

GREASING THE WHEELS OF HEAVEN: RECYCLING, INNOVATION AND THE QUESTION OF “BRUNELLESCHI’S” STAGE MACHINERY

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Theatre historians have long struggled to interpret and reconcile the four major descriptions of Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni*: two by a Russian bishop, Abraham of Suzdal, who visited Florence for the Council of 1439; and two by Giorgio Vasari who, in the second edition (1568) of his *Vite* added to his *Vite* of Brunelleschi and of *Il Cecca* descriptions of the machinery used in the Annunciation play in San Felice and the Ascension play in Santa Maria del Carmine.¹ Brunelleschi is in some ways Vasari’s excuse to talk about the Annunciation machinery. Vasari begins this section: “It is also said that the Paradise machinery in San Felice in Piazza was invented by Filippo”, and the description concludes with the words: “This machinery, and many other things, were invented by Filippo, although others state that they were invented a long time before. Whatever the truth is, it has been useful to speak of it since it has quite fallen from use”.²

¹ An early version of this paper, which revisits material discussed in a previous study (*Feste d’Oltarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 2 vols., Florence, 1996 [hereafter as NEWBIGIN, *Feste*]) in the light of new documents, was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, Cambridge, UK, April 2005. I thank my co-panellists, Blake Wilson and Peter Howard, our respondent John O’Malley, and others who were present, for their comments. Abraham’s descriptions are translated and discussed in NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, pp. 3-7 and 60-63. The “Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi, scultore et architetto” is in GIORGIO VASARI, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori scultori et architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. BETTARINI-P. BAROCCHI, 11 vols., Florence, 1966-1997, vol. 3, pp. 188-191. The “Vita del Cecca, ingegnere fiorentino” is in VASARI, *Le vite*, 3, pp. 450-452, where the description of the Ascension machinery ends with the sentence: “These devices, then, and these inventions are said to have been the work of *Il Cecca*, because although Filippo Brunelleschi had done similar things long before, many things were nevertheless added on with great skill by *Il Cecca*. And it was from these that *Il Cecca* got the idea of making the *nuvole* that used to go in procession through the city every year on the eve of St. John the Baptist”. For translations and discussions of the descriptions of Abraham and of Vasari, see *Feste*, 1, pp. 22-24 and 64-65.

² In the 1550 edition, the stage machinery had been described as follows: “It is said that

This essay begins by tracing the fortunes of the Ascension and Annunciation machinery in Vasari's lifetime and how Vasari came to know it when first the one and then the other was stored in Santa Maria del Carmine, just as he began work on the festivities for the marriage of Prince Francesco de' Medici and, simultaneously, on the revised edition of his *Vite*. The essay goes on to examine in detail the *rappresentazione* of the Annunciation performed in Santo Spirito in 1565 and considers its fifteenth-century antecedents in San Felice and Santa Maria del Carmine. It reviews the collective and cumulative contribution of artists and artisans in the Oltrarno to the old *feste*. In particular it considers the contribution of Pippo di Baldo, a goldsmith in the *gonfalone* of the Green Dragon, and his right to challenge Vasari's attribution of authorship to Brunelleschi. These considerations provide new insight into the cultural politics of the Medici grand duchy, and the efforts by enlightened bureaucrats and antiquarians such as Vincenzo Borghini to modernise and redeploy their own versions of traditional Florentine cultural events.

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On 8 July 1554 the members of the Florentine confraternity of Sant'Agnes petitioned Duke Cosimo I, through the Captains of the Parte Guelfa who now acted as his Office of Public Works, to take action against the friars of Santa Maria del Carmine.³ The Carmelites, they said, were tearing out the old Paradise machinery that the confraternity had formerly used in its Ascension play, on the grounds that it was weakening the roof of the church:

Most Illustrious Lord Duke,
The Captains and Officials of [the confraternity of] Sant'Agnes [which meets] in the Carmine in Florence make representation to Your Excellency

the machinery in San Felice in Piazza in the city [of Florence] were invented by him for doing a *rappresentazione*, an industrious thing to see, a moving heaven full of living figures and counterweighted *ferri*, turning and moving, with covered lamps that light up when they are uncovered; things which brought Filippo great praise", VASARI, *op. cit.* (see note 1), 3, p. 188.

³ Florence, Archivio di Stato (hereafter ASF), Archivio dei Capitani di Parte Guelfa, Numeri Neri 702, no. 59; see Document 1. The confraternity may have been in the process of reorganising itself. It had only recently recovered its meeting rooms which had been occupied and vandalized by Cosimo's troops (see Document 2); and new statutes were compiled the following year, 1555, as recorded in the subsequent statutes of 1584, in response to "la varietà e scorrimento de' tempi [che] arreca sempre nuove occasioni", ASF, Acquisti e Doni 44 (Sant'Agnesa, *Capitoli*), fol. 6r.

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that their Company was entrusted long ago by the Commune of Florence with the care and preservation of the *edefizio* of Heaven,⁴ created in the church of the Carmine for playing and performing the *festa* of the Assumption of our Lord,⁵ and for more than a hundred years they have appointed and continue to appoint special officers to look after the ropes and other *edefizii* used for this activity.

Today the friars and officials of the church of the Carmine have started to tear down the *edefizio* in the roof of the church and pertaining to the *festa*, saying that they have obtained a letter from Your Most Illustrious Excellency.⁶ And as far as your petitioners have been able to establish, the friars petitioned to remove it, and the church officials, who are the one and the same as the friars, without contacting the officers of the company, have informed Your Most Illustrious Excellency, and declared to him that the *edefizio* was tearing down the roof, and that such damage could not be repaired unless the *edefizio* was removed, and that any time Your Most Illustrious Excellency wanted the *festa* done again, it would be an easy matter, and not expensive, to put it back; and it seems that they offered, in such an eventuality, to put it back themselves at their expense, and in this way they were given permission, even though the roof could be repaired at far less expense than it will take to remove it, and though they will have to spend several hundred ducats putting it back. And not content with that, it seems that under this guise they want not only to pull down that part of the *edefizio* that was weakening the roof, but also extinguish and remove all trace and memory of such a *festa*, so that they should

⁴ The term *edefizio* (or *edificio*) means variously a pageant wagon or litter and the structure on it, where a play or tableau (*rappresentazione* and *festa* may denote both) is performed; an elevated performance space; and, as here, the machinery specific to that performance space, that raises and lowers other scenic elements such as the *ferri* or metal frames that support Christ and various angels. Strictly speaking, the *edificio* of Heaven, above the High Altar of the Carmine, had been removed in 1498; what remained was the machinery in the middle of the church, above the Mount of Olives, which had traditionally been called *Paradiso*; this was moved from the western end to the eastern end of the *tramezzo* in 1500 (see NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, pp. 153-155 and vol. 2, pp. 654-657).

⁵ The Ascension of Christ was performed until 1471 when, after the Lenten performance mounted for Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the confraternity added the Assumption of the Virgin to its regular Ascensiontide performance of the same year. From then until 1478, when the Ascension play ceased, both *feste* were performed. In 1480, according to Ser Giusto d'Anghiari, an Assumption *festa* with St. Thomas was performed in August, perhaps not even by the Sant' Agnese company; N. NEWBIGIN, "I *Giornali* di Ser Giusto Giusti d'Anghiari (1437-1482)", *Letteratura italiana antica*, 3, 2004, p. 215. I have found no record of plays in the Carmine after 1491, even though some of the equipment was preserved.

⁶ No letter to this effect has yet been identified among the letters of the Mediceo del Principato archive.

not one day be required, at great expense, to keep the promise they made in their declaration in order to be able to remove these things unnecessarily; and when they were asked by your petitioners to leave certain vestiges, as we have said, they refused.

Wherefore, since it is our responsibility, on account of the care with which we have been entrusted, we inform Your Most Illustrious Excellency about all this, and entreat you further that you should not desire such a devout and ingenious spectacle to be taken down and obliterated, and may it therefore please you to commission the Magnificent Captains of the Parte [Guelfa], or whomever you see fit, to ensure that, once everything has been inspected by experts, as many of those traces and signs of the *festa* as is possible are preserved safely in this place, and that they do not damage the roof of the church; in order that posterity should not lose all memory of such ingenious things, especially since what was in San Felice, now that it has turned into a convent of nuns,⁷ will no longer be useable, and since because they are similar, both of the *feste* could be done in the church of the Carmine; and that everything should be placed in the hands of Your Excellency, to whom they commend themselves, praying that our Lord God will preserve you in happiness always.

[*Annotation*] *Reply*: To the Captains of the Parte [Guelfa], that they should investigate and inform His Excellency.

The Captains of Sant'Agnese, in a querulous attempt to preserve the equipment that they had not used for the last fifty years,⁸ were creative in their petition: claiming ancient responsibilities entrusted to them by the Republic and, by implication, in the golden age of the Duke's ancestor, Cosimo *pater patriae*; claiming that cheaper alternatives had been overlooked; alleging deviousness on the part of the friars, who were expunging all memory of the plays in order to ensure that they would be forgotten and that the friars would not be called upon to reinstate the machinery; and offering an almost irresistible 'two plays for the price of one', that is the Annunciation and the Ascension *feste*, if the equipment was preserved. Duke Cosimo did not intervene. The demolition went ahead, but one member of

⁷ See below, p. 212.

⁸ The equipment had not been used since a exceptional performance of a Pentecost play in the Carmine, at the request of Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici. Part of the machinery was removed and scrapped in 1497. The confraternity then attempted to revive the plays in 1498, but I have found no evidence that they did so; see NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, pp. 152-155 and 2, p. 656.

the ducal court, Giorgio Vasari, may well have become involved at this point to ensure that the Annunciation and Ascension plays were not forgotten, and became instead the most celebrated of the Florentine *feste*, attributed to Florence's greatest architects and engineers.

Throughout the previous century, in the conventual churches of Florence's Santo Spirito quarter, on the 'other' bank of the river and away from the city's political hub, three lay confraternities had vied with each other to mount their annual *feste*: re-enactments or representations of the Annunciation in San Felice in Piazza in the days immediately following Easter, of the Ascension in Santa Maria del Carmine and of Pentecost in Santo Spirito on the appropriate liturgical feast day. In contrast to other ephemeral performances of the period, these *feste* are richly documented: contemporary descriptions,⁹ confraternal records, and survival (in the case of two of the plays) of much of the actual performance space, have meant that it is possible to reconstruct the performances and to see how they changed incrementally in the course of the century. The discovery of new documents relating to the final disposal of the Ascension machinery will also allow us to re-examine the question of authorship of both the Annunciation and the Ascension machinery, and to stand back and view from a broader perspective the way in which this incremental change, driven by the collective desire to make the plays ever better, intersected with individual genius, resulted in a change of trajectory and also contributed to the collapse of the plays under the weight of their own tradition.

⁹ The Russian bishop, Abraham of Sousdal, saw the plays in 1439; see NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, pp. 3-11 and 60-63. Paola Ventrone has recently argued, on the basis of an older manuscript of his Russian description, that the 1439 Annunciation was performed neither in the Servite church of the Santissima Annunziata, nor in San Felice in Piazza, but in San Marco; see P. VENTRONE, "'Una visione miracolosa e indicibile': nuove considerazioni sulle feste di quartiere", in E. GARBERO ZORZI-M. SPERENZI (eds.), *Teatro e spettacolo nella Firenze dei Medici: Modelli dei luoghi teatrali* [essays and catalogue of exhibition], Florence, 2001, pp. 39-51. I continue to believe, however, that just as the "Church of the Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", in which the Russian bishop saw the Ascension performed, was Santa Maria del Carmine, so the "Church dedicated to our purest Mother of God", in which he saw the Annunciation performed, was San Felice in Piazza, and that the Annunciation was always a *festa* of the Santo Spirito quarter, performed in the church where the the miraculous image of the Virgin of Impruneta always stopped on her way into town.

We know little about the physical space in which the Ascension *fešta* was first celebrated in the late fourteenth century, since Santa Maria del Carmine, although begun in 1268, was not finished and consecrated until 1422.¹⁰ By then it was a barn-like structure, with a single nave with massive walls supporting a truss beam roof. As in the other great mendicant churches, Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella, a masonry screen divided the choir from the nave.¹¹ From the earliest period, existing confraternities took up residence in adjacent spaces and in the crypt. Among the most privileged of these confraternities was the confraternity of Santa Maria delle Laudi e di Sant'Agnese. It had a large oratory on the eastern side of the nave, with fourteenth-century decorations, that opened directly into the church and to the two altars in its care, and it had the right to make major structural interventions that cluttered the inside of the church from one year to the next. In return for these privileges, the confraternity provided vernacular *laudi* as an embellishment of the regular liturgy, and was wholly responsible for the celebration of the convent's principal feast day, Ascension, replaced later, to some extent, by the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (29 June), on account of the role played by the Carmelite *beato* Andrea Corsini.¹² In 1422, then, when the church and its rood screen were completed, and the confraternities that had been closed by communal decree in 1419 had reopened, the *fešta* of the Ascension was performed again, this time with such magnificence that Matteo di

¹⁰ On the history of the church fabric, see P. GIOVANNINI-S. VITOLO, *Il Convento del Carmine di Firenze, caratteri e documenti*, exh. cat. (Florence, Salone Vanni, Convento del Carmine, 23 September-10 October 1981), Florence, 1981; and L. BERTI (ed.), *La chiesa di Santa Maria del Carmine a Firenze*, Florence, 1992.

