



Acoustemologies in Contact

Sounding Subjects and Modes of
Listening in Early Modernity

EDITED BY EMILY WILBOURNE AND SUZANNE G. CUSICK



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2021 Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne G. Cusick. Copyright of individual chapters is maintained by the chapters' authors.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text and to make commercial use of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).

Attribution should include the following information:

Emily Wilbourne and Suzanne G. Cusick (eds), *Acoustemologies in Contact: Sounding Subjects and Modes of Listening in Early Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0226>

Copyright and permission for reuse of many images included in this publication differ from the above. Copyright and permissions information for images is provided in the captions.

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license, please visit <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0226#copyright>

Further details about CC BY licenses are available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Updated digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0226#resources>

Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-035-1

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-036-8

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-037-5

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-80064-038-2

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-80064-039-9

ISBN XML: 978-1-80064-040-5

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0226

Cover Image: 'The manner in which the Mexicans dance', in Juan de Tovar, *Historia de la venida de los indios* (Ms., ca. 1585), f. 58r. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, CC BY-SA 4.0. Cover Design by Anna Gatti.

8. ‘La stiava dolente in suono di canto’

War, Slavery, and Difference in a Medici Court Entertainment

Suzanne G. Cusick

In late February 1607, two central Italian courts invited select guests to celebrate Carnival by witnessing an entirely sung dramatic spectacle in one of their ruling families’ palaces. Each spectacle was meant to be ephemeral, yet each had profound consequences both for its composer’s career and for the then-emergent genre we know as opera. One — composed and performed by and for elite men purportedly interested in the story of Orpheus and Euridice as an allegory of Platonist ethics — was published two years later, ensuring both its own and composer Claudio Monteverdi’s canonic status in the historiography of opera’s antecedents.¹ The other, composed by one woman under the indirect supervision of another and intended to offer a heterosocial audience entertaining propaganda, turned on a plot that could have seemed drawn from contemporary life — verbal and physical combat over the fate of a Persian queen captured on the high seas and enslaved. Although praised by the court diarist for having ‘una musica stupenda’ [wonderful music], it was never published, nor

1 On Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, see John Whenham, ed., *Claudio Monteverdi: L’Orfeo* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Iain Fenlon, ‘Monteverdi’s Mantuan “Orfeo”: Some New Documentation’, *Early Music*, 12.3 (1984), 163–172, <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/12.2.163>

was its music preserved.² Indeed, had the composer not asked her poet, Michelangelo Buonarroti *il giovane*, to send her the words of ‘the festa [...] performed at Pisa called *La stiava*, for which I wrote the music about twenty years ago’, posterity might never have known that nineteen-year-old Francesca Caccini began her career as a theatrical composer with a representation of the Mediterranean slave trade meant to entertain the Medici court’s elite.³ This chapter explores the ways *La stiava*’s sound design produced representations of ethnoreligious difference, activating audience-affective responses in ways that served the Medici court’s interests amid the long Mediterranean war of Christian powers against the Ottoman empire. It ends with a meditation on the implications for the historiography of early modern women’s musical culture and the historiography of opera.

I have written about *La stiava* before. In a 2009 monograph on Caccini, I argued that her production of ‘una musica stupenda’ for an entertainment dear to Medici Grand Duchess Christine de Lorraine’s heart led directly to the composer’s hiring as a salaried musician at the Medici court, a position that provided the necessary condition for her remarkable career, and for her posthumous identity as ‘the first woman to compose opera’.⁴

But I had long meant to come back to *La stiava*, because the title and scenario provoked me to questions that I did not know how to answer when I drafted that chapter of my book. The title character is an otherwise nameless ‘slave woman’ who reveals herself — in song — to be a daughter of the Persian king. These twin facts prompted my U.S.-born sensibility to anxieties about the history of chattel slavery and the tide of Islamophobia that was already rising in the 1990s, all but forcing three questions. What notions about slavery and about Persia might

2 Angelo Solerti, *Musica, ballo e drammatica alla Corte medicea dal 1600 al 1637: Notizie tratte da un diario con appendice di testi inediti e rari* (Bologna: A. Forni, 1989; reprint of Florence, 1905), p. 38. The description is taken from Cesare Tinghi’s official court diary, the manuscript of which is in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze [hereafter BNCF], MS Gino Capponi 261, I, f. 173.

3 Archivio Buonarroti [hereafter AB] 44, no. 454, letter from Francesca Caccini Signorini to Michelangelo Buonarroti, 21 June 1626. My translation. The full letter in Italian is published in Suzanne G. Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 321–322, <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226338101.001.0001>

4 Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, pp. 19–38 (esp. pp. 28–35).

have been available in the sensibilities of a Medici court audience on Carnival night, 1607? How might the young Caccini's 'musica stupenda', or other elements of the show's overall sound design, have activated those available notions in ways that served Christine de Lorraine's political interests in that particular season? And what difference, if any, might even speculative answers to these questions make to either the historiography of women's musical culture in Medicean Tuscany or to the historiography of early modernity's signature musical genre, opera?

I need to explain the hidden assumptions behind these questions, and their relationship to the nature and limitations of my sources. First, I assume that *La stiava* has a place in the pre-history of opera. *La stiava* was one of the many theatrical performances involving sung speech, costume, and the musically organized movements of performing bodies that, in retrospect, most music historians have taken to be among the antecedents of opera. To put that another way, *La stiava* is among the set of texts and practices from which the conventions of fully-formed opera were drawn. Moreover, *La stiava* was conceived, composed, and enacted by some of the very people who participated in the gradual assembly of those antecedents into a relatively stable genre. Christine de Lorraine (1565–1637), who took such detailed interest in *La stiava*'s representations, had been the bride for whose marriage one of the most storied antecedents of opera, the 1589 set of intermedi for *La pellegrina*, was commissioned and performed.⁵ According to Tim Carter, her husband Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609) had assigned her at marriage to oversee the court's performance staff as part of her *governo di casa*.⁶ *La stiava*'s poet, Michelangelo Buonarroti il giovane (1568–1646), had written the official account of the festivities for the marriage of Ferdinando and Christine's niece Maria to King Henri IV of France in 1600, festivities that featured Jacopo Peri's *L'Euridice*, the earliest all-sung musical play in modern style to survive.⁷ Buonarroti would go on

5 On the 1589 intermedi, see James Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996) and Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for 'La pellegrina'* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

6 On Christine, see Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court*, pp. 39–60, and Tim Carter, *Jacopo Peri (1561–1633): His Life and Works* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), *passim*.

7 On *L'Euridice*'s historical importance, see Carter, *Jacopo Peri*, and Tim Carter and Francesca Fantappiè, *Staging 'Euridice' (1600): Theatre, Sets and Music in Late*

to be Christine's favorite poet / playwright for many years, writing plays with incidental music for court performance, scenarios for informal musical entertainments at the women's court, and the libretto for the fully sung *Il giudizio di Paride*, staged by Christine and Ferdinando for the wedding of their son, future Grand Duke Cosimo II, to Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria in 1608.⁸ Francesca Caccini (1587–post-1641) herself had sung in *L'Euridice* as part of her father's *concerto delle donne*, as had two of the three singers involved in *La stiava*. She would go on to compose music for some or all of at least fourteen court theatricals, including the most nearly 'operatic' such event to survive from Florence before the genre consolidated in Venice, *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*, in 1625.

Second, I have to grapple with the fact that none of Caccini's allegedly 'stupenda' music for *La stiava* survives. One way that music scholars have traditionally dealt with absent music is to imagine how a composer whose work we know well would probably have responded to a given text. In Caccini's case, one can imagine turning to *La liberazione*. But at a tenth the length of *La liberazione*, the eighty lines of *La stiava* offer no comparable opportunities for virtuosic self-display. Moreover, there is no way of knowing what compositional tricks might have been consistent across the eighteen years leading from compositional debut to mastery. Thus I approach the imagining of Caccini's probable music very cautiously.

Despite the absence of Caccini's music and the inappropriateness of the usual way of compensating for that absence, I believe it is possible to think through what does survive — Buonarroti's various texts — to imagine the affective and political effects of *La stiava* on its audience, and the way both its powerful genre reference and its sounds might have interacted with then-commonplace notions of ethnoreligious alterity, with Tuscany's specific interest in an alliance with Persia, and with the imbrication of the Mediterranean slave trade in that region's long war between 'Moors' and Christians. Evoked by sensory means, these

Renaissance Florence, forthcoming. On Buonarroti's account of it, see Carter, "'Non occorre nominare tanti musici': Private Patronage and Public Ceremony in Late Sixteenth-Century Florence", *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, 4 (1991), 89–104, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4603671>

8 On Buonarroti's importance as a poet, dramatist and patronage broker favored by Christine's court, see Janie Cole, *A Muse of Music in Early Baroque Florence: The Poetry of Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007).

notions had the potential to activate fleeting affective responses even in listeners primarily interested in being entertained.

