

Music at Palermo's San Martino delle Scale during the Late Sixteenth Century

Ilaria Grippaudo

University of Palermo

ilaria.grippaudo@gmail.com

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Palermo emerged as one of the most important musical centres in the South of Italy, second only to Naples. In addition to their regular musical activities, Palermos's convents and monasteries employed large numbers of occasional musicians for special events, which were supported primarily by private donations.¹ This nexus of musical activity produced the conditions in which musicians could meet and exchange styles and experiences, whose tangible fruits are the large number of Palermitan sacred works published in this period.

One of the most important ecclesiastical institutions contributing to this flourishing of musical life was the Benedictine monastery of San Martino delle Scale. Boasting a rather large musical staff that included some of the most renowned musicians of the period, San Martino delle Scale's musical heyday coincided with the late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century development of the compositional tradition described by Ottavio Tiby as Palermo's 'Polyphonic School'. San Martino's most prominent contributor to this tradition was Mauro Panormita – also known as Mauro Ciaula – who served as the abbey's organist and probably *maestro di cappella*. Praised by his contemporaries as well as posterity as 'incomparabilis musicus', Ciaula is counted by Tiby among the first generation of Polyphonic School composers because of his three published editions of sacred music, along with secular works that are unfortunately lost.² In his own lifetime, however, Ciaula's greatest renown derived from his music for the *Atto della Pinta*, a *sacra rappresentazione* first performed in 1581 and subsequently reprised in Palermo throughout the sixteenth century. The opening *Sanctus*, in particular, remained in the repertory of Sicilian chapels until the late nineteenth century. The continued success of this work has ensured the lasting reputation of both Ciaula and the abbey of San Martino.

Although we know a considerable amount about the musical activities promoted by Palermo's ecclesiastical institutions in the early modern period, our knowledge is far from complete. Indeed, aside from Tiby's valuable but dated essay on the Royal Chapel, or Real Cappella – more commonly referred to as the Cappella Palatina – there is no comprehensive study of musical practice in Palermo's religious institutions during the sixteenth century. This article, which draws upon on my research undertaken in Archivio di Stato of Palermo, will fill in some of the gaps in the history of the contributions made by ecclesiastical institutions to the city's musical life, focusing primarily on the abbey of San Martino delle Scale and its most famous composer, Mauro Ciaula.

¹ See Ilaria Grippaudo, 'Produzione musicale e pratiche sonore nelle chiese palermitane fra Rinascimento e Barocco', PhD diss., University of Rome 'La Sapienza', 2010.

² Magnoald Ziegelbauer, *Historia Rei Literariae Ordinis S. Benedicti*, vol. 2 (Augustae Vind. et Herbipoli: Sumptibus Martini Veith, 1754), 346; Ottavio Tiby, 'The Polyphonic School in Sicily of the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Century', *Musica Disciplina* 5 (1951), 203–11; Ottavio Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1969).

Music in Palermo

As early as the eleventh century, the Normans had promoted refined musical performances in the context of official ceremonies and private occasions. Music was thus considered an essential aspect of court life, playing an important role in festive ritual. It was not until Aragonese rule (1282-1402), however, that the idea of the 'feast' as a total event reached its full expression, relying on standardized elements and a combination of visual, auditory, olfactory, and even gustatory stimuli. In this setting, music, along with all these aspects of the Aragonese courts feasts, was considerably developed in conjunction with the broader evolution of tastes at court.³

The Quattrocento opened with the Compromise of Caspe 1412, whereby the Kingdom of Sicily lost its independence and was annexed to the Spanish crown. From then until the eighteenth century, the island was ruled by Spanish viceroys who often showed little interest in improving local cultural life. Indeed, the majority of these Spanish governors regarded Sicily as a foreign domain whose chief purpose was to provide rather high tax revenues and to serve as a buffer against the Ottoman Empire. It is thus not surprising that the viceroys did little to enhance the musical prestige of Sicilian institutions, especially in the first century of Spanish rule.

Among the viceroys appointed in the sixteenth century, Marcantonio Colonna stands out as one of the few who contributed to the development of Palermo's musical life. Indeed, Colonna's intervention in the late Cinquecento resulted in the revival of the Cappella Palatina, which had traditionally been Palermo's most prestigious musical organization. Colonna paid special attention to the chapel's musical establishment, which he reconstituted in January 1584 with seven of his soldiers who happened to be particularly skilled in music. Two years later, King Philip II, acquiescing to Colonna's requests, issued a royal decree officially founding the new *cappella musicale* with a significant annual endowment.⁴ This new institution was mainly preoccupied with promoting the viceroy's strong public image, as confirmed by descriptions and account books, which attest to the participation of the chapel at the numerous feasts in the local civic and liturgical calendar.

In addition to the Palatina, Palermo's other two main chapels – those of the Cathedral and the Senate – along with various other institutions, offered important musical events, whether within their own premises or publicly in the city. It is difficult to be certain about the number of ecclesiastical institutions that were active in the urban area during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. This is due to the frequency of their foundation, the mobility of religious communities generally, and the absence clear indications in the sources. Nevertheless, according to a census held in Palermo in 1613, the city had no fewer than twenty-three convents and fifty churches attached to monasteries and novitiates, and these accommodated a population of about 24,000 souls, for a total of 140,000 inhabitants.⁵ Besides performing music for the normal liturgy, these numerous religious institutions contributed to local musical life by supporting various special occasions, most commonly for religious feasts, but also ordinations, funerals, and investitures, which were mainly supported by private funding.⁶

³ See Giovanni Isgrò, *Festa teatro rito nella storia di Sicilia* (Palermo: Cavallotto Editore, 1981), especially 50, 70, 83–4.

⁴ Ottavio Tiby, 'La musica nella Real Cappella Palatina di Palermo', *Anuario musical' dell'Istituto Español de Musicología del C.S.I.C.* 7 (1952), 180–2.

⁵ Francesco Maggiore-Perni, *Statistica della città di Palermo. Censimento della popolazione nel 1861 pubblicato dall'Ufficio Comunale di Economia e Statistica* (Palermo: Francesco Lao, 1865), cii–civ.

⁶ See Grippaudo, 'Produzione musicale'.