¹¹ M. B. HALL, "The Ponte in Santa Maria Novella: The Problem of the Rood Screen in Italy", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37, 1974, pp. 157-173; EAD., "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconstructed", *The Art Bulletin*, 56, 1974, pp. 325-341; and *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce, 1565-1577*, Oxford, 1979. The screen was removed in 1568.

¹² On Sant'Andrea Corsini, see G. CIAPPELLI, "A Trecento Bishop as Seen by Quattrocento Florentines: Sant'Andrea Corsini, His 'Life' and the Battle of Anghiari", in S. COHN JR.-S. A. EPSTEIN (eds.), *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Honor of David Herlihy*, Ann Arbor, 1996, pp. 283-298; and N. ECKSTEIN, "The Brancacci, the Chapel, and the Mythic History of San Frediano", and N. NEWBIGIN, "Playing in the Piazza: Peter, Paul and Santa Maria del Carmine", in N. A. ECKSTEIN (ed.), *The Brancacci Chapel: Form, Function and Setting*, Florence, 2007, pp. 15-36 and 139-155 respectively.

Piero Petriboni recorded it in his *Priorista*, and expressed the hope that it might continue.¹³

The liturgical feast day and the physical space constituted external constraints for the Ascension *fešta*: it had to be performed on the same day, in the same place each year, and with the same equipment that it had installed in the church over many years. Like a number of other Florentine confraternities, the Sant'Agnese company owned a *stella*, mounted in the *edificio* of Heaven.¹⁴ Since Vasari reported that the Ascension machinery was almost the same as the Annunciation machinery, it is worth attempting to understand how it worked, in order to understand better the terminology of his description of the two sets of machinery. The Ascension machinery consisted of the *nugola*, decorated with eight painted seraphim, that bore Christ to Heaven; an attachment called the *sesta*, which carried the two accompanying angels and was attached to the back of the *nugola*; an attachment called the *Sole* that fitted behind the *sesta*; a *stella* with appearing lights (of which more below), which fitted behind the *nugola*; a sec-

¹³ PAGOLO DI MATTEO PETRIBONI and MATTEO DI BORGO RINALDI, *Priorista* (1407-1459) with two appendices (1282-1406), ed. J. A. GUTWIRTH, trans. G. BATTISTA-J. A. GUTWIRTH, Rome, 2001, pp. 151-152. Petriboni implies that this is the first time the *fešta* has been done in this fashion, so we may assume that the newly built choir screen and new equipment enabled a more impressive spectacle. See also G. POCHAT, "Brunelleschi and the 'Ascension' of 1422", *The Art Bulletin*, 60, 1978, pp. 232-234; and NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, p. 59.

¹⁴ "Una Istella di legname la quale si chiama la Stella Nuova che sta di sopra alla Nughola in uno dificio di panno dipinto a serafini nel quale dificio si nasconde la detta Istella ed è di legname cho' molti artificio la quale aparisce luminata quando Christo entra nella Nughola e non prima"; for a detailed description, see Section 8 of Neri di Bicci's 1466 inventory, in NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, pp. 67-79 and vol. 2, pp. 539-539. In the account books, the major pieces of equipment tend to be written with capital letters, and as proper nouns assume a life of their own. The Spirito Santo company owned a simpler *stella* (*ibid.*, 1, p. 170), decorated nevertheless with 24 angels, "big, gilded and beautiful", each 1.2 metres high, 24 seraphim and 48 doves. The *laudese* company of Santa Croce recorded in its 1485-1538 statutes: "vogliamo che lla vigilia della Ascensione di nostra Donna si pongha la stella accesa nel mezo della chiesa e chantisi le lalde in decta sera chom'era di buona usanza antica", cited in B. WILSON, *Music and Merchants: The Laudese Companies of Republican Florence*, Oxford, 1992, p. 231; while the company of San Zanobi in Santa Maria del Fiore, of which Feo Belcari was a member, in the 1430s and 1440s, was required to set up its *stella* in the church on feast days: "dare opera che nel mezo della chiesa cathedrale si cantino le laude consuete dopo la compieta della vigilia et del di di tale solenità, dinanzi al leggio et alla testa del preducto vescovo et confessore, ad tale acto preparata con lumi et con li angeli pendenti dalla stella, secondo el modo consueto et con li organi et trombetti, come è di anticho costume", 1508 Statutes, cited in WILSON, p. 242.

ond *stella* called the *stella nuova*, “that s[at] above the *nugola* in a structure made of cloth painted with seraphim, and in this structure the *stella* remain[ed] hidden”, and a lot of ropes, so that each part could move independently, with Christ alone ascending into heaven.

Like the Annunciation machinery which Vasari was able to describe in detail, the machinery was all concealed in Heaven, one piece inside another: the *edificio del Cielo*, the *stella nuova*, the *stella* and the *nugola* correspond to Vasari’s “mezza palla tonda”, “*stella di ferro*”, the “*mazzo degli angeli*” and the “*mandorla*”. In unequivocal contrast to Vasari’s description of the San Felice *fiesta* and to Richa’s description of the Santo Spirito *fiesta*,¹⁵ there were no children in harnesses suspended on the ledge inside the *stella nuova*. Instead, painted angels, moulded in leather and painted or gilded, revolved and rotated and created the illusion of living angels as they rotated in a blaze of light. A second celestial location, Paradise, was located over the Mount of Olives, and from it another more modest *nugola* lowered the two Angels to comfort the Apostles.¹⁶ The two earthly locations, the *castello* representing Jerusalem and the *monte* representing the Mount of Olives, were constructed on the *tramezzo*, called the *volte* in the confraternity’s own documents.¹⁷ The Russian bishop, Abraham of Souzdal, our principal eyewitness of the Ascension play, makes scant reference to the appearance of these two locations,¹⁸ but there are references to them from the earliest docu-

¹⁵ G. RICHA, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine*, 10 vols., Florence, 1754-1762, vol. 9, pp. 15-16; NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, p. 167. Vasari speaks of a dozen twelve-year-old live angels on the circle of heaven, but even for the Carmine machinery, which was larger than the San Felice equipment, there is no evidence of live angels or children on the circles of heaven, although it seems possible that children, both male and female, sang in the angelic choir of Heaven, in a niche high above the High Altar. In 1444 the Sant’Agnese company paid for a *cembalo* which had been lost by una “figliuola di Nicholaio Frescobaldi”; the magnate family of the Frescobaldi were the traditional patrons of the High Altar in Santo Spirito and of the Pentecost *fiesta* (see NEWBIGIN, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 114 and 161), and were presumably given special privileges also in the Ascension play.

¹⁶ Inventory, Section 9.

¹⁷ Inventory, Section 5.

¹⁸ “A stone castle, wonderfully decorated with towers and ramparts, which represents the Holy City of Jerusalem; opposite the city against the wall rises a hill, one and a half sagenes high, raised up, to which there lead steps two hand-spans high; the hill is draped all around with red cloth”, trans. in NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, p. 60. Given the absence of any evidence of a rood screen in San Felice, it may be that the “stone rood screen” that Abraham saw in the Annunciation play was similarly a fictive *tramezzo* of painted wood.

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ments.¹⁹ They were constructed in wood and painted, and remained on the rood screen from one year to the next. The *castello* represented Jerusalem, both the Upper Room and the city gates, and in the most extraordinary way draws on fourteenth-century iconography of Pentecost, elements that find no successors in fifteenth-century iconography of the Ascension. When the Russian Bishop observed in 1439 that the spectacle he witnessed was “just like the paintings”, he was possibly acknowledging a very important underlying premise: that the iconographical traditions of painting determined what happened on stage, and not *vice versa*.²⁰

The investment in equipment and in structural modifications to the church, however, also imposed a straitjacket on the play. It could be incrementally bigger and better each year, there could be more lighting devices, bigger expenditure on oil and wax, more angels, ostrich and peacock feathers rather than chicken feathers for the angels' wings, but the structure of the *festa* was established by fixed equipment and by the canonical texts and past practices. It could not change, it could only grow and improve. Nevertheless, the Sant'Agnese confraternity strove constantly to innovate. In its grant application to the Commune in 1465,²¹ it stressed the need for constant innovation and improvement, the incremental changes that it made to the equipment each year, increasing the number of lights, the ingenuity of the rotating back-lit flasks filled with saffron-coloured water, adding a mirror-ball and ever more moving lights. But any addition to the illuminations increased the weight of the apparatus, and required stronger ropes, bigger pulley-blocks and winches, and more pig-fat to grease the moving parts.²²

¹⁹ See NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 2, p. 290.

²⁰ For a variety of views on the relationship between painting and drama, see V. GALANTE GARRONE, *L'apparato scenico del dramma sacro in Italia*, Turin, 1935; M. BAXANDALL, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, 1972; L. ZORZI, “Note sul motivo della scena a portico”, appendix to his *Il teatro e la città: Saggi sulla scena italiana*, Turin, 1977, and his “Figurazione pittorica e figurazione teatrale”, in *Storia dell'arte italiana, I, Materiali e problemi, 1, Questioni e metodi*, Turin, 1978, pp. 421-463; and P. VENTRONE, “On the Use of Figurative Art as a Source for the Study of Medieval Spectacles”, in C. DAVIDSON-J. H. STROUPE (eds.), *Iconographic and Comparative Studies in Medieval Drama*, Kalamazoo, 1991, pp. 4-16.

²¹ NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 2, p. 511.

²² The *feste* used large quantities of laundry soap or lye to lubricate ropes, pulleys,

What first-hand knowledge did Vasari have of the two plays? He could have seen any of the performances of the Annunciation mounted in San Felice in Piazza in 1525, 1533 and 1547,²³ but it is also likely that the two events foreshadowed by the Sant'Agnese company's letter of 1554, that is, the end of the Annunciation plays in San Felice and the removal of the machinery from Santa Maria del Carmine, gave him unprecedented access to what was left of the machinery. A second petition to Duke Cosimo in 1564, this time by the Captains of the Parte Guelfa on behalf of the officials of the Sant'Agnese company, confirms that the machinery was indeed removed:

beams, in fact all the moving parts of their equipment; see, for example, NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 2, p. 435: "A dì xi di maggio 1447 per libre sei oncie otto di sapone molle, chonperai per ungiere le ruote di Paradiso, chostò in tutto soldi 11".

²³ VASARI mentions the 1525 performance in the "Vita di Bastiano detto Aristotile da San Gallo" (*op. cit.* [see note 1]), 5, p. 404; this performance is not corroborated by other sources. For the 1533 performance on the occasion of the marriage of Margaret of Austria and Duke Alessandro de' Medici, see the *Raggionamento di NICCOLÒ DI STEFANO FABBRINI dove si tratta delle feste e magnificenze fatte alla duchessa nel mese d'aprile 1533*, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (hereafter BNCf), Nuove Accessioni 982, ff. 161r-173r; and E. GARBERO ZORZI, "Le 'Nozze' medicee del 1533 e le forme teatrali del principato", in *La Fête et l'écriture: Théâtre de cour, cour-théâtre en Espagne et en Italie 1450-1530* [Proceedings of 1985 Conference], Aix-en-Provence, 1987, p. 288. The sole account of the 1547 performance is the diary copied with marginal annotations by (and formerly attributed to) Antonio da San Gallo: "*In San Felice in Piazza si rappresentò la festa dell'Incarnazione del Verbo eterno: Apresso addì 18 d'aprile 1547 nella nostra città si fece la festa di San Felice in Piazza cioè il Misterio figurato della incarnazione del figliuolo unigenito di Dio eterno, veramente cosa di grandissima considerazione tra i miseri mortali. Fu adunque parato la chiesa onoratissimamente e sopra la porta della chiesa, quanto tiene quel quadretto di Piazza, fu coperta d'un rovescio azzuro a guisa d'uno stellato cielo. Intorno a detto quadretto furono certi panni d'arazzi a verzura già di Alessandro de' Medici, duca primo di Firenze, veramente allegri e belli. Arco in faccia di via Maggio dove era la Sibilla che monstra a Ottaviano la vergine: In faccia di via Maggio appariva un Arco con un frontespizio dentrovi la Sibilla che predisce et mostrò a Ottaviano l'umanità del figliuolo di Dio che incarnar si doveva. Tre volte si fece detta representatione Fecesi tre volte la detta festa perché è tanto bel vedere che huomo non si satia di vederla, et il tempo fu in diversi giorni. Così seguì con grandissimo ordine, salvo che incontro a Sua Eccellenza era un tedesco, che si domandava Pitocco, il quale, mediante la fastidiosaggine de' Fiorentini, stando in su la porta avanti che detta festa si cominciassi, per ubbidienza del duca teneva la porta aperta. Disordini che sempre nascono in simil cose Hora il poco timore de' Fiorentini che fecior serra molte persone, talché detto Tedesco abbassò l'alabarda per far tirare indietro detti popoli, così in volersi tirare indietro dette con detta Alabarda, cioè con quel bicchetto dietro, in su la testa a uno et malamente lo ferì. Visto questo, ognuno si tirò da canto, et haveva gran credito dal Duca. Altro non seguì di questo salvo che in fede vera cristiana", BNCf, II.IV.19, fols. 103v-104r (modern numbering); now edited as *Cronaca Fiorentina 1537-1555*, ed. E. COPPI, Florence, 2000, p. 65.*

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Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lord Duke,

The Captains and other officers of the Company of Sant'Agnese of the Carmine, your petitioners, state in their petition that they have in their custody various *ferr*i, ropes and other pieces of machinery that were formerly used for performing the *rappresentazione* of the Ascension of our Lord, and that these are being eaten away by grit and rust, and that since they do not have the means to refurbish the company's chapel they wish to sell some of the *ferr*i and the more ordinary ropes, and with the proceeds contribute to the chapel restoration, and that they wish to do all this with Your Excellency's good will. They state furthermore that the *ferr*i and other pieces of machinery that were formerly used for the *festa* in San Felice in Piazza are in a room in the Carmine without proper storage, which floods when the river rises, and they are deteriorating, and if these were refurbished, because they are more modern, they could be used for the Carmine *festa* whenever it pleased Your Excellency that it should be done.