Two inter-related ideas will be at work in my reading: the idea of 'notion' and the idea of 'activation' of affective responses. What do I mean by these words? Something that is less formed in consciousness, and less rational, than an idea or a thought, a 'notion' is for me a loose combination of half-remembered ideas and thoughts, perhaps attached to images, sounds, or bits of language, but always attached to an affective response. That affective response, I posit, can be 'activated' by sensory stimulation (including explicit allusions to previous experience), often without more than a fleeting consciousness of the 'notion' to which it is attached.⁹ Self-aware creators of entertainment, I further posit, work with the 'notions' they believe to circulate in their intended audience's milieu. That is, they work intentionally with what they think members of their audience know, or think they know, to activate affective responses appropriate to the occasion, even as they know full well that individual responses are unpredictable.¹⁰ In what follows, I suggest that the potential for such fleeting affective responses was calculated carefully enough that the sound design of *La stiava* probably tapped and then resolved maurophobic anxieties about Tuscan masculinity and readiness for war, flattering its audience while providing them the opportunity both to savor and to disavow the ethnoreligious enmity on which that war would be based.¹¹

9 This line of thinking is inspired by Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700372>. Ahmed shows how affective responses 'stick' to persons, categories of person, objects, or to their representations. If repeated often enough, the 'sticking' can produce powerful, embodied, all but automatic emotional responses of fear, disgust, hatred, or love toward categories of persons. I extend Ahmed's idea, proposing that musical and theatrical cues can activate affective responses to stick and unstick, and therefore both be reinforced and disavowed.

10 For example, for me, a European-descended person born in the United States, the word 'slavery' evokes 'notions' of the Atlantic slave trade, the long history of African-descended people's enslavement in my country, civil war, the equation of skin color and race, etc. For me, those notions activate affective responses of grief, guilt, rage, sorrow, shame, acute awareness of my 'white' skin, mixed into an incoherent brew that produces the physical desire to recoil, or weep, or literally look away from an interlocutor. Predictable though they be, both the notions and the affective and somatic responses attached to them are only one of the many sets of simultaneous responses that are possible for a person like me.

11 Maurophobia is fear of Moors — that is, of people who, regardless of ethnicity or religion, hailed from lands ruled by adherents of Islam.

La stiava: Of the Long Mediterranean War, Slavery, and Spectacles of Combat

Michelangelo Buonarroti's papers preserve a detailed record of his close collaboration with Christine de Lorraine in the development of *La stiava*, some of it mediated by her secretary at the time, Curtio Picchena. In addition to their letters, there are two draft scenarios, one with the texts to be sung; a nearly indecipherable page describing the point system to be used in deciding the winner of a staged combat that was to be the centerpiece of the spectacle; and both a draft and two identical fair copies of the *descrizione* that Christine intended to send her father, Duke Charles III of Lorraine. Among Buonarroti's papers, these materials follow a set of scenarios for earlier theatrical ephemera, all involving combat in which the love of the women in the audience was the nominal prize over which knights dressed as Tuscans or Saracens fought.¹²

From the way Buonarroti archived the performance materials, it seems certain that the main entertainment for Carnival night, 1607, was always meant to center on a staged combat in which the Medici princes would publicly display their prowess at arms. Indeed, the many letters between Christine and Picchena in 1606 and 1607 include exchanges about how the military skills of her sons Cosimo and Francesco should be represented in court spectacles.¹³ These letters are scattered among others that make clear just how important those displays were to sustaining support for the Tuscan state's efforts to create a naval and military coalition meant, in words attributed to Grand Duke Ferdinando I, 'to destroy completely the Ottoman Empire'.¹⁴

Historians have long known that Tuscany participated in the long if often low-level war between Mediterranean basin territories under Ottoman control and those by Christian states or their agents. Alessandro Olsaretti traces Tuscan involvement in these wars to Emperor Charles V's disastrous effort to capture Algiers in 1541.¹⁵ Charles's arrogance

12 These are at AB 81, fasc. 14, which begins at f. 251r; the earliest dates from 1591.

13 Picchena's correspondence with Christine in this period is mainly found in Archivio di Stato di Firenze [hereafter ASF], Mediceo del Principato 1325.

14 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 4275, Corrispondenze col Levante, f. 51r.

15 Alessandro Olsaretti, 'Political Dynamics in the Rise of Fakhr al-Din, 1590–1633: Crusade, Trade and State Formation along the Levantine Coast', *International History Review*, 30.4 (2008), 709–740, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2008.10416646>

prompted the Ottomans under Suleiman bin Selim Khan, 'the Magnificent' (1494–1566) to organize piracy in the Western Mediterranean, piracy that aimed to separate the dominant Christian powers in the Ottoman world, Genoa, and Naples. Tuscany's coast lay in between, and was therefore vulnerable to the constant raids by which pirates provisioned themselves for battle. Grand Duke Cosimo I (1519–1574), Ferdinando I's father, had responded to the threat by building a fleet, a port to house and maintain it at Livorno, and a private force of Tuscan noblemen, the Cavalieri di Santo Stefano, who were dedicated before God to the defense of Christianity but who functioned more as pirates. Cosimo's eldest son and first successor, Grand Duke Francesco I (1541–1587), had furthered his father's policies, intending to provoke naval conflict with both the Ottomans and the Habsburgs so as to preserve Tuscan independence from both. Even though Tuscany was never to have more than twelve galleys, another dozen or so sailing ships, and two very powerful, well-armed galleons added in 1606–1607, it succeeded in preserving a naval independence sufficient to support one of the largest and most active slave markets in the Mediterranean, at Livorno. For a time, under Ferdinando I (1549–1609), Christine, and their heirs, Tuscany indulged itself in the belief that it could become as indispensable a naval power in the Mediterranean as it was a banking and trade power. That belief was at one of its apogees in the months leading to *La stiava's* creation and performance.

As Olsaretti, Lebanese historian Paolo Carali, and many others have recounted, in 1606–1607 Ferdinando I sought energetically to transform Tuscany into a world power, exploring the possibility of acquiring control of slave markets in Sierra Leone and Brazil and trading rights in Indian Ocean ports.¹⁶ One manifestation of that expansion was his effort to form a Christian alliance against the Ottomans, to be partly funded by the Papacy as a holy endeavor aimed at recapturing Jerusalem. That alliance was to include at least two Muslim partners — the rebellious Pasha of

16 See especially Paolo Carali (Būlus Qar'alī), *Fakhr ad-Dīn: Il principe de Libano e la Corte di Toscana, 1605–1635*, 2 vols. (Rome: Reale accademia d'Italia, 1936–1938); P. E. H. Hair and Jonathan D. Davis, 'Sierra Leone and the Grand Duke of Tuscany', *History of Africa*, 20 (1998), 61–69, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3171965>; and Vittorio Siri, *Memorie recondite dall'anno 1601 sino al 1640* (Ronco: [n.p.], 1677–1679), especially volume II.

Aleppo, Haya Giambolat, and the leader of the eastern Mediterranean's most successful and ferocious army, King Abbas I of Persia (1571–1629).

Among the most detailed archival documents attesting to Tuscan policy are the official instructions given to one Michelangelo Corai, a Syrian-born courtier at Mantua hired by the Tuscan court to negotiate an alliance with Giambolat and, if he succeeded there, with Abbas.¹⁷ Corai sailed from Livorno on 1 March 1607, exactly a week after *La stiava*; the fact of his excursion and probably some details of his instructions would have been on the minds of the court's elite. He was to recommend that Giambolat rely on the Persian army to keep the Ottomans busy elsewhere. Further, he was to reassure Giambolat and Abbas that 'the principal intention [of the Christian coalition] was to destroy completely the Ottoman Empire'. Each of Tuscany's allies would retain control of his own territory, and of any that they conquered (51r). The Christians wanted only Jerusalem, along with enough land around the city so that the Christian community could plant grain and other crops, and a safe corridor to the port at Jaffa for the free trade of goods (52v). In exchange, Ferdinando promised to send seven new galleys and land troops, and to protect the alliance's supply chain via the ports at Tripoli and Alessandretta (53v).¹⁸ Tuscany and the Christian coalition would guarantee that the market at Tripoli would be open to Syrians and Persians interesting in selling commodities or ransoming slaves (55r).

Slavery had been inextricable from war in the Mediterranean for centuries, functioning as both its byproduct and its fuel.¹⁹ Prisoners taken

17 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 4275, Corrispondenze col Levante, ff. 43r–59r, copy described as having been sent in a package to Anthony Sherly, an English expatriate in Persia who represented Persia's interests in Europe. On Safavid Persia, see Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris Ltd, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755610358>. On Abbas I's strategic imposition of Imami Shi'ism as the state religion in order to consolidate Safavid rule, see A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.7312/moin16036>

18 Alessandretta, now known as Iskenderum, is on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey 296 km from Nicosia, Cyprus and 138 km from the interior city of Aleppo, now in Syria.

19 On slavery in the Mediterranean, see Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani, eds., *Debt and Slavery in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds* (London: Pickering and Chatoo, 2013) and Jennifer Lefkowitz and Olatunji Ojo, eds., *Ransoming, Captivity and Piracy in Africa and the Mediterranean* (Trenton, NJ, Cape Town, Nairobi, et al: Africa World Press, 2016). Christian and Moorish slave practices were mirror images of each other, each descended from ancient Mediterranean slave practices.

in war were invariably enslaved. Able-bodied captive men were used as galley slaves, literally fueling the ongoing naval excursions of war or piracy, or they were shipped to their captors' homelands to serve as laborers. Less able men and captive women were shipped to slave markets like Livorno, where they would be either sold as domestic workers or, if they were lucky or well-born, ransomed by their kin. Thus, whatever their fate, and whoever their captors, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Mediterranean slaves contributed either their labor or their exchange value to the economic basis for perpetual war. Indeed, slavery was so intrinsic to the war economies of all participants in the long Mediterranean war that by the early seventeenth century raids on coastal towns for the express purpose of capturing slaves had become common.

