

**Giulia de Caro: from whore to impresario.
On *cantarine* and theatre in Naples in the second half of the
seventeenth century**

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The interest in opera, the new theatrical genre which became established in Naples in the mid seventeenth century, involved people of widely differing social groups and educational backgrounds¹.

The debate concerning the first appearance of musical theatre caused keen competition between religious and State institutions; this competition increased as the years went by and only calmed down after Naples became an independent kingdom around 1734. The dominance of opera over all other forms of theatre seems to have been pursued with a number of different aims, which, however, all contributed to the spread of one ideology, however unknown and indefinite².

Stage performers were profoundly affected by this new form of drama, which suddenly began to flourish throughout Italy, probably because the sudden demand for skilled actors exceeded the number and talent of those available in the peninsula at the time. Moreover, the rise of opera influenced the emergence of professions and characters; they were essential to the ongoing changes in a situation until then characterised by different rules and dramatic forms.

Various people - both professional and amateur - were involved in the development of the specializations necessary for performing opera. Recklessly or

¹ Cf. Ulisse Prota Giurleo, *Breve storia del Teatro di Corte e della musica a Napoli nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, in: Felice De Filippis/Ulisse Prota Giurleo (ed.), *Il Teatro di Corte del Palazzo Reale di Napoli*, Napoli 1952, pp. 17-146; Domenico Antonio D'Alessandro, *L'opera in musica a Napoli dal 1650 al 1670*, in: Roberto Pane (ed.), *Seicento napoletano. Arte, ambiente e costume*, Milano 1984, pp. 409-430; Dinko Fabris, *Music in Seventeenth-Century Naples: Francesco Provenzale (1624-1704)*, Aldershot 2007.

² Cf. Francesco Cotticelli, *Teatro e legislazione teatrale*, in: Francesco Cotticelli/Paologiovanni Maione (eds.), *Storia della musica e dello spettacolo a Napoli. Il Settecento*, 2 tt., Napoli 2009, I, pp. 57-73.

consciously, they embarked on a fascinating and mysterious journey: they invented new jobs and presented themselves as self-appointed experts in the new art, although their previous acting experience was in other traditions. Men and women with very disparate aims and wishes enlisted in the operatic venture, persuaded to face sacrifice and hardship by its subtle attraction. They reached out for a professional status which bore no comparison to that of widely recognized existing models. Their keen foresight and their trust in the power of the new genre encouraged actors to improve their performing techniques. In consequence, new 'stars' managed to achieve social dignity and popularity by exploiting all the opportunities offered by this interesting and profitable new genre.

Itinerant companies supplied the increasing demand for musical theatre: their presence in Italy helps us to reconstruct a detailed map of cultural connections all over Italy. They were usually 'mercenary' companies promoting and spreading opera through an impressive repertoire as well as by means of play-bills which boasted the most celebrated singers: the real attraction of the new entertainment. It is beyond doubt that one of the main strengths of opera lay in the social class of its female singers; and even more in the charm of these women who lived by singing on the stage.

«Commediante Cantarinola *armonica*, Puttana»³ are the high-sounding titles of Giulia de Caro in the chronicles of the seventeenth century. The life of this Neapolitan «principessa del bordello»⁴ offers clues to the theatrical context of an age which has yet to be properly researched. Librettos and scores, or even chronicles and literary sources, do not give a complete explanation of how the professional theatre became so successful between 1650 and 1700. «Ciulla di Caro» may thus be seen as

³ Ignazio Fuidoro, *Giornali di Napoli dal MDCLX al MDCLXXX*, Napoli 1934-1939, news dated 11/VIII/1671.

⁴ *Ivi*, news dated 10/II/1676.

a privileged and interesting embodiment of a professional status which was - according to contemporary society - controversial and subject to conflicting interpretations⁵. She ruled the Teatro di San Bartolomeo, the famous opera house in Naples, in the 1670s, and her role as an impresario and actor-manager raises new questions concerning the social class of performers, and offers deeper insights into the legislation and organization of the world of the theatre. Her brilliant career on the stage: in aristocratic houses, at the Royal Palace and at public entertainment venues, reflects the adventurous life of a woman whose reputation, finally, was said to be that of “a virtuous and honest bride”.

