

**THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF BENIGNO ZERFA (1726-1804)  
A MID-18TH CENTURY MALTESE COMPOSER OF SACRED MUSIC**

(In Four Volumes)

Volume One

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the following thesis is to provide a study of the life and music of Benigno Zerafa (1726-1804), a mid-18th-century Maltese composer of sacred music. As a model adopted in this dissertation, research on Benigno Zerafa is divided into four categories which the author chose as important points of evidence in musicology:

- i) biographical, historical and literary studies (based mainly on official documents, the musical documents, and the informative descriptions of performances at the Cathedral, all housed in the archives of the Cathedral Museum) dealing with the composer's life, the environment in which he was brought up and in which he worked, the liturgy and local religious life, the texts he used for his vocal works, performance practice, the reception of his music, and its performance history; these are given in chapters one, two, three and four;
  
- ii) source studies – (i) gathering the sources, (ii) identifying the composer's musical and textual handwriting, (iii) determining the authenticity of works attributed to him – involving documentary or external evidence, provenance, paper studies of handwriting, watermarks and staving (rastrography), methods of dating, etc.: these are discussed in chapter four and the thematic catalogue;

- iii) style analysis concerned with internal evidence deriving from the music itself, and ultimately confronting questions of aesthetics, the place of the composer in music history and, especially, his influence on the development of the Maltese Baroque style – chapters five, six and seven. Empirical methods involving analysis of motifs, phrase structure, harmony, style characteristics, texture, form and word-painting are all considered. The arguments presented demonstrate how topoi, rhetorical figures and systematic overall planning are essential features of Zerafa's works in general;
- iv) a thematic catalogue of Zerafa's 148 works – volumes three and four – in chronological order concludes this study; a general preface and various indexes to facilitate quick reference are also included.

A critical edition of Zerafa's Z116, *Nisi Dominus* for soprano solo, is presented as appendix A. Other appendices (B to G) follow as aids to the main text.

To the best of my knowledge (as of 31 October 2001), no critical editions, books, papers and theses on the composer have yet been published and are in the process of being published. The present author's critical edition of Z2, *Messa a due cori* (1743), has appeared as part-fulfilment of requirements for the M. Mus. degree (Liverpool, 1997) in a computerised version, and was performed professionally in four locations in France in 1998 under the direction of French conductor Jean-Marc Labyille.

One or two dissertations on Zerafa have now appeared. A doctoral thesis by Franco Bruni (Sorbonne, 1998) entitled *La Cappella musicale della Cattedrale di Malta nel diciassettesimo e diciottesimo secolo* presents a detailed study of the *Cappella Musicale* of the Cathedral up to the 18th century; a concise biographical note on Benigno Zerafa and an analysis of watermarks of the manuscript paper used are included. There is also a brief analysis of a small number of works, followed by a general thematic catalogue of the works according to manuscript number.

The aims of this thesis and the results achieved lie within the context of the composer's life and career, and are intended to promote a better understanding of the man and his music.

Frederick Aquilina

31 October 2001

## ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	Archiepiscopal Archives, Malta
ACM	Archives of the Cathedral of Malta, Mdina
Arch.	Archives
Br. Lib.	British Library
CEM	Curiā Episcopalis Melitensæ, Floriana
CSP	Archivio Crypta Sancti Pauli, Rabat
MPA	Mdina Parish Archives
NAM	Notarial Archives of Malta, Valletta
PA	Parish Archives
SPA	Siggiewi Parish Archives



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## Chapter One

### A BIOGRAPHY OF BENIGNO ZERAFA (1726-1804)

The impressive development of Maltese sacred music in the Late Baroque culminated in the works of Benigno Zerafa, a highly talented priest-composer from Rabat who served as *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of St. Paul at Mdina from 1744 to 1786. Zerafa was without doubt the nation's leading composer of the mid-18th century. Through the example of his compositions and through his teaching, he played a major role in establishing the traditions of high craftsmanship and a respected name for the *Cappella Musicale* of the church that he so loyally served for over forty years. His fluent command of melody, uncomplicated textures and bent for innovation reveal him as an important link between the Late Baroque/*Galant* period and the oncoming Classical age.

Benigno Zerafa was born at Rabat, Malta, on 25 August 1726, and baptised on the same day in the Cathedral Church, Mdina.<sup>1</sup> The nobles Caietano Mompalao Apap and Baroness Antonia Castelletti, godparents to Benigno, gave him 'Caietano' as his second name (appendix C, document 1).<sup>2</sup> His father, Nicola Zerafa, described as son of the late Gregorio<sup>3</sup> and Rosa Zerafa of Rabat, was a surgeon by profession.<sup>4</sup> He had married Teresa Lombardo, daughter of the late Bartolomeo, also of Rabat, on 17 September 1716 at the Rabat parish church of St. Paul.<sup>5</sup> Eight children

<sup>1</sup> John Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa (1726-1804): A Biography', in *A Concert of Maltese Baroque Music by Benigno Zerafa* (Mdina, Concert Programme, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Archiepiscopal Archives of Malta, AAM, *Patrimonium* of Benigno Zerafa (1747), 16.3.74, f. 6.

Azzopardi states (loc. cit.), however, that Nicola Zerafa's father was named Giorgio.

<sup>4</sup> AAM, *Patrimonium*, ff. 2, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

were born of this marriage, four sons and four daughters: Benigno was the fifth child.<sup>6</sup> Two sons, Giovanni Battista and Benigno, received Holy Orders,<sup>7</sup> while Giuseppe, the fourth-born, continued in his father's footsteps and became a surgeon.<sup>8</sup>

As a surgeon, Benigno's father enjoyed a relatively high social status. The distinction between social classes in the 18th century carried much more weight than it does nowadays. The upper and lower classes seemed to inhabit different worlds, with little possibility of crossing the barrier from the lower to the upper.<sup>9</sup> "[...] The wealthy sector was generally restricted in number, consisting of a few noble families and a few others who dealt directly in commerce."<sup>10</sup> However, by the end of the 17th century the Knights of St. John had brought much prosperity to Malta and raised the standard of living of her people to much above the general European level of the time.<sup>11</sup>

The Zerafa family was living at that time in the Santo Spirito Hospital area in what is nowadays known as 'Main Street' (appendix B, picture 1), but was then called Strada del Signor Manduca.<sup>12</sup> This was not to be their permanent residence since, according to the Public Census records of 1761,

<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit.

Azzopardi gives the full list of the eight children as follows: Giovanni Battista (b. 21.5.1717), Maria Clara (b. 26.11.1719), Elena Camilla (b. 17.7.1721), Pietro Paolo Giuseppe (b. 23.9.1722), Benigno (b. 25.8.1726), Carlo (b. 12.3.1729), Vincenza (b. 7.5.1731) and Francesca (b. 5.6.1734.)

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> AAM, *Patrimonium*, f. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Attard, *The Knights of Malta* (San Gwann, 1995), p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Bonnici, 'Maltese Society under the Hospitallers', in Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta, 1530-1798: Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St John of Jerusalem*, (Msida, 1993), pp. 311-349, at p. 336.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Attard, *The Knights of Malta*, p. 107.

Grand Master l'Isle Adam and the Knights of St. John had sailed into Malta on 26 October 1530 to take possession of their new home. They established the Order at the small village and port of Birgu.

<sup>12</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

the family is recorded as having moved into a house in Strada del Carmine at Mdina (Città Notabile),<sup>13</sup> (appendix B, picture 2) near to the Castelletti/Mompalao family.<sup>14</sup> Another census, carried out in 1792, noted that the Zerafa family had moved back to the suburb of Mdina, Rabat, this time taking up residence in Strada Nuova, nowadays known as Gusman (Cosmana) Navarra Street (appendix B, picture 3).<sup>15</sup> The family members residing there included Benigno, his mother and sisters, his nephews (who were the children of his brother Giuseppe) and his sister Francesca.<sup>16</sup> Francesca, Benigno's youngest sister, married the cleric Marc'Antonio Bardon on 15 January 1762 and eventually moved to Zebbug.<sup>17</sup>

We know very little about Benigno's early years. We may surmise that, apart from regularly attending church with his parents, he accompanied his brother Giovanni Battista there several times and inherited his fondness for religious discipline through the same brother, who had already taken Holy Orders. Benigno's first real contact with sacred music

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<sup>13</sup> Attard, *The Knights of Malta*, pp. 14, 73.

Mdina, the Arabic equivalent for "a walled city", retained its name until 1428, when King Alfonso of Sicily referred to the city as "a notable and distinguished jewel of the royal crown". The Maltese subsequently adopted the name of Città Notabile instead of Mdina in all official documents. Later, during the building of Valletta, the Order's convent (the headquarters of the Order of St. John) was transferred from Vittoriosa (Birgu) to Valletta. The Knights thenceforth referred to Mdina, or 'Notabile', as "Città Vecchia", (the old city), to distinguish it from their new city of Valletta. Mdina was the main centre for professionally performed sacred music, owing its importance to the Cathedral, which is situated in the heart of the old city. It has an atmosphere of its own, Medieval and Renaissance palaces, churches and fortifications beautifying its narrow streets.

<sup>14</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

Azzopardi states that the *Status Animarum* records for 1722 include the name of Rosa Zerafa, "serva", who formed part of the household of the Castelletti/Mompalao family.

<sup>15</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Loc. cit.

Giuseppe was married to another Rosa, and among his children were Gabriela and Vincenzo, the future organist of the Cathedral.

<sup>17</sup> Loc. cit.

Marc'Antonio Bardon was the son of Filippo and Agata of Notabile, and among his children were Fortunato, Marino, Maria, Giuseppe and Benedetto.

and singing came when he was nine. On 1 May 1735, along with his thirteen-year-old brother Giuseppe, he was appointed to serve in the Cathedral Church of Mdina as a *diaconus* or *clericus chori*, sharing with his brother a salary of 20 *scudi*.<sup>18</sup> This was made possible by the promotion of a cleric named Filippo Tonna, who was elected to the post of *cappellanus chori*, leaving a vacancy.<sup>19</sup> Giuseppe's appointment did not last long, because on 26 December 1736 he was dismissed from the service of the cathedral and replaced by Giovanni Zammit from Zurrieq with effect from 1 January 1737.<sup>20</sup> On 1 September 1737, by official decree, Benigno earned an increase in stipend after the dismissal of George Grixti, another clerk.<sup>21</sup>

Concurrently, Benigno petitioned the Bishop for acceptance into the *Cappella Musicale*.<sup>22</sup> 4 September 1737 proved to be an important day for him since, after receipt of a report from the cathedral's Deputies for Music recommending Zerafa for the promotion, Mgr. Paulus Alpheran de Bussan, Bishop of Malta (1728-57), appointed the eleven-year-old Benigno "di voce soprano" to the *Cappella Musicale*, with an addition to his salary

<sup>18</sup> The monetary system in use in Zerafa's time comprised seven principal coins:

6 <i>dinari</i>	=	1 <i>grano</i>
5 <i>grani</i>	=	1 <i>cinquina</i>
2 <i>cinquine</i>	=	1 <i>carlino</i> (or 10 <i>grani</i> )
2 <i>carlini</i>	=	1 <i>tari</i> (or 20 <i>grani</i> )
12 <i>tari</i>	=	1 <i>scudo</i>
30 <i>tari</i>	=	1 <i>oncia</i> (or 2 1/2 <i>scudi</i> ).

Based on the Order's 17th-century currency system, it continued to be used until the late-18th century. (Carmel Cassar, *Sex, Magic, and the Periwinkle* (Pietà, 2000), p. 34.)

In relation to our modern currency – the Maltese lira – and the British pound sterling, one *scudo* coin was equivalent to about 8 cents 4 mills (about 14 pence), and 5 *scudi* were worth approximately 42 cents (about 69 pence).

<sup>19</sup> Archives of the Cathedral of Malta, ACM, *Regestum Deputationum Personarum* (Reg. Dep. Pers.) Vol. 1 (1698-1851), f. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., f. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., f. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

of 10 *scudi*.<sup>23</sup> By singing treble in the cathedral choir – which was a select group of about 12 to 15 voices within the larger Church choir – not only was Benigno able to earn a modest allowance, but also, perhaps quite unknown to him at this time, he was gaining his first significant musical experience and embarking on a lifelong professional career solely dedicated to the composition and performance of sacred music.

The Cathedral of St. Paul at Mdina (appendix B, picture 4)<sup>24</sup> had fine musical traditions; a considerable library of music had already been accumulated, thanks to the first *maestri di cappella* from abroad (mainly Sicilian) who had rendered their services in the earlier years, and by those Maltese composers who had pursued their studies in Sicily. The *maestro di cappella* in Benigno's time was not a Sicilian but a Maltese – the first to break with the Sicilian tradition. Don Pietro Gristi (1696-1738) from Rabat served as a soprano in the *Cappella Musicale* until 1713, when, with the financial assistance of the Cathedral Chapter, he was sent to complete his musical studies in Naples at the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, returning to Malta in 1717.<sup>25</sup> Gristi, who took over the post of *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Malta that same year, produced some fine works, including a *Kyrie-Gloria* Mass of 1729 (preserved in the Cathedral Archives).<sup>26</sup> Incidentally, Gristi was also the baptismal godfather of

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<sup>23</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 31.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Blouet, *The Story of Malta* (Valletta, 1967, 5/1993), p. 99.

The famous Cathedral of St. Paul is already documented in 1299 and, like many other sacred buildings in the 'Kingdom of the Two Sicilies', was later rebuilt in the Romanesque style. In 1693 Malta felt the outer ripples of an earthquake, which caused extensive damage in Sicily. Many people were killed in the towns of Syracuse and Catania; in Malta, although the damage in Valletta was limited, at Mdina the cathedral collapsed and many buildings suffered extensive damage. The new cathedral was reconstructed in the present Baroque style between 1697 and 1702 by the Maltese architect Lorenzo Gafà, and consecrated in 1702.

<sup>25</sup> John Azzopardi, 'Don Pietro Gristi (1696-1738)', in *Vetera Novaque Conventus et Carmina* (Mdina, Concert Programme, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Loc. cit.

Francesca, Benigno's youngest sister.<sup>27</sup>

On 4 March 1738 Don Pietro Gristi, who had been *maestro di cappella* for 21 years, died unexpectedly three weeks before his 42nd birthday, leaving the post of *maestro di cappella* vacant.<sup>28</sup> Some provisional arrangements by Bishop Alpheran saved the situation: first, through the appointment of Don Baldassare Parnis as teacher of Gregorian chant on 31 March 1738;<sup>29</sup> second, through the nomination and appointment of Carlo Imbert, organist of the Cathedral Church at the time of Gristi's death, to lead the *Cappella Musicale* as *maestro* as well as to teach *canto figurato*. Imbert was previously resident organist at the Parish Church of St. Paul in Rabat. On his call to the Cathedral of St. Paul in Mdina in 1738, he was replaced as organist in Rabat by Don Bernardo Fenech.<sup>30</sup> Imbert's temporary appointment was made on 23 April 1738, for which he received 30 *scudi* in addition to the 100 he was already receiving in annual salary as organist, plus other emoluments customarily enjoyed by the *maestro di cappella*. The document confirming the arrangement concluded with a short note saying that this will last until the Church is provided with a new *maestro di cappella*.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. I, f. 32.

<sup>30</sup> John Azzopardi, 'Muzika u Muzicisti fil-Kolleggjata ta' San Pawl, Rabat', in *Il-Festa Taghna* (Rabat, Parish Programme, 1989), pp. 7-11, at p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 32.

In Malta the native 'Maltese' language was spoken by people of all social origins and conditions. (Carmel Cassar, *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta* (Msida, 2000), p. xxx.) However, the local and Maltese idiom became the main medium of communication in the parlance of towns and in the countryside. (*Ibid.*, p. 189.) Latin was employed in the liturgy, while Italian was the 'official' language of the élite culture, a language "unavailable to the majority of a society, still illiterate and economically backward". (*Ibid.*, p. xlii.) All official documentation of the Cathedral was written in a mixture of Latin and Italian; Latin was used for the formulary part of the document, for example: "Insurrexit Reverendissimus etc., et dixit:", which was followed then by the 'report' in Italian, e.g.: minute writing, revenue records, etc. (Information kindly supplied to me by Mgr. Rev. John Azzopardi.)



With this problem temporarily solved, Bishop Alpheran and the Cathedral Chapter turned their thoughts to who would eventually succeed Gristi. The choice of Benigno must have been made with some degree of confidence, presumably in the knowledge that he had already been receiving musical training and was showing an inclination towards a higher musical education that could ultimately lead to such a demanding but honourable responsibility. Further, his family background must have also been taken into consideration: Benigno's father, being a surgeon, must have stood in fairly high social esteem. This decision was to prove a turning point for Zerafa.

To leave for further training in Naples at the age of eleven must certainly have been, even by modern standards, a remarkable opportunity for a boy of Benigno's age. With some financial assistance from the Cathedral Chapter, Zerafa departed for Naples in mid-1738 to receive musical training at the same *Conservatorio* that Gristi had attended previously. Azzopardi states that the Cathedral Chapter provided the loan of 165 *scudi* necessary for Zerafa's stay in Naples, and which was to be repaid in instalments in the course of the years following his return from Naples.<sup>32</sup> Zerafa was enrolled in the conservatory as a *convittore*, or boarding student.

The organisation of systematic musical education in 17th-century Italy centred around the four great conservatories of Venice and a further four in Naples, all of which initiated their programmes of instruction in the *seicento*. The Neapolitan conservatories became "abundant suppliers of manpower, [musicians of all types,] for which they would become justly

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<sup>32</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 2.

famous in the course of the 18th century." This "high-class musical talent supplied by the Neapolitan conservatories was sufficient to satisfy a public demand far exceeding that of previous centuries."<sup>33</sup> Zerafa's arrival in Naples is recorded in a document of July 1738 preserved in the Archivio Storico Diocesano of Naples. The entry runs as follows:

Benigno Zerafa from Malta was enrolled as a student by His Eminence [Cardinal Mgr. Giuseppe Spinelli (in office, 1735-1754)], on the 8th of the said month (= July 1738).<sup>34</sup>

At the *Gesù Cristo* the *figlioli* were organised in groups (*paranze*), which were in turn led by 'heads of groups' called *capiparanze* (Pergolesi was *capoparanza dei violini* during his stay there). Another entry for May-August 1743 (a few months before the closure of the conservatory) under the heading "Spese per le scarpe di figlioli", records:

A pair of shoes provided to Zerafa - 2 *tari*, 10 *grani*.<sup>35</sup>

During his six-year period of study in Naples (1738-1744) Zerafa managed to complete three major compositions by the time he turned 17. Two of these are large-scale works: the first, a *Dixit* (Z1, ACM, Ms. 288-289) for two choirs, two orchestras and soloists dated in the autograph score 1 June 1743, composed at the age of 16; the second, a *Messa di Gloria* (Z2, ACM, Ms. 243) for two choirs, two orchestras and soloists dated 22 September

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<sup>33</sup> Lorenzo Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, translated by David Bryant (Cambridge, 1987, R/1996), p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 2.  
"A 8 detto (= July 1738) entrato Benigno Zerafa, maltese, posto da Sua Eminenza per alunno."

<sup>35</sup> Loc. cit.  
"Dato le scarpe a Zerafa - tari 2, grani 10."

1743 – a colossal work with *stile antico* fugues which Zerafa composed at the age of 17. The third composition, a *Credo a 4* (Z3, ACM, Ms. 245), is a more concise work dated 8 October 1743. Unfortunately, the *conservatorio's* position as an educational institution had become critical by 1743. It was in fact suppressed that very year, when its building became a seminary for priests.

It is very probable that Benigno acquitted himself well in his studies at the *conservatorio*: a testimonial by the Maltese teacher Girolamo Abos (16.11.1715-?.10.1760), most probably issued at the termination of his studies, reads (appendix C, document 2):

I, the undersigned, attest to you that the young man Benigno Zerafa is most capable and can produce any composition which will be required, and I can affirm this more forcefully since I was *maestro* of the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* where he was at that time, and I can assure you that the compositions he sent to Malta are really his own, unaided work, and I can state this with a clear conscience, and in confirmation of this I undersign myself,

Girolamo Abos.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Curiae Episcopalis Melitensæ, CEM, *Acta Originalia*, Vol. 294, f. 266.

“Io qui sottoscritto li fò fede che il Giovine Benigno Zerafa l'è di buonissimi abilità ed è capace di far qualsiasi co[m]posizione che si richiede e maggiormente l'attesto perche mi son trovato Maestro del Cons[ervatori]o de Poveri di Giesù dove stava allora lui, e l'assicuro, che q[ueste] compositioni à mandate lui in Malta sono sue proprie e sole fatighe e di q[uesto] l'accerto in mia coscienza, ed in fede di ciò mi sottoscrivo, Girolamo Abos.”

This certificate from Abos was backed by another issued by the Rector of the *conservatorio*, Don Filippo Bottigliero (appendix C, document 3):

To all who shall see these writings by right. I the undersigned, Rector of the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, declare and testify that Benigno Zerafa of the city of Malta has received the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist more than once a week and has taken part in all devotions in the same *conservatorio*, and for five years has been an example of a good life and virtue, in which he has distinguished himself greatly, and has been a good example to his companions; we sign this with true faith and with our zeal.

At Naples – from the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* [...] 18 June 1744, I, Don Filippo Bottigliero, Rector.<sup>37</sup>

The conservatory that Zerafa attended was an institution of high repute that always sought to employ as teachers the best composers and pedagogues of the time. Among Zerafa's most prominent teachers were:

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<sup>37</sup> Loc. cit.

"Omnibus ad quos presentes litteras inspicere de jure spectat, Ego infrascriptus Rector Collegij Pauperum Jesu Xsti, in dubiam fidem facio; atq. testam Benignum Zerafa Civitatis Melite sacrosanta penitentiae, e Eucaristie Sacramenta pluries in ebdomada suscepisse atq. omnibus dicti collegij devotionis, pietatis, et studiorum exercitiis p[er] quinque annos operam navasse et bone vite odore, et virtutum omnium splendore enituisse, ac eius Socciis in bene agendo exemplum prestasse: in quorum fidem has presentes litteras propria manu subscripsi, proprioq. sigillo munivi. Neapoli e x editus d. Collegij Pauperu[m]/Jesu Xsti die XVIII. mensis Junis 1744/. Ego D[on] Philippus Bottigliero, Rector."

*Maestri di musica e di canto e aiutanti dei maestri di cappella:*

Francesco Durante	1728 to September 1739 <sup>38</sup>
Francesco Feo	1739 to 1743 <sup>39</sup>
Alfonso Caggi	1738 to 1740 <sup>40</sup>
Girolamo Abos	1740 to 1743 <sup>41</sup>

*Maestro d'istromenti a corda:*

Domenico de Matteis	1727 to 1743
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*Maestro d'istromenti da fiato:*

Giuseppe Comes	1725 to 1743
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*Maestri di grammatica:*

Domenico Cosenza	1732 to ? <sup>42</sup>
Giovanni Argenzio	1739 to ?
Salvatore Ajello	1743 to ?
Michele Pane	1743 to ? <sup>43</sup>

According to Salvatore di Giacomo, Francesco Durante (1684-1755) was elected *primo maestro* at the *conservatorio* in 1728, retaining this post until September 1738. However, Hanns-Bertold Dietz has more recently established that Durante left the conservatory in September 1739, a year and two months after Zerafa's enrolment there; this would imply that Zerafa met Durante and possibly also received instruction from him.

<sup>38</sup> Hanns-Bertold Dietz, 'Durante, Francesco', in S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 5 (London, 1980), pp. 740-745, at p. 741.

On p. 151, Salvatore di Giacomo, in *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli, MDXLIII-MDCCC*, Vol. 2 (Milan, 1928), gives the date incorrectly as 1738. On p. 266, the same author, (op. cit.), states however, that Durante remained *maestro di cappella* until June 1739.

<sup>39</sup> Hanns-Bertold Dietz, 'Feo, Francesco' in S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 6 (London, 1980), pp. 465-468, at pp. 465-466.

Di Giacomo, (*I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2), gives Feo's year of starting employment at the *Poveri di Gesù*, on p. 267, incorrectly as 1738.

<sup>40</sup> On p. 265, (*I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2), Di Giacomo gives Caggi's year of dismissal as 1741.

<sup>41</sup> Di Giacomo maintains that Abos served as *maestro di cappella* from 1742 to 1743 (*I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 263).

<sup>42</sup> Domenico Cosenza's period of service may have extended from 1732 to 1739, the year when Giovanni Argenzio became *maestro di grammatica*. The question mark is intended to indicate that it is also possible that Cosenza's contract terminated before 1739. The same interpretation applies equally to the three subsequent *maestri*.

<sup>43</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, pp. 151-152.

In order to understand clearly Zerafa's activity as a student and composer of sacred music, we have to look briefly into the lives of two of the most prominent composers who were directly involved in his musical education in Naples. Francesco Durante was born in Frattamaggiore, Naples, on 31 March 1684 and died in Naples on 30 September 1755. He was a leading composer of church music and a teacher of international repute.<sup>44</sup> In 1702 he enrolled as a *convittore* at the *Conservatorio di S. Onofrio a Capuana*, but it is claimed that at some time between 1702 and 1728 he went to Rome to study under Pitoni and Pasquini for five years. By 1710 he was teaching at *S. Onofrio*, leaving this conservatory on 12 January 1711.<sup>45</sup> On account of his high reputation, Durante was appointed *primo maestro* at the *Gesù Cristo* conservatory in October 1728, replacing Gaetano Greco. He was by then classed among such celebrated composers as F. Mancini, D. Sarro, F. N. Fago, N. Porpora, J. A. Hasse, L. Vinci and L. Leo. Durante's *Requiem* in G minor, dated 27 November 1738, and his *Missa in Palestrina*, written in 1739, belong to this period. Among his students at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* were G. B. Pergolesi, Girolamo Abos, Domenico Terradellas, and, for about a year, Joseph Doll. Di Giacomo claims that Durante engaged as his assistants two young men, whom he identifies as "il Maltese" (most probably Girolamo Abos) and Guglielmo. Durante resigned from the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* in September 1739 and was succeeded by Francesco Feo, who was to be Zerafa's teacher during the period 1739-1743.

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<sup>44</sup> Dietz, 'Durante, Francesco', p. 740.

<sup>45</sup> Loc. cit.

According to some sources, Durante was a man of simple manners, but one profoundly wise in matters concerning his art, and a respected arbiter on questions of harmony and counterpoint. He was genuinely dedicated to his pupils' welfare and education (Ibid., p. 741).

Francesco Feo was born in Naples in 1691 and died there on 28 January 1761. He received his musical education at the *Conservatorio di S. Maria della Pietà dei Turchini* from 1704 onwards, probably until 1712; among his fellow students were L. Leo and G. de Maio. Feo studied with Andrea Basso and after 1705 with F. N. Fago. In July 1723 he became *maestro* of the *S. Onofrio* conservatory along with Ignazio Prota, teaching such famous students as Nicola Sabatino, Nicolò Jommelli, Gaetano Latilla and Gennaro Manna. Much of his sacred music dates from the period 1723-1743.<sup>46</sup> Feo resigned from *S. Onofrio* in 1739, when Leo took over his position, to become successor to Durante as *primo maestro* of the *Gesù Cristo*, which he served for four years.<sup>47</sup> He was assisted there first by Alfonso Caggi and later by Girolamo Abos. One of Feo's pupils (contemporary with Zerafa) was Giacomo Insanguine, known as 'Monopoli'. Feo retired from public teaching in 1743 with the closure of the *Gesù Cristo*, although he apparently continued to take private pupils.<sup>48</sup>

Some doubts about the last year of Benigno's life in Naples (1743-1744) remain. As already explained, the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* closed down in November 1743 and converted into a seminary. However, Zerafa stayed on in Naples until 1744, the year of his return to Malta, which occurred on 11 September of that year.<sup>49</sup> The Rector, Don Filippo Bottigliero, issued Zerafa's certificate of termination of studies on

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<sup>46</sup> Dietz, "Feo, Francesco", p. 465.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 465-466.

<sup>48</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Feo remained active as a composer of sacred music for Neapolitan churches, such as the *Annunziata*, where he had been appointed *maestro di cappella* in 1726. (*Loc. cit.*)

<sup>49</sup> John Azzopardi, 'Chapter I: The Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina - Malta', in John Azzopardi and Matteo Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music in the Archives at the Cathedral Museum of Malta* (Minnesota, 2001), pp. 19-92, at p. 29. Zerafa returned to Malta from Naples on the *tartana San Francesco di Paola* which travelled from Marseilles via Naples, Castellamare and Malta. A *tartana* was a single-masted ship widely in use in the Mediterranean.

18 June 1744, at a time when, according to Di Giacomo, the *conservatorio* was closed and Bottigliero was absent on account of his illness. Abos's certificate of Zerafa's completion of studies could have occurred around this time, too. We are faced with a period of at least nine months (November 1743 to August or September 1744) during which Zerafa's presence in Naples is shrouded in uncertainty, especially with regard to his residence at the *conservatorio*.

Regarding the arrangements made for the pupils of the *Gesù Cristo*, several writers (including Di Giacomo and Robinson<sup>50</sup>) assure us that, on the closure of the institute, the remaining *figlioli* (among them presumably Zerafa) were transferred to the other conservatories to finish their studies. If this is correct, we may assume that Zerafa attended any one of the three conservatories still operative, possibly the *S. Onofrio*.<sup>51</sup> It seems, therefore, that Zerafa, along with the rest of the *figlioli*, completed his final 'academic' year, that is, from November 1743 to mid-1744, in another institution, the certificate confirming Zerafa's completion of studies being issued on 18 June 1744 (the original date on the certificate) by the rector of the former *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*. The phrase, "[...] and for five years he has been [...]", implies that Benigno's attendance as a student at the conservatory lasted from 1738 to 1743.

It is also evident that Abos issued his certificate in 1744 when he was already fulfilling the duties of *maestro di cappella* at *S. Onofrio* (one of the remaining three functioning conservatories and the one the present

<sup>50</sup> Michael F. Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera* (Oxford, 1972), p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> The conservatory to which Zerafa may have been sent to to finalise his studies may have possibly been the *S. Onofrio*, as this was the institute that Abos was transferred to. Abos may have issued Zerafa's certificate of completion of studies after leaving the *Poveri di Gesù* (i.e. in 1744), as the details in the certificate given above show, during a time when Abos served as *maestro di cappella* at the *S. Onofrio*.



author proposes as Zerafa's final residence). The clause "[...] and I can affirm this more forcefully since I was [past tense] *maestro* of the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, where he [Zerafa] was [past tense] at that time, [...]" certainly suggests that the certificate was issued after Abos' departure from the *Gesù Cristo*. Moreover, the phrase, "[...] where he was at that time", implies that Zerafa, too, had already left the institution by the end of 1743, and that Abos issued the certificate after the conservatory's closure in November 1743. Finally, the passage, "[...] and I can assure you that the compositions he [Zerafa] sent to Malta [...]", means that Zerafa had already sent a number of original compositions to Malta before his departure from Naples. In fact, the compositions in question (Z1 and Z2, and possibly, Z3) were sent to Malta, probably on 20 August 1744, as part of an application for the post of *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral Church which Zerafa submitted, along with the two references mentioned above, prior to his departure from Naples.

As in mainland Europe, any composer who applied for an appointment as a *maestro di cappella* in Malta had to be fully aware that the two main sources of patronage for professional musicians were the Church and the Court. The first usually necessitated subjection to a competitive examination and negotiation with the sovereign appointing body, the Cathedral Chapter; the second entailed submission to the all-powerful patronage of a sovereign Grand Master of the Order of St. John. In Zerafa's case, the first position offered him the stability of a highly visible appointment at the Cathedral of Malta by grace of the Bishop of Malta – a prominent position in musical life, albeit not an easy one to sustain.

The post of *maestro di cappella* still lay vacant following Pietro Gristi's death six years previously. Zerafa's petition of 20 August 1744,<sup>52</sup> along with the two certificates sent from Naples and the works he had already composed, needless to say attracted much praise and attention from the Church Deputies for Music; on 21 August 1744 they issued a report recommending the young Benigno to Bishop Alpheran.<sup>53</sup> The election of a new *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Malta required the receipt of references from qualified persons in two separate areas; one relating to musical accomplishment, the other to moral formation. On the musical side, the applicant had to be proficient at producing church compositions in choral counterpoint and the *stile antico*. In respect of morals, he had to be a priest, or at least a candidate for priesthood, a requirement which was officially abolished only after 1804. The final part of the Church Deputies' report reads:

[...] we have been able to obtain very clear evidence, accompanied with the most dispassionate praise, [...] of his very great capacity and progress in counterpoint, in addition to which he has devoted himself to the playing of the violin and the double-bass; he is therefore qualified to direct the *Coro*. We therefore feel that we shall please your Most Reverend Lordship [Bishop Alpheran] if we humbly ask you to perform an act of the greatest justice and charity, considering also that he is a son of our country, and that before he left for Naples, he had already served in this Holy Cathedral Church, where he was most happy.

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<sup>52</sup> CEM, *Acta Originalia*, Vol. 294, f. 266.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 265v.

For Your Most Reverend Lordship 'Notabile,  
21 August 1744 Can. Albino Portughes, Deputy.<sup>54</sup>

Bishop Alpheran was evidently very pleased with the report, and now that his aspiration to have a professionally trained person in charge of the *Cappella Musicale* had been fulfilled, he immediately issued a decree, on 22 August 1744, appointing Benigno Zerafa *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Mdina (appendix B, picture 5). Zerafa was just turning 18.<sup>55</sup> The following is an extract from Bishop Alpheran's decree regarding Zerafa's appointment:

[...] with the usual salary of 160 *scudi* per year as from the first day of next September 1744, with the duty of leading the *Cappella Musicale* in the same Cathedral, with rehearsals twice a week, and teaching the *clerici cantus figuratus* and *cantus Gregorianus* [...].<sup>56</sup>

It is likely that Zerafa's father informed his son about his new post of director of music, which explains the interval between Benigno's date of

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<sup>54</sup> Loc. cit.

"[...] abbiamo vissuto renderci distintamente informati con spassionatissima lode, [...] della sua gran capacità e progresso nel contrappunto essendosi anche l'ore applicato nel suono del violino e controbasso; capace per tanto alla prefettura del coro Musicale. Siamo per tanto nel sentimento che aggrattando VS illm. e Rev. l'ore di quanto umilmente supplica eserciterà in atto di somma giustizia e carità tanto più che è figlio del paese: e prima della sua partenza per Napoli avea in actual ministro in questa S. Chiesa Cattedrale se li tanto si compiaceva [...] Notabile 21 Agosto 1744."

<sup>55</sup> Young, promising composers, possessing all the pre-requisites to apply for the post of *maestro di cappella* at the Mother Church, were always considered for the post, irrespective of their age. This was also the case with the preceding *maestro di cappella*, Pietro Gristi, who was appointed director of music of the said Church at the age of 21.

<sup>56</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 42v.

"[...] cum solito salario scutorum cento sexaginta quolibet anno documento a prima die Septembris primo venturi 1744 et cum obligatione excrundi municos ejusdim Catedralis cum concertis solitem bis in ebdomada et continuo docendi clericos ejusdem cantum figuratum omnes vero cantum gregorianum [...]"

appointment and his arrival in Malta on 11 September. Becoming *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Malta testified unquestionably to a musician's competence in the composition and performance of music; this recognition naturally augmented his professional reputation and social standing. However, the demands of the *Cappella Musicale* (which comprised a group of well-trained singers and players, an organist and the musical director) at the Cathedral were onerous for both the organist and the *maestro di cappella*, requiring them to be in continuous attendance during the contractual year. Part of Zerafa's contract at the Cathedral clearly laid down his duty to compose genuinely new compositions according to the needs of the liturgical and extra-liturgical functions. Apart from composing and directing, the *maestro di cappella* held the responsibility for the regular instruction of the choirboys. On his election the composer had to submit himself to the total discipline of the church authorities. In the public perception the prestigious and rewarding position of the *maestro* was indissolubly associated with the splendour of the *cappella* and of the divine cult.<sup>57</sup>

The first record of payment to members of the *Cappella Musicale*, to mention Zerafa's name since the time of his appointment, covering the period 1 September 1744 to 31 December 1744, reads: (numeric figures denote *scudi* and *tari* respectively):

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<sup>57</sup> Gino Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca* (Palermo, 1975), pp. 92-93.

A	Benigno Zerafa, <i>Mro. di Cappella</i> tante che lascia scudi dieci accosto del suo debito	43	4
	D[on] Diego Scicluna	13	4
	D[on] Giuseppe Axisa	10	
	D[on] Baldassare Parnis	6	8
	D[on] Filippo Agius	2	4
	D[on] Battista Mifsud	20	
	Carlo Imbert, <i>Organista</i>	33	4
	Paolo Azopardi, <i>Violinista</i>	8	4
	Lorenzo Said, <i>Soprano</i>	50	
	Giuseppe Tabone	2	
	Enrico Grech	1	8
	Benigno Chetcuti	3	4. <sup>58</sup>

The list shows that Zerafa was repaying his 'training' loan to the tune of 30 *scudi* a year. In gross terms his salary amounted to 53 *scudi* 4 *tari* every four months, or 160 *scudi* annually. It was thus possible for him to settle his debt to the Cathedral authorities within a period of just over five years: from September 1744 to February 1750.

Zerafa's 'performing' role as *maestro di cappella* was very specific, and tended to be a rather complex one: he was a singer himself, as well as the player of several instruments, an accomplishment which helped him remarkably in securing the best result from his singers and players; he had to conduct ('battere la musica') and lead the orchestra; he had to teach music both to the clergy and to the choirboys, and was expected to compose a certain amount of music for the church he served. A very interesting and detailed picture of the performing role of the *maestro di cappella* in church in early-17th-century Italy is conveyed to us by Viadana; the description helps us to understand better the performing role of the *maestro di cappella* a hundred years later:

<sup>58</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 9 (1736-1746), f. 397.

The *maestro di cappella* will always follow the Basso Continuo part of the organist in order to observe the musical changes and give an indication when a solo, a duet, a trio, a quartet or a quintet ensues. And when the *ripieni* are about to enter, he will turn his face to all the *chori* [of instruments and/or voices] and lift both hands – the sign that a *tutti* is commencing.

Viadana, *Salmi a 4 Chori* (Venice, 1612).<sup>59</sup>

At the time of Zerafa's return to Malta a new, more materialistic age was beginning under the new Grand Master Pinto (1741-1773). Pinto treated the advent of his rule as the start of a golden age of privilege.<sup>60</sup> Zerafa's interregnum as *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Malta coincided, from a political point of view, with the presence of three Grand Masters of the Order, who ruled the island successively, these being:

Manoel Pinto de Fonseca	1741-73
Francisco Ximenes de Texada	1773-75
Emmanuel de Rohan Polduc	1775-97.

Obtaining the post of *maestro di cappella* at the cathedral was certainly the most important 'career move' of Zerafa's whole life. But this was by no means his final mission, as he was destined from the start to become a

<sup>59</sup> Stefani, *Musica e Religione nell'Italia barocca*, p. 92.

"Il Maestro di Cappella, starà (...) guardando sempre su 'l Basso Continuo dell'Organista, per osservare gli andamenti della musica, e comandar quando à da cantar' un solo, quando due, quando tre, quando quattro, quando cinque. E quando si faranno i Ripieni, volterà la faccia a tutti i Chori, levando ambe le mani, segno che tutti insieme cantino."

<sup>60</sup> Attard, *The Knights of Malta*, p. 133.

priest.<sup>61</sup> His brother "Giovanni Battista was received into the Order [of St. John] as a *Cappellano d'Obbedienza Magistrale* attached to St. Paul's Grotto, Rabat, where his uncle and baptismal godfather, Fra Carlo Lombardo, also served."<sup>62</sup> Michael Talbot maintains that it was customary in the 18th century for those who had a large family to single out one (or more) of their children right from birth for the priesthood in order to enjoy various privileges connected with that state. The privileges in question included, first, the enjoyment of a non-manual profession, and second, security of employment. 'Priestly vocations' in the 17th and 18th centuries were somewhat different from our modern concept of priesthood.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, on 29 July 1746, Benigno was presented for, and elected to, the priestly benefice that was essential for any candidate for the priesthood in order to qualify for the Tonsure.<sup>64</sup> A candidate for the Catholic priesthood had to progress through the ranks on his way to ordination. These ranks comprised first the five Minor Orders (Tonsure, Porter, Lector, Exorcist, Acolyte), and then the three Major Orders (Subdeacon, Deacon, Priest).<sup>65</sup> A person receiving the tonsure (the first of the Minor Orders) became a partaker of the common privileges and obligations of the clerical state and was prepared for the reception of subsequent orders. In the Roman Catholic Church the giving of the tonsure was a separate ceremony in which the parents of the boy offer their young son to the service of God. No special age for the reception is prescribed, but the recipient must have learnt the rudiments of the Faith

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<sup>61</sup> One of two prerequisites needed to become *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Malta was that the applicant had to be a priest, or at least a candidate for priesthood (see details above).

<sup>62</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1. The author states that Giovanni Battista occupied several posts: Sacristan, Procurator, and *Maestro di Canto*.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi* (Florence, 1995), p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> AAM, *Beneficio di Benigno Zerafa*, Vol. 62 (Benefici, 1746-48), f. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 48.

and be able to read and write.<sup>66</sup>

Tonsure was the prerequisite for receiving all benefices, and those aspiring to hold more important duties needed to have passed into the higher orders. A word must be said here about the election and function of benefices in the 18th century. A benefice was an endowment to provide income to support a secular cleric, the income often coming from a parish<sup>67</sup> or, as in Zerafa's case, from such rich benefactors as barons and nobles. Four characteristics were essential to every benefice:

- i) the right to revenue from church property, the beneficed cleric being the usufructuary and not the proprietor of the source of his support;
- ii) a twofold perpetuity, objective and subjective, inasmuch as the source of income must be permanently established and at the same time the appointment to the benefice must be for life;
- iii) a formal decree of ecclesiastical authority giving to certain funds or property the character or title of a benefice;
- iv) an annexed office or spiritual function of some kind, such as the care of souls, the exercise of jurisdiction, the celebration of Mass, or the recitation of the Divine Office.

The last element is fundamental, since a benefice exists only for the sake of securing the performance of duties connected with the worship of God. Further, a benefice is described as 'elective' when the appointing authority

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<sup>66</sup> William H. W. Fanning, 'Tonsure', in K. Knight (ed. Online Edition), *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* (Internet source, 1999: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14779a.htm>).

<sup>67</sup> John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1991, R/1996), p. 289.



may confer it only after some electoral body has named the future incumbent. In order to be fully utilitarian, a benefice must be erected in a church or at an altar, under the title of some saint or mystery, and with the annexed obligation of rendering some spiritual service.<sup>68</sup>

On 16 June 1746 Benigno was elected to a benefice of lay juspatronate under the title of Santa Domenica (*Santa Duminka*)<sup>69</sup> which had been entrusted to Don Filippo Agius, who had just died.<sup>70</sup> This consisted of two fields in the area known as *Tal-Maddalena* in the remote village of Dingli, close to Rabat, one of which is known as *Ta' Fournier*, and the other as *Ta' Cenejch* [sic – *Cenesch?*], or *Ta' Gellum*,<sup>71</sup> and which had been established in its entirety by Baron Marc'Antonio Inguanez and his wife Monica in 1669.<sup>72</sup> Also mentioned is a third field situated in an area known as *Ghar Bittija* on the outskirts of Dingli, which is referred to by name only in the *Patrimonium* at f. 4,<sup>73</sup> not in the *Beneficium*. According to the *Patrimonium*, the chapel of Santa Domenica (appendix B, picture 6) was situated here.<sup>74</sup> In acknowledgement of this benefice, Zerafa was obliged to erect a slab bearing an inscription identifying the beneficiary fields that had been granted to him for 99 years.<sup>75</sup> In return, he was obliged to serve God by praying for the souls of the founders and to

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<sup>68</sup> John T. Creagh, 'Benefice', in K. Knight (ed. Online Edition) *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* (Internet source, 1999: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02473c.htm>).

<sup>69</sup> For further details on Santa Duminka see Alexander Bonnici, *Had-Dingli – Raħal f'Taqbida mal-Hajja* (Dingli, 2000).

<sup>70</sup> AAM, *Beneficio*, f. 10.

<sup>71</sup> AAM, *Patrimonium*, f. 4.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, f.1.

