level for use on the terrace.
- 21 Attic for the carpenters' tools, and for storing water in case of fire on the Stage.

ILLUSTRATION V

Various Sections of Interior Elevations

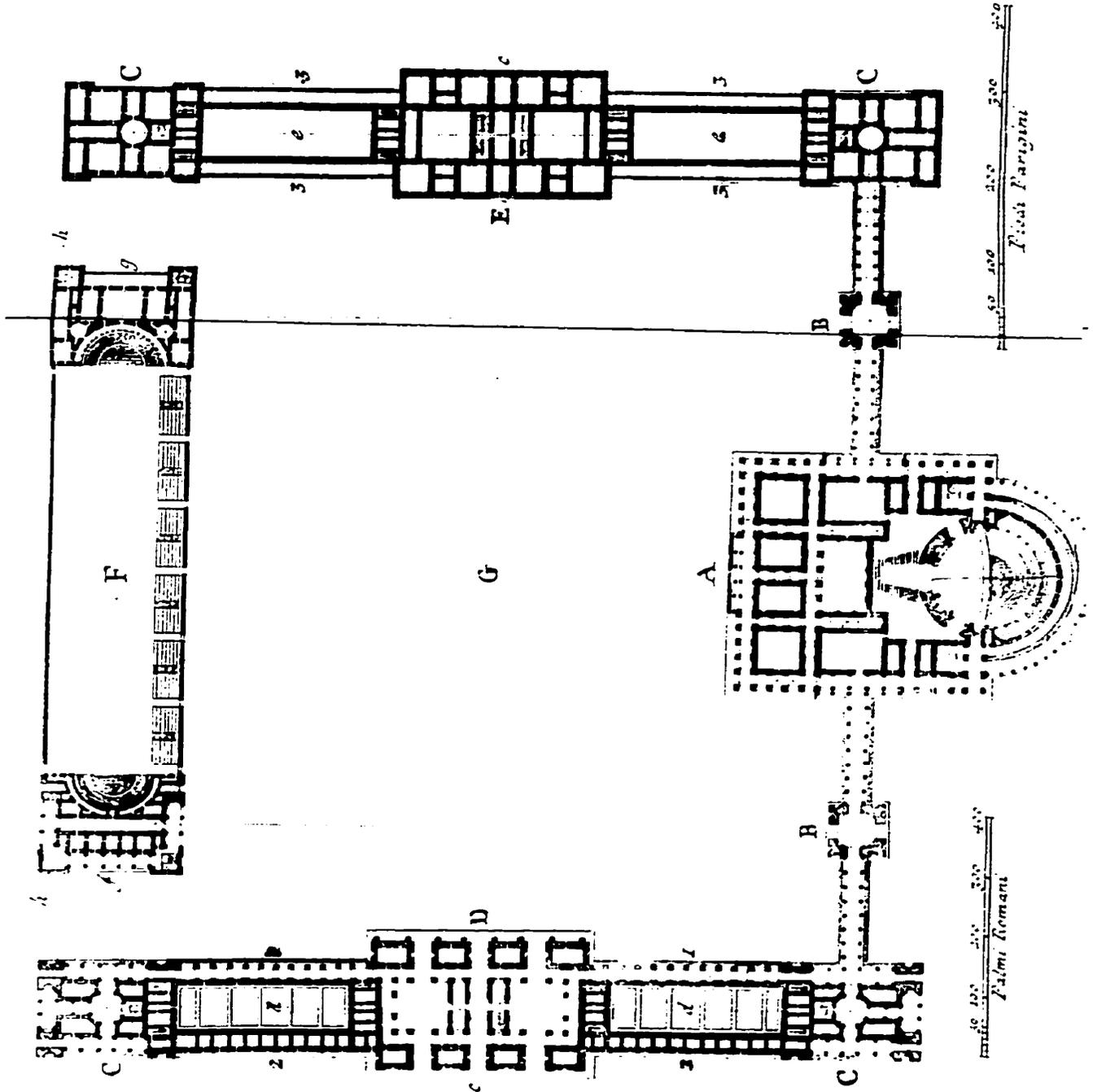
- 1 View towards the Stage, in which the forms of the two separate Vaults can be seen.
- 2 Section taken above the centre point of the circle, that shows the view of the Loggias and the Risers. The first railing cuts the level of the columns: a small defect, that is well compensated by the gaining of an advantageous site for the Spectators, and by the correspondence of the interior apartments.
- 3 Longitudinal section of the entire Theatre interior.