Having sent the Assistant Officer of Works, as commissioned by Your Excellent Lordship, to inspect everything, we are informed that the *ferr*i and pieces of equipment, both those that were used in the Carmine *festa* and those of San Felice, are in very bad condition, and that he has weighed the *ferr*i of the Carmine, which come to 1500 lbs, and valued it at 2 *scudi* per 100 lbs, making 30 *scudi*, and a heavy rope and other rope, 20 *scudi*, making 50 *scudi* in all, and that the equipment from San Felice in Piazza, being largely buried by the flood, could not be assessed. If Your Excellency pleases, the petitioners could be given permission to sell the Carmine equipment that they have in their control in order to refurbish the chapel, which will be an act of piety, and given care and custody of the other equipment, to clean off the mud and gather it together and register it in a book so that if it were necessary it could be found.

Florence, 12 January 1563/4
Your Most Illustrious Excellency's
Most humble servants
The Captains of the Parte [Guelfa]

Reply: Do as above
Lel[io] T[orelli], 18 January 1563/4²⁴

In the almost ten years that had elapsed since the first petition, the changes foreshadowed had in fact happened. The church of

²⁴ See Document 3.

San Felice passed from the Camaldolese monks to the Dominican nuns of St. Peter Martyr by a papal bull of 8 November 1553; the nuns, whose former convent was demolished to make way for Cosimo's new fortifications, began restructuring in April-May 1553, but did not take possession of the church until 12 August 1557, a month before the devastating flood of 13 September the same year.²⁵ According to expenses recorded in the Sant'Agnese account books,²⁶ the Annunciation machinery had been removed from San Felice and stored in a room off the cloister of the Carmine which the Sant'Agnese company refers to as the "arsenal",²⁷ but the floor had collapsed, and the equipment was now under water.²⁸ In accordance with the undertaking given in their petition, the Sant'Agnese company hired a *muratore* and other labourers to haul the Ascension equipment out, and then set about dismantling it, separating the metal parts from the wooden parts, and carting everything round to their own rooms on the other side of the church. At the same time, they were preparing their own equipment for sale, so that by 14 March the Annunciation equipment was safely stored, and on 29 March 1564 the Ascension equipment was sold, 1575 lbs of ironmongery which realized £ 173/5/-, to be put towards the redecoration of their chapel.

Vasari's name does not appear in any of the Sant'Agnese documents, but he was not far removed from any of the decisions that were being made at this time, and once the confraternity had sorted

²⁵ See L. MEONI, *San Felice in Piazza a Firenze*, Florence, 1993, pp. 115-117; VASARI, *op. cit.* (see note 1), 3, p. 189, mentions the departure of the monks (*Vita di Brunelleschi*).

²⁶ See Document 4.

²⁷ This is not simply an "arsenal" from the time when Cosimo garrisoned his Spanish troops in various church institutions, but rather a "junk room", as defined in S. BATTAGLIA, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, 21 vols., Turin, 1961-2004, s.v. *arsenale*, § 4. "raccolta, ammasso spesso disordinato di oggetti diversi; luogo ove sono conservati", When the equipment was removed in 1497, payment was made to workmen "per rasetare la Chonpagnia e l'arazanale e legniami e per mettere un chorente nel tetto de l'arzano" (NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 2, p. 656). I cannot find details of military use of the Carmine in the sixteenth century, but the Carmelites themselves were despatched from the Carmine to rooms in Santo Spirito, "le stanze terrene nel primo ingresso di detto convento, le quali danno alli soldati quando occorre", when the nuns of San Frediano were evacuated to the Carmine after the 1557 flood; see GIOVANNINI-VITTOLO, *op. cit.* (see note 10), p. 106, citing ASF, Conventi Soppressi dal Governo Francese 113, vol. 19, fol. 26v.

²⁸ See Document 4, expense for 21 February 1563/4.

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through both sets of equipment, not parting with any of the Ascension equipment until all the Annunciation equipment had been cleaned and, we must assume, catalogued as had been proposed by the Captains of the Parte Guelfa,²⁹ he would have had the opportunity to inspect and interpret each piece. At this very point, a new opportunity to use the machinery emerged.

On 21 March 1564, as Vasari was attempting to finalise the second edition of his *Vite*, news of the marriage of Cosimo's son Francesco to Giovanna of Austria was published.³⁰ Cosimo appointed Vasari and Vincenzo Borghini, the genial polymath prior of the Spedale degli Innocenti, to oversee the celebrations,³¹ and gave them Giovanni Caccini, his *provveditore* in Pisa, as their *provveditore* for the *feste*.³² Surviving correspondence among these three close collaborators reveals the extent of Vasari's involvement with the "festa di San Felice", the performance of the Annunciation play in Santo Spirito, that would close the celebrations on 10 March 1565/66.³³ Borghini

²⁹ There are no marks on the 1466 inventory that suggest that it was used to mark off items of equipment; nor does any of its terminology reappear in Vasari's account. It seems that he had to invent names for the different parts that he saw.

³⁰ *Diario fiorentino* di AGOSTINO LAPINI, ed. G. O. CORAZZINI, Florence, 1900, pp. 142-143. For the chronology of planning, see the opening pages of R. A. SCORZA, "Vincenzo Borghini and *Invenzione*: The Florentine Apparato of 1565", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 44, 1981, pp. 57-71.

³¹ Vasari notes in his *Ricordanze*: "Ricordo come lo Illustrissimo Duca sotto di 20 di gennaio [1564/5] ordinò che si dovessi far l'apparato per le nozze di don Francesco principe di Fiorenza et Siena, che ebbi di tutti disegni et architetture et altre cose che si appartenevano l'ordine il carico di condurle col Reverendo Don Vincenzo Borghini spedalingho degli Innocenti che fe' l'inventione delle storie et così io feci condurre et finire le scale principali del palazzo et si aveva fatto di scarpello et muratura tutta l'opera del Bandinello che mancava nella Scala grande et così vi si fecie tutte le piazze delle città di Pistoia, Volterra, Fiesole, Il Borgo, Monte Pulciano, Cortona, Prato: et si fecie tutto il cortile del Palazzo lavorare le colonne di fogliami et figure di stuchi et atorno tutte le terre di Germania et dello Imperio con tutte le imprese del Duca Cosimo", *Il libro delle ricordanze di Giorgio Vasari*, ed. A. DEL VITA, Arezzo, 1937, p. 92. For a recent bibliography on Borghini, see *Vincenzo Borghini: Filologia e invenzione nella Firenze di Cosimo I*, exh. cat. (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, 21 marzo-20 aprile 2002), G. BELLONI-R. DRUSI (eds.); cur. A. CALCAGNI ABRAMI-P. SCAPECCHI, Florence, 2002.

³² Caccini was still in Pisa until late April. Vasari wrote to him on 14, 20 and 24 April 1565; see K. and H. W. FREY, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasari*, 3 vols., Munich, 1923-1940, vol. 3, *Neue Briefe*, pp. 101-105, letters LVI-LVIII, informing him at last that Cosimo and Francesco had at last approved his appointment as "provveditore generale della festa" (pp. 104-105).

³³ On the 1566 Annunciation, see A. M. NAGLER, *Theatre Festivals of the Medici, 1539-1637*, New Haven-London, 1965, pp. 84-85; F. DECROISSETTE, "Fêtes religieuses, fêtes

began assembling material in a *taccuino*, and on 5 April 1565 he submitted a detailed proposal to Cosimo for a program of triumphal arches and decorations and inscriptions to greet the princess and to honour the Medici and the city.³⁴ There was no rush, he said, for the extra *feste*, and he promised to deal with them at a later date.

On 14 June, after a shaky start that caused Borghini to urge Vasari to make Caccini take a tougher line with contractors,³⁵ Caccini and Vasari had a meeting with Francesco³⁶ to establish a broad program of popular entertainments that would run parallel to the dynastic display, and Caccini wrote the next day to Borghini, who had been unwell, to tell him what had been discussed:

Yesterday morning Messer Giorgio and I had a meeting with the prince and we had made a written note of what we have to decide to do, namely about the *festaiuoli* of Santo Spirito and whether he wanted to do all three *feste*

about the *baldachino* and whether he wanted to do it and the young men to carry it

about the men to organize the *armeggiatori* and putting someone in charge of each *potenza* as is the custom

deciding whether to send women to meet the princess, and for the ones he wanted to send, not giving their husbands any other expenses

about appointing people to be in charge of the *calcio*, and I had brought a list with most of the young men of Florence

deciding about getting the parts learnt for the comedy, and ordering the music for the *intermezzi*, and Messer Giorgio said that we should send them to be learnt somewhere else, in Siena or San Miniato or some such place, and he replied that he didn't want to send them elsewhere because the Tuscan spoken outside Florence is worse than our own

about organising for all the magistrates [guild officials?] to be responsible for so many yards of decoration each, and where we had discussed,

princières au XVI^e siècle: les Médicis et la fête de l'Annonciation à Florence", in M. BALLESTERO *et al.* (eds.), *Culture et Religion en Espagne et en Italie aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles*, Abbeville, 1980, pp. 11-41.

³⁴ The *taccuino* is BNCF, II.X.100; Borghini's letter is in *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura scritte da' più celebri personaggi dei secoli XV, XVI, e XVII*, ed. G. BOTTARI, cont. S. TICOZZI, 1754-1768; rpt. Milan, 1822-25, 1, pp. 125-204.

³⁵ See Document 5.

³⁶ Throughout this period, Cosimo is referred to as S[ua] Eccellenza I[llustrissima]; Francesco, now aged twenty-five, as "il Principe". Final decisions came from the Duke, but much of the day to day decisionmaking was in consultation with Francesco.

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and we made him a note of all the magistrates and how much we reckoned for each one

about the *potenze* that are building their stages, and we had made him a note of their names and where they were located

about whether he thought that to maintain clear thoroughfare, some of the *potenze* should build their stages where there is a piazza or a widening in the street, and I made a note of all the places where they can build

about beginning early to get a list of houses so as to be able to lodge all those who come with the princess, as well as other foreigners who might come.

His Most Illustrious Excellency took all these aforementioned notes and lists and said that he would make a decision and went off to dinner at the Pitti Palace.³⁷

While the official *apparato* was centrally controlled and funded by Duke Cosimo, financial and organizational responsibility for the remains of the old popular *feste* was to be devolved to the traditional festive groups, ordered into being by command of Prince Francesco. Soon afterwards, Vincenzo Borghini minuted in the *taccuino* which he started keeping for the *apparato* a statement concerning what needed to be done in relation to the Annunciation *festa*, the only one of the three *feste* that was to proceed:

As far as the *festa di San Felice* is concerned, it seems that the first thing to do is to nominate the *festaiuoli* to the prince, and find out beforehand how it is done and what the usual customs are. As I seem to remember, there are usually two kinds: the *festaiuoli* for inside and the ones for outside, or for Heaven and for Earth as they are called, and I think that this time I would create four or six more than usual for each part, because there are many things that have to be renewed and they have to get the whole business going again when it has fallen completely into disuse; and because the church is much bigger and has a different shape from the ones where these *feste* used to be done.³⁸

³⁷ See Document 6.