These slaves' presence in their captors' midst also helped sustain the ethnoreligious enmity on which war's justification depended, both by naturalizing the subjection of one category of person by another and by creating conditions that piqued distrust of the enslaved category. The most powerful of these conditions was the practice of offering unransomed slaves a path to freedom (or such relative freedoms as the right to marry and own property) if they converted to their captors' religion. Because these conversions were often coerced and sometimes forced, the religious sincerity of enslaved converts was perpetually in doubt, leading to doubts about their loyalty and reliability more generally. Mapped onto differences in ethnicity, religion, language, and socioeconomic status, these doubts easily turned into the Muslim assumption that Christians were intrinsically untrustworthy and the Christian assumption that Muslims were intrinsically untrustworthy. These twin assumptions, coupled with the rumors of brutal mistreatment and sexual violation on both sides that circulated in memoirs and romances about the medieval crusades, helped to sustain the mutual distrust and fear that provided the long war's affective fuel.

Christine de Lorraine, the New Crusade for Jerusalem, and *La stiava*

Art historian Massimiliano Rossi may have been the first to discern just how deeply Christine de Lorraine was invested in her husband's fantasy of 'destroying completely the Ottoman empire' under the

banner of a new crusade to recover Christian control of Jerusalem.²⁰ Christine believed herself directly descended from the twelfth-century crusader Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine, commander of the final assault on Jerusalem in 1099, builder of the famous assault tower, and first King of Jerusalem. Beginning in 1582, Ferdinando I's personal humanist, Pietro Angèli da Barga, had composed an eleven-book verse romance, the *Syriade*, on Godfrey's exploits, dedicating successive volumes to Henry III of France, and to his mother — Ferdinando's cousin, and Christine's grandmother — Catherine de' Medici Queen of France. A few years later, in 1589, when Ferdinando entrusted Angèli with composing epigraphs for the triumphal arches that would welcome his bride, Angèli seized the opportunity to emphasize the glorious deeds of Christine's ancestors — the first of which was Godfrey. It was not long, Rossi shows, before other apologists, diarists and propagandists for the Medici regime developed the poetic trope that the couple of Ferdinando (patron of the *Syriade*) and Christine (descendant of its hero) was destined to recover Jerusalem and — according to some — transport the Holy Sepulchre itself to Florence for safe-keeping.²¹

It is impossible to know how seriously either Ferdinando or Christine took their own courtiers' propaganda. But the papers of Christine de Lorraine for 1606–1607 reveal her to have been well-informed about Tuscany's plan to recapture Jerusalem, albeit with a perspective slightly different from the one Corai was to represent.²² Actively engaged in the ransom of enslaved French captives, she was just as engaged in financing the construction of a new galleon for the venture, at Marseille. Memos that detail Picchena's role in coaching negotiations for Papal support of the policy, as outlined in Corai's instructions, adjoin memos lamenting the failure of anyone to pay the troops involved, forcing them to lose valuable time pillaging as a way to resupply. In August 1607, months after *La stiava's* performance and

20 Massimiliano Rossi, 'Emuli di Goffredo: Epica Granducale e Propaganda Figurative', in *L'arme e gli amori: La poesia di Ariosto, Tasso e Guarini nell'arte fiorentina del Seicento*, ed. by Elena Fumagalli, Massimiliano Rossi and Riccardo Spinelli (Florence: Sillabe, 2001), pp. 32–42.

21 Among the poets who represented Ferdinando as the hero who could recover Jerusalem was Tasso, in stanzas 116–118 of *Gerusalemme conquistata*.

22 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5951.

after Pope Paul V had refused to pay the Christian troops, Christine would personally intervene to ensure that the galleys were provided 'sufficient and affordable food'.²³ Picchena's own papers for the period include memos about negotiations and military strategy, including the need to keep the Persian alliance strong against Ottoman persuasion.²⁴ These memos are mixed in with personally signed letters between Christine and Ferdinando about their children, and with the letters between Christine and Picchena about how the two oldest sons' military ability would be represented in court spectacles.

The preliminary scenario that Buonarroti sent Christine on 5 February 1607 — after, he said, consultation with majordomo Vincenzo Giugni — perfectly suited the Grand Duchess's immediate agenda that season. It linked a carefully choreographed display of her sons' combat skills both to the mutually beneficial relationship with Persia that Corai's mission sought and to one of the practices that the long Mediterranean war sustained, the transformation of Muslim captives into slaves. As Buonarroti put it

I decided [...] on the idea of having a woman arrive and appear — that is, a [male] musician who represents a female slave accompanied by some soldiers, themselves musicians, and behind them will come the squad of knights who are to stage the combat. The knights, seeing her to be beautiful, take the opportunity to fight for which among them will be worthy to take her as their booty. She, lamenting in *stile recitativo* [sung words] to her guards, reveals herself to be a daughter of the King of Persia, captured by a Tuscan vessel while traveling to her husband, a king of India. Understanding this, the knights decide to return her to her spouse, changing the reason for their combat to a demonstration that they will be sufficiently valorous champions to conduct her safely to her [husband's] realm. Then they fight, using whatever arms they like, and immediately after there will be a sung dance by the dancers, immediately followed by a dance of the Ladies and the Knights to begin the evening.²⁵

23 Ibid., f. 638.

24 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 1325.

25 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5992, 307r–v, letter of 5 February 1607 to Christine de Lorraine. My translation. The letter is published in Italian in Janie Cole, *Music, Spectacle and Cultural Brokerage in Early Modern Italy: Michelangelo Buonarroti il giovane*, 2 vols. (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007), II, 489, no. 69.

Christine approved, asking only one change: she would prefer, Picchena reported to Buonarroti, that the Persian slave's nobility not be conveyed by her physical beauty, but 'by some other means'.²⁶ That means must have been her eloquence, as represented by Buonarroti's words and Caccini's music.

La stiava as moresca, Stylizing War

By assimilating into the staged combat of Medici princes a jumble of references to piracy, Muslims, enslavement, and chivalric contest over a vulnerable woman, Buonarroti evoked the then faded Italian tradition of the *moresca* — and with it centuries of tense interaction between the Muslim and Christian communities in the Mediterranean basin. The genre has a confusing historiography, in large part because variants of *moresca* practice were diffused throughout the land mass of Europe, assimilating local imagery and practices.²⁷ The Italian thread of this historiography refers to theatrical scenes that combined elements of ancient Mediterranean fertility rituals (choreographed dances representing agricultural work) with carefully choreographed battles that some scholars have claimed to derive from Moorish practices in

26 AB 51, no. 1434, letter from Curtio Picchena to Buonarroti, 6 February 1607. Christine commissioned Buonarroti's formal description of the performance as a gift to her father, Duke Charles IV of Lorraine; because he was himself obviously a descendant of Godfrey de Bouillon, he may have been equally invested in the recapturing of Jerusalem.

27 For a cross-section of traditional scholarly thought about the *moresca* in Italy, see Anthony M. Cummings, 'Dance and "the Other": The *moresca*', in *Seventeenth-Century Ballet: A Multi-Art Spectacle*, ed. by Barbara Grammeniatì (Dartford, Kent: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), pp. 39–60; Cecilia Nocilli, 'The Art of Dance in Early Seventeenth-Century Italy: "Prima" or "seconda pratica"', in *Seventeenth-Century Ballet*, ed. Grammeniatì, pp. 61–78; Barbara Sparti, 'Isabella and the Dancing Este Brides, 1473–1514', in *Dance, Dancers and Dance-Masters in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. by Gloria Giordano and Alessandro Pontremoli (Bologna: Piretti, 2015), pp. 21–48; Barbara Sparti, 'Moresca and Mattacino: Where are the Spanish Antecedents? Where are the Moors?', in *Passi, tracce, percorsi: Scritti sulla danza italiana in omaggio a José Sasportes*, ed. by Alessandro Pontremoli and Patrizia Veroli (Rome: Aracne, 2012), pp. 17–32; Lorenzo Tozzi, 'On the *moresca* in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*', in *Affetti musicali: Studi in onore di Sergio Martinotti*, ed. by Maurizio Padoan (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2005), pp. 47–55; and Paul Vandenbroeck, *Vols d'âmes: traditions de transafro-européennes* (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1997). Although blackface was associated with *moresca* performance north of the Alps, Sparti ('*Moresca* and *Mattacino*') claims that it did not characterize the performance tradition in Italy. See Chapter 9 by Nina Treadwell in this volume for a new interpretation of the *moresca*.

Spain.²⁸ By the turn of the sixteenth century, this kind of *moresca* had become a common entertainment for elite marriages and for Carnival. Transparently suffused with political content, these opulently theatricalized *moresche* began with a choreographed processional of the players, featuring a beautiful young woman for whose safety, favors, or hand in marriage courtiers costumed as Christians and Moors would fight, their movements precisely timed to the accompaniment of pipe and tabor, or drums alone. During the sixteenth century it became increasingly common in Italy for entertainments that, like the *moresca*, combined music, song and choreographed movement to be performed between the acts of plays. Gradually, the elements of this kind of *moresca* disaggregated, informing the *intermedio* and remaining available for recombination in other theatrical cousins and ancestors of opera like *La stiava*.

Buonarroti's description strongly suggests that *La stiava* in performance reaggregated most of the elements of the *moresca*.²⁹ It opened with unseen music that accompanied the entrance and procession of dramatic characters (the enchained slave richly dressed *alla persiana*, with her two guards), who were followed by the combatants, the pages who carried their weapons, and Moors bearing torches. After circling the room to pay respects to the sovereigns, all but the combatants formed a semicircle around the slave, who gave an account of her situation in *stile recitativo* dialogue with her two guards. The combat followed, producing a dramatic contrast in the soundscape that Buonarroti described as giving singular delight. At the end, the combatant's captain led the slave offstage to a five-part dance song, after which the spectators resumed their own social dancing.