All of Palermo's congregations promoted musical activities more or less continuously. Still, because their musical organizations took various unstandardized forms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the task of identifying individual chapels proves difficult. It would appear that, other than the Cathedral Chapel and the Palatine Chapel, the only ecclesiastical musical chapel *sensu stricto* was the Jesuits', which operated from the first half of the Seicento.⁷ On the other hand, numerous sources allude to the existence of other stable organizations of personnel that, while not designated as such in the sources, nevertheless appear to have functioned similarly to proper musical chapels. These musical organizations were primarily affiliated with monasteries and convents.

Mapping the geography of these affiliations reveals a relatively even distribution across Palermo's four districts, perhaps indicating an implicit agreement regarding the division of jurisdictions within the city.⁸ Constant competition between the prominent urban congregations, however, challenged this apparent balance and was sometimes centred on musical issues.⁹ During the medieval period the dominance of monastic orders like as the Basilians and Cistercians gradually shifted towards other congregations, especially the Benedictines, Franciscans, and Dominicans. Since then these latter orders had been increasingly active in Palermo and throughout Sicily. These orders maintained their prominence in Palermo through the end of seventeenth century, despite the arrival of the Jesuits, Theatines, and Oratorians, starting in the sixteenth century. Clashes and rivalries among different orders were not uncommon and often escalated to rather aggressive conflicts that played out in territorial and ideological terms. Among the ideological points of contention was the concept of the 'consumption of devotion,' which is essential for understanding the role of music in convents and monasteries in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.¹⁰

⁷ On the Jesuits and their musical activities, see Ilaria Grippaudo, 'I Gesuiti e la musica a Palermo fra Rinascimento e Barocco', in *Musica tra Storia e Filologia. Studi in onore di Lino Bianchi*, ed. Federica Nardacci (Rome: Istituto Italiano per la Storia della Musica, 2010), 279–311.

⁸ This perspective owes much to the approach of the so-called 'urban musicology', which recognises the function of all the institutions included within the civic space and considers music itself as an essential component of the urban experience. See Tim Carter, 'The Sound of Silence: Models for an Urban Musicology', *Urban History* 29/1 (2002), 8–18. Regarding Palermo, see Anna Tedesco, 'La ciudad como teatro: rituales urbanos en el Palermo en la Edad Moderna' in *Música y cultura urbana en la Edad Moderna*, ed. Andrea Bombi, Juan José Carreras, and Miguel Ángel Marín (Valencia: Universitat de València-IVM, 2005), 219–42; Ilaria Grippaudo, 'Musica Urbana: Musica e cerimonie all'aperto nella Palermo di Cinque e Seicento', in *Studi sulla musica dell'età barocca*, ed. Giorgio Monari (Lucca: LIM, 2012), 77–133.

⁹ An example is provided by the Theatines, who established themselves in Palermo at the beginning of the seventeenth century, initially in the monastery next to the church of the Catena and then moving to a larger and definitely more strategic site within the new developing layout of the city. According to archival sources, shortly before their move they were involved in a controversy over the building of a 'place' for secular music, perhaps a theatre or, more probably, a platform to be placed in the righthand corner of the church. The Theatines' determined opposition to this proposal led to the prompt intervention of the Viceroy, Francesco Lemos, Count of Castro, who called for an immediate interruption to the work, already begun and probably commissioned by the town Senate. Archivio di Stato di Palermo [henceforth, ASPa], Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Casa dei Padri Teatini, vol. 857, p. 2a. NB: many of the documents cited in this study utilize a pagination system in which the two facing pages – i.e., the verso of one folio and the recto of the next one – are given the same page number. In these cases, I have preserved the given pagination and indicated the lefthand (verso) page with the letter 'a' and the righthand (recto) page with a 'b'.

¹⁰ See Angelo Torre, *Il consumo di devozioni. Religione e comunità nelle campagne dell'Ancien Régime* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995); Francesco Lo Piccolo, 'Veicoli di diffusione del culto e consumo della devozione dell'Immacolata nel Palermitano (secoli XVI-XVIII)', in *La Sicilia e l'Immacolata. Non solo 150 anni, Atti del Convegno di Studi (Palermo, 1–4 dicembre 2004)*, ed. Diego Ciccarelli and Marisa Dora Valenza (Palermo: Biblioteca Francescana – Officina di Studi Medievali, 2006), 279–90.

Musical Activities at San Martino delle Scale: Liturgical Chant, Performing Practices, and Festive Occasions

Probably due to its location, about fifteen kilometres outside the city walls, the Benedictine abbey of San Martino delle Scale seems to have avoided the most sensational quarrels, despite being among the leaders of the local musical scene. According to tradition, the abbey was founded by Gregory the Great in 590 and then destroyed by the Saracens in the ninth century. Whatever the truth may be, it is certain that the edification of the present building – or re-edification, as it is often called in the sources – dates back to 1347, when Angelo Senisio was called by the Archbishop of Monreale, Emanuele Spinola, to establish a colony of Benedictine monks on its location.¹¹

The archive of the abbey is a rich source of information, the majority of which is now preserved at the Archivio di Stato of Palermo. Comprising more than 2,000 items in two separate sections, the archive covers an 800-year period, from the twelfth through the nineteenth century. This massive collection of documents is composed of various types of registers: the *giornali*, in which daily expenditures were recorded; income and expense books; registers of receipts; and the *vacchette*, small-size volumes that frequently offer interesting information on musical topics. With few exceptions these kinds of archival records say little about the relationship between music and ordinary liturgy. For such information, it is necessary to consider other types of documents, such as the *Regie Visite*, which are official reports drafted by a royal officer during the monitoring visits in churches and dioceses of the island.¹²

A rather curious piece of evidence pointing to the importance of liturgical chant in monastic culture can be found in the *Ordinationes speciales Capituli generalis, pro monasterio Sancti Martini, excerpta a suis originalibus, amputatis superfluis et non necessariis*, which documents official visits to the abbey from 1511 to 1606. The structure and content of the *Ordinationes* is quite similar to that of the *Regie Visite*, and some provide information on the presence of chant in the liturgy. For example, in 1512 the visitors ordered that a mass for the devotion of the glorious Virgin – ‘ob devotionem gloriosæ Virginis’ – should be sung every Saturday, specifying that ‘if Saturday is a feast day, then the *missa plana* has to be held after the first one, at the major altar’.¹³ Other information, mostly belonging to the second half of the sixteenth century, attests to the involvement of the organist and to some restrictions on the use of musical instruments (see below). Here I refer to two letters from 1585 concerning a Benedictine monk, Iacopo da Palermo, who had left the order some years before. The first letter, which bears Iacopo’s signature, is a petition addressed to the visitors to reduce the remaining time on the monk’s jail sentence, which he felt had been particularly hard in light of his being old and sick. In