ILLUSTRATION VI

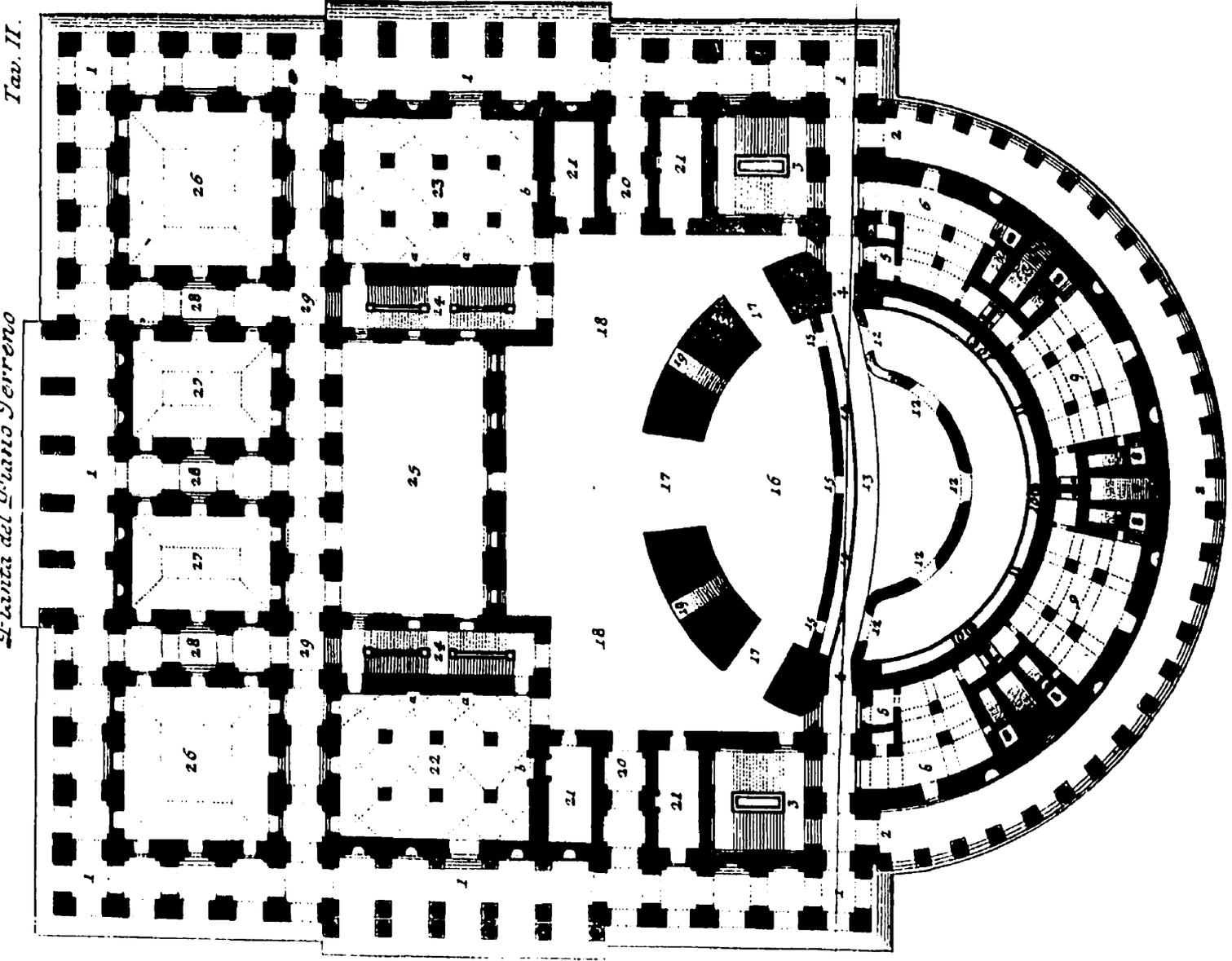
Exterior Elevations

- 1 Elevation of the Principal Facade
- 2 Elevation of one of the three sides.

Tav. I.