The contract is registered in the Acts of Notary Mario Saliba, dated 21 February 1669. For a full version of the conditions signed in 1669 by the founders of the Benefice, see ff. 18-20 of the *Beneficio*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 18.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 19.

celebrate all Masses laid down in the contract.<sup>76</sup> Apart from the religious obligations, there were also some financial ones, which were of little consequence and were normally assigned to the persons concerned on a year-by-year basis.

Following his election (but not yet entitlement) to the benefice, Zerafa received his First Tonsure on 13 January 1747 from Bishop Alpheran in the chapel of the Holy Crucifix of the Cathedral Church;<sup>77</sup> the Minor Orders followed on 21 January 1747.<sup>78</sup> He was finally granted the entitlement of the benefice on 24 April 1747,<sup>79</sup> becoming obliged to:

[...] wear a ring in his finger and a biretta on his head as is the custom in such possessions [...].<sup>80</sup>

The document also specifies that the nominate person will also be obliged to serve God by praying for the souls of the founders and take will care to have celebrated all the Masses prescribed in the foundation, as well fulfilling all other obligations.<sup>81</sup> In the meantime, Benigno's father had petitioned the Church Authorities that his son should be promoted to the rest of the Holy Orders and be ordained a secular priest.<sup>82</sup> He was offering as a donation to Benigno two fields situated beneath the old city of Mdina as a further benefice under the title of 'subsidiary patrimony', constituting

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., f.19.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., f.16.

<sup>78</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> AAM, *Beneficio*, f. 25.

According to a note in the *Patrimonium* (ff. 19-20), Zerafa obtained the *Beneficium* on 5 December 1747.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., f. 24.

"[...] et corporale possem panuli mi in digio et biretin capite suis ut manis ego positione ita in quod de jurip sollicita de servire [...]"

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., f. 24.

<sup>82</sup> AAM, *Patrimonium*, f. 6.

landed property of the highest quality<sup>83</sup> located in what is still known today as *Wied l-Mdina* (appendix B, picture 7).<sup>84</sup> It may be true that Nicola Zerafa was a well-respected person,<sup>85</sup> but this did not deter others from filing a protest against him concerning the property that he was about to leave to his son as a donation.<sup>86</sup> As a general rule, when such an objection was raised, witnesses had to be called by the benefice-holder to draw attention to any irregularities that might have arisen in the process of donation. Consequently, three persons, all from Rabat, were interrogated by Don Salvatore Micallef, General Fiscal Promoter of the Bishop's Curia, on 8 January 1748; these comprised: Agostino Portelli, son of Salvatore, 30 years of age, mason by profession;<sup>87</sup> Lorenzo Galea, son of Andrea, 33 years of age, mason by profession;<sup>88</sup> and Michele Vassallo, son of the late Pasquale, 38 years of age, householder by profession.<sup>89</sup> Don Pietro Vassallo also authorised a report by two qualified architects, Petronius Debono of Zebbug and Filippo Pace of B'Kara, to inspect the land in question.<sup>90</sup>

After the three witnesses in support of the Zerafas had been questioned, Don Pietro Vassallo declared on 8 February 1748 that: [...] he [Vassallo] finds no objection to Benigno Zerafa's acquiring the Patrimony [...],<sup>91</sup> and can therefore obtain a certificate of the sufficiency of his patrimony in

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., ff. 28, 31-32.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., ff. 6-7.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., f. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., f. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., f. 24.

What is interesting here is that all three witnesses (the last two listed below) described the Zerafa family as comprising five children, three brothers and two sisters.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., f. 26.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., f. 29.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., f. 31-32.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., f. 35.

"[...] sono di sentimento che detto Benigno possa ottenere la dichiaratoria della sufficienza del suo patrimonio [...]".

order to proceed to Holy Orders. The case, which had been heard at the *Gran Corte* at Valletta, was declared closed by an endorsement of a declaration, witnessed by Notary Arnaldo Morello of the Great Court of Valletta, and signed by Salvatore Portelli, Benigno Zerafa and Don Pietro Vassallo, on 16 March 1748, confirming that Benigno Zerafa was eligible to be promoted to the Holy Orders.<sup>92</sup> Benigno then went on to receive the Subdiaconate on 30 March 1748, and the Diaconate on 21 September of the same year.<sup>93</sup>

On 12 September 1748 the principal organist of the Cathedral Church, Carlo Imbert, died, and Bishop Alpheran appointed Don Pietro Imbert, his son and the deputy organist, as his successor at the usual salary of 100 *scudi* a year.<sup>94</sup> Four months later it was Benigno who suffered a loss in his family. His father Nicola Zerafa died on 30 January 1749 at the age of 64.<sup>95</sup> This was a terrible blow for the Zerafa family, and a note on f. 305 from volume 11 of the *Depositeria* for the years 1748-1750, under the heading 'Musici Perdenti', confirms that Don Benigno Zerafa, *maestro di cappella*, was unable to fulfil his duties (of *maestro di cappella*) for the four months January-April 1749, possibly due to the tragic circumstances.<sup>96</sup> At all events, Benigno still had to proceed with his commitments; apart from composing and directing the music of the *Cappella Musicale* of the Cathedral of Malta, we even encounter him playing the violin and the double-bass, two instruments in which he received training at the conservatory in Naples. On 5 June 1749 Zerafa received the sum of eight *tari* from Canon Giovanni Maria Azzopardino [sic], depositor of the

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., ff. 36-38.

<sup>93</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 52.

<sup>95</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 11 (1748-1750), f. 305.

Cathedral Church, as payment for playing the violin during two services on the occasion of the solemnity of *Corpus Domini*.<sup>97</sup> We also encounter Zerafa playing the double-bass and supplying the music for a Mass and a *Serenata* on Saturday, 11 October 1749, on the occasion of the “[...] possesso preso dal R<sup>mo</sup> Cap<sup>o</sup> delle nuove insegne [...]”, that is: “new insignia taken into possession by the Reverend Chapter”. In the middle of the 17th century a new genre called ‘serenata’ evolved, deriving its poetic character from the cantata and its dramatic inclination from opera. The word ‘serenata’ is derived directly from ‘sereno’ (clear night sky), under which performances often took place by the light of torches and candles. This was the preferred kind of composition to accompany a ‘festa’. The list of performers includes at the top: “Benigno Zerafa, *Violinista è [sic] Controbasso, 1 scudo 6 tari*”.<sup>98</sup> A further document, dating from December 1749, demonstrates that, apart from serving as musical director of the *Cappella Musicale*, Zerafa was regularly involved in playing the violin on other liturgical occasions:

I, the undersigned, have received from the Right Reverend Can. Don Giovanni Maria Azzopardino [sic] [...] the sum of 3 *scudi* as payment for playing the violin, that is, one *scudo* for the Christmas novena, and another two *scudi* as payment for six services rendered during Christmas time, that is to say, three *scudi*.

Benigno Zerafa  
*Maestro di Cappella*.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., f. 332.

<sup>98</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 11, f. 416.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., f. 465.

“Io qui sottoscritto ho ricevuto dal R<sup>mo</sup> Sig Can. D. Gio. Maria Azzopardino [sic] come [...] la somma di scudi 3, e sono per aver sonato il violino, cioè uno scudo per la novena del SS Natale, e due altri scudi sono per 6 servizi nelle feste della Natività, dico 3-/ Benigno Zerafa, Maestro di Cappella.”

Another note on f. 507 states that Zerafa received the sum of one *scudo* eight *tari* for performing on the violin during two services on the occasion of the Epiphany of our Lord and in the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul of 1750.<sup>100</sup> Other mentions of extra services that Zerafa performed, such as when he was asked to play the violin during the Easter celebration of 1750,<sup>101</sup> are found elsewhere in the same *Depositeria* volume.

As was usual at the time, *maestro* Zerafa would also call on extra musicians (both players and singers), commonly referred to as *rinforzi*, to join the regular orchestra of the *Cappella* as supernumeraries, lending a special lustre to the church orchestra on festive occasions. These included the titular feast of the Cathedral Church on 29 June, when extra stringed and wind instruments, together with voices,<sup>102</sup> were co-opted. The list of extra singers and players engaged by Zerafa for the *Primi Vespri* and *Messa* on 28 and 29 June 1749 respectively, comprises (the two columns of figures denote *scudi* and *tari*):

Il Sig[nor] Fra Tommasino Peres, <i>Soprano</i>	12	
Il Sig[nor] Don Alessandro Bezzina, <i>Primo Violino</i>	6	
I Sig[nori], <i>Trombe di Caccia 1<sup>o</sup> e 2<sup>o</sup>,</i> Nicola è [sic] Salvatore	12	
Il Sig[nor] Petruzzo, <i>2<sup>o</sup> Violino</i>	4	6
Il Sig[nor] Michelino, <i>3<sup>o</sup> Violino</i>	4	6
Il Sig[nor] D[on] Salvatore Gatt, <i>Contrabassa</i> [sic]	4	6
Il Sig[nor] Roberto Debono, <i>Violoncello</i>	5	
Il Sig[nor] Riccardo, <i>Oboe</i>	5.	

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., f. 507.

<sup>101</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 12 (1750-1752), f. 25.

<sup>102</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 11, ff. 90, 318.

The list is very useful since it shows the number of string players, in addition to winds, that were employed for the occasion by the Cathedral: three violinists (one fewer than on the same occasion in the previous year), a cello and a double-bass were added to the regular ensemble.<sup>103</sup>

The emoluments to which Zerafa as *maestro di cappella* was entitled included 'a customary gift' ("il solito regalo") of two *scudi* and six *tari* made to the musical director as token of appreciation on the occasion of the titular feast of *Mnarja* (a popular Maltese term for the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul). We can easily understand why the *maestro di cappella* in his turn composed new works for this occasion as a reciprocal gesture expression of gratitude. This emerges from a note dated 30 June 1749.<sup>104</sup> Other volumes from the same series make similar mention of the annual "regalo".

Benigno was finally ordained priest at the Episcopal Palace at Valletta on 19 September 1750 at the age of 24.<sup>105</sup> His career as *maestro di cappella* and teacher at the school of music of the Cathedral Church must have been a very challenging one, and it is most likely that the Zerafas moved into *Strada del Carmine* at Mdina during this time. While Benigno's first years as *maestro di cappella* were marked by a prodigious musical output, they were also marred by a series of disputes with authority. In 1748 Benigno and his father were cleared by the *Gran Corte* of Valletta of charges regarding what seemed to be a mishandling of affairs. On 26 January 1750 Zerafa was involved in an argument with Silvio Aquilina, whose fields bordered his beneficiary fields at Dingli.<sup>106</sup> Zerafa filed a

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<sup>103</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., f. 316.

<sup>105</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> AAM, *Patrimonium*, f. 15.

protest at the courts of the Bishop's Curia against Aquilina, who was in turn ordered to pay 5 *scudi* and 6 *tari* to Zerafa in respect of the beneficial funds due to him on account of the *Ta' Fournier* fields rented out to Aquilina. The case was closed on 7 February 1750.<sup>107</sup>

Following this, a succession of disputes between Zerafa and various other persons in business occurred, and it is highly probable that Zerafa was given some advice and perhaps oral warnings by his superiors regarding this unsatisfactory situation, which must have already been going on for some time. We can only guess at the facts since, during the second week of November 1751 Zerafa was unexpectedly dismissed by unanimous decision from his post of *maestro di cappella* – a step that deprived him of his income and customary emoluments.<sup>108</sup> In the 17th and 18th centuries, if a composer failed to collect his salary, this almost certainly meant that he was absent from his duties for some time; the financial documents of the archives for the period in question prove that Zerafa was absent from the Cathedral. On Zerafa's dismissal his official salary was terminated on what we nowadays would refer to as a 'pro rata' basis. The accounts record "[...payment] for the four months of Nov[ember], Dec[ember] 1751, Jan[uary], Feb[ruary] 1752: to D[on] Benigno Zerafa, *maestro di cappella*, to the tune of thirteen working days: 4 *scudi*, 4 *tari*, 13 *grani*."<sup>109</sup>

A factor in the religious renaissance of Malta in the 16th century was the introduction of Pastoral Visitations, which were formally performed by the Bishop in all towns and villages of the Maltese islands. During such

<sup>107</sup> AAM, *Atti Civili*, Vol. 109 (1749-1750), ff. 270v and 304r.

<sup>108</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 42v.

<sup>109</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 12, f. 381.

"[...pagamento] per i quattro mesi di Nov[embre], Dic[embre] 1751, Gen[naio], Feb[raio] 1752:/a D[on] Benigno Zerafa, Maestro di Cappella, per rata di giorni 13: 4 scudi, 4 tari, 13 grani."



visits the Bishop dutifully inspected persons and places in his diocese, with a view to examine and maintain faith and discipline, and to correct any detected abuses by applying appropriate remedies.<sup>110</sup> Bishop Alpheran de Bussan performed four such visitations – during the years 1728-29, 1736-40, 1744-51 and 1751-56. It was on the Bishop's Pastoral Visit of 1751 to Mdina that Zerafa's lawsuit was presented to him. Notwithstanding this, in November 1751, during his Pastoral Visit, Bishop Alpheran also inspected all the priests presented for examination, and they were all approved. The roll of priests for 1751 included at number fifteen Benigno Zerafa.<sup>111</sup> So the question that has to be asked is: what misdemeanour was so serious as to cause Zerafa's dismissal?

The first thing that comes to mind in connection with this serious event is that Zerafa may have given cause for displeasure in some aspect of the performance of sacred music at the Cathedral. The conflicts that might arise between the *maestro di cappella*, the sacred repertoire he promoted, and the church authorities, were already described in the *Edict on Music* of 1665, published in Rome to control and enforce musical discipline in the *Cappella Musicale* of any Cathedral; the possible punishments to be inflicted were harsh. These rules, which apply perfectly to the context we are describing, make clear the important position of responsibility that a *maestro di cappella* is sworn to uphold: rule no. 9 of the *Editto sopra le musiche* states "[...] that no *maestro di cappella* or other person entrusted with ordering the music or giving the beat contravene the aforesaid prescriptions [... otherwise he will have to pay] under pain of privation of office and perpetual disqualification from the exercise of his office and the

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<sup>110</sup> Arthur Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, Period III – 1530-1800 (Floriana, 1968), p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> AAM, *Visiti Pastoralis Alpheran de Bussan (1751)*, Vol. 35, ff. 73v-74r.

right to make music; and, moreover, that he be punished with a fine of 100 scudi, [...], and with other penalties – including corporal punishment – [...]”. Rule no. 10 is even harsher: “[...] that no *maestro di cappella* or other individual can in future make music in the churches [...], if he have not first sworn on the hand of the Vicar Cardinal of Rome [...] under pain of the aforesaid penalties, that he will observe everything contained in the present edict; and having taken his oath [...], if he contravene the aforesaid prescriptions in any way, he shall be punished as an oath breaker in accordance with the Constitution of His Holiness”.<sup>112</sup>

Yet the cause of Zerafa’s dismissal seems to have involved rather more than ‘simple’ musical considerations. Bishop Alpheran’s decree concerning Zerafa’s removal reads:

[...] The above-mentioned Most Reverend Mgr. Paulus Alpheran de Bussan [...] since he was rightly moved to do so, removed from his office as [...] *maestro di cappella* of his Cathedral, Don Benigno Zerafa, and ordered that the above be not revoked.

Domenico Falzon Chancellor 13 November 1751.<sup>113</sup>

Unquestionably, the word ‘revoked’ at the end of the statement connotes something serious. In a later document enforcing the above we find that:

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<sup>112</sup> Bianconi, pp. 107-109.

<sup>113</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 42v.

“Prelibatus Illmus et Rmus Dnus Fr Paulus Alpheran de Bussan Archiepus Damiata [...] ab. causas animum suum digne moventes emovit a servitio sua Ecclesia Cathedralis et ab officio praefecti chori musica sive magistri cappella ejusdem Cathedralis [...] Don Benignum Zerafa mandavit que revocari ebolevi pictam notam et itac.”

The Most Reverend Archbishop [Mgr. Paulus Alpheran] for just reasons, has been pleased to dismiss from the service of his Holy Cathedral Church, Don Benigno Zerafa, who was *maestro di cappella*.<sup>114</sup>

The wording “for just reasons”, similar to the “rightly moved” of the preceding quotation, implies something very substantial. Adding insult to injury, Bishop Alpheran almost immediately appointed other persons to take charge of music in the Cathedral. In that same month Don Giuseppe Cutajar was appointed teacher of Gregorian chant of the Cathedral Church with the usual payment of 20 *scudi* per year to be granted as from the first day of the month of November 1751.<sup>115</sup> Turning his attention to the vacancy for a *maestro di cappella*, “Bishop Alpheran tried hard to attract a competent master, [...] and the Chapter proposed for the would-be-successor a higher salary, now raised to 200 *scudi* instead of 160 *scudi*, and exemption from the duty of teaching *canto fermo*.”<sup>116</sup> Canon Napulone even advised the Chapter that the newly appointed *maestro di cappella*<sup>117</sup> would be expected to compose new works for solemn feasts and for the usual Sunday services.<sup>118</sup> Naturally, no one was competent enough to fulfil such a demanding task, so Bishop Alpheran

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<sup>114</sup> ACM, *Registrum Deliberationum Capitularium (Reg. Del. Cap.)* Vol. 7, (1746-57), f. 261v.

“Piacque a Mons Illmo Arciv per alcuni giusti suoi motivi licenziare dal servizio di questa Sta Chiesa Cattedrale il Sacerdote Don Benigno Zerafa che serviva in qualità di Mro di cappella [...]”

It is important to note here that the most vital document, which surely would have shed light on this incident – the *Corrispondenza, Alpheran de Bussan*, Vol. 8 (1750-56) – has been missing from the Archives of the Curia of Malta for an unknown number of years.

<sup>115</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 63.

<sup>116</sup> Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa: A Biography’, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> According to John Azzopardi, the new *maestro di cappella* who was to take Zerafa’s place was a Spaniard. (See John Azzopardi, ‘Chapter I: The Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina - Malta’, p. 30.)

<sup>118</sup> Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa: A Biography’, p. 2.

turned to organist Don Pietro Imbert and appointed him to lead the *Cappella* and to teach *canto figurato* until the Church was provided with a new *maestro*.<sup>119</sup> Imbert was also given the special allowances from which any *maestro di cappella* would customarily benefit as with effect from the last day of November 1751.

The situation remained unchanged all through 1752, during which year Zerafa produced one of his finest Masses *a due cori* (Z22), dated 21 April 1752, and written as a large manuscript score in ten movements. Although no reasons were given in the two documents of dismissal presented above, some clues regarding Zerafa's dismissal which point to a cause totally different from a mere 'musical complication' at the Cathedral can be found in other sources, such as a short note of 22 November 1751 stating that:

The obligation on the feast of *Sta. Domenica* with Vespers and High Mass, as well as other low Masses every week, owed to the icon removed from the church of the same title, which was interdicted in 1699, is to be fulfilled by the beneficiary, Don Benigno Zerafa.<sup>120</sup>

An order dated 10 April 1753 addressed to Benigno reads:

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<sup>119</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 63v.

<sup>120</sup> AAM, *Visiti Pastorali Alpheran de Bussan (1751)*, Vol. 35, f. 77r.

"Onus item festivitatis S. Dominicis cum vesperis et missa cantatis nec non cenies messe lecte qualibet hebdomada ratione icone translate ab ecclea euisdem tituli interdicta ab anno 1699 adimplietur per beneficiatum sacerdotem Don Benignus Zerafa. Die XXII mensis Novembris 1751."

Judge Carolus Cordina accepted the petition of the above-mentioned [Illustrious Lord Baron Marc' Antonio] Inguanez, which was accorded as regards every item therein contained regarding the person of Rev. Don Benigno Zerafa, [...]. By a new order of the Illustrious Lord Baron Marc' Antonio Inguanez, [...] to the Rev. Don Benigno Zerafa who has to decide, and is obliged to start the restoration of the Beneficial church of *Santa Domenica*, situated in the feud of the same Baron known as *Djar il-Bniet*, and subsequently to render it again fit and worthy for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by virtue of a decree sent to him by the *Gran Corte*.<sup>121</sup>

Indeed, a potentially conclusive explanation of the mystery lies here, supported by two factors. First, it is known that Bishop Alpheran (appendix B, picture 8), during his wise government of the diocese, consecrated several churches of the diocese, including many beneficiary chapels, and also donated precious gifts to the Cathedral Church.<sup>122</sup> Second – and this is directly related to Zerafa's beneficiary commitments – he knew that founders of benefices were also given a great deal of freedom in attaching conditions to the act of collation, provided that these conditions were approved by ecclesiastical authority. Although there sometimes emerged cases of interference by the civil authorities in the matter of

<sup>121</sup> AAM, *Atti Civili*, Vol. 112 (1752-53), f. 451v.

"X Aprilis 1753/Ill. Carolus Cordina sud att. sedemto ad instiam petis de Inguanez executu fuisse instrum mta terni omniaque et singula in eo contenta in personam Rev. D. Benigno Zerafa [...]. D'orde suo ad usa dall' Illmo Sig Bare Marc' Antonio Inguanez, [...] al Rev. Sig. Don Benigno Zerafa fra li gli voglia e debba omnimamente incominciare la ristaurazione della V chiesa beneficiale di S. Domenica seta nel feudo d'esso Sig Barone Denomenato ta' Djar il-Bniet, e susseguente quella restituisce idonea e conducente alla celebrazione del Santissimo Sacrificio della Messa e ciò in vigor di decreto spedito a se nella Gran Corte."

<sup>122</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p.15.

collation, all beneficed clerics were bound to make a profession of faith within two months of the date of taking possession by specifically performing faithfully the duties pertaining to their charge, such as reciting the canonical hours,<sup>123</sup> as well as any others that were mandatory in the contractual agreement. It seems, therefore, that Zerafa had to fulfil certain beneficiary obligations to the church of *Sta. Domenica* at Dingli by rendering it worthy again of the celebration of the Mass, and these obligations were in some serious way neglected. The brief note of 22 November 1751 stipulating that the obligation “must be fulfilled by the beneficiary Don Benigno Zerafa” certainly hints at a negligence on the part of our man which led to his dismissal, and makes complete sense when coupled with the subsequent instruction of April 1753. It appears therefore that Zerafa’s dismissal from his post was due primarily to a religious oversight, possibly aggravated by financial complications.

Fortunately, Zerafa was reappointed *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral Church on 14 April 1753 by Bishop Alpheran himself, seventeen months after submitting himself to this severe decree. Zerafa was even granted the higher salary of 200 *scudi* a year, a gesture which aided him and his family immensely to overcome a period of seventeen months of financial hardship. The document ordering his reinstatement reads:

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<sup>123</sup> Creagh, ‘Benefice’, loc. cit.

Alluringly, the tenure of the incumbent of a benefice was perpetual, in the sense that it can only be terminated by death or for causes specified by law. The chief duty of a benefice holder was to maintain it as a perpetual means of support for ministers of religion. Its fruits or revenues, however, belonged to him, but with the obligation of devoting to pious causes, and especially to the relief of the poor, all that is not needed for his own support.

21 April 1753

To the Rev. Don Benigno Zerafa

His Lordship, the Most Reverend Mgr. Paulus Alpheran de Bussan, Archbishop of Damiata, and Bishop of Malta, has named and confirmed as Prefect of the Music Chapel, that is, *maestro di cappella* of his Cathedral Church, the Very Reverend Don Benigno Zerafa, granting him a salary of 200 *scudi* a year, beginning from today in advance, and according to the conditions of the Capitular deliberation of 19 November 1751, which has been approved that same day by his Lordship and according to his good pleasure, by his decree dated 14 April 1753.<sup>124</sup>

Restoration of the beneficiary chapel must have imposed a considerable financial burden on Zerafa, who until 1750 was still paying back his study loan to the Cathedral Chapter. Unfortunately, before the end of 1753 he received another court order to settle all outstanding debts with Michele Zammit, a merchant. On 10 December 1753, six months after Zerafa's reinstatement as musical director, Zammit reminded him of his obligation to fulfil this duty by paying 15 *scudi* out of a larger sum, the remainder to be paid at the rate of two *scudi* per month.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 66.

"Die XXI men Aprilis 1753/Pro Adm Rdo Don Benigno Zerafa/Illus. et Rmus Bnus Fr Paulus Alpheran de Bussan Archiepus Damiata Eccle. Meliten. constituit et deputavit in Præfectum Chori musices sive Magistrum Cappella sua Cathedralis ecclesia situm adm. Rev. Don Benignum Zerafa cum salario scutorum duecentorum quolibet anno ab hodie in ante decurrendo et cum condizionibus contentis in deliberazione capitulari capta die XIX Novembris 1751 codem die approbata ab Amphitudine sua Illma e Rma et adsui Beneplacitum vigere Decreti pralibari Illmi. et Rmi. Dni. die XIV ejusd. Aprilis 1753 oretanus facti p. Unde."

<sup>125</sup> AAM, *Atti Civili*, Vol. 113 (1753-1754), f. 145.

At this time in his career Zerafa was maintaining at his own expense a school of music attached to the Cathedral Church. In a note of 3 March 1755 Zerafa informed the Cathedral Chapter that since his pupils were progressing well in singing, he desired to introduce them additionally to playing wind instruments ('di fiato') which were necessary for the *Cappella Musicale* of the Church. The note says that:

[...] Don Benigno Zerafa [...] has asked for a loan of 60 *scudi* to be granted to him from the Cathedral Church, since he desires to purchase from Naples two oboes and two *trombe di caccia* which he himself will provide and which subsequently he will refund from his salary year by year.<sup>126</sup>

Zerafa doubtless wished to acquire the instruments for the benefit of his students in the hope that they would later be admitted to the Church's orchestra. This makes perfect sense when one considers the fact that it was common for musicians to borrow money from the *Depositeria* of the Cathedral Church in order to purchase instruments that would be employed in its orchestra. A note on f. 381 of the *Depositeria* register for the years 1750-1752 records that Don Diego Scicluna had repaid one *scudo* four *tarì* lent to him for the purchase of his violoncello.<sup>127</sup> But all this must have coincided too much with Zerafa's debts, and the loan, which was perhaps needed to settle other, more urgent issues, rather than to purchase instruments from abroad, was in the event granted to Zerafa only after the arrival of the instruments, two and a half years later: two

<sup>126</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 7, f. 261v.

"[...] Il sacerdote Don Benigno Zerafa [...] due trombe di caccia e due oboi quali a costo suo farà venire da Napoli [...] si compiacerà ordinare li sia sborsata dalla detta Sta. Chiesa Cattedrale la somma di sessanta [...] scudi quale rimborserà poi dal Salario dell' ore ritendoli ogni anno [...]."

<sup>127</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 12, f. 381.



oboes received from Naples on 16 October 1757 costing 21 *scudi*, 3 *tari* and 11 *grani*;<sup>128</sup> two *trombe di caccia* (horns)<sup>129</sup> imported, apparently from Germany, on 25 May 1758, costing 26 *scudi* 9 *tari* and 14 *grani*; and two *tortini grandi* (brass crooks for the horns) ordered from Naples and received on 28 July 1758, costing 5 *scudi* and 8 *tari* (appendix C, document 4).<sup>130</sup>

In some financial need, Zerafa wrote to the Cathedral Chapter on 5 July 1755, pleading that:

[...] he [Zerafa] finds himself in urgent need of money and therefore he humbly asks your Goodness [...] to order that one year's salary be granted to him in advance which he will later pay back by returning 10 *scudi* each month deducted from his salary.<sup>131</sup>

This money, which was desperately needed to avoid any further embarrassment, was granted: 200 *scudi* in advance, which were to be refunded within a period of six years and eight months at the rate of 10 *scudi* per month, and in case this were not fulfilled, at the rate of twenty *scudi* per month, as per a notarial agreement signed on 29 July 1755.<sup>132</sup> On

<sup>128</sup> ACM, *Registrum Mandatorum*, Vol. 2 (1746-1760), f. 264r.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 276v.

The *tromba da caccia* seems to be another name for *corno da caccia*, or valveless hunting horn. The term, customarily used by Zerafa in his autograph scores and frequently encountered in Italian music of the middle decades of the 18th century (in music by Pergolesi, Paradies, etc.), is cognate with French *trompe de chasse*.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 280r-v.

<sup>131</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 7, 5.7.1755.

"[...] l'espone ritrovarsi presentemente in qualche necessità urgente e perciò fà umile ricorso alla bontà di V Illma supplicandola voler compiacersi ordinare li sia anticipatamente il salario d'un anno che sconterà [...] di scudi dieci per ogni mandato fino il totale pagamento [...]."

<sup>132</sup> Notarial Archives of Malta, NAM, Vol. 3I/045, Notarial Act of Salvatore Vitale for 29.7.1755, ff. 827-828.

2 September 1755 came yet another legal instruction to Zerafa to repay outstanding debts: this time to Baldassare Grech. The latter filed a writ in the *Gran Corte* against Zerafa ordering him to pay within two days, and prove to have paid, the sum of 75 *scudi* due to him to make up the larger sum by virtue of a note included in the acts of the *Gran Corte* and besides other petitions which had been made against the same person, Zerafa.<sup>133</sup>

It is clear that this latest sum of money that Zerafa borrowed from the Cathedral authorities was utilised to clear all debts to Baldassare Grech which had been incurred. This is confirmed by a second court order signed by Grech and Antonio Vella, of 11 December 1755; this states that the above-mentioned persons have asked Rev. Don Benigno Zerafa to pay the sum of 50 *scudi*, from the borrowed money which he had acquired through Rev. Can. Albino Portughes from the Depositary of the Cathedral Church, in fulfilment of the decree of the Most Reverend Monsignor, published on 14 April 1754. This had to be done by virtue of a signed document written by Don Benigno Zerafa on 10 August 1751, which included the additional sum of 75 *scudi* to conclude all argument as declared by the Monsignor.<sup>134</sup> A later entry for 5 February 1756 confirms Zerafa's adherence to the agreement made a few months earlier. This document states that Benigno Zerafa had given 25 *scudi*, supplied to him from the money acquired from Don Albino Portughes, to Baldassare Grech, in order to make up the full sum of 105 *scudi*, thus fully settling the debts.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> AAM, *Atti Civili*, Vol. 115 (1755-1756), f. 2.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 144.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 201v.

It emerges, however, that Zerafa also had money owed to him by another person: in this case, a musician. A document dated 1 October 1757 states that Mro. Michael Zammit has to pay the Rev. Don Benigno Zerafa within two days 18 *scudi* and 6 *tari* towards a larger sum of 39 *scudi*.<sup>136</sup> Another decree, dated 24 March 1759, states that the same Michael Zammit has to pay the sum of 20 *scudi* and 7 *tari*, being the balance of the larger sum.<sup>137</sup> This document concludes all Zerafa's legal entanglements.

From the date of his reappointment as *maestro di cappella* onwards Zerafa worked hard at composition, producing no fewer than 25 works in 1753 and 38 works in 1754. The techniques of composition acquired by any graduate of one of the four Neapolitan conservatories were tested in competitions held to fill the posts of *maestro di cappella* in a cathedral or church. *Maestri di cappella* were prepared to compose sacred music employing either of the two styles of church music contemporary with them: that is, the *stile antico* and the *stile moderno*. They were also expected to do so at an unbelievably fast rate. Two instances in Zerafa's composing career bear out this statement. The first is seen in a collection of works dated in quick succession:

- 29.12.1757, *O Felix carina a Soprano solo* (Z98),
- 29.12.1757, *Omnes ergo a Soprano solo* (Z99, incomplete),
- 30.12.1757, *Dixit Dominus a 4 voci* (Z100), and
- 1.1.1758, *Magnificat a 4 voci* (Z101);

the second, in a later collection of works dated:

- 30.1.1764, *Deus in adjutorium a 3 voci* (Z109),
- 30.1.1764, *Dixit Dominus a 3 voci* (Z110),
- 3.2.1764, *Laudate pueri a 3 voci* (Z111), and
- 5.2.1764, *Magnificat a 3 voci* (Z112).

<sup>136</sup> AAM, *Atti Civili*, Vol. 117 (1757-1758), f. 80v.

<sup>137</sup> AAM, *Atti Civili*, Vol. 118 (1758-1759), f. 475.

This extreme fluency that the conservatories of Zerafa's time imparted to their pupils is assumed in the following excerpt from the rules for a 'concorso':

[...] One of the judges will open a book of plainchant, and the first antiphon, gradual, offertory, communion, or other piece that appears by chance will be the theme given to the competitors, each one of whom will, during the same day and without leaving the aforementioned apartment, have to compose a work *a cappella* for four, five, or eight voices, according to the decision of the judges. And in addition to that, employing the same key ["tuono"], they will have to submit another work with instruments, in the concertato style and including fugue: and for the second composition, if the same morning is not sufficient to complete it, all the necessary time will be permitted, subject to the due conditions and cautions.<sup>138</sup>

Among the works which Zerafa produced in the closing months of 1756 was an Office of the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, for which his brother Fra Giovanni Battista helped him out by copying the words and music on

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<sup>138</sup> Sosio Capasso, *Magnificat: Vita e opere di Francesco Durante* (Naples, 1998), p. 66. "Da suddetti Signori Presidenti si aprirà un libro di canto fermo, e quell' Antifona, Graduale, Offertorio, Communio, o altro, che casualmente uscirà, sarà il tema che si darà a' Concorrenti su del quale ciascuno di essi, dentro quello stesso giorno e senza uscir dal menzionato appartamento, dovrà comporre a Cappella a quattro, cinque, o otto voci, come piacerà a' medesimi Presidenti. Ed oltre a ciò, su l'istesso tuono, dovranno fare un'altra Composizione, se non basterà quella stessa mattina, si darà tutto il tempo che sarà necessario, colle dovute bensì condizioni e cautele."

The competition in question was held to appoint a new *maestro di cappella* for the *Cappella Reale* in Naples. There were nine competitors, who were: Giuseppe de Maio, Francesco Galletti, Michelangelo Valenti, Niccolò Sala, Giuseppe Marchitti, Carlo Cotumaccio, Domenico Auletta, Saverio Granuccio, and Francesco Durante. The three examiners appointed to judge their works were Johann Adolphe Hasse, Giacomo Antonio Perti and Giambattista Costanzi.

parchment, and for which they received remuneration of 24 *scudi*. What interests us here is the description of the paper used in Zerafa's time for writing music, namely, "carta reale e carta pergamena": that is, "royal [large-format] paper and parchment".<sup>139</sup> The Italian music copying industry in the Baroque period involved large numbers of persons employed as professional copyists who frequently worked in collectives ('copying shops') dividing the work of writing out parts or score of a single composition between several hands.<sup>140</sup> However, it seems that there were not many, if any, professional copyists available to the Cathedral, and that all composers had a high degree of personal involvement with the copying out of their music. Indeed, Zerafa was the composer, arranger and copyist of his music for most of his career, although a close study of the separate parts in his collection suggests that there were other musicians who assisted him in the copying of parts. However, it is unlikely that any visitors to Malta would have gained access via copyists to his music (which explains why it did not circulate outside Malta).

On 20 April 1757 Bishop Alpheran died and was succeeded by Bartholomæus Rull, who was appointed Bishop of Malta on 19 December 1757. Rull was consecrated in his diocese on 27 June 1758,<sup>141</sup> an occasion for which Zerafa composed a grand *Messa a due cori* (Z103) and three linked works (Z104, Z105, Z106): a *Sacerdos et Pontifex*, a *Sancte Paule Apostole* antiphon and an introit, *Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas*. In 1764 Zerafa composed a *Laudate Pueri* for soprano solo featuring a cello

<sup>139</sup> ACM, *Mandatum* (1746-60), entry for 30.11.1756, f. 506; and ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 17, f. 11.

<sup>140</sup> Michael Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', in J. A. Sadie (ed.), *Companion to Baroque Music* (London, 1990), p. 17.

<sup>141</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 16.

Since the consecration of a new bishop entailed the presence of three officiating bishops, it was customary for the new bishop of Malta to be consecrated in nearby Sicily.

*obbligato*, thus employing a violoncello in concerto style as a solo. This practice was not very common in Malta in the period, but Zerafa again made use of the solo cello in three other works, namely Z117, Z118 and Z120, all of them psalms. In the same year Zerafa composed another 'innovative' work: a *Nisi Dominus* for soprano solo and *mandolino obbligato* – which is a rare combination anywhere for a church composition (a Critical Edition of the composition is given as appendix A). Undoubtedly, the mandolin was an instrument widely in use in Naples, and it is no surprise, therefore, that Zerafa was attracted by it and later included it in a sacred work.<sup>142</sup>

Zerafa did not restrict his activity to what was demanded by his position as *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral Church, but also occasionally conducted the music for the feast of St. Publius at Rabat from 1764 to 1784 (appendix C, document 5) and rendered other services to St. Peter's Convent and the Carmelite Priory, both at Mdina. The church of St. Publius, adjacent to the parish church of St. Paul in Rabat (appendix B, picture 9), belonged to the Order of St. John. The two churches of St. Publius and St. Paul at Rabat had already led similar musical activities since 1610, and both called on Zerafa's assistance for the music, as they had done on the former *maestro di cappella*, Don Pietro Gristi.<sup>143</sup> In fact, Zerafa served as official *maestro di cappella* of St. Publius (appendix B, picture 10), too, until 1784, when he was succeeded by Francesco Azopardi.<sup>144</sup> The collegiate church of St. Paul pursued many liturgical

<sup>142</sup> Among Maltese traditional folk instruments one finds the bagpipes (*żaqq*), flutes, lutes, tambourines, fiddles, guitars, mandolins and accordions. In Zerafa's time the mandolin was one of the most popular instruments in general use. Small ensembles of instrumentalists and singers participating in *festas* usually included mandolins, tambourines and accordions.

<sup>143</sup> Azzopardi, 'Muzika u Muzicisti fil-Kollegjata ta' San Pawl, Rabat', p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> Archivio Crypta Sancti Pauli, CSP, *Conti*, Vol. 39 (1764), p. 145, and Vol. 59 (1784), p. 82.

and musical activities (centred on the celebration of Mass and Vespers) in exactly the same way as the Cathedral of Mdina, and organists were regularly appointed there throughout the period. These included Carluzzo (in 1727), Fra P. P. Azzopardi (from 1744-?), Fra P. P. Schembri (in 1786), Fra Giovanni Battista Zerafa (in 1792) and Pietro Chircop (in 1796). Giovanni Battista Zerafa, who had earlier served as *maestro di canto* at the same church from 1741 to 1752, was the elder brother of Benigno Zerafa. After 1752 he taught organ there; Pietro Paolo Azzopardi was the brother of the future *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Mdina, Francesco Azopardi. Another popular feast commemorated annually on 21 September at the Parish of St. Paul at Rabat was that referred to as 'Consecration Day'. Don Pietro Gristi, *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Mdina between 1717 and 1738, was paid 26 *scudi* in 1726 for four services he had rendered on the occasion of the above-mentioned *fešta*, and which called for such instruments as two *corni da caccia*, a bassoon and four violins. Almost fifty years later we still encounter Zerafa, performing during a Mass solemnised by the bishop for the same occasion, at the head of a group of musicians comprising four wind instruments, three violins, one double-bass and an organ.

From 1762 Zerafa served also as *maestro di cappella* for the feast of St. Joseph at Rabat (*ta' Giezu*). In April 1763 Benigno and his elder brother Giovanni Battista formed part of the *fratellanza* of the Archconfraternity of St. Joseph, as assistant secretary and secretary respectively. During the 1762 festivities at the above-mentioned church, Zerafa's elder brother Fra Giovanni Battista was engaged as "secondo soprano". It is recorded that on 18 March of the same year, before the *traslazione* on the eve of the feast, a group of musicians led by Don Benigno Zerafa performed a concert

of *sinfonie*, “gratis” (free of charge), and also the ‘compieta’ in *falsobordone*; then during the transportation of the *reliqua*, the hymn *Iste Confessor* was performed. On the feast’s day (19 March), Zerafa led the music during High Mass with the participation of the castrato Lorenzo Sayd, bass Don Giovanni Battista Mifsud, organist Don Pietro Imbert, violinist Diego Scicluna and horn player Agostino Portelli. In the afternoon Zerafa and the above-mentioned musicians gave a concert, and later in the evening they performed the *antifona Joseph Fili David*. The same was repeated the next year (1763) on the occasion of the feast of the *Patrocinju* of St. Joseph, held in April, with the addition of a concert given on the terrace of the monastery of the same church.<sup>145</sup>

Zerafa also participated in services in other towns.<sup>146</sup> In the 1760s he directed the music for the feast of St. Catherine at Zurrieq, a thriving village in the south of Malta.<sup>147</sup> A document entitled *Esito Veneranda Lampade* for 1776-1837 details the musical activity held during this period at neighbouring Mosta, another village very close to Mdina, confirming that Zerafa served as *maestro di cappella* here, too. In 1778 he directed the music during the feast of the Assumption at Mosta, and was paid 40 *scudi*

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<sup>145</sup> Noel D’Anastas, ‘Il-Festa ta’ San Guzepp fis-Snin Sittin tas-Seklu 18 (L-Ewwel Parti)’, in, *Lehen il-Komunità Guzeppina* (Rabat, Parish Programme, 1996), pp. 72-77, passim.

“[...] Il Mro. di Cappella fece fare il trattenimento di Sinfonie gratis, come anche la detta compietà a falsobordone”.

<sup>146</sup> Many towns and villages in Malta did not benefit from the presence of a full-time *maestro di cappella*, but instead employed full-, or part-time, organists to play and direct all the liturgical and extra-liturgical services required during the year. However, the *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral was hired to compose and/or direct the music on the occasion of the titular feast, to celebrate, in a solemn way, the annual village/town *fešta*. This explains Zerafa’s position as director of music in various towns and villages around the Maltese islands.

<sup>147</sup> D’Anastas, ‘Il-Festa ta’ San Guzepp fis-Snin Sittin tas-Seklu 18 (It-Tieni Parti)’, in, *Lehen il-Komunità Guzeppina* (Rabat, Parish Programme, 1997), pp. 75-80, at p. 75.



and 10 *tari* for two services.<sup>148</sup>

On 27 September 1768 Don Pietro Imbert, organist of the Cathedral Church, died. Benigno was keen to promote to the vacancy his own nephew Vincenzo, who had already deputised for Imbert on a few occasions. Mgr. Bartholomæus Rull found no objection to appointing Vincenzo Zerafa as organist from 1 September 1768.<sup>149</sup> The post carried a salary of 120 *scudi* a year.<sup>150</sup> The next year, 1769, Bishop Rull died, on 19 February, and was succeeded by a Sicilian, Joannes Carmine Pellerano (1770-80), the third bishop under whom Zerafa served, and who was appointed on 28 May 1770. Pellerano was consecrated Bishop at Reggio Calabria on 25 August 1770. On account of his support for the Maltese people, he was not on good terms with Grand Master Ximenes, who later accused Pellerano of stirring up trouble between the Knights and the people. After being summoned to Rome, Pellerano was urged to remain in the Roman Curia from 5 April 1775 onwards to avoid further dissension between government and church in Malta.<sup>151</sup>

Zerafa's last years as *maestro di cappella* coincided with one of Malta's most crisis-ridden epochs, marked by political and ecclesiastical disputes

<sup>148</sup> Noel D'Anastas, 'Maestro di Cappella fil-Mosta, Francesco Azopardi (1748-1809), Hajtu u Hidmietu', in, *Programm tal-Festa, Socjetà Filarmonika Nicolò Isouard* (Mosta, Parish Programme, 1995), pp. 90, 92.

<sup>149</sup> Four compositions – Ms. 331-334 – survive by Vincenzo, all dating from 1767.

<sup>150</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 90v.

<sup>151</sup> Attard, *The Knights of Malta*, pp. 143-144.