¹¹ For the general history of the monastery, see Rocco Pirri, *Sicilia Sacra disquisitionibus et notitiis illustrata*, ed. Antonino Mongitore and Vito D’Amico, vol. 2 (Palermo: heirs of Pietro Coppola, 1733), 1072–107; Gregorio Frangipani, *Storia del monastero di San Martino delle Scale presso Palermo* (Assisi: Tip. Metastasio, 1905); Paolo Collura, ‘Storia e cultura nel monastero di S. Martino delle Scale presso Palermo’, *Schede Medievali* 4 (1983), 52–67; Anselmo Lipari, *L’abbazia di San Martino delle Scale: storia, arte, spiritualità* (Palermo: Poligraf, 1989); Angelo Sinisio e i primordi dell’abbazia di San Martino, *Mostra storico-documentaria (Palermo, Abbazia di San Martino delle Scale, 20 luglio-18 agosto 1996)*, ed. Fabrizio Messina Cicchetti, (Palermo: Officina della memoria, 1996); *L’eredità di Angelo Sinisio. L’abbazia di San Martino delle Scale dal XIV al XX secolo, catalogo della mostra (Palermo, Abbazia di San Martino delle Scale, 23 novembre 1997-13 gennaio 1998)*, ed. Maria Concetta Di Natale and Fabrizio Messina Cicchetti (Palermo: Regione Siciliana – Assessorato dei Beni Culturali, Ambientali e della Pubblica Istruzione, 1997); *De reedificatione monasterii Sancti Martini de Scalas*, ed. Diego Ciccarella (Palermo: Abadir, 1997).

¹² Paolo Collura, ‘Le sacre regie visite alle Chiese della Sicilia’, *Archiva Ecclesia* 22-23 (1979-1980), 443–51. Throughout this article, all English translations of archival materials are my own. Nevertheless, I am most grateful to Carrie Churnside for her invaluable assistance with the translations.

¹³ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresses, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 1467, fol. 1r.

reconstructing his history, the monk mentions, albeit briefly, the reasons that prompted him to leave the order, referring to the fear of not performing up to the choir's singing standards:

Io Don Iacobo di Palermo Monaco, et professo di questo Monasterio di Santo Martino havendo stato alcuni anni fuora della religione, havendomi partito dal Monasterio di Monreale per timidità di non poter sodisfar al cantare in choro, come vi potranno far fede il Reverendo Padre Don Isidoro Abbate nostro, et il Venerando Padre Don Martino Priore di Monreale, et il Padre Don Gregorio di Santo Angelo nostro Decano. Ultimamente mi presentai nel capitolo generale prossimo passato in Peruggia, dove fui ricevuto in congregatione, havendo tutti li RR. PP. del capitolo buon testimonio della vita mia fuora la congregatione per lettere di Monsignor Arcivescovo di Genua, dove stetti per alcuni anni. Trovandomi oggi in quisti carceri supplico humilmente le PP. VV. RR. amore Dei, per trovarme vecchio et indisposto, travagliato, mi vogliano haver misericordia in allargarme detta carcere, acciò non incorra in qualche infermità incurabile, promettendo alle PP. VV. RR. di emendar la vita mia, et perseverar nella santa religione per fin al fine della vita mia. La presente ho scritto in questi carceri, del nostro Monastero de Santo Martino delli Scali di Palermo, primo settembre 1585.¹⁴

(I, Don Iacobo di Palermo, a monk professed in this monastery in St. Martino, as I have been out of the order for some years, after leaving the monastery of Monreale from the fear of not performing up to the choir's singing standards, as Reverend Father D. Isidoro, our abbot; and Venerable Father Don Martino, prior of Monreale; and Father Don Gregorio di Santo Angelo, our dean can attest. Recently I presented myself to the last general chapter in Perugia, where I was accepted into the congregation, since all the Reverend Fathers of the chapter testified to my good conduct outside the order, thanks to the letters of Monsignor the Archbishop of Genua, where I stayed for some years. Being at present in this prison, I humbly beg Your Reverend Fathers for God's sake to have mercy in reducing this jail sentence, since I am old and sick, and afflicted, and so that I may avoid catching an incurable disease, while promising to amend my behaviour, and to persist in this religion until the end of my life. I have written this [letter] in this prison of our monastery of St. Martino delle Scale in Palermo, on 1 September 1585).

In the second letter, Don Isidoro, abbot of San Martino, further attests to the good conduct of the prisoner, renewing the supplication to the visitors and confirming what had been written in the preceding text:

Sono circa anni sedici, chè io me ritrovava monaco di Monreale insieme con il Padre Don Martino di Palermo al presente Priore in Monreale. Occorse s'hebbe bisogno di monaci, et il Reverendo Padre Don Geronimo di Palermo, allora Abbate in Monreale hebbe ricorso dal Reverendo Padre Don Benedetto di Firenze Abbate di San Martino, et da quello hebbe duoi monaci, e fra essi fù D. Iacobo supplicante, quale essendo in San Martino gravato di exercitii manuali si contentò d'andare in Monreale. Et essendo andato lli dopo alcuni mesi per l'insufficiencia sua et pusillanimità si pentì, perché non poteva sodisfar in choro, e li monaci, secolari, e donne si burlavano, et ridevano di lui. Et havendo scritto in San Martino, che voleva ritornare, e li fu denegato,

¹⁴ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Sopresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 1467, fol. 66v.

intanto che ritrovandose in Monreale allhora un monaco per nome Don Bernardo de Coniglione, huomo disculo, lo indusse, per quanto ho inteso, a lasciar e partirse dalla religione e così esequirno.¹⁵

(It is now around sixteen years ago that I was a monk in Monreale, along with Father Don Martino, at present prior in Monreale. It happened that we needed some monks, and Reverend Father Don Geronimo di Palermo, former abbot of Monreale, sought help from Reverend Father Don Benedetto di Firenze abbot of St. Martino, and from him he received two monks, and among them there was the petitioner Don Iacobo, who was satisfied to go to Monreale, since at St. Martino he was burdened with manual labours. Having gone there, after a few months he regretted it because of his inadequacy and pusillanimity, since he could not perform up to the choir's standards, and the monks, the secular people, and the women made fun of him and sneered at him. And after having written to St. Martino that he would like to come back, and since that was denied to him, while a monk named Don Bernardo de Coniglione, an unruly man, was in Monreale, this latter forced him [Don Iacopo] to go away and leave the order – as far as I know – and thus it happened.)