Her employment as a whore, a comedian, a singer, and an impresario are merely the highlights of a remarkable individual career, although perhaps not unique for Naples at that time; another woman, Cecilia Siri Chigi, had been the impresario of the San Bartolomeo in the years before the management of the new «Carilda»⁶. She was responsible for the debut of Giulia de Caro on that stage in the *melodrama*

⁵ About Giulia De Caro see Angelo Broccoli, »Del Fuidoro e del Muscettola«, in: *La Lega del Bene* Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden., I (1886), nn. 10 (pp. 4-7), 11 (pp. 7-8), 12 (pp. 6-8), 13 (pp. 5-6), 14 (p. 8), 15 (pp. 5-6); Benedetto Croce, *I Teatri di Napoli. Secolo XV-XVIII*, Napoli 1891, pp. 167-180; Ulisse Prota Giurleo, *I teatri di Napoli nel '600. La Commedia e le Maschere*, Napoli 1962, pp. 293-303; Salvatore Di Giacomo, *La prostituzione in Napoli nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII*, s.l. 1968, pp. 147-153; Paologiovanni Maione, *Giulia de Caro «Famosissima Armonica» e Il Bordello Sostenuto del Signor Don Antonio Muscettola*, Napoli 1997 and Id., »Giulia de Caro «seu Ciulla» da commediante a cantarina. Osservazioni sulla condizione degli «Armonici» nella seconda metà del Seicento«, in: *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, XXXII (1997), pp. 61-80.

⁶ Cf. Lorenzo Bianconi, *Funktionen des Operntheaters in Neapel bis 1700 und die Rolle Alessandro Scarlatti*, in: Wilhelm Osthoff/Jutta Ruile-Dronke (Hgg.), *Colloquium Alessandro Scarlatti. Würzburg 1975, Tutzing 1979*, pp. 13-117: 55; Francesco Cotticelli/Paologiovanni Maione, «Onesto divertimento, ed allegria de' popoli». *Materiali per una storia dello spettacolo a Napoli nel primo Settecento*, Milano 1996, pp. 258-266: 260 and Paologiovanni Maione, *Le metamorfosi della scena tra generi e imprenditoria nella seconda metà del Seicento a Napoli*, in: Alessandro Lattanzi/Paologiovanni Maione (eds.), *Commedia dell'Arte e spettacolo in musica tra Sei e Settecento*, Napoli 2003, pp. 295-327.

L'Annibale in Capua by Pietro Andrea Ziani in the winter of 1671: her curriculum is comparable to the career of the “empress of the whores”. The private house, the city square, the theatre building respectively hint at the working environments of prostitutes, actresses and singers; the common and widespread image of «dreadful and dissolute sirens»⁷ refers to all actresses, who often went through the ignominy of public suspicion and infamy because of gossip concerning their reputations. Not all the complaints regarding social and moral behaviour were groundless: earlier and later chronicles and documents register many situations which hint at the doubtful morals of artists and singers⁸. The position and the role of *comediante* and *cantarina* recall those of *meretrice* and *mercenaria*; women who searched for a professional identity were criticised and condemned. The struggle to achieve a better social status was fraught with difficulties, since being an actress could only mean leading «a free and licentious way of life»⁹; the attempts of many performers to achieve social respectability through temperate and abstinent behaviour were generally doomed to failure.

Giulia de Caro atoned for her debauchery by marrying Carlo Mazza, a

⁷ Giovan Domenico Ottonelli, *Della Christiana Moderatione del Theatro, Libro I, detto La Qualità delle Comedie. [...] In Fiorenza, [...] 1648*, in: Ferdinando Taviani, *La Commedia dell'Arte e la società barocca. La fascinazione del teatro*, Roma 1969, p. 330.

⁸ See [I. Fuidoro], «L'amore libero in Napoli attraverso i secoli (1660-1680)», in: *La Lega del Bene*, I (1886), nn. 5 (pp. 3-5), 6 (pp. 5-7), 8 (pp. 5-6); A. Corona, «L'amore libero a Napoli attraverso i secoli», in: *La Lega del Bene*, II (1887), nn. 43 (p. 4), 45 (p. 2), 46 (pp. 2-3), 47 (p. 8), 48 (p. 7), 49 (pp. 5-6), 50 (pp. 5-6), 51 (pp. 7-8), 52 (p. 8) e III, 1888, nn. 2 (pp. 7-8), 3 (pp. 4-5), 4 (pp. 6-7), 5 (pp. 7-8), 6 (pp. 6-7), 7 (pp. 6-7), 8 (pp. 2-4), 9 (pp. 6-8), 13 (p. 6), 14 (pp. 6-8), 15 (pp. 6-7), 16 (pp. 4-6); B. Croce, *I teatri* cit., p. 167 and *passim*; S. di Giacomo, *La prostituzione in Napoli* cit., p. 145 and *passim*; F. Cotticelli/P. Maione, «Onesto divertimento, ed allegria de' popoli» cit., p. 119 and *passim* and Paologiovanni Maione, «Mena vita onestissima»: le cantarine alla conquista della scena, in: Carla Dente (ed.), *Dibattito sul teatro. Voci, opinioni, interpretazioni*, Pisa 2006, 123-134.

