

# S K E N È

**Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies**

---

**10:1 2024**

Memory and Performance.  
Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals

Edited by Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino,  
and Eugenio Refini

# SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

---

*Founded by Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliuzzi, and Alessandro Serpierti*

<i>Executive Editor</i>	Guido Avezzù.
<i>General Editors</i>	Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliuzzi.
<i>Editorial Board</i>	Chiara Battisti, Simona Brunetti, Camilla Caporicci, Sidia Fiorato, Sotera Fornaro, Massimo Fusillo, Felice Gambin, Alessandro Grilli, Chiara Lombardi, Lorenzo Mancini, Stefania Onesti, Nicola Pasqualicchio, Antonietta Provenza, Susan Payne, Cristiano Ragni, Antonio Sánchez Jiménez, Alessandra Squeo, Emanuel Stelzer, Savina Stevanato, Martina Treu, Gherardo Ugolini, Antonio Ziosi.
<i>Managing Editors</i>	Valentina Adami, Emanuel Stelzer.
<i>Assistant Managing Editors</i>	Marco Duranti, Roberta Zanoni.
<i>Editorial Staff</i>	Chiara Battisti, Petra Bjelica, Francesco Dall'Olio, Serena Demichelis, Carina Fernandes, Sidia Fiorato, Carla Suthren.
<i>Typesetting</i>	Elena Festa, Cristiano Ragni.
<i>Advisory Board</i>	Anna Maria Belardinelli, Anton Bierl, Enoch Brater, Jean-Christophe Cavallin, Richard Allen Cave, Rosy Colombo, Claudia Corti, Marco De Marinis, Tobias Döring, Pavel Drábek, Paul Edmondson, Keir Douglas Elam, Ewan Fernie, Patrick Finglass, Enrico Giaccherini, Mark Griffith, Daniela Guardamagna, Stephen Halliwell, Robert Henke, Pierre Judet de la Combe, Eric Nicholson, Guido Paduano, Franco Perrelli, Didier Plassard, Donna Shalev, Susanne Wofford.

Copyright © 2024 S K E N È.  
The Journal is a CC-BY 4.0 publication  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)  
SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies  
<https://skenejournal.skeneproject.it>  
[info@skeneproject.it](mailto:info@skeneproject.it)

Edizioni ETS  
Palazzo Roncioni - Lungarno Mediceo, 16, I-56127 Pisa  
[info@edizioniets.com](mailto:info@edizioniets.com)  
[www.edizioniets.com](http://www.edizioniets.com)

Distribuzione  
Messaggerie Libri SPA  
Sede legale: via G. Verdi 8 - 20090 Assago (MI)

Promozione  
PDE PROMOZIONE SRL  
via Zago 2/2 - 40128 Bologna  
ISBN: 9788-8467-6968-8  
ISBN (pdf): 9788-8467-6969-5  
ISSN 2421-4353

## Contents

Memory and Performance.  
Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals

Edited by Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino, and Eugenio Refini

FRANCESCA BORTOLETTI, GIOVANNA DI MARTINO, EUGENIO REFINI – <i>Preface</i>	5
FRANCESCA BORTOLETTI, EUGENIO REFINI – <i>Introduction.</i> <i>Ephemeral Renaissance. Myth and Drama in Renaissance Festivals and Performing Rituals</i>	9
DANIELA SACCO – <i>The Performativity of the Classical According to Warburg: Pathosformeln and Memory in Renaissance Festivals</i>	27
CLAUDIO PASSERA – <i>The Glory of Rome Comes Back to Life. Real and Ephemeral Triumphal Arches for a Renaissance Wedding. Rimini 1475</i>	45
SERGIO COSTOLA – <i>Lucrezia Borgia’s Triumphal Chariot: Notes on Performance Documentation</i>	61
RAIMONDO GUARINO – <i>Nympha loci: Gardens, Statues and Poetry in Early Renaissance Rome</i>	81
JAN BAŽANT – <i>Pompa in Honorem Ferdinandi, 1558</i>	97
BENEDETTA COLASANTI – <i>A Rediscovery of Antiquity. Traces of Ancient Mechanics in the Staging of the Opening Performance of the Farnese Theatre in Parma (1628)</i>	115
EDMUND THOMAS – <i>Bernini’s Two Theatres and the Trauma of Classical Reception</i>	131
MARIA CZEPIEL – <i>“Como la luz de la fe te falte”: the Privileging of the Christian over the Pagan in Calderón’s El divino Orfeo (1634)</i>	147
BORJA FRANCO LLOPIS, IVÁN REGA CASTRO – <i>Representations of the Battle of the Giants: an Early Modern Anti-Islamic Allegory Deployed by the Hispanic Monarchy</i>	167

### Special Section

CARLA SUTHREN – Malika Bastin-Hammou, Giovanna Di Martino, Cécile Dudouyt, and Lucy C. M. M. Jackson (eds), <i>Translating Ancient Greek Drama in Early Modern Europe: Theory and Practice (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries)</i> . Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023. ISBN 9783110718652, pp. x + 344.	189
FRANCESCA COPPOLA – Edoardo Pérez Rasilla. <i>El Teatro Español de Madrid. La Historia (1583-2023)</i> . Madrid: Cátedra, 2023. ISBN 9788437646633, pp. 488.	197

- ROBERTA MULLINI – Francesco Marroni. *George Bernard Shaw. Commediografo e saltimbanco*. Lanciano: Carabba, 2023. ISBN 9788863447156, pp. 215 207
- BEATRICE BERSELLI – Benjamin Wihstutz, Daniele Vecchiato, and Mirjam Kreuser (eds), *#CoronaTheater. Der Wandel der performativen Künste in der Pandemie*. Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2022. ISBN 9783957494351, pp. 210. 215
- SHIN'ICHI MURATA - STEFANO ALOE, *An Appointment with Japanese Noh Theatre in Verona and Milan* 231

