

2016

## Civic Identity and Civic Glue: Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Jeffrey G. Kurtzman

*Washington University in St Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://elischolar.library.yale.edu/yjmr>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kurtzman, Jeffrey G. (2016) "Civic Identity and Civic Glue: Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion*: Vol. 2: No. 2, Article 4.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17132/2377-231X.1052>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* by an authorized editor of EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. For more information, please contact [elischolar@yale.edu](mailto:elischolar@yale.edu).

# Civic Identity and Civic Glue

## Venetian Processions of the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries

Jeffrey Kurtzman

Processions, the forerunners of the modern parade and protest march, have been a vital part of cultures across the globe from time immemorial, particularly as a form of religious expression. In the ancient West, as the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* notes, “Processions are an extremely common feature of Greek and Roman religious practice. It is above all in the procession that a group may ritually display its cohesion and power to itself and others. And the route taken may express the control of space.”<sup>1</sup> From the early stages of the Roman Catholic liturgy, processions formed part of the Roman rite itself.<sup>2</sup> In early medieval Europe churches often served as the locus or starting point of outdoor processions, celebrating annual feasts and various festivals of thanksgiving, often marked by the carrying of devotional images.<sup>3</sup> Plagues could stimulate processions, whether to ward off an approaching contagion, to appease an angry God during an epidemic, or to celebrate the end of the affliction. In 590, Pope Gregory the Great organized penitential processions, which visited the major churches of Rome in hopes of bringing a halt to a plague.<sup>4</sup> Since the disease dissipated not long afterward, a precedent had been set for future responses to plagues in Roman Catholic Europe.<sup>5</sup> Processions could also expand their geographic scope from one town or village to another, as in the bands of flagellants that traveled through Italy beginning in the 1230s in response to widespread social disorder and a subsequent plague.<sup>6</sup> In some cities flagellant confraternities were founded; the first in Venice, the Scuola di Santa

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard A. S. Seaford, “Processions,” *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed., ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), online version (accessed Jan. 30, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> “Liturgical Processions,” Robert L. Fastiggi, ed., *New Catholic Encyclopedia supplement 2011* (Detroit: Gale, 2011), 490–91 (accessed Jan. 30, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> David J. Kennedy and David Hiley, “Processions,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), online version (accessed Jan. 30, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Many Roman processions involved stopping at each of the four “stational” churches of the city. On Roman processions in the second half of the sixteenth century, see Noel O’Regan, “Processions and Their Music in Post-Tridentine Rome,” *Recercare* 4 (1992): 45–80. A list of festivals in Rome during the papacy of Urban VIII (1623–44), including those with processions, can be found in Frederick Hammond, *Music and Spectacle in Baroque Rome* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 255–82. See also Siegfried Gmeinwieser, “Aspekte sakrale Festmusik im barocken Rom,” in *Musik in Rom im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Kirche und Fest*, ed. Markus Engelhardt and Christoph Flamm, *Analecta musicologica* 33 (2004): 57–76, esp. 58–62; and Juliane Riepe, “Musik im Anno Santo; Das heilige Jahr 1650 im Spiegel der Diarien,” *Analecta musicologica* 33: 101–39, esp. 126–36. A comprehensive survey of Roman festivals, many of which included processions, some on horseback, is found in Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, *La festa barocca* (Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 1997). The bibliography of contemporaneous accounts of festivals from 1585 to 1700 in this volume updates Fagiolo dell’Arco’s earlier *Bibliografia della festa barocca a Roma* (Rome: Antonio Pettini, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> George Childs Kohn, “Roman Plague of 590 C.E.,” *Encyclopedia of Plague and Pestilence: From Ancient Times to the Present*, 3rd ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2008), *Ancient and Medieval History Online*, Facts on File, <http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE49&iPin=ENPP539&SingleRecord=True> (accessed Sept. 21, 2016). See also Joseph Patrick Byrne, “Processions,” *Encyclopedia of the Black Death* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2012), ebook (accessed Jan. 30, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Glixon, *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian Confraternities, 1260–1807* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

Maria della Carità, was established in December 1260 and eventually became one of the six major confraternities of the city, called *scuole grandi*. Even pilgrimages, in which large numbers of people marched for weeks, even months, to distant holy shrines such as the Church of St. James in Santiago de Compostela or the Holy House of Loreto, qualify as a type of procession.

The principal function of all these varieties of processions is obvious: to unite people in a common ritual and a common purpose. That purpose was fundamentally religious in nature, whether celebrating a civic event, such as a military victory, a harvest, or deliverance from disease, or expressing concern or desperation, as during an epidemic or military siege, since all major civic events were typically understood to result from divine beneficence or anger. Thus, a procession typically culminated with a religious ceremony at its destination as well as some religious act at any important stopping point on its route. Both the religious orientation and the physical movement of marching, sometimes in a dancelike manner, stimulated organized vocal expression, such as the chanting of prayers and litanies, as well as other songs according to the purpose of the procession. Instruments joined the voices as well, contributing further to the procession as a sonic as well as a physical and visual phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> By the fifteenth century, processions were a standard feature of civic life in every city of any size throughout Italy and the rest of Europe.<sup>8</sup> While processions may be studied as an independent phenomenon, it should be remembered that, especially in Europe, civic processions were only one aspect, and not necessarily the dominant aspect, of a larger sequence of festive events, the constituents and organization of which depended on the nature and focus of the celebration. Such a larger context will be illustrated in the last section of my discussion.

What made Venetian processions singular in relation to the rest of Italy and Europe, other than their sheer quantity, was the central role played by the city's unique republican government in the largest and most important processions. Government leaders and other officials sponsored and participated in processions in other cities as well, especially processions in honor of civic events, though also on important feast days in the liturgical calendar. However, no other government was as central to the organization and character of processions, including religious processions, as that of Venice. This elected government had provided far more stability and

---

<sup>7</sup> Processions might also be on horseback, as was sometimes the case in Rome, or, especially in the eighteenth century, comprise a procession of carriages, as in Habsburg Vienna. Obviously, the opportunity for singing and playing instruments differed under such circumstances.

<sup>8</sup> For processions in Rome, see n. 4 above; for processions in Milan, see Robert L. Kendrick, *The Sounds of Milan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 142–62, and Christine Suzanne Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience in Sixteenth-Century Milan* (Aldershot, England, and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005), 123–56; for processions in Florence, see Samuel Berner, “Florentine Society in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 18 (1971): 203–46, at 221–27; Ronald F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 49–58; Jean Grundy Fanelli, “Florentine Festivities and Festivals with Music 1640–1710,” in *Florilegium musicae: Studi in onore di Carolyn Gianturco* (Pisa: ETS, 2004), 519–48, esp. 521–23; and Matteo Casini, *I gesti del principe: La festa politica a Firenze e Venezia in età rinascimentale* (Venice: Marsilio, 1996). For a guide to descriptions of European processions, see Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly and Anne Simon, *Festivals and Ceremonies: A Bibliography of Works Relating to Court, Civic and Religious Festivals in Europe, 1500–1800* (London and New York: Mansell, 2000). A number of paintings of spectacular European processions and festivals are reproduced in Bryan Holme, *Princely Feasts and Festivals: Five Centuries of Pageantry and Spectacle* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988).

continuity to the self-described Serenissima than was to be found in any other governmental structure in Europe. Moreover, the Venetian government was so inextricably intertwined with religion and the Roman Catholic church that only to a limited extent could it be considered a secular government at all. Civil governments elsewhere were also closely linked with the church, but only in Venice was the interrelationship between state and church so close that the church itself was in various respects subordinate to the government and Venetian law, often more loyal to the doge and Senate than to the pope and the Roman Curia. This tendency of the Venetian church to hold itself at arm's length from Rome is well symbolized by the central location of St. Mark's Basilica, the ducal chapel and by far the most important Venetian church, directly adjacent to the doge's palace, while the cathedral of Venice, the representative of Rome, was situated far away on a remote edge of the city on the island of San Pietro di Castello.