⁹ Girolamo Fiorentini, *Comoedio-Crisis, sive Theatri contra Theatrum Censura, 1675*, in: F. Taviani, *La Commedia* cit., p. 277.

descendant of a dynasty of rich speculators, despite the strong opposition of his family and of government institutions. In her petition to the viceroy's secretary she requests that in contrast to her past life she should now be allowed to lead a life of deep tranquility and proclaims that she has chosen the honourable conduct which becomes her¹⁰. This last public action of hers, which was of course reported in the city chronicles¹¹, was balanced by a series of significant events: her secret marriage, the arrest of her husband, her confinement in the Conservatorio delle Pentite alla Pignasecca and trial and the plan to annul her marriage organized by the Neapolitan ecclesiastical orders. These traumatic events led the couple to forsake the worldly city for a discreet and decorous isolation: after many troubles, «Carlos Maza, and Julia de Caro, husband and wife» prefer to live «in their country estate at the hamlet of Marano»¹². Her long silence and her austere new way of life did not prevent the compiler of her obituary from writing in 1697 (twenty years after she left the stage life and retired from the world), that «before getting married, she had been the moving force behind all the Neapolitan brothels, and had earned a very large income. She left a substantial legacy, worth many thousands of scudi [...] and was buried in poverty in the Church of the above mentioned hamlet - Capodimonte -, accompanied only by four priests, though she had dominated Naples when she was a famous whore, *et sic transit gloria mundi*»¹³.

Confuorto's obituary underlines the remarkable wealth of Giulia de Caro, suggesting the need for further inquiries into her property, which was quite exceptional, as revealed by contemporary bank-records. The documents kept in the archives of the Banco dello Spirito Santo, di Santa Maria del Popolo, di San

¹⁰ Cf. P. Maione, *Giulia de Caro «Famosissima Armonica»* cit., pp. 9-12.

¹¹ Cf. I. Fuidoro, *Giornali di Napoli* cit., news dated 10/II/1676; 7/V/1676; 9/VII/1676.

¹² P. Maione, *Giulia de Caro «Famosissima Armonica»* cit., p. 12.

¹³ Domenico Confuorto, *Giornali di Napoli dal MDCLXXIX al MDCIC*, Napoli 1930, news dated 27/XI/1697.

Giacomo, dell'Annunziata (some of the banks working in Naples in the seventeenth century) record the great wealth of a careful and enterprising woman, who managed her property with financial skill¹⁴. She invested in State *arrendamenti* - at 7% interest -, and in silver-plate, in lending money at a 5,5% interest rate, and earned money also by controlling gambling in Naples.

According to contemporary sources, Giulia de Caro acquired her great wealth through her shady transactions as a go-between and through her questionable profession. In fact, her rise in society from whore to comedian and singer/impresario is supported by her relationship with the city's high aristocracy, as may be inferred from Antonio Muscettola's pamphlet *La Carilda*¹⁵, or the Neapolitan chronicles, which reported news of her life in great detail.

However, the triumph of the well-known singer was gradual. Her apprenticeship took place in a milieu of social and theatrical decline: the city areas of Toledo and the Pignasecca were given over to prostitution, and the stage of her artistic debut was the Largo del Castello. The city atmosphere was sinister, crowded with soldiers and corrupt officers, thunderous and prophesying priests, street vendors and charlatans, merchants and thieves, listless and lascivious noble men. Surrounded by women who relapsed back into sin after repentance and still repenting converts, procurers and go-betweens, scoundrels, swindlers and counterfeiters, Giulia de Caro set out on her unusual journey on the stage.