Grand Master Ximenes had hardly been in office for a year when disputes between the Order and the clergy arose. Discontented priests were already plotting against the Order, and the troubles culminated in an actual uprising against the Order. A rebellion, commonly referred to as the "Revolt of the Priests", which was led by Don Gaetano Mannarino and involved the participation of seven priests and five clerics in all, took place on 9 September 1775. The mutiny tried unsuccessfully to overthrow the rule of the Order, which quickly reasserted its power. However, it was Ximenes's death in the same year that solved the problems, temporarily, for nothing was ultimately going to change the fact that the Knights of Malta had already fatally decayed.

that are firmly etched in the history of Malta. By 1777 the diocesan clergy rose in number to 485 priests and 200 holders of lower orders in a population of 48,900. This produced a ratio of one priest to every 100 persons, all these priests earning their living solely from benefices. The consequent abuses and instances of misbehaviour caused Pope Pius VI to issue his *Motu Proprio* of 1777, in which he called for a reduction in the number of ecclesiastics and in the number of churches enjoying the right of sanctuary. By 1781 Bishop Labini had 'purified' the Clergy, reporting to the Holy See that the clergy now led a better life and were sufficiently instructed and very obedient.<sup>152</sup>

Nevertheless, music making in the Cathedral never faltered in its purpose, and new ideas for better musical services and improved performance were always welcomed by the Church Authorities. In a Chapter Meeting on 2 November 1772 the Procurator of the Cathedral Church, Canon Giovanni Battista Tonna, presented a request for a new organ, backed by a declaration made by the *maestro di cappella*, Don Benigno Zerafa, who stated that the existing organ was beyond repair, identifying the various defects in the instrument. A new organ was therefore ordered for the north transept of the Cathedral Church. The task was entrusted to the Neapolitan organ builder Domenico Antonio Rossi, who completed it by 1774.<sup>153</sup> Some time later Zerafa was consulted again to give advice on the location and construction of a new organ loft at Naxxar parish.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, pp. 34-35.

<sup>153</sup> Azzopardi, 'The Organs of the Cathedral Church at Mdina and St. John's Conventual Church in Valletta', in H. Agius Muscat and Luciano Buono (eds.), *Old Organs, in Malta and Gozo* (Blata l-Bajda, 1998), pp. 185-223, at p. 193.

The organ is still located in the north transept.

<sup>154</sup> Azzopardi, 'Chapter I: The Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina - Malta', p. 29.

In the meantime, on 10 July 1773 the Cathedral Chapter, at the insistence of Francesco Azopardi (about whom more shortly) and on Benigno Zerafa's written advice, purchased a positive organ from Ghaxaq, a remote village in the south of Malta, for the sum of 185 *scudi*.<sup>155</sup> The *organetto* (still preserved in the Cathedral Museum) was needed to complement the orchestra on solemn occasions, as in the festivity of the titular feast of the Cathedral.<sup>156</sup> Azzopardi claims:

Zerafa's statement is full of interest: it shows his connection with other churches in Rabat, and gives the prices and details of recent acquisitions of organs made by St. Paul's church, St. Publius' church and the Dominican Priory.<sup>157</sup>

On 1 February 1772 the organist Vincenzo Zerafa, Benigno's nephew, was granted permission to absent himself from his position for two years,<sup>158</sup> in order to pursue a course of training in Naples.<sup>159</sup> His place was temporarily taken by Benigno's eldest brother Giovanni Battista,<sup>160</sup> but Vincenzo died unexpectedly in Naples, leaving the post of church organist vacant.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, Vincenzo's death did not prove a problem for the Cathedral authorities because a promising young composer was gradually making his way into the *Cappella Musicale* during this period. Francesco Azopardi (b. 5.5.1748, d. 6.2.1809), also from Rabat, had received his musical training at the *Conservatorio di Sant'Onofrio* in Naples from 1763 to 1767. Di Giacomo lists Francesco

<sup>155</sup> Azzopardi, 'The Organs of the Cathedral Church at Mdina and St. John's Conventual Church in Valletta', p. 194.

<sup>156</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 10 (1772-1778), entry for 4.7.1773.

<sup>157</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 3.

<sup>158</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 90v.

<sup>159</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 3.

<sup>160</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 90v.

<sup>161</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 3.

Azopardi along with Francesco Agius and Giuseppe Penna, both Maltese, as new pupils at *S. Onofrio* in 1763. The roster of pupils confirms that "Francesco Azzepordi" [sic] was enrolled at the conservatory on 15 October 1763, and remained there until 1767, whereas Agius left the institute after just a couple of months there.<sup>162</sup> Penna, who entered the conservatory as a paying student on 25 April of the same year, remained at the *conservatorio* until 1767 (the same year that Azopardi left) but was expelled and imprisoned as "incorreggibile".<sup>163</sup> Azopardi remained in Naples until 1774, pursuing a career as a composer and teacher there, and occasionally visiting Malta. In 1772 Azopardi donated to the Cathedral Chapter a Mass which he had composed to give proof of his abilities, if ever they might be in a position to consider him as 'acting', or even, *maestro di cappella* at the cathedral. On one of his later visits to the island Azopardi submitted a request, dated 20 December 1773, to the Cathedral Chapter, expressing his wish to be employed by the *Cappella Musicale*.<sup>164</sup> The death of Vincenzo having left a vacancy, his post was offered to Azopardi, who was appointed Cathedral organist on 12 April 1774.<sup>165</sup> Azopardi was even given the right of succession ("cum futura successione"), whether by death or by resignation, to the post of the present *maestro di cappella* Don Benigno Zerafa.<sup>166</sup> It must have been a glorious moment for the Cathedral of Malta to have two talented composers simultaneously in its service.

<sup>162</sup> Salvatore Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli, MDXLIII-MDCCC*, Vol. 1 (Milan, 1924), p. 104.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Another Maltese student at that time was Francesco Billion (this is quite an unusual surname for a Maltese), who is recorded as having entered the institute in 1765 and who was extradited by the Neapolitan government in August 1767 (*ibid.*, p. 106). This information shows that there were other Maltese students with Azopardi in Naples in 1763 and in succeeding years.

<sup>164</sup> ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, Vol. 1, f. 96v.

<sup>165</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>166</sup> *Loc. cit.*

The situation inherited from Grand Master Ximenes by the newly elected Grand Master in 1775 was far from good. Emmanuel de Rohan Polduc (appendix B, picture 11) was a French aristocrat of a friendly and cultivated nature whose first priority was to reconcile the Maltese people to their rulers – a move which was welcomed by the local population.<sup>167</sup> Testimony to all this is a commemorative narration by Francesco Xaverio Farrugia on the occasion of De Rohan's appointment as Grand Master, an event which caused a stir all over the island. Farrugia recounts enthusiastically how celebrations were held all over Malta, especially in Valletta.<sup>168</sup> The Grand Master's entry into Mdina (the 'possesso'), a festive occasion for all the people, took place on Sunday 27 October 1776, for which event Zerafa led the *Cappella Musicale*. The procession moved to Mdina from San Anton at Attard on Sunday morning and included cavalry regiments, horsemen, and numerous coaches to carry all the prominent personage and the Grand Master. A band of wind and percussion instruments accompanied the whole entourage. On arriving near the church and convent of St. Augustine the Grand Master alighted from the coach and attended Mass privately at the same church, followed by a reception in the sacristy. Then came the formal entrance of Mdina, with all the clergy and members of the Order including the Grand Master parading under a canopy borne by the Captain of the Rod and the jurats. After the usual oath-taking and such other symbolic gestures as the handling of two small silver keys to the Grand Master as a representation of the act of opening of the Main Gate of the city, the procession proceeded

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<sup>167</sup> Attard, *The Knights of Malta*, pp. 145-146.

Francesco Azopardi contributed to the occasion by writing a cantata entitled *Malta felice* dated 1775.

<sup>168</sup> Francesco Xaverio Farrugia, *Ragguaglio Della Gloriosa Esaltazione Di Sua Altezza Serenissima Fra Emanuele De Rohan, 12 Novembre 1775* (Malta, 1776), British Library (Br. Lib.), T. 71. \* (4.), passim.

to the Cathedral Church<sup>169</sup> for the singing of the *Te` Deum* and the concelebration of a Mass with grand music. The Reverend Archpriest of the Cathedral Church and the Cathedral Chapter participated in the Mass; there was also artillery fire and *moschetteria* (fireworks), followed by a public address in Italian and the illumination of the whole of Mdina.<sup>170</sup> Zerafa showed great respect for this man in the introductory notes to his *Posui adjutorium* (Z132), composed for the occasion. On f. 2v of the organ part the composer lays down a detailed scenario of how the musicians and singers are to conduct themselves during the Grand Master's entrance into Mdina and, later, in the Cathedral during the ceremony.

Contacts between Naples and Mdina were maintained regularly during the 18th century. It was widely recognised that the pinnacle of singing was reached only by the *castrati*; and it was widely acknowledged in Italy and other areas under its influence that the castrato (or *sopranista*) was the most desirable soprano voice of all.<sup>171</sup> Consequently, Zerafa, who had always insisted on maintaining good relations with Naples, constantly advised the Cathedral Chapter to recruit singers from southern Italy. It was therefore by no coincidence that several castratos and altos from Italy were invited to join the choir at the Cathedral Church, among them the well-known alto Lorenzino. On one instance Zerafa informed Cathedral authorities about a specific castrato by the name of Gaetano Marino whom he wished to be employed by the *Cappella*. The authorities readily took Zerafa's advice,<sup>172</sup> and on 13 February 1776 Marino, who had already sung

<sup>169</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 107.

<sup>170</sup> Farrugia, *Ragguaglio Della Gloriosa Esaltazione Di Sua Altezza Serenissima Fra Emanuele De Rohan, 12 Novembre 1775*, p. 10.

<sup>171</sup> Castratos, who were held in high esteem, were regarded as able to interpret music in the best manner: to sing their pieces with grace ("grazia"), taste ("gusto") and true beauty ("vero garbo"). (Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca*, pp. 104-105.)

<sup>172</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 10, entry for 13-2-1776.

under Zerafa,<sup>173</sup> was offered a place in the *Cappella* at a good salary. It was customary, in fact, for Zerafa, who also served as director of music at the convent of the Benedictine nuns of Mdina, to test the voices of the new recruits there during minor services before proceeding to engage them at the Cathedral.

On 22 January 1778 Zerafa was commissioned to build a ten-stop organ for the Dominican priory at Vittoriosa. The organ was meant "to be completed within four years at the price of 650 *scudi* and the donation of the old organ to Zerafa himself." However, for some unknown reason, Zerafa was later asked to cancel the contract.<sup>174</sup> In 1780 Monsignor Pellerano died. The new Bishop, the last under whom Zerafa was to act, was Vincentius Labini (1780-1807) from Calabria, who was appointed Pellerano's successor on 19 June 1780 to serve as Bishop in Malta. On his arrival Labini was received with great joy by the Maltese. He also found that the clergy was now acceptably cultured, submissive and docile.<sup>175</sup>

It is normal for any composer to slacken his productivity towards the end of a hectic career, and we witness this in Zerafa's musical output, which started to slow down in his later years. However, he continued to make additions to the Church's musical archive, and a note of 1 November 1781 tells that he had composed a set of six motets for less solemn feasts as they were very necessary since the Cathedral Church did not possess any of the kind".<sup>176</sup> By 1783 his career was nearing its end; although he was only 57 years of age health problems had started to become manifest. Francesco

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<sup>173</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p.3.

<sup>174</sup> Azzopardi, 'Chapter I: The Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina - Malta', p. 30.

<sup>175</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, pp. 17-18.

<sup>176</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 11 (1779-1786), f. 111v.

Azopardi, who had already been serving both as organist and acting *maestro di cappella* for some time,<sup>177</sup> was becoming frustrated with the situation and was even thinking once more of pursuing a career abroad, [perhaps in Naples], if the situation remained unchanged.<sup>178</sup> He finally voiced his opinion on 8 December 1783 in a complaint to the Cathedral authorities, who, taking his advice, stated that because of various shortcomings on the part of the *maestro di cappella*, Don Benigno Zerafa, it is proposed that he be granted a pension while Azopardi's salary should be increased.<sup>179</sup> However, all this had to be ratified by the Bishop and the Chapter.<sup>180</sup> No immediate decision was taken, and for another year everything remained unchanged until Azopardi once more submitted a petition for a salary increase. On 11 January 1785 he was granted an increase of 60 *scudi* a year, in addition to the 200 he was already earning.<sup>181</sup>

On 12 December 1786 it was Benigno himself who submitted a *supplica* to the Cathedral Chapter, asking to be allowed to retire. This petition, which sums up Benigno's career and achievements as *maestro di cappella*, reveals, in addition, that Zerafa had also supplied, at his expense, a violoncello and a double-bass to complete the continuo section of the *Cappella Musicale*. The request takes a pathetic turn towards the end, with a description of the humble man's physical state; it concludes as follows:

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., f. 205v.

<sup>178</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>179</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>180</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>181</sup> ACM, Reg. Dep. Pers., Vol. 1, f. 104.



[...] And since he has continually been sick for a few years and reduced to a deplorable condition, because of this he presents himself [...] and petitions that you may be pleased, together with your most Reverend Chapter to help him with some gratuity [...].<sup>182</sup>

The 18th-century church composer rarely had any direct financial stake in the composition of works, which he wrote merely to contract. He was, indeed, only a 'purveyor' of music, paid at a rate usually well below that of the celebrated virtuoso performers of his own works. On his termination of contract Zerafa donated his entire collection of composition manuscripts (which comprised: Masses, Psalms, Introits, Antiphons, Litanies, and Motets) prepared between 1743 and 1782 to the Cathedral Church. This is recorded in a document of 7 January 1787, with the added condition that he should be able to use the works again whenever he wished to.<sup>183</sup> The Cathedral Chapter, having considered the length of service rendered by Benigno, the donation of the collection of sacred music, and the grave necessity of vestments for the sick man, unanimously assigned to him a *giubilazione* (retirement pension) and a further 100 *scudi* awarded in order to provide him with the necessary garments and enable him to retire into the Hospital of *San Nicola de Saura* (appendix B, picture 12) at his home town, Rabat.<sup>184</sup> The concluding statement noting Zerafa's wish to make use of the manuscripts after his

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<sup>182</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 12 (1786-1793), f. 41v, 42.

"[...] e poiche [...] da pochi anni [...] si ritrova sempre ammalato e ridotto in qualche miseria perciò ricorre umilmente alla pietà di vostra Illma e Rma supplicandola voler degnarsi [...] con qualche gratificazione [...]"

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 41v-42.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 42r.

Saura hospital was founded in 1667 by Dr. Nicola Saura. After 1762 preference for admission into this hospice was given to old priests serving at the Cathedral of Malta and at the church of St. Paul at Rabat, and from Zebbug.

act of donation is important, since it suggests that Zerafa hoped occasionally to direct music outside the Cathedral Church after his retirement. Zerafa's position as *maestro di cappella* was predictably enough taken by Francesco Azopardi, who was, in his turn, replaced at the organ by Joachim Micallef.

On 29 September 1793 Benigno's eldest brother Giovanni Battista, who had once worked as *maestro di canto* alongside him, died at the age of 76.<sup>185</sup> We are even given a little more information on Benigno's state of health and his religious duties after Giovanni's death. Azzopardi writes:

In 1795/6 he [Benigno Zerafa] could only walk leaning on a stick, and in order to say Mass in a private oratory, he needed to be examined by the Master of Ceremonies and to be given a special permission by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.<sup>186</sup>

The Church authorities were very strict about the physical image of their priests, and it was forbidden to allow that a priest had a physical impairment (such as being unable to genuflect successfully according to the Rubrics of the Mass), or any other affliction "a Divinis".<sup>187</sup> Zerafa's physical impairment is explained in a document dated 15 February 1796 (appendix C, document 6), and the same statement describes how, a few years earlier, he had fallen and damaged his left knee, which forced him to make constant use of a walking stick, a handicap which was to linger with him until the end.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>187</sup> AAM, *Brevia et Constitutiones*, Vol. 23, f. 166, dated 19.12.1795.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 168, dated 15.2.1796.

At the close of the 18th century Malta passed through one of its sociologically and psychologically most traumatic, albeit historically momentous periods. In June 1798 the French invaded Malta, banishing the Order and immediately taking possession of the islands. In January 1799 the French killed over forty Maltese, including Don Michele Xerri and Guglielmo Lorenzi, after the insurgents' plan to seize control of the Valletta gates failed to materialise.<sup>189</sup> Later that same year a detachment of British troops arrived in Malta (December 1799), and on 5 September 1800 General Vaubois signed a capitulation terminating French occupation of the Maltese islands.<sup>190</sup>

By 10 September 1803 Zerafa had been transported to a hospital in Valletta, since his health was failing rapidly. Bishop Labini had previously, on 20 July 1781, erected in Valletta a College of six priests whose aim was to assist dying people in Valletta. Their headquarters were annexed to the church of St. James in Merchants' Street in Valletta.<sup>191</sup> It is uncertain to which hospital Zerafa was taken, although we may suggest that he was transported to the *Civil Hospital*, but among the people who paid visits to the dying composer were members of the church authorities, who asked him to renounce the benefice so that the patrons might freely name anyone for it.<sup>192</sup> A few months later, on 20 March 1804, *maestro* Benigno Zerafa died at Valletta, aged 78 (appendix C, documents 7 and 8): unmourned, unhonoured and unsung. His body was transported to the Cathedral Church that he had so faithfully served as *maestro di cappella* the following day and laid to rest there.<sup>193</sup> No

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<sup>189</sup> Blouet, *The Story of Malta*, p. 135.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>191</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, pp. 36-37.

<sup>192</sup> AAM, *Beneficio*, f. 25.

<sup>193</sup> Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa: A Biography', p. 4.

inscription was provided, and no written document survives to direct us to his place of burial (appendix B, pictures 13 and 14): a poignant omission that haunts every follower of his life and work to this day. The Cathedral Chapter and Maltese state authorities have various means of providing memorials whereby meritorious persons such as composers and notable musicians are posthumously remembered. Azopardi and Nicolò Isouard are both commemorated by busts, portraits, plaques, and written eulogies; for Benigno Zerafa we have nothing.

Barely a month after Zerafa's death Azopardi wrote to the Cathedral Chapter stating:

I, Francesco Azopardi, the most humble servant [...] since I have served your Holy Church for a long time and have composed during these years various new compositions, and have always been granted a salary inferior to that of the singers, and since the payment of the salary of 200 *scudi* per year from the same Church has now ceased, owing to the death of Don Benigno Zerafa, I wish to ask [...] that your Most Reverend Chapter takes into consideration my work by increasing my salary.

This was communicated to the Most Reverend Chapter at  
Valletta, at the Bishop's Palace, on 23 April, 1804.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>194</sup> ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, Vol. 15 (1804-1807), f. 30.

"Francesco Azopardi, Umo. Ser. [...] che avendo servito per l'addietro di maestro di cappella nella sua Santa Chiesa Cattedrale Arcivescovile con avere fatto in parecchi anni varie nuove composizioni, ha avuto sempre il salario inferiore sempre a quello delle voci, per tanto ora che alla suddetta Sta. Chiesa cessò il pagamento del salario di annui scudi due cento per la morte del Sacerdote Benigno Zerafa, supplica l'ord. [...] si compiaccia riguardarle di lui fatiche con aumentargli il salario. E della grazia: comunicentur al Mro Rmo. Capto. dat. Valletta ex Mro. Pal. Epti. Die 23 Aprilis, 1804."

After examining this petition Bishop Labini decreed that Azopardi's salary be increased by another 100 *scudi*, besides the 260 he already had, as from the day of death of Don Benigno Zerafa, his predecessor, as *maestro di cappella* of the *Cappella Musicale*.<sup>195</sup>

Like most composers of his age, Zerafa was quickly forgotten, and his work sank into complete oblivion for many years. He was already being overtaken by new musical fashions and styles during his last years, mainly by Azopardi's new compositions, and, after Azopardi's death in 1809, by succeeding *maestri di cappella* who, naturally, presented their own works, written in a more recent style. He was at least remembered and honoured by *Maestro* Paolino Vassallo, *maestro di cappella* of the same Cathedral a hundred years later, who, on discovering Zerafa's collection of sacred manuscripts at the Cathedral Archives, declared:

His compositions [...] deserve to be exhibited in all the major European academies of music.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., f. 30v.

<sup>196</sup> Vincenzo Caruana dei Conti Gatto, *Malta Artistica Illustrata*, Vol. 2 (Hamrun, 1910), p. 25.  
"Questi suoi componimenti [...] degni di essere esposti nelle prime accademie di Europa."

## Chapter Two

### CHURCH MUSIC IN MALTA (Up to the 18th Century)

Praise him with sound of trumpet: praise him with psaltery and harp.  
Praise him with timbrel and choir: praise him with strings and organs.  
Praise him on high sounding cymbals: praise him on cymbals of joy.

The oft-quoted Hebrew psalm, mirroring the Latin dictum "Qui cantat bis orat", meaning "He who sings, prays twice", embodies the whole essence of the Roman Catholic concept of sacred music since the earliest times: music used for worship that, as an integral part of the Liturgy, serves to increase the *decor et splendor* of the ecclesiastical ceremonies. In a treatise entitled *Scola di canto fermo* (Naples, 1715) Fabio Sebastiano Santoro wrote:

In worship, music has been introduced for the total glory of God, and to arouse devotion in the souls of the listeners.<sup>1</sup>

But perhaps the most authoritative rationale given for sacred music is that presented to us by Mgr. Fiorenzo Romita, who declares:

The Liturgical Performance receives a more noble form when the Divine Offices are solemnly celebrated in music, with the involvement of the Most Reverend Ministers and the active participation of the populace.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca*, p. 56.

"Nel culto, la musica è stata introdotta per maggior gloria di Dio, e per eccitare alla divozione gl'animi degli Uditori."

<sup>2</sup> Fiorenzo Romita, *La Musica Sacra e la Costituzione Conciliare sulla Sacra Liturgia* (Rome, n.d. [after 1964]), p. 74.

"L'azione Liturgica riceve una forma più nobile, quando i Divini Uffici sono celebrati solennemente in canto, con i SS. Ministri e la partecipazione attiva del popolo."

Malta, a small island situated in the middle of the Mediterranean (appendix E), has a wealth of history, its first inhabitants settling there c. 4000 BC. There are some twenty prehistoric temples, together with remains of the Phoenician era and Roman sites, and Rabat has excellent early Christian catacombs. The golden era of the Knights of St. John, which is embodied within the walls of Valletta, the capital city, reaches its heights in the beauty and splendour of the Co-Cathedral of St. John, which became the centre of all religious activity. On the other hand, Mdina, with its majestic Cathedral dedicated to St. Paul, was the centre of all liturgical and religious activity, the place where the prime development and the most professionally conceived performance of church music evolved. Up to 1798 the Cathedral of Malta was managed by the Diocese of Malta under the spiritual care of the Bishop of Malta. The island's intensely religious character is symbolised by the large number of ornate churches found in the relatively small area of only c. 120 square miles.

Malta has more than fifty villages and towns, each of which celebrates an annual cycle of religious festivities (most of which are accompanied by processions) including: All Souls' Day, Christmas, Our Lady of Sorrows, Holy Week, Corpus Christi, the Nativity of Our Lady, Our Lady of the Rosary and the annual *fešta*. One can say with certainty that there are two ceremonial high points: the first is the annual *fešta* of the parish patron; the second is the series of celebrations that take place during Holy Week. There are two further distinctions among the devotional rituals of a feast that take place within a church, namely:

- a) the “festa ta’ gewwa” or ‘internal feast’, which is organised by the clergy, thus conforming fairly strictly to the prescribed liturgy and characterised by ritual and formal rules;
- b) the “festa ta’ barra” or ‘external feast’, which is organised by a committee of volunteers and which differs from the above by mainly being more light-hearted and open to improvisation.<sup>3</sup>

The history of sacred music in Malta dates back to the earliest times, owing its importance to a population that has always been (and still is) very religious. According to Ulderico Rolandi, sacred music was performed in Malta from the time of the coming of St. Paul in AD 60, mainly in chapels and catacombs; Rolandi claims that a school of music attached to the Cathedral of St. Paul in Mdina was in existence already during the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604).<sup>4</sup> Since Music was one of the seven Liberal Arts taught in the medieval schools, one can assume that Maltese pupils who acquired a certain standard of education also learned music, which was one of the four Mathematical Arts in the so-called *quadrivium*.<sup>5</sup>

Processions, or *litanix* as they were commonly called, were a very common feature in early Christian liturgy. The term *litanix* implies a prayer of an insistent nature (“supplica”); however, the same term also

<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Boissevain, ‘Ritual, Play and Identity: Changing Patterns of Celebration in Maltese Villages’, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (University of Malta, 1991), pp. 87-100, at pp. 89-90.

<sup>4</sup> Ulderico Rolandi, *Musica e musicisti in Malta: Saggio di ricerche e di appunti storici* (Livorno, 1932), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 1, Period I – 60-1090 and Period II – 1090-1530 (Floriana, 1967), p. 117.

Martianus presented what was essentially a textbook of the seven Liberal Arts which were grammar, dialectic, rhetoric – described as the ‘verbal arts’ and later known as the *trivium* – plus geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and harmonics, classified by Boethius as the *quadrivium*: Grout, 1988, p. 36).



referred to procession intended to embody a collective invocation of mercy ("pietà") by a large number of participants.<sup>6</sup> In these processions the Gospel was borne in front, followed by crosses and banners. Then came the clerics holding wax candles and blazing torches marching behind while chanting psalms, hymns and litanies. Last came the subdeacons, followed by the bishop, who was flanked by his ministers.<sup>7</sup> The most colourful and popular of the votive processions was that of St. Gregory, the feast of which falls on 25 May of each year, in which the Cathedral Chapter and all the members of the diocesan and regular clergy together with the laity took part. On their entry into the church, and after a threefold cry of "misericordia" by the congregation, the *Te Deum* was intoned and sung by all present. Mass was then said.<sup>8</sup> Congregational singing held a prominent place in the religious services of the primitive Christians. Originally, the singing of psalms and hymns was borrowed from the Jewish Liturgy, but in the course of time, a Christian hymnology developed in Greek, Latin and other languages, opening the way for its introduction to various Christian liturgies. From Carolingian times, congregational singing in churches was accompanied by the organ.<sup>9</sup>

During the twelfth century we find the earliest references to the performance of sacred music in Malta, with the mention of such persons as G. Auselli, Magister Philippus, Raimundus Provincialis and Rainaldus, all of whom are believed to have served in St. Paul's Cathedral, and perhaps in other churches as well.<sup>10</sup> Among the musical manuscripts

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<sup>6</sup> Ludwig Eisenhofer, *Compendio di liturgia*, translated by Paolo Carosi, O.S.B. (Casa Editrice Marietti, 1944), p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 1, Period I – 60-1090 and Period II – 1090-1530 (Floriana, 1967), p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 1, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Rolandi, *Musica e musicisti in Malta*, p. 45.

found in the Mdina Cathedral archives, and which shed light on the musical liturgy of the time, are choir books written on parchment or paper, the oldest being two antiphonaries of French origin dated, by Prof. Michel Huglo of the Department of Musical Paleography at the Sorbonne, to the middle of the twelfth and the second half of the thirteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

The first Mendicant Orders were established in the country in the fourteenth century. Undoubtedly, such orders helped in the intellectual education of young men called to join the religious life. On the other hand, members of these orders and ecclesiastics attached to hospitals imparted elementary education to children who were not called to the service of God. They taught them reading, writing, and psalmody (that is, the study of the psalms).<sup>12</sup> Psalmody entailed the singing of a group of psalms, often those used in a specific Office service, the verses of which were normally sung in alternation by the two sides of the choir.

Only much later do we have documented evidence for the Cathedral of Malta's musical establishment that we can really regard as marking the start of its musical activity. The archival documents provide us with enough information to enable us to situate the beginnings of the *Cappella Musicale* towards the end of the fifteenth century. In 1494 the first signs of organ playing are encountered, and the first organist to be engaged to serve the Mother Church was the *Venerabili Frati Joannes (de) Rapi(s)*, who was paid an annual salary of 10 *uncie*. After his death in 1496 he was succeeded by Don Lorenzo Vagnolo, only to be replaced two months later

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<sup>11</sup> John Azzopardi, 'The Revival of Old Music from Maltese Archives: 1976-1985', in *Vetera Novaque Conventus et Carmina* (Mdina, Concert Programme, 1985), p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 1, pp. 128-129.

by Don Nicola de Virmiglia. From 1515 onwards the Cathedral Chapter employed as organist Don Lorenzo Caxaro, employing another cleric to teach plainsong, the first known being the foreigner Don Andriotta Scavuni, who was engaged to teach *canto fermo* to the clergy in the same year. In 1524 Caxaro was joined by a second organist (and organ repairer) by the name of Ximuni Ferriolu, who was also a deacon. Their contract is the earliest documented reference to the renovation of the Cathedral organ.

Other music instructors followed: Don Nicola Catalano (employed in 1517) and the first two native-born Maltese educators, Don Domenico Vella and Don Andrea de Federico (employed in 1523 and 1527-28 respectively). In 1533 a certain Misser Joan Aloysi Scagluni was enrolled to teach the clerics; he was succeeded in 1535 by a Maltese Augustinian friar Padre Petro Callus, who also had the task of giving afternoon lessons in *canto fermo* to the choir. Apart from teaching the cathedral clerics, Callus was one of the first tutors to give private lessons to clerics for payment. One of his first students was Don Antonio Vitali, who, in November 1535 paid a fee of 24 *tarì* to Padre Callus for private lessons that included daily exercises performed at the master's convent during Sext and Vespers. Another student was Don Francesco Falca, who started private lessons with Padre Callus the following March.<sup>13</sup>

In 1535 Don Simuni Ferriolu (referred to earlier as Ximuni) was offered the post of *maestro di coro*. In 1537 we encounter again a detailed report on the repair of the Cathedral organ, which was entrusted to a Sicilian from Palermo by the name of Petro Fauczuni (also Falzuni, Falsuni).

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<sup>13</sup> Stanley Fiorini, 'Church Music and Musicians in Late Medieval Malta', in *Melita Historica*, Vol. 10 (Floriana, 1988), pp. 1-11, at pp. 1-3.

Fauczuni (d. 1560) also served as organist of a church dedicated to St. Maria Jesu in Rabat (*ta' Giezu*). During this time, some other religious institutions, such as the Dominican church of Rabat, installed new organs.<sup>14</sup>

Music and its performance required the acquisition of liturgical books. It seems that the most hectic period for this kind of activity at the Mother Church took place between the years 1527 and 1538, with such names as Don Petro La Cruchi (probably Sicilian) and Frati Joanni Xebiras (Augustinian) being commissioned to copy psalters. This undertaking was a continuous process, and many other persons were charged with purchasing parchments, copying antiphonaries and psalteries, and binding the books for liturgical purposes.<sup>15</sup> Further, it is recorded that the Spaniard Antonio Mirinda and the Maltese Giovanni Bartolo compiled an *antiphonario* based on Sicilian sources.<sup>16</sup> Another *maestro di coro* taught Gregorian chant to the ecclesiastics in Gozo.<sup>17</sup> From this documentary evidence one conclusion suggests itself immediately: that the main musical activity going on at this time centred around teaching (and playing) the organ, the singing of Gregorian chant and the writing and performing of certain antiphons and psalms. In a wider sense 'chant' implied 'liturgical chant' which in turn denoted the singing (even to the accompaniment of instruments) of a sacred liturgical text, provided that the portion of honour was always retained by the vocal part. The music which accompanies non-liturgical functions of catholic worship is usually

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>16</sup> John Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta e i suoi rapporti con la Sicilia', in Daniele Ficola (ed.), *La musica sacra in Sicilia tra rinascimento e barocco: Atti del convegno di Caltagirone 10-12 dicembre 1985* (Palermo, 1988), p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 1, p. 118.

and accurately styled "extra-liturgical" music.<sup>18</sup> In the first half of the 16th century polyphonic music was introduced into the Maltese church. Towards the end of the 16th century the Cathedral paid the annual salary of 100 *scudi* to the *maestro di cappella*, and a further 20 *scudi* to his assistant, who taught plainchant to the clerics attached to the Cathedral Church.

The other major musical centre where sacred music was professionally cultivated was the Conventual Church of the Order of St. John. The musical activity of the Order, Malta's political authority for three centuries, dates back to 1530 in Vittoriosa (Birgu) and to 1578 in Valletta. The churches in both locations were run by the Order under the spiritual care of the Grand Prior of the Order of St. John, and under the military care of the Grand Master 'pro tempore'. The oldest musical manuscripts of the Order, the earliest proof of its cultivation of church music, are located in Valletta; they are a set of antiphonaries commissioned by the Grand Master l'Isle Adam dating to c. 1530.<sup>19</sup> The Church of St. John at Valletta was also supplied with an organ, most probably in the year of its inauguration, 1578. It was originally erected in the Chapel of Auvergne (on the right hand of the altar) until it was replaced by a double organ installed in the choir in 1665.<sup>20</sup> Grand Master Giovanni Orsini ordered that a singer-organist be appointed to serve the Conventual Church.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Angelo de Santi, 'Liturgical Chant', in K. Knight (ed. Online Edition) *The Catholic Encyclopædia* (Internet source, 1999: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09304a.htm>).

<sup>19</sup> Azzopardi, 'The Organs of the Cathedral Church at Mdina and St. John's Conventual Church in Valletta', p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> J. Vella Bondin, 'The Cappella di Musica of the Order of St. John, I', in *The Sunday Times* (Malta, 24.1.1993), pp. 28-29, at p. 28.

By 1540 the Cathedral of Malta was already employing its first organists, choir masters and copyists (*scripturi*). The church was the major employer of musicians,<sup>22</sup> and every large church had its *cappella* or *coro* (singers and players) directed by a *maestro di cappella*. The instrumentalists employed by the Cathedral Church of Mdina were not full-time in the modern sense of the word, but had the time to participate in other churches' activities or private occasions during the week to supplement their earnings. In church women did not benefit from canonical statute and were forbidden to participate in the singing (according to St. Paul's injunction *mulieres in ecclesia taceant*). Except in convents of nuns it was normal that the choirs were composed of men and boys, the latter being reinforced, and sometimes replaced, by falsettists or castratos.<sup>23</sup>

In October 1573 the study of *cantus figuratus* ('figural', that is, composed, music) was introduced into the Church, and the newly appointed *maestro di cappella*, Giulio Scala, a Sicilian, was entrusted with the new task.<sup>24</sup> This type of singing distinguished itself from *cantus firmus* mainly by being more florid, that is, entailing a counterpoint added to the traditional Gregorian melody and strict mensuration, hence initiating the use of polyphony in liturgical music. Giulio Scala served at the Cathedral of St. Paul between 1573 and 1574, and some of his madrigals were published in Italy during the same period.<sup>25</sup> Scala only stayed in his post until 1574, the vacancy prompting the necessity for a new director. During his Apostolic

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<sup>22</sup> Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', p. 9.

Courts, after churches, offered musicians the best opportunities of regular employment.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

Sopranos and altos were regularly taken by trained boys, later being replaced by *castrati*.

<sup>24</sup> Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta', p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Loc. cit.

Visit (21 January 1575) Mgr. Dusina gave orders for the appointment of a “magister cappellanæ”, and also “referred to the obligations of the new appointee to teach music to clerics and priests”.<sup>26</sup>

A word of clarification needs to be added here in order to explain the difference between the various kinds of *cantus*. In the Baroque ‘plainsong’ had many synonyms, being known as: *canto fermo* (Italian for *cantus firmus*, deriving its name from “fermezza” (strictness), thus indicating the regularity (“stabilità”) and the inanimateness (“immobilità”) way of singing plainchant, especially in the relation to the duration of the notes), *canto gregoriano* (*cantus gregorianus*), *canto piano* (*cantus planus*, deriving from the smooth, uniform notes of similar value and style), *canto ecclesiastico*, *cantus simplex*, *cantus vetus*, *canto divino*, *canto angelico*, *canto armonico*, *cantus unisonus* (that is uniform, and therefore “fermo”), *canto corale*, *canto liturgico*, *canto fratto*, and *canto misto*. The distinction between *canto fermo* and *canto figurato* is purely in terms of musical technique: that is, *canto fermo* denotes a succession of notes of equal value; *canto figurato*, in contrast, represents a sequence of notes whose durational values are measured and hence graphically express “figure notali” (notational figures such as *maxima*, *longa*, *brevis*, etc.). Hence it was possible for any composer to combine *canto fermo* with *canto figurato*, as when a work makes use of a *cantus firmus*.<sup>27</sup> Some early Baroque music historians even distinguished between three types of singing (“tre sorti di canto”), these being: *canto fermo*, *canto spezzato/fratto* (that is, in the Palestrina style, as well as

<sup>26</sup> John Azzopardi, ‘Chapter II: The Cappella di Musica of the Cathedral Church of Malta’, in John Azzopardi and Matteo Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music in the Archives at the Cathedral Museum of Malta* (Minnesota, 2001), pp. 93-110, at p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell’Italia barocca*, pp. 148, 152, 156-157 passim.

*falsobordone*), and *canto figurato*.<sup>28</sup>

The Cathedral Chapter has since then always accorded great importance to its *Cappella Musicale*, insisting on having professionally trained directors and singers.<sup>29</sup> One of its merits was that it always made sure of creating good opportunities for its young and promising choirboys to go abroad and receive professional musical education at the best schools in Italy.<sup>30</sup> It is in fact during this same time that we encounter the name of the first Maltese musician to be sent by the Cathedral authorities to Palermo to study the organ there: Michele Zahra (1574-1646). Zahra was most likely sent to the conservatory known as the *Casa degli Spersi*, the most prominent institute of its kind in Palermo at that time. On his return to Malta Zahra was employed as organist at the Cathedral Church and at certain times as a teacher of music.<sup>31</sup> Ordained priest in 1598, he was subsequently elected to the post of *maestro di cappella* in 1631.

At this time the *Cappella Musicale* of the Church of St. John at Valletta comprised a *maestro di cappella*, an organist, one treble, two tenors and two basses, accompanied by three violins, a cello and a double-bass. On certain festive occasions two further violins and two trumpets were added. Some festive occasions were solemnised with magnificent musical settings, allowing for large instrumental combinations of woodwinds, brass, strings, continuo and sometimes timpani to join in. The *Cappella Musicale* was subject directly to the Grand Master; consequently, all its members were paid from the Order's treasury.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>29</sup> Paolo Pullicino, *Notizia biografica di Francesco Azzopardi* (Malta, 1876), p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta', p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 78.



Consequently with this, popular or congregational singing was still being encouraged by the Church. In 1591 Bishop Gargallo ordered all teachers in Grammar Schools to gather their pupils on Sundays and teach them sacred hymns, which would have probably included the Psalms of St. David.<sup>33</sup> In processions,<sup>34</sup> the main musical ingredients were litanies, hymns, *laudi*, and psalms, all of which could be sung in *alternation*. The *laude* were intended for singing by all the people and hence were always simple to remember and perform. A small number of well-known melodies served for a much larger number of texts.

Official recognition of the *Cappella Musicale* at the Cathedral came in 1619, when Don Francesco Fontana, a Sicilian, took up the prestigious position of *maestro di cappella* for the first time.<sup>35</sup> With this significant move came another: the establishment on 2 August 1619 of the “*clerici inservientes musicæ*”, an assembly of priests better known as the “*cappellani di coro*”, which began to serve the *Cappella Musicale* as choristers in liturgical services at the request of Bishop Cagliares. This meant that the Cathedral now possessed a group of priests and *chierici* (clerks) with a sound knowledge of, and a good background in, music who served regularly at the church.<sup>36</sup> The *coro* of priests participated in the singing of plainchant (*canto fermo*), which in turn gave rise to antiphonal singing (“*rispondere al coro*”) involving the alternation (“*alternanza*”) between the ecclesiastical *coro* of the priests in plainchant with the rest of the performers.<sup>37</sup> It is also recorded that for the *Mnarja* of 1622 the

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<sup>33</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Processions along the streets were often held in commemoration of the deliverance of the people from the disasters of plague, earthquake and drought. In this, Malta resembles southern Italy.

<sup>35</sup> Azzopardi, ‘La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta’, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell’Italia barocca*, pp. 89, 114, 150.

*maestro di cappella* Francesco Fontana directed music for three choirs.<sup>38</sup>

One of the first major services to be introduced at the Cathedral was initiated by the Cathedral Chapter to commemorate the final defeat of the Great Siege of the Turks on 8 September 1565, concluding a battle which had begun in May of the same year. The Church instituted a Pontifical High Mass to be sung in thanksgiving on 8 September each year, a function which is still commemorated today.<sup>39</sup> Evidence of the Maltese people's strong religious feelings and gratitude towards God has been seen down the ages in the frequent chanting of the *Te Deum*. The devotion of 'The Forty Hours', a popular Italian observance which dedicated a period of 40 hours of oration to the Blessed Sacrament and entailed the performance of sacred music, seems to have been introduced into Malta in 1620 by Bishop Cagliares.<sup>40</sup>

The religious practices of the Order of St. John from 1530 onwards were very similar to the religious practices of the Cathedral Church. However, processions were even more frequent among the Knights, who used to conduct two processions every week within the walls of the Hospital at Valletta; one on Sunday, in which they prayed for the recovery of the sick, and another on Friday, in which they asked God to deliver them from earthquakes and to grant them peace. The most imposing procession of all was undoubtedly that of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the Order, where music formed an integral part of the activity, as Bonnici exuberantly describes:

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<sup>38</sup> Azzopardi, 'The Organs of the Cathedral Church at Mdina and St. John's Conventual Church in Valletta', p. 189.

<sup>39</sup> Attard, *The Knights of Malta*, p. 66.

<sup>40</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 65.

On the eve of the feast [of St. John the Baptist], after the toll of the *Angelus* at sunset, the Grand Master, accompanied by the Bishop, [...] followed by a retinue of Knights, went out of the Magisterial Palace amidst the flourish of trumpets, beating of drums and pealing of church-bells.<sup>41</sup>

Don Francesco Fontana's place in the history of church music in Malta is important. Sicily, Malta's closest neighbour geographically, had a lot to offer, and Fontana's election as *maestro di cappella* paved the way for a succession of later Sicilian composers and directors to follow a career at the Cathedral of St. Paul at Mdina. From ancient times Malta's history was inextricably linked to Sicily. In the 15th and 16th centuries it became widely common for the Maltese people to go to Sicily to benefit from a multitude of factors, one being the learning of the arts. The close relations between Malta and Sicily are explained clearly by Paolo Emilio Carapezza, Professor of Music History at the the University of Palermo:

The reports [...] indicate what continual exchanges were going on [between the two states], how many musicians went and came, between the two centres, or how some of them managed to lead an active career simultaneously in other cities such as Palermo, Messina, Piazza, Enna, Catania, Syracuse, Nicosia and Cefalù.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 108-109.

<sup>42</sup> Paolo Emilio Carapezza, 'Introduzione: La musica sacra in Sicilia tra Rinascimento e Barocco', in Daniele Ficola (ed.), *La musica sacra in Sicilia tra rinascimento e barocco*, p. 10.

"I rapporti tra i vari centri erano intensissimi: le relazioni che seguiranno, in particolare quelle riguardanti Caltagirone e Malta, ci mostreranno quali continui scambi intercorressero, come molti musicisti andassero e venissero tra questi due centri, o fossero attivi chi anche a Palermo, chi a Messina, chi a Piazza o a Enna, a Catania o a Siracusa, a Nicosia o a Cefalù."

If one bears in mind the fact that Malta formed part of the 'Kingdom of Sicily' from 1091 to 1798,<sup>43</sup> it makes sense to regard it as a normal event to recruit musicians from Sicily and through them to introduce different styles of contemporary sacred music into Maltese churches. It was also quite customary to bring in not only foreign *maestri di cappella* but also foreign singers and players. One may mention just two here: Agostino Buggiani (1621), who was a *cantore*, and Francesco di Gregori (1622), a trumpeter.<sup>44</sup> It is therefore not by chance that the first direct musical and liturgical influences at the Cathedral were reminiscent of the contemporary Sicilian polyphonic school.

Towards the end of the 16th century in Malta the alternation of polyphonic music with the Gregorian Chant in the *falsobordone* style was introduced. This innovation is highlighted by Paolo Emilio Carapezza, who points out that in addition to the usual polyphonic practice of the time there were musical features that were related to genres of the local folklore. He maintains that a new practice of liturgical singing that took root in Sicily and Sardinia came to be known as *falsobordone*.<sup>45</sup> Gino Stefani claims that the origins of *falsobordone* are obscure, probably coming from the lower classes, but that its use, which started straight after the Tridentine reforms was well justified: to preserve the integrity of the original source (text and melody) but at the same time include a minimal amount of musical 'ornament' involving basically triadic harmony. According to Carapezza, *falsobordone* was a simple way of improvising polyphony on a plainchant melody and consisted mainly of root-position triads harmonising a plainsong recitation in the treble. This technique

<sup>43</sup> Paolo Emilio Carapezza, 'Sicily Rediscovered in Malta its Own Music', in *Vetera Novaque Concertus et Carmina* (Mdina, Concert Programme, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta', p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> Carapezza, 'La musica sacra in Sicilia', p. 10.

was commonly applied (particularly in Italy and Spain) to psalms, Magnificat settings and Lamentations. Carapezza defines it as follows:

It consisted of the polyphonic intonation of the psalms or other liturgical texts, in which the various verses were sung syllabically to harmonised melodic modules taken from the modal intonations of Gregorian chant. These modules were first stated and then repeated. The music proceeded in perfect chords, mainly shifting between the tonic and dominant of the mode. This practice diffused by capillary action into all the Sicilian churches and even made deep inroads into folklore.<sup>46</sup>

Psalms were sung in *falsobordone* in all the ancient tones, and the *Te Deum*, along with litanies of the BVM, was a particular favourite. Nevertheless, polyphonic settings of entire psalms in the Vespers of solemn feasts were reintroduced in the 17th century.

