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## Musical Venues\*

### Musical Performance at San Petronio in Bologna: a Brief History

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Marc Vanscheeuwijck

The *Cappella musicale di San Petronio* was the most important and influential of the Bolognese musical *cappelle*,<sup>1</sup> particularly since the Basilica was the site of solemnities of the Bolognese Senate. Begun in 1390, the actual construction of San Petronio was spread out over nearly three centuries. Nonetheless the first celebration of the patron saint's feast, on 4

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\* The two articles concerning venues in this issue explore an important avenue of research only minimally represented in earlier volumes of *Performance Practice Review*. Venues certainly have had a direct link with performance practice. Many works were written with a specific locale in mind (a church, a theater, a concert hall), and the nature of this locale, its size, dimensions, and acoustical qualities, often had a distinct bearing on the initial musical conception.

<sup>1</sup> Others include S. Francesco, the Cathedral of S. Pietro, S. Maria dei Servi, S. Maria Maggiore, S. Salvatore, S. Giovanni in Monte, S. Maria della Carità, Filippini, S. Stefano, S. Domenico, S. Maria della Vita, S. Giacomo, and S. Paolo, each of which flourished during the period from the 15th to 18th centuries. Around 1700 approximately 1/6 of the total surface of the city (of 64,000 inhabitants) was taken up by the more than 200 churches, monasteries, convents, and oratories.

October 1393, already included instrumental music as well as chant (*cum tubis vel aliis instrumentis ante eos pulsantibus*).<sup>2</sup>

### Fifteenth Century

In 1436 Pope Eugene IV founded the first regular musical chapel with one *Cantor* and *unum collegium viginti quatuor puerorum clericorum* (a singing master and collegium of 24 boy clerics) who sang during liturgical services.<sup>3</sup> In 1464 we learn from a Cardinal Capranica that the choir performed *Canto figurato* (polyphony) during vespers and also during masses on Sundays and duplex-feasts.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, members of the *Concerto Palatino* were regularly paid for participating in the music of the liturgical services from 1439 on. The first large organ was built by the Tuscan organmaker Lorenzo di Giacomo da Prato from 1471 to 1475, though a smaller positive organ by Andrea di Giovanni Mologhi from Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna had been used in the church beginning 1440.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the plainchant performed at San Petronio is preserved in nine illuminated choirbooks (compiled between 1477 and ca. 1520) now in the *Museo di S. Petronio*, whereas the polyphonic music was transmitted in manuscripts from the first half of the 16th century. The 15th-century music is mainly anonymous,<sup>6</sup> while repertory spanning over into the following century includes Flemish and Italian composers such as Jacheto, Févin, Pari, Josquin, Brumel, Rosselli, Mouton, de la Rue, Janequin, and Spataro.

### Sixteenth Century

Spataro became the first musician in Bologna to hold the title of *Maestro di Cappella* (1512-1541). Later in the century a number of instrumental performers were added. In 1560 a trombone-player (Alfonso Viola) was hired as a regular member of the *Cappella*, and in 1574 Ascanio Cavalaro became a regular cornetto-player. A violinist (Pellegrino Muzoli) was em-

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<sup>2</sup> *Archivio della Fabbriceria di San Petronio* (I-Bsp), vol. 1, *Statuti*, fols. 9v.-12r.

<sup>3</sup> Bologna, *Archivio de Stato* (I-Bas), *Demaniale, Capitolo de S. Petronio*, busta 5: Papal Bull of 4 October 1436.

<sup>4</sup> Bologna, *Ibidem: Costituzioni Reatine* of Cardinal Capranica (*Ad ea libenter*, 5 June 1464).

<sup>5</sup> Oscar Mischiati, "La Cappella Musicale e il suo Archivio," in *La Basilica de S. Petronio*, vol. 2 (Milan: Pizzi, 1984), 323.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. a mass in I-Bsp (*Archivio Musicale*): Ms. A.XXI, fasc. E.

ployed as early as 1593, together with one cornetto-player and three trombone-players under the chapelmaster Andrea Rota. Rota managed to convince the vestry board to have Baldassarre Malamini from Cento build a second organ in 1596, facing the old one, "since with two organs concerts could be made with choirs and double [choirs], both responsorial and antiphonal."<sup>7</sup> The practice of having a double choir must have been very popular in Bologna in the 1590s to justify the considerable expense of a second organ.