### The Ducal *Andate* of Venice

In Venice, processions are traceable to the twelfth century as a basic ritual of civic life.<sup>9</sup> Venetian processions may be divided generally into two categories: 1) those involving the doge and other government officials and symbols, and 2) those mounted by the various institutions of Venetian life, whether the *scuole* (a term applied to all confraternities in Venice), particular churches or monastic orders, or artisans' guilds (usually associated with a *scuola piccola* and a parish church). Processions involving the doge and his retinue, called *andate*, were themselves categorized by the degree of their elaborateness and solemnity. *Andate in trionfo* included the doge's wind band (*pifferi del doge*), his six silver trumpets and other ducal symbols given, according to Venetian mythology, to Doge Sebastiano Ziani by Pope Alexander III in 1177 in gratitude for military assistance and for negotiating a peace treaty between the pope and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.<sup>10</sup>

Other ducal processions, without the doge's symbols, and sometimes with other officials substituting for the doge, who might be ill or otherwise unable to participate, were referred to as *andate senza i trionfi*.<sup>11</sup> Ducal processions of both types, however, also involved other institutions and people, varying according to the particular festivity: the large *scuole grandi* (obligated by the government to participate in most of the ducal processions), clergy and monastic orders, and the Captain General of the navy and military officers. While many of these

---

<sup>9</sup> Lina Urban, *Processioni e feste dogali "Venetia est mundus"* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1998), 22. The fundamental study in English of Venetian ducal processions is in Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), esp. chap. 5. See also Marino Zorzi, "The Pageants of Power and Society in the Republic of Venice," in Herman C. Du Toit, ed., *Pageants and Processions: Images and Idiom as Spectacle* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 79–92. The two principal studies of Venetian processions are found in Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, and Elena Quaranta, *Oltre San Marco: Organizzazione e prassi della musica nelle chiese di Venezia nel Rinascimento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1998). These two sources provide an exhaustive account (as far as documentation permits) of the processions of the Venetian confraternities (*scuole*) and the churches with which they were associated.

<sup>10</sup> The various legends and known historical facts are detailed in Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 103–19.

<sup>11</sup> Francesco Sansovino, Giovanni Stringa, and Giustiniano Martinioni, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare descritta in XIII. libri . . . con aggiunta di tutte le cose notabili della stessa città, fatte, & occorse dall'anno 1580, sino al presente 1663* (Venice: Filippi Editori, 1968 [1663]), 516.

elements also constituted processions in other Italian cities, such as Rome, Florence, and Milan, what distinguished Venetian civic processions was the central role of the state, symbolized by the doge, the doge's emblems, his musical ensembles, and other government officials. In the minds of Venetians, the state meant long-standing traditions and secure government, based on a highly stratified society and ruling oligarchy in which only about 5 percent of the population, the patricians (*nobili*), could participate in elective politics, though another 8 to 10 percent, with the status of citizens (*cittadini*), could fill the many bureaucratic administrative positions. Hierarchy defined the strata of Venetian society and the Venetian government, but even though the doge stood at the summit of that hierarchy, his powers were greatly constricted and his functions were often primarily symbolic of the broader governmental structure, famous for its careful avoidance of the cult of personality and its stability over centuries.

That stability was also fostered by the other self-governing organizations of the city in which the rest of the populace could participate and elect their leaders: the scuole—comprising the scuole grandi (eventually numbering six) and the hundreds more scuole piccole (a few even larger than the scuole grandi)—and the artisans' guilds (many associated with the scuole piccole) representing the wide array of crafts and trades practiced in Venice. Equally hierarchical on the religious side were the ecclesiastical officials, the monastic organizations, and the parish clergy. In Venice, parish priests were elected by the populace of their parish, and even bishops were appointed by the government and only confirmed by Rome. By the seventeenth century, there were also scuole focusing on particular elements of religious devotion, such as the Scuola del Santissimo Crocifisso and the Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento. Only the scuole grandi and ecclesiastics, however, were regular participants in ducal processions.<sup>12</sup> The scuole piccole, artisans' guilds, and individual churches mounted their own processions, as described below.

Ducal processions celebrated the most important feast days of the liturgical calendar, the feast days of particular saints, and a host of civic events and anniversaries. Often the populace joined in processions as well, following them to their culminating destination and religious ceremony. The central role of the doge and his cortege was symbolized by placing them not at the head of a procession, but, in keeping with the doge's position in Venetian society, at the center. Not only did ducal processions feature the doge and his entourage at its core, the doge himself was at the middle of his cortege. This cortege served to highlight the central authority, magnificence, and wealth of the state, all embodied in the several symbols, the *trionfi*, of the doge, the doge's musical ensembles, the doge's banners, the person of the doge himself, the various other high officials who surrounded him, and the elaborately color-coded costumes of all the governmental participants. The ducal cortege followed a very detailed protocol in terms of the positioning of these various elements, a protocol that changed slightly over time, but without altering its fundamental elements and order.<sup>13</sup> The most detailed depiction of this order is a well-known xylograph of a Palm Sunday procession in eight segments by Matteo Pagan dating from

---

<sup>12</sup> For the involvement of the scuole grandi, see Jonathan Glixon, "'Far una bella processione': Music and Public Ceremony at the Venetian *scuole grandi*," in R. Charteris, ed., *Altro Polo: Essays on Italian Music in the Cinquecento* (Sydney: Frederick May Foundation for Italian Studies, 1990), 190–220. See also Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 55.

<sup>13</sup> The order is described in detail in Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 192–203.

1556–59 (Fig. 1). The second and third segments illustrate the doge’s long silver trumpets, so large by this time that their bells had to be supported by boys marching in front of each trumpeter, and the pifferi del doge. In their outdoor configuration, the pifferi comprised three shawms and three trombones.<sup>14</sup> The ducal cortege was preceded and followed by the scuole grandi, ecclesiastics, and other participants in the procession. In the ducal andate, the state, society, and the church were inextricably united, performing the functions of organizing the populace according to long-standing precedents and traditions that were reinforced by their replication in more processions than in any other city. These processions bore repeated witness to the stability and cohesion of Venetian society.

**Figure 1:** Matteo Pagan, *Processione in Piazza San Marco, 1556–59*<sup>15</sup>



<sup>14</sup> For identification and description of wind instruments in Venetian processions, see Jeffrey Kurtzman and Linda Maria Koldau, “*Trombe, Trombe d’argento, Trombe squarciate, Tromboni, and Pifferi in Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*,” *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 8/1 (2002), <http://sscm-jscm.org/v8/no1/kurtzman.html> (accessed Sept. 21, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, St. Correr 5933. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.

Figure 1, cont'd.