Her activity was prompted by her marginal role inside a professional hierarchy: as an actress in the Largo del Castello she used her art to attract the attention of passers-by, who then fell into the hands of quacks and other charlatans. At this early stage of her career, her work seems to have been unremarkable, since, as far as we know, her name does not occur in the cast-list of any professional theatre

¹⁴ Cf. P. Maione, *Giulia de Caro «Famosissima Armonica»* cit., pp. 20 and 46-47.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 63-142.

company. It was a search for professional identity that encouraged her to aim for success in the world of singing.

In all likelihood, her frequent trips to Rome were a type of pilgrimage for her initiation into the art of singing; the Holy City was the forge of skilled artists, the source of all evil, where Giulia de Caro was apprenticed to a ‘virtuosa’. Her return home was greeted with general protest; the protection of high society saved her from exile and enabled her to settle at Mergellina, «where all ladies meet during their summer walks or trips - by sea and land - and everybody greets her and courts her while walking»¹⁶.

A malevolent interest arose in the corrupt, dissolute and shocking life of this woman, which the contemporary “Giornali” invariably reported in great detail. A thorough evaluation of her licentious habits awaits posterity. Seventeenth-century texts tend to emphasize her central role in the high-class scandals of the day, but dismiss her work on the stage as vile and ill-judged. The studies of Croce, Di Giacomo and Prota-Giurleo have succeeded in fostering the myth of de Caro as a singer of lascivious songs, although Prota-Giurleo recognizes gleams of redemption for such monstrosity. He follows a merciful digression concerning the private life of the demoniac heroine with a discussion of the roles which she performed, in which he argues that her vocal skills were far from worthless.

The whore/singer fed the theatre of the senses: «Satan’s empire», «the fascination for lascivious performances» and «the infernal theatre dream»¹⁷ condemned by the clergy, were symbolized by the stage and its capacity to make us forget reality, in a *maraviglioso* and troublesome lay and pagan hell. The stage and the theatre building become an arena for the unique temptation of sensuality.

¹⁶ I. Fuidoro, *Giornali di Napoli* cit., news dated 11/VIII/1671 cit.

¹⁷ All quotations are drawn from G. D. Ottonelli, *Della Christiana Moderatione del Teatro* cit.

Muscettola's outrageous eulogy describes a turbulent world, where the new Medea wanders proclaiming her victory and joy: the impenitent heroine suffers and destroys her life through alchemical fumes, moral corruption, a succession of good-looking lovers, erotic performances, bodily titillation and amorous liaisons. Her career looks like the triumph of a baroque monster, surrounded by sophisticated machines and a delirious public, perfectly set into a complex plot, like a clear, chimerical, fake and illusive mirror of reality which is always observed and filtered through the medium of the theatre.

Written sources concerning Giulia de Caro as an impresario explain the methods and aims of theatrical management, and raise interesting questions about the world of theatrical artists. Certainly, her merits could hardly be denied: she engaged the musician Pietro Andrea Ziani and the celebrated singer Caterina Porri to perform in Naples, and commissioned Andrea Perrucci and Francesco Provenzale to compose librettos and scores. In a dedication, she declares

in spite of the difficulties of this enterprise [...] my continuous labours are worthy of celebration, since I have summoned with praiseworthy efforts all Calliopi and Orfei, who have been astounding Italy as well as the world¹⁸.

Still, it is important to examine the manager's documents. Giulia de Caro led the Teatro di San Bartolomeo between 1673 and 1675; the text of a payment made on 10th May 1673 and registered in the Journal of the Banco dello Spirito Santo in Naples, reads:

To Giulia de Caro seventy five ducats, and through her to Domenico Antonio Parrino, named Florindo in comedy, for all members of the players' company who were brought to Naples to perform at her request. The seventy five ducats are given by Giulia de Caro gratis and without any obligation from

¹⁸ From the dedication by Giulia in the libretto *Marcello in Siracusa* (G. Cicinelli - P. A. Ziani), Napoli, Roncaglioli, 1673.

her, though she considered that any permission to play was suspended by order of His Excellency because of His sister empress's death - may she rest in Heaven - on condition that, with regard to this gift, Domenico Antonio Parrino and his companions should stay in this city until the outcome of letters from Spain is known, so that His Excellency will decide whether performances are to be allowed or not. The licence for performances having been obtained, before or after the arrival of these letters from Spain, the above mentioned Domenico Antonio and his companions will be obliged to play comedies and operas for as long as they had agreed, according to the contents of their correspondence¹⁹.