Pianta del Piano Terreno



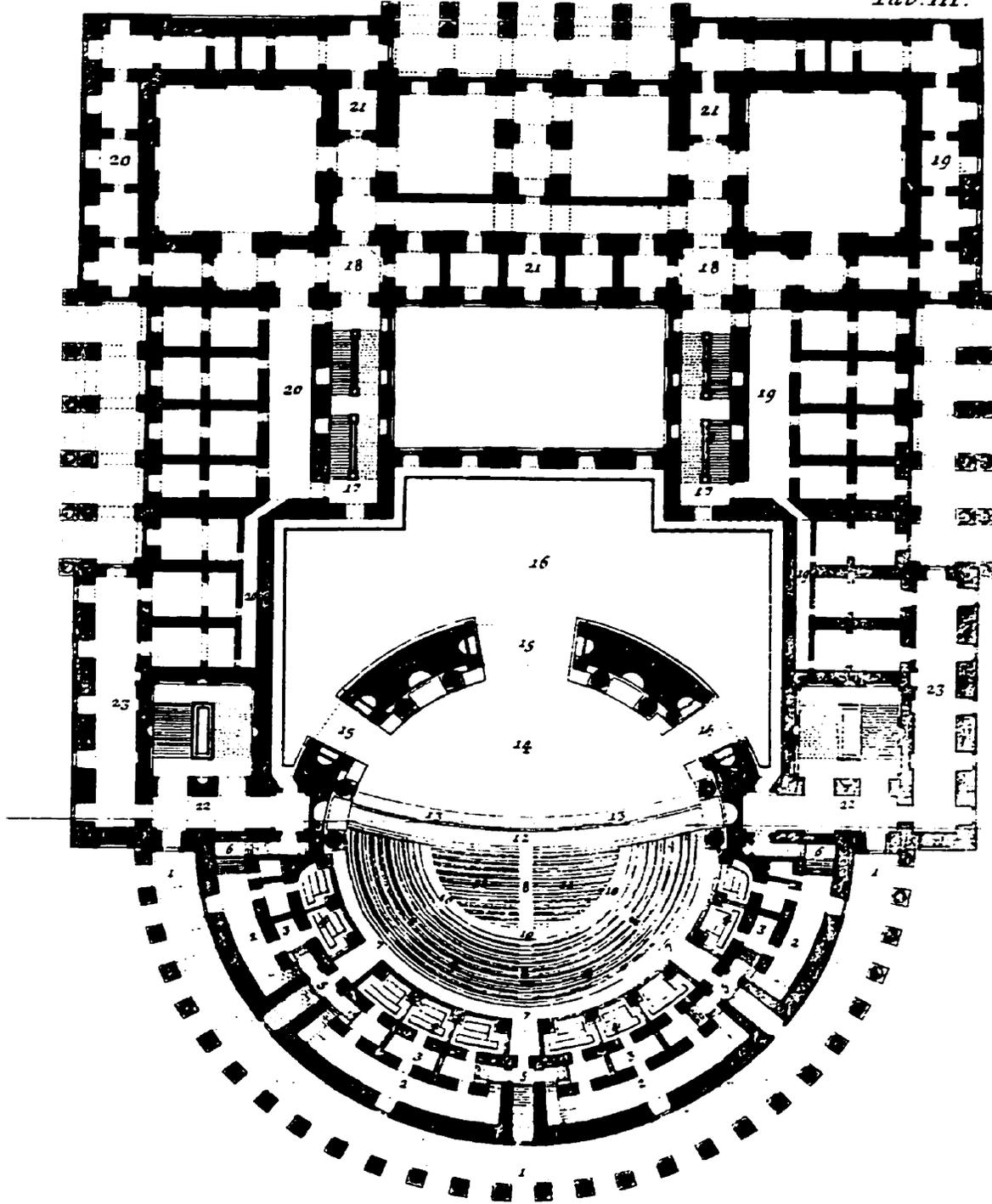
Tav. II.

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Piedi Romani

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Piedi Perugini

Pianta del primo piano sopra Portici

Tav. III.



100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10
Palni Romani.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 5
Piedi Parigi.

Metà della Pianta del secondo Piano

Metà della Pianta del terzo Piano Tav. IV.