CLAUDIO PASSERA\*

## **The Glory of Rome Comes Back to Life. Real and Ephemeral Triumphal Arches for a Renaissance Wedding. Rimini 1475**

Abstract

On 24 June 1475, Elisabetta da Montefeltro and Roberto Malatesta's wedding took place in Rimini. Four wooden triumphal arches marked the processional route of the princess' entry. Over them, figurants impersonating historical characters welcomed the newlyweds and the most important guest, Federico da Montefeltro. The design of these ephemeral architectures was inspired by the Arch of Augustus, a gate in the former city wall dedicated to the Roman emperor in 27 BC. This essay investigates how the ceremony transformed Malatesta Rimini into a new Rome, reconstructing a monument of the city's glorious past with temporary materials and modifying the urban landscape with ephemeral decorations. It also clarifies how the poems proclaimed during the triumph associated Federico da Montefeltro with the figures of Julius Caesar, Themistocles, and Furius Camillus, thus celebrating his new alliance with the groom. Finally, it illustrates how Malatesta's allies sent artists to the nuptials as diplomatic gift. They made the feast an occasion to exchange different performance cultures, including that of the Roman triumph studied by the Italian Humanists, whose influence on the celebrations is analysed here. This essay also focuses on the presence in Rimini of theatrical events similar to those designed by Filippo Brunelleschi for the religious performances acted in the Florentine churches of Santa Maria del Carmine and San Felice in Piazza. By the second half of the fifteenth century, the Florentine craftsmen had exported such sets into the Italian courts with the most up-to-date theatre culture, for example Pesaro. Here, a few days before the Malatesta wedding, the city ruler Costanzo Sforza married Camilla d'Aragona during a five-day lavish festival. By comparing the primary sources of the two events, various similarities with the Rimini celebrations will be revealed. Such similarities are here investigated to identify the models, meanings, and political communicative intents of the Malatesta wedding feast.

KEYWORDS: Renaissance Italy; Wedding Feast; Spectacles; Rimini; Roberto Malatesta

On 24 June 1475, Elisabetta da Montefeltro, the thirteen-year-old daughter of Federico, duke of Urbino, entered Rimini to marry the city's ruler, Roberto Malatesta. This marriage healed the conflict which had seen Montefeltro opposing the Malatestas during the hostilities between the groom's father, Sigismondo Pandolfo, and the popes Pius II and Paul II for the control of Romagna (1460-1470). On another, more subtle, level, the nuptial alliance

\* University of Parma - [claudio.passera@unipr.it](mailto:claudio.passera@unipr.it)

between the two houses aimed to curb the ambitions of Sixtus IV, who in those years was trying to herd the small domains of Emilia into one area under direct papal control, in order to create a fief for his nephew, Girolamo Riario.

In April 1471, the betrothal of Elisabetta and Roberto had been signed with the approval of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, duke of Milano, Ferdinando d'Aragona, king of Napoli, Sixtus IV himself, and was followed by revels in Urbino and Rimini, mentioned exclusively in the *Cronaca di Urbino* by Guerriero da Gubbio.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the testimonies about the wedding celebrations in Rimini are numerous, which show how the Roman glory of a Renaissance city, coming back to life thanks to the fictional atmosphere of temporary urban decorations and poems recited during the festivities, could legitimise the diplomatic policy of its ruler and exalt his incoming government. This essay analyses how the Rimini ephemeral return to its Roman past could be turned into a celebratory propaganda tool for Roberto Malatesta, which brought the city up to the level of the most advanced Italian centres of performative arts, thanks to the intervention of performers, musicians, and artists sent by the groom's allies according to the alliances they stipulated with him. This will be possible thanks to the comparative study of the celebration's primary sources and poetic texts recited therein, explaining the communicative intentions of its different performative moments.

## 1. Preparation of the feast

The *Cronaca malatestiana*, written by Gaspare Broglio between 1443 and 1477, reports the most extensive record of the festival and several of the compositions recited on that occasion.<sup>2</sup> The text describes how, in honour of the bride and her illustrious father, four ephemeral triumphal arches and several urban ornaments had been erected on the route that would have led her from the city walls to Castel Sismondo.<sup>3</sup> She entered Rimini through the arch of Augustus, built in 27 BC in praise of the first Roman emperor

<sup>1</sup> See Guerriero Da Gubbio 1902, 88. On the political weight of the marriage, see Falcioni 2012, 51-3; Bornstein 1988, 101-17.

<sup>2</sup> Native of Siena, son of Angelo Tartaglia, after studying humanities Gaspare followed his father's footsteps by undertaking a military career. From 1443 he served Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, first as a soldier, and later as administrator and diplomat. After the death of his patron, Broglio retired, fully devoting himself to authoring *Cronaca malatestiana*. About this work, see Bornstein 2005, 143-9.