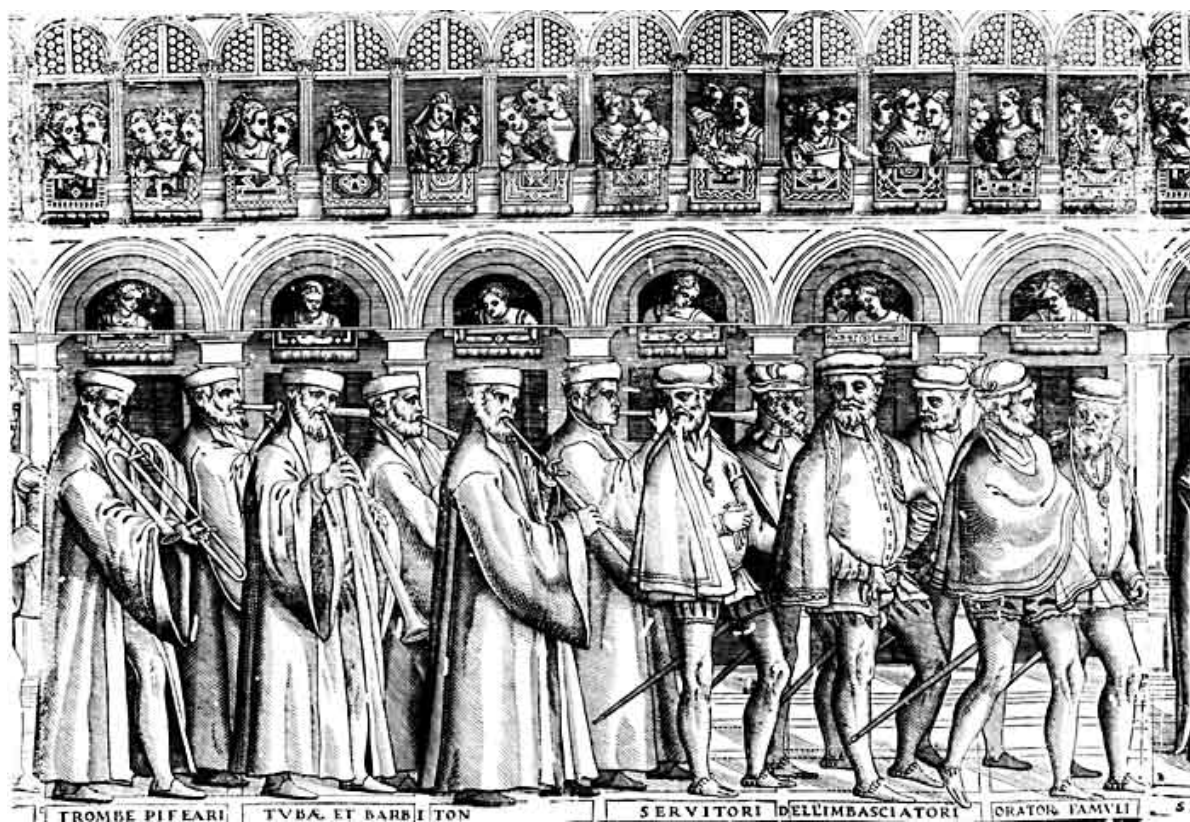
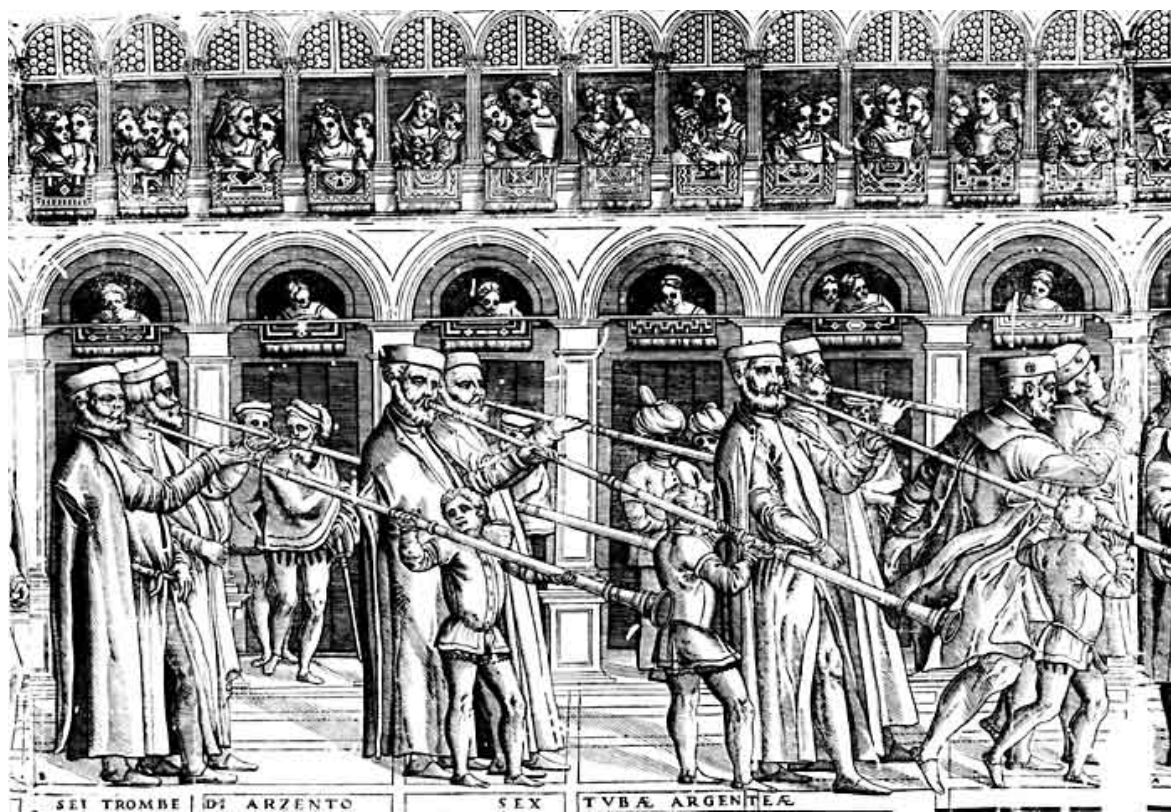


Figure 1, cont'd.

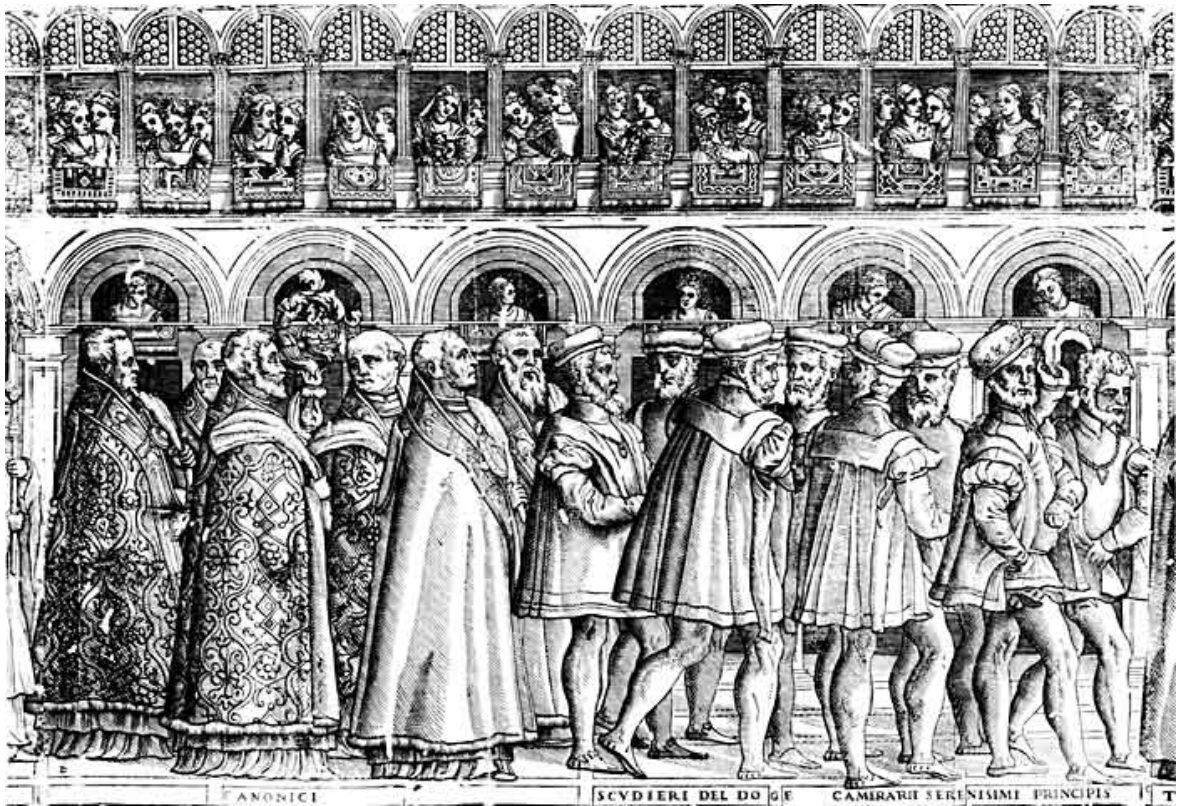




Figure 1, cont'd.