From this document it is evident, then, that the chief actor Domenico Antonio Parrino had been engaged with his companions in order to perform 'Comedie, et opere'; this statement suggests that the general title of 'comedians' referred also to opera performers. As a result, versatility seems to have been the basic requisite for professional companies, whose competence included *premeditata* and improvised comedy as well as opera. Musical theatre is not yet seen as a genuine option for professional actors, unlike the alternatives of the two different acting systems, comedy in prose and musical drama, as described in current studies²⁰. Apart from

¹⁹ Archivio Storico del Banco di Napoli, Banco dello Spirito Santo, matricola 550, partita estinta 10/V/1673.

²⁰ About the relationships between opera and improvised theatre see the following texts for a first bibliographic orientation: Thomas F. Heck, *Commedia dell'Arte. A Guide to the Primary and Secondary Literature*, New York & London, Garland Publishing, 1988, pp. 258-267. Cf. *Il corago o vero Alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, edited by Paolo Fabbri/Angelo Pompilio, Firenze 1983 and Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata, ed all'improvviso. Giovevole non solo a chi si diletta di rappresentare, ma a' Predicatori, Oratori, Accademici e Curiosi. Parti due [...]*, Napoli, M. L. Mutio, 1699, pp. 46-62, 173-186, 340-350. Further information is provided by the rich documentation collected in Sergio Monaldini, *L'Orto ell'Esperidi. Musicisti, attori e artisti nel patrocinio della famiglia Bentivoglio (1646-1685)*, Lucca 2000 or in Dinko Fabris, *Mecenati e musicisti. Documenti sul patronato artistico dei Bentivoglio di Ferrara nell'epoca di Monteverdi (1585-1645)*, Lucca 1999. See Nino Pirrotta, *Commedia dell'Arte e Opera*, in: Nino Pirrotta, *Scelte poetiche di musicisti. Teatro, poesia e musica da Willaert a Malipiero*, Venezia 1987, pp. 147-171 and Id., *Li due Orfei. Da Poliziano a Monteverdi*, Torino 1975, pp. 315-316. See also Carolyn Gianturco, *Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682). His Life and Music*, Oxford 1994; Gloria Staffieri, *Lo scenario nell'opera in musica del XVII secolo*, in: Maria Teresa

occasional singing performances by some famous early seventeenth century players, there is no readily available information about the origins of most opera organizers and most members of mercenary companies. There is no doubt that the position of such artists recalls that of *comici*, but we still know very little about the individual experiences of this great community of singers.

The art of singing was certainly not unknown to actors, and the treatise *Il Corago* states that

Above all, in order to be good players when singing, it would be necessary to be also good players when reciting, since we have observed that those who have particular skill in reciting have been wonderful when they have sung too [...] even more successful have been the perfect *istrioni* with a normal voice but with musical attitudes²¹.

Companies which changed their members and expanded their repertoire admitted experienced and talented players: according to Giovan Domenico Ottonelli, the category of «professional dramatic and musical plays, performed by musical mercenaries who are professional comedians», is made up of «professional comedians and reciting singers», who «are usually gifted at singing, playing instruments, or dancing, or inventing new stage design, or controlling astounding theatre machines, or setting and changing scenes easily, or in other matters concerning the musical play»²². What Ottonelli portrays is a class of people gifted with a diversity of skills, all of which were typical of an actor or a *comico*. «*Virtuose*,

Muraro (ed.), *Le parole della musica. Studi sul lessico della letteratura critica del teatro musicale in onore di Gianfranco Folena*, Firenze 1995, II, pp. 3-31; F. Cotticelli/P. Maione, «*Onesto divertimento, ed allegria de' popoli*» cit., pp. 201-209; Marcello Conati, *Musica e comici*, in: *Origini della Commedia Improvvisa o dell'Arte*, Roma 1996, pp. 329-343, P. Maione, *Giulia de Caro «Famosissima Armonica»* cit. and Id., *Giulia de Caro «seu Ciulla»* cit.

²¹ *Il corago* cit., p. 91.

²² These quotations are drawn from G. D. Ottonelli, *Della Christiana Moderatione del Theatro* cit., p. 512.

comedians, and singers or players»²³ are the requisites underlined by the Jesuit for women on the stage; for instance, it is no coincidence that Giulia de Caro is described as a “commediante” and “cantarinola”, as though the author wanted to specify her stage abilities.