<sup>3</sup> A reconstructive hypothesis of the wedding procession route in De Maria 1984, 443-62.

and the rearrangement of via Flaminia he commissioned after his victory over Marc Antony (called Porta San Bartolo by the chronicler, because of the church that was once standing close to it). The monument, a symbol of the strategic importance that Rimini had for the empire, was among the first that displayed the *Augustus* title for Ottaviano, which the Senate bestowed on him in January of that same year. Despite its being absorbed into the medieval city walls and crested by a crenelation that altered its original appearance, it inspired Alberti for the project of the Tempio Malatestiano, and was renowned among Italian Humanists.<sup>4</sup> On the day of the event, on its façade, one could see “homini sperti vestiti in forma delli antichi e bon romani, li quali all’intrata dell’illustrissimo duca d’Urbino e della illustrissima madonna dissero in versi ricevendo lo illustrissimo duca e la illustrissima madonna” (learned men dressed up as the ancient and fair Romans, who, as the most illustrious duke of Urbino and most illustrious lady made their entrance, proclaimed verses, receiving the most illustrious duke and lady).<sup>5</sup>

Refined cloths hanging on today’s Corso Augusto marked the route that led to Piazza Maggiore, today’s Piazza Tre Martiri, where Julius Caesar was said to have pronounced his famous speech to the XIII legion before crossing the Rubicon, provoking the civil war. The first two ephemeral arches were erected here, specifically for the event:

In capo de la detta piazza fo edificato un archo triumphale altissimo e dignissimo, con tucte quelle solinnità appartenenti. E sull’archo v’era bellissimo palencato, sul quale v’erano dodici homini vestiti nella forma di quelli famosissimi romani; et in fra mezzo loro era una sedia voita dignissima, coperta di drappo d’oro.

Conseguedo per insino a un altro arco triumphale, sopra el quale v’era defittii d’angeli su certi rami, li quali de continovo se volgivano intorno cantando degnie melodie. (Turchini 2001, 437)

[At the top of the said piazza a high and commendable arch was built, full of solemnity. Atop the arch, within a splendid fenced area, there were twelve men dressed up as those most famous Romans; and in their midst there was a regal empty chair, covered in a gilded drape.

Proceeding onward there was an additional triumphal arch, on top of which there were angels sitting above some branches, who continuously turned around singing beautiful melodies.]

<sup>4</sup> Pasini 1988, 63-101. On the Humanists’ interest for the monument, see Quaquarelli 2018, 237-50.

<sup>5</sup> The manuscript of *Cronaca malatestiana* is kept in the Biblioteca Gambalunga of Rimini, sc.ms 1161. The notes on Roberto Malatesta’s wedding are published in Turchini 2001, 436. Here and below, translations from Italian are mine.

The central area of the piazza was occupied by a wooden castle, which was going to be stormed by two rival teams during the *Pas d'Armes* scheduled for the end of the festivities. The bleachers built on the sides of the square allowed the guests to watch the spectacle.

Two additional triumphal arches “in varii modi hordenati” (Turchini 2001, 438; differently displayed) and more cloths covered the second section of the Corso leading to Castel Sismondo, where the nuptial banquet would take place. Lastly, on the overlooking piazza Cavour, decorations for the fountain that had been gracing the city ever since the Roman Age, which was also the most important local source of drinking water, were laid (Ravara 2020, 80-6). A golden sphere held by four angels was added above its summit, while in the two polygonal fourteenth-century basins were four makeshift statues of dolphins.

After the urban decorations, Broglio described the ornaments of the Rocca malatestiana – built between 1437 and 1446 for Sigismondo Pandolfo –, starting from the gate of the entry tower that faced the city and whose walls, at that time, were painted red.<sup>6</sup> Two statues with shapes of giants watched this gate; and on its summit, according to the chronicler, two “composti con maestrevole mano” (Turchini 2001, 438; well-crafted) angels were sitting, who supposedly sang welcoming verses as Federico da Montefeltro, his daughter, and the most renowned guests crossed it. It is possible that said angels had been *crafted* with temporary materials (wood, papier-mâché, scagliola) and that singers, hidden behind them, sang welcoming messages; perhaps in polyphony, as their subdivision in two distanced groups would suggest.

After climbing the steps and crossing the Camera dei Ginepri and the rooms previously inhabited by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, the guests ended up in the Sala Grande of the castle, with the tables set for the nuptial banquet lying before them.<sup>7</sup> Silk and fine gold tapestries covered its walls, with “figurati gran parte delli famosi re e imperadori e baroni e cavalieri de cristiani e pagani . . . et similmente tucte le famose donne.” (438; images of most of the famous kings, emperors, barons, and Christian and pagan knights . . . along with all of the famous women). After these words, in *Cronaca malatestiana*, a poem illustrates the biblical and historical characters sewn in

<sup>6</sup> There is a wide bibliography on the castle, its project, its construction times. For the bare minimum, see the contribution by *Castel Sismondo, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta e l'arte militare nel primo Rinascimento*, Atti del Convegno (Rimini, 20-2 September 2002), edited by Angelo Turchini. Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio. Giovanni Maccioni provides a virtual reconstruction of how the building looked in the fifteenth century, available at [www.riminiduepuntozero.it](http://www.riminiduepuntozero.it). (Accessed: 04 January 2024).

<sup>7</sup> About the identification of Castel Sismondo spaces according to an inventory of the movable property of Isotta degli Atti (1468), see Tosi Brandi 2020, 231-9.



the tapestries. Then, the text describes an unusual apparatus built upon the entrance of the Santa Colomba cathedral:

In sull'entrata della prima porta del domo v'era d'ificato una cupola d'un padiglione dalle cortine fuori, in quatro parti il padiglione era disteso, significando i quatro elementi, aiero, terra, acqua e fuocho aceso. (442)

[Above the entrance of the first gate of the duomo there was the dome of a pavilion with outward curtains, the pavilion was laid out in four parts, each representing the four elements: air, earth, water and lit fire.]

Then four octaves describe the natural wonders depicted on the curtains of the pavilion representing the power of the elements, introduced with these words: “edificato a strani intendimenti / or questo padiglione tenete a mente / v'era la luna colli raggi de sole / veder lo potiva chiunqua lo vole” (built toward bizarre effects / keep in mind this pavilion / moonlight shone through sunrays / anyone could see it if they wanted to), and concluded by declaring that atop the dome one could see a lamb.