Such a strong evocation of the *moresca* cannot have been accidental, for the flowering of the theatrical *moresca* as a court genre in Italy had coincided with the greatest era of the Ottoman empire's expansion — the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566), when the Ottomans conquered Serbia, Kosovo, Rhodes, most of Hungary, Persia and the horn of Africa, established naval dominance as far west as Algiers and warred with Portugal over control of ports on the Indian ocean. The fashion

28 Cummings ('Dance and "the Other"') argues for this interpretation, while Sparti ('*Moresca* and *Mattacino*') dismisses it.

29 The fair copy of Buonarroti's complete description is translated as Appendix B. I am grateful to Lucia Marchi for help with details of the transcription and translation.

at many levels of society for reading aloud or singing romance poetry based on crusade narratives (*Orlando furioso*, *La Gerusalemme liberata*, and Angeli's *Siriade*), the rise of constant piracy and low-level naval war in the Mediterranean, and the fashion for the *moresca* can all be understood as among Italian Christendom's responses to the ongoing expansionary threat of the Ottomans. Thus, when Buonarroti reaggregated *moresca* elements into *La stiava* — with Christine's approval, relayed by a secretary who was deeply involved in war planning — genre alone implies a shared intention to activate whatever feelings the audience had about one of the world's most resilient antagonisms. Genre, that is, was the framing device through which *La stiava*'s theatrical performance and sound design were to produce the audience's feelings — about the Medici princes' stylized combat, the court's preparations for real war, and the role that Persia was meant to play.

'La stiava dolente in suono di canto': Sound Design, Affect, and Difference in the Slave's Scene

The song scene of the slave's exchanges with her guards was the narrative, emotional, and musical centerpiece of *La stiava*. Apparently the ground against which the contrasting sounds of battle produced the audience's singular delight, it was surely what prompted court diarist Cesare Tinghi to pronounce *La stiava*'s a 'musica stupenda'. Buonarroti himself described it as stunning the combatants, stopping them in the very act of drawing their weapons. Indeed, in his account the song scene communicated affect so powerfully that in the fictional world of the performance the singing literally moved the bodies of the combatants to mime 'gestures and poses according to the words and conceits of the singers [...] pride, pity, meekness as the affect required'.³⁰ While no music for the scene is known to survive, it is

30 The power of the slave's song literally to move others' bodies to perform affect was presumably a way of demonstrating her inherent authority as a queen. In a personal communication, Cecilia Nocilli noted that dance historians typically date the choreographed miming of affect to Monteverdi's *Il ballo delle ingrate*, first performed at Mantua a year later; Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, brother of the Mantuan Duke, witnessed *La stiava*. For Nocilli's notion that choreographed affective miming represented a kind of 'second practice' in dance, see Nocilli, 'The Art of Dance in Early Seventeenth-Century Italy'.

possible to imagine something about its sounds, and to imagine what elements of sonic design might have taken advantage of the audience's responses to advance Christine's and the court's political agenda.

One way to imagine the sounds of this scene is by thinking through its reference to what were then two stock theatrical scenes of human distress. The slave's very first words, 'Misero! Ov'e son'io?' immediately evoke both scene types associated with women characters in court entertainments from this era — the lament and what I've come to call the 'bad news messenger' scene.³¹ Textually, both scene types mark a character's movement across a threshold between two categories of human sociality, the lament in the first person and messenger scene in the third. When a female character's transformation was at issue, it usually resulted from the sexual initiation by which women acquired (or lost) a relational location in the world of men.³² In *La stiava*, sexual initiation figures in both possible outcomes of the title character's situation: her plunge in social status, from king's daughter to slave, potentially made her the sexual booty of her captors, while her eventual rehabilitation as the bride of an Indian king, arriving under Tuscan escort, would mark her social usefulness as the token of both a Tuscan-Persian and a Persian-Indian alliance.

Lament and bad-news messenger scenes were intended to do what ethnomusicologist Tullia Magrini once called 'the work of pain', because they staged responses to the pain of disruptive change — changes of expectations, perceptions, fate, ontological status.³³ Therefore, however eloquent, even deliciously beautiful, they might seem, they were meant to sound painful (unpredictable, disruptive, non-normative) and to produce in listeners responses on the continuum from sympathy to

31 'Alas, where am I?' See Appendix A for the surviving text, with a full translation. I am grateful to Lucia Marchi for help with details of the translation.

32 On the lament, see the special issue of *Early Music*, 27 (1999) and Susan McClary's classic essay 'Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen', in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 80–111.

33 Tullia Magrini, 'Women's "Work of Pain" in Christian Mediterranean Europe', *Music & Anthropology: Journal of Musical Anthropology in the Mediterranean*, 3 (1998), <https://www.umbc.edu/MA/index/number3/magrini/magr0.htm>. Magrini was writing about 'folk' laments in the contemporary Mediterranean world, but many of the practices she describes are startlingly like what we know of real-world lamenting in early modern Italy, especially at funerals. I thank Elizabeth Tolbert for a lively conversation about Magrini's work.

empathy, along with a desire for the painful sounds of lamenting to end.

Buonarroti's text fuses the pained elements common to the first-person lament and third-person messenger scenes into the part of the enslaved Persian woman, while assigning the sympathetic responses that characterize both kinds of scenes to her two guards. The fusion of two well-known scene types into the slave's voice would, I think, have tempted any composer to double down on the dissonance, chromaticism and harmonic juxtapositions that conventionally represented the disorientation and dismay of both lamenters and messengers. Producing a storm of sonic disorder and woe from the mouth of the enslaved but well-dressed Persian woman in chains, that storm would have been in calculatedly sharp contrast to the sympathetic reassurances, probably free of sonic disorder, uttered by her guards. The rapid contrast of affect between slave and guards (Muslim and Christians), emphasized by the combatants' empathetic miming, must have been meant to challenge listeners' emotional responses as much as it did the combatants' physical agility — and to activate a notion of the slave's ethnoreligious alterity. Both were likely to have produced something like an affective battle, an affective staging of war. Caused by the sonically disturbing presence of the Persian slave-queen, that affective war could only have been heightened by the prevailing association of the sounds of pain with effeminacy, weakness, and feminizing danger, all of which were here coded Muslim, and all of which required defeat. That is, the overall sonic design of the scene must have activated multiple levels of anxiety among listeners — anxiety easily linked to notions of Muslim-Christian difference, and of the threat that difference could pose to a listener's masculinity and combat worthiness.³⁴ However 'stupenda' in invention and performance, the song scene was likely to have been so troubling

34 The miming of these affective shifts by the combatants would have emphasized their constant contrasts. Because immasculate gestures may well have been used to convey pride and effeminate ones to convey meekness, the combatants may also have communicated a gender fluidity that, in the twin contexts of imminent war and pervasive maurophobia, would have been disturbing. I use the word 'immasculate' for performances of masculinity independent of a body's apparent biological sex following Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

as to provoke the audience's desire for the affectively stressful scene to end — something that would happen first when the cause of the distress, the Persian slave-queen, became the silent object of battle, then when she submitted to Tuscan authority in a style that must have been the opposite of sonic disorder, and finally when she was escorted silently out of sight.

A second way to imagine the scene's sonic effect is to think through the assignment of voice types. When Buonarroto commented to Christine that he had consulted with *maggiordomo* Vincenzo Giugni, he almost certainly meant that he had determined what staff musicians would be available for *La stiava's* cast. They were the three members of the court's *concerto di castrati* — Giovannino Boccherini as the slave, Fabio Fabbri, who played one guard, and their de facto coach, tenor-instrumentalist Giovanni Battista Signorini, who played the principal guard.³⁵ Thus the vocal world available to Caccini as a composer consisted of two trebles, a voice type then taken to signal excitability and the potential for excessive emotionality; and one tenor, a voice type then taken to signal reasoned equilibrium.³⁶ Compositionally, then, it was logical to assign the excitability and emotionality in the slave's part to a castrato, and logical to assign reasoned responses — including the eventual decision to return the enslaved 'woman' to her Indian husband — to the tenor. The political result of that compositional logic was to project the effeminate, alluring but dangerous sonic disorder of the Persian slave-queen's part through a body well known to be that of a sexually unproductive adult man. Seemingly an innocuous, conventional choice, in this particular instance the casting may have activated listeners' memories of the long-circulating maurophobic rumor that Ottoman troops castrated their

35 Boccherini had sung the Prologo to Peri's *L'Euridice* in 1600, while Fabbri sang the roles of Venere and Proserpina. Signorini, an instrumentalist as well as a tenor, succeeded Peri as their musical director in 1603. In November, 1607, he would marry *La stiava's* composer, Francesca Caccini. For biographical sketches of all three men, see Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence During the Principate of the Medici: With a Reconstruction of the Artistic Establishment* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993).

36 On the emotional valence of high, intermediate, and low voices, see Barbara Russano Hanning, 'Monteverdi's Three Genera: A Study in Terminology', in *Musical Humanism and its Legacy: Essays in Honor of Claude V. Palisca*, ed. by Barbara Russano Hanning and Nancy K. Baker (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 145–170.

captives.³⁷ Thus, such sympathy as might have been provoked by the dolorous sounds of a lamenting woman might have mingled with male listeners' fears that their own biological masculinity was literally at stake in the coming war.