In referring to the past life of Don Iacopo, the abbot focused on his years in Monreale, also mentioning the fear to which the petitioner had only alluded, and which had caused great derision from the other monks, the laymen, and even the women. This underscores the importance of singing ability, since its absence could attract ridicule and laughter among the congregation or even cause the culprit to depart from the religious order. It is also likely that Don Iacopo's singing ineptitude was the main reason for the manual labours that he had to carry out in San Martino and the decision to send him to Monreale. Among the other things, the abbot reiterates several times the good reputation of the monk and his honourable behaviour, adding that 'what he is lacking in the choir setting, he makes up for in manual labours'.

These two letters also allude to the close relationship at the time between San Martino delle Scale and the Archbishop of Monreale, under whose jurisdiction the abbey fell. The exchange of performers and singers between these two institutions was rather frequent, and the fine craftsmanship of the choral books produced in the monastic scriptorium suggests the high level of their skills. Many of these manuscripts date from the sixteenth century and are valuable resources for the reconstruction of the abbey's liturgical practice.¹⁶

Although the account books of San Martino contain numerous references to singers, in most cases it is not possible to establish whether they were permanently in the abbey's employ. In fact, the archival documents for this period provide no evidence of an officially institutionalized *cappella musicale* at the abbey, although circumstantial evidence suggests its existence. For instance, a payment note dated 1576 appears to offer the earliest evidence musicians receiving a monthly salary from the institution.¹⁷ While this does not confirm the existence of an institutionalized musical chapel, one must remember that during the sixteenth century the organization of musical

¹⁵ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresses, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 1467, fol. 66v.

¹⁶ Angela Daneu Lattanzi, *I manoscritti ed incunaboli miniati della Sicilia*, vol. 1 (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1965), 235–7; Maria Concetta Di Natale, 'Argentieri e miniatori a San Martino delle Scale', in *L'Abbazia di San Martino delle Scale: Storia, Arte, Ambiente*, ed. Anselmo Lipari (Palermo: Poligraf, 1990), 132–5; *Il fondo antico della Biblioteca Pax di San Martino delle Scale: Corali miniati e cinquecentine*, ed. Elisabetta Lo Coco and Silvestre Zuccarello (Palermo: Officina della memoria, 2001); Maria Concetta Di Natale, 'Arti decorative nell'abbazia di San Martino delle Scale', in *Lo splendore di un chiostro: Guida storico-artistica dell'Abbazia di San Martino delle Scale*, ed. Anselmo Lipari and Fabrizio Messina Cicchetti (Palermo: Abadir, 2002), 77–96.

¹⁷ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresses, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 756, fol. 25r.

staff in Palermo's churches was generally flexible and heteromorphic. If we accept Oscar Mischiati's broad definition of *cappella musicale*, one may justifiably hypothesize that already in the Cinquecento San Martino employed 'a group of *cantori* and players who were in the permanent service of [the] church under the supervision of a maestro (who sometimes was also the organist)'.

For special occasions of the church calendar, outside musicians supported the abbey's regular musical personnel. The recruitment of professional performers, both singers and instrumentalists, is noted for the patronal feast of San Martino; for the feast of San Benedetto, founder of the order; and for other occasions that required increased musical activity, such as Marian feasts, Christmas, and Lent. These additional musicians were compensated either with money or, more frequently, food and commissions.¹⁸ Among the most popular food items were fruits and sweets, such as *mustazzola*, diamond-shaped cookies made with honey and wine; *cubaita*, crispy sweets for the Christmas period; *confezioni* (jams); and above all the *nivi* (snow) that was used to produce ice creams and sorbets. The distribution of fish was also very common, and it was reserved for the musicians hired for the Lent period, following the canonical Christian prescriptions. Such in-kind payments were sometimes also made to the abbey's organists. The registers for the years 1580-1585 indicate that the organist was entitled to food and *stromenti di letto* (accommodation commodities), in addition to his regular salary. Most importantly, he was also provided with *cavalcature*, or mounts, which were most likely necessitated by the monastery's distance from Palermo and Monreale. The cost of these extra perks, combined with normal monetary payments, brings the monastery's expenditure on compensation for the organist to a total of 13 *onze* per year.¹⁹

In addition to the organist, trumpeters and players of *piffari* (various types of woodwind instruments) were added to the *cantori* and other regular personnel to perform for major feasts. These instruments enhanced the solemnity of the celebrations and also attracted large congregations. This explains their appearance in virtually all the celebrations of feasts of the patron saints. Also noteworthy is the abbey's use of wind instruments for Pentecost, which doubled as the titular celebration of its *grancia* (i.e., dependent church) in Palermo, named for the Holy Spirit. Besides being a public display of devotion, the Pentecost celebrations of the Church of the Holy Spirit served to project San Martino's institutional power directly to Palermo's citizens, despite the monastery's physical distance from the city. Somewhat puzzling, given the massive amount of extant documentation, is that little information has survived regarding sixteenth-century celebrations for the feasts of the patron saints, San Martino and San Benedetto. Perhaps it was deemed unnecessary to supplement the abbey's regular musical personnel, whether or not organized into a functional *cappella musicale*, with external musicians.