³⁸ See Document 7. The note is undated. While its position at the beginning of the *quaderno* (BNCF, II.X.100, fols. 8v-10r) suggests a date before April, the fact that a decision has already been made to do only the Annunciation suggests a date after June. There are no corrections in the text, and it seems less a draft than a copy of part of a letter. These pages of the *taccuino* were published by F. PALERMO, in *I manoscritti palatini di Firenze ordinati ed esposti*, Florence, 1860, vol. 2, pp. 457-459; also in M. FABBRI-E. GARBERO ZORZI-A. M. PETRIOLI TOFANI (eds.), *Il luogo teatrale a Firenze*, exh. cat. (Florence, May 31-Oct. 31, 1975), Milan, 1975, *scheda* 1.39, pp. 68-69 (E. GARBERO ZORZI); see also NEWBIGIN,

It would also be good to get the Companies of the Orciuolo and Sant'Agnese going again, and, if possible, the Pippione, and they could be entrusted to Luigi Gianfigliazi who is one of the captains of Sant'Agnese. He could also take responsibility for the things to do with Heaven, since he has in his possession the equipment that is still in existence for this *festa*. I don't know what condition the affairs of these three companies are in. The Pippione, I think, has all but given up the ghost. But since the location of the *festa* is being changed, I would think that, just for the *festa* on this one occasion, they could join up together just for this purpose and in this one case make just one body, leaving each one as it was for all the rest of their income and their offices and their meeting places, at other times and apart from these feste. But as soon as we know exactly how they stand, and in what state they are today, we will easily be able to decide what is proper in this respect, and what can be done, and for my part I think that of these three only the Agnese company is still in existence and functioning.

As far as the *festa* is concerned, seeing that we are moving it, and since the time and the way of doing it are so different, we could think of giving the thing to two or three people. One of them could be Messer Francesco Cortecchia³⁹ to consider the style of singing and also the matter of those Prophets and Sibyls who used to wear the audience down and they removed much grace from the beauty of the rest, so that perhaps they could be tempered in some way, and improved and made more refined with some worthwhile innovation suitable to the refinement of these times. As for Paradise and the *mazzo* ('nosegay of Angels'), these cannot be improved on, or not much, for they are what constitutes all the beauty of the *festa*. And for this purpose, perhaps Giovanni Bizzeri⁴⁰ would be good, as he has much experience of comedies, and good taste in the modern ones, and perhaps there are other people that I don't know.

But the officer of works must take measures before this commission is made public to establish clearly all the work that he needs done, and all the

Feste, vol. 1, pp. 214-215 (trans.) and vol. 2, pp. 279-280 (text). Lorenzoni believed that it was from Borghini to Caccini; see *Carteggio artistico di D. Vinc. Borghini*, ed. A. LORENZONI, Florence, 1912, Letter XV, p. 29. P. GINORI CONTI, though citing Lorenzoni, believed it to be from Borghini to Cini; see *L'apparato per le nozze di Francesco de' Medici e di Giovanni d'Austria nelle narrazioni del tempo e da lettere inedite di Vincenzio Borghini e di Giorgio Vasari illustrato con disegni originali*, Florence, 1936, p. 97.

³⁹ Chapel-master to the Medici court, Francesco Cortecchia also provided the secular music for the third, fourth and last *intermezzi* of the comedy, Francesco D'Ambra's *La cofanaria*, performed at Carnival. The remainder were performed by Alessandro Striggio.

⁴⁰ Nothing further is known of Giovanni Bizzeri (or Gizzeri).

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men and the timber and the other materials, because as soon as the official announcement is made the carpenters and the others will make a lot of trouble, and for this *festa* the seating [*palchi*] in the church and the decorations outside take tons of wood, and therefore I would like to have firm estimates and requisitions and supply of everything that is needed.

As for the timber for the seating, I know that there cannot be any shortage because there are some wholesale timber merchants that have plenty, and at the worst they will take responsibility for building the seating, and then they will sell the seats for a price; but in all this, the best way is to make sure beforehand of everything. Remember too for these seats that have to be built in the church, that it would be necessary to make them all the same height and shape and dimension, to avoid the infinite confusion and disorder that tend to arise. And all this is to be thought through and decided in advance, so that the places are assigned in good order, for the court, the magistrates, the *festaiuoli* and so on.

It is worth considering this statement in all its parts, and the extent to which the writer is in touch with the issues. The *Orciuolo* company was the company of Santa Maria delle Laudi e della Santissima Annunciazione, called “the Jug”, in reference to the vase that is a standard iconographical element of the Annunciation, which met in San Felice in Piazza. In the absence of any archive for the San Felice confraternity, it is not possible to say what had become of it after 1554. The Sant’Agnese company in the Carmine continued to function, but had difficulty meeting its testamentary obligations as well as the basic obligations of its statutes in relation to care of the sick, burial of the dead, dowries for poor but honest virgins. The company of the Spirito Santo, called the *Piccione* or *Pippione*, although it never again staged the Pentecost *festa* after the fire of 1471, continued to be responsible for its small women’s refuge. The *festaiuoli* and funding, however, did not come from the two functioning confraternities, and there is no hint in their respective account books that the volunteers came from what was left of the confraternal membership. Popular enthusiasm for *feste* in general has shifted from the confraternities, which have sparse artisan membership by this period, to the *potenze*, the plebeian festive kingdoms that became part of Cosimo’s festive machine.⁴¹ The writer is, moreover, fully aware that nostalgia

⁴¹ On the *potenze*, see M. PLAISANCE, “La politique culturelle de Cosme I^{er} et les fêtes

and contemporary taste are on a collision course, and takes steps to shorten the preliminary matter of prophets and to focus on the spectacle of Heaven and the machinery.

By 17 June 1565 work was already under way in Santo Spirito,⁴² and Vasari reported to Borghini:

In Santo Spirito they are working on the *fiesta*, and for now the Prince wants this to suffice. This morning you should have given him the list of the *festaiuoli* for the football and various other things that will explain everything to him.⁴³

Things must have moved slowly, for on 20 September Borghini wrote to Caccini, with thinly veiled impatience at tension that might emerge between the people responsible for the major engineering works of erecting the *edificio* of Heaven in the cupola of Santo Spirito, and the *festaiuoli* – not yet officially appointed – who would be responsible for everything else, and seem already to have indicated that they did not like the proposed colour and decoration scheme:

It seems the time now to remind the Prince to appoint the *festaiuoli* for the Annunciation, and then leave all the final embellishments to them, because it's enough that the *Cielo* is up, and besides this some painting might be done that the *festaiuoli* then didn't like; and I know what I'm talking about and the minds at work here.⁴⁴

annuelles à Florence de 1541 à 1550", in A. ROCHON (ed.), *Les fêtes de la Renaissance*, vol. 3, Paris, 1975, pp. 133-152; and D. ROSENTHAL, "Genealogy of Empires: Ritual Politics and State Building in Early Modern Florence", *I Tatti Studies*, 8, 1999, pp. 197-234.

⁴² According to Agostino Lapini, it had started on 8 June: "A' di 8 di detto giugno si cominciò a fabbricare e lavorare il cielo in S. Spirito qui di Firenze, per farvi la festa dell'Annunziata della Madonna, alla venuta et all'arrivo della serenissima Giovanna sposa dell'illustrissimo Principe di Firenze", LAPINI, *op. cit.* (see note 30), p. 144.

⁴³ "Et perché per questa volta vo' far fine, dirò solo, che in Santo Spirito si lavora alla festa, che per ora il Principe vole che basti questo. Stamani gli aviate dato la lista de' festaioli del calcio et dell'altre cose, che a tutto darà recapito", ASF, Carteggio degli Artisti, II, I, 29, Giorgio Vasari in Florence to Don Vincenzo Borghini in Poppiano, 17 June 1565. Cf. FREY, *op. cit.* (see note 32), II, 188, Letter DII; Frey's gloss on "festaioli del Calcio" makes it clear that he understands them to be the people putting on the play: "So heiss die Kompagnie, die sich mit der Aufführung des geistlichen Schauspieles befasste", p. 190, n. 21. The reading, however, is unequivocal. The people in charge of the *calcio in livrea* are elsewhere called *maestri* rather than *festaiuoli*, even though the *festaiuoli* in charge of the plays had long been referred to as *maestri*; on the *calcio in livrea*, see GIOVANNI DE' BARDI, *Discorso sopra il giuoco del calcio fiorentino del Puro Accademico Alterato*, Florence, 1580.

⁴⁴ "Pare anche tempo al presente di ricordare al Principe i festaiuoli di S. Felice et poi

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The scale of the works was vast: the kind of machinery that the Sant'Agnese company had constructed over fifty years had to be reconstructed in six months, and vast sums of money were allocated to do it. A summary of the payments (see Table 1), pieced together from Frey's extracts from Caccini's lost *Quaderno di spese* and the summary accounts for the entire *apparato*, is of little help in understanding the chronology of the works but does show their scale.⁴⁵ Over 1300 man-days – an average of nine men a day for a six-day week for the six months from September to February – were spent on the *apparato* in Santo Spirito. Of these half were for carpentry work by Bastiano di Simone, called *Confetto*, and his team, on the stage and seating, which required, as had been foreshadowed, vast amounts of timber. The structural work to install and subsequently remove the *cielo* and make good Brunelleschi's dome, took 154 man-days of master stonemasons and a further 196 man-days of general labourers. A team of half a dozen painters under Marco da Faenza worked on the decoration of the *cielo* for five weeks between January and March, for a total of 215 hours,⁴⁶ while others worked on regilding the *mandorla* with 50 pounds of *orpello*, gold and silver, resculpting the three orders of angels on the *stella*, and doing *papier-mâché* and *gesso* mouldings and final decoration for the *castelli*

lasciar fare a loro gli ornamenti, ché ben basta che si è fermo il cielo. Oltre che si potrebbe far qualcosa di pittura che non piacesse poi a' festaiuoli; et io so quel che io mi dico et che cervelli ci sono. Ditelo a messer Giorgio", letter from Vincenzo Borghini to Giovanni Caccini, *provveditore generale della festa*, dated 20 September 1565, cited in GINORI CONTI, *op. cit.* (see note 38), p. 97. Since the Annunciation *festa* was normally referred to as the "festa di San Felice", I take the words "i festaiuoli di S. Felice" to mean 'the people putting on the Annunciation *festa*' rather than any remnant of the Confraternity that was formerly responsible for putting it on. An undated "to do" list in Borghini's hand, in the *taccuino* of BNCF, MS Magliabechiano VIII.1393, fol. 271r, includes the following: "A Santo Spirito fermo il cielo: non farei ornamenti di sotto che gli lascerei a' festaiuoli"; I take *fermo* to mean 'fixed in position' rather than 'work has stopped on'.

⁴⁵ Some time before 1940, H-W. Frey was able to consult CACCINI's *Giornale [...] per chonto di feste dell'anno 1565*, ASF, Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica 1497, and published a partial transcription in *op. cit.* (see note 32), pp. 230-349; the first of its two *fascicoli* of 32 folios was noted missing in 1987 and I have been unable to check the details. It has been possible, however, to reconstruct other expenses for the *festa* in Santo Spirito through ASF, Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica 772.

⁴⁶ Marco Marchetti da Faenza had first collaborated with Vasari in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1555; see A. CECCHI, "Pratica, fierezza e terribilità nelle grottesche di Marco da Faenza in Palazzo Vecchio a Firenze", *Paragone*, 327, 1977, pp. 24-54, and 329, pp. 6-26.

Table 1. Summary of expenses

Category	Craftsman	Date of payment	Materials	Days of labour	Other	Cost	Dep. Gen. PA 772
Gilding	Giovanni d'Agnolo <i>orefice</i>	27 Oct				fi. 5.5.9	99v
Pots and pans	Giovacchino <i>stovigliato</i>	23 Nov	pots and cauldron			fi. -1.6	99v
Painting	Marco da Faenza and other <i>pittori</i>	12 Jan		35 1/2		fi. 10.10.6	99v
Cartage	Matteo di Meo		4 loads		wood and coal	fi. 2.5.9	99v
Painting	Marco da Faenza and other <i>dipintori</i>	18 Jan		[38 1/2]		fi. 11.1.9	99v
Painting	Marco da Faenza and other <i>pittori</i>	26 Jan		40		fi. 11.12.11	99v
Rope	Alexandrini & Co, <i>lanciai</i>	1 Feb	50 lbs fine hemp		to make a rope	fi. 5	99v
Painting	Marco da Faenza and other <i>dipintori</i>	1 Feb		31		fi. 9.6.5	99v
Gilding	Michelagnolo Granacci & Co, <i>mercatai</i>	1 Feb	4 lbs <i>orpello</i> (gold foil for gilding)			fi. 1.1.9	99v
Painting	Marco da Faenza and other <i>pittori</i>	9 Feb		42		fi. 11.3.9	99v
Gilding	Michelagnolo Granacci & Co, <i>mercatai</i>	9 Feb	10 lbs <i>orpello</i>			fi. 2.17.2	100r
Gilding	Girolamo di Domenico, <i>orefice</i> and others	16 Feb			work on gilding the <i>mandorla</i>	fi. 3.3.9	100r
Cartage	Luca di Lorenzo <i>carrettaio</i> and others	16 Feb			work on the <i>festa</i>	fi. -19.6	100r
[Gilding]	Girolamo di Domenico <i>orefice</i> and five others	23 Feb		22	work on painting	fi. 4.15.10	100r
Coal	Veri da Carraia, <i>carbonaio</i>	23 Feb	440 lbs coal			fi. 1.1.3	100r
Rope	Alexandrini & Co, <i>lanciai</i>	9 Mar	110 lbs hemp		to make a rope	fi. 8.18.1	100r