The effects this pavilion produced on 25 June 1475 as the newlyweds entered or exited the Duomo have not been reported by Broglio. Since the lines mentioning the moon and the sunrays precede the ones about the painted images in the four curtains, claiming that anyone could easily see them (perhaps due to their prominence), my hypothesis is that in the middle of the pavilion hung a sphere shaped like a moon joined with a sun, which could rotate or be lowered down the structure towards the onlookers, thanks to a mechanism for rising, at a specific moment of the ceremony, which created the *bizarre effects* mentioned by the chronicler.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the pavilion structure and its operating principle would be similar to the theatrical sets (or *paradisi*) created, according to Vasari, by Filippo Brunelleschi in the 1420s for the religious performances of the *Ascension* and *Annunciation*, staged by the confraternities of Agnesa and Orciuolo in the Florentine churches of Santa Maria del Carmine and San Felice in Piazza respectively.<sup>9</sup> Hanging between the trusses of the roofs of the two churches, the said sets, with their cube-shaped structure containing a half sphere, which appeared as a dome looking at it from below, were a three-dimensional representation of paradise. At their bases they had

<sup>8</sup> Additionally, in the fourth verse of the first octave dedicated to the wonders represented within the apparatus, Broglio mentions that in the air section there was a “Fair and clear moon”, seemingly referring to a painting, because, if the first mention of the satellite wasn't referring to a three-dimensional object, then this would be a redundant repetition either of the iconographic aspect or its poetic description.

<sup>9</sup> The most up-to-date description about the operating mechanisms and structure of these apparatuses is provided by Ventrone 2016, 60-85.

moving curtains painted with starry skies, which opened up revealing painted angels overlooking the walls of the half sphere, placed behind actual children, dressed up as musician angels, sitting across the perimeter. From the centre, a cloud of cotton wool was lowered down, supported by a structure of metallic concentric circles equipped with upward gears: the sitting place of Christ, who hung from the ropes that would allow his ascension toward the heavens, or the archangel Gabriel, sent to the earth to bring the message to Mary. The wondrous appearance of the descending *cloud* – which was also equipped with lighting contraptions that made it glow, thus exalting its spectacle – was the reason of the success that Brunelleschi's *paradisi* achieved during the Renaissance.

By the second half of the fifteenth century, Florence's stagecraft masters had begun to export the *clouds* outside the city's borders, adapting their appearance according to the staging needs of the cities where they were invited.<sup>10</sup> In Rimini, for example, the interior of the heavenly dome didn't host painted angels, but the wonders of creation, subdivided in four segments, and the upward mechanism of the cloud was simplified and adapted according to the motion of the sphere representing the sun and the moon.<sup>11</sup>

The Florentine inspiration for the apparatus seems confirmed by the fact that among the “[s]pese fatte per ornare la ghiesa per le nocie del signore miser Robert” ([e]xpenses sustained for the church decoration for messer Roberto's wedding), reported in the bookkeeping of the Santa Colomba cathedral chapter, there can be found the item “Per corda per li festuni et per atacare *nevole* e fare altre cose necessarie per la ghiesa e per una corda nova per atacare el cerchio de le *nevole* e frasche in megio la chiesa” (Ropes for garlands and for attaching the *clouds*, and other necessary things for the church and for a new rope to attach the *clouds*' circle and the branches in the middle of the church).<sup>12</sup> The *clouds*' circle was supposedly a part of the structure comparable to the ones of the aforementioned Brunelleschi's *paradisi*, while the word *clouds* used in the notes confirms the reference,

<sup>10</sup> On the implementation of the Brunelleschi's creations for court spectacles in Milan and Ferrara, see Ventrone 2022, 11–41.

<sup>11</sup> The apparatus iconography, with the half sphere divided into four decorated sectors dedicated to the power of the elements, seems to recall that of the cross-ribbed vault of the Sant Vitale in Ravenna presbyter. The image of the *Agnus Dei*, which stood out like the midday sun against a starry sky, surrounded by a garland carried by four Angels, divides into four sectors a phantasmagoria of birds, fishes, flowers, blazing flames, symbolizing Christ's power over the creation.

<sup>12</sup> Delucca 2020, 5–19. The note reveals that the apparatus was located “in the middle of the church”, so it was inside it, hanging over the main gate of the Duomo, as Broglio indicated. It is therefore possible that it was hanging from the ceiling of the cathedral, perhaps with a support on the counter-façade.

even lexically, to the said theatrical sets, which had also been present, less than a month before, on 28 May 1475, in the Palazzo Ducale of Pesaro for the wedding feast of Costanzo Sforza and Camilla d'Aragona. On that day, the banquet began with the opening of a *paradiso* placed in the middle of the ceiling of the banquet hall; it contained a "*nebulla d'oro*" (golden *cloud*), from which an actor representing the Sun was lowered down, and later on it was the turn of another one representing the Moon, marking the *entremets* succession (*Ordine de le noze*, c. b2r.).