Carapezza maintains that even the *canti* of the Passion, which are still heard nowadays in some Sicilian churches and in Good Friday processions, are based on the harmonised melodic modules of the Renaissance *falsobordone*. This practice can easily be learnt by amateurs and does not require professional singers.<sup>47</sup> Malta's sacred liturgy benefits even today from a number of church hymns which are based on

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

"Consisteva questo nell'intonazione polifonica dei salmi o d'altri testi liturgici, in cui i vari versetti venivano cantati sillabicamente su moduli melodico armonici, basati sulle intonazioni modali gregoriane, prefissati e ripetuti: si procedeva per accordi perfetti oscillanti soprattutto fra tonica e dominante modali. Questa pratica si diffuse capillarmente in tutte le cappella siciliane, e penetrò profondamente nel folklore."

<sup>47</sup> Loc. cit.

*falsobordone* structures, even though these hymns have been varied and restructured musically, acquiring a tinge of Maltese character. Such hymns as the *Tantum Ergo* and *Adoremus in Æternum* may still be heard during services and feasts; because of their simplicity the congregation is encouraged to join in.

A number of early manuscripts and prints found at the Cathedral archive show that the liturgical music performed there in the seventeenth century was something more than simple *falsobordone*. In a study entitled 'Stampe musicali siciliane a Malta' Daniele Ficola lists a number of composers, including Vincenzo Amato, Giulio Oristagno and Andrea Rinaldi, whose music was performed at the Cathedral Church.<sup>48</sup> The oldest prints found in the Archives are *Il Libro Quarto delle messe d'intavolatura d'organo* by Claudio Merulo, published in Venice in 1568, followed by the *Responsori a 4 voci per il Natale e l'Epifania* of Giulio Oristagno, which were published at Palermo in 1602. Oristagno was the organist at the Palatine Chapel of Palermo.<sup>49</sup> Two other printed works are by Don Vincenzo Amato, the most important Sicilian composer of the period. Born in 1629 at Criminna, Amato died in 1670 in Palermo, where he was *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral. A copy of his Passion Music may still be viewed in Mdina Cathedral archives.<sup>50</sup> All the printed music manuscripts mentioned here emanate from three main Italian music-making centres: Venice, Rome and Palermo.<sup>51</sup> Other Italian composers whose works are also found at the Archives, a testimony to the rich performing repertoire at the Church, are Corrado Bonfiglio, Giuseppe

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<sup>48</sup> Daniele Ficola, 'Stampe musicali siciliane a Malta', in id. (ed.), *La musica sacra in Sicilia tra rinascimento e barocco*, p. 69.

<sup>49</sup> Carapezza, 'Sicily Rediscovered in Malta its own Music', p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Franco Bruni, *Stampe musicali italiane alla cattedrale di Malta* (San Gwann, 1999), p. 34.

Caruso, Vincenzo D'Elia, Mariano Di Lorenzo, Antonio La Greca, Giuseppe Palazzotto and Tagliavia, Giovan Battista Fasolo (from Asti), Bonaventura Rubino (from Montecchio) and Vincenzo Tozzi (from Rome). This wealth of manuscripts at the Archives of Malta may be summed up in Carapezza's own words, who confirms that:

[...] the exhibits at the Cathedral Archives are but a few of a rich collection of old music, certainly, the most important south of Naples.<sup>52</sup>

The influence of Sicily continued all through the 17th century, and into the early-18th century: Don Antonio Campochiaro, Don Andrea Rinaldi, and Don Antonio Mortulano Campochiaro were all Sicilian *maestri di cappella* who served at the Cathedral, while the Maltese-born Don Michele Zahra, Don Giuseppe Ferrari, and Don Giuseppe Balzano all pursued their studies in Sicily before serving as *maestri di cappella* at the Cathedral Church.<sup>53</sup> Campochiaro, probably born at Caltagirone towards the end of the 16th century, was a friar of the Minor Conventuals who in 1620 was entrusted with the task of directing the *Cappella Musicale* at Caltagirone, a task which he pursued irregularly up to 1650. In 1623 he proceeded to Rome to further his studies, reaching Malta for the first time in 1626. Campochiaro served at the Cathedral of Malta as *maestro di cappella* from 1635 to 1638, leaving only one extant work, a motet for four voices entitled *Omnis Pulcritudo*. Rinaldi, born around 1600 in Francofonte, a province of Syracuse, directed the music at the Cathedral of Malta from 1627 to 1631. On acquiring the post of *maestro di cappella* at

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<sup>52</sup> Carapezza, 'Sicily Rediscovered in Malta its own Music', p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Azzopardi, 'The Organs of the Cathedral Church at Mdina and St. John's Conventual Church in Valletta', p. 190.

Syracuse Cathedral in 1634, he moved on to Sicily, serving later at Caltagirone from 1635 to 1638.

In July 1635 the *maestro di cappella* of the Mdina Cathedral was commissioned to conduct the music for the solemn episcopal consecration of Inquisitor Fabio Chigi, later to become Pope Alexander VII.<sup>54</sup> In 1658 Don Simeone Schembri from Senglea founded the *Oratorio of San Filippo Neri* in Malta, in the Porto Salvo church. He was succeeded in 1723 by Don Saverio Polidano (1678-1756), who was followed by Don Agostino Psaila in 1764. Naturally, activities at the Oratorio included, among other things, musical performances and sacred plays.<sup>55</sup>

In 1678 there were 72 ecclesiastics (canons, priests or clerics) officiating at the Cathedral Church. The chaplains (*canonici supernumerarii*) were obliged to attend the choir on Saturdays for Vespers and on Sundays for Holy Office and Mass. They had no right to attend any chapter meetings and were not allotted any remuneration for their services. Deacons and subdeacons, incense-bearers and clerics served Mass and also sang versicles.<sup>56</sup>

Malta's earliest composers of sacred music, Giuseppe and Domenico Balzano, both served as *maestri di cappella* at Mdina Cathedral. Giuseppe Balzano (1616-1700) was ordained priest in 1640 and served at St. Paul's Shipwreck Church at Valletta. In 1661 he was appointed *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral Church, a post which was interrupted twice by absences and which he retained until his retirement in 1699. Giuseppe

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>55</sup> Rolandi, *Musica e musicisti in Malta*, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 27.



was a prolific composer – a repertory of music scores completed in 1710 enlists a large number of Masses, Vesper psalms, Hymns, Sequences and Motets, many of them *ad 8 voci*.<sup>57</sup> However only a few of these survived, among them a number of cantatas and motets. Domenico, his brother (1632-1707), was ordained priest in 1657 at the age of 25 and was employed as *musico salariato* at St. John's Cathedral, Valletta, from 1657 onwards. Following in his brother's footsteps, he left the Cathedral of St. John and went on to serve at St. Paul's Shipwreck Church in Valletta until he succeeded Giuseppe as *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral at Mdina in 1699, a post which he retained until his death at the age of 75 in 1707.<sup>58</sup> The only surviving work by Domenico is a *Venite omnes* (Ms. 242) for soprano, alto and continuo (1680). One of Malta's earliest known composers before the Balzano brothers, but about whom we lack information, was Aloisyo Mataron (died before 1667). There is no evidence that he served the Cathedral of Malta; the only biographical information we have is that he married Aloysia Ghimes of Vittoriosa on 7 October 1650 and had two children, Stefano, ordained priest in 1678, and Anna. Among his sacred works are a *Confitebor* and a *Lauda Jerusalem*.

The last Italian to work as *maestro di cappella* was a Venetian, Don Bernardino Zanetti, who directed the *Cappella Musicale* from 1708 to 1712. From 1712 until 1717 the post remained vacant, and it was Carlo Imbert, the organist and teacher of *canto figurato*, who most probably deputised as musical director.<sup>59</sup> However, Azzopardi argues that after

<sup>57</sup> Azzopardi, 'Chapter I: The Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina - Malta', pp. 65-68.

<sup>58</sup> John Azzopardi, 'The Ecclesiastical Archives of the Cathedral of Mdina', in *Musica Restituta: A Revival Programme of 17th-century Maltese Sacred Music* (Mdina, Concert Programme, 1980), pp. 11, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Franco Bruni, *Musica sacra a Malta: Le cappelle della cattedrale di S. Paolo e della concattedrale di S. Giovanni Battista nel XIX secolo* (Marsa, 1993), p. 7.

1706 the musicians (including singers) employed at the Cathedral were all Maltese, apart from some *castrati* and *contralti* brought over directly from Naples.<sup>60</sup> In the later-17th century the *Cappella Musicale* of the Cathedral Church included also such instruments as trombones, cornetts and a rebec.<sup>61</sup>

The *Cappella Musicale* of the Conventual Church of St. John at Valletta differed slightly in make-up from the Cathedral *Cappella*. In 1690 it consisted of a *maestro di cappella*, two sopranos, two contraltos, two tenors, a bass, an organist, two violins, a cello and a double-bass, whereas in 1759, it comprised a *maestro di cappella*, one soprano, one contralto, one tenor and two basses, an organist, two violinists, a cello, a double-bass and, very occasionally, a serpent player. Interestingly, there was one occasion when the *Cappella Musicale* of the Cathedral of Malta joined forces with the *Cappella Musicale* of St. John's Co-Cathedral at Valletta and the musicians of the Manoel Theatre; this occurred during the solemn funeral of Monsignor Fra Melchior Alpheran, which was held in 1734 at St. Paul's church, Valletta.<sup>62</sup>

By the beginning of the 18th century Malta had already achieved a fully 'European' level of excellence in art and culture. Valletta, Mdina and the three towns of Cottonera (Cospicua, Vittoriosa and Senglea), were by this time enriched with lavish streets and palaces and enhanced by picturesque forts and magnificent churches erected by the Knights. Don Michelangelo Vella, who was born at Senglea on 7 November 1710,<sup>63</sup> was

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<sup>60</sup> Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta', p. 61.

<sup>61</sup> Bruni, *Stampe musicali italiane alla cattedrale di Malta*, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Vella Bondin, 'The Cappella di Musica of the Order of St. John, I', p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> Noel D'Anastas, 'Dun Mikiel Ang Vella (1710-1792)', in *In-Nazzjon Taghna* (Pietà, Local Paper, 1994), Part I: 28.2.1994, pp. 22-23, *passim*; Part II: 21.3.1994, pp. 22-23, *passim*.

another Maltese composer of sacred music. He left Malta on 14 July 1730 to continue his studies in Naples, enrolling as a student at the *Conservatorio di Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini* on 4 September 1730. He stayed there until 1738 studying under Nicolo Fago and Andrea Basso, and from 1734 onwards under Leonardo Leo.<sup>64</sup> Some of his later students included Giuseppe Burlò (of Vittoriosa), Salvatore Magri (of Cospicua), Francesco Azopardi (of Rabat) and Nicolò Isouard (of Mosta). Among his sacred works are a *Salve Sancte Parens* (for choir and organ) and a *Sancta et immaculata virginitas* (for soloists and continuo). Vella died at Cospicua on 25 December 1792.

The Baroque distinctness of ceremonial festivity in church with music reached a pinnacle in the 18th century; two main prerequisites were needed for a religious *fiesta*: solemnity (“solennità”) and cheerfulness (“allegrezza”). These combined emerged into the three principal functions of a Baroque ceremony, namely: status (“prestigio”), delight (“diletto”) and devotion (“devozione”).<sup>65</sup> Hence, music played a rather important role in the definition of status and solemnity: the more the music, the greater the solemnity (“più musica, più solennità”). Since music lured the public from the public squares into church, Baroque society created a dual function for religion: to provide a spectacle, and to morally inculcate (“dello spettacolo e dell’edificazione”).<sup>66</sup> In consequence, the governing characteristics of the ecclesiastical institution, ‘decorum and status’ (“decoro e prestigio”), became the symbols of spirituality and solemnity. As a result, Baroque celebration in church constantly followed a specific formality: the officiating priests and their assistants

<sup>64</sup> Hanns-Bertold Dietz, ‘Vella, Michelangelo’, in S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 19 (London, 1980), p. 595.

<sup>65</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell’Italia barocca*, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

("celebranti/clero"), collectively glorified the triumphant Church of God ("Dio/Chiesa trionfante"), through their extra-worldly representations ("riti") on the main altar before the general public ("popolo"). Every single moment of this orderliness demanded the involvement of music, and this combination of liturgy and music, in turn, captivated the attending public which was steered towards devotion. In other words, music in church became an object of decorum as well as an ornament ("decoro e ornamento") which, inevitably, required the provision of specialised music composed by specially trained composers and performed by professionally trained musicians.<sup>67</sup>

The status of the *Cappella Musicale* rose to glorious heights in the early-18th century, its reputation being enhanced by the engagement of famous singers.<sup>68</sup> The solemnity of a feast determined how many people were involved; the number of musicians, singers and *interventi musicali* (musicalised items) was kept in direct and regulated proportion to the status of the feast.<sup>69</sup> The singers in the *Cappella Musicale* were normally divided approximately equally into four categories: sopranos and altos (a mixture of castratos and falsettists), tenors and basses. Surviving documented evidence help us create a picture of how singing in churches may have sounded since the 17th century. Writing in 1624, Cesare Crivellati noted in his *Discorsi musicali* that "in churches you sing differently from music-rooms: in churches with a loud voice, in music-rooms with a subdued voice". This is also attested by Pietro Cerone writing in Naples in 1613, who commented that "choral singers sing to the crowd with full voices, chamber singers with soft, low and falsetto

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50, 52.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

"La sostanza ed il prestigio delle cappelle musicali sono i cantori."

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

notes, modifying their voices to balance with the instruments accompanying them [...]".<sup>70</sup> Vibrato tone and 'straight' tone coexisted in the Baroque. Vibrato was applied only affectively (rather than routinely) by 16th- and 17th-century solo singers (as when performing in madrigals) and by church choral singers (who were accustomed to singing with boys and falsettists, and therefore used vibrato very little).

This should not imply, however, that Baroque church celebration was purely devotional. Stefani recounts how, in the Baroque age, people often attended churches not out of devotion or to participate devotionally in the liturgical functions, but solely to listen to the music; this was amply demonstrated when, at sung Vespers, after the singing of the last motet following the Magnificat, knowing that there was no more singing to be done, everyone left the building without waiting for the Vespers to end. Congregations also often applauded in churches to acknowledge a performance,<sup>71</sup> and, if the orchestra was placed at the west end of the Church, it was frequent, although disrespectful, for the public to turn its back to the altar to follow the music. Lastly, people always preferred to go to the churches where there was more and better music being performed rather than to attend as an act of faith ("più per la musica che per pregare").<sup>72</sup>

From around 1711 onwards one finds the first indications of a new concept that was to take a firm grip on the *Cappella Musicale*. The Cathedral authorities, who had long-established links with Sicily, started gradually to turn their attention towards Naples, which at that time had

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<sup>70</sup> J. A. Sadie (ed.), *Companion to Baroque Music* (London, 1990), p. 353.

<sup>71</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

already produced such great composers as Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725), Nicola Fago (1677-1745), Gaetano Greco (1657-1728), Francesco Provenzale (1626-1704) and Cristoforo Caresana (1640-1709). In fact, Naples was generally recognised after about 1720 as the first in the hierarchy of Italian musical cities.<sup>73</sup> Being in Southern Italy, Naples did not offer any difficulties of access for the Maltese. The first Maltese priest to benefit from the Neapolitan education system was Don Pietro Gristi (1696-1738), who was sent to study music at the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* in 1713.<sup>74</sup> Gristi occupied the post of *maestro di cappella* at Mdina Cathedral from 1717 to 1738. It is recorded that on 19 February 1738, during carnival, Gristi directed a sacred opera entitled 'Santa Elisabetta' at the Bishop's palace.<sup>75</sup> Following Gristi's death in 1738, Benigno Zerafa was sent to Naples to study at the same *Conservatorio* that his late master had attended. Zerafa remained in Naples for six years and on his return in 1744 began his career at Mdina as *maestro di cappella*: a career which lasted until 1786.

The effect of Naples on Malta can be witnessed in the purchasing of instruments, too. In the 1720s St. Publius' church at Rabat purchased a positive organ from the Neapolitan Tomaso De Martino, organ builder to the King of Naples, who had earlier supplied the organ at the Cathedral of Mdina. In 1728, the Parish Church of St. Paul, also at Rabat, purchased a yet larger organ than that of St. Publius' Church, from the Neapolitan organ builder Giuseppe del Piano. Organ building and renovations were carried out in the 18th century by such Neapolitan organ builders as

<sup>73</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta', p. 51.

Gristi's request to pursue studies in Naples is dated 10 September 1713. Gristi is buried in St. Dominic's Church at Rabat.

<sup>75</sup> Azzopardi, 'Chapter II: The Cappella di Musica of the Cathedral Church of Malta', p. 105.

We cannot proceed to analyse the Maltese liturgy without first giving a concise but clear explanation of the function of the *Cappella Musicale* at the Cathedral of Malta. It was customary to house the orchestra and choir in organ lofts or on specially designed raised platforms within the nave itself, occasionally divided into two *cori* on either side of the altar (see below). This partial dissociation of music from the rite – music serving here as an accompaniment to, or commentary on, the celebration of the service rather as an essential ingredient – was possible in Catholicism, where the validity of the rite depended on the acts of the celebrant and his assistants rather than on the participation of the choir or the congregation. When a motet or piece of instrumental music such as a toccata, ricercare, canzona, sinfonia or sonata coincided with the recitation of the liturgy, the latter took place *sotto voce*, thus reconciling liturgical propriety with musical integrity.<sup>77</sup>

In the Baroque period both vocal and instrumental ensembles grew greatly in size, so newly created stages (“palchi”) started to be erected at specific points within the church. These spaciouly designed lofts favoured antiphonal singing, music reaching the audience from fixed points in the church (a concept directly inherited from the Renaissance).<sup>78</sup> Orchestras in Italian cathedrals were usually situated in more than one location. Michael Talbot explains that the placement of the instrumental ensembles in churches usually conformed to one of three specific positions:

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<sup>76</sup> Azzopardi, ‘Muzika u Muzicisti fil-Kolleggjata ta’ San Pawl, Rabat’, pp. 7-8.

<sup>77</sup> Talbot, ‘An Italian Overview’, p. 8.

<sup>78</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 59.

- i) originally, in the north and south transepts, on the ground, or elevated in specially designed balconies (*bigonzi*), or in the organ lofts, “on the nave side of the iconostasis”;
- ii) optionally, opposite each other and in any one of the archways of the nave;
- iii) optionally, side by side at the far end of the Church, i.e. on the Western side, on both sides of the Church’s main door and entrance.

Talbot’s detailed description of the musicians’ performance locales at the ducal church of St. Marco in Venice deserves quotation here, as its importance may be related to the understanding of favoured locations for instrumental and vocal forces at Mdina Cathedral:

Works with full instrumental accompaniments, either *a 4* or *a 8*, were performed on the altar side of the iconostasis, the musicians being accommodated in the organ lofts (“*negli organi*”) and in the various supplementary galleries (“*palchetti*”) that included the two facing raised galleries (“*nicchie*”) with openings both to the choir and to the nave.<sup>79</sup>

An important document at the Archives of Mdina dated 4 July 1773 sheds light on where orchestras in the Mdina cathedral were placed. A memorandum to the Chapter to purchase an *organetto* from Ghaxaq, a request endorsed by Benigno Zerafa as *maestro di cappella* and by Francesco Azopardi, specifically places the orchestra in the nave of the Church. The document states:

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88.



[...] to provide this Church with a portable *organetto* which would be ideal for the orchestra, which is usually placed in the nave of the said Church [...].<sup>80</sup>

Zerafa even commented on the exact dimensions and position of two raised platforms for the *cori* in the church which, by a fortunate chance, serves as a detailed picture of how and where the music was performed on grand occasions. In Z22 (21.4.1752), a *Messa a due cori*, the composer wrote the following note giving details of the raised platforms in the Cathedral:

La Lunghezza dell'Orchestra [sic] che si fa per j SS. Pietro, e Paolo, / e di palmi ventinove, e un terzo, opure [sic] tre canne, e mezza, un palmo, e un terzo. Il risalto [sic] che fa dal pilastro, e di pal: / palmi sette.<sup>81</sup>

This states that:

The length of the orchestra [gallery] that is constructed for [the celebration of the feast of] St. Peter and St. Paul is  $29\frac{1}{3}$  hands ("palmi"),<sup>82</sup> or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  rods ("canne") and  $1\frac{1}{3}$  hands. The projection [of the gallery] measured from the pillar is seven hands.

<sup>80</sup> ACM, *Minute Capitulari*, Vol. 13 (1771-1775), Chapter meeting on 4.7.1773, f. 285. "[...] di provvedere questa Chiesa d'un organetto portatile che sia adattato alla orchestra solita formarsi alla nave della medesima, [...]".

<sup>81</sup> ACM, Mus. Ms. 251, f. 82r.

<sup>82</sup> For easy calculation, a *palmo* (plural, *palmi*) translates into 'hand', measuring approximately 10.16 cm or 4 inches. One *canna* = 8 *palmi* = 32 inches, i.e. 2 feet, 8 inches.

The immensity of the churches led to the phonic and spatial 'expansion' of the Palestrina style, "through an increase in the number of voices and use of polychoral divisions",<sup>83</sup> the acoustical results are symmetrical (with a mirror effect) in the Italian double choir tradition.

Although church orchestras were usually modelled on their theatrical counterparts, the list below shows us how the instrumental ensemble at the Cathedral in Zerafa's time looked. Immediately, one will observe that trumpets and/or horns, and such other woodwind instruments as the oboe, were added occasionally as *rinforzi*, along with other instruments, and that bassoons were not regularly employed, neither in the main ensemble nor as *rinforzi*, although we may assume that, along with other bass instruments, they could have been employed periodically as continuo instruments. The size of the *Cappella Musicale* of Mdina Cathedral at the time of Benigno Zerafa's appointment as *maestro di cappella* in 1744 comprised:

Benigno Zerafa, *maestro di cappella*  
Don Diego Scicluna  
Don Giuseppe Axisa  
Don Baldassare Parnis  
Don Filippo Agius  
Don Battista Mifsud  
Carlo Imbert, *organista*  
Paolo Azzopardi, *violinista*  
Lorenzo Said, *soprano*  
Giuseppe Tabone  
Enrico Grech  
Benigno Chetcuti.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 107.

<sup>84</sup> ACM, *Depositaria*, Vol. 9, f. 397.

In contrast, the list below gives the names of the supernumerary singers (*rinforzi*) and players called upon by Zerafa for feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the Commemoration of St. Paul of 1748: (the figures denote *scudi* and *tari*, respectively):

Il Sig[nor] Fra Tommasino Peres, <i>Soprano</i>	12
Il Sig[nor] Don Alessandro Bezzina, <i>Primo Violino</i>	6
I Sig[nori], <i>Trombe di Caccia 1<sup>o</sup> e 2<sup>o</sup>,</i> Nicola è [sic] Salvatore	12
Il Sig[nor] Petruzzo, <i>2<sup>o</sup> Violino</i>	4 6
Il Sig[nor] Michelino, <i>3<sup>o</sup> Violino</i>	4 6
Il Sig[nor] Martino, <i>1<sup>o</sup> Violino</i>	4 6
Il Sig[nor] D[on] Salvatore Gatt, <i>Contrabasso</i>	4 6
Il Sig[nor] Roberto Debono, <i>Violoncello</i>	5
Il Sig[nor] Riccardo, <i>Oboe</i>	5. <sup>85</sup>

In March 1748 further expenses are recorded on account of the inclusion of *rinforzi*, as ordered by the *maestro di cappella*, Benigno Zerafa, and which included two foreign solo violinists who participated in the procession of St. Gregory from the limits of Marsa up to Zejtun: 5 *scudi* 6 *tari*.<sup>86</sup>

The composition of large *cappelle*, in which singers and players were divided into 'ripienists' (*ripieni*) and 'soloists' (*solisti*), inevitably gave rise to instrumental forms that took advantage of this division. The ripienists (from 'ripieno', meaning full choir, or 'tutti') were usually musicians of average ability who accompanied the full chorus in grand sacred concertos by doubling the choral parts on instruments of the violin family. The instrumental soloists were usually highly skilled violinists or cornettists who played in dialogue with the vocal soloists in concertos for few voices

<sup>85</sup> ACM, *Depositeria*, Vol. 11, f. 90.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., f. 36.

or during the solo sections of grand concertos.<sup>87</sup> Iconography of the early 18th century indicates that performers normally played from individual parts, thus confirming that the number of parts equals the number of players.

To distinguish between *ripieni* and *solisti*, Giovanni Lorenzo Gregori, in the preface to his *Concerti grossi* (Lucca, 1698), described a means of augmenting the sound of the vocal and instrumental ensembles in selected passages. This procedure was adopted also by Corelli, who likewise issued separate part books for soloists and orchestral musicians.<sup>88</sup> Zerafa adopted this convention, too, and often separates the two bodies, as in Z36 (*Laudate pueri a 4 vv*) and Z37 (*Confitebor a 4 vv*). Both works come in a set of 'concertino' partbooks entitled 'solisti', augmented by a further set, called *ripieni*. The distinction between the two bodies is clear.

The orchestra did not usually participate on the regular Sundays of the year, when a simpler service was held. The choir and organ would on such days perform in a *cappella* style (in Baroque terminology this meant either performing without instrumental accompaniment, or with instrumental doubling of the voices), or simply revert to plainsong with the participation of some string instruments to provide variety.<sup>89</sup> The schedule of the *Cappella Musicale* of the Cathedral under Zerafa's direction followed the normal procedures of its Italian counterparts and fell into three categories:

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<sup>87</sup> Claude V. Palisca, *Baroque Music* (New Jersey, 1968, 3/1991), p. 163.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>89</sup> Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', p. 7.

a) Normal Sundays throughout the year:

Choir and organ, *canto fermo* and/or polyphonic Masses composed in the *stile antico*. Vespers were usually sung alternately in Gregorian chant tones (tones 1 - 8) and/or in *tono retto* (strict tone). *Falsobordone* was also included.

b) Low feasts such as Commemorations of Saints, etc.:

Mass and psalms performed by the Cathedral choir in *canto fermo* and *canto figurato*, with the inclusion of few instruments, usually strings and organ. Vocal solo items are usually sung by soloists from the main choir.

c) Grand occasions such as the titular feast of the church, a principal feast of the BVM, Corpus Christi, consecration of a new Bishop or Grand Master, etc.:

Figural music throughout, with soloists, choir, instruments and organ, *rinforzi* being employed to augment the festive sound. A *Te Deum* was usually performed in addition.

Services during which the full participation of the *Cappella Musicale* at Mdina Cathedral was expected were of two kinds: Mass and Vespers, performed at prescribed times of the day. The following list details all the major feasts of the *Sanctorale Liturgical Calendar* celebrated at the Cathedral of Malta in 1786:

Gennaio	1 - Circoncisione di Nostro Signore	Primi Vespri (IV), Messa (Mes), Secondi Vespri (IIV).
	6 - Epifania di Nostro Signore	IV, Matutino (Mat), Mes., IIV.
	25 - Conversione di San Paolo	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
Febbraio	2 - Purificazione di Nostra Signora	IV, Mes., IIV.
	10 - Naufragio di San Paolo	IV, Mes.
Marzo	19 - San Giuseppe	IV, Mes., IIV.
	25 - Annunziatione di Nostra Signora	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
	- Sabato Santo	Mes., Compieta.
	- Pasqua di Resurrezione (Primo giorno)	Mat., Mes., IIV.
	- (Secondo e terzo giorno)	Nella messa.
Maggio	3 - Inversione della Santa Croce	IV, Mes., IIV.
	- Ascensione di Nostro Signore	IV, Mes., IIV.
	- Pentecoste ( Primo giorno)	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
	- (Secondo e terzo giorno)	Nella messa.
	- Trinità	IV, Mes., IIV.
	- Corpus Cristi	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
	- Nel giorno dell'ottava di detta festività.	Mes., IIV, Processione.
Giugno	24 - Nascità di San Pio Battore	IV, Mes., IIV.
	29 - San Pietro e San Paolo	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
	30 - Commemorazione di San Paolo	Mat., Mes., IIV.
Agosto	15 - Assunzione di Nostra Signora	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
Settembre	8 - Nascità di Nostra Signora	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
Ottobre	8 - Consecrazione della Chiesa	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
Novembre	1 - Festività di tutti i Santi	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
Dicembre	8 - Concezione di Nostra Signora	IV, Mat., Mes., IIV.
	25 - Natale di Nostro Signore	IV, Mat., due Mes., IIV.
	- (Secondo e terzo giorno)	Nelle messe Solenne. <sup>90</sup>

Major feasts were further divided into two categories: 'titular' and 'principal'. 'Titular' referred to the feast or feasts of the saint(s) to whom the church was dedicated; in the case of the Cathedral of Mdina, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, also referred to as *l-Mnarja* and falling annually on 29 June, was the titular feast. By 'principal' one understands the most important class of feast day apart from the 'titular' feast, celebrated with the greatest degree of solemnity, such as the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, falling annually on 25 January, or *Sta. Marija* on 15 August.

<sup>90</sup> ACM, Reg. Del. Cap., Vol. 12, f. 3.

In Michael Talbot's words, "so much has happened, especially since the Second Vatican Council, to change the relationship between clergy and laity in the Catholic Church that it requires a real act of imagination to recapture in one's mind the spirit and atmosphere of a service in the seventeenth or eighteenth century". The Mass as celebrated publicly in this period was a series of visual and aural spectacles which the spectators, having nothing to do except to follow the actions (as in a Shakespearean tragedy), participated in just by watching. Hence the action during Mass was centred on the altar (the priest) and the organ loft (the music), the faithful having been turned into merely passive onlookers, very often understanding hardly anything of the Latin employed for the ritual. In this perspective "all Catholic services were [...] concerts",<sup>91</sup> establishing a performance-audience relationship, just as in a theatre. After all, Church services are always sacred theatre. Indeed, a Roman Catholic service was fully valid without the use of any music at all. Since music served largely as an ornament, the variety of forms and styles applied to texts that could be sung was infinite.

The performance of music in Roman Catholic churches matured under three constraints:

- (i) the desired length of the performance,
- (ii) the financial support, and
- (iii) what the present author has called the degree of 'sacredness' of the performance.

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<sup>91</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 57.

To address these factors, some basic rules were laid down for the *maestro di cappella* to follow, the most important being:

- (i) The length of the musical items and their musicalised numbers varied according to the degree of solemnity and importance of the feast; maximum music for the most solemn occasions (Easter, Christmas, Titular and Principal feasts), and minimum music for everyday and ordinary (ferial) services and occasions.
- (ii) This affected the allowable cost of the services, a distinction being made between solemn occasions (costly but fewer in number) and the less important ones (ferial), which were numerous but less costly.
- (iii) The use of non-liturgical texts (motets) was restricted, and the musical styles adopted were not to be either theatrical or operatic, 'showiness' being contained within clear parameters.

In order to meet these multiple needs, composers adopted two types of musical language:

Stile Antico	Stile Moderno
the (originally) Renaissance style based on vocal polyphony, in which music dominated the text (Palestrina's practice continued).	the (originally) Baroque style based on opera and dance music, in which text dominated the music (Monteverdi's practice continued).



By this means, a characteristic ecclesiastical style mingling both old and new styles developed. Under the general banner of 'sacred music', it managed to encompass all forms of music written specifically for the church, whether liturgically or extra-liturgically. Composers used both languages ('antico' and 'moderno'), creating a composite style dependent on local taste and custom. The parts of the liturgy that were set to music were:

- (a) Mass, comprising the Ordinary (*Ordinarium*: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei) and the Proper (*Proprium*: Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, Communion);
- (b) the Office (Vespers and Compline).

The *maestro di cappella* had a wealth of musical forms that he could apply to his settings of liturgical texts. These included:

- (i) through-composed, single-movement works, in which each textual phrase generates a motive which can then be repeated according to need;
- (ii) church aria (*Kirchenarie*) form commonly employed in solo, ensemble and choral movements, interspersed with instrumental ritornellos;
- (iii) da capo aria form, generally used only for solo movements;
- (iv) multi movement and polychoral structures;
- (v) fugue, based on the *stile antico* and sometimes utilising *cantus firmus* as a source of invention.

The centre of the Church's ritual in the Baroque period lay in the High Mass.<sup>92</sup> High Mass was usually entrusted to professional choirs and orchestras, which performed the choral part of the liturgy, while the remaining canons or priests moved in silent devotion articulated by the ceremonial gestures and other ritual movements such as genuflecting and bowing, and the occasional prompting of a bell. When composers set each section of the Ordinary as a single movement, the work is often referred to as a *Missa brevis*; when each section is subdivided into more than one movement, it is today often described as a *Cantata Mass*.<sup>93</sup> The important stylistic and structural changes that came in at the beginning of the Baroque (the 'concertato style') and towards the beginning of the 18th century (structure employing more planned thematic relationships between movements) tended to lengthen the Mass dimensions. A Mass on a feast day in the first decades of the 18th century, displaying a full musical rendition of the whole of the Ordinary and some of the Proper of the day by the composer, often took many hours to complete. In recognition of this, the items of the Ordinary (which happen to be the longest texts) set to music were often reduced to two (*Kyrie* and *Gloria*) from the total of six. This type of Mass was known either as *Messa di Gloria*, or *Missa brevis* – 'brevis' here connoting 'shortened' via reduction of the number of sections rather than 'concise' in the sense of retaining all the sections but compressing them to the maximum extent. A setting of the whole of the Ordinary of the Mass, which was more common in German practice than in Italian, was referred to as a *Missa tota* (complete Mass).<sup>94</sup> Setting of the Proper of the Mass were usually cast in the *stile*

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<sup>92</sup> Friedrich Blume, *Renaissance and Baroque Music* (New York, 1967), p. 157.

<sup>93</sup> Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', at p. 8.

The term is a little unfortunate, since it is based on our present-day understanding of 'cantata' in relation to Bach's music rather than on the sense of 'cantata' in Italian music of the same time.

<sup>94</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 66.

*antico* and were thus rather short compared with the rest of the Mass settings.<sup>95</sup>

In Malta, Mass was always said in the morning (the German equivalent of *Hauptgottesdienst*), and never in the evening, which is a late-20th-century outgrowth of the Vatican Council II; whereas Vespers were, naturally, always placed in the afternoon (*Nachmittagsgottesdienst*).<sup>96</sup> Mass was anticipated in the morning by the singing of *Mattutino* and *Laudi*, which were usually performed by the organist and one or two singers in alternation with the clergy in the choir. On their completion, the chief procession involving all the ministers and the officiating priest bearing the *reliqua* commenced, leaving the Cathedral following a circuit of a preplanned route according to the feast's importance, and during which hymns were sung. On their return, the *antifona* was sung and High Mass (Pontifical Mass) commenced.<sup>97</sup> The following table gives a picture of the structure of a grand Solemn Mass (*Summa Missa*) as celebrated on an important occasion in Benigno Zerafa's day. The priest's actions are supported by a close and detailed synchronisation of the music offered by the *Cappella Musicale*:<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>96</sup> In Malta, the *horarium* of the liturgical day established daytime at midnight; in 1708 the whole of Italy (except Turin) was using the traditional 24-hour clock, in which *ore ventiquattro* – '24 hundred' hours – was set at nightfall throughout the year – as in the medieval canonical hours (Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', p. 4). Malta, like Turin, adhered to 'French' time, beginning the cycle at midnight.

<sup>97</sup> Information kindly supplied to me by Rev. Alberto Borg, OSA.

<sup>98</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 65.

**Ritual**

*Priest's actions at the Altar*

*Opening Rite*

Prayers at the foot of the altar

Act of contrition

Kissing of the altar

Blessing of the Incense

*Ante-Communion*

Collects (prayers)

Epistle

Gospel

Homily

*Offertory*

Offering of bread and wine

Incensing

Washing of Hands

Homage to the Holy Trinity

Secrets (prayers)

*Canon*

Prayers

Elevation of the two elements

*Communion*

Lord's Prayer

Commingling of bread and wine

*Post Communion*

Prayers

Blessing

Last Gospel

**Ordinary**

*Music supplied by the Cappella Musicale*

Instrumental sinfonia or organ toccata.

Kyrie (figural music, usually short in a march-like dotted rhythm).

Christe (usually set as a fugal section in *stile antico*).

Kyrie (a close restatement of the opening Kyrie).

Gloria (figural music, in several movements usually not less than 7 and not more than 10, and with 2 or 3 movements cast in *stile antico*). The *Gloria in excelsis Deo* text is usually intoned by the celebrant.

Gradual (figural music).

Alleluia or Tract

(figural music).

Credo (figural music in one movement). The text *Credo in unum Deum* is usually intoned by the celebrant.

Offertory (figural music).

Sanctus (plainchant).

Benedictus (recited silently, in plainchant, or motet in figural music).

Agnus Dei (plainchant).

Communion (figural music).

Organ.

A satisfactory degree of synchronisation between music and liturgy was achieved by allowing the former to regulate the velocity of the gestures of the prelate (a high ecclesiastical dignitary such as a bishop). If the choir ceased to sing, the organ continued playing, but the rite remained focused on the sacred person. In the saying of the Mass the recitation of the holy texts was the prerogative of the priest, the prescribed texts being whispered (or murmured), so demonstrating that music did not replace the rite but, instead, functioned as a "glorification and adornment of it".<sup>99</sup> The participation of the organ in the liturgy, both in alternation with Gregorian chant and in substitution for the texts of the Proper, was encouraged, imposing on the organist the need to have available a collection of *ricercars*, *canzonas*, *capriccios* or *toccatas* to be drawn on as substitutes for the Gradual, Offertory, antiphons or the Elevation. Improvisation was another handy technique to be freely employed by the sufficiently capable organist during the liturgical function. Other pieces, such as *sinfonias* in *sonata da chiesa* style, were played just before Mass commenced, and could be performed either on the organ or by an instrumental ensemble.<sup>100</sup>

Figural music was never allowed to overshadow the spiritual spectacle of the liturgical rite, but instead sought to comment on the actions at the altar rather than to supersede them, thus fulfilling the true purpose of the rite: the 'saying' of the Mass. This meant that music and rite were allowed to move slightly out of step with each other. Michael Talbot gives a very clear definition of what congregations of the 17th and 18th centuries expected to see and hear:

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<sup>99</sup> Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 110.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

[Music] may stop prematurely before the action it accompanies has been completed or, conversely, it may overshoot into the next part. [...] There is no risk that the prescribed spoken or chanted intonations of the priest [...] will 'interfere' with the music, since they can be delivered in a murmur, *sotto voce*. Indeed, while the priest inaudibly recites the prescribed liturgical texts, the musicians can perform wordless (purely instrumental) compositions or ones with quite different words [motets].<sup>101</sup>

Sung Vespers at the Cathedral were likewise treated as a public liturgy involving concelebrating priests with their servers, the role of both being primarily ceremonial, thus constituting a primarily visual presence. The choir and orchestra played, and the passive but devotional populace followed the dual action. The voice of the officiating priest (*hæbdomadarius*) was needed only to chant the versicle and chapter, whereas the rest was left performed with music. On lesser occasions, such as ferial days, Vespers were performed in alternation between choir and clergy. Psalms were often set for five, six or seven voices, or even for double choir. 'Jubilus' effects were frequent, and vocal exuberance was cultivated, often with echo replies from contrasting *cori*. At the opposite extreme, the use of *falsobordone*, a type of pseudo-polyphony predominantly for ferial use in which the psalm verses are recited chorally to a single chord "punctuated cadentially at the mid-point and end of each verse", was also used.<sup>102</sup>

Vespers in Zerafa's day consisted of:

<sup>101</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 58.

<sup>102</sup> Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 114.

(i) *Primi Vespri* (First Vespers), sung on the vigil of the feast and constituting the most important liturgical celebration of the day as they required the physical presence of the Bishop, who transported the Saint's relic (*reliqua*) from its place of repose to have it displayed on the high altar. The *Primi Vespri* were always the central attraction for the composer, and new settings of psalms were customarily composed for this liturgical celebration on the vigil of the feast day.

(ii) *Secondi Vespri* (Second Vespers), following the pattern of the First Vespers, the only differences being in the choice of psalms and antiphons sung. The Second Vespers were celebrated on the afternoon of the feast day itself, with the Bishop now transporting the relic back to its secluded location.

The function of the transportation of the relic is widely and popularly known as the 'traslazione della reliqua', in short, *traslazione*, and entailed the placing of the sacred relics of the Saint on the main altar, accompanied by artillery fire, the playing of trumpets, organ and bells, and the full participation of the *Cappella Musicale*.<sup>103</sup> This feat regularly anticipated the *Primi Vespri* and during its implementation, the *Cappella Musicale* performed an antiphon and a hymn. The *traslazione* also meant the official opening of the feast by the Bishop, and is a particularly important practice in the Maltese islands. The *reposizione*, the official closure of the feast, took place after termination of Vespers, with an exact replica of the *traslazione* this time in reverse, that is, reinstating the Saint's relic back to its place of repose. A hymn is usually sung, followed by a Marian antiphon. The structure of Vespers at the Cathedral followed the

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<sup>103</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca*, p. 28.

universal pattern:

*Deus in adjutorium*

*Gloria patri*

*Alleluia*

Psalms (with ferial or proper antiphons):

Antiphon - Psalm 1 - Antiphon

Antiphon - Psalm 2 - Antiphon

Antiphon - Psalm 3 - Antiphon

Antiphon - Psalm 4 - Antiphon

Antiphon - Psalm 5 - Antiphon

Chapter Reading

Hymn

Versicle (Responsory)

Antiphon - *Magnificat* - Antiphon

Collect

*Benedicamus.*

Psalms were set to music (or not) in relation to their importance in the liturgy, so the most commonly heard ones were the ones most regularly set to music. The *Dixit Dominus* was the only psalm required on all feasts throughout the year, so it was inevitably the one most frequently set to music by composers and treated to the most grandiose style, as several of Zerafa's *Dixit* settings evidence. In Vespers the psalms and canticle were the most important texts. The four Marian Antiphons (*Alma Redemptoris mater*, *Ave regina cælorum*, *Regina cæli lætare* and *Salve Regina*) were also regularly set to music, but the antiphons to the psalms were, by Zerafa's time, normally replaced by motets or instrumental pieces.<sup>104</sup> Zerafa's only *Salve Regina* (dated 17 June 1764, for three voices and organ only) was likely to have been composed for the Benediction Service on the occasion of the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Common Vesper psalms, generally grouped in cycles of five, and performed during the liturgical year on Sundays and Double Feasts at the

<sup>104</sup> Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', p. 8.



Cathedral, came in five main 'formations':

<i>Sunday Vespers</i>	<i>Vespers of the BVM</i>	<i>First Vespers of Apostles, Evangelists, Martyrs, and Confessors</i>	<i>First and Second Vespers of Dedication</i>	<i>Second Vespers of Apostles and Evangelists</i>
Dixit Dominus	Dixit Dominus	Dixit Dominus	Dixit Dominus	Dixit Dominus
Confitebor	Laudate pueri	Confitebor	Confitebor	Laudate pueri
Beatus vir	Lætatus sum	Beatus vir	Beatus vir	Credidi
Laudate pueri	Nisi Dominus	Laudate pueri	Laudate pueri	In convertendo
In exitu Israel	Lauda Jerusalem	Laudate Dominum	Lauda Jerusalem	Domine probasti
Magnificat	Magnificat	Magnificat	Magnificat	Magnificat. <sup>105</sup>

Composers gave priority to psalms required for three types of service:

- (i) Sundays (including Easter Sunday);
- (ii) Feasts of Male Saints (Male Cursus);
- (iii) Feasts of Female Saints and the BVM (Female Cursus).