Conversely, the celebrations for Carnival and Lent are widely documented from the first half of the sixteenth century since the liturgical celebrations of period were of primary importance for the city. Indeed, the tradition during Lent was for each church in Palermo to solemnize the feast, giving the whole city the aura of a holy place. Accordingly, extant records attest to rather elaborate musical performances, for which additional musicians and singers were apparently brought in to join the regular personnel of all of Palermo's ecclesiastical institutions. San Martino, of course, played a leading role in these celebrations, indirect evidence for which

¹⁸ This widespread practice endured throughout the city at least until the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁹ The monetary units used in Sicily were, in order of increasing value, *grana*, *tari* (1 *tari* = 20 *grana*), and *onze* (1 *onza* = 30 *tari*). In 1862, after the Italian unification, *onze* and *tari* were converted into *lire*, such that 1 *onza* was valued as 12.74 *lire*, and 1 *tari* as 0.42 *lire*. For previous centuries it is difficult to estimate precise values, but we do know that in 1548 a mule cost around 6 to 11 *onze*, a horse 5 *onze*, an ox 3 *onze*, a barrel of wine 1.5 *onze*, a cow 1.2 *onze*, a pig 6 *tari*, and a sheep 5 *tari*.

can be found in the account books that note increased expenditures for strings and *conzature* (repairs) of musical instruments.

Organists, Teachers, and Musicians

In contrast to the scant information regarding music in Palermo's other ecclesiastical institutions during the Quattrocento, payments to the organists of San Martino delle Scale are recorded from the second half of the fifteenth century. An entry from 1478 records the donation of 6 *tari* to father Pietro to be paid to 'father Janni Janellu, player of the organ', whose duties included teaching Pietro and other monks to play the instrument 'to honour the divine worship'.²⁰ A memorandum inserted into the book – a slip of paper, or *pizzino*, as it was often called by copyists – informs us that the abbot had ordered the cellarer to renegotiate the fee for the organ teacher due to the limited number of monks; namely 6 ducats to be paid in three instalments over a period of three weeks, plus the immediate payment of 2 ducats as a compensation for the services of the first week.

For the sixteenth century we can confirm sustained collaboration with numerous organists performed for the regular liturgy and on solemn occasions, whether in the abbey or its *grancia*. Generally, changes of organist were apparently infrequent, and the abbey seems not to have employed multiple organists simultaneously. Rather, the records suggest the presence of a single salaried organist who was replaced as soon as he finished his appointment. Other organists, who were perhaps recruited from outside to teach music or perform, joined the permanent player only occasionally and for special events, particularly during Easter and Christmas. The earliest sixteenth-century record for such an engagement dates from November 1526. This payment to the organist from Monreale, probably in connection with the feast of San Martino, underscores the importance of the abbey's relationship with the archdiocese.²¹ Five years later, on 29 December 1531, we find a larger payment of 13 *tari* to Pietro Fresina to play the organ at San Martino during Christmas.²² Although this could be an occasional performance, the amount of the payment suggests that it might be part of the salary, in which case Fresina would have been the permanent organist of the monastery. Indeed, this would be consistent with the institution's common practice of compensating its permanent organists with single payments of 13 or 26 *tari*.

The permanent organists also included a certain Lentomello, to whom Don Girolamo paid 12 *tari* in 1535.²³ However, in July 1536 regular payments are recorded for Giovanni Antonio Ansilio (or Ausilio), a new organist who would remain continuously at San Martino for about thirty-five years. Ansilio received a bimonthly salary of 13 *tari*, for a total of 2 *onze* and 6 *tari* per year. This sum was paid through private banks, such as those of Torongi and Scirotta, and almost always by the abbot, the cellarer, or Antonio Venitiano from Monreale.²⁴ By the mid-sixteenth century this annual salary had been significantly increased to 4 *onze*. From 1568 until 1587 we find no further information about Ansilio. Leaving aside for the moment Mauro Ciaula, who will be discussed later, during that period four successive performers held the post of organist: Giulio Guido in 1574, Girolamo Catalano in 1576 and 1577, Girolamo di Sabato in 1577 and 1578, and Antonio Cadili (or Candili) from Monreale in 1582. At 8 *onze* per year, Candili's salary was exactly

²⁰ '[...] a frati Jannj Janellu sonaturi di organj, ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 708, p. 35b; ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 708, p. 36b.

²¹ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1405, Libro di spese minute 1523-1526, fol. 54r.

²² ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 721, p. 103b.

²³ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 725, p. 34b.

²⁴ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 725, p. 186a.

twice the amount that was earned by Ansilio thirty years earlier. For the remainder of the sixteenth century, the sources mention no other permanent organists, instead recording extraordinary payments. Such payments include one in 1583 for the feast of the Assumption, one in 1584 to Girolamo di Sabato for the Pentecost, and another in 1587 to the aforesaid Ansilio.²⁵

The *vacchette* for the early seventeenth century include only one payment in 1614 to Raffaello Li Rapi, 'for the salary of the organ'.²⁶ However, it is not clear whether Li Rapi was the institution's organist or, more likely, the organ maker. The term *organista* was used interchangeably to describe either the player or the organ maker, an ambiguity of terminology that recurs frequently in the archival sources. At any rate, the lack of information about the organists of the seventeenth century is hardly surprising, considering that the *vacchette*, in contrast to the *giornali*, primarily registered extraordinary payments while normally omitting payments to permanent employees. Nonetheless, the organists continued to work regularly throughout the century, as is attested by regular payments to one or more anonymous men employed 'on the margin' to pump the bellows (*alzamantici* or *tiramantici*).

Further confirmation of the attention that the Benedictine institution paid to liturgical music is provided by the presence of teachers of polyphonic singing and instrumental practice. In addition to the aforementioned Janni Janellu, San Martino employed the organist Francesco Lo Grammatico, who is found among the salaried players and was paid on 9 March 1569 either to teach or to learn from Don Mauro (i.e., Mauro Ciaula).²⁷ The ambiguity results from the use of the term *imparare* (to learn), which often was incorrectly used as a synonym of *insegnare* (to teach). We also find a record for the collaboration with Giovanni Battista Adamo, a musician of the *cappella musicale* of the Senate, which presumably also dates from the same period. An undated receipt seems to confirm that Adamo ran a school ('teneva scola') in the church of San Teodoro on the Cassaro, the main street of the city.²⁸ This is the first and, so far, only evidence that explicitly uses the expression 'tenere scola' in relation to music teaching in a church of the city, although other sources attest to the vitality of teaching activities carried out by local musicians, both in the ecclesiastical institutions and private workshops. Indeed, the records for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain frequent references to teachers of guitar, harp, lute, and keyboard instruments.