It is difficult to identify the prop master of the Rimini *paradiso*. Among the *Expenses* sustained by the Santa Colomba chapter for the Malatesta wedding only the name of Vignudolo di Matteo da Cesana can be found, a local artist paid to paint "dodece arme grande" (twelve large coats of arms) that enriched the decoration of the floral garlands of the cathedral naves.<sup>13</sup>

*Cronaca malatestiana*, though, reports a list of the wedding expenses (Turchini 2001, 428-35) which, when compared to a second list drafted by a page of the Roman prefect Leonardo della Rovere, a guest of the wedding, sheds light on the workforce employed in building the temporary urban architectures.<sup>14</sup> Under the column "*Ingenieri, doni facti alli dicti*" of both lists, there can be found the following names: "Iacomo fiorentino" (with four helpers), "Simone fiorentino", "Domenico fiorentino", "don Bartolomeo", "Agnolo da Bettino", "Francesco Sperandio da Mercatello", "Pietro Beretta", "Giovanni da Ragusa" and "Domenico da Firenze" (23). The contribution of the Florentine masters – some of them might have also offered advice for the Santa Colomba apparatus – was quite remarkable; and they were also the creators of the triumphal arches placed across the streets of Rimini, as indicated by Cesare Clementini's seventeenth-century *Raccolto storico della fondazione di Rimini e dell'origine e vite de' Malatesti*, which expanded, through undeclared sources, Broglio's chronicles.<sup>15</sup> Following the information provided by this historian, Elvira Garbero Zorzi noticed how Vasari had actually highlighted the names of one "Domenico" and one "Simone fiorentini" among Brunelleschi's apprentices, and speculated that they were the same artists hired to work on the apparatuses of Rimini (1986, vol. 2, 301-30). The research for additional documentation on the event that I have carried out in the Archivio di Stato of Florence hasn't added new information to substantiate this hypothesis. It allows only to the requests to the Magnifico for sending horses and knights, as participants in the

<sup>13</sup> ASR, Congregazioni religiose soppresse, AB 704, c. 92. On Vignudolo di Matteo, see Delucca 1997, 164-5.

<sup>14</sup> Pesaro, Biblioteca Oliveriana, ms. 386, published, annotated and compared with the *Cronaca malatestiana* in Lombardi 1986, 13-26.

<sup>15</sup> Clementini 1617, vol. 2, 518-38. Turchini 2001, 427-67 compares the description of the wedding by Clementini with the one by Broglio.

joust organised for the wedding ceremony, and for sending the renowned improviser poet Antonio di Guido.<sup>16</sup>

However, as proof of the Florentine nature of the Rimini arches, it should be pointed out how at least one of those built in Piazza Tre Martiri supported children dressed up as angels on “some branches, who continuously turned around” (Turchini 2001, 437). Similar self-propelled mechanisms, either of rotating or ascensional nature, which was meant to recreate the angels’ flight, characterised the structure of several pageants of the Florentine procession in honour of San Giovanni Battista, famous at that time in Italy for its spectacular features. In *Roma triumphans* (X, 14), for example, Flavio Biondo admirably compared the trees sitting on the squared platforms of the said structures – equipped with golden-leaved branches among which, sitting in leather-made nests, children sang hymns in honour of the saint – to the Roman triumphs *pegmata*, where the cherubs sang the praises of the victorious.<sup>17</sup> The Humanist thus legitimated the inclusion of these marvels in the fifteenth century processions inspired by the glory of ancient Rome, such as Camilla d’Aragona’s entrance in Pesaro, on whose route stood a triumphal arch, with a ship mast on its summit that had two sets of rotating iron branches, where some children carrying instruments sat, singing the praises of the bride as she passed by (*Ordine de le noze*, c. 66r). The similarities between the two princely celebrations of Pesaro and Urbino appear therefore more evident when comparing the stagecraft apparatuses they both employed. Before analysing the analogies in the timeline of the acts of performance, however, I would like to highlight how the relationships among the protagonists’ two celebrations motivated the insertion of artists hailing from Florence, Urbino, and Pesaro within the lists of remunerated musicians and actors taking part in the Malatesta-Montefeltro wedding.<sup>18</sup>

Other than Antonio di Guido, Lorenzo de’ Medici sent two of his drummers to the wedding and, perhaps due to his solicitation, the Florentine Signoria sent four *trombetti* (trumpeters) and three fifers, along with one “Giovanni fiorentino and his comrades”, who apparently had a leading role among the

<sup>16</sup> Firenze, ASFi, Mediceo avanti il principato, filza 32, c. 182 (26/04/1475); c. 242 (06/06/1475); c. 275 (10/06/1475). On Antonio di Guido, see Degli Innocenti 2017, 17-18.

<sup>17</sup> On the comparison between the chariots of San Giovanni and the *pegmata* in *Roma Triumphans*, see Cruciani 1987, 46-8. The Rimini poet Roberto Orsi, in the elegy *In adventu novae sponsae Roberti Malatesta*, Biblioteca Gambalunga Rimini, ms. 1262, Orsi, *Elegiae*, f.19r, remembered the temporary architectures of the triumphal entrance as follows: *Unde haec signiferum ferientia pegmata caelum?* providing an image of the apparatuses that recalled the ancient and literary memories from which the celebration took inspiration.

<sup>18</sup> For the list of musicians and their compensation, see Turchini 2001, 432-4.

singers of the liturgical chorus.<sup>19</sup> Federico da Montefeltro participated in the event along with his six *trombetti* and the lutenist Mastro Bartolo, and two other trumpet players from the Urbino community were present. Five Urbino masters were classified by Broglio as prop masters of the decorative cloths for the city streets and the joust stages. Lastly, Costanzo Sforza sent four *trombetti* and two drummers, along with the jester Mambrino, although *Cronaca Malatestiana* doesn't report any information about his performances.

From the two expense lists analysed, it can also be learnt that the wedding guests attended the performance of two famous artists under the protection of Ercole I d'Este: the jester Giovan Battista Scocola and the lutenist Pietrobono Burzelli dal Chitarrino.<sup>20</sup> When and how their performances took place is not known, but undoubtedly their presence showed great care toward the contemporary performative culture that Roberto Malatesta wanted to flaunt during the wedding. A culture which, thanks to performing arts, brought the reputation of the captains who promoted the celebration onto the same level as the glory of Ancient Rome, in a direct competition with the ruler of Pesaro for the supremacy in both arts and warfare – as the fierce *Pas d'Armes* that capped the celebration also showed – with an exceptional judge: the Duke of Urbino, of whom Roberto and Costanzo were key allies.