### Seventeenth Century

Under Girolamo Giacobbi (Chapelmaster 1604-1628) the *Cappella* reached the unusually high number of 42 regularly employed musicians. In the preface to his *Prima parte dei Salmi concertati a due e più chori* (Venice, 1609) Giacobbi explained that a *Maestro di Cappella* might feel free to augment the number of singers, instrumentalists, and choirs for the performance of his Psalms, but that the best effect would be obtained when the added choirs were arranged at a "suitable distance" from the two main choirs.

When Maurizio Cazzati was nominated *Maestro di Cappella* in 1657 he radically reorganized the whole Chapel and modernized the instrumental ensemble; he added a regular group of 4 violins, 2 *alto viole*, 1 *tenore viola*, 2 violoni, 1 theorbo, and 2 trombones to the 2 organs and chorus. Developing the latest instrumental forms of concerto, sonata, and sinfonia, as well as small and large-scale vocal and instrumental *concertato* styles, he also introduced the trumpet as a solo instrument into San Petronio. The number of musicians and the variety of instruments used during the liturgical services depended entirely on the importance and the type of the celebrations.

In 1658 it was stipulated<sup>8</sup> that for every regular Sunday and for the "Simplex" and "Duplex" liturgical feasts one of the two organists was to be present, and that the *Cappella* (the choir) was to sing "at the large music stand" (*al leggile*) in the middle of the Choir, in this way performing plainchant in alternation with the organ or with four-part polyphony in *stile*

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<sup>7</sup> . . . "quod possint cum duobus organis fieri concertus et chori ac musica duplex et responsiva ac alternata." Cf. Mischiati, *Idem.*, 324, and Osvaldo Gambassi, *La Cappella Musicale di S. Petronio* (Florence: Olschki, 1989), 19, 76, 83, and 94.

<sup>8</sup> In the *Ordini per la Musica dell'Insigne Collegiata di S. Petronio*.



*antico* (the Palestrina style). For the Vigils (Eves) of some Double First-Class Feasts two organs accompanied the chorus.<sup>9</sup> More important, however, were the Masses and Second Vespers of these feasts, where the chorus was instructed to sing *sù gli organi*, that is on the *cantoria*, close to the organs. In such cases the chorus was usually divided into two parts to perform double choir music. On such days as Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, or on the commemoration days of the Bolognese popes (*feste solenni*) the regular instrumentalists of the *Cappella* also performed (*si fà Cappella*), playing short instrumental pieces and small-scale concerted pieces at certain moments during the Proper of the mass or during Vespers. The concerted pieces consisted of psalms or mass segments for 1 to 5 soloists, either with or without a 4- or 5-part chorus and a small string ensemble.<sup>10</sup>

### Seventeenth to Eighteenth Century

From the time Cazzati became chapelmaster (1657) until the late 18th century, as many as 120 to 150 extra musicians were regularly hired from other Bolognese churches and nearby towns, thereby constituting a huge chorus and large instrumental ensemble, the latter consisting of strings, trumpets, cornetts, trombones, serpents, bassoons, theorboes, four organs, and (after 1702) oboes.<sup>11</sup>

Large-scale compositions by Cazzati, Petronio Franceschini, Giovanni Paolo Colonna (*Maestro di Cappella* 1674-1695), Domenico Gabrielli, Giacomo Antonio Perti (*Maestro di Cappella* 1696-1756) were performed with as many as 9 soloists, 2 choirs (5 and 4 parts), 1 or 2 trumpets, a 5-part string ensemble, and three separate continuo groups (the continuo of the first choir and soloists, the bass for the second choir, and the orchestral *ripieno* bass). Every chorus that had its own continuo group (cello, *violone*, trombone, bassoon, theorbo) was placed close to the organ, whereas the strings and trumpets often filled the raised platform in the back of the choir. In small scale compositions the musicians were arranged with the soloists close to the *Organo di concerto* (the "new" organ *in cornu Evangelii*) and the first

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<sup>9</sup> *Feste doppie* included All Saints, Christmas, Ascension, Pentecost, and Epiphany.

<sup>10</sup> Similar performance practices were quite common in the other Bolognese churches as well.

<sup>11</sup> Bologna, Archivio della Fabbriceria di San Petronio (I-Bsp), Cart. 577-80: *Liste e Ricevute (Filze di Cassa)*, and Cart. 602-4: *Mandati [di pagamento]*. See also Anne Schnoebelen, "Performance Practices at San Petronio in the Baroque," *Acta musicologica* 41 (1969), 37-55, and Eugene J. Enrico, *The Orchestra at San Petronio in the Baroque Era* (Washington, D.C., 1976).