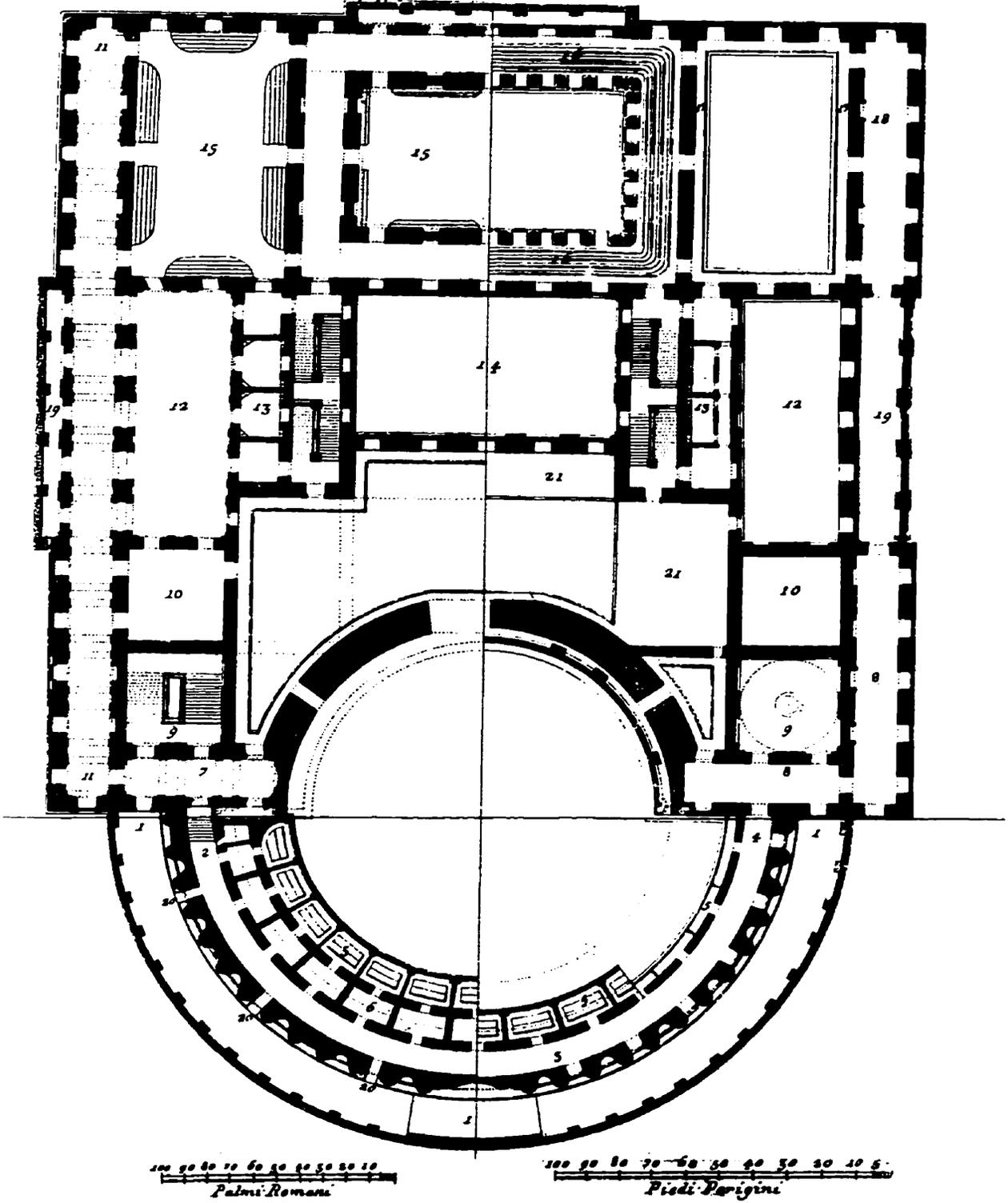


Fig. 12.