As for the musicians hired for special occasions, the San Martino account books often do not record their names, at least during the sixteenth century. When names are specified, they are generally well-known performers affiliated with the most important *cappelle musicali* of Palermo. For example, in 1610 the bass Girolamo Muntiliana performed during the feast of San Martino, for which he was compensated 1 *onza*.²⁹ Thanks to the documentation of the *Regie Visite*, we learn that Muntiliana was a member of the musical chapel of the Palatina.³⁰ Another member of the Palatina was the tenor Ottavio d'Apa, who was employed two years earlier for the patronal feast of San Benedetto at the *grancia* of the Holy Spirit.³¹

²⁵ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1135, Libro di spese minute 1583, c. 84r; fondo II, b. 1203, Libro di spese minute 1584-1585, c. 2b; fondo II, vol. 770, fol. 5v.

²⁶ '[...] per lo salario dell'organo', ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 998, Cassa 1613-1615, fol. 81r.

²⁷ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 749, fol. 27v.

²⁸ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1405, Spese 1520-1869.

²⁹ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1137, Vacchetta 1610-1611, fol. 32v.

³⁰ ASPa, Conservatoria di registro, vol. 1330, fol. 222v.

³¹ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1138, Vacchetta 1617-1618, fol. 36v.

While archival records clearly demonstrate the pre-eminence of singing at San Martino delle Scale, considerable evidence reveals that the monks regularly played musical instruments. In fact, the earliest known payment of any kind for music at the abbey dates from the second half of the fifteenth century and records the purchase of strings for a clavichord.³² Similar entries continued to be registered in the following century, with many references to organs, keyboard instruments, violins, lutes, violas, and flutes. The use of musical instruments spread to such an extent that it caused frequent interventions by the ecclesiastical authorities, especially after the Council of Trent. Again in the *Ordinazioni del Capitolo Generale*, we find a note dating back to 1578 by which the visitors forbade the monks to play instruments, a prohibition that was re-affirmed in the following year.³³

In addition to organists and singers, San Martino and other Palermitan institutions employed outside instrumentalists for special occasions. For the years 1581 and 1582 we find Antonino Morello, one of the most cited musicians in the account books of Palermo's *Corporazioni soppresse*. In 1577 Morello is documented as a player of woodwind instruments at the cappella of the Senate, a role that he probably also held at the Cappella Palatina in the first years of the following century.³⁴ Morello collaborated with numerous institutions, both male (San Domenico and Casa Professa of the Jesuits) and female (Santa Maria del Cancelliere and Santa Maria della Pietà). But his most prestigious appointment is recorded in a notary's deed of 1595 wherein he is named *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral and required to play the organ for several occasions of the liturgical calendar.³⁵ In 1628 Giovanni Battista Fiorenza was entrusted with the same role, though not at the Cathedral of Palermo, but at the Dome of Monreale. This musician had already appeared as organist of San Domenico (1606–7) and was then hired by the monks of San Martino to play at the *grancia* for the feasts of San Martino and San Benedetto.³⁶

None of the previously named musicians seems to have been active as composer, although rental documents of San Martino provide interesting information on performers who published music collections during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, as early as 1599 a number of payments attest to the presence of Vincenzo di Elia, perhaps identifiable as the homonymous composer and *maestro di cappella* of the Palatina from 1636.³⁷ In the same year D'Elia published his only known music book, the *Salmi et hinni di vesperi ariosi, a 4 e 8 voci*, held today at the Archive of the Museum of the Cathedral of Malta.³⁸ Although it remains uncertain whether Vincenzo di Elia is the composer of the *Salmi et hinni*, we have stronger clues about the identity of a certain Antonio Lo Verso mentioned in the *vacchette* from the first half of the

³² ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1405, Libro di spese minute 1569-1571, fol. 96r.

³³ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 1467, fol. 32r.

³⁴ Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo, Atti del Comune 1576-1577, f. 40 (see Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo*, 37); ASPa, Conservatoria di registro, vol. 1330, fol. 222v.

³⁵ ASPa, Notai defunti, vol. 7043. See Giuseppe Dispensa Zaccaria, *Organi e organari in Sicilia dal '400 al '900* (Palermo: Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti di Palermo, 1988), 143.

³⁶ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1138, Vacchetta 1618–1619, fol. 44v; b. 1138, Vacchetta 1619-1620, fol. 38v; b. 1139, Vacchetta 1628-1629, fol. 302v.

³⁷ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1456, Dare e avere 1598–1602, p. 130a. For Vincenzo D'Elia, see Antonino Mongitore, *Bibliotheca Sicula sive De Scriptoribus Siculis qui tum vetera tum recentiora saecula illustrarunt, notitiae locupletissima*, vol. 2 (Palermo: D. La Bua, 1714), 281; Tiby, 'La musica nella Real Cappella Palatina di Palermo', *Annuario musical' dell'Istituto Español de Musicología del C.S.I.C.* 7 (1952), 91; Paolo Emilio Carapezza and Giuseppe Collisani, 'D'Elia, Vincenzo', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), version at *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (accessed 13 September 2015).

³⁸ Daniele Ficola, 'Stampe musicali siciliane a Malta', in *Musica sacra in Sicilia tra rinascimento e barocco, Atti del convegno (Caltagirone, 10–12 dicembre 1985)*, ed. Daniele Ficola (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1988), 74.

seventeenth century. He could be Antonio Il Verso, the renowned composer and pupil of Pietro Vinci who belonged to the second generation of the Sicilian Polyphonic School. Lo Verso certainly had contacts with Monreale, and his 1606 collection of motets was dedicated to the Archbishop Ludovico II de Torres.³⁹ On the other hand, there is no evidence of Il Verso having a relationship with the Benedictine abbey, although his name appears among the lodgers of San Martino from 1618 to 1621.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is worth noting that San Martino's payments to Lo Verso end abruptly in 1621, the year Tiby identified as the date of the Il Verso's death.⁴¹