The Blessed Virgin has always held a place of major importance in the Catholic Church, and the five major feasts dedicated to Her devotion were: the Immaculate Conception (*Immacolata Concezzione*) on 8 December, the Purification (*Purificazione*) on 2 February, the Annunciation (*Annunziazione*) on 25 March, the Assumption (*Assunzione*) on 15 August (this being the most important of all five) and the Nativity (*Natività di Maria*) on 8 September. The minor feasts were the Visitation (*Visitazione*) on 2 July, the Presentation of Mary at the Temple (*Presentazione di Maria al Tempio*) on 21 November and Our

<sup>105</sup> Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, pp. 160-161.

Dixit Dominus	- Psalm 109	Laudate Dominum	- Psalm 116
Confitebor	- Psalm 110	Lætatus sum	- Psalm 121
Beatus vir	- Psalm 111	In convertendo	- Psalm 125
Laudate pueri	- Psalm 112	Nisi Dominus	- Psalm 126
In exitu Israel	- Psalm 113	Domine probasti	- Psalm 138
Credidi	- Psalm 115	Lauda Jerusalem	- Psalm 147
Magnificat	- Canticle of the BVM.		

Lady of Mount Carmel (*Madonna del Carmelo*) on 16 July.<sup>106</sup> Devotions of the Blessed Virgin in Malta were very numerous, the earliest going back to 1575.<sup>107</sup> Another popular devotion in Malta and Gozo was that of St. Paul, the bringer of faith to Malta in AD 60. All devotional days were regarded as feasts of profound significance. Nevertheless, in 1748 Pope Benedict XIV extended to Naples and Sicily the decree issued in Spain in 1727 reducing the Holy Days to seventeen and the obligation of hearing Mass to another seventeen days. Bonnici maintains that Malta was affected by this reduction, too.<sup>108</sup>

All Souls' Day was also solemnised with music. On the day of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (2 November) the entire Office was said with three Nocturns, each with three responsories sung as follows:

i) First Nocturn for Sunday, Monday, and Thursday:

1. *Credo*
2. *Qui Lazarum*
3. *Domine quando veneris*

ii) Second Nocturn for Tuesday and Friday:

1. *Memento mei*
2. *Hei mihi Domine*
3. *Ne recorderis*

iii) Third Nocturn for Wednesday and Saturday:

1. *Peccantem me*
2. *Domine secundum actum*
3. *Libera me de viis.*

<sup>106</sup> Eisenhofer, *Compendio di Liturgia*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>107</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, p. 68.

Out of 432 churches and chapels existing in Malta in 1575, 159 were dedicated to Our Lady, whereas out of 50 churches in Gozo, 20 bore one of the titles of the BVM. Towards the end of the 16th century, 11 parishes were erected, seven of which were dedicated to the Mother of God. During the 17th century, out of 14 newly erected parishes in Malta and Gozo, nine were dedicated to Our Lady.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

The *Cappella Musicale* would also normally perform a grand *Requiem* Mass.

Festal celebrations came to an end with the final Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, an extra-liturgical gesture which survives up to today to round off the festivities in a spiritual observance. The Benediction service, which generally followed after Second Vespers, had the following structure:

Marian antiphon (see p. 102),  
Litany (usually of the Blessed Virgin but occasionally the *Maior Sanctorum* (all Saints) or the litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus),  
*Pange Lingua* and *Tantum Ergo*,  
Benediction (or blessing) by the officiating priest,  
*Adoremus* with the *Ave Maria*,  
Organ music.

Motets gave composers another opportunity to set words to music. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, motets were usually written for solo voice and continuo (and instruments). A motet was, in effect, a sacred cantata, and motets for two or three voices also existed that were the sacred counterparts to chamber duets and terzets. Zerafa composed numerous motets, and two are *Ad astra, ad sidera* (Z39) and *Ad faustum, ad festum* (Z107). As poetry, motets had even less to offer than contemporary cantatas.<sup>109</sup> According to the traveller Pierre-Jean Grosley, the Latin texts of Baroque motets were often penned by sacristans – that is, men of only moderate education.<sup>110</sup>

In the Baroque period, processions (which were very common, as practically every feast had its own form of sacred parade) reached a peak of

<sup>109</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 74.

<sup>110</sup> Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', p. 5.

splendour, leaving regularly from Mdina Cathedral. A liturgical feast such as the 'Ascension of Our Lord' started at 12.00 (noon) of the previous day and ended at 24.00 (midnight) the next day. Hence the Liturgical feast lasted 36 hours, opening with *Primi Vesperi* on the afternoon of the vigil, and concluding with the final Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the feast day itself. The procession of the *Ascensione* usually left the Cathedral and circulated within Mdina only, returning to the Church, where a *Te Deum* was sung. On the feast of *Corpus Christi* (solemnised at the Cathedral on a Thursday), to give but one example, the procession started at the Cathedral of Mdina, proceeding on to *Saqqajja* (outside Mdina), at which point such hymns as the *Æterne Rex altissime* and *Salutis humanæ Sator* were sung. It then continued via Strada Reale (Main Street) up to the parish church of St. Paul at Rabat, where an *antifona* would be sung; then on to *Ta' Giezu*, further on to St. Augustine, and finally back to Mdina. The *Te Deum* hymn was also sung and would have usually started prior to the procession's re-entry into the Cathedral Church.<sup>111</sup> Two processional hymns (Z26 and Z26a) were sung during the procession by the SATB choir to an accompaniment played only on a portative organ and a double-bass. It is interesting to note that the double-bass was carried at the rear and was used to accompany the singers (usually when the procession stopped near a niche or at a church). Another popular feast celebrated at the Cathedral which involved a 'traditional' procession was that of St. Mark Evangelist (celebrated annually on 25 April). On the feast day the procession would leave the Cathedral Church and proceed to the church of St. Mark outside Mdina which was (as it still is) the main church of the monastery of St. Augustine in Rabat. On its return, the ceremony would culminate in a

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<sup>111</sup> Information communicated to me by Rev. Fr. Alberto Borg, OSA.

sung Mass at the Cathedral.<sup>112</sup>

Processions in Malta have always included some kind of musical intervention, both to increase religious fervour and to enhance festivity. In the *Libro Conti* (No. 98) for 1774-1790 of the Parish Church Archives of Siggiewi, then a remote village in the south west of Malta, we find under the heading of "Esito della Festività di San Nicola Titolare" for the year 1774, the sum of 39 *scudi* and 10 *tari*, which was assigned "per la musica", one *scudo* and two *tari* "per li tamborlini". In 1782 the corresponding entry mentions "più scudo uno et quattro alli musici per la processione p[er] sonar, 1:4", whereas in 1783 this is even clearer, indicating precisely that such processions were accompanied musically: "Più scudo uno tari quattro p[er] l'accompagnamento della Processione alli Musici". In 1786 the *maestro di cappella* is mentioned by name: "Per la musica al Mro. di Cappella Fra Carlo, 47:-", whereas in December 1787 the document affords us more direct information about what kind of sacred music services were being conducted for this village feast: "Per la musica al S. Mro. Fra Carlo ho dato scudi quaranta sette e altri sedici tari per accompagnare la processione con musica cioe con due voci e con un vinocello [sic, violoncello] e violino, 48:4". It seems that the use of the tambourines ("tamborlini") mentioned earlier was extensive since, in another entry for 1787, we find that "tamburlini che hanno nel di della vigilia e tutto l'intero seguace giorno della festa sonato, 2:-", thus implying that the percussion instruments were employed on both the vigil and the feast day for various purposes. In 1789, the *maestro di cappella* employed at Siggiewi Parish was Canon Don Giuseppe Debono.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> The strong religious connections that have long existed between the two churches are attested by the inscription that lies on the main door of the monastery church.

<sup>113</sup> Archive of the Parish Church of Siggiewi, *Libro Conti*, No. 93 (1774-1790), ff. 179-189.

On 5 October 1760 canons Don Paolo Mompalao Apap and Don Theodoro Grech submitted to the Cathedral Chapter a new plan for the *Cappella Musicale* that outlined new conditions and salaries for its members.<sup>114</sup> The plan also included a list of new church services which were to be introduced in due course.<sup>115</sup> The first extant and official list of feasts to be observed in Malta was then given by the Apostolic Delegate. Days of obligation included:

- i) all Sundays;
- ii) Christmas with the following feasts:
  - a) St. Stephen,
  - b) St. John the Evangelist, and
  - c) Holy Innocents;
- iii) Circumcision and Epiphany, the two days following Easter, Ascension Day, the two days following Whitsunday and the Invention of the Holy Cross;
- iv) the Nativity, the Purification, the Annunciation, and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
- v) the Dedication of St. Michael, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, feasts of the Apostles; and
- vi) the feasts of St. Lawrence, St. Martin, and St. Sylvester.<sup>116</sup>

During this time the series of *maestri di cappella* who served at St. John's Church at Valletta included Giuseppe Sammartini (1752-1765), followed by Melchiorre Sammartini (1765-1796), Nicolò Isouard (1796-1799) and Francesco Azopardi, who took over as *maestro di cappella* of both the

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<sup>114</sup> Bruni, *Musica sacra a Malta*, p. 10.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>116</sup> Bonnici, *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol. 2, pp. 56-57.

Mdina and the Valletta Cathedrals after Isouard. Azopardi was succeeded in 1809 by Pietro Paolo Bugeja, who held the post until 1825. Other important churches in Malta which had successful *maestri di cappella* and a wealth of sacred compositions were the Collegiate Church of St. Paul *Naufrago* at Valletta, the Carmelite Church at Valletta, the Church of *Gesù Nazzareno* at Sliema, the Carmelites at St. Julian's and the Church of *San Lorenzo* at Vittoriosa.<sup>117</sup>

A new phase in the history of the Maltese church in general began with the French occupation of the Maltese islands, which occurred on 10 June 1798. The French, under Napoleon's instructions, soon introduced a series of new laws that were in some respects anti-Catholic.<sup>118</sup> Naturally, the first institution to be proscribed by the new rulers was the Order of St. John, which had its seat at the Cathedral of St. John in Valletta. The removal of the Knights of St. John brought about a new challenge for the Church authorities, mainly because the running of the Cathedral of St. John, which thereupon became the co-Cathedral, was entrusted to the Cathedral Chapter of St. Paul, which now had to administer both churches. Even the *Cappella Musicale* had to undergo essential changes, the biggest affecting the *maestro di cappella*, who was now given the task of directing two churches instead of one,<sup>119</sup> a situation which persists to this day.

A quick glance at the list showing some of the *maestri di cappella* who have contributed to the *Cappella Musicale* at St. Paul's Cathedral at Mdina, shows that the two principal factors that helped to create a

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<sup>117</sup> Rolandi, *Musica e musicisti in Malta*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>118</sup> Bruni, *Musica sacra a Malta*, p. 12.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

professionally based *Cappella Musicale* were:

- a) The recruiting of musical directors and musicians (including singers) mainly from Sicily, as well as the sending of Maltese students to Sicilian music schools to study there, and
- b) The sending abroad of talented Maltese musicians to receive professional musical training at the Neapolitan conservatories, and the import of singers from Naples.

The *maestri di cappella* of the Cathedral from 1618 onwards were:

Don Francesco Fontana (1618-19, 1621-23, 1626)	Sicilian
Don Filippo Fortuni (1623)	Florentine
Giovanni Paolo la Forgia (1623-25)	Sicilian
Gregorio Rosso (1625-26)	?
Don Antonio Campochiaro (1626-27, 1635-38)*	Sicilian
Don Andrea Rinaldi (1627-31)*	Sicilian
Don Michele Zahra (1631-33, 1634-35)	Maltese, trained in Sicily
Don Giovanni Maria Seychell (1633-34, 1653-60)	Maltese
Fra Lorenzo Berardi (1634)	? (Gerosolimitano)
Don Giuseppe Ferrari (1638-52)	Ordained priest at Catania
Don Giuseppe Balzano (1661-65, 1669-73, 1674-97)	Maltese, ordained priest at Catania
Don Ortensio Benini (1665-69)	Maltese
Don Antonio Mortulana Campochiaro (1673-74)	Sicilian
Don Domenico Balzano (1698-1707)	Maltese
Don Bernardino Zanetti (1708-12)	Venetian, active in Sicily
Don Pietro Gristi (1717-38)	Maltese, trained in Naples
Don Benigno Zerafa (1744-1804)	Maltese, trained in Naples
Francesco Azopardi (1804-09)	Maltese, trained in Naples. <sup>120</sup>

\* (Both Campochiaro and Rinaldi were active in Caltagirone and Malta.)

The series of *maestri di cappella* who served at the Cathedral of St. Paul and elsewhere from 1800 onwards continues in the same tradition. Such later figures as Pietro Paolo Bugeja, Vincenzo Bugeja and Giuseppe Vella all received their musical training in Italy, pursuing their careers later on

<sup>120</sup> Azzopardi, 'La Cappella Musicale della Cattedrale di Malta', p. 52.



in Malta. It is not by chance that Malta possesses such a wealth of sacred compositions that has remained well preserved in one of the best archives of the central Mediterranean area. The 18th century was a period of grand musical innovation in Malta, producing no fewer than three of the most significant composers in the history of Maltese music, all of whom were employed, one after the other, at the Cathedral of Malta and came from Rabat: Pietro Gristi (1691-1738), Benigno Zerafa (1726-1804) and Francesco Azopardi (1748-1809). Truly, the golden age of Maltese sacred music occurred between the years 1717 and 1809.

Malta has been greatly influenced by Italy, both in church music and opera. Maltese composers such as Zahra, Seychell, Balzano, Gristi, Vella and Zerafa all showed great interest in the Italian school, and entrusted their whole lives enthusiastically to cultivating the product of this powerful educational system, which indeed diffused uninterruptedly into all major cities within the Italian sphere of influence. The surviving works of these Maltese masters offer powerful evidence of the once totally dominant Italianate style, which, as we saw, was in this case borrowed mainly from Sicily and Naples. The foreign dimension in Italian politics aided the spread of Italian culture outwards leading to a curious 'domination' through which Italian became the language of polite conversation and of letters even at the imperial court of Vienna.<sup>121</sup> The rise of Baroque music in Italy lay in the powerful hands of political and spiritual leaders (monarchs and high ecclesiastical authorities, respectively). Power calls for ceremony, and the Italian Baroque, through a host of famed *maestri di cappella*, evolved ceremonial music of the highest level for all purposes.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Talbot, 'An Italian Overview', p. 3.

<sup>122</sup> Blume, *Renaissance and Baroque Music*, p. 156.

## Chapter Three

### A NEAPOLITAN OVERVIEW

In Baroque Italy music was performed regularly in seven types of locale: schools, halls, palaces, churches, oratories, outdoors ("all'aria"), and in composers' houses.<sup>1</sup> Within Italy Naples was one of three major centres of musical excellence, along with Rome (in central Italy) and Venice (in the north-east of the peninsula). Lying on the west coast of Italy 120 miles south-east of Rome, in the fertile province of Campania, Naples was by far the most important city of southern Italy. In the 18th century it became renowned for its accomplishments in music, art, architecture and literature, and among the many prominent people who had words of praise for this city were P. J. Grosley and G. F. Coyer. However, Charles de Brosses' statement in 1739 that Naples was "the capital of the world's music", manages to capture the city's important musical position at the beginning of Bourbon rule.<sup>2</sup>

The history of Naples towards the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century (central to our study) is marked by a series of wars between the Spanish and the Austrians, who fought for its possession. Carolyn Gianturco explains the difficult times Naples passed through:

In the complex game of European struggle for power, Naples clearly played a major role. To the locals it was, instead, simply a game of survival. The hardships caused by famine,

<sup>1</sup> Stefani, *Musica e religione nell'Italia barocca*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 1.

poverty, drought, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions were sufficient to make their lives miserable. To these sufferings were added the misfortune and humiliation of living under foreign rulers – the Spanish, the Austrians, and again the Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless, from a cultural point of view, the history of Naples in the years 1680-1740 is a lively one, during which some aspects of Neapolitan life remained constant, one of them being music.<sup>4</sup> Three main kinds of music were written during this period:

- i) music for the nobility only,
- ii) music for both the nobility and the lower classes, and
- iii) popular music.<sup>5</sup>

The principal kind of music being constantly requested by the nobility was opera. Opera, a preferred entertainment of the viceroys, was usually given in either the *Teatro S. Bartolomeo* or the *Teatro dei Fiorentini*, as well as in the viceregal palace itself. The *Teatro S. Bartolomeo*, built in 1621 by the governors of the *S. Casa degli Incurabili*, offered Neapolitan plays by Neapolitan authors. Opera was given during much of the year (during carnival, in April, in August, in October and in November), and was also the means of celebrating an event in the life of a ruler or an anniversary such as a birthday, name-day or wedding-day.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', in G. J. Buelow (ed.), *The Late Baroque Era: From the 1680s to 1740* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 94-128, at p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

*Accademie* (private concerts also known as “evenings of music”), were also frequently offered, and during a *serenata*, music was only one of the many “divertimenti” provided.<sup>7</sup> In addition to such spectacular music, simpler works were given at aristocratic gatherings. Secular cantatas – small dramatic ‘scenes’ formed of recitatives and arias for one or more voices – were the usual fare. Detached arias, duets, trios and madrigals were also performed as chamber music. Sacred cantatas, too, were given during Lent or Advent and for other religious feasts; those by Francesco Feo (1691-1761) bearing such titles as *La morte del giusto e del peccatore* are typical examples. These compositions were scored for one or more voices and continuo, with or without other instruments, and followed the standard pattern of alternating recitative and da capo aria.

There was also another repertory to delight the nobility: a repertory involving the lute, the guitar and the harp, and which had always been favoured for their indoor activities. For outdoor activities, drums and wind instruments replaced the above. Some composers, such as Nicola Fiorenza, specialised in instrumental music. Fiorenza (d. 1764) left fifteen concertos for various instrumental combinations and nine symphonies. Gaetano Greco (c. 1657-c. 1728) was particularly noted for his keyboard works, but most Neapolitan composers wrote both vocal and instrumental works. The skill of the Neapolitan instrumentalists is attested by Burney’s account of Corelli’s visit to Naples in 1702: “the Neapolitan band executed his concertos almost as accurately at sight, as his own band [in Rome] after repeated rehearsals, when they had almost got them by heart”.<sup>8</sup> Corelli was also “astonished beyond measure to hear Petrillo, the Neapolitan leader, and the other violins, perform that which

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-113.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

had baffled his skill" when rendering a piece of music by Scarlatti.<sup>9</sup> This is also confirmed by Confuorto, who wrote in his diary of 18 November 1696: "the performers are the best to be found in Italy".<sup>10</sup> Alessandro Scarlatti was the dominant figure of the Neapolitan musical scene at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. Brossard described him in 1724 as the most accomplished musician to have flourished at the end of the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century.

After 1706 initiatives were taken by some impresarios to establish a new attraction for the public at the *Teatro dei Fiorentini*, the new attraction being operas in music that could be attended by both the nobility and the lower classes. After a number of attempts, the impresarios adopted the model of an operatic genre that already existed in private houses, and which was characterised by the use of the local dialect: the Neapolitan language. The contribution of comic scenes and comic intermezzos (which formed an integral part of musical comedy) and of dialect (used in sacred operas and cantatas) gave rise to the first comic opera in the Neapolitan dialect: *La Cilla* (1701), with text by Francesco Antonio Tullio and music by Michelangelo Faggioli (1666-1733). Comic opera (*commedeja*) librettos portrayed aspects of life of the colourful lower classes of Naples who lived in the alleys and meeting-places expressing, among other things, their manners of speech and gesture and, above all, their psychology.<sup>11</sup> Also known as "cummedeja in museca", Neapolitan comic opera traces its descent from the pastoral operas and "favole boscareccie" such as *La Rosaura* and *Il Figlio delle Selve*. Dent claims that the opera *Patrò Calienna de la Costa* (1709) was written mainly in dialect

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<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', pp. 119-120.

because there was no time to turn the rough draft into literary Italian. Being a success, the experiment was repeated, and a style was developed that depended for its interest on the lively presentation of popular types of character, with an occasional parody of opera seria.<sup>12</sup>

We can safely assume that Zerafa, who resided in Naples during the period 1738-1744, had ample opportunity to visit such theatres as the Fiorentini. Occasions certainly arose when even the students of the institutions were given the opportunity to listen to popular opera written by established composers. Writing in 1724, a chronicler shows how wide a range of classes attended such performances:

[...] the new opera in the Neapolitan language that began Saturday evening of last week [at the Fiorentini] was done to the greatest satisfaction not only of the nobility but to every level of person.<sup>13</sup>

Neapolitan operatic audiences in the 18th century were avid for new works, and it has been estimated that during the 18th century, forty local composers wrote approximately 2000 operas for immediate consumption.<sup>14</sup>

Popular song was commonly heard on Neapolitan streets and squares. Neapolitan songs like Vinci's *So' le sorbe e le nespole amare*, from his comic opera *Lo cecato fauzo* of 1719, were set in the Neapolitan dialect,

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<sup>12</sup> Edward J. Dent, *Alessandro Scarlatti: His Life and Works* (London, 1905, 2/1962), pp. 127-128.

<sup>13</sup> Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', pp. 121-122.

<sup>14</sup> Elaine Brody and Claire Brook, *The Music Guide to Italy* (London, 1979), p. 45.

usually being syllabic and strophic and dealing with love.<sup>15</sup> It was probably this kind of music that was most often heard during the public entertainments offered by the government to the public.

A prominent aspect of Neapolitan music, seen in opera and sacred music, was its favour towards wind instruments. Two trumpets, two oboes, two horns, strings and continuo became the standard ensemble, and the hundreds of existing operatic and sacred manuscripts testify to this. The use of two orchestras was also common, one example from the operatic repertoire being found in Pergolesi's *L'Olimpiade*. An aria from this work entitled *Torbido in volto*, makes use of two orchestras which are divided into *prima orchestra*, in which there are parts for two violins, viola, cello and continuo, and *seconda orchestra*, made up of horns, two violins, viola, and continuo. These two groups "alternate in a manner reminiscent of double choirs [in church music], or of a concerto grosso; the singer may be accompanied by one orchestra or the other, and the orchestras even alternate in the middle of a vocal phrase."<sup>16</sup>

The birth of opera resulted in an entirely new kind of singer. Singing in the late-17th and early-18th centuries is characterised by several trends: the rise of the professional opera star, the wide popularity of the castrato, the formation and inculcation of the special Italian style of singing (which came to be known as *bel canto*), and the cultivation of vocal ornamentation. The Church was at first reluctant to accept virtuosos in its haven, but it soon started to invite eminent singers to perform, especially when the theatres were closed, with the result that church music became partially assimilated to the operatic style. The previous

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<sup>15</sup> Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

distinction between chapel musicians and singers (performers) and theatre performers was, in fact, formally abolished in 1684 by the viceroy, del Carpio.<sup>17</sup>

All instrumental and vocal music in the Neapolitan theatres and the main churches was performed by professionals, the most striking music conceived for the voice (singers). In 1675 the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* hired a castrato, opening a tradition of employing and training *evirati*, a practice that took root somewhat later in Venice. As in all over Italy, the *castrato* was the most prominent, and Naples had some of the most famous, with such names as Giovanni Francesco Grossi (known as 'Siface'), Matteo Sassano (known as 'Matteuccio'), Nicolò Grimaldi (known as 'Nicolini'), Carlo Broschi (known as 'Farinelli'), Domenico Cecchi (known as 'Il Cortona') and Gaetano Majorano (known as 'Caffarelli'). The presence of such professional singers inspired Neapolitan composers of serious opera to compose difficult passages of magnificent vocal splendour and virtuosity. In his account of a visit to Naples the French traveller Joseph Jérôme de La Lande (1786) praised the system of the Neapolitan conservatories, stating that the young *castrati* were trained and brought up well in music. Almost all the castratos who sang in Italy were trained in Naples, which was a nursery of excellence for this preparation.<sup>18</sup> Throughout Italy, professional sopranos and contraltos were always given such demanding arias, and bass singers (in reality bass-baritone in range), who were expected to be equally agile, were also assigned important roles. Exceptional, however, in Naples – and noteworthy in the history of singing – is the role of the operatic tenor.

<sup>17</sup> Renato di Benedetto, 'Naples', in S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 13 (London, 1980), pp. 22-32, at p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 1, p. 96.



Elsewhere in Italy the tenor was often given subsidiary roles (often those of old men and women), whereas in Naples the tenor was almost on a par with the castrato. Two examples of florid tenor parts occur in Porpora's *Flavio Anicio Olibrio* (1711) and *Amare per regnare* (1723). The tenor voice was highly regarded in France, since the castrato was abhorred as unnatural, but Naples played a part in properly evaluating both voices.<sup>19</sup>

Singing in Italy was taught systematically at the Neapolitan conservatories (which will be discussed later), at the Venetian *Ospedali grandi*,<sup>20</sup> and in Bologna under such important teachers as Antonio Pistocchi (1659-1726). In Naples, tenor-composer Nicola Porpora (1686-1768) established Naples's most important school of singing. The 18th-century trend towards extremes of pitch in the construction of and composition for instruments has its counterpart in vocal music. Only a few works from the mid-17th century take the soprano voice as high as b<sup>''</sup> or c<sup>'''</sup>. Such high notes and ones even higher became common in scores before the end of the 18th century, and it must be presumed that the most extreme were used only in cadenzas and other forms of ornamentation. The practice of tailoring operatic roles to specific singers was common from the very beginning of opera, and the effect of vocal technique on the history of vocal music is of fundamental importance.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Similar to, and contemporary with the four conservatories of Naples for boys, were the four *ospedali* in Venice, whose musicians were drawn exclusively from the female residents: the *Pietà* (which is best known today from Antonio Vivaldi's involvement), the *Mendicanti*, the *Incurabili* and the *Ospedaletto*.

<sup>21</sup> Owen Jander, 'Singing, III: 17th and 18th Centuries', in S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 17 (London, 1980), pp. 342-343, at pp. 342-343.

Apart from opera, most of the 'art' music heard in Naples was sacred, and its quality and importance was often on the same level as opera,<sup>22</sup> generally following a development parallel with it. Public religious services in general required music, peaking at Christmas, Lent and Easter.<sup>23</sup> Some were instrumental compositions such as trio sonatas and concertos, performed at moments when an audible pronouncement of the liturgy was not required. The Neapolitan school was decisive for the history of church music; whereas in the operatic repertoire the choir (chorus) was of little importance, in church music it became a vital element.<sup>24</sup> The choir served as the backbone of the work, but it did not provide, unaided, enough resource to sustain an entire *Missa solemnis*. Consequently, solo and choral movements were mixed to produce a *stile misto* (mixed style) balancing *stile antico* and *stile moderno*.<sup>25</sup>

The 'Neapolitan Mass' was a sacred genre of immense importance. It usually followed the reduced structure of the so-called *Messa di Gloria*. This type of Mass alternated choral passages and solo arias, commonly interspersed with instrumental ritornellos. *Messa di Gloria* – comprising only the 'Kyrie' and 'Gloria' texts, with the opening text of the 'Gloria' ('Gloria in excelsis Deo') traditionally being intoned by the celebrant – were conceived specifically for wind (woodwinds and brass) and string accompaniment. Masses by Leo, Durante, Feo, Pergolesi, Provenzale, Fago, Porpora and Vinci – to mention but a few – are normally set into a cycle of several movements, with a considerable number of them scored

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<sup>22</sup> Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Edward Olleson, 'Church Music and Oratorio', in E. Wellesz and F. Sternfeld (eds.), *The New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. 7 (The Age of Enlightenment: 1745-1790) (London, 1973), pp. 288-335, at p. 289.

<sup>25</sup> One can never talk of a 'solo Mass' any more than one can of a 'solo opera' (*ibid.*, p. 290).

for four voices and an instrumental ensemble comprising two oboes, two violins, flutes and continuo. The voices and instruments are used in varying combinations throughout. From the above list of names, two stand out most prominently: Provenzale, who is generally recognised as the founder of the 'Neapolitan School', and Francesco Durante, generally considered to be the major representative of the Neapolitan School during the first half of the 18th century.<sup>26</sup>

The motet for several voices was an extra-liturgical sacred genre also set to music. It usually consisted of a choral introduction followed by a succession of recitatives and arias, duets, trios, and so on. Other sacred liturgical texts included the *Te Deum* settings, the cycles for Holy Week and Christmas (lessons, lamentations, responsories), the Office for the Dead, Psalm 1 (*Miserere mei Deus*)<sup>27</sup> and the *Stabat Mater*, all being further examples of Neapolitan sacred music of the 18th century.<sup>28</sup> Ausilia Magauidda observes that during the first half of the 18th century in Naples, a huge variety of musical activities was seen. For instance, in 1717 no fewer than twenty-four different musical activities were presented in public, which included performances of the *Te Deum*, *Messe cantate*, a Passion, an oratorio, an "opera sacra", four "opere in musica", an "accademia" and two "serenate".<sup>29</sup> From the 1720s onwards Neapolitan composers obtained for the first time numerous commissions outside Naples and started to export their art to other cities, such as Rome,

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<sup>26</sup> Di Benedetto, 'Naples', p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Leonardo Leo composed a *Miserere* for two choirs a 4 voci and continuo which offers traditional polyphony. Another setting, by David Perez (1711-78), for four soloists, chorus and continuo, is divided into twenty sections of verses alternating between plainchant and polyphony. Zerafa's own *Miserere* resembles the latter type.

<sup>28</sup> Di Benedetto, 'Naples', p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Ausilia Magauidda, 'Feste e cerimonie in Calabria nel Settecento', in L. Bianconi and R. Bossa (eds.), *Musica e Cultura a Napoli dal XV al XIX Secolo* (Florence, 1983), pp. 165-206, at p. 174.

Bologna, Modena, Venice and Parma, not forgetting centres of Italian opera abroad (London, Lisbon, etc.).

The important role of religion in Naples is attested to by the 500 churches that existed by the end of the 17th century. 'I Tredici Venerdì' was a religious feast introduced in 1741 in honour of St. Francis of Paola (*San Francesco di Paola*), the first celebration being attended by Queen Amalia. Zerafa even composed a work (*Charitas dei diffusa*) in honour of the same saint. Of all the Marian devotions in Naples, the feast of the Immaculate Conception was the most popular.<sup>30</sup> Another extremely popular ritual was the 'Forty Hours Devotion', which entailed the exposition and veneration of the Holy Host, followed at the end by a Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This devotion commonly included three elements characteristic of Neapolitan feasts in general:

- a) an apparatus ("apparato"), which was a structure similar to a theatrical set built for a specific place and occasion and intended to fit over an already existing indoor or outdoor structure;
- b) music; and
- c) a procession.<sup>31</sup>

There were twenty-three religious institutions in Naples that retained a permanent group of musicians – a *cappella musicale* – or at least a professional organist (capable of directing a choir). The women's convents, too, had regular directors of music. Among the institutions that cultivated music strongly were:

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<sup>30</sup> Romeo De Maio, 'Napoli sacra negli anni di Pergolesi', in F. Degrada (ed.), *Studi Pergolesiani - Pergolesi Studies*, Vol. 1 (Florence, 1986), pp. 25-32, at p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Gianturco, 'Naples: A City of Entertainment', p. 116.

- i) the Royal Chapel,
- ii) the Cathedral of *S. Gennaro*,
- iii) the Oratory of the Filippini (also known as the *Gerolomini*),
- iv) the *Annunziata*, and
- v) the four conservatories.<sup>32</sup>

The *Cappella Musicale* of the Royal Chapel at the beginning of the 17th century comprised twenty-five singers (seven sopranos, four altos, three counter-tenors, five tenors and six basses), six violinists, one cornettist, one trombonist, one harpist, one lutenist and two organists.<sup>33</sup>

The establishment of the conservatories in the opening years of the 17th century had important consequences for the history of Neapolitan music. The four main institutions for boys were: the *Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto*, the *Conservatorio di S. Onofrio a Capuana*, the *Conservatorio di S. Maria della Pietà dei Turchini*, and the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo*. Their origins date back to the late 16th century, when they were institutions receiving orphans and foundlings: that is, their main object was to give them free board and education. The first three were under the jurisdiction of the viceroy, the last under the archbishop. Subsequently, the roles which the conservatories performed as centres of education for boys turned out to be of immense civic and regional importance, offering, among other disciplines, religious and devotional practices as a firm component of their educational methodologies. From this sprang a wealth of sacred musical composition by the great Neapolitan *maestri* employed at the conservatories. Their works included *messe solenni* (solemn concerted masses), *mottetti* (motets) and *vespri* (vesper psalms, including settings of the Magnificat).

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> Di Benedetto, 'Naples', p.25.

The *figlioli* (pupils) of the conservatories supplemented the income of these institutions by participating in the music-making of the various palaces and churches. Michael F. Robinson maintains that each conservatory acquired the dual character of orphanage and music school. He states that after about 1630 the demand for good music teaching grew, forcing the institutes to elect as teachers highly professional composer-musicians. This policy of employing the best teachers encouraged talented music students from less disadvantaged backgrounds to apply for entry, enabling the conservatories to earn extra money from these young pupils.<sup>34</sup> Such Maltese students as Pietro Gristi, Michelangelo Vella and Benigno Zerafa were accepted in the schools as paying boarders. However, it is argued elsewhere that *convittori*, or fee-paying students, began to be admitted after the conservatories found it difficult to survive economically; this happened as early as 1667 at the *Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto*.<sup>35</sup> Whatever the case, it is clear that the institutions trained their boys with an eye to turning as many as possible of them into life-long musical professionals. Hence, career opportunities were already foreseen in their programme of learning.<sup>36</sup> Robinson opines that although this was in general an advantageous policy, there were some dangers in it which could defeat the object, such as composers, busy with other tasks, who did not turn up to give lessons. By the early-18th century students were coming from as far as northern Italy, Spain, Germany and Malta.

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<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Denis Arnold, 'Education in Music, §V: Conservatories', in S. Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 6 (London, 1980), pp. 18-21, at pp. 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 29.

The Neapolitan conservatories soon discovered that music could be a profitable activity. In 1680, the pupils at the *Gesù Cristo* took part in over 100 reported concerts and processions.<sup>37</sup> This musical activity in Naples exploded during the first decades of the 18th century, as shown in diaries such as that of Confuorto. The reports they offer provide an insight into music at the Neapolitan conservatories towards the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries. In these sources one regularly finds news related to musical performances in aristocratic palaces or in the houses of the wealthy bourgeois, i.e., hiring conservatory students to perform at their functions.

The role of the conservatories expanded with the employment of *maestri di cappella* to instruct the pupils in music. The students were later divided into groups of younger and older pupils called, respectively, 'paranzelle' and 'paranze'. During the late-17th and early-18th centuries public musical functions in Naples multiplied dramatically – especially religious services, since practically all churches had a type of patronal festival requiring musical celebration. From the account books of the conservatories one learns that their pupils participated in a professional manner at ceremonies both civil and sacred in the Neapolitan domain. Roberto de Simone claims that through this the conservatories enhanced their specialisation in the musical field with the employment of teachers of singing, counterpoint and instruments.<sup>38</sup> Initially, the youngest of the *figlioli* residing at the conservatories did not attend the classes offered by the *maestri di cappella*, but instead performed Holy Week responses ("turbe") or 'angel choruses' ("cori d'angioli") in public feasts and sacred

<sup>37</sup> Denis Arnold, 'Education in Music, §V: Conservatories', p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> Roberto De Simone, 'Pergolesi nella realtà della storia musicale napoletana', in F. Degrada (ed.), *Studi Pergolesiani - Pergolesi Studies*, Vol. 1 (Florence, 1986), pp. 73-79, at pp. 73-74.

spectacles, and in funerals and processions of saints.<sup>39</sup>

Civic, ecclesiastical and private societies all desired to engage pupils from the conservatories for functions requiring music, and the conservatories acted to meet the demand.<sup>40</sup> Robinson argues that “the social and economic advantages of making pupils perform in various parts of the city and outside it” were of outstanding importance to the students in their acquisition of experience, diversifying and adding extra relevance to the skills that they were meant to learn in class, and also to the conservatories through the income earned thereby.<sup>41</sup> Di Benedetto claims that, in addition to public beneficence and provision made by the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, the conservatories gained extra income from the participation of the music students in religious ceremonies held in the churches, in the viceroy’s palace and even in private homes.<sup>42</sup> The activities which the students were asked to perform in various parts of the city are summed up clearly by De Villeneuve, writing in the mid-18th century:

Whenever the church or society wishes to promote some music [...], a letter is sent to the director [of the conservatorio] requesting the services of twenty, thirty, or more of these children for a small recognised price. This benefits the institution, contributes to its upkeep, and multiplies the number of musical performances.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Di Benedetto, ‘Naples’, p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 15.



Zerafa, residing as a paying-student at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* from 1738, certainly participated in this demanding activity. Because of the heavy demand for students, the teacher-composers could not always lead the students in person, which led them to depend heavily on senior teachers, also known as *secondi maestri*. To cope with the problem, the conservatories changed the role of the *maestro di cappella* and started to employ persons of repute as composers and administrators in this position, rather than as teachers, to give instruction in such theoretical subjects as counterpoint, harmony and orchestration. They were given extra administrative powers and were placed in charge of staff that included teachers of strings (*magister lyræ*), wind, brass (*magister buccinæ*) and singing. The *maestro di cappella* himself taught only the most advanced students, usually senior members of the choir and orchestra, who in turn taught the younger pupils.<sup>44</sup> It was possible that Zerafa (who, on his arrival at the institution in July 1738, was just eleven), received his earliest tuition in this fashion. Michele Rak maintains that the institutions had already reached their function of training students in music and launching them into the public by the beginning of the 18th century.<sup>45</sup> Notwithstanding this, Di Benedetto argues that although a musical education was necessary for the boys, the music pupils always remained a minority among the *figlioli*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Denis Arnold, 'Education in Music, §V: Conservatories', p. 19.

The same pyramidal system of teaching (senior *maestro* > junior *maestro* > advanced pupils > less advanced pupils) was adopted at the Venetian *ospedali*.

<sup>45</sup> Michele Rak, 'L'Opera comica napoletana di Primo Settecento', in L. Bianconi and R. Bossa (eds.), *Musica e cultura a Napoli dal XV al XIX secolo* (Florence, 1983), pp. 217-224, at p. 222.

<sup>46</sup> Di Benedetto, 'Naples', p. 25.

The Neapolitan composers and musicians who were involved in opera, and who also studied or taught at one of the four Neapolitan conservatories, created a musical style that triumphed all over Europe – hence the present-day label of “Neapolitan”.<sup>47</sup> The number of well-qualified composers who emerged from the conservatories in the early 18th century included, among many others: Nicola Porpora (1686-1768), Leonardo Vinci (1690/6?-1730), Francesco Durante (1684-1755), Francesco Feo (1691-1761), Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736), Gaetano Latilla (1711-1788), Nicolò Jommelli (1714-1774), Girolamo Abos (1715-1760), Alfonso Traetta (1727-1779), Pietro Anfossi (1727-1797), Nicolò Piccinni (1728-1800), Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816) and Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801).<sup>48</sup> Comparable with music departments in modern universities, some of the institutions held strengths in particular fields. A glimpse at the four schools reveals that at the *Gesù Cristo* Alessandro Scarlatti taught Durante, who in turn taught Vinci and Pergolesi. *S. Onofrio* produced Jommelli, Sammartini, Paisiello and Piccinni, while the *Loreto*, from the time of Nicola Porpora (a pupil of Scarlatti), who was known as the greatest singing teacher of Naples and the master of Farinelli; was nicknamed the *scuola di canto italiano*, many of the greatest singers being trained here. The *Turchini* was, however, reckoned the best for composition, specialising in fugue and counterpoint as represented by Leonardo Leo. The polyphonic ‘church style’ of the later-18th century, with its more modern view of harmony, owed much to him via his

<sup>47</sup> Rak, ‘L’Opera comica napoletana di primo Settecento’, p. 222.

The lightness and mobility of the Neapolitan style, contrasting with “the smooth and linear style of Venetian composers”, is the result of many features joined together: the preferential use of dotted rhythms (and the avoidance of stressing the downbeat); the frequent employment of rests to punctuate phrases; the rather active (often motivic) instrumental bass lines; virtuosic vocal parts with an abundance of “fioriture” and complex passages; disjunct vocal lines; and the wide use of intervallic leaps. The correct declamation of the text was also often sacrificed in favour of an interesting musical idea. (Gianturco, ‘Naples: A City of Entertainment’, p. 110.)

<sup>48</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, pp. 17-18.

pupils.<sup>49</sup>

A major element in Neapolitan music of the 18th century was the so-called 'drammi sacri', in which conservatory pupils participated. The students were often involved in the composition of these 'drammi' and also in their performance. It is probable that from the mid-17th century, spiritual activities with music, sermons and representations of "operette spirituali" were held in the cloisters ("chiodro") of Sant' Agnello by the *Padri dell'Oratorio* (the *Filippini*).<sup>50</sup> The history of the 'dramma sacro' developed alongside that of the 'opera comica' and, to a certain extent, the 'dramma in musica'. The first 'dramma sacro' of great importance emerges with *Li prodigi della Divina Misericordia verso li devoti del glorioso Sant'Antonio da Padova* (c. 1705) by Francesco Durante. The work has a "scherzo-drammatico" plot: that is, it includes spiritual elements interspersed with scenes containing popular, realistic features and comic dialect-speaking characters for didactic purposes. Music students in the conservatories learnt the techniques of modern stage production through their study of this genre.<sup>51</sup> It is noteworthy that conservatories regularly allowed their better students to compose sacred operas as 'end-of-course' compositions. Michael Robinson argues that in the 18th century it was conservatory policy to let students compose either the whole or sections of an opera themselves.<sup>52</sup> The 'dramma sacro' continued to be practised mainly by pupils of the conservatories as a

<sup>49</sup> Peter Smith, 'Liturgical Music in Italy, 1660-1750', in A. Lewis and N. Fortune (eds.), *The New Oxford History of Music, Opera and Church Music 1630-1750*, Vol. 5 (London, 1975), pp. 370-397, at p. 391.

<sup>50</sup> Guido Salvetti, 'Musica religiosa e conservatorii napoletani: a proposito del San Guglielmo D'Aquitania di Pergolesi', in L. Bianconi and R. Bossa (eds.), *Musica e cultura a Napoli dal XV al XIX secolo* (Florence, 1983), pp. 207-215, at p. 208. Some motivic features of the 'drammi sacri' trace their origins back to the Spanish 'comedias de santos'.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 15.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

valedictory exercise during the 17th century until 1730, the year it went out of use.<sup>53</sup>

The educational curricula at the four Neapolitan conservatories required a well-organised and packed timetable. The subjects taught included:

- i) rudiments of music and exercises in singing (“solfeggi”);
- ii) rudiments of performance, which included the study of accompaniment from figured and unfigured bass on harpsichord and organ;
- iii) the study of counterpoint;
- iv) classes for the learning and practising of wind and string instruments; and
- v) classes for all voices (sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses).<sup>54</sup>

A more detailed report of students following training at the conservatories is supplied to us by G. A. Bontempi, who gave a precise report of the daily instruction in the latter half of the 17th century. The schedule started in the morning with:

one hour devoted to difficult passages, one hour of trill studies, one hour of scales and ornaments, one hour of literature, one hour of vocal exercises in the presence of the master (singing in front of a mirror was used as a device to break bad habits); in the afternoon: one hour of theory, one hour of contrapuntal practice, another hour of literature. The rest of the day was spent playing, composing, or

<sup>53</sup> Di Benedetto, ‘Naples’, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 1, p. 88.

listening to famous singers. After eight years' of such training the singer was a well-rounded musician, able to cope with any musical problem, however inadequate his general education may have been.<sup>55</sup>

Salvatore Di Giacomo provides us with a more informative account of the pupils' daily life in the conservatories in Zerafa's time: a bell summoned the *figlioli* from the dormitories (which also served as study rooms) to attend lessons with the *maestro*, who inspected the pupils' "cartelle" (or "cartelloni") one by one. The "cartella" was a type of small portable blackboard made of varnished cloth ("tela verniciata") with printed staves on it, on which the students could write their exercises, and which could easily be erased again once the work was corrected. The *maestro* examined every 'cartella' and corrected it accordingly in front of all students. This activity took place systematically every morning. Another bell announced lunch ("pranzo") and recreation time, followed again by study and practising time which continued until the *Ave Maria* in the evening; then bed time. There were harsh penalties for those who sneaked secretly out of the institution to go out during the night. The exams were taken by every student in the presence of all the tutors; for the best students there were prizes, whereas those who did not do well were expelled.<sup>56</sup>

A conservatory's staff list with the attached annual salaries at the beginning of the 18th century comprised (expressed in ducats):

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<sup>55</sup> Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era* (London, 1948), p. 407.