Caccini assigned the work of responding to the slave's sonic disorder unevenly. One guard, the castrato Fabbri costumed as a very young Tuscan soldier, responds to the slave's disorder only once, by accepting her claim to be a queen and offering as consolation the idea that the combatants' desire to win her as a prize was motivated by love.³⁸ This 'love', communicated in lines whose rhymes emphasize images of penetration, presumably evoked for listeners both the *moresca's* traditional representation of women's sexual vulnerability in Muslim-Christian combat and the aforementioned fears of Muslims' supposed sexual violence against even their male captives. The other guard, sung by the tenor whose voice signaled equilibrium, reason and intact masculinity, responded to the slave three times — first to investigate the reasons for her opening outburst; then to reassure her that her Tuscan captors were too chivalrous to harm her; and finally to resolve her predicament by decreeing that after combat the winning squad would escort her to India. His was the textual as well as registral voice of reason. In both parts, then, voice type and affect matched perfectly.

In fact, the alternating sounds of these exchanges between the Persian queen-slave and her guards had the potential to evoke in listeners' minds a confused set of negative notions about non-Christian masculinity, ideas that circulated in travel literature as well as in the intelligence reports about both Ottoman subjects and Persians that had

37 Guy Poirier, 'Masculinities and Homosexualities in French Renaissance Accounts of Travel to the Middle East and North Africa', in *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, ed. by Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eichenbichler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 155–167, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442673854-010>. Poirier cites Pierre Henry's translation of the Munster *Cosmographie universelle*, published in Basel in 1566, as a print source for the claim that 'the most beautiful young men captured by the Turks were castrated and then used to satisfy their masters' voluptuous desires' (p. 158).

38 The 1611 edition of John Florio's dictionary translates the word in Buonarroti's texts, 'preda', as 'bootie' or 'spoile'. See *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues* (London: Melch and Bradwood, 1611), p. 386. The dictionary is searchable online at <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio>

informed Michelangelo Corai's instructions. Presumably, these notions also circulated in the conversations of the bankers, merchants, courtiers and Cavalieri di Santo Stefano who were in the audience. Because the castrato guard's voice was equivalent to that of the enslaved Persian woman, his relative emotional vulnerability and focus on 'love' might have brought to mind the intelligence reports' dismissal of the current Sultan, sixteen-year-old Ahmed I, as effeminate, the similar dismissal of his naval commander, described as barely out of the *serraglio*, or the prevailing notion that any man's exaggerated interest in heterosociality was a sign of effeminacy.³⁹ Although both guards were dressed as Tuscans, the sight of Fabbri assisting a soldier twice his age might conceivably have evoked the notion of *köçeks*, the singing-dancing boys kept as the love objects of Janissaries and Ottoman bureaucrats.⁴⁰ And yet, the likelihood that Fabio's castrato voice sounded in the musical language of reassurance, not the slave-queen's musical language of pain, allowed listeners to remember which of the treble bodies was 'truly' effeminate — the one dressed 'alla persiana'.

Conceivably delivered in the rapid, one-note declamation eventually called *stile concitato*, the treble slave-queen's fear that the costumed combatants meant to kill her may have seemed both overwrought and reminiscent of reports attributing Persian military success under Abbas I to his troops' ruthless killing of all inhabitants of the towns they conquered.⁴¹ Vocal register, perhaps coupled with style, might have confirmed for listeners a notion that Persians were capable of both the hysteria of mass murder and the hysteria of unreasonable fear. The tenor guard's reassurance that Tuscan knights would never do such a thing responds to that fear by attaching the sound of reason to the claim that Tuscan masculinity was respectful and chivalrous, in contrast to Ottoman masculinity, which reportedly allowed men to abandon their women and children when they fled their cities in defeat.⁴² It also

39 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 4277, ff. 434 and 440 respectively. Siri, *Memorie recondite*, implies that the young Ahmed may have been a sodomite as well.

40 See Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kaplaci, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005) and Mustava Avci, 'Köçek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Belly Dancers (Dancing Boys) from the Ottoman Empire to Contemporary Turkey' (PhD thesis, New York University, 2015).

41 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 4277, f. 427.

42 Ibid., f. 430.

attaches Tuscan reason and chivalry to Tuscan authority to restore order and subject others to its will, for it is the tenor's speech that prompts the treble Persian slave-queen to accept Tuscan superiority in a final speech free of all poetic prompts to sonic disorder and pain. Her acceptance, in turn, prompts the tenor's magnanimous decree that the combat will eventually restore her to her husband. That restoration will, in turn, restore social order, liberating the Persian queen from the worst predation of slavery, sexual violation, and restoring her to her gendered role as a living token of political solidarity. In the fiction of the scene, the political solidarity was that of Persia with India, sealed with a marriage exchange expedited by Tuscan benevolence. In the fiction of Corai's pending mission to Aleppo and Persia, it was also Tuscany's own military alliance with Persia in which, a listener might have inferred, Tuscany would always arrogate to itself the authority to permit (and perhaps facilitate) Persian alliances with other infidel realms. Alliance with Tuscany, then, was figured as more like the subjection of women in marriage than it was like slavery. According to Buonarroti's description, that flattering representation of Tuscan power filled the combatants with good energy (*allegrezza*) and they fought with grace and gusto.

Of Sonic Alterity and 'Race', the Historiography of Women's Musical Culture, and the Historiography of Opera

It is clear that *La stiava*'s sound design afforded its audience ample opportunities to experience and attach negative affect to the presence of the Persian slave-queen in their midst, and briefly to re-encounter both specific maurophobic notions that circulated in the Tuscan elite's common culture and the fear, loathing and sense of superiority that those notions could provoke. Indeed, *La stiava*'s sound design enabled the irrationality of the audience's own feelings toward Muslims to be projected onto their one representative in the room, and then disavowed as she was led offstage. That mechanism of affordance both reinforced the Tuscan self-flattery on the show's surface and allowed the activated negative feelings towards Muslims to remain unchallenged, fuel for

the very war Ferdinando and Christine proposed. At the same time, while *La stiava's* narrative sustained the Tuscan elite's long-standing normalization of the link between the Mediterranean slave trade and the long war against the Ottomans, its sound design helped in its own small way to naturalize the stickiness of negative affect to Muslim bodies that, thus naturalized, has persisted in Europe and among its diaspora for centuries.

But why should anyone care that this obscure, ephemeral Carnival entertainment — for which neither the music nor any pictorial representations survive — functioned both as effective propaganda supporting the Medici's fantasy of leading a new crusade for Jerusalem and as mechanism for sustaining the ethnoreligious antagonism behind such crusades? Two kinds of scholars might care — scholars of women's musical culture in the early modern period, and scholars of the early history of opera.

Scholars of women's musical culture in early modern Italy could learn from this *pentimento* of my own decades-old work the dangers of too narrowly gynocentric a focus. I still think that Christine de Lorraine was persuaded by the success of *La stiava* to hire Caccini as a *musica* in her own right. And I still think that it was at least partly because Caccini succeeded in conceiving a sounding voice for a woman that was capable of changing that woman's situation by literally moving, and ultimately redirecting, the actions of men. In so doing, she had created in sound a representation of the sovereign authority Christine would soon quietly wield as *de facto* regent for her ailing husband, and subsequently for her ailing son Cosimo II. Now, however, I also see that, in collaboration with Buonarroti under Christine's attentive supervision, Caccini also succeeded in creating a sonic design for *La stiava* that reinforced Christine's maurophobic support of Tuscany's bellicose, expansionist agenda. For the next thirty years, Caccini (and her colleagues on the Medici court's artistic staff) served an agenda that the chronicler and apologist for the Tuscan women's court, Cristoforo Bronzini acknowledged as the fantasy of creating a gynocentric, even proto-feminist Christian peace throughout the world.⁴³ Caccini's remarkable career was thus founded and sustained

43 Cristoforo Bronzini, 'Della dignità e nobiltà delle donne', BNCF, Magl.VIII, 1525/I, 93, as cited in Suzanne G. Cusick, 'Epilogue: Francesca Among Women, a '600

in two exceptional women's complicity in promoting a proto-feminist, Christian supremacist sensibility that often, if inconsistently, stuck negative affect to ethnoreligiously different bodies.

That inconsistency — in the musico-theatrical representations sponsored by the Medici court and in the many other courtly and theatrical representations resonant with the long Mediterranean war that were presented in the early modern period — problematizes the relationship of these works with contemporary notions of 'race'. In the case of *La stiava*, archaic elements of 'race' as we know it are present in the explicit representation of Euro-Christian behavior as rational and benevolent, of the Persian slave-queen as the source of sonic disorder, and of the Persian slave-queen's submission to Euro-Christian authority. Elements of 'race' are present, too, in the various notions of Moorish effeminacy, irrationality, and violence that circulated in its audience's world, ready to be activated by such apparently neutral, incidental decisions as choices about vocal registers. But because they are so particular to a world steeped in the centuries-old but well-remembered ethnoreligious enmity (maurophobia) born of the medieval crusades, that is all they are. They are elements of profound, categorical, de-humanizing enmity assembled in a form we don't quite recognize because the elements had yet to be assembled in a way that seems coherent to us now, over four hundred years later. Still, some important elements of 'race' as we know it and 'slavery' as it would soon be practiced in the Atlantic were present in *La stiava's* text, performance and likely reception — present, normalized, and waiting for inclusion in a cultural process of assemblage that was going on in the same generation.