In fact, in May 1473 Federico da Montefeltro promoted the marriage pact between Costanzo Sforza and Camilla d'Aragona, which strengthened his relationship with Ferrante I, King of Naples and the princess' uncle, after the two had agreed upon a three-year military deal, which Montefeltro encouraged. In the summer of 1474, Costanzo also took part in the military campaign led by the Duke against Niccolò Vitelli to bring Città di Castello back under the papal rule. That's when Roberto Malatesta joined them, and it was due to the valour he showed on the battlefield that he earned the hand of Elisabetta da Montefeltro (Ambrogiani 2003, 74-81). Therefore, Costanzo and Roberto owed their military successes to Federico, as well as the nuptial policy that would favour their signorias in the political context of Renaissance Italy. There are no doubts, then, that their weddings had been a stage in which the two captains competed with each other to show the prestige, glory, and wealth they had earned thanks to the favour of duke Federico.

<sup>19</sup> About the influence of Lorenzo de' Medici on musicians employed by Florentine magistratures, see D'Accone 1993, 219-49.

<sup>20</sup> Saffiotti 2017, 23-9 observes that this is the last documented performance of the jester. The presence at the Rimini of Pietrobono doesn't seem to be well-known. See Maccarthy 2018, 431-59.

## 2. Unfolding of the Feast

In the afternoon of 24 June 1475, a welcoming procession with Roberto Malatesta, his dignitaries, many refined high ladies and musicians, headed to Terzo (present-day Miramare) to meet the Urbino delegation and accompany the bride to Rimini. Once there, as the guests arrived, the re-enactors dressed up as ancient Romans placed on the arch of Augusto proclaimed to the bride and to Duke Federico their greeting lines, which are not reported in *Cronaca Malatestiana*. As it entered the city, the procession advanced until the first wooden arch that marked the access to piazza Tre Martiri. All the actors rose from their seats placed upon its golden frame to greet Montefeltro. Broglio specified how, looking at the arch façade, one could spot among them, to the right, Julius Caesar, armour-clad and holding a book, and to the left Hercules holding a club. While the latter stood silent, the author of *De bello Gallico* pronounced these words to Montefeltro, as he approached the apparatus: “Tucti t’aspectavamo, con grande alerezza / Invicto duca Federico, a darti / Luocho conviniente a tua Fortezza” (Everybody was waiting for you, with great merriness, / Undefeated duke Federico, to provide for you / A place worthy of your might). And he pointed at a golden seat prepared for the Duke on the arch frame. This greeting – which with the incipit “everybody” bonded together the destinies of the ancient Romans with the Rimini citizens and the wedding guests – was followed by the declaration of the Greek tactician Themistocles. Introducing himself as the victor of the battle of Salamina, he said:

*Tu che sei spesso uscito con victoria  
delle tue imprese, como non sali  
qui, dove nasce ogni eccellente istoria?  
Meritano i tuo gesti triumphali  
farti sedere fra noi con preminentia:  
de non avere al mondo molto equali.*

...

*Si legge nell’opere tue sì che conviene  
che essendo lo inventore dell’onione  
questo sia el luocho tuo de tanto bene.*

[You, who have always emerged victorious / From your ventures, won’t you rise up / Here, where every noble history is born? / Your triumphal deeds make you worthy / Of sitting among us with prominence: / Not many in the world are your equals. / . . . / By your endeavours it is appropriate / Since you are the maker of this union / That you claim this benevolent spot as your own.]

It was then the turn of Furius Camillus, a character that Plutarco placed side by side with Themistocles in *Parallel Lives*, a book that had been thoroughly translated and studied in fifteenth century Italy (Pade 2007). After recalling his victories against the Veients, the Falisci and the Gauls, he proclaimed:

*Quantunque te ha condocto el sommo Iove,  
ove il più preminente esser tu deggi,  
per quanto el corso ogni pianeta move,  
tu in gratia di pontifici e di regi  
sola virtù porterà contubernale  
compagnia e guida e mane fida a pregi,  
onde riverde in te gloria mortale.  
Or nostra gloria in te restinstitata  
fa che per fama meriti essere dove  
la nostra dignità n'è disigniata.*  
(Turchini 2001, 448-9)

[Albeit the sublime Jupiter led you here, / Where you should be the most eminent one, / As every planet follows its course, / You shall bring, by your virtue alone, / Company, guidance and loyal support / To the grace of pontifices and kings, / Whose mortal glory shall flow upon you. / Now, let our glory be renewed within you, / And let our worthy rank be reinstalled / Where our dignity is manifested.]

While the Athenian claimed that it was his deeds – and, in particular, the achievement of the wedding alliance – that had earned Federico the honour to seat on the triumphal arch, the Roman general underlined instead how the glory of the ancient *condottieri* was brought back to life thanks to the force of his sheer virtue. Therefore, Montefeltro was worthy of sitting on a seat where such glory could be admired: on the triumphal arch, among the men whose strategic, political prowess and ingenuity alike were celebrated by Plutarco.

On the second wooden arch, at the opposite edge of the piazza, as Broglio specified, Diana and the nymphs sang joyfully as the bride passed by, giving to the angels (mentioned in the apparatus description) the identity of the nymphs of the goddess' train who, a few days earlier, had met with Camilla d'Aragona near Fano and had accompanied her into the lands of Costanzo Sforza (*Ordine de le noze*, a2r). The author did not report what she said to Elisabetta; nor did he mention what happened along the route that connected Piazza Maggiore to the cathedral, but just wrote: “per abbreviare, tucti li archi triumphali al passare dell'illustrissimo duca d'Orbino laudaro la fama e la gloria di Sua Signoria” (in short, every triumphal arch, as the most illustrious duke of Urbino passed by, praised His Lordship's fame and glory). Therefore, Federico da Montefeltro was the protagonist of the celebration, and the subject of the majority of the poems recited during the entrance of his daughter.