Along with the cases discussed above, other examples refer to various musical collaborations. In 1621, for example, Paolo d'Aragona, the author of two books of *canzonette*, *Amorose querele* and *Soavi ardori* (both printed in Naples in 1616), was recruited as musician, probably as a lute player, for the feasts of San Benedetto and Pentecost.⁴² Ten years earlier, San Martino had similarly engaged Giulio Oristagno, the permanent organist of the Cappella Palatina, who in 1602 had composed the *Responsoria Nativitatis, et Epiphaniae Domini, quae quatuor vocibus concinuntur*.⁴³

Mauro Panormita and the *Lamentationes* for Holy Week (1597)

Of all the aforementioned musicians recruited to collaborate with San Martino, the only one for whom evidence points to his having composed music specifically for the abbey is Mauro Panormita, commonly known as Mauro Ciaula. Ciaula took vows to become a Benedictine monk in the second half of the sixteenth century, and his continuous affiliation with San Martino is documented from 1569. His presence at the abbey since that date supports the hypothesis that he was ordained in 1562 rather than 1578, as suggested by Maria Antonella Balsano.⁴⁴ Although Ciaula is traditionally presumed to have been *maestro di cappella* of San Martino, no evidence explicitly supports this.⁴⁵ For example, the testimony of Pietro Antonio Tornamira, concerning the staging in 1581 of the aforementioned *Atto della Pinta*, describes Ciaula as *maestro di cappella* not of San Martino delle Scale, but rather 'of the Dome of the Palace of Sicily', probably referring to the Cathedral or to the Cappella Palatina.⁴⁶ Conversely, San Martino's documents tell us only that

³⁹ Mongitore, *Bibliotheca Sicula*, vol. 1, 74–5; Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo*, 73–8; Paolo Emilio Carapezza, 'Il Verso [Lo Verso; Versus], Antonio', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn., version at *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (accessed 13 September 2015).

⁴⁰ The earliest reference is in ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1138, Vacchetta 1618-1619, fol. 225v.

⁴¹ Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo*, 74.

⁴² Daniele Ficola and Paolo Rigano, 'La toccata per liuto di Paolo d'Aragona', *I Quaderni del Conservatorio* 1 (1988), 91–100; ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1138, Vacchetta 1620–1621, fol. 39v; b. 1138, Vacchetta 1621–1622, fol. 34v.

⁴³ On Giulio Oristagno see Mongitore, *Bibliotheca Sicula*, vol. 1, 415; Giuseppe M. Di Ferro, *Biografia degli uomini illustri trapanesi*, vol. 1 (Trapani: Mannone e Solina, 1830), 174–6; Tiby, 'La musica nella Real Cappella Palatina di Palermo', 188; Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo*, 67; Paolo Emilio Carapezza and Giuseppe Collisani, 'Oristagno, Giulio d', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn., version at *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (accessed 13 September 2015).

⁴⁴ This hypothesis was expressed by Maria Antonella Balsano on the basis of primary sources that refer to the profession of two different 'Mauro a Panormo', in 1562 and 1578, respectively. A later chronicle reports the inscription 'Ciaula' below the name of the monk who was professed in 1562. See Balsano, 'L'Atto della Pinta: un crescendo durato mezzo secolo', 229.

⁴⁵ For a general view on the composer see Paolo Emilio Carapezza and Giuseppe Collisani, 'Ciaula [Chiaula, da Palermo, Palermitano, Panormitano], Mauro [Maurus Panhormita]', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn., version at *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (accessed 13 September 2015); Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo*, 68–9; Lorenzo Bianconi, 'Sussidi bibliografici per i musicisti siciliani del Cinquecento', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 7 (1972), 3–38.

⁴⁶ Giovanni Isgrò, *Teatro del Cinquecento a Palermo* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1983), 103–6; Maria Antonella Balsano, 'L'Atto della Pinta: un crescendo durato mezzo secolo', in *Musica sacra in Sicilia tra Rinascimento e Barocco*, 195–236;

Ciaula was the organist from 1569. In any case, we may at least note that, in Palermo's ecclesiastical institutions organists often exercised functions commonly associated with the role of *maestro di cappella*.

Following the mention of Ciaula in connection with Lo Grammatico of 9 March 1569, the next indication of Ciaula's work as a musician is found in the *Ordinationes speciales Capituli generalis* of 15 May of that year, when the official visitors – responsible for monitoring the abbey and reporting any misconduct to the royal authorities – granted that he should play the organ to the honour and glory of the Lord.⁴⁷ Further information about Ciaula may be found in the account books for the same year. For instance, a note dated 22 August 1569 and addressed to Ciaula concerns the transport of keyboard instruments: a spinet and a clavichord.⁴⁸ In 1581 he was involved with Antonino Morello in the sale of musical instruments, probably woodwinds.⁴⁹ The entry for this transaction relates to the staging of the aforementioned *Atto della Pinta*, with a text by Theophilus Folengo and music by Mauro Panormita. It was thanks to this commission from the Viceroy, Marcantonio Colonna, that Ciaula earned much of his reputation among his contemporaries, both in Sicily and throughout Italy.

As mentioned earlier, Ciaula's greatest fame derived from the 1581 performance of the *Santo della Pinta*, which 'still in the early nineteenth century – according to [Giuseppe] Bertini, maestro di cappella of the Palatina Chapel – was assiduously sung'.⁵⁰ Bertini also tells us that Ciaula's music enjoyed 'such success that it was decided to print it'.⁵¹ Unfortunately, this print has not survived, unlike three collections of sacred music, of which, however, only the first is complete: the *Missarum quae quinque vocibus modulantur, liber primus* (1588), the *Sacrarum cantionum, quae octo, tum vocibus, tum varijs instrumentis chorisque coniunctis, ac separatis concini possunt, liber primus* (1590), and the *Lamentationes* (1597), all published in Venice. In addition to these, we know that one madrigal by 'Mauro Palermo', *Le mie speranze vanno*, was inserted into the Sicilian collection of five-voice madrigals, *Infidi Lumi, Madrigali a cinque voci di diversi autori*, published in 1603 and now lost.⁵² It seems likely that by that time the composer had already published a book of madrigals for five voices, as may be deduced from the *Catalogus librorum qui in Iunctarum bibliotheca Philippi haeredum Florentia prostant* (Florence, 1604).⁵³ Also interesting is the inclusion of a seven-voice canon by 'Don Mauro P.' in the *Compendium Musicae Latino-Germanicum* by the German theorist Adam Gumpelzhaimer, printed in Augsburg in 1595.⁵⁴ According to Giovanna Vizzola, this

'Maestro di Cappella del Duomo della Reggia di Sicilia', '13 Raguagli storici del P. Don Pietro Antonio Tornamira di Palermo', ms. of the Library of the Abbey of San Martino delle Scale [VI. C. 16], 253.