<sup>56</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 1, pp. 89-90 passim.

il rettore (the rector)	72
il vicerettore (the vice rector)	54
il maestro di scuola (the music teacher)	12
il cappellano (the chaplain)	36
l'avvocato procuratore (the legal procurator)	10
il razionale (the provisions officer)	36
il medico (the doctor)	6
l'esattore (the debt collector)	4
il maestro di casa (the resident teacher)	7
il barbiere (the barber)	20
la lavandara (the laundress)	16
il cuoco (the cook)	2
il notaio (the notary)	5
il maestro d'accomodi di violino (the stringed-instrument repairer)	/
total	208. <sup>57</sup>

All the conservatories were attached to public churches at which the pupils performed regular musical services; these included: singing during funerals, for the ordaining of new nuns, during processions, during the transportation of the Holy Host for the sick, and during the *sacre rappresentazioni* that were held every now and then at convents and monasteries.<sup>58</sup>

To summarise: music teaching in the four conservatories, the multiplication of music rooms and theatres, the increase in number of people participating in the performing arts and the highly influential *scuola napoletana* were the structural forces of a cultural fashion on the rise in the first decades of the 18th century, which were to dominate European musical centres for some time.<sup>59</sup> The population of Naples, testimony to its importance as a thriving European musical centre, rose from an estimated 186,769 in 1688 to 294,241 in 1743.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-91.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>59</sup> Rak, 'L'Opera comica napoletana di primo Settecento', p. 223.

<sup>60</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla, *Storia dell'economia italiana*, Vol. 1 (Torino, 1959), p. 461.

We cannot conclude this section on Naples and its music without having a brief look at the history of the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, which is central to our present study; this institution was instrumental in the formation of Benigno Zerafa's music career for more than five years. According to De Simone, the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* (appendix B, pictures 15 and 16) was a thriving place for musical training, in which highly sophisticated music was forged.<sup>61</sup> Founded in 1589 by the Franciscan Marcello Fossataro, it was established in 1598/9 in its permanent historical location.<sup>62</sup> After Fossataro achieved written permission to operate the institution he immediately started to look for financial sponsors and other immediate necessities needed to sustain it. Di Giacomo writes that Fossataro daily sent three groups of children of twenty persons each to sing litanies and to collect alms in boxes in front of the Neapolitan churches. There were twelve boxes in all, and children collected not only money but also vegetables and whatever they were offered.<sup>63</sup>

In 1598 a set of rules was drawn up for the conservatory, which remained valid in the succeeding years:

- i) the pupils were to be recovered only through the streets of Naples, and not offered to the institution by their families;
- ii) children younger than seven years were not admitted because they were considered too young to be looked after;
- iii) pupils with infectious diseases were excluded;

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<sup>61</sup> Francesco Degrada, 'Forward' (translated by Bernard Toscani) in id., (ed.), *Studi Pergolesiani - Pergolesi Studies*, Vol. 1 (Florence, 1986), pp. xiii-xvi, at p. xv.

<sup>62</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

- iv) novices were kept in quarantine for a month or so, although they were allowed to join in the processions and other exercises;
- v) pupils could stay at the institution for up to six months, or according to the decision of the governors;
- vi) they were expected to wear the vestments of the institution, and not their own clothes;
- vii) only the inclined students were allowed to proceed on to learn trades.<sup>64</sup>

Discipline was pivotal in the conservatory, and as a symbol of piety, the boys were ordered to wear a monk's habit. They all went to Mass every morning, and texts from the Bible and other scriptures were read during the main meal, too,<sup>65</sup> in an approximation to monastic life. According to Di Giacomo, the role of the *maestro* (here meaning the person in charge of the pupils) included the saying of Mass every morning, immediately followed by sessions in instruction. The children were taught two main disciplines:

- i) Christian doctrine (and good manners), and
- ii) Reading and writing, (later leading to the learning of trades).<sup>66</sup>

Mario Borrelli gives us an insight into the health situation in the institute; "le terme" (hot medicinal baths) were used by both the ecclesiastics and the pupils as a remedy for illness.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>67</sup> Mario Borrelli, *Le relazioni tra il conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo e l'oratorio di Napoli* (Naples, 1961), pp. 43-45.



The *conservatorio* was ruled by two ecclesiastics called *Governatori* who had the power to engage and discharge the officers and ministers working in the institution, according to their judgment.<sup>68</sup> The highest in rank among the 'ministri' was the 'custode', who held general administrative responsibility for the institution. Other officers employed at the conservatory included a sexton (sacrestano), a cleaner (portinano), a pharmacist (despensiero), a cloakroom attendant (guardarobba), a refectory attendant (refettoriero), a cook (cuciniero), a nurse (infermiere) and a provisioner (rationale). Other persons who were added to the list some time later included a cobbler, a hat-maker, a barber, and an accountant.

The church attached to the conservatory, which was to play a rather important part in its musical development, was the *Chiesa di Santa Maria a Colonna* (appendix B, picture 17), nowadays forming part of the *Seminario Diocesano* adjoining it. In 1606 the church was referred to also as *di Santa Maria della Colonna de Poveri di Gesù Christo*, and served basically as the official church of the institute, where new sacred works were constantly being promoted by composers and pupils.

In the early 17th century, the *Poveri di Gesù* possessed various houses and buildings close to the institution itself, many of which were bought or donated by noble persons.<sup>69</sup> The community at the conservatory from 1620 onwards was divided into three categories: administrators, adolescents and minors.<sup>70</sup> All administrators (officers) kept books:

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<sup>68</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, pp. 39-40.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.48-51.

<sup>70</sup> *Loc. cit.*

- i) *il libro maggiore* which contained all the book keeping and accounts of particular bills;
- ii) *il libro de casa* which reported the daily financial incomings;
- iii) *il giornale d'introito* this reported the income from the financial privileges that the institution benefited from;
- iv) *il giornale d'exitto* recording all the particular outgoing bills recorded in the *libro maggiore*;
- v) *il libro de banco* showing all the money that was debited to redeem the debts of the institution towards other people;
- vi) *il libro corrente* recording all the spending of the institution.<sup>71</sup>

A strict religious discipline was regularly maintained at the institute; pupils attending the conservatory in the late-17th and early-18th centuries had to follow meticulous orders: the boys who were under twelve had to go for confession once every month, whereas those over twelve went every fortnight. All pupils had to perform every morning half an hour of mental oration followed by the recitation of a litany and the reading of a passage from a holy book. Advanced pupils had to learn the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary and recite it every day. Pupils were still being regularly sent to the city in groups to seek charity and donations, and were expected to sing litanies and spiritual songs (*laudi spirituali*). Every group, headed by a leader, carried a Cross at the front; the groups who went to *Santo Pietro ad Ara*, the *Refugio*, the *La Pace* and the *Tesoro del Arcivescovado* had to pray there and to gain indulgences for the souls of the benefactors.<sup>72</sup> In the evening, at the *Ave Maria*, all pupils were obliged to say the litanies of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to pray for the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-43.

<sup>72</sup> Loc. cit.

Holy Church, for the Pope and Bishop, for all the ecclesiastic prelates, and also for the Catholic King and the *Vicere*, and for those who led the city both politically and spiritually. On their way to sleep they were again asked to recite the litanies for the living benefactors and those dead, and for the wise and knowledgeable running of the conservatory. Witness to the good morals and close religious observance of a pupil is expressed officially in the rector's certificate issued on Benigno Zerafa's termination of studies in 1744 (see transcript in chapter one).

An inventory of 1633 conveys information on what kind of music was then being performed at the *conservatorio*: musical scores for Masses, Vespers, motets, sonatas, madrigals, etc., by such composers as Cristóbal de Morales, Don Giovan Maria Sabino, Pomponio Nenna, Pomponio Dentice, Luca Marenzio, Rogiero Giovanelli and Prencipe de Venosa [Gesualdo].<sup>73</sup> One of the books prescribed for the study of sacred music was by Pietro Cerone, who had written in Spanish a work entitled *El Melopeo y Maestro*, a treatise on music theory with the subtitle – *Tractado de musica theorica y pratica* (1613).<sup>74</sup> A list of instruments that were used by the pupils in the services includes:

<i>violino di soprano</i>	- 3
<i>violino di tenore</i>	- 3
<i>tromboni</i>	- 2
<i>cornetti vecchi</i>	- 3
<i>cimbalo</i>	- 1
<i>violini</i>	- 2
<i>violino</i>	- 1
<i>rebecchina</i>	- 1. <sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

The conservatory pursued many activities during the late-17th and early-18 centuries. On 26 January 1675 mention is made of two castratos (one of them Nicolò Fortuna) who travelled from Rome to Naples to offer their services there.<sup>76</sup> On another occasion, in January 1680, an introductory *Concerto della Congregazione del Bambino di S. Domenico Maggiore* was given. The activities regularly performed by the *figlioli* included:

- i) musical concerts for feasts of saints,
- ii) processional singing, which also took place in churches,
- iii) choral singing for the Mass and Vespers,
- iv) solo singing (soprano and violin),
- v) Masses for the Dead,
- vi) anniversaries of prominent persons, and
- vii) a concert in the last three days of carnival.<sup>77</sup>

The *conservatorio* was also noted to maintain a very close relationship with the Oratory of St. Philip in Naples – the buildings were very near to each other – a relationship which became synonymous with the successful promotion and cultivation of sacred music for over three centuries. The oratory of St. Philip, known also as the *Oratorio di Napoli* (founded in Naples by *Padre Giambattista del Tufo* in 1584), but perhaps more popularly as the *Gerolomini*, regularly invited teachers and pupils from the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* to perform services at the church of the *Gerolomini* (appendix B, picture 18).<sup>78</sup> Consequently, composers took the opportunity to introduce their new works at the oratorio, engaging the

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<sup>76</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-95.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 126-127.

The *Filippini* were also referred to as the *Padri dell'Oratorio*, the *Girolamini*, as the *Gerolamini* or *Girolmini*.

pupils to sing there. The oratory then paid the teachers for their performances, in due course becoming a natural haven for the works of the composers employed at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*,<sup>79</sup> and of the pupils (including Zerafa) who performed the works of their masters from the organ lofts. This durable association furthered the cultivation of the so-called *Operette delli Gerolmini*, which were performed regularly during the Summer season and were held primarily in the said location amid the participation of the people. The activities were usually sponsored by a patron.<sup>80</sup> Stage action was also a feature of the three-act sacred music dramas favoured by the Oratorians for their didactic value. During Lent and Summer sacred operas were also given in convents, palaces and city squares (see above).

Among the many notable processions in which the *figlioli* regularly participated (appendix B, picture 19) was the great annual procession of St. Philip Neri.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, from 1712 onwards some disputes arose between the governors of the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* and the *Padri dell'Oratorio* that lasted for eighteen years. During this time, the church of the oratory, the *Santa Maria a Colonna*, did not allow teachers and pupils to perform there;<sup>82</sup> the pupils were even debarred from participating at the oratory.<sup>83</sup> Between 1730 to 1743 (the year the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* closed) the relationship between the two institutions was reinstated and, as a symbolic gesture, the pupils of the conservatory initiated a practice of carrying the statue of St. Philip Neri every year from

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<sup>79</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>80</sup> Salvetti, 'Musica religiosa e conservatorii napoletani: A proposito del San Guglielmo D'Aquitania di Pergolesi', p. 209.

<sup>81</sup> Borrelli, *Le relazioni tra il conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo e l'Oratorio di Napoli*, p. 24.

<sup>82</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 103.

<sup>83</sup> Borrelli, *Le relazioni tra il Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo e l'Oratorio di Napoli*, p. 26.

the *Tesoro* to the Church.<sup>84</sup>

The musical services that the pupils of the conservatory gave at the *Gerolomini* were of four types:

- i) *cambi*: these were musical services performed by the pupils themselves at the Oratory;
- ii) *messe*: apart from the usual services, the figlioli also sang regularly in the Masses said at the Oratory, the first activity (a *Messa de Morti*) taking place in 1675;
- iii) *opere*: performance of *opere spirituali* at both S. Agnello and at the Oratorio by the pupils; these comprised a *prologhetto* (short prologue), a prologue (a full scale prologue) and *canti spirituali* (spiritual songs); and
- iv) *altre musiche*: these included services at Vespers (normally singing), and instrumental playing (by an orchestra, commonly made up of strings and organ) for such feasts as those of the B.V.M. and Christmas.<sup>85</sup>

The pupils also rendered musical services at the Oratory in connection with the five Congregations attached to it.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>85</sup> Borrelli, *Le relazioni tra il Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo e l'Oratorio di Napoli*, pp. 27-32.

<sup>86</sup> These were:

- Prima Congregazione* - *Visitazione della BMV*,
- Seconda Congregazione* - *Purificazione della BMV*,
- Terza Congregazione* - *Assunzione della Madonna*,
- Quarta Congregazione* - *San Giuseppe*, and
- Quinta Congregazione* - an association of merchants under the title of *S. Maria, tutti i Santi, e S. Filippo*.

On other occasions, the *figlioli* rendered services in convents, too. Don Giacomo Sarcuni, *maestro di cappella* of the *Arcivescovato*, was charged to engage the pupils for musical services “per il canto e la musica” in convents and monasteries. The following statistics show the number of services given in the last ten years of the institute:

19 services in 1733,  
54 services in 1734,  
61 services in 1736,  
58 services in 1738,  
49 services in 1739,  
37 services in 1742,  
29 services in 1743.<sup>87</sup>

The last four years coincide with Zerafa’s presence at the conservatory. Being a regular student at the *Gesù Cristo*, he must have contributed to the numerous services, likewise participating in functions at the *Arcivescovato* under Don Sarcuni.

Salvatore di Giacomo gives us the first indications of the presence of a Maltese student who, during the period of the disputes, was at the conservatory. In September 1729 the following is recorded in the *libri d’introito ed esito*: “[...payment is here effected] to the Maltese senior for buying manuscript paper and for copying the new opera by the gentleman Francesco Durante, three *tari* [...]”,<sup>88</sup> and in December 1729: “[...payment is here effected] to the Maltese senior for [buying] twenty manuscript sheets, and for copying the pastorale of Don Ciccio Durante, one *tari* [...]”.<sup>89</sup> Di

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-39.

<sup>88</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 103.  
“[...] al maltese maggiore per compra di carta da copiare l’opera nuova del signor Francesco Durante, tari tre [...]”.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

“[...] al maltese maggiore per venti fogli di carta per copiare la Pastorale di don Ciccio Durante, tari uno”.

Giacomo argues that “il maltese maggiore” (the Maltese senior) could well have been Girolamo Abos (1715-1760), who was born in Malta and later emigrated to Naples. He was educated at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, subsequently becoming a teacher there.<sup>90</sup>

Mention is also made of a certain “Maltese minore”, whose name is given several times, especially with regard to the purchasing of new violin strings.<sup>91</sup> A question arises here, since both ‘maggiore’ and ‘minore’ are used. This could imply that there were two Maltese students concurrently studying at the same institution.<sup>92</sup> Another payment entry dated 10 November 1729 lists once again the Maltese ‘junior’, along with Palazzo, Iesi, Malemme and Colucci. The same payment is repeatedly given to these pupils, who play the violin, until the end of June 1730.<sup>93</sup>

One of the main ‘assets’ that any conservatory sought in order to maintain the popularity and standard of its teaching was the retention of one or more well-established composers as its principal instructors in music. Two Neapolitans, Francesco Durante and Francesco Feo, regarded as towering figures in the early decades of the 18th century, were both

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<sup>90</sup> Loc., cit.

According to Roberto Zanetti, Abos served as teacher at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, continuing at the *Pietà dei Turchini*, and finishing at *Sant’Onofrio*. Abos was also at one time employed as organist and *maestro di cappella* at the metropolitan church. In 1756 he went to London to serve as *maestro di cembalo* at the Italian Theatre. Among his many sacred works, serenatas, trio sonatas and operas there is a series of comic operas that were composed between 1742 and 1746. These include *Le due zingare simili* (1742), *Il Geloso* (1743), *La serva padrona* (1744), *La moglie gelosa* (1745) and *Le furberie di Spilletto* (1744). (Roberto Zanetti, *La musica italiana nel ‘700*, Vol. 1 (Busto Arsizio, 1978), p. 445.)

<sup>91</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 104.

<sup>92</sup> Maltese students had already previously studied in Naples, and the first Maltese pupil (i.e. sent directly from Malta) to attend a Neapolitan conservatory was Pietro Gristi, who was at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* from 1713 to 1717.

<sup>93</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 104.

“A Palazzo, Iesi, Maltese minore, Malemme e Colucci, capiparanze, per le corde che li spettano ogni mese, un tari e cinque grana. Lo stesso pagamento è continuato a questi figlioli, che suonano il violino, fino a tutto giugno del 1730.”



employed at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, possibly serving as Benigno Zerafa's teachers at different times. Durante composed many didactic works for use in the conservatories, including studies for keyboard at all levels of difficulty, vocal *solfeggi*, canons and duets.<sup>94</sup> Twenty years after his death Burney wrote: "his [Durante's] Masses and motets were still in use by the students of the Neapolitan conservatories as models in composition and voice leading". Rousseau in 1767 exalted Durante as "the greatest master of harmony in Italy, that is to say, of the whole world".<sup>95</sup> Feo's music was praised by Burney as having "fire, invention, and force in the melody and expression in the words."<sup>96</sup>

Like most modern institutions, the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* had its share of problems too, even serious ones. In 1728 there was a rebellion by the students against their masters. Di Giacomo provides us with an interesting account of the revolt led by the *figlioli* within the conservatory; the cause was alleged mismanagement of the institution. On 9 December 1730 a fresh revolt broke out on account of harassment on the part of the Rector and other staff. In the aftermath of the protest many pupils were severely punished and expelled, after armed men from the *curia* managed to enter the premises. Some of the *figlioli* were given shelter at the *Gerolomini*. The *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* opened again a short while afterwards and accepted back most of its former pupils.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Capasso, *Magnificat: Vita e opere di Francesco Durante*, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> Dietz, 'Durante, Francesco', p. 742.

<sup>96</sup> Dietz, 'Feo, Francesco', p. 466.

<sup>97</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, pp. 112-115.

We can safely assume that after the revolts subsided, life in the institution returned to normal. Di Giacomo gives us some information on life at the conservatory some time prior to Zerafa's enrolment there as a student. A pupil applying for admission as a student at the conservatory in 1732 paid 20 ducats and was given a "[...] letto, veste, zimarra, centa (cintura) [...]" We are also given the names of some of Zerafa's colleagues at the *conservatorio*. In 1736 Giuseppe Doll, Giacomino Ruberti and Giovannino Caselli were admitted as students. The famous Gaetano Majorano, better known as Caffarelli, was also there, along with Domenico Terradeglias (a Spaniard) and Gaetano Barbella.<sup>98</sup> Other *castrati* were enrolled in 1736 as pupils at the *conservatorio*, including Riccio, di Terra, di Lavoro, Biase Frasca, di Avellino and Gennaro Zona. In 1738 *castrati* came from Florence, Pesaro and Milan.<sup>99</sup> It was during the early-to-mid 1700s that the Neapolitan conservatories gained world-wide fame, inspiring members of the foreign nobility to send their children as boarders. In 1743 one of the *figlioli* to enter the conservatory was Benedetto Rivière, son of the French Ambassador.

Zerafa's attendance at the *Poveri di Gesù Cristo* began in 1738, just seven years after Pergolesi left and two years after he died. Naples was at this time celebrating the legacy of Pergolesi, a true romantic hero of Neapolitan opera who, undoubtedly, made a great impact upon popular sentiment and imagination. Neapolitan music became associated with the "exquisite feelings that the man of sensibility sought to experience",<sup>100</sup> and his works were embraced as the perfect examples of 'natural' and

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

Castrati were distinguished from the rest of the students by their different garment: a red waist-belt ("cintura rossa") and a dark blue cap ("berretto turchino").

<sup>100</sup> Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera*, p. 30.

pleasing Italian [Neapolitan] music.<sup>101</sup>

The concluding years in the history of this famous school are recorded in some detail. The precise manner of its demise was described by Cardinal Luigi Scilla in 1804 as follows:

[...] the pupils were sent home as early as November 1743. The smallness of the profit that was being made from religious activities was the sole factor that induced Cardinal Spinelli to change the nature of the institution.<sup>102</sup>

In consequence, the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* closed in 1743 after 144 years of activity.<sup>103</sup> The *ex-conservatorio* suffered further changes after its initial transformation into a *Seminario Diocesano*: first into a *Liceo Giannone* and later into a *Piccolo Seminario*.<sup>104</sup>

Nevertheless, the musical legacy in the form of the thousands of manuscripts of works by hundreds of musicians including a number of genuinely famous composers, now kept in such libraries as those of the *Oratorio dei Filippini* and the *Conservatorio di S. Pietro a Majella*, furnish proof of a once thriving musical centre of excellence, the documentary evidence for which now lies in history books and in endless shelves of archival volumes, painstakingly written by the masters and their copyists themselves.

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<sup>101</sup> Di Benedetto, 'Naples', p. 25.

<sup>102</sup> Di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli*, Vol. 2, p. 121.

"[...] i figlioli erano stati licenziati fin dal novembre del 1743. Il poco profitto che si faceva nelle cose della religione era stata la sola ragione che aveva indotto il cardinale Spinelli a mutare faccia a quel luogo."

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

## Chapter Four

### STATISTICS, SYSTEMATIC CLASSIFICATION OF WORKS, SOURCES AND COMMENTARY

Among the thousands of musical manuscripts discovered locked away in one of the cupboards of the sacristy of the Cathedral of Malta in 1969 was Zerafa's entire collection of sacred works, with one exception: a recently discovered Requiem Mass for four voices and organ that is now preserved in the *Archivio Crypta Sancti Pauli* at Rabat (appendix B, picture 20).<sup>1</sup> Along with other scores, the collection from the sacristy was transferred to the Archives of the Cathedral (appendix B, picture 21), where it was professionally catalogued and shelved. This event proved to be a landmark in late-20th-century Maltese musicology, a find which has brought to light musical wonders left untouched for almost two hundred years.<sup>2</sup>

Benigno Zerafa's career as *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Malta spanned forty-two years (from 1744 to 1786). Although Zerafa lived on until the early years of the 19th century, his career in musical composition stopped around 1782. The following chapter will present statistical information regarding Zerafa's compositions as viewed in the perspective of his composing career, their first ever classification according to date, and an examination of his works in relation to their function within the Maltese liturgy. The final section of this chapter will investigate the composition manuscripts (or original drafts) as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> The curator of the Archives of Mdina, Mgr. Rev. John Azzopardi, discovered the work in December 2000 in a private collection that has subsequently been bought by the Rabat Parish.

<sup>2</sup> John Azzopardi, 'Musical Archives', in G. Mangion (ed.), *Maltese Baroque: Proceedings of a Seminar on "The Baroque Route in Malta"*, (Beltissebħ, 1989), pp. 51-57, at p. 51.

## Statistics

### Zerafa's Output

Zerafa's output may be assigned to six periods:

<i>Period</i>	<i>Year/s</i>	<i>No. of Works</i>
Period 1:	up to 11 September 1744 (the Neapolitan period)	: 3 works
Period 2:	after 11 September 1744-13 November 1751	: 18 works
Period 3:	14 November 1751-13 April 1753	: 2 works
Period 4:	14 April 1753-1759	: 84 works
Period 5:	1763-1766	: 14 works
Period 6:	1772-1782, and beyond	: 27 works (+two s.d.).

Period 1 (the 'Neapolitan' period, which roughly covers six years from mid-July 1738 to 11 September 1744), takes us from Zerafa's earliest identified date of composition (currently established at 1 June 1743) up to 11 September 1744, which is the officially recorded date of his arrival in Malta from Naples.<sup>3</sup> Any works composed before mid-July 1738, i.e. prior to Zerafa's visit to Naples, may be classified as 'pre-Neapolitan'. Period 2 starts after 11 September 1744<sup>4</sup> and ends abruptly on 13 November 1751, with his temporary removal from his post as *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral. Period 3 covers the seventeen-month period of his suspension, followed by Period 4, which commences with his reinstatement and continues up to his last composition in 1759. A four-year lapse ensues, during which Zerafa produces no compositions at all. In Period 5 Zerafa embarks on a four-year period during which he composes fourteen works, while the final period arrives late (starting in

<sup>3</sup> The official date of termination of studies in Naples is, however, 18 June 1744, as confirmed by the Rector's certificate (see chapter one).

<sup>4</sup> 22 August 1744 is, however, the official date of Zerafa's appointment as *maestro di cappella* of Mdina Cathedral.

1772 after a hiatus of six years), and is characterised by the presence of Francesco Azopardi, whose occasional visits to the Cathedral, starting in 1772, earned him the post of organist of the Cathedral under Benigno Zerafa's direction in 1774. This period spans ten years or more, as the last two *sine die* works cannot be placed accurately within Zerafa's composing time-frame.

Zerafa composed 148 works, divided into two categories:

- i) works for voices and instruments: 104; and
- ii) works for voices and organ only: 44.

*Works for voices and instruments*

13	Masses: (Kyrie/Gloria)	4	a 8vv
		2	a 5vv
		6	a 4vv (one 'in Pastorale', and one 'Breve' in two movements)
2	Requiem Masses:	1	a 3vv
		1	a 5vv (+ 5 responsories)
		1	a 4vv
3	Credos:	3	a 4vv
5	Deus in adjutorium:	4	a 4vv
		1	a 3vv
12	Dixit Dominus:	3	a 8vv
		1	a 5vv
		7	a 4vv
		1	a 3vv
3	Confitebor:	2	a 4vv
		1	a 1v
5	Beatus vir:	2	a 4vv
		3	a 1v
5	Laudate pueri:	2	a 4vv
		1	a 3vv
		2	a 1v

1	In exitu Israel:	1	a 4vv
2	Laudate Dominum:	2	a 4vv
1	Lætatus sum:	1	a 4vv
2	Nisi Dominus:	1	a 4vv
		1	a 1v
5	Magnificat:	1	a 5vv
		3	a 4vv
		1	a 3vv
11	Graduals:	3	a 3vv
		8	a 1v
15	Offertories:	3	a 3vv
		12	a 1v
1	Litany:	1	a 2vv
1	Hymn: (Te Deum)	1	a 4vv
3	Sequences:	3	a 4vv
2	Antiphons:	2	a 4vv
1	Responsory:	1	a 4vv
11	Motets:	8	a 4vv
		3	a 1v

*Works for voices and organ only*

5	Masses: (Full text, no <i>Benedictus</i> )	5	a 4vv
1	Requiem Mass:	1	a 4vv
2	Responsories (x27):	1	a 8vv
		1	a 4vv
1	Improperia:	1	a 4vv
1	Miserere [alternatim]:	1	a 4vv
4	Introits:	3	a 4vv
		1	a 3vv
3	Offertories:	2	a 2vv
		1	a 1v
2	Alleluia Verses:	2	a 1v
1	Gradual:	1	a 1v
1	Hymn: (Salutis humanæ Sator/ Æterne Rex altissime)	1	a 4vv
2	Anthems:	1	a 3 vv
		1	a 1v
3	Litanies:	3	a 4vv
18	Motets:	12	a 4vv
		6	a 2vv

The following table shows Zerafa's rate of composition:

1743 = 3	1757 = 4	1771 = 0
1744 = 6	1758 = 6	1772 = 1
1745 = 5	1759 = 1	1773 = 1
1746 = 3	1760 = 0	1774 = 0
1747 = 1	1761 = 0	1775 = 8
1748 = 0	1762 = 0	1776 = 1
1749 = 1	1763 = 1	1777 = 0
1750 = 0	1764 = 8	1778 = 0
1751 = 2	1765 = 3	1779 = 5
1752 = 1	1766 = 2	1780 = 0
1753 = 25*	1767 = 0	1781 = 6
1754 = 38	1768 = 0	1782 = 3
1755 = 4	1769 = 0	s.d. = 2
1756 = 7	1770 = 0	

- \* including one multipurpose work (Z26), which contains two subsidiary works: Z26a and Z26b; Z26 is counted as a single work. There is also an unfinished excerpt (Z34a) in Z34, the two together being treated as one work. For further details of the cataloguing system for these works, see below under 'Systematic Classification of Works'.

Total number of compositions = 148 (excluding sub-works Z26a, Z26b,  
(as of 31 October 2001) and Z34a);

Total number of years = 40 (excluding the two s.d. works).

From this table we can deduce that in a forty-two-year career at the Cathedral (not counting the first three works of the Neapolitan period), there are fourteen years in which our composer did not produce any works, whereas two years (1753 and 1754) yielded no fewer than twenty-five and thirty-eight works respectively. An overall average for Zerafa's composing career (1743-1782, including the two s.d. works) shows that he



composed at an average rate of 0.3 compositions per month, i.e., about 3.8 compositions every year (see appendix F for a bar graph of Zerafa's compositional career). We may, however, assume that the composer wrote many other works that have been lost in the course of time. The void years listed above, together with the topical fact that the last work (Z121) was discovered as recently as December 2000, suggest that there are more works unaccounted for that may still fill in the vacant time-spans of the statistical histogram given above.<sup>5</sup>

The following timeline reveals Zerafa's composing rate in months and days over a period of forty years (the composer's dated, or partially dated works, are usually signed on the last folio of the composition; see Thematic Catalogue for full details):

- (i) figures in brackets denote the number of works;
- (ii) '?' refers to undated, or partially dated, works;
- (iii) years involving no compositions are not included;

(e.g.: 1743 - 1.6, 22.9, denotes: in the year 1743, 1 June, 22 September.)

1743 - 1.6, 22.9, 8.10.

1744 - ? (4), 28.9, ?.

1745 - 18.1, ? (2), 18.6, 3.12.

1746 - 10.3, ? (2).

1747 - 25.6.

1749 - ?.

1751 - 24.6, 28.6.

1752 - 21.4.

1753 - 28.1, 28.5 (3), ? (4), 12.6, 12.9, ?, 24.9, 27.9, 29.9, 1.10, ? (8), 22.12, 30.12.

1754 - 1.1, 4.1, ?, 5.3, 26.3, 29.3, ? (31), 9.6.

1755 - 22.6, ?, 29.10 (2).

1756 - 24.1 (2), 24.4 (3), 10.6, 25.6.

1757 - 9.12, 29.12 (2), 30.12.

<sup>5</sup> In a repertory list of compositions by Benigno Zerafa dated 1809 (ACM, *Minute Capitulari*, Vol. 20, ff. 547-551), there is mention of a number of works that have not survived in the present collection of 148 compositions. These include: two *Messe Pastorali*, one set of *Responsori di Natale* and nine psalms: two *Confitebor* and one each of *Beatus vir*, *Laudate Dominum*, *Memento, Domine probasti*, *In convertendo*, *De profundis* and *Credidi*.

1758 - 1.1, 9.1, 21.6, 26.6 (3).  
 1759 - 4.5.  
 1763 - ?.  
 1764 - 30.1 (2), 3.2, 5.2, ?, 17.6, 3.7, 20.9.  
 1765 - 16.8, 24.9, 29.11.  
 1766 - 8.1, 4.3.  
 1772 - 11.6.  
 1773 - 13.6.  
 1775 - 16.2, 11.3 (6), 13.5.  
 1776 - 23.10.  
 1779 - 2.11 (5).  
 1781 - 16.6 (6).  
 1782 - ? (3).  
 s.d. - (2).

Some important statistics can be gleaned from this table. Zerafa composed the *Messa a 4vv* (Z21) of 28 June 1751 in four days. From September 1753, we witness a period of rapid compositional activity starting on 12 September (Z32, Mass for 4vv), followed by Z33, undated (*Credo a 4vv*), Z34 (*Dixit a 4vv*), Z35 (*Beatus vir a 4vv*), Z36 (*Laudate pueri a 4vv*), Z37 (*Confitebor a 4vv*), and then succeeded by ten works of indefinite date (except for the last two), all of which were completed by the end of 1753. Approximately three, two and again two days were needed, respectively, for the completion of Z35 - Z36 - Z37. This pattern is repeated again at the end of 1753 and the beginning of 1754, with approximately eight, two and three days needed, respectively, for the full completion of Z47 - Z48 - Z49 in succession. In both cases, Zerafa was dealing with works *a 4vv* of considerable length, one in eight movements. The same procedure is repeated briefly between Z52 - Z53 - Z54. Z96, a *Messa a due cori* with *rinforzi*, was completed in a slightly longer time of fifteen days, indicating a more complex and profound process of composition. A period of rapid composition returns, starting on 29 December 1757, with two works completed on that day, followed by Z100 the next day and Z101 (a

*Magnificat a 4vv* in four movements) two days later. Z104, Z105 and Z106, all *a 4vv*, took five days to complete. The last period of rapid composition occurred between 30 January 1764 and 5 February 1764; two works were completed on 30 January, which were followed by Z111 and Z112, completed within a span of four and two days, respectively. All these compositions were for three voices and framed in one *concertato* movement only. There are other instances where we discover a single day recorded for the composition of more than one work (as already mentioned above), such as in the case of the three works Z24, Z25 and Z26+Z26a+Z26b, all of which are dated 28 May 1753 and could easily have been completed within the stated time; the speed at which composers of the time typically worked has already been discussed in some detail in chapter one.

We will never know whether Zerafa composed any instrumental works (such as church sonatas), until new material comes to light. Comparing Feo's output to Zerafa's, one finds a very close similarity in the number of sacred works produced; but Feo in addition composed many operas, no fewer than twelve sacred dramas, about nine sacred dialogues and numerous cantatas and passions. Durante's output is also large, with a huge quantity of motets, antiphons, hymns, sequences, canticles, vesper cycles, psalms, lessons, litanies, responses, etc., and about five sacred dramas, eight concertos for strings, keyboard sonatas, toccatas and pedagogical studies to his credit. The short-lived Pergolesi (1710-36) produced few sacred works when compared with either Feo or Durante, but he also wrote about eleven operas and three sacred dramas, as well as numerous chamber cantatas, duets, trios and concertos for solo instruments. Compared with other Neapolitans, Zerafa was prolific in

the sacred domain, but non-productive in the secular one. Nevertheless, Zerafa's (sacred) works undoubtedly compare remarkably well with the above-mentioned Neapolitan composers' works in compositional and technical skills, architectural planning, performing demands, handling of textures and the expert handling of thematic and harmonic resources.

### 1743 - *The Neapolitan Works*

Zerafa's oeuvre consists overwhelmingly of sacred vocal works. A *Dixit Dominus a due cori* (Z1, dated 1.6.1743) is the composer's earliest surviving work, followed by the *Messa a due cori* (Z2, dated 22.9.1743) and the *Credo a 4 voci* (Z3, dated 8.10.1743), the last composition of the earliest period. All three were composed while he was pursuing his final study years in Naples, and they served, predictably, as 'end-of-course' compositions which in return earned him his certificate of merit. Presumably, all three works were sent to Malta as proof of his abilities in composition along with his application for the post of *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Mdina, in August 1744. We can safely assert that the three works are purely 'Neapolitan' in style: they were composed while Zerafa was studying in Naples under Feo and Abos and, although they were probably not performed there, they were definitely overseen and corrected by his teachers.

### 1744-1751

After a period of six years Zerafa returned to Malta to fulfil the duties of *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of St. Paul at Mdina.<sup>6</sup> Period two

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<sup>6</sup> Zerafa was appointed *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Malta while he was still residing in Naples.

encompasses the composer's first sacred liturgical and non-liturgical works that were specifically written for the Cathedral under contract: compositions that were required immediately for the Cathedral's liturgical and extra-liturgical functions. In all, eighteen works represent this period.

#### 1751-1753

A startling incident in November 1751 apparently resulting from a conflict between the composer and the ecclesiastical authorities saw the unexpected dismissal of Zerafa from his position of *maestro di cappella* by Bishop Alpheran de Bussan. During his period of absence from the Cathedral Zerafa composed a large-scale *Messa a due cori* in 1752 and a *Lætatus sum a 4 vv* (January 1753). Since the composer was not officially employed at the Cathedral when these works were composed, there lies a significant possibility that they were written for other churches that he also served. However, with regard to the Mass for two choirs (Z22), there is good reason to believe that it was in effect composed for the solemn occasion of the titular feast of the Cathedral (as its dedication to the feast on f. 82r clearly implies). It is also very unlikely that such a work could have been performed elsewhere with such grandeur (in view of the huge financial outlay) than at the Mother Church, financially the most well endowed of all.

#### 1753-1759

After his reinstatement as *maestro di cappella* in April 1753 Zerafa embarked once again on a busy compositional period, the most

productive in his whole career. From May to December 1753 alone, Zerafa produced no fewer than twenty-four works (excluding one composed in January 1753 that falls under the preceding period), almost all conceived for four voices in the concertato style and mostly in one movement. 1754 was, however, the year which saw Zerafa at the peak of his career, producing thirty-eight works scored variously for one to four voices. Yet, one minor query surfaces with regard to a collection of thirty graduals/alleluia verses and offertories (Z55-Z84), all bound in one thick manuscript (Ms. 262) of 86 folios and bearing no date except for the year "1754", which is found only on some of the separate parts. The problem arises whether, in reality, these thirty neatly written works were composed in a single year. For more information see the entry for 'Z55-Z84' below under 'Commentary'. The thirteen graduals/alleluia verses and seventeen offertories carry dedications to the feasts celebrated during the liturgical year at the Cathedral.

Within the period 1755-1759 the composer completed just twenty-two works. This means that, in comparison with the preceding compositional period (his most prolific), his rate of composition fell from an average of 4.76 compositions per month (for thirteen months, May 1753 to June 1754) to about 0.46 (for a forty-seven-month period stretching from July 1755 to May 1759). Nevertheless, this is a period during which Zerafa produced no fewer than four large works for eight voices, two (Z95 and Z96) directly related to each other, plus Z86, and Z103, his longest *opus*. It is also the period that, stylistically, is characterised by a cultivation of highly complex and individual ideas in composition. A brief look at these works reveals a marked advance in Zerafa's approach to composition.

A four-year interval between the last composition in 1759 and the first in 1763 possibly owes its existence to the fact that Zerafa had by then supplied all the basic compositions required for a decent variety in the liturgical provision for the church year since his first appointment as music director. A new attitude in favour of compositions for one to three voices (instead for the four voices of traditional polyphony) is now discernible, giving rise to a somewhat lighter compositional style so far unexploited. It is clear that to a certain degree, the *cappella musicale* had now entered a new musical phase, especially evident in the works for solo voice, which explore more than ever before the possibilities of virtuosity. The works for solo voice clearly proclaim a lighter style, in which the sense of melody is paramount and the orchestral and harmonic textures are less complicated than in the solo church arias within Zerafa's multi-movement works *a 4vv*, *a 5vv* and *ad 8vv*.

## 1772 - 1782

The last compositional period begins six years after 1766 and comprises ten years of uneven production leading to the end of Zerafa's incumbency as *maestro di cappella* in December 1786. In this period we experience a general reversion to polyphonic writing *a 4vv*, with a tendency now to employ the organ as sole accompaniment. Zerafa's output in the last ten years is substantial and includes, among other compositions, six Masses (five for everyday use for organ and SATB only), and two *sine die* works: a *Laudate pueri a Soprano solo* (Z147) and a Marian antiphon, *Alma redemptoris a Basso solo* (Z148).

## *Systematic Classification of Works*

Up to the time of writing (31 October 2001) Zerafa's compositional output numbers 148 items, all of which have been catalogued by the present author according to their date of composition with the prefix 'Z' (for 'Zerafa') followed by a serial number, progressing from Z1 to Z148. The complete Catalogue of Zerafa's works is given below; this is followed by a detailed explanation of criteria and procedure.

### Catalogue of Zerafa's Works

<i>Z...</i>	<i>Ms. No.</i>	<i>Title of Work</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	288/289	Dixit Dominus a due cori	01.06.1743
2	243	Messa a due cori	22.09.1743
3	245	Credo a 4vv	08.10.1743
4	273	Deus in adjutorium a 4vv	? 1744
5	274	Deus in adjutorium a 4vv	? 1744
6	307	Magnificat a 5vv	? 1744
7	328	Litania a 2vv	? 1744
8	245	Messa a 4vv	28.09.1744
9	244	Messa de Morti a 4vv	? 1744
10	291	Dixit Dominus a 5vv	18.01.1745
11	246	Messa a 4vv	? 1745
12	290	Dixit Dominus a 4vv	? 1745
13	247	Messa a 5vv	18.06.1745
14	280	Beatus vir a Basso solo	03.12.1745
15	311	27 Responsori per la Settimana Santa a 4vv	10.03.1746
16	248	Messa Pastorale a 4vv	? 1746
17	269	Te Deum laudamus a 4vv	? 1746
18	249	Messa a 5vv	25.06.1747
19	316	Læta surge, dulcissima aurora a 4vv	? 1749
20	292	Dixit Dominus a 4vv	24.06.1751
21	250	Messa a 4vv	28.06.1751



22	251	Messa a due cori	21.04.1752
23	282	Iætatus sum a 4vv	28.01.1753
24	319	Ascendit Deus a 4vv	28.05.1753
25	319	O Rex glorie a 4vv	28.05.1753
26	319	Salutis humanæ Sator/Æterne Rex (v. 1) a 4vv	28.05.1753
26a	319	Salutis humanæ Sator/Æterne Rex (v. 2) a 4vv	28.05.1753
26b	319	Te Deum (bass line only)	28.05.1753
27	270	Veni Sancte Spiritus a 4vv	? 1753
28	318A	O Quam suavis est a 4vv	? 1753
29	318A	Ego sum panis vivus a 4vv	? 1753
30	318A	O Sacrum convivium a 4vv	? 1753
31	271	Lauda Sion a 4vv	12.06.1753
32	252	Messa a 4vv	12.09.1753
33	260	Credo a 4vv	? 1753
34	293	Dixit Dominus a 4vv	24.09.1753
34a	293	'Tecum principium' (incomplete tenor melody)	24.09.1753
35	281	Beatus vir a 4vv	27.09.1753
36	283	Laudate pueri a 4vv	29.09.1753
37	278	Confitebor a 4vv	01.10.1753
38	300	Laudate Dominum a 4vv	? 1753
39	318	Ad astra, ad sidera a 4vv	? 1753
40	317	Rorate cæli desuper a 2vv	? 1753
41	317	Super te Jerusalem a 2vv	? 1753
42	317	Ecce veniet Deus a 2vv	? 1753
43	317	Ecce apparebit Dominus a 2vv	? 1753
44	317	Jerusalem gaude a 2vv	? 1753
45	317	Montes et omnes a 2vv	? 1753
46	308	Magnificat a 4vv	22.12.1753
47	294	Dixit Dominus a 4vv	30.12.1753
48	279	Beatus vir a 4vv	01.01.1754
49	284/285	Laudate Dominum a 4vv	04.01.1754
50	301	Laudate pueri a 4vv	? 1754
51	286	In exitu Israel a 4vv	05.03.1754
52	312	Improperia per il Venerdì Santo a 4vv	26.03.1754
53	313	Miserere (alternatim) a 4vv	29.03.1754
54	272	Victimæ Paschali laudes a 4vv	? 1754
55	262	Alleluia, Confitebuntur ad Alto solo	? 1754
56	262	Confitebuntur cæli a 2vv	? 1754
57	262	Alleluia, Ascendit Deus ad Alto solo	? 1754
58	262	Ascendit Deus a 2vv	? 1754
59	262	Confirma hoc Deus ad Alto solo	? 1754
60	262	Intonuit de cælo ad Alto solo	? 1754
61	262	Portas cæli ad Alto solo	? 1754
62	262	Sacerdos Domini ad Alto solo	? 1754
63	262	Constitues eos a Soprano solo	? 1754

64	262	Constitues eos a Soprano solo	?	1754
65	262	Qui operatus est a Tenore solo	?	1754
66	262	Mihi autem a Soprano solo	?	1754
67	262	Dilexisti justitiam a 3vv	?	1754
68	262	Filiæ regum a 3vv	?	1754
69	262	Propter veritatem a 3vv	?	1754
70	262	Assumpta est Maria a 3vv	?	1754
71	262	Benedicta et venerabilis a 3vv	?	1754
72	262	Beata es Virgo Maria a 3vv	?	1754
73	262	Locus iste a Deo a Basso solo	?	1754
74	262	Domine Deus in simplicitate a Tenore solo	?	1754
75	262	Timete Dominum a Tenore solo	?	1754
76	262	Justorum animæ a Tenore solo	?	1754
77	262	Tecum principium a Basso solo	?	1754
78	262	Lætentur cæli a Tenore solo	?	1754
79	262	Viderunt omnes a Soprano solo	?	1754
80	262	Tui sunt cæli a Basso solo	?	1754
81	262	Sederunt principes ad Alto solo	?	1754
82	262	Elegerunt apostoli ad Alto solo	?	1754
83	262	Exiit sermo a Basso solo	?	1754
84	262	Justus ut palma a Basso solo	?	1754
85	711/309	Magnificat a 4vv		09.06.1754
86	276	Dixit Dominus a due cori		22.06.1755
87	302	Nisi Dominus a 4vv	?	1755
88	277	Dixit Dominus a 4vv		29.10.1755
89	277	Confitebor a 4vv		29.10.1755
90	275	Deus in adjutorium a 4vv		24.01.1756
91	275	Deus in adjutorium a 4vv		24.01.1756
92	268	Quasi modo infantes a 4vv		24.04.1756
93	268	Alleluia, In die resurrectionis ad Alto solo		24.04.1756
94	268	Angelus Domini ad Alto solo		24.04.1756
95	295	Dixit Dominus a due cori		10.06.1756
96	253	Messa a due cori		25.06.1756
97	320	Rorate cæli a Basso solo		09.12.1757
98	321	O felix carina a Soprano solo		29.12.1757
99	321	Omnes ergo a Soprano solo	?	29.12.1757
100	296	Dixit Dominus a 4vv		30.12.1757
101	310	Magnificat a 4vv		01.01.1758
102	261	Credo a 4vv		09.01.1758
103	254	Messa a due cori		21.06.1758
104	322	Sacerdos et Pontifex a 4vv		26.06.1758
105	322	Sancte Paule Apostole a 4vv		26.06.1758
106	322	Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas a 4vv		26.06.1758

107	323	Ad faustum, ad festum a 4vv	04.05.1759
108	315	27 Responsori per la Settimana Santa a due cori	? 1763
109	303	Deus in adjutorium a 3vv	30.01.1764
110	303	Dixit Dominus a 3vv	30.01.1764
111	303	Laudate pueri a 3vv	03.02.1764
112	303	Magnificat a 3vv	05.02.1764
113	255	Messa a 3vv	? 1764
114	330	Salve Regina a 3vv	17.06.1764
115	304	Laudate pueri a Soprano solo	03.07.1764
116	305	Nisi Dominus a Soprano solo	20.09.1764
117	297	Confitebor a Soprano solo	16.08.1765
118	298	Beatus vir a Soprano solo	24.09.1765
119	256	Messa de Morti a 5vv	29.11.1765
120	299	Beatus vir a Basso solo	08.01.1766
121	CSP	Messa de Morti a 4vv	04.03.1766
122	258	Messa a 4vv	11.06.1772
123	306	Dixit Dominus a 4vv	13.06.1773
124	266	Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas a 4vv	16.02.1775
125	324	Magnus Dominus a 4vv	11.03.1775
126	324	Magnificentia gloriæ a 4vv	11.03.1775
127	324	Et virtutem a 4vv	11.03.1775
128	324	Memoriam abundantiae a 4vv	11.03.1775
129	324	Miserator et misericors a 4vv	11.03.1775
130	324	Suavis Dominus a 4vv	11.03.1775
131	267	Charitas Dei diffusa a 3vv	13.05.1775
132	325	Posui adjutorium a 4vv	23.10.1776
133	257	Messa Prima a 4vv	02.11.1779
134	257	Messa Seconda a 4vv	02.11.1779
135	257	Messa Terza a 4vv	02.11.1779
136	257	Messa Quarta a 4vv	02.11.1779
137	257	Messa Quinta a 4vv	02.11.1779
138	326	Fidelis Dominus a 4vv	16.06.1781
139	326	Allevat Dominus a 4vv	16.06.1781
140	326	Oculi omnium a 4vv	16.06.1781
141	326	Aperis tu manum a 4vv	16.06.1781
142	326	Justus Dominus a 4vv	16.06.1781
143	326	Prope est a 4vv	16.06.1781

144	327	Litania Prima a 4vv	?	1782
145	327	Litania Seconda a 4vv	?	1782
146	327	Litania Terza (Pastorale) a 4vv	?	1782
147	287	Laudate pueri a Soprano solo	s.d.	
148	329	Alma Redemptoris a Basso solo	s.d.	