*continuo* group, and the chorus close to the *Organo de ripieno* (or the "old" organ *in cornu Epistolae*), whereas the strings were placed in the back of the choir.

Instrumental pieces for one, two, or four trumpets, with as many oboes, strings, and divided continuo by Giuseppe Torelli, Franceschini, Gabrielli, Giuseppe Jacchini, and Guiseppe Matteo Alberti were performed at the beginning or end of a service. For the authorities and the clergy, who were seated in the choir and thus surrounded by musicians 20 feet above them, the sound must have been enormously impressive. The extremely long reverberation (12 seconds) of the huge building did not allow composers to make too many harmonic digressions in their compositions, so they worked more on contrasting effects in colors, dynamics, texture, etc. Moreover, since the acoustics boost the high frequencies, the number of performers had to be increased in the lower musical parts—up to 2/3 of the instruments in the ensemble played bass parts.<sup>12</sup>

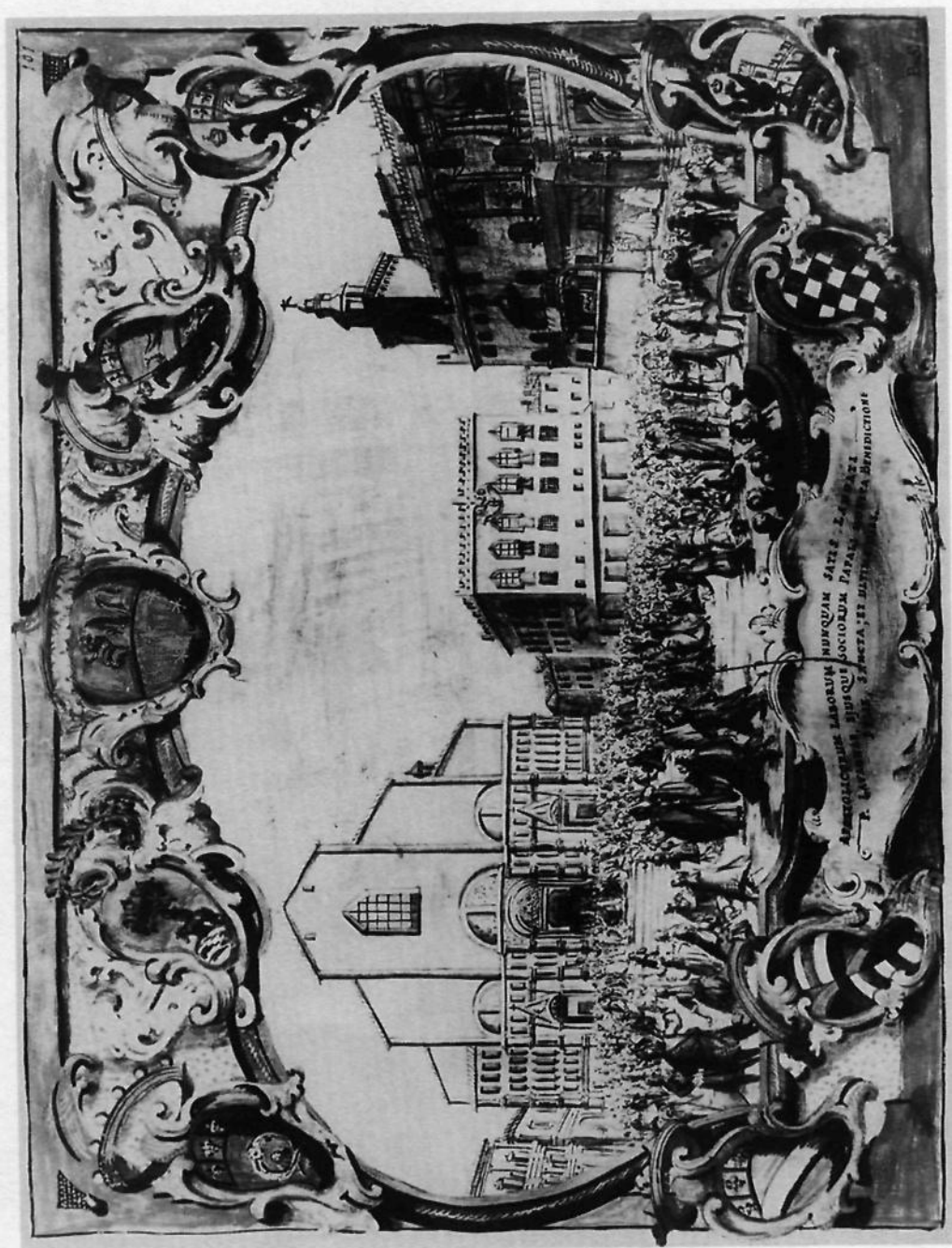
### Nineteenth to Twentieth Century

Even if in the 19th century extra musicians were still hired for the celebration of San Petronio, it no longer happened on such a large scale. In 1926 the musical chapel was abolished, but in 1986, after the restoration of the two organs (1974-1982), a new chapel was created in San Petronio thus permitting performances of the Bolognese Renaissance and baroque repertoire in its original location. In this way the city of Bologna was once again able to realize some of the musical splendors of its own glorious past.

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<sup>12</sup> See my doctoral dissertation, *De religieuze muziekproductie in de San Petronio-kerk te Bologna ten tijde van Giovanni Paolo Colonna (1674-1695)*, Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 1995.

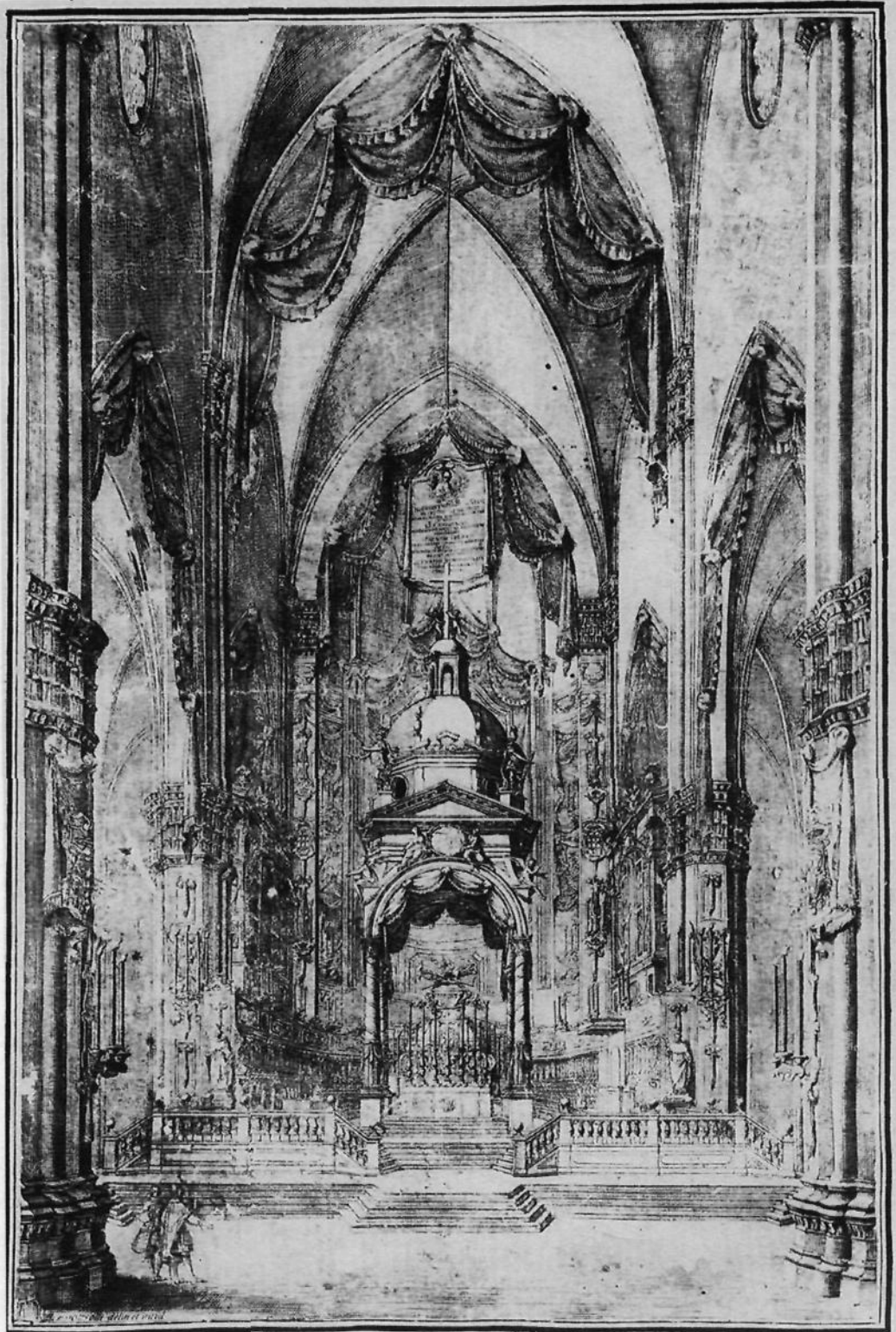
**San Petronio and the Piazza Maggiore**  
**Insignia degli Anziani (undated, I-Bas)**