This interpretation of seventeenth-century sources is supported by the presence in Naples - around 1669 - of Domenico Antonio Parrino, who supervised the performance of *L'Antigone delusa da Alceste, drama per musica* staged at the Teatro di San Bartolomeo, in which he also acted; Parrino, later to become a printer and a historian, was a highly esteemed touring chief actor.

We might also suppose that the touring companies responsible for the wide spread of opera are those same companies of “comici” who were so sensitive to the new dramatic experiences and to changing public taste that they even included opera in their repertoire. They constantly adapted and developed new performing techniques by enrolling actors with reliable skills in the new genre and by signing contracts with «singers and players, who might be attracted by the promise of a prize, or persuaded by affection, and sometimes forced in effect to join them through prestigious intermediaries»²⁴. Even those singers performing the *Dori* in 1675 seem to have belonged to this latter group: they were forced by the viceroy Marchese Los Velez to join the “armonica” company; as Fuidoro reports in his «Giornale»:

The stage having been prepared, the company named the Febi armonici plays the *Dori*, in which the brothel princess Ciulla de Caro takes part with companions of similar origin; therefore, every skilled *castrato* would be regarded as vile if he joined these companies in public theatres. Even so, three musicians of the Royal Palace could not help obeying the Viceroy's orders to entertain him by playing in the Palace²⁵.

Through analysis of Giulia de Caro's controversial artistic life, which is a paradigm

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ I. Fuidoro, *Giornali di Napoli* cit., news dated 6/XI/1675.

of contemporary theatre organization, we can observe the structures which controlled theatre activity in Naples²⁶. Further research will examine the events of 1672, when Giulia was ordered to give back the part of Medea in the play performed at the San Bartolomeo, so that the theatre landlord could choose another actress. The order was given by the Delegate of the Casa Santa degli Incurabili, which, as a charitable institution, had obtained privileges and grants concerning theatre income and received the proceeds of any public performance through special measures (known as *ius prohibendi* and *ius repraesentandi*)²⁷. It was also responsible for the controversies arising between interpreters performing plays or between them and the landlord chosen by the Casa Santa, and perhaps also between the landlord and the Casa Santa itself.

The competence and interests of the Casa Santa in theatre building and all stage activities in Naples were above discussion. Several decrees issued between 1590 and 1592 warned that nobody was allowed to stage plays, either public or private, requiring payment from the public, either in Naples or in its province, without the permission of the Governors of the Incurabili or of their chosen landlords, and neither might anyone perform as a mountebank, or play comic parts, or make jokes or organize public or private performances on payment without such permission²⁸.

These measures were renewed in the following years, establishing the absolute legal power of the *pio luogo*, which did not have to accept any interference from government. The public stage was controlled by the institution and all theatre

²⁶ About the Neapolitan institutions see F. Cotticelli/P. Maione, *Le istituzioni musicali a Napoli durante il Vicereame austriaco (1707-1734). Materiali inediti sulla Real Cappella ed il Teatro di San Bartolomeo*, Napoli 1993 and Id., «*Onesto divertimento, ed allegria de' popoli*» cit.

²⁷ Cf. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien, Italien-Spanischer Rat, Neapel, Korrespondenz, Karton 66 (alt Fsz. 118), cc. 462v-478v, 16/V/1733.

²⁸ Cf. *ivi*.

workers were subject to its legislation. Evidence for this is also given by the *armonica* Antonia Rutini, who in the season of 1671 refused to play her part in a comedy because of ill health. Following an official request by the impresario Cecilia Siri Chigi, the case was entrusted to the Delegate, who had to apply to doctors in order to establish whether Antonia Rutini was genuinely ill, and also ordered the actress to give back her part in the performance. Since she did not obey promptly, he forced her to accept his orders by confiscating all her furniture²⁹.

Performers' names invariably occur in government papers in relation to civil suits or criminal cases, to requests for leave of absence, to applications regarding anything but the theatre. All problems concerning the stage were put before and solved by the Casa Santa: paradoxically, it also fought against the dreadful seminary of obscenity, whose result was the destruction of all virtues through the female vice monsters; it offered medical care to people afflicted by various diseases, it promoted Divine Offices and Church ceremonies, it maintained nuns who had retired from a scandalous life, and comforted many hundreds of poor and destitute women, who had given up prostitution and dishonesty: *et sic transit gloria mundi!*

²⁹ Cf. *ivi*.