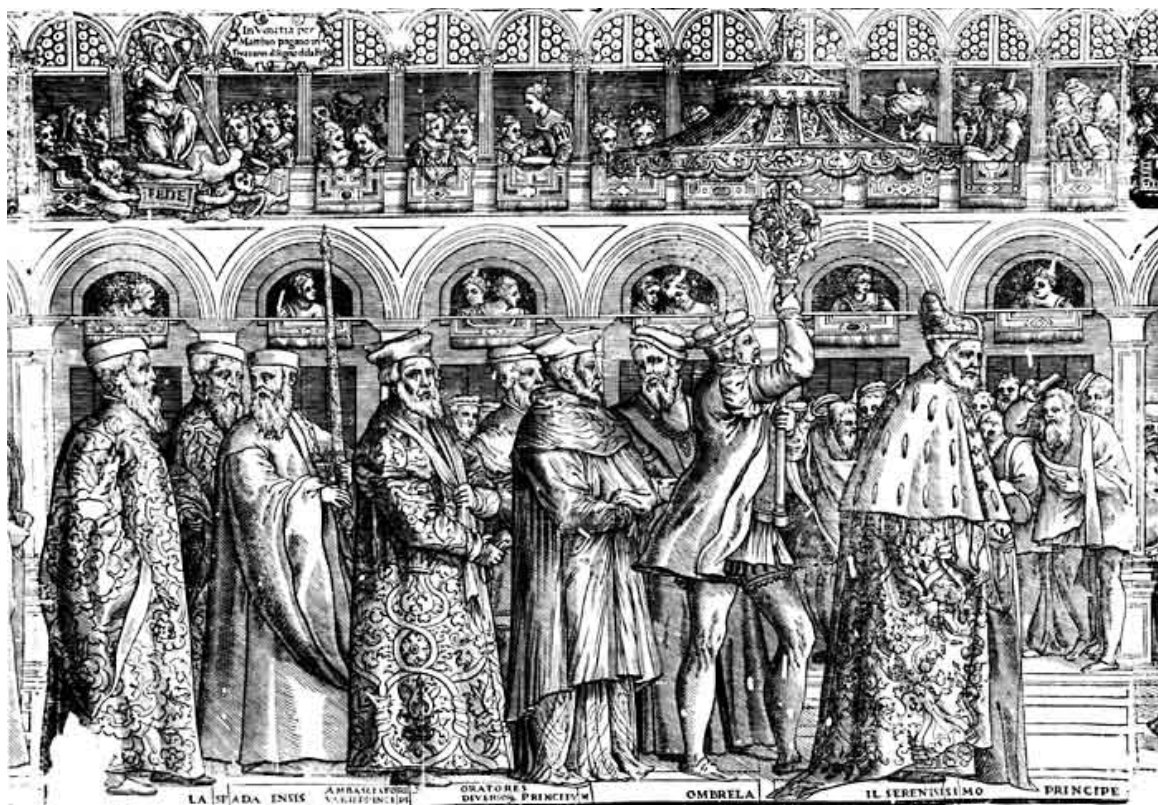
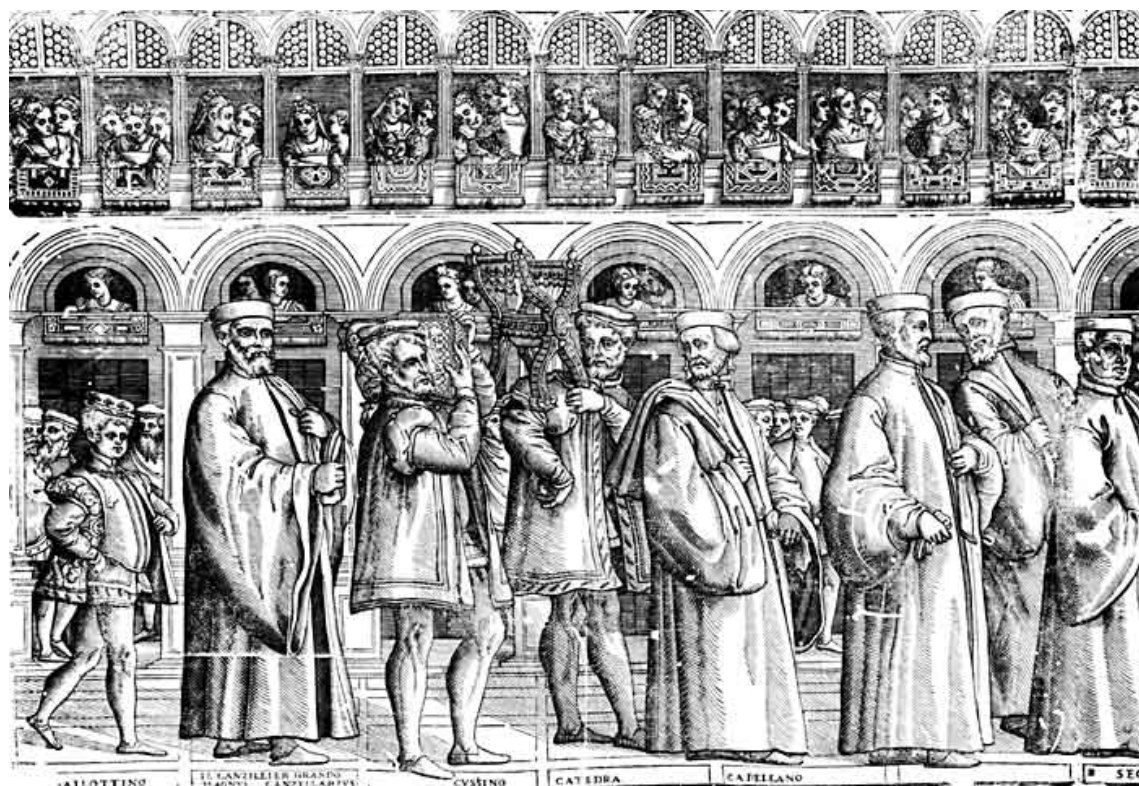
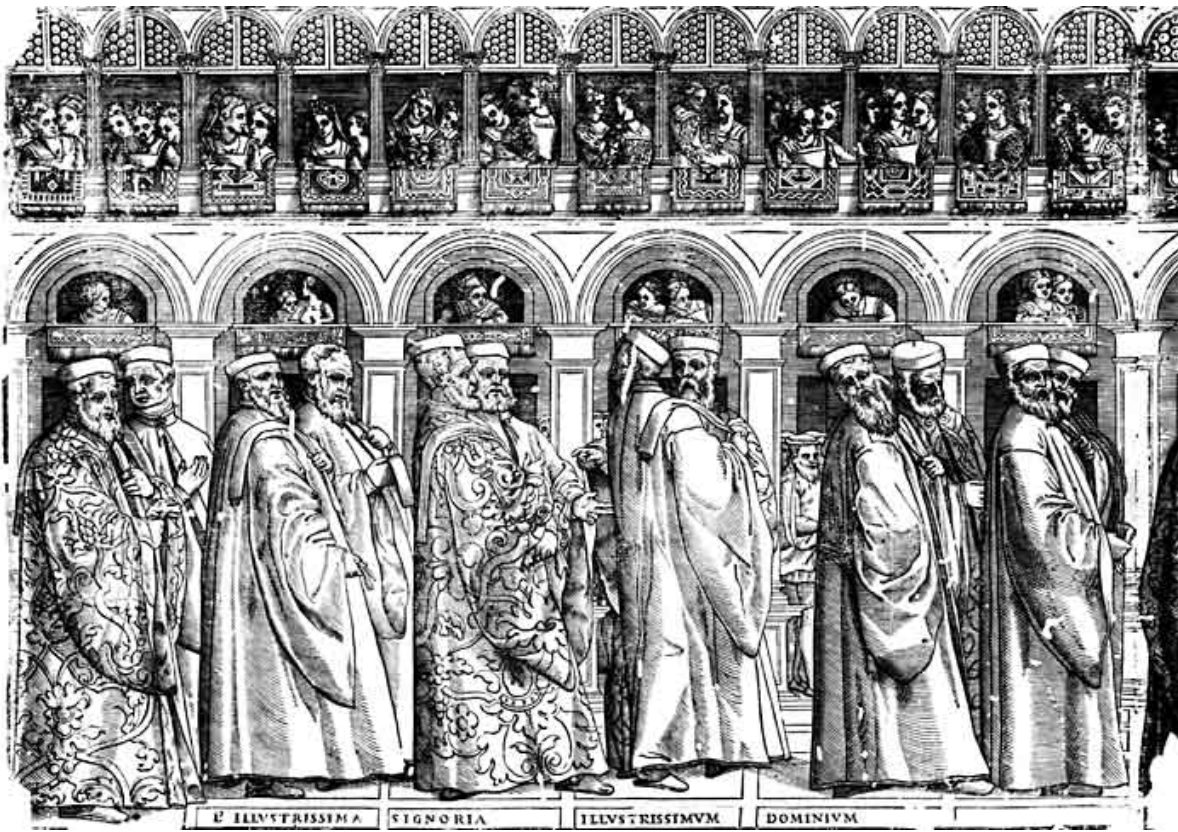


Figure 1, cont'd.



The quantity of such official civic processions grew steadily in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The large guidebook *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*, originally published by the Venetian historian Francesco Sansovino in 1581, then expanded in 1604 by Giovanni Stringa, and again in 1663 by Giustiniano Martinioni, reports 18 separate andate in trionfo and another 22 andate senza i trionfi prescribed for St. Mark's and in St. Mark's Square, as well as traveling to different churches in various quarters of the city.<sup>16</sup> The majority were in celebration of calendrical feast days, but some were andate on the anniversaries of occasional events, such as the end of a plague, the translation of the relics of a saint, a military victory, or the defeat of a domestic plot. In addition, occasional andate celebrated victories, peace treaties, royal visits, the arrival of new ambassadors, investitures of procurators and of captains of the naval forces and armies, funerals of important civic officials, and any other occurrence suggesting official ceremonies.<sup>17</sup> The historian Edward Muir has counted at least 86 different days that had ceremonial significance for Venice by the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Just how magnificent and large these andate could be, especially when followed by a large segment of the