Gilding	Michelagnolo Granacci & Co, <i>merciai</i>	9 Mar	25 lbs <i>orpello</i>			fi. 6.8.7	100r
Painting	Marco da Faenza and other <i>pittori</i>	9 Mar		[28]]	working on <i>Cielo</i>	fi. 8.13.9	100r
Illuminations	Domenico <i>merciai</i>	9 Mar	72 mirror fragments			fi.-.16.-	100r
Glue	Antonio <i>cartolaio</i>	9 Mar	56 lbs leather scraps			fi. -.8.-	100r
Plaster	Giovanni <i>macinatore</i>	16 Mar	5 lbs plaster			fi. -.2.6	100r
Plastering	Giovanni <i>macinatore</i>	16 Mar		8	working on <i>Cielo</i>	fi. 1.-.10	100r
Labouring	Cosimo <i>manovale</i>	23 Mar		6		fi. -.14.7	100r
Nails	Agnolo da Castello <i>lanciaio</i>	27 Mar	nails and bolts			fi. 1.-.8	138vr
Pots and pans	Giovacchino <i>stovigliaio</i>	30 Mar	pots and containers			fi. 4.19.2	138v
Stationery	Bartolomeo Fontana <i>cartolaio</i>	13 Apr	3 large and 2 very large <i>quaderni</i>			fi. -.14.3	138v
Gilding	Taddeo di Francesco <i>battiloro</i>	27 Apr	1025 pieces of gold and 600 pieces of silver		for gilding the <i>mandorla</i> and other things	fi. 7	138v; Frey, n. 21, 10 Apr
Illuminations	Cammillo <i>bicchierato</i>	11 May	1400 beakers		for Heaven	fi. 6	138v
<i>Ferri</i>	Giovanni di Filippo <i>fabbro</i>	25 Jun	393 lbs 9 oz of <i>ferro lavorato</i> and other work			fi. 18.4.8	138v
<i>Ferri</i>	Danese di Matteo, <i>fabbro</i>	26 Jun	670 lbs 10 oz <i>ferro lavorato</i> and other services		for <i>Cielo</i>	fi. 28.7.7	138v
<i>Ferri</i>	Danese di Matteo	26 Jun	ironmongery			fi. 1.17.-	138v
<i>Stella</i>	Lorenzo Marignolli <i>scultore</i>	26 Jun	cherubim, seraphim and thrones	56 (38 at L. 3 per day, and 18 at L.2 per day), 19 Feb-21 Mar	for <i>Cielo</i>	fi. 21.12.10	138v; Frey, no. 34,

<i>Category</i>	<i>Craftsman</i>	<i>Date of payment</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Days of labour</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Dep. Gen. PA 772</i>
Masons	Francesco di Graziadio, master builder	26 Jun		stonemasons: 79; laborers: 29	for <i>Cielo</i>	fi. 17.16.5	138v
Hauling	?	8 Jul			making the platforms in paradise; making the stages for the Virgin and the prophets, putting up scaffolding and taking everything down and putting it away	fi. 41.3.2	139r; Frey, p. 231, n. 25
?	Francesco del Fede	21 Jul				fi. -9.5	139r
Rope	Antonio di Bernaba <i>lanciaio</i>	8 Aug	61 lbs rope and hemp			fi. 6.-3	139r
Masons	Francesco di Graziadio masterbuilder	8 Aug		stonemasons 75 labourers 167 1/2		fi. 41.3.2	139r
Painting	Domenico di Santi <i>imbiancatore</i>	13 Sep			priming surfaces to be painted in the Virgin's chamber and in the stage and elsewhere	fi. 1.18.1	139r; Frey, p. 233, n. 48
<i>Ferri</i>	Filippo di Mariotto <i>fabbro</i>	20 Sep	26 lbs 7 oz ironmongery			fi. 1.16.-	139r

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and chamber of the Virgin. A separate commission was given to the painter Pier Francesco, for a representation of the Twelve Winds and other paintings in the Heaven of the vault of Santo Spirito.⁴⁷ New illuminations were purchased: 1400 beakers for the lamps of heaven, 72 mirror fragments, 286 brass lamps. Ironmongery as usual was a significant item: Danese di Matteo provided *ferri* for Heaven weighing 670 lbs 10 oz, while he and two other blacksmiths provided all the necessary ironmongery to the carpenters, including 703 lbs of nails, and 31,800 bolts. Three big ropes were made from newly purchased hemp, weighing in all 221 lbs. The first payments are dated 27 October 1565; the last are finalised in April 1568, and the total under the heading of *Spese per fare il Cielo e altro in Santo Spirito* is a paltry 1,010 florins, in a total of 23,333 florins, and it is clear that some of the accounts with artists and artisans were settled only after considerable negotiation.

Absent altogether from these accounts are charges for oil and wax for the illuminations, costumes, materials, singers, actors and musicians. Once the *apparato* had been prepared, the performance was in the care and at the expense of the *festaiuoli*, who were eventually appointed. Agostino Lapini, a chaplain in the Duomo, provides their names:

Piero di Agostino Dini, Simone Corsi, Alessandro Capponi, and Alessandro de' Medici, who later became archbishop of Florence, and each of them had his arms painted under the small cupola of Santo Spirito where they will remain forever.⁴⁸

A new text was prepared that addressed the issues that Borghini had raised: the music and “the matter of those Prophets and Sibyls who used to wear the audience down” and who “removed much grace from the beauty of the rest”. There were already arguing pro-

⁴⁷ This may well have been the commission that risked displeasing the yet-to-be-appointed *festaiuoli*. The payments were finally made after he presented his detailed account in November 1566.

⁴⁸ See Document 8, and also FRANCESCO SETTIMANNI, *Memorie fiorentine 1532-1737*, ASF, Manoscritti 128 [1555-1574], fol. 362r-v. Domenico Mellini states that the *fiesta* was done “con cura e spesa di quattro principali e molto ingegnosi gentiluomini della città” (Document 9). There is no trace, however, of the *fiesta* in the Sant'Agnese or Spirito Santo account books for this period.

phets in the Annunciation witnessed by Abraham of Souzdal in 1439, but the earliest text of prophets and sibyls is the *Festa della Purificazione*, which became a regular staple of the boys' confraternity of the Purification in San Marco from 1449.⁴⁹ In their play, prophets and sibyls are called forth from Limbo (in the form of a whale or leviathan) to prophesy the coming of the Messiah, after which Mary takes Christ to the Temple where he is recognised by Simeon as the Messiah. Feo Belcari's *Rappresentazione della Nostra Donna Vergine Maria quando fu annunziata dall'Angelo Gabriello*, which dates to about 1464, is measured in its presentation of three prophets and eight sibyls, constraining them to eight stanzas and expanding instead the *Dispute of the Four Daughters of God*, taken from the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.⁵⁰ The Annunciation proper occupies only 56 lines in the total of 384 lines in the play. Yet another version of the Annunciation *fiesta*⁵¹ circulated in print from the 1490s onward, and is reprinted in the modern anthologies; it was illustrated with a woodcut that quite exceptionally appears to show the *fiesta di San Felice*, so that we must accept that the text does in fact relate to a performance at some stage in the history of the *fiesta*. The prophecies, which are closely related to those which had appeared earlier in The Purification play, are not so much enigmatic as garbled.⁵² The text is quite unworthy of the fame it has enjoyed, so that Borghini was more than right to discard it.

⁴⁹ In N. NEWBIGIN (ed.), *Nuovo Corpus di sacre rappresentazioni fiorentine del Quattrocento*, Bologna, 1983, pp. 79-106; and EAD., "The Word Made Flesh: The 'Rappresentazioni' of Mysteries and Miracles in Fifteenth-Century Florence", in T. VERDON-J. HENDERSON (eds.), *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, Syracuse NY, 1990, pp. 361-375: 364-368.

⁵⁰ F. BELCARI, *La rappresentazione quando la nostra donna vergine Maria fu annunziata dall'Angelo Gabriello*, in NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 2, pp. 239-253.

⁵¹ Attributed to BELCARI in A. D'ANCONA (ed.), *Sacre Rappresentazioni dei Secoli XIV, XV e XVI*, 3 vols., Florence, 1872, 1, pp. 167-181. D'Ancona includes Belcari's sonnet and lines 112 *did.*-384 of Belcari's Annunciation as an alternative redaction of the same text (1, pp. 181-189). The later version, rather than Belcari's text, is republished in most modern anthologies.

⁵² Over two-thirds of the play (330 of approximately 450 lines) belong to the twenty-one prophets and ten sibyls, each summoned by the Angel to speak a stanza. Two prophets alternate with one sibyl, but the sibyls include *Sofonia sibilla*, *Osea sibilla* and *Michea sibilla*, that is to say, the Old Testament prophets Zephaniah, Hosea and Michea have become female sibyls. The place of the final sibyl is taken by the Zacheriah (father of the Baptist), with the suggestion that he is a female penitent.

The new *Rappresentazione dell'Annunziata della Gloriosa Vergine*,⁵³ slimmed to 318 lines, does indeed temper and improve the Prophets and Sibyls. The fifteen prophets are marshalled into chronological order, along with two Sibyls. The *Angelo che annunzia* summons each by name from their *castello* to sing an *ottava* of prophecy, which accounts for two-thirds of the play.⁵⁴ As the Virgin prays in her *camera*,⁵⁵ Heaven opens, either with painted cloth or a reconstruction of the old rumbling doors that had been used in San Felice, “e Dio Padre dice a Gabriello che vadia annunziare la Vergine”. The Angels – traditionally two young boys – sing a vernacular *laude* based on Psalm 148, and the Angel Gabriel (an adult) sings his reply in praise of Justice and Mercy, with possible echoes of Belcari’s daughters of God. The words and music, long and loud, cannot reveal what else was happening: the rumbling and clanking of the winches, the extraordinary illuminations of heaven, the *stella* and the *mandorla* as they descend. Timing was everything: the end of the music had to coincide with the arrival of the *mandorla* on the stage, so that Gabriel could move straight to the angelic salutation, spoken rather than sung.⁵⁶ After the annunciation, Gabriel and the other two angels return to heaven singing Psalm 97, “Nuovo canto al Signor tutti hor cantiamo” in a metrical vernacular setting, over and over until they have returned to heaven.⁵⁷

⁵³ *La rappresentazione dell'Annunziata della Gloriosa Vergine, recitata in Firenze il dì x di Marzo 1565 nella Chiesa di Santo Spirito*, Florence, 1565/[6]; copy examined: BNCF, E.6.7.56 I⁸.

⁵⁴ The Prophets (and their given sources) are Noah (Ge 23), Abraham (Ge 23), Jacob (Ge 28), Moses (Ex 4), David (Ps 18), Isaiah (Is 45), Jeremiah (Je 29), Baruch (Ba 23), Ezechiel (Ez 44), Habbacuc (Hab 3), Haggueus (Hag 2), Zaccherias (Zac 9), Malachi (Ma 3) and Joshua (“Iosue per tutto”); the prophesy of the Cumean Sibyl is taken from AUGUSTINE, *De Civitate Dei*, X, 27; that of the Tiburtine Sibyl from the *Summa Theologica* of ST ANTONIUS, Lib. IV. Dist. 8. Cap. 1.

⁵⁵ Payments for construction of the *castello* and *camera* are included in CACCINI’s *Giornale*: “a Bastiano di Confetto per servitio del cielo et palcho et camera et castelli della Madonna et Profeti”, FREY, *op. cit.* (see note 32), 3, p. 237, n. 89. The *castello* was a traditional part of the Ascension and Pentecost *feste*, representing both the Upper Room and the Gate of Jerusalem, and reflecting the iconographical traditions of the fourteenth century; here it seems to be principally the location through which the prophets and sibyls can enter and exit.

⁵⁶ Vasari’s description makes no reference to any mechanism for representing the incarnation through the descent of the Holy Ghost, a dove, a ray of light. In the Pentecost play, as in the modern *Scoppio del carro* performed on Easter Sunday, a plaster dove was propelled by fireworks from heaven to earth along a cord.

⁵⁷ “La qual lauda da gl’Angeli si replica più volte; e così si dà fine alla representazione”.

NERIDA NEWBIGIN

On 8 March 1565/6, almost at the end of what must have been a grueling season of festivities which began with the bride's entry on 16 December 1565⁵⁸ and climaxed in the lavish pagan spectacles of carnival, Don Vincenzo Borghini watched a technical rehearsal for the Annunciation *festa*, which was due to be performed two days later on the second Sunday in Lent. In his easy, affectionate style, he wrote to Vasari the next day:

Yesterday the *festa* went well, but in my opinion it needs the following:

1. More music in Heaven; but I don't know whether wind instruments will be right. Rather, I'd reinforce the keyboards and strings.

2. Heaven should not lurch as it did yesterday evening. But it might have been that they weren't absolutely ready then.

3. I think that the music of the *mazzo* falls short in the sense that because they take longer to come and go than they did before, because everything has grown, they need to have more material on hand, even though yesterday they didn't sing the *Magnificat* right through; and I'm sure that really they'll do it better.

4. Lights, lights, lights! And keep your eye on it, because you couldn't see the *mazzo* at all. And I'm telling you, that however many you have they will still seem too few. And the angel who announces and summons the prophets, he also needs to be seen. And if the *ferro* came down at an angle and made him lean out, so that he could be seen the length of the church, it would be better.