The first day of celebration ended when the procession entered Castel Sismondo in the evening. On the following morning, in the Duomo, the wedding mass was sung. The guests then gathered in the Sala Grande of the castle, where Giovanni Mario Filelfo recited a congratulatory oration, followed by the signing of the nuptial contract. Broglio did not describe the following banquet, and only provided a list of the dishes that composed its four courses, reporting how a dancing party ensued, and later a *colazione* choreographically served by 140 pageboys.<sup>21</sup> Among the sophisticated sugary sculptures of this pastry-based banquet, which traditionally ended the fifteenth century gala feasts, the chronicler described:

La fontana della piazza d'Arimine che sta apresso al palazzo formata in propria forma con 16 puttini intorno di zucaro fino, la quale giettava acqua rosata. Et più in propria forma fo portato nella gran sala figurata di zucaro la porta di San Pietro con dui giganti nella similitudine che già antichamente fo guardata da dui giganti, l'un chiamato Galarano al tempo del grande ammirante Balante patre del valente barone di Fierabranca.

Similmente fu dificato di zucaro l'Arco trionfale di Arimino con dui giganti di zucaro; la degna chiesa di San Francesco come doveva essere fornita tucta de zucaro fino, e più un carro triumphale con lo signore [Sigismondo] armato capitano col bastone in mano.

La Rocha ovvero castello d'Arimine como proprio sta con ponti e porte seracinesche e con giente alle mura con fochi udirifichi, e tucti li toresini forniti di puctini assaissimi e so le mura di questo castello ardiano con fochi odorosissimi e in ciaschuno torresino v'era un gigante suso; pur di zucaro fino era ogni cosa. (Turchini 2001, 455)

[A reproduction of the fountain of piazza d'Arimine, which is next to the castle, with 16 cherubs surrounding it made of the finest sugar, which pumped out rosewater. Later, a reproduction of the gate of San Pietro was brought in the hall, with two giants, in the same way as two giants overlooked it in the past, and one was named Galarano, during the era of the great admiral Balante, father of the valiant baron of Fierabranca.

Likewise the triumphal Arch of Arimino was built with sugar, with two sugar giants; the fair church of San Francesco, all built with the finest sugar, and a triumphal chariot with His Lordship [Sigismondo] armed with a staff in his hand.

The Rocha (i.e. the Arimine castle), with its bridges, gates, portcullises, people by the walls and scented fires, and every tower was brimming with a multitude of cherubs, and the walls of this castle burned with scented fires, and each tower had a giant on top of it; and everything was made of the finest sugar.]

<sup>21</sup> Observations about the courses of this feast can be found in Benporat 2001, 81-2.



The monuments from Rimini's proud Roman past (the ancient Roman fountain, the arch of Augustus, the gate of San Pietro), made of sugar and with hidden hydraulic devices, decorated with cherubs and marzipan giants, were restored to their ancient glory for the second time during the celebration. Likewise, the wedding was the stage to show to the guests how the modern buildings commissioned by the Malatestas (the church of San Francesco and the Malatesta's stronghold) would look upon completion, with their sugary reproductions, crafted by the court's confectioners, being displayed in the hall. Perhaps they were not that surprised when the ambitious ruler of Rimini showed off his future projects for the city through the wedding pastries. Three weeks before, during the *colazione* offered by Costanzo Sforza for his wedding, a model of the Rocca Costanza was displayed, "de zucaro candidissima facta a quella forma et proportione che el desegno over modo . . . che fa edificare el prefato signor di Pesaro" (*Ordine de le noze*, e3v; made of the whitest sugar, following the shape and proportions of the project . . . commissioned by the lord of Pesaro). Even in Pesaro the choreographic presentation of the magnificent pastries had been accompanied by music and dances, which at some point were interrupted by a Latin ode praising the newlyweds declaimed by a "uno garzoneto de Fano de età circa XIII anni" (d8r; a boy from Fano about 13 years old). Likewise, the lord of Rimini wanted his nuptial *colazione* to have an acted interlude entrusted to "dui nobili damigille della età di quindici anni l'una, bellissime d'aspetto e di loquentia" (two noble damsels of fifteen years of age each, beautiful both in demeanour and eloquence)<sup>22</sup>. The *Cronaca Malatestiana* reports the two songs declaimed by the maidens, one in Latin and the other in the vernacular, praising the groom and bride, along with the names of the two performers – Adriana Polissena and Giovanna Grisalda Bianchella – and the lyrics of the song they sang when the celebration day was over.

Again, the performances of these adolescents with commendable Latin oratory and singing skills were an additional *trait d'union* of the nuptial ceremonies of the two captains, who, among poems, sugar sculptures, and ephemeral apparatuses, wished to flaunt the 'illusory' stability of their rulership. In the suspended time of festivals they build their ideal city, but it would only take one single fork to corrupt that majestic dream made of sugar and pretentious words, doomed to be shattered at the end of the celebrations. However, between an ideal continuity and a necessary discontinuity of forms of government, idealisations and hopes, the glory of Rome had come back to life.

<sup>22</sup> See Turchini 2001, 456. The edition of the lyrics declaimed by the two maidens can be found in Rossi 2021, 7-17.