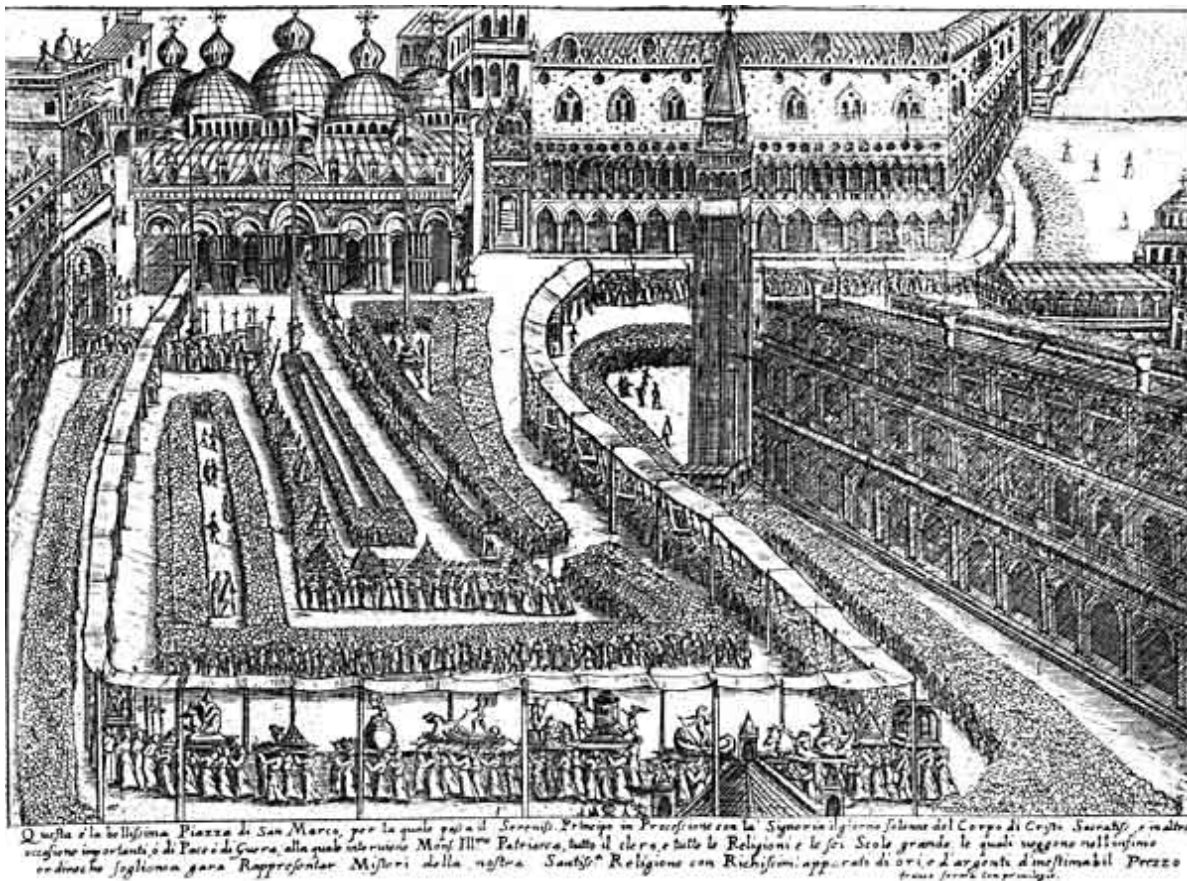
<sup>16</sup> Sansovino et al., *Venetia, città nobilissima*, 492–526, esp. 492–93.

<sup>17</sup> Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 212–50.

<sup>18</sup> Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 78, n. 35.

population, is illustrated in Giacomo Franco's 1610 engraving of a Corpus Christi procession (Fig. 2), certainly one of the most important processions of the liturgical calendar.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 2:** Giacomo Franco, *Processione Corpus Christi*<sup>20</sup>



Some processions took place entirely within the church of St. Mark. Other processions began inside St. Mark's and then exited into the piazza, circled it, and returned to St. Mark's at the end. Many processions began in the neighboring doge's palace, circled the piazza, and culminated in St. Mark's, as in the Corpus Christi procession. But there were also numerous processions that went out from St. Mark's or the doge's palace to other parts of the city, especially to visit individual churches on the feast days of their patron saints as detailed by Sansovino, Stringa, and Martinioni. One of the most famous visitations, still celebrated today, was the annual procession

<sup>19</sup> Giacomo Franco, *Habiti d'huomeni et donne venetiane con la processione della Ser.ma Signoria et altri particolari, cioè trionfi feste et ceremonie publiche della nobilissima città di Venetia* (Venice: Ferdinando Ongania Editore, 1878 [1610]), Plate XXV. Such processions could last for hours. Marin Sanudo, in describing in detail a lengthy procession in celebration of the signing of a peace treaty on Oct. 20, 1511, indicates that it lasted five hours: "Fo comenzata la processione a hore 16 et compita a hore 21." See Marino Sanuto, *I diarii*, ed. R. Tulin et al. (Bologna: Forni Editore, 1969), vol. 13, col. 144.

<sup>20</sup> Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana Coll.6.D.31.1/XXV anche It.VII, 537. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

across the wide Giudecca Canal to Palladio's Church of the Redeemer (Il Redentore), marking the end of the plague of 1575–77. The church itself had been constructed in fulfillment of a civic vow to build such a sanctuary should the Redeemer bring an end to the devastating affliction. The propensity of Venetians to record the character of their public life in images of their own history and as demonstrations of civic continuity resulted, fortunately for us, in numerous depictions of processions, including a mid-seventeenth-century representation of the procession to Il Redentore (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3:** Joseph Heintz il Giovane, *Processione al Redentore*<sup>21</sup>



### Music in Venetian Processions

As already noted, Venetian processions, from their origins, included music. Musicians can be seen in the widely published painting by Gentile Bellini depicting a procession in St. Mark's Square, celebrating a miracle that took place on the feast of St. Mark, April 25, 1444 (Fig. 4). The painting was commissioned by the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista and completed in 1496. Members of the scuola are in the foreground in white robes carrying the confraternity's most famous relic, a piece of the True Cross. A Brescian merchant, Jacopo de' Salis, shown kneeling behind the reliquary, had prayed successfully to the relic on behalf of his injured son.

<sup>21</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, inv. Cl. I n. 2058. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.

Figure 4: Gentile Bellini, *Procession in Piazza San Marco*, 1496<sup>22</sup>



This painting is the first to show the presence and role of instrumentalists and singers in such processions. Featured prominently in the left foreground (Fig. 5) are five singers and three instrumentalists, playing a lute, a harp, and a rebec, from the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista.<sup>23</sup> This is the typical instrumental ensemble of the scuole in the fifteenth century. From the painting it is not clear whether the instrumentalists accompanied the singers or the singers and instrumentalists performed alternately, but generally the instrumentalists and singers were separated by brothers of the scuola and would not have performed together.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Glixon, "Music at the Venetian *Scuole Grandi*," in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Iain Fenlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 193–208, at 199–200.

<sup>24</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 54–55. The Italian scholar Rodolfo Baroncini has argued, against the assumption of some other scholars that the instruments in the painting accompanied the voices, that the two groups actually performed alternately. See Baroncini, "Voci e strumenti nella 'processione in piazza San Marco': Considerazioni metodologiche in margine a un celebre dipinto di Gentile Bellini," *Fonti musicali italiane* 5 (2000): 77–87. It is also possible that Bellini painted the groups side by side for artistic reasons rather than reflecting reality, since the focus on the True Cross leaves little room on the left side of the canvas.

**Figure 5:** Gentile Bellini, *Procession in Piazza San Marco*, foreground detail



Because this painting focuses in the forefront on the role of the scuola in the procession and miracle, the ducal cortege is relegated to the distant background on the right (Fig. 6). Here two other instrumental ensembles can be discerned: the doge's six long silver trumpets and the pifferi del doge. Although the pifferi consisted of three trombones and three shawms when marching outdoors, Bellini depicts only two of the trombones. We have no information about what music these ensembles performed, but the trumpets, because of their great length, probably produced a rather loud, low-pitched sound that in its low frequency would have spread and reverberated broadly among the buildings and across the water.

**Figure 6:** Gentile Bellini, *Procession in Piazza San Marco*, detail of the doge's trumpets and pifferi



Other processions included singers from the cappella of St. Mark's, sometimes hired by one or another of the *scuole grandi*.<sup>25</sup> Earlier in their history the *scuole grandi* featured their own members as singers (sometimes enrolled especially because of their ability), but by the 1440s singers, including members of the St. Mark's cappella, were being contracted to enhance the quality of performance. Hired instrumentalists are evident from the 1480s.<sup>26</sup> The typical instrumental ensemble of the *scuole* depicted by Bellini might have been used on some occasions to accompany floats carried by members of the confraternity.<sup>27</sup> By the 1530s this trio of instruments tended to give way to string consorts of five or six members of the violin family (*violen da braccio*), first as brothers of the *scuole*, but hired in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Other instruments could also be added to processions, such as wind instruments, consorts of lutes, and especially trumpets and drums.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, we have no information or musical sources identifying what was performed at any of these processions, though it is likely that litanies were commonly sung, as elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> But the sounds of processions were not limited to musical instruments and voices. Celebratory processions could also involve the ringing of church bells, the firing of blunderbusses and artillery, and displays of fireworks, making them noisy affairs, indeed.