The works follow a strict chronological order according to the date found primarily on the autograph scores. The identity of Zerafa's hand has been confirmed after examining his handwriting found on all the available documents (such as payment receipts, etc.) written and signed by the composer himself, and comparing them with the autograph scores, taking into consideration the titling, performance directions, etc. Further, his notational habits, coupled with the common concluding monogram and date customarily found in almost all of his works (both manuscript scores and many of the separate parts copied by himself), provide further evidence of autograph status. In cases where the date is missing there, the date located on the copyists' parts (or separate parts) has been selected, since such parts are the next most authoritative source for dating a work. Works that are partially dated, that is, bearing only a 'year' of composition, have been treated individually; full information about their position in the Catalogue is given below under the sub-section 'Classification of Undated and Partially Dated Works'. Indeed, it is of great importance to the cataloguer (and scholar) always to remember that the composer composed his works for specific occasions and not as the mood took him. In other words, the correct placement of a partially dated composition within the Catalogue becomes clear only when the liturgical or extra-liturgical function for which it was written is identified. Hence, a third kind of authoritative source that has been used for the classification of 'problematic' works is the 'Calendar of Liturgical Events' of the Cathedral

Church, in use from Benigno Zerafa's day right up to the present.

The cataloguing of Z26, Z26a, Z26b and Z34a needs further explanation. Z26 is a hymn (*Salutis humanæ Sator*), the music of which is found solely on the separate parts for SATB and organ of Z24 and Z25; that is, it does not exist in score format (appendix D, folios 1 and 2). Z26 serves as the basis for a second hymn text (*Æterne Rex altissime*). This means that the composition which is given the single catalogue number 'Z26' has a dual purpose. A second version of the first hymn exists in notated form following the first hymn (both given in chapter five), thereby showing that two different (yet closely related) settings of the same texts exist. To distinguish between version one and version two, a subordinate catalogue number, 'Z26a' has been assigned to version two. In addition, the composer has written a single *Te Deum* line on the organ part, notated in the bass clef, which makes it a third hymn setting, albeit in the briefest form possible. To this fragment the catalogue number 'Z26b' has been assigned. The same catalogue number shared between the three hymn settings (differentiated through suffixes) shows that the three, which were intended to be performed successively, are linked, but are not sufficiently independent to be regarded as entirely separate works.

Z34a happens to be an incomplete melody for the *Dixit* verse 'Tecum principium', set for tenor voice (appendix D, folio 3). Written on the alto part for Z34 (a *Dixit Dominus a 4 vv*), it has been given the number 'Z34a'. Full information on this entry is given under 'Z34/Z34a' of the thematic catalogue. The melody is unrelated to Z34, and, although it resembles themes from Z58, Z63 and Z95 (movements IV and VII), the present author has found no direct link to any of the above-mentioned works. It

may have been composed by Zerafa as a rough draft or as a simple sketch.

The classification of Z98 (*O felix carina*) and Z99 (*Omnes ergo*) calls for further explanation. Z98 is a fully completed and dated work (29.12.1757); Z99 is a second, different work succeeding Z98 in the same manuscript, but in incomplete form and undated. Since it forms part of the same manuscript as Z98 (Ms. 321) the work has naturally followed the ordering principles of the Thematic Catalogue and acquired the designation 'Z99', as well as being assigned the same date as the preceding work. Further details about the works are given under the respective catalogue entries for Z98 and Z99 in the thematic catalogue. Other works that present the same problem – i.e., having no individual date but being bound within a manuscript of known date – include: Z24-Z26b (clarified above), Z28-Z30, Z40-Z45, Z55-Z84, Z88-Z89, Z90-Z91, Z92-Z94, Z98-Z99 (just discussed), Z104-Z106, Z109-Z110, Z125-Z130, Z133-Z137, Z138-Z143 and Z144-Z146.

#### Classification of Undated and Partially Dated Works

To the members of the *Cappella Musicale* the identity of the composer and the date of composition of the music they performed were not of vital importance, as this was not relevant information that was normally passed on to the participants or the congregation. Yet, for the musicologist, the lack of a composer's name, and of the exact date of a particular work, is a regrettable void. In Zerafa's case we are lucky to possess autograph manuscripts that bear some form of date. However, the two undated works Z147 and Z148 and twenty-three partially dated manuscripts among the composer's 148 works need to be individually investigated in order to attain the best chronological sequence in the

Catalogue. These are:

Z4	273	Deus in adjutorium a 4vv	?	1744
Z5	274	Deus in adjutorium a 4vv	?	1744
Z6	307	Magnificat a 5vv	?	1744
Z7	328	Litania a 2vv	?	1744
Z9	244	Messa de Morti a 4vv	?	1744
Z11	246	Messa a 4vv	?	1745
Z12	290	Dixit Dominus a 4vv	?	1745
Z16	248	Messa Pastorale a 4vv	?	1746
Z17	269	Te Deum laudamus a 4vv	?	1746
Z19	316	Læta surge, dulcissima aurora a 4vv	?	1749
Z27	270	Veni Sancte Spiritus a 4vv	?	1753
Z28	318A	O Quam suavis est a 4vv	?	1753
Z33	260	Credo a 4vv	?	1753
Z38	300	Laudate Dominum a 4vv	?	1753
Z39	318	Ad astra, ad sidera a 4vv	?	1753
Z40	317	Rorate cæli desuper a 2vv	?	1753
Z50	301	Laudate pueri a 4vv	?	1754
Z54	272	Victimæ Paschali laudes a 4vv	?	1754
Z55	262	Alleluia, Confitebuntur ad Alto solo	?	1754
Z87	302	Nisi Dominus a 4vv	?	1755
Z108	315	27 Responsori per la Settimana Santa a due cori	?	1763
Z113	255	Messa a 3vv	?	1764
Z144	327	Litania a 4vv	?	1782
Z147	287	Laudate pueri a Soprano solo	s.d.	
Z148	329	Alma Redemptoris a Basso solo	s.d.	

The criteria determining the chronological ordering of this list have included the study of rastrography, scoring and the liturgical succession of functions. Unquestionably, the two hardest works to place within this timeframe are the undated *Laudate pueri* (Z147) and *Alma redemptoris* (Z148). Unfortunately, the score for Z148 is missing, so the study of

rastrography, paper quality and other calligraphic information could not be undertaken in the hope of linking it to other works within the collection. However, there is enough evidence to tell us that towards the end of his career Zerafa was devoting himself to very simple compositions for the voice/organ medium; testimony to this is provided by the over twenty works dated 1775 onwards, all of which are scored for this particular medium. Consequently, the most likely position for this work occurs at the very end of the collection, along with other works composed for the same forces.

With regard to Z147, difficulty arises under various heads. The alternative positions at which the present author could place the work are numerous, according to:

- i) scoring (violin 1/2 and continuo);
  - ii) rastrography (10 staves);
  - iii) vocal scoring (soprano solo);
  - iv) stylistic features (such as the range of the soprano voice, which goes up to c''' on the last note), and the inclusion of recitative; and
  - v) its liturgical function in Vespers (a *Laudate pueri* could serve either as the second or as the fourth psalm within the Vesper cycle).
- (i) Starting with the first criterion, Z147 may be placed within the bracket for works composed for an instrumental complement of 'Violin 1/2 and Basso', a scoring which occurs in the years 1743-1744, 1753-1755 and 1758. Out of thirty-six works (Z147 excluded), sixteen are for solo



voice, while the rest are written for two to four voices. The remaining sixteen turn out to be a mixture of graduals/alleluia verses and offertories, all bound into a single thick manuscript and forming a homogeneous collection of works; this degree of homogeneity implies that Z147 was not composed at this time.

(ii) Rastrography has not served our purpose convincingly; the ten-stave paper found in the manuscript of Z147 is used widely throughout the composer's career, namely from 1744 to 1781.

(iii-v) The last three criteria appeared potentially more helpful, since, through our research, we know that Zerafa was using the vocal solo medium in 1745, 1753-1754, 1756-1757 and 1764-1766. Starting by ruling out the works less likely to complement Z147, we commence by excluding first the works composed in 1754: a collection of graduals and offertories (Z55-Z84) mentioned above, and which includes also works for solo voice). One work for 1753 – an incomplete *Te Deum* bass line for organ only (Z26b) – the two works for 1756 – conceived for organ only – and the three works for 1757 – three motets with an instrumental layout which differs from that of Z147 – do not fit the criteria. It is therefore unlikely that Zerafa completed Z147 during the 1750s. The last four timelines suit our purposes well, as the works involved here all happen to be psalm settings, which makes it more likely that Z147 forms part of a psalm sequence belonging to the years 1745, 1764, 1765 or 1766. Z14 (*Beatus vir a Basso solo*), composed in 1745, is in five movements, uses manuscript paper with 18 staves and is written for an orchestra of horns, trumpets, violin 1/2 and Basso. This differs slightly from Z147 in rastrography and instrumentation. The closest we can get to fitting Z147 into the

chronology is to assign it to 1764 (along with Z115 and Z116) or to 1765 (along with Z117 and Z118). For easier reference, the details of these four works are given below:

Z115	Ms. 304	Laudate pueri a Soprano solo	03.07.1764
Z116	Ms. 305	Nisi Dominus a Soprano solo	20.09.1764
Z117	Ms. 297	Confitebor a Soprano solo	16.08.1765
Z118	Ms. 298	Beatus vir a Soprano solo	24.09.1765

If we start by ruling out some odd peculiarities, it seems unlikely that Zerafa composed two *Laudate pueri* settings for soprano solo in 1764, although the rastrography features ten staves in all cases. A solo cello is included in the 1765 work, a feature which does not occur in the scoring of Z147. If we examine criterion (iv), we find that the soprano compass does not rise to  $c'''$  (as in Z147) in any of the works given here. On the other hand, the singer for Z147 (who had a wide compass) would certainly have appeared in similar works performed in the same period in the Cathedral – the high  $c'''$  appears in movement III of Z103 (1758). – but there are no solo works such as psalms ‘in the vicinity’ to support Z147’s presence there, making the application of criterion (iv) problematic. This leaves us with the last alternative: that of joining Z147 to Z117 and Z118 to create a substantial portion of a Vesper cycle and rendering it musically and liturgically congruent. This would certainly be the best pragmatic solution, but since there are various features that do not correlate directly with Z117 and Z118 (such as discrepancies in rastrography, instrumentation and vocal compass), it was finally decided to classify Z147 as a *sine die* work and place it towards the end of the catalogue.

The rest of the undated or partially dated works follow a set of criteria that the present author adopted in order to achieve the best classification in relation to dates within the liturgical calendar. In order to pursue this objective, the present author has consulted an authoritative reference book, the *Cronologia, Cronografia e Calendario Perpetuo* of A. Cappelli (Milan, 1930) – referred to here as *Cronologia* – which gives a day-by-day chronology of the church's liturgical calendar in the 18th century. Like any other composer, Zerafa occasionally composed psalms not in the strict order of their performance, thus making it harder to detect whether a partially dated psalm corresponds to one cycle or another. However, the best available research-based findings were taken into account, as the following observations will show:

Z4, Z5, Z6, Z7, Z9

After closely examining the partially dated works for 1744 (Z4, Z5, Z6, Z7, and Z9), it was concluded that all five were conceived after the composer returned from Naples; hence all five were regarded as post-11 September 1744. The texts set here (*Deus in adiutorium, Magnificat, Litanias* and *Messa de Morti*) all happen to be fundamental ones that a newly elected *maestro di cappella* would need straight away for use in services. Therefore, it is highly probable that Zerafa composed these works immediately after being appointed director (further details supporting this assumption are given below under 'Commentary': entry for 'Z3 (8.10.1743)'). Composed according to their urgency (bearing in mind the 'first' liturgical feast 'closing in' on Zerafa after his arrival in September), the first four items (Z4, Z5, Z6, Z7) were most likely composed in close succession in the following order:

- Z4 - Introductory versicle to Vespers,
- Z5 - Introductory versicle to Vespers,
- Z6 - Closing canticle to Vespers,
- Z7 - Item performed after completion of Vespers, and
- Z9 - Performed on 2 November.

The *Messa de Morti* was usually set to music by composers primarily for use in the 2 November commemoration of the dead, as well as for solemn burial services. Z9 retains its place towards the end of 1744, succeeding the first four items in the compositional process according to the liturgical calendar.

### Z11

This Mass closely follows the *Dixit Dominus* of 18.1.1745, perhaps being intended for the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul on 25 January (a principal feast at the Cathedral).

### Z12

This *Dixit* displays an important inscription on the top left hand corner of f. 1: "P[er] La festa / deSS. Pietro [sic] / e Paolo / del 1745" (for the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul of 1745). This establishes that the work is linked to Z13 (dated 18.6.1745), both works being performed on 28-29 June 1745.

### Z16, Z17

'Pastorale' here connotes 'Christmas'; hence the work should be placed towards the end of 1746, closely flanked by Z17 (*Te Deum*) which best fits the placement here at the end of 1746; the latter would be performed regularly during feast days and definitely at the thanksgiving occasion on

the last day of the year. Rastrography helps here, since both manuscripts use 18-stave paper.

### Z19

This is the only partially dated work for 1749.

### Z27

The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* is a sequence for Whit Sunday Mass. According to the *Cronologia*, Whit Sunday (or Pentecost) fell in 1753 on 10 June, hence the work's best position is after Z26, which is dated 28.5.1753, and before the next dated work, Z31 (12.6.1753).

### Z28-Z30

These three works are written consecutively on the same manuscript (Ms. 318A), and all form part of the Proper for the feast of *Corpus Christi*, falling, in 1753, on 21 June. Conceived as motets to be performed during the procession,<sup>7</sup> they are positioned after Z27: that is, after 10 June, and before Z31 (12.6.1753), composed for High Mass on *Corpus Christi*.

### Z33

The best position for this *Credo* arrives after Z32 (a *Kyrie* and *Gloria*), since it is a fundamental ingredient of the Ordinary of the Mass. The score is missing, hence rastrography cannot be applied in this case.

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<sup>7</sup> In the liturgy processions always took place on the morning preceding High Mass.

### Z38

This psalm forms part of the 'Vespers of the Apostles, Evangelists, Martyrs, and Confessors'; hence its position has to fit in with the other dated psalms, which together form a Vesper cycle of five settings. Its insertion as Z38 corresponds to the others as follows: Z34 (*Dixit*), Z35 (*Beatus vir*), Z36 (*Laudate pueri*), Z37 (*Confitebor*) and Z38 (*Laudate Dominum*).

### Z39

This motet has a subject matter which generalises vaguely about 'heaven' and 'saints'. This subject vaguely suggests the present position as Z39, linking it with 1 November (All Saints' Day), 2 November (All Souls' Day) and December's Christmas festivities. The score is missing, so rastrography cannot be applied here.

### Z40-Z45

There are six motets in this manuscript composed "per la novena del Santissimo Natale". Their respective chronological entries occur towards the end of 1753, followed by Z46 and Z47, which are dated respectively 22 and 30 December.

### Z50

The best location for this *Laudate pueri a 4vv* occurs at Z50, preceded by (Z46) *Magnificat*, (Z47) *Dixit*, (Z48) *Beatus vir* and (Z49) *Laudate*

*Dominum*, and succeeded by (Z51) *In exitu Israel*. Its scoring is the same as for the last four, and its placement here completes a Vesper cycle dedicated to feasts of 'Apostles, Evangelists, etc.'. In addition, the *Laudate pueri* (Z50) could easily combine with the succeeding *In exitu Israel*, dated 5.3.1754, as part of Sunday Vespers.

#### Z54

This is a Sequence performed on Easter Day. According to the *Cronologia*, Easter fell in 1754 on 14 April, hence the work's position comes naturally after Z52 and Z53 (*Improperia* and *Miserere*, respectively), two settings performed during Holy Week.

#### Z55-Z84

This huge and neatly bound manuscript (Ms. 262) contains a mixture of thirty graduals, alleluia verses and offertories, the majority of which follow an orderly sequence conceived by the composer himself, each systematically placed according to the solemnised feast within the liturgical calendar of the Cathedral Church. The first work is a gradual dedicated to the feast of St. Mark, which falls annually on 25 April. This helps to fix the start of the collection with the catalogue number Z55: thus following Z54, dated 14 April. The next composition for 1754 bears the date '9.6.1754', so, given the above evidence, it was logical to place the collection of thirty works here.

## Z87

The place of this *Nisi Dominus*, an occasional psalm in Zerafa's collection, comes after Z86 (*Dixit*) and Z85 (*Magnificat*) but before Z88 (another *Dixit*) and Z89 (*Confitebor*). Its position here implies links both to the previous two works (Z85 and Z86) and to the succeeding Z88 (*Dixit*). The *Nisi Dominus* usually forms part of the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which comprises *Dixit, Laudate pueri, Lætatus sum, Nisi Dominus* and *Lauda Jerusalem*.

## Z108

This is the only work for 1763.

## Z113

Vocal and instrumental scoring have aided the task of placing this Mass for three voices in its present location. The Mass acquires this position by virtue of following a collection of Vesper settings (Z109-Z112) which suggest that it was conceived for the 9-10 February festivity of the *Naufragio di S. Paolo* (St. Paul's Shipwreck), another popular feast celebrated at the Church.

## Z144-Z146

These are the only works for 1782. Although Zerafa's original score is missing, they are written successively in separate parts (Ms. 327) in this order, suggesting the present catalogue order.



## *The Sources*

Vespers (performed in the afternoon) and Mass (textually involving both the Ordinary and the Proper, performed in the morning) remained the two pre-eminent liturgical functions solemnised imposingly in the Catholic church. Although antiphons in Vespers were usually sung in plainchant, it was permitted to sing them in figural music, too. When performed figurally, they were kept rather simple. The texts (antiphons, psalms, hymn, etc.) sung in Vespers vary according to the feast or the season of the church year. Mass was almost always solemnised in a grand manner, except when Continuo Masses were preferred: that is, on ordinary occasions throughout the year. The complete list of texts set by Zerafa comprises:

(see overleaf)

<i>No. of Works</i>	<i>Text</i>
14	Alleluia Verses and Graduals;
12	Antiphons (ten employed as motets);
3	Credo settings;
5	<i>Deus in adjutorium</i> (one incomplete);
4	Hymns/Anthems (plus Z26a, which is a second version of hymn Z26, and an incomplete <i>Te Deum</i> line (Z26b) for Bass voice);
6	Introits (two employed as motets);
4	Litanies;
5	Magnificat settings;
21	Masses (including Masses for the Dead);
5	Non-scriptural sources of unknown origin employed as motets (one incomplete);
18	Offertories;
32	Psalms, including: 50 ( <i>Miserere mei Deus</i> ), 109 ( <i>Dixit Dominus</i> ), 110 ( <i>Confitebor</i> ), 111 ( <i>Beatus vir</i> ), 112 ( <i>Laudate pueri</i> ), 113 ( <i>In exitu Israel</i> ), 116 ( <i>Laudate Dominum</i> ), 121 ( <i>Lætatus sum</i> ), and 126 ( <i>Nisi Dominus</i> );
12	Psalm fragments: 144 ( <i>Exaltabo te</i> ), verses: 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15-14, 16, 17, 18, 19 (twelve verses employed as motets; verses 3, 8, 9, 14 and 15-14 are also found as Antiphon texts; verses 16 and 19 are also found as Gradual texts);
1*	88 ( <i>Misericordias Domini</i> ), Verses: 19-20-21 (same source as that for <i>Responsorium breve</i> (*) given below);
1*	<i>Responsorium breve</i> (same source as that for psalm 88, verses 19-20-21 (*) given above);
3	Sequences (excluding the <i>Dies iræ</i> , which forms part of the Mass for the Dead);
2	Sets of twenty-seven Holy Week Responsories each; and
1	Set of Holy Week <i>Improperia</i> .

148 compositions (plus three subsidiary works: Z26a, Z26b, and Z34a).

Such common texts as those for the Ordinary of the Mass and psalms do not require to be discussed here, since they are standard sources in use in all Catholic liturgies. What matters more here are those extra-liturgical works with texts of unknown origin which may be classed as specifically written for a special occasion. These include (see appendix G for full texts):

- Z39 *Ad astra, ad sidera*
- Z107 *Ad faustum, ad festum*
- Z19 *Læta surge, dulcissima aurora*
- Z98 *O felix carina, and*
- Z99 *Omnes ergo.*

Except for five motets whose texts are non-scriptural sources (Z19, Z39, Z98-Z99 and Z107), twenty-four motets are set to a fragment of a scriptural text that in other texts has a liturgical status (Z24-Z25, Z28-Z30, Z40-Z45, Z97, Z125-Z130, and Z138-Z143). Seven sources out of twenty-four have double texts; this means that verses 3, 8, 9, 14, and 15-14 from psalm 144, *Exaltabo te*, are also found as Antiphons, whereas verses 16 and 19 (from the same psalm) are also found as Graduals.

Z39 is termed a "mottetto". The generic term 'mottetto', translated here as 'motet', implies a text of usually extra-liturgical provenance. Z107, Zerafa's longest setting, is a motet in three movements and has the following structure: Coro - Recitative - Coro - Recitative - Coro, modelling itself on the cantata form of Scarlatti and other contemporaries. Z98 exists as a two-movement combination of recitative and aria (constituting a kind of 'sacred aria'), whereas Z99, making up another 'sacred aria' (motet), survives as an unfinished and incomplete work in draft form. Z19 is described by Zerafa as "Mottetto dopo l'Epistola". Other sources that are referred to as motets include Z24-Z25, Z28-Z30, Z40-Z45 (described as

“Mottetti à due voci per la / Novena del Santissimo / Natale [...]”, Z97, Z125-Z130 (headed “Mottetti a 4 voci”) and Z138-Z143 (“Mottetti per ogni tempo”).

Consultation with the curator of the Archives of Mdina has led to the following conclusions: some of the texts were derived directly from the *Breviarum Romanum* published after, and in conformity with, the Tridentine Reform, and which are not found in the *Liber usualis*, whereas other texts (such as those for Z19, Z39, Z98, Z99 and Z107), were written by anonymous/unknown authors for specific events calling for a sacred, but non-liturgical, genre (cantata-motets). Consequently, *Læta surge, dulcissima aurora* (Z19), *Ad astra, ad sidera* (Z39), *O felix carina* (Z98), *Omnes ergo* (Z99) and *Ad faustum, ad festum* (Z107) all emerge as non-liturgical texts of unknown provenance which Zerafa composed under the generic description of ‘mottetto’.

The feasts to which all liturgical and non-liturgical sources were directed included among others:

- i) St. Peter and St. Paul Apostles and Martyrs;
- ii) Conversion of St. Paul, and the Shipwreck of St. Paul;
- iii) Corpus Christi and the Ascension of Our Lord;
- iv) Advent and Christmas;
- v) Holy Week and Easter;
- vi) Feasts of the BVM, which include the Nativity of the BVM, Immaculate Conception, St. Anne Mother of the BVM, Assumption of the BVM, and the Betrothal of the BVM (*Desponsatione*);
- vii) St. Stephen;
- viii) Pentecost;
- ix) St. John Evangelist;
- x) Dedication of a Church;
- xi) St. Mark;
- xii) All Souls and All Saints;
- xiii) Blessed Trinity; and
- xiv) St. Francis of Paula.

Other occasional commemorations involved those:

- xv) in honour of the birth of a son of the King of Naples;
- xvi) for the Solemn Consecration and Reception of a new Bishop; and
- xvii) for the Solemn Reception of a new Grand Master.

The first six feasts listed above are definitely the most prestigious for the Cathedral of Malta, and the works composed for such occasions testify to this fact. Other commemoration activities not included in the above list include the Forty-Hours' Devotion, and services of the adoration of the Holy Eucharist, national victory anniversaries, funerals, canonisations, and additional anniversary occasions, all of which were celebrated in music. The feast of the Seven Sorrows (or Dolours) of the BVM, which was celebrated from 1727 onwards on the Friday before Palm Sunday (as is still the practice today), prescribed the *Stabat Mater* in its complete form as a Sequence to be sung at Mass. Of all five Sequences in the Liturgical compendium of chants (*Dies iræ*, *Lauda Sion Salvatorem*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, *Victimæ paschali laudes*, and *Stabat Mater*) the only one that is not represented in Zerafa's collection is the last, the possibility being that he never composed one (assuming that it was sung, for preference, in plainchant).

## Commentary

The last section deals with the extant manuscripts that constitute the 148 compositions that Benigno Zerafa to our knowledge composed. Such remarks given here include:

- i) details on the manuscripts' state of preservation;
- ii) significantly important observations and/or comments annotated by the composer, the copyists or the musicians on the autograph manuscripts or the separate parts; and
- iii) historically informative notes/directions that the composer himself wrote in the autograph/copy scores to clarify details of performance.

Indeed, all the arguments presented under this section enable us to form a well-rounded picture of the composer at work. The report of all the relevant details found in the majority of the 148 works has been presented in strict chronological order, starting with Z1 (1743) and ending with Z148 (s.d.).

### Z1 (1.6.1743)

The note found on p. 13 of the continuo/organ part is of immense importance to us since it reveals the name of the copyist who copied the parts of the *Dixit* of 1743 which Zerafa composed at the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo* that June. The note states: "Io Filippo Cherubini / scrisse per un [sic] suo / amico Benigno Zerafa e / Pñe Pñe Pñe / 1743 1743 1743", (I, Filippo Cherubini, have copied [this part] in the name of his [!]

friend Benigno Zerafa and master). “Pñe”, here with superscript bar, implies ‘Padrone’, most likely the person in charge of the copyists at the institute. The language and grammar may be slightly illogical, but the note certainly implies that a named Italian copyist was involved here, as the calligraphy of this part proves. Filippo Cherubini could have possibly been a student at the *Conservatorio* during Zerafa’s time, and a friend, too.

On the Horn 1 part we also encounter the following marginalia written haphazardly on the title page: “Mur, Fiti, Fu [with a bar over the ‘u’ of ‘Fu’], Fadisca, in Serturajca”, whereas on p. 2 of both Horn 1 and 2 parts, the composer gives us a typical performance direction which the brass players would have followed during performance: “s’aspetta solam.<sup>te</sup> 2 battute q[uan]do. si fà à 4” (count two bars only when four parts are used). Further, it seems that witty banter was part of the musicians’ life, as on the last page of the same part one finds some more marginalia written: “Mur di vidi che, è finito finito / mur cridelo malora malora / cridilo con tutti li diavoli e / malora a finito”, which produces no clear translation except for some expressions such as “mur” (in the Maltese language this translates as the imperative ‘go’, “finito” (finished), “malora” (ruin), and “diavoli” (devils). Finally, on the title page of the Horn 2 part, we find a cruel remark which has absolutely nothing to do with the performance of music: “Conte, chette [= che ti] Venga il Cancaro”, meaning: Conte, may you get cancer, “Conte” here referring to the brass player in person. Interestingly, the second horn part represents ‘Conte’ diagrammatically (i.e. the large capital ‘C’ is made horn-shaped).

Almost all the folios of the separate parts are uniform in size and paper quality and contain the 'tre mezze lune' watermark in the centre (CCC), with a progressive reduction of the size of the second and third 'C' symbols. The 'tre mezze lune' watermark shows that the manuscript paper that was supplied to Malta was produced in the Veneto. Venetian paper traditionally displayed a generic watermark of three adjacent crescent moons ("mezze lune"), each slightly smaller than the previous (as above), and "placed in the middle of the half of the full, unfolded sheet".<sup>8</sup> Although this Mass belongs to Zerafa's Neapolitan period it is likely to have been copied in Malta, as this type of watermark occurs in other manuscripts containing similar works composed by Zerafa up to as late as 1758.

On ff. 1v and f. 2r of the Trumpet 1 part the composer gives us two important performance directions that are used extensively in many of his works: "Siegue Gratias agimus & Corni di caccia in G.sol.re.ut." (Now follows *Gratias agimus* for Horns in G), and "Siegue Cum Sancto Spiritu & Tutti con Trombe Lunghe" (Now follow *Cum Sancto Spiritu* and 'Tutti' for trumpets). The same directions are also used for the second trumpet. In the 18th century 'Corno di Caccia' or 'Tromba di Caccia' (as used by Zerafa)<sup>9</sup> both referred to 'Horns', whereas 'Tromba Lunga' meant 'Trumpet'. This distinction persists regularly in all of Zerafa's works, where trumpets and horns are interchangeable among the players. The second instruction, "in G.sol.re.ut.", describes the key in which the brass instruments are to perform, that is, the type of crooks that the horns

<sup>8</sup> Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi*, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Zerafa frequently writes "di caccia" instead of "da caccia".



should adopt for the movement in question and for that particular key. This is a somewhat old-fashioned way of describing the key and pitch that the horns are to select, and implies, technically, a hard (*durum*) hexachord which begins on 'G' and contains B $\flat$ . Hexachords (vide appendix F for Brass Hexachords table) were used by music tutors and composers in the study and performing practice of music, a convention which continued until the 18th century. Zerafa's horns use a wide selection of keys and, among others used (just to mention a few), the most popular choices, apart from that given above, are "in D.la.sol.re" (Delasolre), "in C.sol.fa.ut" (Cesolfaut), "in A.la.mi.re" (Alamire), and "in Fe.fa.ut" (Fefaut). To give a concise and technical definition of just one hexachord function: "in D.fa.ut.#3", appended to the horns, implies that the letter name 'D' is exactly the same as the one used in English and other Germanic languages today for the identification of notes; 'Faut' is a reference to function within the old solmization system (the Guidonian Hand). The 'D' in question acts as 'ut' (the first note) for a transposed 'natural hexachord' comprising D-E-F#-G-A-B, and 'fa' (the fourth note) for a 'hard' hexachord made up of A-B-C#-D-E-F#. The solmization syllables are really redundant but are added for the sake of tradition and the wish to appear learned. "D.fa.ut.#3" therefore means that the key has a major third above the tonic; in other words, this is a major, not a minor, key.

Z3 (8.10.1743)

The sixteen-page autograph *Credo* score is attached to a *Kyrie/Gloria* Mass (same file) dated 28 September 1744. The *Credo* occupies the first sixteen pages of the manuscript, the 'Mass' proper following on page seventeen.

A detached folio (f. 3) in the score, comprising only two and a half bars written on its *recto* side (p. 5), informs us of a mistake in the original score that forced the composer to add a separate folio (the one in question) in order to mark the correction on it. It is clear that the mistake was noticed only after the composition manuscript was finished, otherwise the need for an insertion of a separate detached folio would have been purposeless.

For the first time in this *Credo*, Zerafa distinguishes between “ripieno” (‘choir’ voices) and “solisti” (‘soloists’, or ‘concertante’ voices). In Zerafa the two terms imply that the solo parts are performed by selected choral voices borrowed from within the main choir, who are chorally ‘reinforced’ by the full choir wherever the term *ripieni* appears (i.e. the remaining choir voices join in, a technique discussed in more detail in chapter three). Similar uses are found in many of Zerafa’s works, among them Z6, Z9 and Z11. In this work we also encounter for the first time the motto “LDBV Doctoriq Gent” in the copyist’s parts (bass, basso ripieno), which is a typical Zerafian concluding formula found almost invariably at the end of every work. Significantly, this implies that the separate parts were copied in Malta, on account of the phrase “Doctorique Gentium”, which refers to ‘St. Paul, Father of the Maltese people’; this started to be inscribed by Zerafa on his scores, and more randomly on the separate parts, only after his return from Naples in 1744 (i.e. from Z4 onwards). Works of the Neapolitan period do not contain this characteristic monogram.

The violoncello part in this work is headed by the superscription “viola” in very faded ink. The use of the bass clef throughout and the tenor clef periodically implies that this is another basso continuo part. Also, the

hand involved in the writing of this last part is different from that in the rest of the copies, suggesting a late addition.

#### Z6 (? 1744)

In this work Zerafa did not employ the direction *ripieni* as in the previous compositions, but instead preferred to distinguish between soloist and choir parts by inserting "Primo" (soloist) and "Secondo" (ripieno) respectively. Nevertheless, the explanation and general application of these terms remain the same as those outlined in Z3 (above).

Uniquely, the composer has written parts for two trumpets and two horns that must be performed by the same pair of players in a coordinated manner (appendix D, folio 4). This is achieved by allowing enough time for the players to exchange instruments. No details for any instrumental change are given in the score, the only information given in the separate parts, mainly distinguished by the use of a treble clef (for trumpets) and a bass clef (for horns).

#### Z7 (? 1744)

The score of this *Litania* is lost, and all the relevant information has to be gathered from the separate parts. Unusually for Zerafa, the soprano part ends with "Finis L D Deipareq. Virg", meaning: It is finished, glory be to God and the Virgin Mother of God. Further, there are no separate parts for the violoncello and double-bass, which may suggest that they were lost; conversely, their absence could also suggest that this work was

accompanied solely on the organ and not by all the continuo instruments.

Z8 (28.9.1744)

The autograph manuscript for this Mass comprises thirty-three folios and forms part of a larger manuscript comprising forty-one folios (see Z3 above). The last four-folio gathering in the manuscript is of larger measurements, is whiter in quality, and has ten pre-ruled greyish staves on each folio, clearly showing that it comes from a totally different batch of paper. The copyist's parts are a mixture of paper types of all kinds and sizes. The condition and appearance of the score, along with the separate parts, clearly show that this Mass, popular with its composer, was conceived hastily and was performed many times.

This is a composition manuscript, since it contains a good number of corrections and cuts, as well as some hasty calligraphy; on p. 34 the whole second system comprising eight bars of music is cancelled and scribbled over. A similar correction appears on the lower half of page 18, where the composer began a first version of the *Laudamus te a 3* in D major in 3/8 after having already written twenty-three bars. The new movement is in D major and in cut time. Zerafa ends the organ booklet with a personal note: "Die P<sup>ma</sup> 8bris 1744 hoc libellum exaratum est", meaning: This booklet is finished today, the first day of October, 1744. All the copyist's parts are of a very poor quality, and many of them betray heavy use.

The rastrography of the tenor part needs some explanation: f. 2r (p. 3) has the seventh staff sloping diagonally to the right, underneath which there is a rather wide gap; moreover, f. 3r/v (pp. 5-6) comprises twelve staves

with a whole-stave gap right in the middle. A horizontal fold in the folios implies that the folios were intended to be folded horizontally to produce small oblong (instead of upright) folios of six staves each.<sup>10</sup> Further, two vertical guidelines enclose all the staves of all folios, both on the left-hand and right-hand sides.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, all staves are short (150mm approximately), and the violin 2 is the only part in the whole set which is in oblong format (measurements given in the thematic catalogue entry) comprising four folios of ten staves on each side.

Interestingly, although the two horns do not appear in the score until movement VI, in the separate parts horns and trumpets (in movement III) are required from the beginning of the Mass. The following table is intended to clarify this situation:

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Separate Parts</i>
I	Horns not included	Horns 1/2 parts created separately
II	Horns not included	Horns 1/2 parts created separately
III	Trumpets not included	Trumpets 1/2 parts created separately
IV	Horns/Trumpets not included	Horns/Trumpets do not play
V	Horns/Trumpets not included	Horns/Trumpets do not play
VI	Horns included	Horns included
VII	Horns included	Horns included
VIII	Horns included	Horns included.

Z9 (? 1744)

The *Messa de Morti* contains three Basso Continuo parts: violoncello, double-bass and organ. Continuo playing at the Cathedral regularly involved the three mentioned instruments, further testimony of which is found on Zerafa's 1786 retirement note, which confirms that the two

<sup>10</sup> The folding may have served another purpose, too: for easier transportation (or postage).

<sup>11</sup> Vertical guidelines enclosing pre-ruled staves are a feature of music paper produced in the Veneto.

main continuo instruments – the violoncello and double-bass – were supplied by the composer himself.

One typical and consistent irregularity found in Zerafa is the variable use of 2/2, 3/2, 4/2 and, occasionally, 6/2 bars in *alla breve* time. This irregularity was characteristic of many 18th century composers, and the difference is one of notational style rather than of musical character. With regard to foliation, although many of the folios used for the copying of Zerafa's separate parts throughout his career lack a watermark, some of the parts involved here exhibit the already discussed Venetian 'tre mezze lune' mark (violin 1/2, horn and continuo, violoncello and double-bass).

#### Z10 (18.1.1745)

This work, an autograph score which exhibits a cut in movement V between the present bars 87 and 88, is dated 18 January 1745, and can almost certainly be regarded as composed specifically for the solemnity of the *Conversione di San Paolo* of 1745, a major feast celebrated annually at the Cathedral on 25 January. The extra parts for violin 1/2 may have been copied after 1745, perhaps for another performance, as they exhibit greyish folios with dark greyish staves and very dark brown ink, implying a later addition.

We may here dedicate some time to hypothesise that the reason for the great variety of paper used at Mdina Cathedral may be that a number of different musicians employed at the Cathedral Church borrowed the autograph score in turn and copied out their respective parts themselves, which would explain why numerous different handwritings are found in

Zerafa's separate parts. This may easily have involved a circle of musician-friends of the composer, who, apart from participating in the *Cappella Musicale*, served as the copyists for their parts, too (as the separate parts for this work themselves testify). It is therefore reasonable to suspect that the diverse paper used throughout Zerafa's oeuvre indicates that each musician-copyist possessed his own personal paper supply and was paid separately for 'purchases and services'. Documented evidence of this activity is given in chapter one, where a note involving Benigno Zerafa's brother (who had helped him in the copying of a manuscript) mentions both the type of paper used and the financial recompense.<sup>12</sup>

#### Z11 (? 1745)

Typically for Zerafa, when a change from horns to trumpets (or vice versa) occurs between movements, the author accompanies the change of instrument by a further note explaining the substitution from horns to trumpets to aid clarity: "Siegue Dñe Deus & con Trombe Lunghe". However, also typical is that the change from one brass instrument to the other in Zerafa's scores is shown simply by a change in clef: treble for trumpet, bass for horn.

The manuscript score is made up of four gatherings sewn together; the paper in gatherings one, two and four is identical and of 'Medium' quality containing slightly faded staves; gathering three is of 'Flimsy' quality with bolder staves. The folios of gathering three are larger in both dimensions,

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<sup>12</sup> On a small island such as Malta, the small local market and the absence of significant tourism made professional, full-time music copying an impossibility; this explains why musicians themselves were employed for the task of copying the parts – as also occurred in northern Europe very widely.

implying that, for various reasons (primarily financial), Zerafa made use of whatever paper was available to him in the process of composition. Paper production and purchase was very expensive in the 18th century, so it was natural for any composer to economise on consumption, as may be the case here.

Zerafa also writes "Organo chiuso" in the Largo assai movement II (*Gloria*), f. 21r, implying a soft registration. A similar terminology used in other 18th-century Maltese scores was "Organo serrato",<sup>13</sup> denoting 'closed organ': that is, 'soft'.

#### Z12 (? 1745)

On the copyist's parts we find the words "[...] del Sig: D. Benigno Zerafa [...]". Since it was not customarily for Zerafa to use the title "del Signor" for himself in his autograph scores and in the hundreds of separate parts he himself copied, it is clear that, as the the calligraphy also suggests, the separate parts were copied by another person.

#### Z13 (18.6.1745)

This is certainly one of Zerafa's least well-preserved manuscripts. The autograph score and separate parts are in such bad condition that most of the folios in the score are destroyed. The twenty-one separate parts are also very fragile and partially destroyed on account of deterioration caused by moisture. At the end of the *Gloria* movement there is a three-bar cut executed by the composer (starting on f. 23v with the first half bar,

<sup>13</sup> Girolamo Abos uses this term in his 'complete' Mass for four voices in G major (s.d., ACM., File no. 9).



followed by the remaining two and a half bars on f. 24r), cutting short the ending of the movement by three bars. The only part that had already been copied at this point was that for the violin 1.