This point is more interesting if one thinks about it in relation to *La stiava's* place in the immediate pre-history of opera. Like the contemporary, if casual, notions of 'race' and 'slavery' that have circulated in the modern era, 'opera' is a powerful notion of musical theatre that emerged from a set of once-commonplace practices that had made sense separately for centuries, with histories that seem to us now only incoherently related to each other, much less to what we casually expect from 'opera'. Some of those practices have been named in this

Gynocentric View', in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women*, ed. by Thomasin LaMay (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), pp. 425–444 (p. 442).

chapter — the *moresca*, the practice of reciting in speech or song stanzas from verse romances about the Crusades (*Orlando furioso*, *Gerusalemme liberata*) and, briefly, the *intermedio*. The improvised theatre known as *commedia dell'arte* was another.⁴⁴ Still other obvious antecedents were huge outdoor combats and horse ballets accompanied by vocal and instrumental music, and plotted and sung ballets, from Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx's *Le balet comique de la Reyne* in 1581 to the *ballets de cour* of Louis XIII's and XIV's reigns in France.

Brief and evanescent as it was, *La stiava* occupies an important place among the specifically Medicean practices that were to be assembled into opera as early as the middle of the seventeenth century. It is the first in a series of musical spectacles staged by the Medici court in support of its specific, ongoing aspirations to establish power in the area that the court's apologists called the Holy Land — and beyond. As Emily Wilbourne has pointed out elsewhere, in 1614, Buonarroti and Caccini would collaborate on the finale of the former's gargantuan pastiche *Il passatempo*.⁴⁵ The finale, called 'Il Balletto della Cortesia' by court diarist Cesare Tinghi, opens with the initially fearful disembarkation on Tuscan shores of a group of women said to be Syrian; as soon as one of them comes to understand, in song, that they are in Tuscany, their fears are assuaged because, of course, they know they will be treated courteously there. While the Balletto della Cortesia was clearly aimed (at least in part) at Syrian Emir Fakr-al-Din, then living in exile at the Medici court with an ample retinue, the 1616 *Guerra d'Amore* and 1617 *Guerra di Bellezza* aimed at the much wider audience that could be gathered in Piazza Santa Croce, and represented a wider field of imperial ambition (from India to the Indies). Like *La stiava*, but on a grander scale, both featured combat between Tuscans and 'infidel' troops, the combat preceded by music and song.⁴⁶ Caccini's 1625 quasi-opera *La liberazione di Ruggiero*, to a text by Ferdinando Saracini, featured a plot derived directly from *Orlando furioso*, with

44 Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226401607.001.0001>

45 Emily Wilbourne, 'Music, Race, Representation: Three Scenes of Performance at the Medici Court (1608–16)', *Il saggiautore musicale*, forthcoming. I am grateful to Professor Wilbourne for letting me read her essay in manuscript.

46 Both featured music by Jacopo Peri to texts of court poet Andrea Salvadori.

updates from one scene in *Gerusalemme liberata*, and culminated in a horse ballet in the courtyard of the palace known as Poggio Imperiale — all to celebrate the Carnival visit of Archduchess Maria Magdalena's nephew, the Polish crown prince who would become Wladislaw IV, who had defeated an Ottoman army in 1621. All these works traffic textually in the maurophobic tropes and self-flattering fantasies of chivalrous crusade assembled in *La stiava*, and all but the Balletto della Cortesia have identifiable imitators elsewhere in Italy.

Yet despite generations of scholarship devoted to complicating it, the conventional narrative about 'opera's' origin is the one promulgated self-servingly by the Medici rulers of Tuscany: that 'opera' was born of the humanist desire to restore the power of classical Greek theatre, which was said to depend on the unified force of sound, word and gesture to represent human and divine experiences of the world. Itself exemplifying the fusion of heterogeneity into homogeneity that Medicean absolutism sought to produce in every possible mode of discourse, that narrative leaps away from Florence early in the seventeenth century, to focus on the published score of the other important antecedent of modern opera that was first performed for Carnival in February, 1607 — the one composed, performed, and witnessed by men; Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. *Orfeo* engages neither Mantua's involvement in the emergent Medici coalition against the Ottomans nor its involvement, if any, in practices related to the slave trade. Traditional histories of opera and its constituent genres remain centered on Monteverdi's participation in the gradual assembly of the genre we know, which emerged in the operas he composed for the public theatres in Venice. The practices of those theatres, and the operas composed for them, were to define the genre for centuries.⁴⁷

This narrative does more than simplify the complex history of early modernity's most enduring musical genre. It distorts the Florentine-origin story by ignoring the through line of opera-like performances sponsored by the court (including ones commissioned and composed

47 See Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and Jonathan Glixon and Beth Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

by women) that imbricates the emergence of the modern assemblage that is opera with the emergence of the modern assemblages of race and slavery. It distorts, as well, the Monteverdi-centered part of the story, for the scholarly literature all but ignores the fact that his *Orfeo*'s surviving score, published several years after the 1607 performance, ends with music for a dance called — simply and mystifyingly — *moresca*.⁴⁸ The conventional narrative largely ignores, too, the political valences of the 1624 carnival entertainment published in 1638 as *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. Textually based on an incident in *Gerusalemme liberata* that took place during Godfrey of Bouillon's final siege of Jerusalem in 1098, and hugely influential on subsequent musical representations of affect, it can be understood to have activated some of the same maurophobic anxieties over competing masculinities that *La stiava* is likely to have engaged.⁴⁹ Operas based on crusade narratives would continue to be produced for centuries to come.

Whether intentionally or not, such distortions in the standard historiography of opera constitute a kind of historiographical whitewashing, such that the relationships of the genre's constitutive elements to non-humanist practices and unsavory aspects of Christian Mediterranean history are obscured. They allow the fantasy of opera's purely humanist origins to become its essence, and the presence of represented, performed and audible alterity on the opera stage to be incidental to that essence, an artifact only of the later, fully modern era that witnessed the zenith of Europe's colonial and imperial power. That distortion allows scholars, opera professionals, and opera lovers to continue valuing 'opera' as one of the rare defining assemblages of modernity that we can rescue from imbrication in modernity's all too obvious sins. 'La stiava dolente in suono di canto' — the sorrowful slave in the sound of singing — asks that we revise that historiography, to investigate the parallel and sometimes mutually constitutive assemblage histories of 'opera', 'race', and 'slavery'.

48 The only serious effort to interpret the appearance of this word in the score is Tozzi, *op cit*.

49 Suzanne G. Cusick, "'Indarno chiedi': Clorinda and the Interpretation of Monteverdi's *Combattimento*", in *Music, Word and Song: Essays in Honor of Ellen Rosand*, ed. by Rebecca Cypess, Beth Glixon, and Nathan Link (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), pp. 117–144.

Appendix A: Text and Translation of *La stiava*

Archivio Buonarroto 81, f. 295v–296r

Stiava. Giovannino.

Miser ov' son io?

Di cui son pred'ahime? dove m'ha scorto

Nemico empio Nettuno, e destin rio?

In qual riva in qual porto

Lunge dal patrio ciel del regno mio?

Soldato custode.

Gio. Bata Franciosino

Fosti dunque Regina

Donna infelice tu, che serva or sei

E di Re genitore

Cadesti ancella di sì dura sorte?

Stiava. Giovan.no

Regina or non più, no. Regina fui

Re' i parenti miei, Re' il mio consorte,

A cui dolci goder nuov'Imenei

Toltami a i lidi Persi

Mi conducean le fortunate vele

The slave (Giovannino, treble):

Alas, where am I?

Of whom am I now prey? Where have you taken me

Cruel enemy Neptune, and wicked destiny?

On what shore, in which port

Far from the native sky of my realm?

Guard 1

(Giovanni Battista 'Franciosino' Signorini, tenor):

Were you therefore a queen?

You, troubled woman, who are now a slave?

Did you as a king's daughter,

Fall victim to such harsh fate?

The slave:

A queen no more, no. I was a queen,

My parents were kings, and my husband,

To whom, for the pleasures of a new marriage,

A happy fleet was taking me

From Persia's shores

To where the Ganges bathes the golden fields;
 When sudden hostile winds,
 Arrogant *Teti*,⁵⁰ and a cruel sea
 Burst into a tempestuous rage,
 And I found myself far from my husband
 Taken prisoner
 By your errant wandering ships.

/296r:

Guard 2:

Such an appealing appearance,
 Such noble manners, and regal attitude,
 Show the attributes of a royal woman,
 You need not fear deadly attack,
 Nor bonds and chains;
 An illustrious prisoner has a courtly victor;
 After [suffering] warlike offense,
 [You are now] the fortunate booty of knights in love.

La dove 'l Gange i campi aur'inonda;
 Quand'importuni avversi
 Venti, Teti orgoglios'e mar crudele
 Versar dal seno i tempestosi sdegni.
 E me dal mio signor divis'e tolta
 Prigioniera mi scorsi
 De vostri erranti peregrini legni.

/296r:

Soldato custode.

Fabio

A sì gentil sembiante,
 Al tuo nobil costume, a gli atti alteri
 Ben luce 'n te di real donna esempio.
 Non si tema per te mortale scempio.
 Non lacci non catene,
 Illustre serv'a vincitor cortese.
 Appo guerrier offese
 D'amanti cavalier preda beata.

⁵⁰ The reference is either to Tethys, the daughter of Uranus and Gaia, who was the Titan goddess of all fresh water on earth, and whose name often substituted poetically for the sea; or to Thetis, a sea nymph abducted by Peleus who became the mother of Achilles. Both names are written "Teti" in Italian.