In addition to processions around the city, processions also mounted the large, elaborate ducal ship of state, the *Bucintoro*, to move out into the lagoon for the feast of the *Sensa*, the annual marriage of Venice with the sea. This procession is depicted in a woodcut by Jost Amman dating from around 1560, after a woodcut by Andrea di Vavasson and an original by Titian (Fig. 7). The doge's pifferi, at the front of the procession, can be seen about to embark on the *Bucintoro*, which others in the ducal cortege have already boarded.

---

<sup>25</sup> For the participation of the cappella in the ducal andate, see James H. Moore, *Vespers at St. Mark's: Music of Alessandro Grandi, Giovanni Rovetta and Francesco Cavalli*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979, 1981), 1: 184; and Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 86–87, 122, 124.

<sup>26</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 102–03.

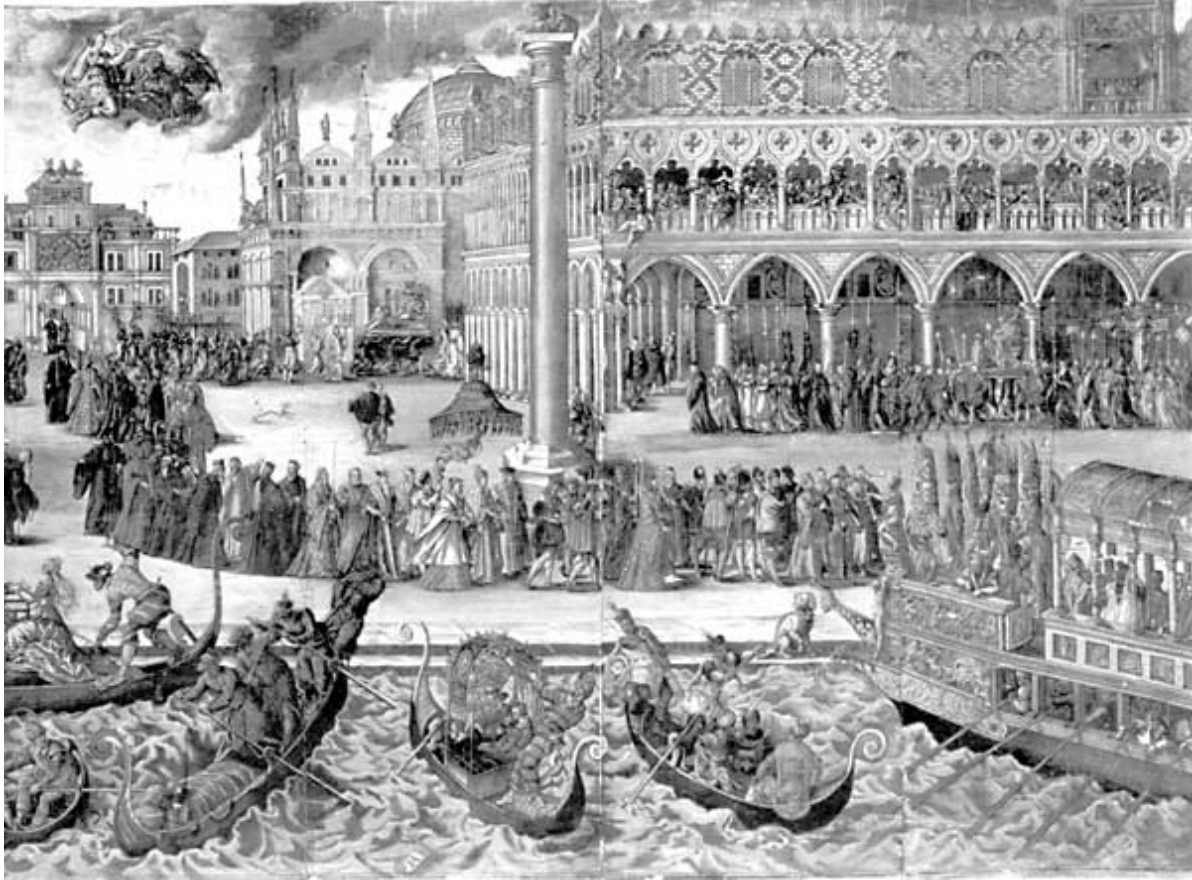
<sup>27</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 87, 131.

<sup>28</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 131–35.

<sup>29</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 57, 130–31.

<sup>30</sup> The lack of information about Venetian processional repertoire contrasts with the known musical sources for some Roman processions detailed in O'Regan, "Processions and Their Music," 66–77 and Milanese processions as reported in Kendrick, *The Sounds of Milan*, 148–49, 152–59. Getz cites unspecified laude and litanies sung at Milanese penitential processions and identifies a few specific texts sung at particular processions. She has also identified specific compositions that may have been used during ceremonies of which processions were a part, but were not sung during the processions themselves. See Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience*, 126–27, 129–30, 142–44.

Figure 7: Jost Amman, *Procession to the Bucintoro*, ca. 1560<sup>31</sup>



Processions also embarked on barges, called *peatoni*, for transport to the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in the *bacino* (the inner lagoon off St. Mark's Square), or to other locations around the city. An annual visit to San Giorgio began with the dedication of Palladio's church of San Giorgio Maggiore on Christmas Day 1610, illustrated in a woodcut by Giacomo Franco (Fig. 8). The doge's trumpets and pifferi are featured prominently in the foreground.

<sup>31</sup> Photo copyright Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



Figure 8: Giacomo Franco, *Disembarco a San Giorgio Maggiore*<sup>32</sup>



These processions announced to the populace the celebration underway and served as an invitation to witness or follow the cortege. Such elaborate and splendid civic events not only

<sup>32</sup> Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana Coll.6.D.31.1/XIX (anche It.VII,537). Reproduced with the kind permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

displayed the civic authority and magnificence of the state and its constituent institutions, but outside the annual pre-Lenten Carnevale season, they were also a chief source, perhaps *the* chief source, of public entertainment throughout the year.

### **Processions not Involving the Doge and Government**

The approximately 90 ducal processions held each year—on average, one every four days—don't begin to exhaust the processions that wound their way through various parts of Venice. The six *scuole grandi* celebrated the feast days of their patron saints, the first Sunday of every month, the Sundays of Lent, Holy Week, funerals for their members, and a number of other occasional events with processions by members and hired musicians followed by a liturgical service in the *scuola's* associated church or at a church or burial ground that was the destination of the procession.<sup>33</sup> The processions by the *scuole* could be limited to the immediate surroundings of the *scuola's* building and patron church, or, like some of the ducal *andate*, could wend their way through a substantial portion of the Venetian geography. Some traveled as far as the Rialto and St. Mark's to announce the celebration to a wide audience, inviting the populace to follow the procession and attend the liturgical event in the *scuola's* home church. Some processions stopped at other churches on the way to their final destination, especially Lenten processions and funeral processions, which visited churches where brothers were buried.

As with ducal processions, a *scuola's* singers and instrumentalists were a regular feature of these processions, with the exception of funeral processions, in which only singers participated.<sup>34</sup> Other instruments, such as *pifferi* ensembles and trumpets and drums, were frequently added to *scuola* processions, but as with ducal processions we have no musical sources to tell us what any of these singers or instrumentalists performed while marching. At the churches where funeral or Lenten processions stopped en route, it was typical for the singers to perform polyphonic *laude* (the term possibly referring to motets as well),<sup>35</sup> though again we have no musical sources to identify specific pieces.

The *scuole grandi* were not the only non-governmental institutions to stage processions. The several hundred *scuole piccole*, which represented artisans' guilds, ethnic communities of the city, and a variety of religious and nonreligious interests, also organized processions on their annual patronal feast, or during Holy Week, or in veneration of religious symbols.<sup>36</sup> Processions of the *scuole piccole* were more likely to be confined to the narrow geographical areas of their parishes than those of the *scuole grandi*, and therefore not to attract as widespread attention. Nevertheless, they too involved singers, string and wind instruments (*pifferi*), trumpets, and drums as regular components.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> See Quaranta, *Oltre San Marco*, and Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*.

<sup>34</sup> On funeral singers, see Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 126–27.

<sup>35</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 58–62, 85. A diagram of the intermittent stops during the Lenten processions of one of the *scuole* is given on p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 195–98.

<sup>37</sup> On processions by the *scuole piccole*, see Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 200–206.