Come by and see me when you can, and God be with you.

9 March

Yours,

Don Vincenzo⁵⁹

Vasari and the new *festaiuoli*, like the traditional owners of the Ascension *festa*, had succumbed to the urge to add more and more to the *stella*, or the *mazzo* as it was now called: it was heavier and slower and clunkier, and carried the eight live angels that Vasari attributed to the original machinery. There is an orchestra in heaven that can scarcely play loudly enough to drown out the machinery and to fill the considerable space of Santo Spirito, and louder and longer music is required to accompany the ascent of the angels.⁶⁰ Nevertheless the

⁵⁸ LAPINI, *op. cit.* (see note 30), p. 148.

⁵⁹ See Document 10.

⁶⁰ Borghini can scarcely have mistaken Psalm 97 for the *Magnificat*, which was, however, part of the printed *Annunciazione* that circulated; see D'ANCONA, *op. cit.* (see note 51), 1, p. 180.

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play went ahead the next evening⁶¹ and along with his record of the *festaiuoli*, Lapini wrote in his diary:

On 10 March 1565[/6], which was the second Sunday in Lent, they did the *fiesta* of the Annunciation of Our Lady in the church of Santo Spirito where it had never been done and they did it there three times, that is, on 10, 14 and 18 March. Duke Cosimo and Prince Francesco and his beloved consort and Cardinal Arnaldo de' Medici came.⁶²

The *festaiuoli* who concealed their family arms in the *cupoletta* were uncharacteristically modest: throughout the final stages of the preparations of the *apparato* Vasari and Borghini had been working closely with two young publicists, Giovambattista Cini and Domenico Mellini, whose task it was to ensure that a written record of the occasion appear almost simultaneously with the ephemeral display. Mellini was probably responsible for the major *Descrizione dell'Apparato fatto in Firenze per le nozze dell'Illustrissimo ed Eccellentissimo Don Francesco de' Medici, Principe di Firenze e di Siena, e della Serenissima Regina Giovanna d'Austria*, which Vasari published almost as his own as an appendix to the new edition of his *Vite*.⁶³

Giovanni Caccini's work as the *provveditore delle feste* continued for the rest of 1566. The enormous expense of the ceremonial arches, the statuary throughout the streets of Florence, tapestries, livery, the comedy, the banquets and so on was met largely from the Ducal purse. Each artist and craftsman put in his claim for payment, an assessor evaluated the claim, and payment was made over or under the claim. The *fiesta* in Santo Spirito is a very small part of the overall expenses. In February, Caccini accounted for expenditure

⁶¹ Borghini had written of the Friday rehearsal as "iersera"; given the abundance of natural light in Santo Spirito, the illuminations would have been more effective in the dark. We know that Galeazzo Maria Sforza saw the Ascension performance of 1459 in the darkness of evening (BNCF, MS Magliabechiano VII.1121, *Terze rime in lode di Cosimo de' Medici e de' Figli, e dell'honoranza fatta l'anno 1458 al figliolo del Duca di Milano et al Papa nella loro venuta a Firenze*, fol. 77v); the confraternity had previously sought exemption from Antoninus's 1446 episcopal constitution which banned plays at night; see Newbigin, *Feste*, 1, pp. 110-111.

⁶² See Document 8.

⁶³ VASARI, *op. cit.* (see note 1), VI, p. 366; the traditional attribution to Cini has been challenged by M. FEO, "Cini, Giovanni Battista", *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 25, Rome, 1981, p. 609, who attributes it to Domenico Mellini.

of 18,400 gold florins, and the sum probably doubled as accounts came in during the next year.⁶⁴

Vasari, in the meantime, must have returned to the task of revising his *Vite*⁶⁵ and, in the process, added the *feste* sections to his lives of Brunelleschi and of *Il Cecca*, incorporating his new expertise in the machinery both of Santa Maria del Carmine, which was probably cannibalised before being scrapped, and of San Felice in Piazza, which was recycled, renewed, and as ever enlarged. Vasari now knew how the machinery worked, he judged rightly that it was part of the city's cultural and artistic heritage and that people would want to know about it, and he needed to attach it to a named artist. His *Vite* do not include *artigiano anonimo*, and it is not within the broad propagandistic aims of the lives to include anonymous masters.

Most of the collective owners of the old Carmine *festa*, which they habitually referred to as “la festa nostra della Scensione”, are not, however, without names. They were for the most part identified, resident in the *gonfalone* of the Green Dragon, that is, in intimate proximity to the Carmine, and present in the tax records of the district that establish their fiscal and social identity. One of these *confratelli* was Filippo, or Pippo, di Baldo, a goldsmith like his more famous contemporary, Filippo (or Pippo) di Ser Brunellesco, to whom Vasari attributes the Annunciation machinery in San Felice.

Pippo di Baldo was born in about 1417. At the time of his aged father's *catasto* return of 1442, he was living in Via Mozza, in the parish of San Frediano and the *gonfalone* of the Green Dragon,⁶⁶ where

⁶⁴ “A Giovanni Caccini fiorini diciotto mila quattrocento di m^a che di tanti era debitore Antonio Mori suo camarlengo, al quaderno di cassa c. 57, posto havere e sono per tanti pagati al detto Antonio in più partiti da di 21 di maggio passato sino alli 23 del presente per spendere secondo l'ordine di detto Giovanni per conto delli appar(a)ti per la venuta di sua altezza fi. 18,400”, ASF, Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica 772, fol. 50v (28 February 1565/6). The total income through this account for 1565 was fi. 689,323, so the budget for the *apparato* was less than 3% of the total. For the Santo Spirito expenses, see Table 1.

⁶⁵ The printer Iacopo Giunti sent Vasari's final draft to Vincenzo Borghini on 9 October 1567 for last minute checking; see *Carteggio artistico inedito di D. Vinc. Borghini*, ed. A. LORENZONI, Florence, 1912, 1 (no more published), pp. 66-67.

⁶⁶ On the social world of the area around the Carmine, see N. ECKSTEIN, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence*, Florence, 1995. For Filippo di Baldo's tax records, see ASF, Catasto 613, fol. 336r (for 1442, in name of Baldo di Lippo, aged 85); Catasto 655, fol. 1206r, portata n. 526 (for 1446, in the name of “Mona Domenica, dona fu di Baldo di Lippo, sarto”); Catasto 692, fol. 510v, por-

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his next-door neighbours included the widowed mother of the painter, Piero del Massaio.⁶⁷ Pippo di Baldo appears in the Sant'Agnese records from 1435, when he would have been eighteen years old; four years later, in January 1438/9, he entered the Arte della Seta.⁶⁸ We find him doing whatever needs to be done: making beards for the apostles,⁶⁹ running errands, taking responsibility for equipment. In 1444, he is part of the production crew, one of the *festaiuoli* under an un-named but picturesquely titled Sant'Abate, or Holy Abbot in charge of the plays, along with four other young men who maintain a lifetime commitment to the *fiesta*: Lapaccino the furrier, Filippo di Simone d'Alberto, called *Il Bizzarrino*, Piero del Massaio the painter, and Antonio da Bacchereto.⁷⁰ Between them, these men shaped and reshaped the play over the century. In 1453, Pippo and Piero del Massaio were appointed syndics and *festaiuoli*, and over the next year they worked together to redesign the *nugola*, the illuminated frame in which Christ was hoisted into heaven, and to enlarge the chamber

tata n. 257 (1451, in the name of Filippo di Baldo, now aged 35 and living with his mother, Domenica); on his involvement with the plays, see NEWBIGIN, *Feste, passim*.

⁶⁷ On Piero del Massaio's involvement with the Ascension plays, see NEWBIGIN, *Feste, passim*; for other documentary sources, and in particular on his work as a cartographer in the workshop of Vespasiano de' Bisticci, see M. LEVI D'ANCONA, *Miniatura e miniatori a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo: documenti per la storia della miniatura*, Florence, 1962, pp. 220-223, the recent facsimile, *Ptolomei Cosmographia*, ed. A. I. FONTANA-S. GENTILE-A. CATTANEO, Florence, 2005.

⁶⁸ ASF, Arte della Seta 8 (Matricole), fol. 72r; he entered on 28 January 1438/9, but paid for the first time only on 10 March 1445/6.

⁶⁹ NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 1, pp. 116-117.

⁷⁰ On Antonio di Giovanni da Bacchereto, see NEWBIGIN, *Feste, passim*; M. VILLORESI, "Note e divagazioni sul canterino Antonio di Giovanni da Bacchereto (1425ca.-1490)", *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 13, 1999, pp. 231-247. Follow-up research on Antonio's *portate* to the Catasto suggest that he was born in about 1421 (ASF, Catasto 129 [Catasto del 1427, Quartiere di Santa Maria Novella, Pieve di Signa], fol. 7r); had moved with his widowed mother to Florence by 1442 (Catasto 613, fol. 603r), had opened a shoemaker's shop by 1451 (Catasto 693, fol. 602r, portata no. 360), which then failed in July 1457: "Antonio mio figliuolo faceva uno botteghino di chalzaiuolo in Porta Rossa, la quale bottega teneva a pigione dallo spedale di Sancta Maria Nuova per pregio di fiorini undici l'anno et del mese di luglio proximo passato el decto Antonio per povertà falie. Fugli vota la bottega da creditorì e lui se n'andò a Siena et così è stata serrata la decta bottega mesi sette. Ha debito con più persone circa fiorini ducento et ha havere da più persone circa fiorini cinquanta", ASF, Catasto 794, fol. 161r-v. I have not been able to find details of his bankruptcy in the records of the Mercanzia, or any further catasto records under his name. His widowed mother, Mona Veronica, now in her 80s, makes her 1480 return on her own (ASF, Catasto 1001, fol. 393r); Antonio was buried in the parish church of San Frediano, still in Piazza del Carmine, in 1490.

above the high altar to accommodate it. Although the confraternity normally paid even its own members for skilled labour and materials, these two forewent payment. Subsequently Pippo and Antonio da Bacchereto were two of the three *massai* designated to look after the equipment when in 1466 another painter, Neri di Bicci, compiled his comprehensive inventory, setting out details “of all the fittings and items that the Company finds this present day in its meeting place and outside its meeting place, and of what the said fittings are for”.⁷¹ In 1469 we find Pippo di Baldo again hard at work on the *nugola*. Item by item, the accounts record his experiments with the fire-tube illuminations, that must have been similar to, if not the very ones recorded in Buonaccorso Ghiberti’s *Zibaldone*.⁷² He experiments, building models, taking his models to a lantern maker to be made up, and finally constructing the working *nugola*, with tin-plated fire tubes. He does not appear in the Sant’Agnese records after 1471.

Such continuity and incremental ‘improvement’ is clearly at odds with the version of the play’s history that Vasari puts forward: that the *nugole* of the Ascension play were the creation of *Il Cecca*, and that the Annunciation machinery was the invention of a single man, Filippo Brunelleschi. The umbrella-spoke dome of heaven that Vasari describes sits comfortably within our vision of Brunelleschi’s umbrella-spoke domes in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo, completed in Brunelleschi’s lifetime, and in Santo Spirito. The artificial illuminations of the dome of heaven complement what we know of Brunelleschi’s genius for bringing light and lightness into his domes. But inspiration and authorship are not the same: Brunelleschi’s dome may well have given line and form to the dome of heaven, but the machinery is in all probability the work of more hands.

Vasari is possibly not the first to have identified Brunelleschi’s characteristic umbrella-spoke dome with the dancing angels of the Annunciation. As Oskar Fischel observed in 1920,⁷³ when Vincenzo

⁷¹ On Neri di Bicci’s role in the confraternity, see C. BARR, “A Renaissance Artist in the Service of a Singing Confraternity”, in M. TETEL-R. G. WITT-R. GOFFEN (eds.), *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Durham, 1989, pp. 105-119 and 216-221.

⁷² A. R. BLUMENTHAL, “A Newly Identified Drawing of Brunelleschi’s Stage Machinery”, *Marsyas*, 13, 1966-1967, pp. 20-31; the drawing is further discussed in the exhibition catalogue, *Il luogo teatrale, op. cit.* (see note 38), *scheda* 1.26, p. 64 (E. GARBERO ZORZI).

⁷³ The possible relationship between this chapel and the Annunciation play was first

Foppa came to decorate the Portinari Chapel in Sant'Eustorgio in Milan between 1462 and 1467, he seems to have drawn not only on Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy for inspiration, but also on the performance of the Annunciation itself. In this chapel, commissioned by Pigello Portinari, the Florentine banker responsible for the Milan branch of the Medici bank and in close contact both with Florence and with Florence's close ally Francesca Sforza, Foppa has represented not only Peter Martyr, the saint to whom the banker was particularly devoted, but also a quintessentially Florentine subject, the Annunciation.⁷⁴ While the figures of the Angel Gabriel and of Mary adorn the wall that faces the opening of the chapel, angels in terracotta high relief, linked by bells of greenery and ribbons, dance in a circle around the opening of an umbrella-spoke dome, decorated with polychrome overlapping feathers that fade from bright to pale as they ascend. In the very years in which the chapel was being decorated, between 1462 and 1468,⁷⁵ the play of the Annunciation in Florence was being transformed.