**San Petronio, Cappella Maggiore, 1733**  
Engraving by Antonio Alessandro Scarselli

(Archivio della Fabbriceria di S. Petronio, I-Bsp, Cart. 390, n. 54)





**Ordini Per la Musica . . . di San Petronio, 1658**  
(I-Bca, 17, Stor. Eccl. Bol., cap. H15, n. 22)



**ORDINI**

Per la Musica dell' Insigne  
Collegiata di S. Petronio,  
Reformati d'ordine de gl' Illustris-  
simi Signori

Presidente , e Fabbricieri  
della Reuerenda Fab-  
brica di essa .

L' Anno 1658.

## Ordini, 1658 (pp. 29-30)

29  
PER LE FESTE  
MOBILI.

**D**omeniche Feriali à tutte  
Vn'Organo.  
Messa.  
Inno, e Magnificat.  
Sabbati feriali le Litanie, & Mottetto al-  
la Madonna.  
Prima di di Quaresima doppo l'Oratio-  
ne delle 40. bore alla Processione,  
Pange lingua con gl'Organi alterna-  
tamente, seconda l'ordine del Ma-  
stro di Cappella.  
Domenica in Passione.  
Inno, e Magnificat.  
Domenica delle Palme.  
Alla Processione, e beneditti.  
A Vespro Inno, e Magnificat.  
Mercoledì Santo la sera.  
Prime Lamentationi. (Si fa Cap-  
Resp. Benedictus, & pella.  
Miserere.

B 3

Gio-

30

Gionedi Santo.  
Due Organi.  
Kyrie, Gloria.  
Alla eleuatione vn. (Si fa Cap-  
Mottetto. pella.  
Alla Processione Pan-  
ge Lingua.  
La sera come sopra.  
Venerdì Santo.  
Processione del Croci-  
fisso,  
Del Santissimo Sacra- (Si fa Cap-  
mento. pella.)  
Alla Eleuatione vn.  
Mottetto.  
La sera come sopra.  
Sabato Santo.  
Due Organi.  
Ultima Profetia. (Si fa Cap-  
Messa. pella.  
Vespro.  
Compieta solenne.  
Mottetto alla Madonna.  
L'Organista del Mese sonarà al Te-  
Deum, e Benedictus.  
Domenica di Pasqua.  
Due Organi.

Mes-

## Ordini, 1658 (pp. 33-34)

33

Tutto Vespro .  
 Organo al Matutino , al Te Deum ,  
 Inno , e Benedicſus .  
 gilia del Corpo di Chriſto .  
 Vn'Organo .  
 Tutto Vespro .  
 ennità del Corpo di Chriſto .  
 Vn'Organo .  
 Meſſa , e Proceſſione .  
 Tutto Vespro .  
 gilia dell'Ottava del Corpo di Chri-  
 ſto .  
 Vn'Organo .  
 L'Organista del Meſe ſonará al Mat-  
 tutino .  
 aua del Corpo di Chriſto .  
 Vn'Organo .  
 on ſi farà Muſica in alcuna Fe-  
 ſta di Aduento , ò Quareſima  
 trasferita .

Gior-

34

Giorni ne' quali ſi dourà  
 Cantare ſù gl'Or-  
 gani .

Ogni volta , che ſi farà Cappella .  
 Circoncione di N.S. à Meſſa .  
 Epifania à Meſſa .  
 Aſſuntione di M.V. à Meſſa , e Veſpro .  
 S. Petronio Secondo Veſpro .  
 Tutti li Santi à Meſſa .  
 Notte di Natale à Meſſa .  
 Natale à Meſſa .  
 Tre feſte ſeguenti à Meſſa , e Veſpro .  
 Sabato Santo à Compieta .  
 Domenica di Paſqua à Meſſa .  
 Due feſte ſeguenti à Meſſa , e Veſpro .  
 Aſcenſione à Meſſa .  
 Pentecoſte à Meſſa .  
 Due feſte ſeguenti à Meſſa , e Veſpro .  
 Trinità à Meſſa , e Veſpro .  
 Corpus Domini . à Meſſa , e Veſpro .

LAUS DEO.