The quantity of processions mounted by the *scuole grandi*, *scuole piccole*, artisans' guilds, and individual churches and monasteries substantially outnumbered the ducal mandate. Glixon provides a list of some 50 feast days celebrated by the *scuole grandi* alone.<sup>38</sup> When the processions on the first Sunday of every month, Lenten processions, Holy Week processions, funeral processions, and other occasional processions of the *scuole grandi* are added to those of the *scuole piccole* and the other institutions cited above, the numbers must have been staggering, perhaps averaging as many as one per day, though they were obviously bunched on Sundays and important feast days, with many ferial days probably lacking processions altogether. Moreover, these more localized processions were widely scattered among the parishes constituting the Venetian geography.

When a procession arrived at its destination, where Mass and/or Vespers were typically celebrated, the musical contingent of the procession, depending on the circumstances, may or may not have joined with the musicians of the church and possibly other hired musicians in embellishing the service. Here we enter upon another aspect of these celebrations that has its own complex issues regarding the music performed and the musicians performing it. But that is another subject, outside the scope of processional music *per se*, though certainly integral to the festivity taken in its entirety.

### **The Societal Function of Venetian Processions**

Both ducal and nonducal processions served not only as symbols of authority, piety, Venetian institutions, and continuity, but also as a kind of civic identity and societal glue. While bridges, gondolas, and shipping barges physically overcame Venice's geographic divisions produced by innumerable canals, processions accomplished the same thing on a human and spiritual level. A procession that wound its way through different parts of the city drew people from different parishes and *sestieri* (the six geographical and political subdivisions of the city) together in a common function, and directed people toward a common location for the culminating liturgical service. Such a procession was a living thread that traced its path through the city, knitting together its people and its geographical subdivisions. These events might well be termed "cultural performance," a phrase, in Milton Singer's words, "which is widely used by anthropologists to identify music, theater, pageant, and sports events in which a society abstracts for itself and others its governing principles, showing itself and others its uniqueness."<sup>39</sup> Even the much more limited processions of the *scuole piccole* performed the same function on the scale of the individual parish or neighborhood.

As is already clear from the descriptions above, sound was an intrinsic element in these processions. Ducal processions in particular, with singers from the cappella of St. Mark's, the singers and instrumentalists of each *scuola grande*, the *pifferi* and six long silver trumpets of the doge, and the addition of unofficial trumpets and drums or other instruments, produced a great deal of sound. When the ringing of bells, the firing of weapons, and the explosion of fireworks

---

<sup>38</sup> Glixon, *Honoring God and the City*, 255–60.

<sup>39</sup> Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 56–58.

were added, ducal processions, as they progressed, could be heard almost everywhere in the city, with the sound carrying far and wide, echoing off nearby walls, and spreading out over the water, making the entire populace virtual participants in the celebration.

Even the processions of the *scuole grandi* and the *scuole piccole* produced considerable sound, which also functioned as a herald of the approaching festivity. The visual splendor of a procession could have its effect only on those who witnessed it directly, but others—Venetians confined to their homes for whatever reason, artisans buried in their workshops, or nuns cloistered in their convents—knew a procession was on its way well before it was actually visible. And after a procession had passed, the sound could still be heard for some time. The sound of a procession extended its reach in both space and time well beyond its immediate physical confines, making it one of the most important elements in the civic adhesion and solidarity such festivities promoted.

### **The Coronation of the Dogressa Morosina Morosini Grimani**

I would like to conclude this very brief survey with an example of a splendid and complex celebration in which processions, religion, government, and civic life were inseparably intertwined: the coronation of the Dogressa Morosina Morosini Grimani on May 4–7, 1597. This grandiose event illustrates the manner in which processions, instrumental and vocal music, artillery, fireworks and church bells, religious services, and diverse secular activities and entertainments could be integrated into an extended, cohesive event. Elaborate coronations of the wife of a doge were uncommon in Venice, but in the sixteenth century there were two major festivities of this type. The first celebrated the coronation of Zilia Dandola-Priuli in 1557. The second, 40 years later, feted the wife of Doge Marino Grimani, himself crowned in 1595.<sup>40</sup>

The description of this four-day festivity by Giovanni Stringa occupies 17 pages in his enlarged 1604 version of Sansovino's 1581 *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*.<sup>41</sup> His account is that of a first-hand witness, but is also derived in part from earlier published reports of the ceremonies by Giovanni Rota<sup>42</sup> and Dario Tutio.<sup>43</sup> The large dimensions of these reports, each of which provides unique information, give some idea of the coronation's sumptuousness and complexity.

---

<sup>40</sup> For a history of the Venetian dogressas prior to the sixteenth century, see Holly S. Hurlburt, *The Dogressa of Venice, 1200–1500: Wife and Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> Martinioni, *Venezia, città nobilissima*, 416–32.

<sup>42</sup> Giovanni Rota, *Lettera nella quale si descrive l'ingresso nel palazzo ducale della serenissima Morosina Morosini Grimani principessa di Vinetia. Co' la cerimonia della rosa benedetta, mandatale à donare dalla santità di nostro Signore* (Venice, 1597).

<sup>43</sup> Dario Tutio, *Ordine et modo tenuto nell'incoronatione della serenissima Moresina Grimani dogressa di Venetia. L'anno MDXCVII adi 4 di maggio. Con le feste e giochi fatti* (Venice, 1597).

**Figure 9:** Jacopo Negretti detto Palma il Giovane (attributed), *Ritratto della dogressa Morosina Morosini Grimani*<sup>44</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, inv. Cl. I n. 0585. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.

Morosina Morosini was a formidable person in her own right (Fig. 9), and it has been suggested that her popularity may have had something to do with Grimani's own election two years earlier.<sup>45</sup> Eight days before the coronation, the artisans' guilds began decorating the various rooms of the ducal palace, where they would each be responsible for displaying the finest examples of their crafts and for providing refreshments. The dogaressas had long been considered patronesses of the artisans' guilds, thus providing them with a rationale for their special role in the ceremonies. From sunrise on May 4 the sound of trumpets and drums could be heard throughout the city. The coronation festivities themselves began about 1:00 P.M. with an assembly of the most prominent state officials boarding the *Bucintoro* to travel along the Grand Canal to the private residence of the doge. They arrived there to the sound of trumpets, drums, and artillery, whereupon they ascended the palace stairs to the continuous sound of the instruments, and were received by the dogaressa and an entourage of wives and sisters of various officials. In her own palace the dogaressa swore to observe the ducal *promissione*, or contract between the doge and the state, after which she distributed purses of gold and received a newly minted medallion of herself. Then she and a large group of "gentildonne & cittadine" (young noblewomen and female citizens) invited for the occasion processed down the stairs, preceded by 12 trumpets, 12 drums, and the 6 pifferi and 6 long silver trumpets of the doge. The dogaressa embarked on the waiting *Bucintoro*, while many of the gentildonne boarded a unique octagonal barge designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi in the shape of a columned temple called the *Teatro del Mondo*. There were another 12 trumpets and 12 drums on this vessel, with the trumpets divided into two groups of six, playing in alternation.

The embarkation scene was captured in a painting (Fig. 10) labeled "anonymous" in the published catalogue of the Museo Correr, but identified in the museum itself as the work of Andrea Michiele detto il Vicentino. Vicentino painted two other scenes from later in the coronation as well as a number of large historical and allegorical scenes for the ducal palace and for churches in Venice.<sup>46</sup> He accurately depicts not only the Grimani palace, which is today still easily recognizable along the Grand Canal, but even the stormy weather described by witnesses to the event.

---

<sup>45</sup> See Edgcumbe Staley, *The Dogaressas of Venice* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1910), 283.

<sup>46</sup> Paintings by Vicentino are still in situ in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and Santi Giovanni e Paolo.

**Figure 10:** Andrea Michieli detto il Vicentino, *La Dogaressa Morosina Grimani sale sul Bucintoro*<sup>47</sup>



In this scene, three straight trumpets of about four feet in length can be seen extending out of the *Bucintoro* near the bow. In the lower left-hand corner of the painting is another symbolic straight trumpet of about the same size. Such trumpets are often found in Venetian paintings and engravings, and may be identified as the *trombe squarciate* mentioned in many Venetian descriptions of such events.<sup>48</sup>

The next stage in the coronation was the transport of the dogressa and her retinue to the Piazzetta San Marco (the smaller square fronting on the bacino between St. Mark's and the Library of St. Mark's). All along the Grand Canal music was played, and rifles and arquebuses were fired, as well as artillery from small naval ships. Morosini's passage through the bacino was illustrated in an engraving by Giacomo Franco, probably executed not long after the event (Fig. 11).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, inv. cl. I. n. 0285. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.

<sup>48</sup> See n. 14 above.

<sup>49</sup> Two other engravings by Franco of the scene in the bacino show the *Bucintoro* and *Teatro del Mondo* in one and the *Teatro del Mondo* alone in the other (both with many other boats in the background).