The machinery of the *Oltrarno* plays is almost organic: it grows with the people who love it and care for it and continually seek new ways to make it amaze its viewers; it does not have a single inventor. It is not impossible that Brunelleschi could have made information about pulleys and ropes and gears available to the confraternities,⁷⁶ but the visual spectacle is very much the work of the visual artists and the craftsmen, including the less distinguished goldsmith

signalled in O. FISCHER, "Eine Florentiner Theateraufführung in der Renaissance", *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 55 (Neue Folge 31), 1920, pp. 11-20, but appears to have been largely overlooked both by art historians and by theatre historians; see, for example, the volume published to mark a major restoration of the chapel: L. MATTIOLI ROSSI (ed.), *Vincenzo Foppa: La Cappella Portinari*, Milan, 1999.

⁷⁴ In 1336, the church had been the scene of a major Magi procession, but there appears to be no recollection of this in the decoration of the fifteenth-century church.

⁷⁵ For the dating of the chapel and its decoration, see M. NATALE, "Gli affreschi: aspetti del contesto culturale e dello stile", in *Vincenzo Foppa, op. cit.* (see note 73), pp. 39-40.

⁷⁶ During the construction of the cathedral, the company of Santa Maria delle Laudi e dello Spirito Santo, detta del Piccione, responsible for the Pentecost *fešta* in Santo Spirito, borrowed timber from the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in 1433, and incurred their wrath by not returning it promptly; the confraternity of San Lorenzo borrowed pulley blocks and rope in 1419 to do their *fešta* (Florence, Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, II 1 74, fol. 6v, Deliberazioni, 6 August 1418). These documents are published on the website, *Gli anni della Cupola* (<http://www.operaduomo.firenze.it>).

Filippo, or Pippo, di Baldo, who were members of the confraternity and who lived in the Gonfalone of the Dragon.

The 1566 Annunciation certainly remained in the collective memory of Francesco's court. In November 1573, Francesco's representative in the entourage of Juan of Austria, Enea Vaini, wrote to him from Palermo that their return was delayed because, among other reasons, the city wanted them to see the *fiesta della Pinta*, "which is a representation of the Annunciation, such as was done in Santo Spirito in Firenze, although in this one there are many other mysteries. It is way behind, and I don't think that it is at all worth delaying our departure on its account."⁷⁷

In their grant application of 1445, the men of the company had declared themselves "willing to continue the *fiesta* and to use their wits to make it ever more beautiful in honour of God and for the enhancement of the city" ("ingegnerarsi continuamente farla più bella a honore di Dio e a magnificentia di questa città").⁷⁸ This combination of voluntary devotion combined with civic pride and artistic refinement did not survive the political and religious changes between the 1490s and the 1540s. By the mid-sixteenth century, only the Medici Duke, well served by an extraordinary bureaucracy of intellectuals and artists, had the resources to "grease the wheels of heaven" in the traditional way.

⁷⁷ "Si solecita la partenza nostra per Napoli, non di meno molte occupazioni, il tempo rotto, ne potria trattenere quindici giorno, et questa città voria pur che si vedesse la lor festa della Pinta, che è una Rappresentazione dell'Anonziata, come si fece già in Santo Spirito di Firenze, se bene in questa si vedono molti altri misteri e questa è adietro assai, né credo che per essa sia per trattarsi punto", ASF, Mediceo del Principato 4153, unnumbered folio for 11 November 1573. I thank Edward Goldberg for drawing my attention to this document, now entered in the Medici Archive Project database. On the *fiesta* for Santa Maria della Pinta, composed by Teofilo Folengo c. 1531 and reworked through to the 1580s at least, Palermo, see M. DI VENUTA, "L'Atto della Pinta: una sacra rappresentazione nella Palermo del Cinquecento", in *Quaderni folenghiani*, 2, 1997/98 (special issue: G. BERNARDI PERINI-C. MARANGONI-R. SIGNORINI (eds.), *Folengo in Sicilia: Teofilo Folengo e la cultura siciliana della Rinascenza. Atti del Convegno, Partinico - Palermo - San Martino delle Scale, 2-4 ottobre 1997*), pp. 55-72; and her edition, TEOFILO FOLENGO, *Atto della Pinta: sacra rappresentazione*, Lucca, 1994.

⁷⁸ NEWBIGIN, *Feste*, 2, p. 420.

DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT 1. ASF, Capitani di Parte Guelfa, Numeri Neri, Filza 702, no. 59. Petition from the Captains and Officers of the Company of Santa Maria delle Laudi e di Sant'Agnese to Duke Cosimo I, 8 July 1554.

Illustrissimo Signor Duca,

Li Capitani et Operai di Santa Agnesa del Carmino di Firenze expongono a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima come la loro Compagnia fu anticamente dal Comune di Firenze costituita sopra la cura et perservazione dello edefizio del cielo fatto nella chiesa del Carmino per recitarvi et rapresentarvi la festa della Assunzione di nostro Signore et già per più di cento anni hanno tenuto et tengano ministri particolari che hanno cura delli canapi et altri edefizii atti a tal negozio.

Hoggi i frati et operai della chiesa del Carmino hanno messo mano a rovinare lo edefizio che è nel tetto di tal chiesa, attenente a detta festa, con dire che ne hanno ottenuto lettera da Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima. Et per quanto ne hanno detti supplicanti possuto ritrarre, i frati hanno supplicato di levarlo, e li operai di tal chiesa, che sono una cosa medesima con loro, senza chiamare li operai di detta compagnia, hanno informato Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, e mostro a quella come tal edefizio rovinava quel tetto, et che a tal rovina non si posseva riparare, se non si levava tal edefizio, et che ogni volta che Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima volesse mai che tal festa si rifacesse sarebbe facil cosa, et di poca spesa, ritornarvelo, et pare che e' si sieno oferti in tal caso ritornarvelo a loro spese, et così hanno ottenuto tal licentia, ancora che a detto tetto si potesse riparare con assai minore spesa, che non sarà il levarlo, e che a risanarvelo bisogna spendere parecchi centi di ducati. Né contenti di ciò, pare che, sotto questo colore, non solo vogliano pòr giù quella parte dello edefizio che affaticava il tetto, ma del tutto spegnere, e levar via ogni vestigio, et memoria di tal festa, acciò non forse un giorno fusse lor fatto attenere, con loro grande spesa, quello che, per levare senza proposito una tal cosa, hanno promesso nella loro informazione; e ricerchi da' detti supplicanti di lasciarvi certi vestigi, come è detto, l'hanno recusato.

Per il che si come è lo interesse loro per la cura comessa già alla fede loro con la presente daemo del tutto aviso a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, suplicandola appresso che non voglia che così devoto et ingegnoso spettacolo del tutto si disfaccia et anulli, e perciò gli piaccia di comettere alli Magnifici Signori Capitani di Parte, o a chi a quella pare, che, fatto vedere il tutto da huomini pratici, faccino che in detto luogo rimanghino salvi tutti

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quelli vestigii et segni di tal festa che è possibile, et che non nuochino al tetto di detta chiesa; acciò che la posterità non perda la memoria del tutto di così artificiose opere, stante maxime che quello che era in San Filice, per tornarvi un monasterio, non si potrà più esercitare, e che per essere simili, nella chiesa del Carmino si potrebbe fare l'una et l'altra festa; e di tutto si rimettano alla deliberazione di quella, alla quale si raccomandano, pregando nostro signore Dio che felice la conservi sempre.

Reply: A Capitani di Parte che intesa la cosa ne informino Sua Eccellenza Lelio T[orelli]
8 Julii 54

DOCUMENT 2. ASF, Compagnia di S. Maria delle Laudi detta di S. Agnese 17, fol. 70v (11 February 1553/4).

A spese di nostra Compagnia lire dua soldi xii piccoli a Batte nostro seruo, portò contanti, cioè soldi 15 piccoli in piccoli in carboni per le tornate, soldi 3 piccoli per una chiave per l'uscio quando se n'andorno e solldati, s. 10 per fogli et chollo per rifare le finestre impannate di detta, lire 1 soldi iiii piccoli perché rasettò li usci e deschi e nettò la compagnia quando si riebbe tanto sconquasata.

DOCUMENT 3. The Annunciation and Ascension machinery. ASF, Capitani di Parte Guelfa, Numeri Neri, Filza 715, no. 139. Petition from the Captains of the Parte Guelfa, on behalf of the Captains and Officers of the Company of Santa Maria delle Laudi e di Sant'Agnese, to Duke Cosimo I, 12 January 1563/4.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Duca,

Li Capitani et altri Ufficiali della Compagnia di Sant'Agnesa del Carmine supplicanti dicono nelle loro preci come tengono in custodia più ferramenti, canapi, et altri ordigni che già servivano per recitare la rapresentatione della Ascensione di nostro Signore, quali dalla polvere et ruggine si vanno consumando, et che non havendo il modo a possere rassettare la Cappella di detta Compagnia desiderrebbono vendere alchuni di detti ferramenti, et canapi de' più dozinali et del ritratto supplire a detta restaurazione et che tutto vorebbono fare con buona grazia di Vostra Eccellenza. Dicono anchora come li ferramenti et altri ordigni che servivano già per la festa di San Felice in Piazza sono in una stanza del Carmine senza custodia dove entra la piena, et vanno male, et che rassettando questi per essere più moderni potrebbero servire alla festa del Carmine ogni volta che piacesse a Vostra Eccellenza che s'havessi a fare.

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Dove che per commissione di Vostra Eccellente Signoria, havendo mandato il sottoproveditore qui a vedere tutto, ci riferisce detti ferramenti et ordigni tutti, tanto quelli che servivano alla festa del Carmine quanto quelli di San Felice, essere molto male condotti, et havere fatto pesare i ferramenti di quella del Carmine che sono libbre 1500, che lo valuta a ragione di scudi 2 il cento, che sono scudi 30, et un canapo grosso con altre fune scudi 20, in tutto scudi 50, et che quelli di San Felice in Piazza per essere una buona parte sotterrati dalla piena non si sono possuto stimare. Piacendo a l'Eccellenza Vostra potrebbesi dar facultà a' detti supplicanti di posere vendere di quelli del Carmine che sono in loro potere per rassettare detta Capella che sarà opera pia e delli altri darli la cura et custodia con farli nettare dalla mota et ridurli tutti insieme et notarli a un libro acciò che sempre quando occorressi si potessero ritrovare. Rimettendoci,

Di Firenze al dì 12 gennaio 1563[/4]
Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima,
Humilissimi servi,
Li Capitani di Parte

Reply:
Facciasi come di sopra
Lel[io] T[orelli] 18 di Gennaio 63

DOCUMENT 4. ASF, Compagnia di S. Maria delle Laudi detta di S. Agnese 102, fols. 99v-100r; fol. 20v.

+ *Lunedì a dì 31 di genaio 1563*

A spese di nostra Conpagnia lire dua soldi tredici denari quatro picoli pagati a ser Lucha Caceliere de' Capitani di Parte per avere fattosi dare la copia del chostratto per chonto degli adigi [*edifici? ordigni?*] che servivano a la festa che si faceva per l'Asesione e datolo a nostro Caceliere

...

+ *Giovedì a dì 3 di febraio 1563*

A spese di nostra Conpagnia soldi sette picoli pagati a Francesco magnano per avere fatoci una chiave a l'uscio del chiostro del Charmine dove sono le maseritie della festa che si faceva in Sa' Fice in Piazza, portò contanti

...

+ *Lunedì a dì 21 di febraio*

A spese di nostra Conpagnia lire dua soldi dieci picoli sono che tanti si spese per fare cavare e ferri ch'erano in una stanza nel chiostro del Charmine, e quali ferri erano della festa di Sa' Filice, e si cavorno i fra calcinaci perché era rovinata el palcho di detta istanza, portò Giovanni di --- muratore e altre opere di manovale

(fol. 100r) + *Mercoledì a dì 8 di marzo*

A spese di nostra Compagnia lire tre soldi quindici piccioli sono che tanto s'è pagato a maestro Giovanni muratore e al Barbagnia manovale e Batista nostro servo per avere cavati tutti e ferri de l'arzanale e schonfitti d'i su legname e rimessi isieme in compagnia e spazato detto arzanale e rasettato e legname isieme chome dissano e diputati, portorno e sopradetti contanti + *Sabato a dì 11 di marzo*

A' signori Batista de' Servi e *fratelli* bancheri fiorini quaranta danari di moneta dipositati apresso ad loro di comesione de' signori depitati sopra la Capella cioè £ 350

...