Stiava. Giovan.no

Ma qual veggio più d'una schiera armata

Quinci, e quindi 'mpugnare gli acuti ferri

A trapassarmi 'l petto apirm' il core?

A che tanto furore, e tanto strazio?

Non basta un solo strale un colpo solo

Vostro sdegno far sazio

E mi discior di vit' anzi di duolo?

Soldato custode

Gio. Bat.a Franc.no

Non regna 'n cor toscano

Nobil donzella no, si fiera voglia,

Ne desio tanto 'nsano,

Ch' anima si gentil di vita scioglia.

Ma sol desio ne 'nvoglia

Di questi cavalieri pregio, e valore

Venirne a prova in glorioso aringo,

Ove tu preda sij d'amato pegno

Di chi fia che più degno

Mostri ardità la man', e pronto 'l core.

Stiava Gio.no

The slave:

Why, then, do I see an armed troop

All around, ready to pick up sharp swords
to tear my breast, and pierce my heart?

Why so much fury, and so much anguish?

Is not a single dart, a single blow

Enough to satisfy your rage

And end my life, or better, my sorrow?

Guard 1:

O noble lady, in Tuscan hearts

There reigns neither the cruel will

Nor the insane desire

To take the life of such a noble soul,

But only the desire

Of these knights to test their worth and valor

On the jousting field

So that you might be the prize of a lover,

The pledge to the one who shows most worthily

A brave hand and a ready heart.

The slave:

Dunque al Gran Tosco Duce in toscò regno Son giunt' alfin sotto 'l felice 'mpero? O servitu soave. O carcer dolc', e giogo non indegno. E quest' e Rege altero, Che ne lidi del sole	Have I reached, then, the Tuscan realm, Happily ruled by the Grand Duke? Oh gentle servitude, Oh sweet prison and worthy yoke! He is a mighty king, Who prepares for himself a throne in heaven
/296v: S'appresta 'l seggio con le 'nvitt' antenne. Quell' e l'alta sua prole, Per cui tem' Oriente Appo 'l suo calcitar lo spron', e 'l freno. Christiana io miro, entro 'l cui nobil seno Virtu Real vera pietà si serra, Ond'io sper'anco un giorno Lieta 'mpetrar ritorno Lacrimata Regin'all'Inda terra.	/296v: with his victories. There is his noble offspring, Of whom the East fears His kick, his spur and bit. [There] I see Christiana, within whose noble breast Royal virtue and true mercy reside, From which I hope one day Happily to ask a return, As a mourned Queen, to Indian soil.
Soldato. Gio. Bat. a Franc.no Etruschi semidei Accesi nel desio d'opere di gloria Non e minor vittoria Erger chi resto vinto, Che vincer chi superbo ergeo la fronte.	Guard 1: Etruscan demigods, Driven by desire for glorious deeds, It is no less a victory To raise up the defeated Than to conquer the arrogant who rebelled.

Ben e degna costei,
 Che de suoi genitori, e del suo sposo
 Affidata da noi riveggia 'l nido;
 Ne di barbaro 'nfido
 Sostegna offesa per l'ondoso corso.
 Abbia da voi soccorso.
 Servisi il guerreggiar' in sua difesa.
 E di vostra contesa
 Ogni fiamma s'estingua, ogni furore.
 Sol a mostrar valore
 Cortese in suo favor guerra s'appresti,
 Pegno di quell'onore,
 Ond'al grand'uopo suo Marte si desti.

She is worthy
 To be entrusted by us
 To see again her parents' and spouse's home;
 And to not be disturbed by treacherous barbarians
 On her voyage.
 She should have your aid.
 Fight in her defense.
 Extinguish every flame and fury
 Of your contest.
 Only to show courtly valor
 on her behalf should you fight,
 In token of that honor
 For which Mars awakens.

Appendix B: Text and Translation of Description of *La stiava* (Fair Copy)

Archivio Buonarroto 81, f. 307r–310r

Descrizione del abbattimento e ballo del principe Cosimo fattami fare da Madama dopo il ritorno di Pisa fatto il carnovale di 1606, perche ella volle mandarla al S.r Duca di Lorena suo Padre.

Per dare allegro fine al lungo Carnoval di quest'anno dopo che loro Altezze tornarono di Livorno in Pisa, oltre ai consueti festini, molti trattenimenti si fecero in sollazzo di questi giovani principi tra i quali fu una battaglia del Ponte, gioco antico, solito di farsi almeno una vota l'anno dalla gioventù Pisana, dove per varie divise di sopravvesti vestitesi più, e più squadre armate, dall'una, e dall'altra parte del fiume d'Arno con certe targhe, o palvesi, contendono urtandosi e percotendosi di ributtare la parte avversa, e insignorirsi del ponte. Fecesi appresso dal Sig.r Don Ferdinando Gonzaga recitare una commedietta tutta cantata molto graziosa e piacevole: e corsesi un palio, e fecesi una giostra del saracino, e altri giochi si rappresentarono, e vari. Ma la sera stessa del Carnovale il Ser.mo Sig.r Principe stesso, acciochè più lieta di tutte l'altre passase si compiacque farsi spettacolo di valore a gli occhi di molti gentilhuomini, e dame al festino di quella notte invitate.

Fu adunque pensata et messa in esecuzione da Madama S.ma una tale invenzione. Cioè che otto cavalier Toscani de quali il Sig.r Principe era uno sotto 'l governo d'un Capitano che fu il Sig.r Don Francesco Medici, volendo combattere fra' loro di chi più valoroso dovesse esser la preda di una schiava che essi conducono quivi in campo; scoprono da le parole di quella lei/307v: esser figliuola di un Re di Persia, e quando i legni toscani la presero andarne allora a marito novella sposa a un Re dell'Indie; onde i cavalieri nel riconoscerla donna Reale, mutando cagion di combattere, e convertono 'l furore in festevol contrasto, combattono per dar saggio di lor prontezza; sicchè ella argomenti loro esser sufficienti campioni a scamparla di ogni avversa fortuna, perche liberandola risolvono di ricondurla al suo sposo. Mentre che la sala circondata intorno di gradi era piena di popolo fermandosi il ballar delle Dame, e de Gentilhuomini, e cominciandosi a sonare una sinfonia di diversi stromenti movendosi una Cortina, comparse da una testa della sala

primieramente la schiava assai riccamente vestita accompagnata da più soldati custodi armati con aste in mano e da una schiera di marinari che seguiva quelli con alcuni mori innanzi, e attorno di lei, che portavano le torchiere per dar maggior lume alla stanza in occasione di questa vista, tutti convenevolmente vestiti di abiti a l'invenzione proportionati. Seguendo sempre la sinfonia, mentre che questi girando la sala con la schiava facevano reverenza a SS.mi Padroni collocati appunto nella parte opposta a donde usciva la mostra, gli otto cavalieri comparivano in atto guerriero e in andar feroce e leggiadro insieme, precedendo loro illustrissimo capitano atto grazioso, e ardito quanto si richiedeva a un giovanotto d'animo illustre. Erano armati di certi piastrini a scaglie dorate con loro elmi simili, e gran pennoniere vaghe e ricche per i gioielli, et erano quattro per/308r: Quattro diversi ne colori del lor vestire. Cingevano spade al fianco et erano accompagnati da molti paggi divisati di abiti mezzanamente succinti con lor morione in testa: parte de quali reggenando lumi, e parte erano assegnati uno per uno a portare le rotelle de cavalieri. Tornò la schiava avendo passeggiata in giro tutta la sala la onde era prima venuta, opposta dirittamente in vista di L. Alt. ze alla quale intorno i soldati custodi e i marinari si raccolsero circondandola per modo di una mezza luna: e i cavalieri intanto che nel girar la sala dopo di lei erano comparsi davanti i Principi e s'eran loro inchinati, fermatisi si spartiscono quattro per parte secondo la distinzione de' colori delle lor divise, ponendosi il capitano da uno lato intento a quanto occorreva e dove nel venire avevano seguitata la schiava, le rimansero allor innanzi. Appena fermi i cavalieri subito miser mano alle spade per venir all'abbattimento. Ma movendo in un tratto la voce la schiava dolente in suono di canto, voltisi a lei con cenno del capitano si ritennero, e in atto di maraviglia l'ascoltarono lei, e i soldati fino al fine di questi versi sempre cantati da voci sole.