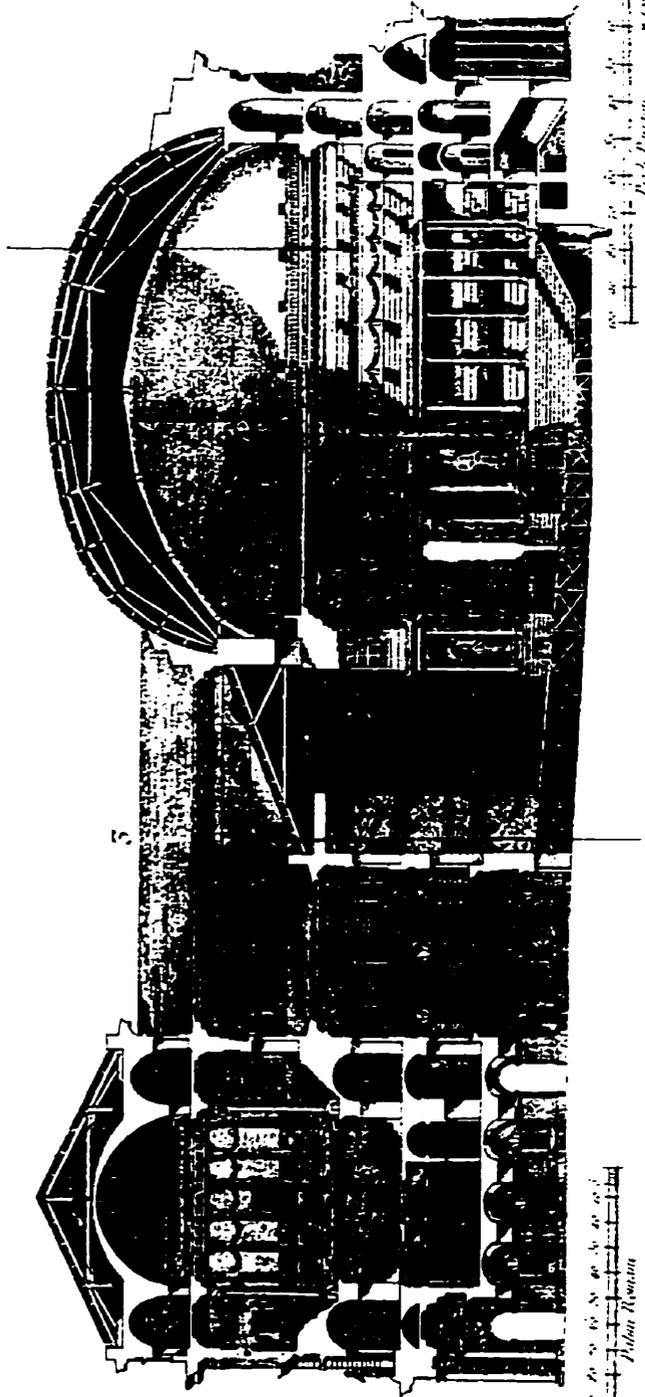
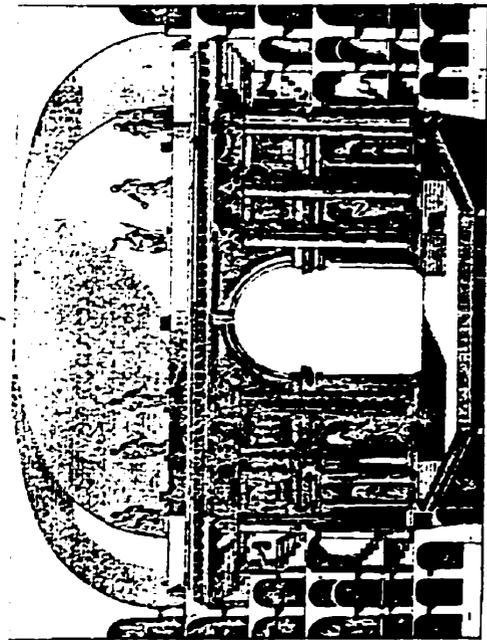
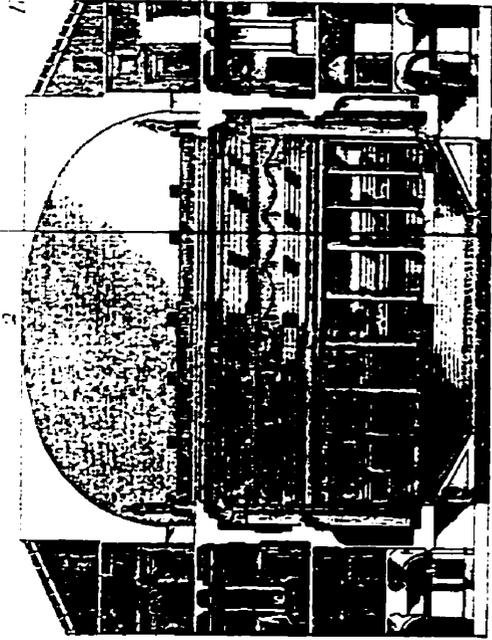
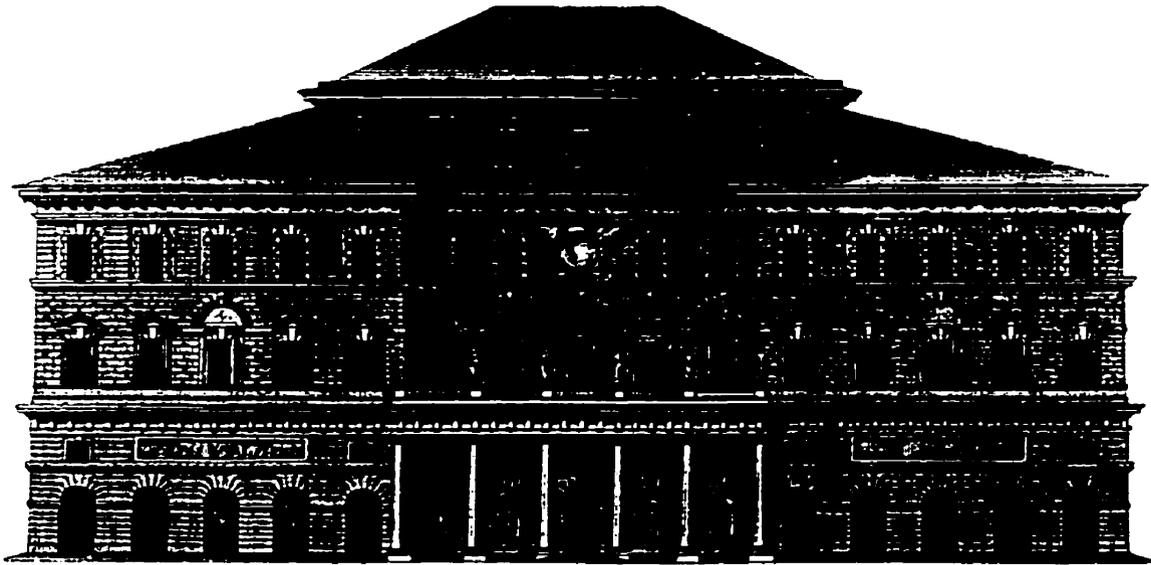