+ *Martedì a d'i 14 di marzo*

A spese di nostra chonpagnia lire una soldi dua piccioli sono per avere fatto una altra chiave a l'uscio de l'arzanale, una toppa cho' la *chiave* a una cassa della chonpagnia, portò Batista magnano contanti

(fol. 20v) *Mercoledì a dì 29 di marzo [1564]*

Dagli operai di Santa Agnesa lire centosettantatre soldi 5 piccioli, sono per la monta di libre 1575 di ferri venduti a Giovanni di Domenicho fabro a Ricci per lire undici soldi 0 el cento ad chomesione de' quatro uomini deputati sopra alla Cappella, arechò Nicholò Gaburi

Some of the same expenses are recorded in ASF, Compagnia di S. Maria delle Laudi detta di S. Agnesa 116 (Libro Maestro 1510-1577), fol. 225r. In addition we find that various quantities of rope were sold to the builder, Maestro Giovanni di Stefano Palai, *muratore*: £ 9 "per uno canapo di libre 40 venduto a Giovanni di Stefano muratore a soldi 4 danari 5 libre", £ 18 "per la monta di 3 canapi usati finiti a maestro Giovanni Palai", and £ 32/11/- "per libre 93 di canapo venduto a maestro Giovanni muratore a soldi 7 la libra".

DOCUMENT 5. BNCF, MS Magliabechiano VIII.1393, fols. 198r-199v. Vincenzo Borghini to Giorgio Vasari, 10 June 1565, second last paragraph.

E bisogna, messer Giorgio mio, che voi aiutate messer Giovanni Caccini in questo principio del allogare et fermare i pregi e se non vi volete scoprire, fatelo in disparte col consiglio e con dirli il modo che ha da tenere, ché lo sapete. Ricordatevi che Sua Eccellenza Illustrissima, in camera sua, quando finimo di leggere la mia intemerata,⁷⁹ lasciò a me la cura della inventione, a

⁷⁹ Literally, a long prayer to the Virgin, beginning "O intemerata"; here, possibly, Borghini's long letter of 15 April that set out the program for the *apparato*.

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voi de' disegni, e de' modi, e così replicò in camera sua in Calendimaggio quando andava a desinare, siché di gratia, per questo obligo che havete, ma molto più perche le cosa vadino bene e il padrone nostro tanto buono e tanto gentile sia servito, e anche per honore nostro e che le cicale indiane⁸⁰ non habbino che dire, e per amor mio che ve ne prego, vigilate questa faccenda aiutare.

DOCUMENT 6. BNCF, MS Magliabechiano VIII.1393, fol. 233r-v (new transcription). Part of letter of 15 June 1565; previously published in *Carteggio artistico inedito di D. Vinc. Borghini*, ed. A. LORENZONI, Florence, 1912, pp. 21-22.

Iermattina messer Giorgio et io funmo col principe e havèno fatto una nota in sur uno foglio di quello che pareva bisongniassi pensare di fare e prima:
per li festaiuoli di Santo Spirito et se voleva fare tut'a tre le feste
per il baldachino se lo voleva fare et per li giovani che lo portassino
per li huomini che mettessino a ordine li armeggiatori et di fare uno capo per potentia come era solito

pensare se voleva mandare donne a ricontrare la principessa et a quelle che voleva mandare, a' loro mariti non dare altre spese

per fare li maestri del Calcio et che li havevo portato una lista dove erano la maggiore parte de' giovani di Firenze

pensare al fare inparare le commedie et ordinare la musica per l'intermedi et messer Giorgio reprichò del mandarne a inparare fuori, o a Siena et a San Miniato e in simili luoghi. Rispose che non voleva mandare fuori perché la lingua di fuori è peggio che la nostra.

per conto che tutti li magistrati facessino tante braccia di parato per ciaschuno e dove s'era ragionato e gli haveno fatto una nota di tutti li magistrati e quanto pareva per uno

per conto delle potentie che rizzano palcho e gli haveno fatto una nota de' nomi et dove risedevano

per conto se gli pareva che per il viaggio dove sono certe piazze e luoghi larghi che qualchuna di quelle potentie vi rizzassino il loro palcho e feci la nota di tutti li luoghi dove si potevano fare

per conto del cominciare a buona ora a vedere di fare scrivere delle case per potere quelli che veranno co' la principessa alloggiargli et così altri forestieri che venissono

Sua Eccellenza Illustrissima prese tutte queste note e liste di sopra dette e disse che si risolverebbe e andò a desinare a' Pitti.

⁸⁰ 'Persone maliziose, che chiacchierano giorno e notte'?

DOCUMENT 7. BNCF, MS II.X.100, fols. 8v-10r. Vincenzo Borghini, undated minute (June-July? 1565) of proposal to Vasari and Caccini in his *Taccuino* for the 1565-66 *apparato* (see also *Il luogo teatrale, scheda* 1.39 (E. GARBERO ZORZI), pp. 68-69; Newbigin, *Feste*, vol. 2, pp. 279-280).

Quanto alla festa di San Felice in Piazza pare che e' si dovessi proporre al principe la prima cosa e festaiuoli, informandosi prima bene del modo et de l'usanze solite, et secondo mi vuol ricordare, sogliono esser di dua sorte: quei di drento et quei di fuori, o di Cielo et di Terra che e' si chiamino, et per mio giuditio ne farei questa volta per ogni mano 4 o 6 più del solito, per l'avarsi a rinovare molte cose et a riassumere una impresa già dimessa, et per essere la chiesa molto maggiore et haver altra proportione che quelle dove si facevono queste feste.

Sarebbe ancor bene riassumere le compagnie de l'Orciuolo et de l'Agnesa, et, se possibil fusse, del Pippione, et se ne potrebbe dare la cura a Luigi Gianfigliazi, che è de' Capitani della Agnesa, il quale ancora potrebbe pigliare l'absumpto delle cose del Cielo, havendo in mano sua [MS: tua] gli strumenti che sono in essere di questa festa.

Io non so in che termine stien le cose di queste tre Compagnie, et quella del Pippione penso che sia poco meno che spenta; ma da che e' si muta il luogo della festa crederei che, per quanto porta la cosa della festa sola, elle si potessino unire insieme et [fol. 9r] fare per questo effetto, et in questo caso solo, di tutte un corpo, lasciando poi nel resto di loro entrate et loro offitii et residentie, negli altri tempi et fuor di queste feste, ognuna ne l'esser suo; ma quando si sapia come le stanno per l'apunto et in che essere le si trovino hoggi, sarà facil cosa poter risolvere quel che circa a questo stia bene et si possa fare, et per me credo che di queste tre l'Agnesa sola sia in essere et si exerciti.

Quanto poi attiene alla festa, mutandosi il luogo et essendo anco tanto variato il tempo et i modi del fare, si potre' pensare di dare la cosa a dua o tre, fra quali intervenissi Messer Francesco Corteccia, di pensare a' modi del canto, et anco alla cosa di quei Propheti et Sibille che solevano straccare molto gli spectatori et toglievon gran gratia alla bellezza del resto, che forse si potrebbero moderare in qualche cosa, et migliorare et ringentilirle con qualche inventione che havessi del buono et si accomodassi un po' più alla gentileza di questi tempi; che quanto al Paradiso et al Mazzo qui non si può migliorare o poco [fol. 9v], che è dove consiste tutta la bellezza di questa festa; et a questo effetto sarebbe forse buono Giovanni Bizeri che ha gran pratica delle commedie et buon gusto per le moderne, et forse ce n'è degli altri che io non conosco.

Ma bisogna che il provveditore avvertisca innanzi che questa commessione si scuopra, di stabilire et fermare tutti e lavori ch'egli ha bisogno per

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sé et gli homini et i legnami et l'altre materie, perché come si sentirà la cosa ferma, i legnaiuoli et altri faranno più difficoltà, et in questa festa si ne' palchi della chiesa, si ne l'ornamento di fuori, v'andrà un mondo di legname et però vorrei prima haver fermo stabilito, allogato et provvisto tutto quello ci bisogna.

In quanto a' legnami pe' palchi so bene che e' non ne potrà mancare perché e' ci è de' legnaiuoli grossi, che ne hanno quantità che al peggio piglieranno l'assunto loro di fare i palchi per concedere poi i luoghi a prezzo; ma con tutto questo la diritta è assicurarsi innanzi per ogni rispetto.

Ricorderò ancora intorno a questi palchi che s'hanno a fare in chiesa, che e' sarebbe necessario dare una alteza et forma et misura uguale per levar [fol. 10r] via infinite confusioni ed disordini che sogliono nascere; che a tutto è da pensare innanzi et pigliarci buon verso, così distribuire i luoghi con buon ordine, per la corte, magistrati, festaiuoli et per tutto il resto.

DOCUMENT 8. *Diario fiorentino di Agostino Lapini dal 252 al 1596* (ed. G. O. CORAZZINI, Florence, 1900), p. 151. Quando si fe la festa della Annunziata in S. Spirito fu la prima volta vi si facessi.

A' dì x di marzo 1565, che fu la seconda domenica di quaresima, si fe' la festa dell'Annunziata di nostra Donna nella chiesa di S. Spirito, dove non si era più fatta e vi si fe' 3 volte: cioè, alli 10, a li 14, et alli 18. Vennevi il duca Cosimo et il signor principe Francesco con la sua cara consorte e il cardinale Arnaldo de' Medici. Furno li festaioli Piero d'Agostino Dini, Simone Corsi, Alessandro Capponi, Alessandro de' Medici, che poi fu arcivescovo di Firenze, dove ciascheduno di loro fe' dipignere la sua arme sotto la cupoletta di detto S. Spirito, dove staranno sempre.

DOCUMENT 9. [Domenico MELLINI,] [*Descrizione dell'Apparato fatto in Firenze per le nozze dell'Illustrissimo ed Eccellentissimo Don Francesco de' Medici, Principe di Firenze e di Siena, e della Serenissima Regina Giovanna d'Austria*], in GIORGIO VASARI, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. BETTARINI and P. BAROCCHI, 11 vols., Florence, 1966-1997, VI, p. 366.

Ne' primi e santi giorni poi della seguente Quaresima, pensando di soddisfare alla religiosissima Sposa, ma con soddisfazione certo grandissima di tutto 'l popolo, che, essendone stato per molt'anni privo et essendosi parte di quei sottilissimi instrumenti smarriti, temeva che mai più riassumere non si dovessero, fu fatta la tanto famosa e tanto ne' vecchi tempi

celebrata festa di S. Felice, così detta dalla chiesa ove prima ordinar si soleva. Ma questa volta, oltre a quella che i proprii eccellentissimi Signori aver ne volsero, con cura e spesa di quattro principali e molto ingegnosi gentiluomini della città, in quella di Santo Spirito, come luogo più capace e più bello, rappresentata, con ordine et apparato grandissimo e con tutti i vecchi instrumenti e con non pochi di nuovo aggiunti; in cui, oltre a molti Profeti e Sibille, che con quel semplice et antico modo cantando, predicevano l'avvenimento di Nostro Signore Iesù Cristo, notabile anzi pure, per essere in quei roz[z]i secoli ordinato, meraviglioso e stupendo et incomparabile fu il Paradiso, che in un momento aprendosi, pieno di tutte le gerarchie degl'Angeli e de' Santi e delle Sante, e co' varii moti le diverse sue sfere accennando, si vide quasi in terra mandare il divino Gabbriello pieno d'infiniti splendori in mez[z]o ad otto altri Angeletti ad annunziare la Vergine gloriosa, che tutta umile e devota sembrava nella sua camera dimorarsi, calandosi tutti e risalendo poi con singolar meraviglia di ciascuno dalla più alta parte della cupola di quella chiesa, ove il prescritto Paradiso era figurato, fino al palco della camera della Vergine, che non però molto spazio sopra il terreno si alzava, con tanta sicurezza e con sì belli e sì facili e sì ingegnosi modi, che a pena parse che umano ingegno potesse tant'oltre trapassare. Con la quale le feste, tutte dagl'eccellentissimi Signori per le realissime noz[z]e apparecchiate, ebbero non pure splendido e famoso, ma, come bene et a veri e cristiani principi si conveniva, religioso e devoto compimento.

DOCUMENT 10. Roma, Archivio di Stato MS XLVIII.98, Vincenzo Borghini to Giorgio Vasari, 9 March 1565/6; from K. and H. W. FREY, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasari*, Munich, 1923-1940, vol. 2, pp. 220-221.

... Hiera la festa andò bene; pure a mio giuditio bisogna queste cose:

1. Magior musica in cielo: ma non so se instrumenti di fiato saranno bene; più presto rinforzerei gli strumenti di tasto et di corde.
2. Che il cielo non dessi certe scosse, come e' fece hiersera; pure potette essere che alhora non fussino ad hordine per l'appunto.
3. Mi pare che la musica del mazzo sia poco in questo modo, che perché e' mettono più tempo a 'ndare et tornare che e' non facevon prima, per esser cresciuto ogni cosa, che bisognassi che egli havessino più materia alle mani, benché hiersera ei non cantarono tutta la Magnificat; et sono certo, che d'vero si farà meglio.
4. Lumi, lumi, lumi! Et habbiateci l'occhio, perché el mazzo non si vedde punto. Et vi dico che e' non ve ne sarà tanti che e' non paino pochi. Et l'angelo, che annuntia et chiama i profeti harebbe anche bisogno d'esser

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veduto, et se il ferro fussi venuto su l'angolo, che lo sportassi in fuori, in modo che e' si vedessi pel diritto della chiesa, era meglio.
Fate, che io vi vegga quando potete, et Dio con voi.
Agli 9 di marzo. Don Vincenzo vostro.