Schiava. *Misera ove son io? ec insino alla linea .A.*

Mentre che la schiava, e i soldati cantavano, i cavalieri in atti vari, e in varie posture/308v: movendosi secondo che dalle parole, e da' concetti di chi cantava eran volti, mostravano ora alterezza, et ora pietà, e mansuetudine come richiedeva o questo o quello affetto, che lor conveniva rappresentare maravigliandosi sempre in venire scoprendo la schiava essere stata Regina. Ma all'ultime parole de canto quasi che

distolse dalla prima intenzione di combattere il possesso di lei, parve che con più piacevole modo si accingessero alla battaglia, acconsentendo alla persuasione della speranza, che (pronti ad effettuarla) la schiava aveva avuta nella pietà di Madama, e a quella della sentenza dell'ultimo soldato custode. E avendo già di prima imbracciati gli scudi vennero velocemente alle mani, e fu in un instante diletto molto la varietà del soggetto; poi che dal canto, e dalli strumenti musicali si passo al suon dell'armi, e de tamburi che in un subito furono percossi. Parve a ciascuno graziosissima cosa questo contrasto. Nel quale l'arte esercitata invitò di maniera il vero accidentale, che dale ferrite in poi, che ne vi furono, ne vi dovevano essere, ogni azione si riguardo come vera; mentre che in un medesimo gruppo non mai spartito, cominciandosi l'abbattimento a un per uno; or qua, e or la volgendosi ciascun di loro veniva alla prova ora con questo, et ora quello de' quattro avversari, talora avendone alcuno attorno più d'uno, si faceva nascere il caso a ogni sorte di ardire, e di risoluzione cavalleresca, dandone a credere spesso a chi riguardava, che le finte cadute, /309r: le ritirate, e ogni altro avvenimento fosser portate dall'accidente e non dalla volontà di chi le faceva. I quali avvenimenti furono tra gli altri degnamente essercitati dal Sig.^r Principe, vedendosi anche nel gioco in lui fiamma di vero valore, e raggi di eroica gloria. Durò la tenzone fino a che nel girare, e rigirare più per ruote da questa, e da quella parte i combattitori si ritrovarono nel lor primo luogo. E allora il capitano mostrandosi tutto animoso mossosi arditamente si mise in mezzo con molta destrezza, e cautela spartendoli. Onde essi ritirati si sterono fermi sin che la schiava, che anch'essa per frenarli con le parole si preparava, durò cantando così.

Schiava. *Deh che di vostro ardire: ec insino alla linea .B.*⁵¹

Finito il canto della schiava e reverendo lei i cav.ri come Regina, liberata ora mai da loro nel tacito consenso dato alle precedenti parole del soldato custode, il coro de' soldati, e de' marinari incontanente cominciò a cantare la canzonetta infrascritta accompagnati da più strumenti. E voltandosi per bella maniera, e passeggiando in forma di una ruota i cavalieri, destramente assegnarono l'armi in mano a lor paggi e finita la prima stanza della canzone dieron principio a un ballo veramente

51 A full text with this incipit does not survive among Buonarroti's papers.

leggiadrissimo, e molto grazioso, e allegro levato da cavrivole, e intrecciato per varie guise. Ne meno s'avvenn a i cavalieri/309v: il ballar gentile, che il nobile abbattimento di poco innanzi. Nel quale prendendo riposo con un semplice passeggio davan tempo a cantanti per il canto della seconda stanza. Che tosto finita ripigliandosi di nuovo il ballo tutto diverso dal primo, ma non meno piacevole, essendo questo più tosto di stile francese, e quello italiano, lasciarono nel finire un gran desiderio ne gli spettatori di più lunghezza. Ma già fornito, e il coro ricominciato a cantare le tre ultime stanze della canzonetta, ripresero i cavalieri da i paggi le arme loro; e il capitano venendo per lo mezzo di essi, inchinandosi alla schiava si come fecero quelli, la prese per mano. E da i cavalieri amendue messi in mezzo in una bella fila aprendosi comparsero di nuovo davanti di L. Alt.ze e mostrando atti di ossequio, e di reverenza inverso di quelle, quasi prend'esser comiato per ricondurla liberata Regina al suo sposo, si rivoltarono indietro: e sempre cantando il coro, andarono infra di quell che si aperse in due parti, a rientrar ove erano da prima usciti. E il coro riunendosi gli segui insieme con tutti quelli che vi intervennero finendosi col canto, e con l'armonia diletta la grata vista, e la piaciuta apparenza di tanti abiti, e vari, che avevano illustrato tutta la sala. E ripigliandosi il ballo delle dame tralasciato nel comparer della schiava, si trapasso insensibilmente dal carnevale/310r: alla quaresima vegliando in festa.

La canzonetta del coro de soldati, e de marinari fu questa.

Real donna prigioniera, ec insino al fine.

Description of Prince Cosimo's combat and dance, which Madama commissioned from me after returning from Pisa, performed Carnival 1606 (1607), because she wanted to send it to her father, the Duke of Lorraine.

To bring a merry end to the long Carnival this year, after Their Highnesses returned from Livorno to Pisa, many entertainments for the amusement of these young princes were organized in addition to the most common ones. Among these were a 'battaglia del Ponte', an ancient game played once a year by local youth, in which they dressed in various uniforms as armed teams, one on each side of the Arno river with large rectangular shields, and competed with each other, shoving

and hitting to repel the opposing side and take control of the bridge. After that, Don Ferdinando Gonzaga presented a very enjoyable all-sung comedy; and [the court] ran a race, produced a *giostra del saraceno*,⁵² and did other games. But for Carnival night itself, the Prince himself was pleased to produce a spectacle that would be worthy in the eyes of the many gentlemen and ladies invited for that evening.

Madama conceived and organized the scenario.

There were eight Tuscan knights — one of whom was the Prince himself, under the direction of a captain, who was Don Francesco Medici — wanting to fight among themselves for who would win a woman slave that they brought onto the field. They discovered from her words that she was the daughter of a king of Persia, and had been captured by Tuscan ships on her way to be the bride of a king of India. Understanding from this that she was a royal woman, they change their rage to a festive combat, and they fight [only] to prove their battle-readiness; then she tells them that valorous knights would be enough to rescue her from adverse fortune, since they have decided to free her and escort her safely to her groom.

When the bleachers that ran all around the hallway were full of people, the dancing of ladies and gentlemen ended, and an instrumental ensemble began to play, the slave appeared from behind a curtain at one side of the hallway, quite richly dressed and accompanied by both lance-equipped soldier-guards, and a group of sailors who followed them with a few Moors before and around her, carrying torches to give more light to the room for the occasion of this appearance. Everyone was costumed in a way appropriate to the scenario. The music continued as all rounded the room, the slave bowing to Their Highnesses who were at the opposite [end of the room from where she entered]. The eight knights moved with a warlike attitude, both fierce and graceful, led by the graceful and bold acts of their illustrious captain, as befit a young man of such distinguished spirit. They wore gilded armor plates and helmets, with beautiful standards rich with jewels, and swords at their sides, and were divided into groups of four by the color of their clothing. Many pages dressed in short-length clothes and helmets accompanied them, some holding lights, others the knights' shields.

52 In a *giostra del saraceno*, men costumed as knights galloped with lances aimed at a puppet made to look like a Moor.

Having processed around the entire room, the slave returned to the place where she had entered, directly opposite Their Highnesses, and was surrounded by the guards and sailors in a half moon. The knights, having followed her around the room, bowed to Their Highnesses, then stopped in front of the slave, dividing in two groups according to their colors with the captain — attentive to what was happening — on one side.

As soon as they stopped, the knights put their hands on their swords to fight. But hearing in that instant the sound of the sorrowful slave in song, they turned to her, and at the signal of the captain held back and listened as if marveling to her and the guards until these verses were sung by the soloists. (*Misera ove son io?* etc to line A).

While the slave and the guards sang, the knights' bearing and gestures followed the words and conceits of the singers, manifesting pride, pity and meekness as befit each affect, always representing themselves as marveling at the discovery that the slave had been a queen. But at the last word of the singing they seemed to distance themselves from the first intention of their combat, and chose another, more pleasing one, persuaded by the hope that the slave had in Madama's pity (and ready to make it happen), and by the words of the last guard to sing. And having their shields already on their arms, they began to fight. It was a moment made delightful by the change of subject, and because song and instrumental music changed instantly to the sound of weapons and drums. The contrast seemed elegant to everyone.

The acting was so good that the 'accidental/fake truth' became very evident; starting with the wounds (that never were, and should have never been), the action seemed real. The groups remained close together in combat. Each knight had to confront all four of the other group, each of them turning this way and that, sometimes with more than one adversary around him, giving occasion for every sort of knightly daring and resolution, making those who watched believe the feigned falls, the retreats, and every other thing as what could happen accidentally rather than by the will of the players. The Prince himself played his part excellently, and revealed that even in play he had the fire of true valor, and heroic glory. The knights turned around in their combat many times, finally ending in their original positions. The captain, swift and confident, got into the middle of the fight and artfully separated the

warriors. They stayed still while the slave sang to stop them with the words *Deh che di vostro ardire* (to line B).⁵³

When the slave finished singing, the knights bowed to her as if to a Queen who was now already liberated by their tacit agreement with the earlier words of the guard. The chorus of soldiers and sailors immediately started the *canzonetta* written below, accompanied by many instruments. Turning and processing in the form of a wheel the knights gave their weapons to their pages, and when the first stanza was done there began a truly delicate and graceful dance, with cabriole leaps and entwining patterns of various sorts. The knights were admired for their dance no less than for their previous combat. When the chorus started the second stanza, they started processing to the music to rest. After that, they started a new dance, completely different from the first but no less pleasant, in French style instead of Italian, leaving the spectators with great desire for it to last longer. Once finished, when the chorus began the last three stanzas, the knights took their weapons back from their pages. The captain came to the middle, led them in bowing to the slave, and took her by the hand. And the two [captain and slave] — put in the middle of a beautiful row opened by the knights — moved toward Their Highnesses, with bows and proper gestures; almost as if they were taking leave to escort the liberated queen to her bridegroom. They turned and passed through the now divided but still-singing chorus to exit where they had come in. Reuniting, the chorus followed them with everyone else who had participated, ending with song, and with the delightful harmony the spectacle and the pleasing appearance of so many varied costumes. As the ladies reprised the dance that they had stopped at the slave's entrance, everyone passed festively — without realizing it — from Carnival to Lent.

53 Buonarroti seems not to have preserved a copy of the slave's final words when he created his archive.