Fig. 13.

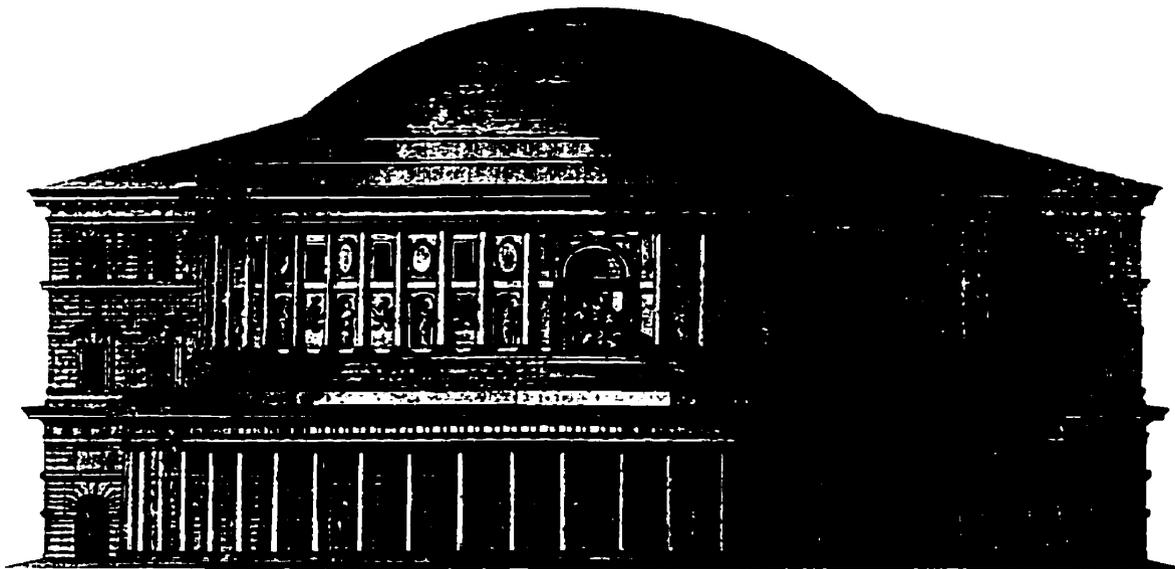
Fig. 14.



2



1



5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Piedi Romani

5 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Piedi Parigi