## Works Cited

- Ambrogiani, Francesco. 2003. *Vita di Costanzo Sforza (1447-1483)*. Pesaro: Link 3.
- Benporat, Claudio. 2001. *Feste e banchetti. Convivialità italiana fra Tre e Quattrocento*. Firenze: Olschki.
- Bornstein, Daniel. 1988. "The Wedding Feast of Roberto Malatesta and Isabetta da Montefeltro: Ceremony and Power". *Renaissance and Reformation* 12 (2): 101-17.
- 2005. "History and culture in a provincial centre: a universal chronicle from Renaissance Rimini". *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2): 143-9.
- Bridgeman, Jane. 2013. *A Renaissance Wedding: The Celebrations at Pesaro for the Marriage of Costanzo Sforza & Camilla Marzano d'Aragona, 26-30 May 1475*. London: Harvey Miller.
- Clementini, Cesare. 1617. *Raccolto istorico della fondazione di Rimino e dell'origine e vite de' Malatesti. Con vari e notabili fatti in essa città e fuori di tempo in tempo successi*, vol. 2. Rimini: Simbeni.
- Cruciani, Fabrizio. 1987. "Il teatro e la festa". In *Il teatro italiano nel Rinascimento*, edited by Fabrizio Cruciani and Daniele Seragnoli, 46-8.
- D'Accone, Frank A. 1993. "Lorenzo il Magnifico e la musica". In *La musica a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, edited by Piero Gargiulo, 219-49. Firenze: Olschki.
- Degli Innocenti, Luca. 2017. "I cantari in ottava rima tra Medio Evo e primo Rinascimento: i cantimpanca e la piazza". In *Cantar ottave. Per una storia dell'intonazione cantata in ottava rima*, edited by Maurizio Agamennone, 17-18. Lucca: LIM.
- Delucca, Oreste. 1997. *Artisti a Rimini fra Gotico e Rinascimento, Rassegna di fonti archivistiche*. Rimini: Pataconi.
- 2020. "Addobbi e ornamenti liturgici quattrocenteschi nella cattedrale riminese di Santa Colomba". *Romagna arte e storia* 40 (116): 5-19.
- De Maria, Sandro. 1984. "L'arco di Rimini nel Rinascimento. Onori effimeri e antichità ritrovata". In *Culture figurative e materiali tra Emilia e Marche*, edited by Paolo Del Bianco, 443-62. Rimini: Maggioli.
- Falcioni, Anna. 2012. *Elisabetta di Montefeltro*, DBI, 76: 51-3.
- Garbero Zorzi, Elvira. 1986. "Festa e spettacolo a corte". In *Federico da Montefeltro. Lo stato, le arti, la cultura*, edited by Giorgio Cerboni Baiardi, Giorgio Chittolini and Piero Floriani, vol. 2, 301-30. Roma: Bulzoni.
- Guerriero Da Gubbio. 1902. *Cronaca di Urbino. Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* 22/4, edited by Giuseppe Mazzatinti. Città di Castello: Lapi.
- Lombardi, Francesco Vittorio. 1986. "Liste delle nozze di Roberto Malatesta e di Elisabetta da Montefeltro (25 June 1475)". *Romagna arte e storia* 18: 13-26.
- Maccarthy, Evan A. 2018. "The English Voyage of Pietrobono Burzelli". *The Journal of Musicology* 35 (4): 431-59.
- Ordine de le noze de lo Illustrissimo Signor Misir Costantio Sfortia*. 1475. Vicenza: Hermann Liechtenstein.
- Pade, Marianne. 2007. *The Reception of Plutarch's 'Lives' in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press.
- Pasini, Pier Giorgio. 1988. "Fortuna e immagini dell'Arco riminese. Appunti per una storia dell'Arco di Augusto e del suo contesto". In *L'arco d'Augusto. Significati*

- e vicende di un grande segno urbano*, edited by Pier Luigi Foschi, 63-101. Rimini: Musei Comunali.
- Passera, Claudio. 2020. "In questo piccolo libretto". *Descrizioni di feste e di spettacoli per le nozze dei signori italiani del Rinascimento*. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- Quaquarelli, Leonardo. 2018. "Ciriaco d'Ancona e Rimini". In *Gli antichi alla corte dei Malatesta. Echi, modelli e fortuna della tradizione classica nella Romagna del Quattrocento (l'età di Sigismondo)*, Atti del convegno internazionale (Rimini, 9-11 giugno 2016), edited by Federico Maria Muccioli and Francesca Cenerini, 237-50. Milano: Jouvence.
- Ravara Montebelli, Cristina. 2020. *Acqua buona riminese. Sorgenti, acquedotti, fontane e lavatoi: nuove ricerche*, 80-6. Rimini: Bookstones.
- Rossi, Carla. 2021. "La Biblioteca Femminile Italiana e l'edizione dei sonetti ritrovati di Giovanna Grisalda Bianchelli e Adriana Polissena". *Theory and Criticism of Literature and Arts* 5 (2): 7-17.
- Saffiotti, Tito. 2017. "Scoccola, 'soavissimo' buffone di Borso d'Este alla corte di Ferrara". *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco* 33: 23-9.
- Tosi Brandi, Elisa. 2020. *Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. Oggetti, relazioni e consumi alla corte di un Signore del Tardo Medioevo*. Milano: Jovence.
- Turchini, Angelo, ed. 2003. *Castel Sismondo, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta e l'arte militare nel primo Rinascimento*, Atti del Convegno (Rimini, 20-22 September 2002). Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio.
- 2001. *La signoria di Roberto Malatesta detto il Magnifico (1468-1482)*. Rimini: Ghigi.
- Ventrone, Paola. 2022. "Paradisi e voli angelici nello spettacolo e nell'iconografia in Italia nel lungo Quattrocento". *Drammaturgia* 19 (9): 11-41.
- 2016. *Teatro civile e sacra rappresentazione a Firenze nel Rinascimento*. Firenze: Le Lettere.

