

## Abstract

Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740) played a prominent role in eighteenth-century Rome as vice-chancellor of the Church, protector of the crown of France, lover of the theatre, profitable client, eager collector, *Custode* of Arcadia and author of literary compositions. Thanks to the social status guaranteed by his great-uncle Alexander VIII, the prelate managed to forge relationships with both religious orders and secular academies, and to gather a cénacle of artists of the caliber of Arcangelo Corelli, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Francesco Trevisani, Simone Felice Delino, Nicola Michetti and Filippo Juvarra who benefited from his cultural diplomacy strategies. This is the picture painted by a recent conference dedicated to the cardinal, regarding issues of biography, collecting, and the ample patronage of music and painting, as well as the impact of his strategies of cultural diplomacy in the diffusion of taste. On the other hand, in the architectural field studies have been mostly limited to the period of employment of Filippo Juvarra (1709-1714).

The research aims at widening the picture of Ottoboni's patronage by delving deeper into what relates to religion, namely the setting of liturgical celebrations, and defining the parameters applied to the sponsorship of the sacred as opposed to the secular. The main object of investigation is ordinary and extraordinary ritual occasions with a scenographical component. The cardinal was involved in them for 50 consecutive years as commendatory of San Lorenzo in Damaso, ordering various apparatuses and sacred theaters. The corpus of works is mostly comprised of scenographies for devotions of the Forty-Hours and Sepulchres, which are described thoroughly in a wide array of documents.

Despite the lack of visual evidence, thanks to the detailed descriptions of pamphlets and payment accounts, the research shows an organic analysis of these celebrations aimed at decoding the prospective of the theatricalization of the sacred as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, starting from the spectacular *Machine* as architectural artifacts. The field of investigation is therefore extended to all the arts involved, music in particular, and to the entire sacred space, as well as to urban space (represented by courtyards, squares and streets occupied during processions) and extra-urban space (abbeys and leisure residences).

The celebration is seen by the patron as an instrument of social and religious power, and by the artists as an opportunity for work and experimentation; the complex stratification of all the facets of the festival is read through archival research, combined with specific investigations that range from statistical to comparative analysis, to ephrastic reconstructions and a massive effort of contextualization to support the recognition of rules and exceptions. The typological and spatial continuity and the refinement of the Ottobonian patronage in the sacred sphere, in fact, allow the emergence of dynamics linked to both the figurative-symbolic and the technical-realization spheres. Therefore, parallel to the evolution of sacred theaters in their iconographic aspects and in their social and political role, the study focuses on the underlying practices necessary to create them, on the issues of stagecraft, the reuse of components and on the organisation of a very particular construction site.

The research aims to provide an organic reading of the sets commissioned by cardinal Ottoboni for liturgical occasions from 1689 to 1740, ranging from the formal and liturgical aspects to the technical and professional organization of the displays, with the aim of combining the deep knowledge of the sacred theaters with the diachronic vision of the cardinal's patronage.