Figure 11: Giacomo Franco, *La dogaressa Morosina Morosini Grimani sul Bucintoro*<sup>50</sup>



In this engraving we see the six pifferi del doge toward the stern, near the dogaressa, who sits at the very back. The two trombones are clearly delineated, and two of the other four instruments are illustrated in enough detail to indicate unequivocally that they are shawms. Midlength straight trumpets are shown on several other boats in the flotilla, and drums may be seen in yet other boats. A wooden ramp specially built on small barges for disembarkation onto the piazzetta at the upper right is populated with trumpeters and drummers, who saluted the dogaressa's arrival with a great din. Behind the ramp is a temporary triumphal arch erected for the occasion and inscribed on both sides with phrases that are included in Stringa's description. On top of the arch was a trumpeter dressed allegorically as Fame, who also sounded his instrument. Three boats in the center of Franco's engraving are firing their artillery, and an extensive row of bonfires, probably the source of fireworks, can be seen on the shore at the top left. The bottom corners of the picture are framed with a single symbolic midlength trumpet with an exceptionally wide bell on the left, balanced by an equally symbolic single drum on the right.

<sup>50</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, St. P. D. n. 24/4. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.



Vicentino's second large painting in his series shows the dogaressa disembarking on the wooden ramp leading to the piazzetta (Fig. 12). She wears the same royal robes as in the *Palma il Giovane* painting (see Fig. 9), though Vicentino depicts her as plumper than Tintoretto. The woman on her left, sporting the same typically Venetian double-horned headdress seen on the gentildonne in the Franco engravings, is probably the dogaressa's sister, and the two children between them are likely her sister's son and daughter, as best can be ascertained from Stringa's description. Spectators can be seen on the shore and leaning out of the Library of St. Mark's. Near the bow of the *Bucintoro* can be seen a single musician playing what appears to be a shawm.

**Figure 12:** Andrea Michieli detto il Vicentino, *Sbarco a San Marco della Dogaressa Morosina Grimani*, detail, left-hand side<sup>51</sup>



On the right-hand side of the painting is Vincenzo Scamozzi's vessel, the *Teatro del Mondo*, from which the gentildonne with their horned headdresses have already disembarked and are being escorted toward St. Mark's to the sound of drums on the piazzetta and three full-length folded trumpets and a single drum in the lower right-hand corner of the scene (Fig. 13).

<sup>51</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, inv. cl. I n. 0928. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.

**Figure 13:** Andrea Michieli detto il Vicentino, *Sbarco a San Marco della Dogaressa Morosina Grimani*, detail, right-hand side<sup>52</sup>



During the dogaressa's disembarkation there were further volleys of rifles, arquebuses, and artillery. The dogaressa was led toward St. Mark's by representatives of the artisans' guilds, each with its own banner, who marched in pairs and were followed by 24 men in livery playing trumpets and drums (very probably 12 trumpeters and 12 drummers). These were followed by another 12 men in scarlet who played pifferi and short silver trumpets, likely divided, as in the ducal ensembles, into two equal groups of six. The procession comprised some 400 people, with each gentildonna escorted by a young citizen or nobleman, who helped support her because of the awkward height of her heels.<sup>53</sup> State officials followed, then the dogaressa and the doge, and afterward came officials and senators in the same order as in a ducal procession. The entire

<sup>52</sup> Venice, Museo Correr, inv. cl. I n. 0928. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Museo Correr.

<sup>53</sup> Venetian women wore extraordinarily high heels, essentially short stilts, at such public events. Note that in Vicentino's painting the women appear as tall as the men. Examples of such heels may be seen in Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 184; and Giandomenico Romanelli, Monica da Cortà Fumeri, and Camillo Tonini, *Correr Museum* (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2006), 144.

procession took place under a canopy like that shown in Franco's engraving of a Corpus Christi procession (see Fig. 8), but not shown by Vicentino. The piazza was so crowded with spectators that the doors of St. Mark's had to be kept locked until the first elements of the procession were ready to enter.

The last of Vicentino's large paintings depicts the procession around the piazzetta prior to the dogaressa's entry into St. Mark's (Fig. 14). The orderly nature and variously colored costumes of the procession can be seen, as well as the banners of the different artisans' guilds. Vicentino, in order not to obscure people and buildings, has again omitted the canopy from his painting of the scene.

**Figure 14:** Andrea Michieli il Vicentino, *The Dogaressa Marching in Procession in St. Mark's Square*<sup>54</sup>



Just to the left of the campanile (bell tower) are a trumpeter with a midlength straight instrument and his accompanying drummer, while to the right of the campanile inside the angle created by the processing women in white can barely be seen a group of trumpeters playing midlength straight instruments with banners attached.

When the trumpeters, drummers, and pifferi arrived at the door of St. Mark's, they split into two wings between which the rest of the procession entered the church and seated themselves according to a specific protocol. When the dogaressa passed through the aisles of instrumentalists and entered the church, there was another salvo of arquebuses along with the "sweet melody" (*soave melodia*) of the trumpets, drums, and pifferi.

A substantial portion of Stringa's description is taken up with details of the Mass and the reception in the ducal palace next door, whose rooms and corridors were ornately decorated by the artisans' guilds. While the dogaressa was in the basilica, seated in the chancel on the doge's chair, the organs, singers, and instrumentalists of St. Mark's provided music except during the Mass itself. Her entourage's exit into the ducal palace was preceded by drummers. Accompanying the elaborate reception in the palace was the "joyful harmony of various instruments" (*gioconda armonia di varij stromenti*). The dogaressa passed from room to room, filled with confections and decorations

<sup>54</sup> Now located at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, UK. Reproduced with the kind permission of Eric Beaussant & Pierre-Yves Lefèvre, Commissaires-Priseurs Associés, Paris.

furnished by the artisans' guilds. The guilds also provided "music of infinite sweetness" (*suoni pieni d'infinita dolcezza*) performed by lutes, cornettos, winds, strings, and various other instruments (*la dolce armonia de' liuti, cornetti, pifferi, viuole, & altri variati stromenti*). Some guilds were represented by trumpets and drums, and others featured voices accompanied by lutes (*dolce commertio di liuti, & delicate voci*), with music heard throughout the building. The instruments later accompanied dancing until the evening was concluded.

The second day of festivities was devoted, according to the dogaressa's wishes, to a "formal festival of dance" (*una solenne festa di danzare*) in the Great Council Hall, presided over by Morosini sitting on the ducal throne. The beginning of the event was announced by 12 trumpets and 12 drums assembled in the palace courtyard. In the Great Council Hall, the musicians not only played for the ball itself, but very likely also performed continuously during the serving of sumptuous refreshments as they had on the previous day. Throughout the city trumpets and drums continued to be heard, and there was playing and singing on boats circulating through the canals.

The third day of the coronation was given over to the presentation to the dogaressa of a golden rose as a gift from the pope in a papal Mass celebrated by the pope's nuncio, who had traveled from Rome especially for the occasion. Again there was a procession into St. Mark's, with the *commendatori* leading the way followed by the trumpets, drums, and pifferi who played as they entered the church. The Mass itself was accompanied by both singing and instruments (*canti & suoni*). After the Mass, the participants all processed to the ducal palace to the sound of the trumpets, drums, and pifferi, where a scenic representation and another splendid banquet and dance were given in the Great Council Hall, accompanied again by music, including "the harmony of concerted delicate voices" (*all'armonia di bene concertate delicate voci*). Following the banquet, a mock naval battle was held in the bacino that also featured the sound of artillery, followed by an unusually elaborate regatta, in which trumpets and drums must have been heard as well, though the accounts are silent on the matter.

On the fourth and final day of the coronation festivities the dogaressa processed, to the sound of voices and instruments, through the doge's palace greeting the artisans' guilds. The final event of the ceremonies was a social evening at the Ca' Foscari with games, music, and dancing.

The sumptuousness and expense of the coronation of Morosina Morosini were so great, and Venetian fortunes were in such decline after the plague of 1630–31, that the Senate in 1645, as a money-saving measure, forbade forever the coronation of a dogaressa, though that decree was ultimately honored in the breach as early as 1694, as so many Venetian prohibitions were.<sup>55</sup>

The coronation of Morosina Morosini Grimani represents in the highest degree the manner in which state and church, the secular and the religious, were brought together in a public display of civic unity, enhanced through the combination of the most striking visual and sonic effects. This pageant drew the entire city into its vortex, offering a "cultural performance" that, for at least four days, helped make of the Serenissima a unified, living organism and whose recollection, in published accounts, engravings, and paintings, helped preserve its effects for years to come. Alas, there was no means of also recording for posterity the music and other sounds of such a splendid event, for which we can only exercise our imaginations.

---

<sup>55</sup> Giovanni Pompe Molmenti, *La Dogaressa di Venezia* (Turin, 1884), 319–22.