#### Z14 (3.12.1745)

The composer intended to write this work for Vespers of 28-29 June 1745, but it was probably not completed in time and was left unfinished for some months. The two dates on the autograph score, (p. 1) "Beatus vir / à B Solo / pp [sic] SS. Pietro e / Paolo dell' / anno 1745", and (end page) "Finis. Laus Deo / li 3. Decembre 1745", along with the presence of two different ink colours – light brown ink, suggestive of June 1745, and dark brown ink, suggestive of December 1745 – show that it is unlikely that it was performed on time six months earlier. These variations in the ink colour show that many sections were formed by first writing out all the notes of the most prominent part and then filling in the other parts in turn, a procedure that many composers, including Vivaldi, very often adopted.<sup>14</sup>

In movement IV the key signature shows three sharps (F#, C#, G#) as in the trumpet and oboe, and violin 1/2 lines except bass and Basso, where F#, F#, C# [sic] can be plainly seen. The real key here is definitely D major, and not A major, showing that the composer inadvertently applied an incorrect key signature to the mentioned instruments. A similar mistake appears in movement III, where Zerafa inadvertently wrote two sharps for violin 1/2 and only one sharp for the Bass and continuo lines. The key here is B minor.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Talbot, 'VII: A Vivaldi Sonata with Obligato Organ in Dresden', in id., *Venetian Music in the Age of Vivaldi* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 81-103, at p. 89.

A characteristic that occurs regularly in Zerafa is the use of shorthand symbols (also typical of the Baroque) in both scores and parts. Here, the composer makes use of an “&c” sign (employed in Z13, too) following the main title, that is, *Beatus vir &c*. This implies ‘and so on’, and was often used by the composer to cut short a title by summarising it accordingly. A full title would have been drafted as: *Beatus vir a Basso solo con stromenti di Benigno Zerafa 1745*.

#### Z15 (10.3.1746)

The liturgical cycles for Holy Week (lessons and lamentations, responsories) and Christmas (responsories), and for the Office of the Dead, furnish rich examples of Neapolitan sacred music in the 18th century. This is Zerafa’s first set of twenty-seven responsories for Holy Week, and on the last page of the manuscript we find a rare appearance of the words: “Ipse qui cepit, hoc, auxiliante Dei gratia, opus perfecit die x. / Martij 1746”, meaning: He who started this composition, completed it, with the help of God, on 10 March 1746. Also rather uncommon is the exceptionally decorative title page of the organ part.

On the last two staves of f. 8r three bars of music written in pencil suggest that they were executed by another hand several years later. A tiny ‘x’ on b. 139 indicates that the pencil version served as a draft alternative for the succeeding three bars following b. 139 (i.e. bb. 140-142). Interestingly, the autograph score is made of seventeen gatherings of folios which Zerafa numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., in the top left-hand corner during the process of composition, and prior to their sewing. The numbers represent gathering signatures and not ‘folio’ or ‘page’ numbers.

### Z16 (? 1746)

The date "1746" is written on the organ part only. In movement V Zerafa writes "Le Trombe qui finiscono" (under bb. 17-18), indicating that the trumpets are not employed any more after b. 18 of this movement. There are also two separate pieces of manuscript found in the violin 1/2 parts, on both of which a musical excerpt that recalls the *Missa pastorale* is written, although the music does not conform to that of the original Mass. One possibility is that the music was composed subsequently as a replacement.

### Z17 (? 1746)

Representing something encountered occasionally in other of Zerafa's works, we find here an insertion, at b. 15 of movement III, of a lone bar in 2/4 in the middle of a section in 4/4 metre. As already stated above, this is a simple matter of notational style other than a true change in metre (further information about changes in metre in Zerafa is given in chapter five). A mistake in the violin 2 and violin 2 (E/P) parts has led the copyist to add a piece of paper in the form of a stave projection beyond staves eleven and eight, respectively, of f. 1r. Both fragments measure 120 x 20 mm approximately.

### Z18 (25.6.1747)

On f. 1r Zerafa writes the word "Partimento" to indicate the Basso continuo line. This is used again in Z20 (see below for further details). Other obsolete terms used in this work include the direction "siegue [...] /

a tre nel cartellino", "nel cartellino" implying here: in the separate solo part; also "instrumenti" (as used in the organ part), which is an old, latinate variant of "istromenti", or "strumenti" in modern Italian.

It is clear that Zerafa intended to employ two oboes in this Mass, since the opening of the *Kyrie* is entrusted to two separate instruments. Although Zerafa's instrumental designations include the word "Oboe" at the top stave (given in the singular), the first few bars are for two oboes, indicated through the use of the direction "Unisoni con i VV.<sup>ni</sup>" (in unison [plural] with the violins). Further, bars 4-5 and 18-20 have two notes written on top of each other (with up-stems and down-stems, denoting two separate instruments), and also single notes with varying stem directions to indicate more than one instrument to the stave. All details point strongly to the presence of two separate instruments. However, from bar 24 onwards (to the end of the work) only one oboe is employed (shown by the single-stemmed notes). Indeed, a slight problem arises here concerning the performance of this work: the question is whether the oboe should play solo from bar 1 (hence eliminating a handful of notes assigned to a second oboe) or whether this second oboe turns up just to play the first 24 bars (even though several of them are silent) and then retires. Since the final intention of the composer seems to have been to eliminate the second oboe from the work, the second option seems inoperative.

Z19 (? 1749)

All the oblong folios in this work are in reality upright quarto folios that have been divided in half to produce two oblong folios. This was done to

economise on paper, since the employment of a full upright folio instead would have resulted in more than half the paper remaining void – a very uneconomical use, especially by 18th-century standards. In this work we also encounter the use of the term “Mottetto” (the present author has given a concise definition of this term in this chapter and also in chapter two).

In bar 1 the composer twice employs a sign: *ff*. This is a replica sign, and indicates a ‘repeat convention’ of the ‘enclosed’ bar: that is, bar one should be repeated as bar two. The sign is often used by copyists when, by accident, they have omitted a repeated bar, and also occasionally by composers for their ‘second thoughts’ (appendix D, folio 5).

#### Z20 (24.6.1751)

This *Dixit* was composed for the *Mnarja* of 1751 (28-29 June). In this work Zerafa wrote for the *flauto traverso* instead for the usual oboe. However, although the score prescribes two flutes, the two separate parts that exist are for two oboes instead. We can therefore assume that the actual performance of the work permitted the participation of either the two flutes or the two oboes, according to the performance necessities; it is important to note here that the two woodwind instruments were often interchangeable (in the hands of the same players) in the orchestral music of the 18th century.

In movement II (on f. 14r) the composer inadvertently exchanged the Basso and bass staves. To retain linear accuracy in the scoring order he wrote “partimento” to denote the Basso continuo line, and on f. 14v (p.

28) on a similar occasion he includes "verso del partimento" on stave three of system two, and again on stave four of system three and stave five of system four. On system four (stave three) the direction "il verso delli flauti" explains a similar, inadvertent mistake by indicating that the flute line shifts from stave five (written underneath the Basso line) to stave three.

#### Z21 (28.6.1751)

This Mass once again makes use of flutes, and forms a pair with the previous work, written for the same occasion. Interestingly, we are told the name of the second flautist who performed in this work: Basilio Cassar, whose name appears on f. 3v of the flute 2 part. In this case, and unlike in Z20, their presence suggests strongly that flutes were employed in place of oboes.

The manuscript uses extraordinarily flimsy (thin) paper throughout, lending most of the *folios* a near-transparent quality. Like the preceding work, this composition makes use of a wide assortment of rastrographies. A very amusing feature on f. 1v deserves mention: Zerafa has written a semibreve note within another slightly larger semibreve note, clearly showing that two notes of the same pitch have to be sounded here: that is, both instruments using the stave perform the same note. This is a rather rare notational usage in Zerafa; composers nowadays indicate the same thing by writing 'a 2', or else by placing two notes of the same pitch adjacent to each other (appendix D, folio 6).

The author wrote two versions of the *Qui tollis*; the first was originally scored without flutes and written on the usual eighteen-stave folios, whereas the revised version (recording slight modifications in the horn parts) includes the flutes and is written on twenty-four-stave folios. Both versions are 106 bars long, which makes it crystal clear that Zerafa intended only the newer version to be performed – a safe assumption since it is the only version included in the copyists' (separate) parts. This suggests further that the composer had already completed the entire Mass before he decided to undertake the revision, since the new version, written on a separate quaternion, was inserted and sewn in between folios 24v and 25r, implying a later addition. The copyist's parts also attest to this, since flutes 1/2 are both written on one bifolio each, with a smaller (subsequently added) detached folio inserted inside; on both occasions, the smaller folio (f. 3) contains the music for the revised *Qui tollis* movement (discussed above). Further, there is a very neat correction on f. 1v of the flute 1 part, which indicates a possible mistake in the process of copying. We also find that, on account of the use of eighteen-stave folios for the opening of the *Gloria*, the composer had no choice but temporarily to allot three void staves (that is, occupied by rests) to the SATB choir, which has not yet started to perform. Zerafa solved this problem by immediately reverting to the use of twenty-stave folios just before the entrance of the choir, after the opening instrumental ritornello concludes.

#### Z22 (21.4.1752)

Z22 was composed during the period when Zerafa was suspended from his post at the Cathedral. The score is extraordinarily large (82ff., 164pp.), formed from sheets in upright format measuring 315 x 460 mm

approximately; the extra-large sheets have been created by not making the second fold that turns upright folio into oblong quarto format.

This autograph score offers an interesting instance of second thoughts. It is clear that Zerafa originally intended to conclude the composition at f. 72r, but then decided to lengthen the work. Originally, this Mass was due to end on this folio (p. 143), on which the composer had already written the concluding seven bars of the work plus a date, "20 April 1752", which was added after the final double barline. Nonetheless, the composer abandoned the idea of concluding the work 'prematurely' and inserted a ten-folio gathering in between f. 71 and f. 72 of the manuscript, changing the foliation to: f. 71, ff. 72-81 (new ten-folio gathering), f. 82 (the original f. 72, ending the Mass). Zerafa thereby lengthened the work substantially, adding a further sixty-nine bars to the original seven that were already copied (thus making the total seventy-six bars in all), copying the new bars on to ff. 72r-79r. Folio 79r became the new last folio of the work, and a new date of completion, "21 April 1752", was written on it, showing that Zerafa finished the work the day after composing the first ending as described above. Folios 79v-81 and 82v are all void. There are two types of watermark on the folios of this composition:

- (i) the 'tre mezze lune' (already discussed), and
- (ii) a bell-shaped watermark.

Curiously, Zerafa wrote "atque B<sup>o</sup> Joanni" in the concluding monogram of the Mass. It is known that later in his career Zerafa started to include "Beato Benedicto" in the monogram closing his works (from Z110 onwards), but there is no clear explanation so far for the composer's decision to include the name for this different saint at the end of the work.



This *Lætatus sum* is scored for violin 1/2 and continuo. However, on f. 1r Zerafa wrote "Trombe" to the left of the top stave and penned in the treble clef, key signature and metre. This stave was left void thereafter, automatically excluding the trumpets (as is also confirmed by the absence of separate parts for this instrument).

A complex situation regarding various dating possibilities for this work demands our attention here: the autograph score is marked 28 January 1753, whereas all the separate parts are dated 1754. There are several possible explanations for the discrepancy: first, that this was a mistake on the part of the copyist; second, that the original parts were damaged, and a new set was copied a year later; a third explanation, the most likely to be true, is that, since this work was composed when Zerafa was suspended from his post of *maestro di cappella*, the composer left the work untouched – that is, he did not submit the separate parts for the performing instruments – until the occasion arose for its first performance after he was reinstated in his post: i.e., when an immediate need for separate parts arose.

## Z24, Z25, Z26, Z26a, Z26b (28.5.1753)

Zerafa originally intended to compose the motets for organ solo and SATB only, before he finally added a violin part at the bottom line of each system: an addition which, as the ink-colour shows, was implemented only after the work was finished and the parts copied.

On b. 93 of Z25 (*O Rex gloriae*) the composer included a 'larger-than-usual' vertical stroke in the form of a wedge-shaped 'l' over the notes of the SATB and continuo lines, but excluding the violin line. Contrary to the usual modern interpretation (*staccatissimo*), the wedge was normally employed in the early and mid 18th century for ordinary *staccato*. Zerafa's purpose in this instance was probably to warn the singers not to linger on the note bearing the final syllable, "-ia", of "Alleluia", in order to make the opening of the succeeding phrase clearly distinct. This is the only instance where Zerafa employs a vertical stroke for the very last syllable of a word. The exceptional size of this symbol (appendix D, folio 7) may be intended simply to underline the importance, in its context, of the desired musical effect.

#### Z27 (? 1753)

This is indubitably a composition manuscript; the work starts in the middle of f. 1r since the whole first system is cancelled on account of a mistake. It is interesting to see that Zerafa needed only one violin part here (and in the next work, too); although two separate violin parts are included (violin 1 and *violino unisono*), they are identical in content.

#### Z34 (24.9.1753)

The autograph score does not contain an oboe 1/2 line, although separate parts for the two oboes are supplied. This possibly implies that Zerafa conceived the oboe parts only after the work was finished, and 'extracted' them from the existing score to make separate parts – a Baroque convention which reveals how composers regularly created extra

instrumental parts (*strumenti di rinforzo*) directly from the score.

#### Z37 (1.10.1753)

At the top of each system in the score there is one vacant stave that has been left unfilled. The bass clef (along with a key signature and time signature) indicates that it was intended for horns, but since there are no separate parts for brass instruments, we can safely surmise that Zerafa originally intended to include the horns but finally decided otherwise, leaving the staves void. However, he may have also left their addition as a future possibility not to be realised immediately.

Quite intriguingly, the SATB separate parts exhibit at the top a "1745" date, which was cancelled and changed to "1753", written in different ink. This could well mean that Zerafa originally composed (or sketched) the work in 1745, but rearranged it for use in 1753 (i.e. the year when Zerafa was reinstated as *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral). The mixture of grey and brown ink in the manuscript offers support for this hypothesis.

#### Z40-Z45 (? 1753)

In the first motet (out of a collection of six) the composer left two void lines at the top of each system which were intended for violins 1/2, an idea which Zerafa later abandoned. Although he designated the work as "con VV.<sup>ni</sup>", the violin lines were never supplied. There is also a mistake in the dates written on the soprano and alto parts (mistakenly given here as 1750[?]), but the organ part gives the correct year of composition, "1753".

#### Z46 (22.12.1753)

This *Magnificat* has a deleted date, "1745", which was written on almost every separate part; this was replaced by "1753", raising the possibility that this work, too, was composed (or sketched) in 1745 but revised for performance in 1753. A similar case arises with Z37, where the reworking of an already conceived composition is evident. Moreover, nearly all the written notation in the autograph manuscript of Z46 is in light brown ink, except for the horn parts at the top of each system, whose notation is in dark brown. This difference suggests that Zerafa composed the work in 1745 without brass instruments (although a stave was reserved for them right from the beginning), but that when he revised it in 1753, he added them. Further, there are a number of other places where dark ink coexists with light ink, strongly implying that this work came into being in two stages. Z46 is undoubtedly a composition manuscript, since whole 'blocks' of stave system have been deleted by scribbling over them. Finally, the deleted year "1745" from the separate parts (replaced by "1753") suggests that the work was in actual fact completed and performed in 1745 but reworked and performed again in 1753 to produce the final version.

#### Z47 (30.12.1753)

Z47 presents us with a mixture of dates:

- a) the autograph score is dated 30 December 1753;
- b) all the separate parts except Horn 1/2 are dated 1754;
- c) the Horn 2 part names 1758 as the year; and
- d) the Horn 1 part is dated 1753.

The possible explanation is as follows: the decisive date remains the one given on the original score, 30 December 1753, the penultimate day of the year. The "1754" date on the copyists' parts derives from the fact that almost all of the parts were copied after the turn of the new year. The "1758" year could well be a mistake on the part of the copyist, who wrote a carelessly written '3' that only seems to be an '8'. Lastly, the "1753" on the Horn 2 part shows the completion date of the manuscript.

Z52 (26.3.1754)

An interesting feature in this work is the use of  $\frac{x}{9}$  in the figured bass, with 'x' denoting '10'. This is a rare usage, since normally only Arabic numerals are used in bass figures (appendix D, folio 8).

Z54 (? 1754)

On f. 1 the author wrote the following note: "Il verso, che deve fare l'Organo per il Coro prima della presente sequenza [sic] dev'essere in Delasolre #3", meaning: the verset that the organ has to play for the choir before the present sequence is performed has to be in D major.

Z55-Z84 (? 1754)

This important collection of works from the Proper of the Mass probably already existed earlier, and we can reasonably suspect that it was recopied only after the original selection had deteriorated through extensive use. The manuscript must have been bound by Zerafa himself and was

intended to follow the items in the order of the respective liturgical functions celebrated at the Cathedral. It is unlikely that Zerafa composed all thirty compositions in 1754; he may instead have collected the graduals, alleluia verses and offertories over the years. From the collection one can work out the major feasts of the Cathedral for which the graduals/alleluia verses and offertories were intended, starting with Z55:

- i) St Mark,
- ii) Ascension,
- iii) Pentecost,
- iv) Corpus Christi,
- v) St. Peter and St. Paul Apostles,
- vi) Conversion of St. Paul Apostle,
- vii) St. Anne Mother of the BVM,
- viii) Assumption of the BVM,
- ix) Nativity of the BVM,
- x) Betrothal of the BVM (*Desponsatione*),
- xi) Immaculate Conception,
- xii) Dedication of a Church,
- xiii) All Saints,
- xiv) Christmas,
- xv) St. Stephen Martyr, and
- xvi) St. John Apostle and Evangelist.

It is equally significant that the separate parts are similarly grouped in large fascicles, so the composer must have intended this compilation to be used regularly in succeeding years. Unfortunately, the exact date of composition of each individual work will remain uncertain. The separate parts contained in Ms. 263 have all been given page numbers (instead of the more usual folio numbers comprising *recto* and *verso*) by the copyist himself, each number being located at the top corner of each page.

In Z72, Zerafa mistakenly inserted a key signature of two sharps in all the staves, and then cancelled one to change the key. To avoid any misunderstanding, the composer inserted the words "Tutte le chiavi con un Diesis" at the top of f. 49v, meaning: all the clefs with one sharp.

Z87 (? 1755)

The score for this composition is missing and, as with Z50 (Ms. 301), only the parts survive, from which the year of composition is derived.

Z88 (29.10.1755)

This manuscript comprises eight folios which are used jointly for the present *Dixit* and the succeeding *Confitebor*; a concluding date is found on f. 3v, which happens to contain the end of the *Dixit*. At the end of the *Dixit*, both on the score and the separate parts Zerafa wrote: "siegue [sic] *Confitebor*"; the ink and calligraphy both indicate that the two psalms were composed in quick succession. This information confirms that the two psalms are associated through their date of composition; hence the same date has been assigned to Z89 (see below).

Z89 (29.10.1755)

There is no date at the end of this *Confitebor*, and the closest date obtainable to this work is derived from that of the previous work (discussed above). Z89 occupies the last five folios (ff. 4r-8) of Ms. 277.

#### Z90 (24.1.1756)

This *Deus in adjutorium* is followed by a draft copy of another *Deus* (Z91). On f. 1v of the alto ripieno part, the author wrote a dedication to a named person – “Al R:mo Sig:r Can:o Garcin, Valletta”, meaning: To the Reverend Canon Garcin of Valletta, referring to a man who served as the Cathedral’s deputy. Although oboe parts do not figure in the score, they exist as separate parts, suggesting later addition.

#### Z91 (24.1.1756)

This is a draft copy of a *Deus in adjutorium* which is in unfinished and incomplete form (for further details about this work, see the thematic catalogue entry for Z91). Interesting to us here is the process through which Zerafa designed the work in the course of composition, starting first from the continuo (which is complete), and then filling in the tenor and alto voices. So, the bass line (a basic ingredient in Baroque music) takes precedence here and is planned in advance of the remaining voices.

#### Z92-Z94 (24.4.1756)

The title of this collection of works runs: “Introito, Graduale, ed Offertorio per la Domenica in Albis, li 24 Aprile 1756”. The organ parts for Z93 and Z94 were left void by the composer, and hence are missing from the score, leaving just the alto part in complete form. This is also the first of the few instances where Zerafa specifies “contralto” rather than “alto”, a feature found again in Z144-Z146.



The composer also makes use here of a 'back slash' (an uncommon feature in his works) as a means of separating words in titles, as the following title on the soprano part shows: *Introito per la Domenica in Albis li 24. \ Soprano / Aprile 1756, e presentato nell'anno 1775. sotto lj 23. Aprile, per l'esaltatione di nostro Signore Pio Sesto.* This title also confirms that Z92, which was composed for the 'Domenica in Albis' (the first Sunday after Easter), was reused for the celebration of the election of the new Pope Pius VI in 1775. Likewise, as in Z106, Z124 and Z131, Z92 (*Quasi modo infantes*) alternates plainchant intonations and versets with polyphonic sections.

#### Z95 (10.6.1756)

This work was composed for the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (29 June 1756). The especially important note on the title page of this work asking for vocal reinforcements in the two *cori* provides eloquent testimony:

In questo Dixit / Bisogna rinforzare il canto fermo / con  
sedici voci, se vi sara gran / numero di musici, e se non vi  
sara / gran numero di musici, che si rin= / forzi almeno con  
otto voci.

(In this *Dixit* one has to supplement the cantus firmus with sixteen voices if there is a large number of instrumental players, and if this is not the case, to reinforce the cantus firmus with at least eight voices.)

It is very interesting to see how Zerafa managed to write the two vocal *rinforzi* parts without including them separately in the score. All vocal

*rinforzi* are required to sustain the *cantus firmus*, and, on completing it, are asked to join the rest of the choral voices (see thematic catalogue entry for Z95 for a detailed note on the auxiliary choirs). Another point worth noting is the use of the viola, an instrument already employed in Z22 and Z86. In Zerafa the viola is seldom used, as is quite usual in contemporary Neapolitan practice, but here it is given greater importance.

#### Z96 (25.6.1756)

As in the previous work, there are two smaller choirs of *rinforzi* (ii) assigned to the *cantus firmus*:

Coro I: SATB (+SA (ii) for movement II), and

Coro II: SATB (+A (ii) for movement II).

Interestingly the alto (ii) part employs a tenor clef just after the intonation of the *cantus firmus*; there are eighteen bars in all for which the composer writes "tenore", before changing the clef to alto.

#### Z98-Z99 (29.12.1757)

Zerafa names these two works "arie". The first composition (Z98, *O Felix carina*) is a complete recitative and aria. The second work (Z99, *Omnes ergo*) is in unfinished form. Zerafa's formal plans for Z99 can be detected from the draft he has left us: the title "Aria Seconda" followed by the opening recitative (melody only without the bass), and the direction "Aria" coming after the recitative, of which only eight bars for the violin 1 have been notated. From the incomplete parts of the second aria we can again see how Zerafa went about his compositional process, the violin 1 theme being supplied first. The separate parts bear the date 1758, the year

when they were most probably copied, since this work dates from the last three days of 1757.

Z100 (30.12.1757)

The dates on the separate parts vary irregularly between "1757" and "1758", implying that some were copied immediately after composition (in December 1757), whereas the rest were copied in the new year.

Z102 (9.1.1758)

This manuscript has two missing folios: the first folio, which contains two systems with ten bars of music, and the blank last folio. The missing ten bars can be restored from the separate parts.

Z103 (21.6.1758)

This manuscript (Ms. 254) contains Zerafa's longest work, constituting a thick score of 97 folios (194pp). All the folios bear the Venetian *tre mezze lune* watermark and come from the same batch. This is a major work, conceived for the titular feast of 1758, at which the newly elected Bishop of Malta, Bartholomæus Rull, presided.

Z104-Z106 (26.6.1758)

Ms. 322 comprises three works: *Sacerdos et Pontifex* (Z104), *Sancte Paule Apostole* (Z105) and *Benedicta sit* (Z106). The date is given at the end of the *Sancte Paule* antiphon (Z105) on f. 6v; since the three sources are all

bound into the same manuscript in succession, the same date has been assigned to them. However, it is open to doubt whether Zerafa in reality composed the trilogy in exact succession. Differences in ink colour suggest that Zerafa did not in fact compose them all sequentially but wrote only Z104 and Z105 in this manner, placing the date at the end of the second item. The introit (Z106) bears no date and displays a different ink colour from that of the previous two works. It also exhibits two titles (one also in lighter ink): the one given above, and another rendered as *Introito per la SS:ma Trinità*, which suggests that it was conceived first as an introit for the feast of the Holy Trinity (21 May 1758) and then renamed for the second occasion.

Zerafa had already completely written the first nine bars for horns 1/2 and oboes 1/2 before he decided to exclude these instruments from the work. A probable reason for this omission is that since this work was to be performed outside the Cathedral, the composer wished to keep the instrumentation simple. This manuscript has a number of ceremonial instructions written in Italian on various pages. Starting with that on page one, all transcriptions are followed by a translation:

F. 1r: "Vicino la / Barracca / e si replica / insin a tanto / che Monsig.<sup>re</sup> / vesti:<sup>to</sup> e parato / per marciare / si mette in / camino. / Allegro."

([This should be performed] repeatedly as required near the *barracca* [hut] until the Monsignor, robed and ready for the cortège, starts to walk. Allegro.)

F. 3v: "Doppo quest' Antiphona si can= / tano quei salmi che ordinera il Maestro di / Ceremonie, cioe salmi d'allegrezza, / su qualunque Tono il

piu conosciuto. (//) Doppo questo nel medesimo punto, / che Monsig:<sup>re</sup> arrivera nella porta della / Chiesa, e vi sara, o si fara il cenno, / o pure il segno dal Maestro di ceremo= / nie per dar principio al Te Deum, allora / subito si principiera il detto Te Deum etc.”

(After the singing of this antiphon [*Sacerdos et Pontifex*] the psalms, as ordered by the Master of Ceremonies, are to be performed, that is, lively psalms on any of the [Church] tones, [perhaps] the best known one. After this, and at the moment that the Monsignor is received at the main door of the [Cathedral] Church, wait for the signal, that is, the ‘go ahead’ from the Master of Ceremonies, to administer the commencement of the *Te Deum*; at that moment, therefore, start the *Te Deum* etc.)

F. 4r: “Doppo il Te Deum le risposte / seguenti:

- V. Protector Etc.
- R/. Et respice in faciem Christi tui.
- V. Salvum Etc.
- R/. Deus meus sperantem inte.
- V. Mitte ei Etc.
- R/. Et de Sion tuere eum.
- V. Nihil Etc.
- R/. Et filius iniquitatis non apponat nocere ei.
- V. Domine exaudi Etc.
- R/. Et Clamor meus ad te veniat.
- V. Dominus vobiscum.
- R/. Et cum Spiritu tuo.
- R/. Amen.

Doppo questo si sona l’Organo fin a tanto, che finisce l’osculo. / Doppo tutto questo si dira / l’antiphona Sancte Paule. / subito, che sara fino l’osculo. Doppo si fa la Benedizione, e doppo si sona l’organo di nuovo fin’ a tanto, che s’incomincia Terza. E doppo questo l’introito e la Messa. Siegue Sancte Paule.”

(After the completion of the *Te Deum*, the following responses should be performed: V. Protector Etc. [...] R/. Amen. Following this, the organ is to

play until the kissing [of the crucifix] ends. After all this, execute the *Sancte Paule* antiphon at once, and immediately at the point when the kissing [of the crucifix] terminates. Then the Benediction ensues, followed again by organ playing until Terce begins. Afterwards, the Introit and Mass will follow. Now follows *Sancte Paule*.)

F. 7r: "Introito per la SS:<sup>a</sup> Trinita.

a.s.: Introito / per il pos= / sesso o pure / del Vescovo / primo ingresso / nella Diocesi."

(Introit for the Holy Trinity.

a.s.: Introit for the occasion of the consecration, or otherwise, of the Bishop, and His arrival into the Diocese.)

F. 8r: "Quando il Vescovo principia la visita si fara come e / notato più sotto."

(When the Bishop starts to examine [the clergy], do as stated hereunder.)

End Page, f. 8v: "Veni Creator etc. Si Principia dalla porta del Palazzo, / e si continua fino la porta della chiesa, e doppo si / dice Sacerdos et Pontifex vicino la porta della Chiesa / dalla parte di dentro. /

Veni Creator Spiritus,  
Mentes tuorum visita,  
Imple superna grazia,  
Que tu creasti Pectora. /

Doppo questo si dice Te Deum etc. finche / s'arriva nel Coro. Poi la messa solenne coll' In= / troito prima, doppo la messa il Responsorio Libera / me Domine etc. / Doppo questo si dice Tantum ergo etc. e si fer= / ma finche si darà, l segno dal M:º di Ceremonie / per l'ultima strofa Genitori etc."

(The singing of the *Veni Creator* should commence at the [main] door of the Palace and, proceeding on until reaching the [main] door of the Church, [at which point] the *Sacerdos et Pontifex* is performed, and which should start while heading towards the inner entrance of the Church. *Veni Creator Spiritus* [...] *Que tu creasti Pectora.* /. Then sing the *Te Deum* etc., until he arrives in the Choir. Solemn Mass will then take place starting first with the Introit, and after Mass, the Responsory *Libera me Domine* etc. Afterwards, the *Tantum ergo* is sung, etc., actuating a break after the completion of the first verse, then wait for the signal from the Master of Ceremonies for [the singing of] the last strophe, *Genitori* etc.)

It is worth noting here that this is the only occasion in Zerafa when we find mention of a *Tantum ergo*, a setting that has not survived in Zerafa's oeuvre. Further, the mention of the responsory *Libera me* may indicate that the newly elected Bishop visited the underground cemetery of Mdina (beneath the Cathedral itself), during which the funerary responsory was performed. Another interesting question not discussed here is where the "barracca" was situated, where the musicians were located, and in what manner everyone proceeded on foot towards the cathedral.

Z107 (4.5.1759)

This manuscript is a composition copy that does not bear the composer's name. However, although there is no reference to any composer on the separate parts, the calligraphy, concluding monogram, notational procedures and stylistic traits are unmistakably Zerafa's. There are also several mistakes and a considerable number of corrections that testify to

the authenticity of the work. The manuscript is not in a very good condition, either, and the organ part is missing. Zerafa used page numbering at the top left- and right-hand corners (similar to what he did in Z55). Inadvertently, at one stage the composer numbered the pages incorrectly and had to write 26, 27, 28, a, b, c, d, 29, 30, 31 etc., in order to rectify the mistake. Further, the composer wrote a first version of the second recitative on f. 18r but replaced it with a later version, written on f. 25v.

#### Z108 (? 1763)

The organ part for coro I is dated "1764", whereas all the remaining parts are dated "1763". It is probable that the original was lost and that a new copy was supplied for the 1764 Holy Week service. There are several pencil markings (numbers) in the first two responsories of the score, indicating the sum of consecutive void bars.

#### Z109-Z112 (30.1.1764)

The four works that constitute this manuscript score (Ms. 303) are *Deus in Adjutorium* (Z109), *Dixit Dominus* (Z110), *Laudate Pueri* (Z111) and *Magnificat* (Z112). There is no date for Z109, and the closest date is found on the last page of the second work (*Dixit*), which immediately follows it. Zerafa wrote *Siegie Dixit Dominus* at the end of Z109, a clear indication that the two works form a pair. The two other works were composed in quick succession (as the two dates accompanying them reveal).



The last three works are 'signed' at the end of each with the motto "B. Benedicto". Zerafa started to write "Beato Benedicto" as the concluding monogram in Z110 (appendix D, folio 9), after which he continued to use it almost uninterruptedly. Zerafa uses the direction "non obligati" on all separate parts except the horn 1/2, oboe 1/2 and organ. Although this direction is not written on the woodwind and brass parts, it usually applies also to the horns and oboes, which could be left out 'according to necessity' in performance.

#### Z113 (? 1764)

There are at least two mistakes in dating here: the soprano 1 and soprano 1 ripieno parts both give "1768" instead of "1764" (the date shown on all the rest). Unquestionably, this score also involves the hand of a new copyist, who committed a number of errors in the copying (as in the *Qui tollis* movement (VIII) of the soprano 1 part, where the key signature has one sharp, although the movement is, in fact, in C major.) The bass part seems to have been started by the new copyist but was actually finished by Zerafa, and the horn 2 part contains a correction made by Zerafa himself. The set of separate parts for this work proves to be one of the few in which most of the parts are not in Zerafa's hand, drawing attention to the point that the composer partly wrote out himself, and partly supervised, the copying of the score and parts.

#### Z114 (17.6.1764)

The new concluding monogram that Zerafa started to use in Z110 figures once again here, this time with the addition of the word "auctore"

(author), along with "Beato Benedicto".

Z115 (3.7.1764)

The composer started to include the term "originale" on his scores from here onwards, as the following title on page one shows: *Laudate pueri à voce sola di soprano di Benigno Zerafa 1764. Originale*. He also wrote full 'closing' information and dates on all the separate parts.

Z116 (20.9.1764)

Interestingly, all the separate parts carry precise dating, including the day and month of copying, something not encountered elsewhere in Zerafa's oeuvre. Unfortunately, the separate part for the solo mandolin is missing.

Z117 (16.8.1765)

The composer might have intended (later on?) to include trumpets and oboes in the score, as two void staves at the top of each system, each with a treble clef, suggest.

Z118 (24.9.1765)

There is a possibility that Zerafa composed the solo works (Z115-Z118) for a special occasion during which a number of proficient solo performers, among them a soprano, a mandolin player and a cellist, were available. The cello part in Z118 includes a cello line supported underneath by a continuo line with bass figures.

Another interesting remark is found in the title of the organ part: *Organo / Beatus vir à voce sola di Soprano con Vio= / loncello, e VV:ni obligati, e con Stromenti / di fiato senz' obligo / di Benigno Zerafa / 1765*. With no separate woodwind parts surviving, and no woodwind parts provided in the score, it appears that, as in common 18th-century instrumental practice, the woodwinds played the violin 1/2 lines.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, “senza obligo” means ‘optional’, and if the wind parts were not supplied separately, they would have been derived from the most appropriate string parts. Copyists of the time were used to adapting string parts for winds, missing out the double-stops or transposing to a higher octave notes that were too low to be performable (this applies especially to oboe parts), simplifying difficult passage-work, etc.

Z119 (29.11.1765)

The following note, written on f. 29v (at the end of the Mass) states: “Le risposte de j quattro Prelati, anche presente il Vescovo, / con tutto questo si fanno da j Musici. / Sieguono cinque Responsorii per le cinque Assoluzzio / ni, che si donano nelle Cappelle ardenti. / Sappiasi, che l’ultimo Responsorio (Libera me Domine etc.) / puol servire in tutti j Funerali, anche in quei, che non sono / Cappelle ardenti”. This means: The responses of the four prelates, as well as that by the Bishop, including all the following, will be executed by the musicians. Now follow the five responsories for the five absolutions that are customarily administered in the mortuary chapels. Note that the last Responsorio (Libera me Domine etc.) can be performed at all funerals, even in those that are not held in

<sup>15</sup> Evidence for the doubling by wind players of violin lines is provided by such occurrences as the following annotation in the oboe 1/2 stave (in Z1, movement VIII, bb. 61 ff): “[oboi] unisoni colli [sic] violini”.

mortuary chapels.

Z120 (8.1.1766)

Ironically, this is one of those few works whose scoring is inconsistent. Zerafa stopped writing for solo violoncello in the last three movements, after only composing exclusively for solo violoncello in the first three. Further, as happened in countless of his previous works, Zerafa began composing parts for Horn 1/2 and Oboe 1/2 but completed only nine bars before deciding to abandon the idea.

There is also some ambiguity in the dating of this composition. Although the year "1766" is found on the autograph score, we also find the following on the separate organ part: "Finis. / Laus Deo, BMV. Dñque Gentium, atque B.º Benedicto. / 16. agosto 1765". This suggests that the first draft was made in August of the previous year, before Zerafa returned to complete the work in 1766.

Z121 (4.3.1766)

This *Requiem Mass* for SATB and organ only was discovered in December 2000 by the curator of the Archives of Mdina, Mgr. Rev. John Azzopardi. The first folio, or folios, of the score and all the separate parts are missing, but the composition manuscript survives as an autograph manuscript in the hand of Zerafa, signed and dated on the last page as: "Laus Deo BMV. Drque [sic] Gentium, atque B.º Benedicto, ad Animarum quoque / fidelium defunctorum suffragium. li 4º / Marzo / 1766. / Finis".

Z124 (16.2.1775)

All the separate parts are neatly copied out by the composer, who uniquely included the prefix "del Sig.<sup>e</sup> D.", which makes this a rare case with regard to titling. Quite unusually, Zerafa here produced a work composed in honour of the birth of a son to the King of Naples. Naples remained important to Zerafa until late in his life, as archival documents concerning the purchase of organs and other instruments and the engagement of singers from this southern Italian city testify.

Z125-Z130 (11.3.1775)

The composer uses the phrase "Beato Benedicto Abbati" in his closing formula. There is also a slight ambiguity with the dating of the parts here: the SATB parts give "1774" as the year when they were copied, while the autograph score and organ part both have "1775" as the year of composition.

Z131 (13.5.1775)

This work is linked to Z124 (above) and is once again dedicated to the King of Naples, as the title states: *Introito per la Messa di S. Francesco di Paula, in ringraziamento per la nascita del / Figlio del Re di Napoli. li 13. Maggio 1775. / Originale.* The dedication refers to a Neapolitan saint: St. Francis of Paula, a native saint of Calabria (southern Italy), whose feast was celebrated with great zeal in Naples. Interestingly, the whole organ part is blank here, and no separate part for organ exists, which confirms that the organ part is missing.

This is a historically important work composed for the occasion of the election of the new Grand Master of Malta, Emanuel De Rohan Polduc, in 1776. The *lieto fine* (happy ending) of the work is described in the fitting dedication to the Grand Master which the composer has written on various pages of the manuscript:

Responsorio per il possesso del eMinentis.º [sic] e Degenis.º

Gran Maestro De Rohan. 1776. Originale.

A note on f. 2v of the organ part is of immense importance with regard to the inaugural reception of the Grand Master in Mdina. The note provides first-hand information on the conduct of the ceremony and on how and where the work was performed, including precise and detailed orders for the musicians. The instructions are transcribed below and are followed by a translation:

f. 2v: "Il Felicis.º Possesso del Eminentis.º Fra D. / Emanuele De Rohan fu preso dal med.mo / sotto li 27. Ottobre 1776. 1776. 1776. / Il qui contenuto Responsorio si deve / dire da j Musici nella distanza verso / la Notabile, e dal genuflessorio, in maniera, / che tra il genuflessorio, ed il coro della / Musica, vi sia la distanza, che vi deve / essere, in tutte le Processioni, tra quello, / che conduce, ed j Musici, ma non qualche / poco piu di spazio, a motivo de j molti mi= / nistri, si dovranno trovare tra l'uno, e l' / altro, cioe tra il genuflessorio, e detto / coro della Musica; ed in conseguenza / j detti Musici devono stare tra il ponte / e la porta della trincera, in maniera tale, / che quando marcia la processione, saranno / nel luogo solito di tutte le processioni: Finito / il d.º Responsorio, subito

s'incomincia il Can / tico Benedictus settimo Tono solenne. / S'averta pure, che il detto Responsorio / deve incominciarsi un poco prima dell'arrivo / dell'Eminentis.º Gran Maestro, al genuflessorio, / accio finisca, assieme col bagio della Croce."

(The most fortunate election of the Most Eminent Fra D. Emanuel De Rohan was celebrated by the said [Grand Master] on 27 October 1776 [thrice repeated]. The Responsory contained herein has to be performed by the musicians in the space between the kneeling-stool and Mdina, in such a manner that, between the kneeling-stool and the singers the same distance usually kept in processions between the leader and the musicians, is maintained, but perhaps allowing a little more space on account of the numerous ministers who will be in between the kneeling-stool and the choir of singers; consequently, the musicians have to stay between the bridge and the gate to the moat in such a manner that when the procession starts, they will already be in the usual place for all processions. The moment the responsory finishes, start the canticle *Benedictus* on the solemn seventh tone. Therefore, to confirm, this *responsorio* has to commence just a little while before the arrival of the Most Eminent Grand Master at the genuflector [kneeling-stool], in order that it concludes with the kissing of the Cross.)

Z133-Z137 (2.11.1779)

All five Masses constituting this collection were composed one after the other; no new or title page is interposed between one work and the next, and every Mass 'overlaps' at the concluding bar of the previous one, telling us instantly that the five compositions were conceived as a group. In addition, the only date given at the end of the last Mass serves as the

date common to all. Each Mass carries a title: *Messa Prima*, *Messa Seconda*, etc., and, rather uncommonly in Zerafa, they are not 'Kyrie/Gloria' Masses; instead, the composer has written the music to all the sections of the Ordinary but one, the *Benedictus*, which is omitted from all five. Each *Sanctus* therefore ends on the first 'Hosanna in excelsis'. Further, the five Masses feature a choir and organ texture, and no extra instruments are involved implying that Zerafa intended the Masses to be performed without instrumental accompaniment except for the organ.

The missing 'Allegro' tempo (as in Z133, given in editorial brackets) has been adopted by the present author for the movements lacking a tempo direction. This has been carried out after a thorough consultation with, and a detailed examination of, all the other Masses' tempo markings, and by comparison with the other works in the same collection.

#### Z138-Z143 (16.6.1781)

Rather important in this six-work collection is the original inscription on the title page of the manuscript which, for the first time, contains the phrase "in servizio della Cattedrale di Malta [...]". This note shows officially that the manuscript belonged by right to the Cathedral of Malta. According to the following note (given on Z138), the motets were intended to be performed at any time during the liturgical year:

Mottetti per ogni tempo, in servizio della / S. Cattedrale di  
Malta di Don Benigno Zerafa M.o di Capp. / della medesima  
/ 1781, and Mottetti per ogni tempo di Benigno Zerafa 1781.  
Originale / Psalm. / 144 / Allegro.



## Z144-Z146 (? 1782)

This file contains separate parts for three litanies but no score.

## Z147 (s.d.)

This manuscript is partly smudged with stains of ink. The watermarks of the separate parts for the following instruments are:

violin 1 - a 'Bell',  
violin 1 (E/P) - a 'Horse', and  
violin 2 - 'CCC', or 'tre mezze lune'.

## Z148 (s.d.)

This is the last composition in the Zerafa collection, and is the second and final undated work. There is one bar missing in the organ part.

## Miscellaneous

In conclusion, it was confirmed by the present author in January 2001 that an anonymous manuscript designated 'Ms. 151A' and entitled (f. 1r) *Originale / Mottetti per la Processione / di San Gregorio / 1719*, is an authentic copy by Benigno Zerafa of a set of five motets composed by the preceding *maestro di cappella*, Don Pietro Gristi, in 1719 (the composer's identity has been confirmed by the curator of the archives, Mgr. Rev. John Azzopardi, who tracked down the official documentation proving that the set of five motets were commissioned to be composed by the said *maestro di cappella*). The calligraphy, including the lettering, numbering, flourishes, notation and stems, titling and corrections, shows that this is

an early manuscript copy by Zerafa. The manuscript comprises a total of twelve (12) folios, ff. 1v and 12v both being void of any notation; its dimensions are 200-205 x 290 mm, approximately, with a rastrography of 20 staves per page, and folios of a 'Flimsy' paper type. The motets dedicated to the feast of St. Gregory are:

- i) O populi fideles,
- ii) Ad cantus, ad plausus,
- iii) Veni sponsa Christi,
- iv) Jubilemus omnes, and
- v) O Doctor optime

Conceived for an SATB choir in homophonic style, they are supported by an ensemble comprising violins 1/2 and continuo. There are in all seven separate parts, likewise in the hand of Zerafa, which are kept in Ms. 579.

The layout of the manuscript score is as follows:

<i>Motet</i>	<i>Text Incipit</i>	<i>Bars</i>	<i>Folios</i>
I	O populi fideles	62	2r-4v
II	Ad cantus, ad plausus,	32	4r-6r
III	Veni sponsa Christi	53	6r-8r
IV	Jubilemus omnes	29	8v-10r
V	O Doctor optime	59	10r-12r

The manuscript may have been copied when Zerafa served as soprano in the *Cappella Musicale* (between 1737 and 1738) under the supervision of Gristi himself. If this assumption is proved, this non-original work will date from Zerafa's 'pre-Neapolitan' period. The cordial relationship between Gristi and Zerafa is recorded in Zerafa's Biography (chapter one), and Benigno's earliest musical training came under the same man, who was a close family friend of Zerafa's father.