⁴⁷ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 1467, fol. 22r.

⁴⁸ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1405, Libro di spese minute 1569-1571, fol. 96r.

⁴⁹ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1404, Libro di Cassa 1581-1582, fol. 33r.

⁵⁰ 'Il Sanctus che durante lo spettacolo [del 1581] era intonato da un coro angelico [...] ancora ai primi dell'Ottocento, a quanto ci assicura il Bertini che fu maestro di cappella alla Palatina, era assiduamente cantato'. Tiby, *I polifonisti siciliani del XVI e XVII secolo*, 69.

⁵¹ 'Essa [la musica] ebbe tal successo, che fu stabilito darsi alle stampe', Giuseppe Bertini, *Dizionario storico critico degli scrittori di musica e de' più celebri artisti di tutte le nazioni sì antiche che moderne*, vol. 2 (Palermo: Tipografia Reale di Guerra, 1815), 57.

⁵² Vincenzo Di Giovanni, *Filologia e letteratura siciliana*, vol. 2 (Palermo: L. Pedone Lauriel, 1871), 135.

⁵³ Oscar Mischiati, *Indici, cataloghi e avvisi degli editori e librai musicali italiani dal 1591 al 1798* (Florence: Olschki, 1984), 121.

⁵⁴ Adam Gumpelzhaimer, *Compendium Musicae latino-germanicum* (Augsburg: Schoenig, 1611), 38. We assume the composer to be Don Mauro Panormitano.

canon was extracted from another collection of motets, now lost but mentioned in an authorization for publication issued in Parma in 1586.⁵⁵

Mongitore, who attests to Don Mauro's mastery as a composer and as a *concertatore* (director), informs us that he returned to Palermo in 1597 before finally settling, in 1598, at the Benedictine abbey where he would remain until his death, around 1603.⁵⁶ In these two years the accounts of San Martino document the rental of music books from Messina belonging to father Don Mauro.⁵⁷ Perhaps these are the *Lamentationes ac responsoria que in Hebdomada sancta cantari solent rithmis vocibus accomodata [...] quattuor vocibus*, printed in 1597 thanks to a donation of 6 *onze* to the monastery.⁵⁸ If so, the *Lamentations* are directly related to the abbey and in particular with the rites of the Holy Week, which have always received a special musical attention. The above-mentioned *Ordinationes speciales* indirectly supports this, noting that the official visitors had expressly prohibited polyphonic music or figurative singing for the Holy Week.⁵⁹ Although incomplete, the *Lamentationes* may be helpful for understanding the liturgical traditions of the Benedictine monks at the end of the sixteenth century. The link with San Martino delle Scale is indicated in the dedication to Father Michele Abelardus, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. It claims that Abelardus was accustomed to lightening his mood by listening to music, particularly the compositions of Ciaula, enjoying the well-tempered and harmonious manner by which the singular voices were coming to his ears.⁶⁰ At the end of his dedication, Ciaula expresses his gratitude to the monks of San Martino and for the kindness of the Venetian abbot who bestowed honours upon them.⁶¹

Although Vizzola has fully analyzed the musical style of Ciaula's *Lamentationes*, it is worth mentioning here that it exhibits a well-balanced alternation between isorhythmic chordal passages, imitative *contrappunto*, and falsobordone free sections.⁶² Ciaula employs these various textural and structural procedures in support of text expression, which, of course, was general principal of post-Tridentine liturgical music. As specifically noted by John Bettley, the stylistic novelty of falsobordone had been introduced by Pietro Vinci in his *Il primo libro delle Lamentationi a quattro voci con altre composizioni convenienti alla Quadregesima* of 1583, and subsequently became one of the distinctive features of the Lamentations genre. Thus, Ciaula's use of it in his own collection is not surprising.⁶³ The declamatory flexibility that this technique allows brings out the

⁵⁵ Giovanna Vizzola, 'Le Lamentazioni del profeta Geremia in Sicilia nel Cinquecento', PhD diss., University of Rome 'La Sapienza', 2012, 139–40.

⁵⁶ 'Supra caeteros eminuit in ordinandis plurimorum vocum, & instrumentorum, pleno choro ex proportione respondentium symphonicis modulacionibus', Mongitore, *Bibliotheca Sicula*, vol. 2, 62-3.

⁵⁷ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, b. 1136, Libro di spese minute 1597-1598, fol. 68v.

⁵⁸ This printed collection can be found in the International Museum and Library for Music in Bologna, call number T.81. Three of the four partbooks (Altus, Tenor, and Bassus) are kept there; the Cantus is apparently lost.

⁵⁹ ASPa, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, San Martino delle Scale – fondo II, vol. 1467, c. 32r.

⁶⁰ 'Non semel enim in ocio illo tu, in quo ad honestam hilaritatem soles animum à gravibus illis negotijs cum celeberrimi istius cœnobij, tum totius Congregationis nostræ, Cantionibus musicis revocare, aliqua ex nostris audire voluisti, atque in ijs acri perito ve iudicio, quam temperata concentu auribus aptè respondeant singula vocum momenta pendere?'

⁶¹ 'Præterea cum propter filiorum huius cœnobij divi Martini, cum quibus artissimo necessitudinis vinculo coniunctus sum, clientelam susceptam, pro singulari tua humanitate illos maximis cumulare honoribus soleas, non alij quam tibi referendum erat hoc munus, quod esse posset simul grati erga te animi, ac ob susceptum patrociniū tui erga me beneficij monumentum?'

⁶² The musical features of this collection are fully analysed in Vizzola, 'Le Lamentazioni del profeta Geremia', 158–76.

⁶³ John Bettley, 'La compositione lacrimosa: Musical Style and Text Selection in North-Italian Lamentations Settings in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 118/2 (1993), 181–2.

opposition between the rhythmically static parts performed in falsobordone and other passages in crotchets and quavers. Compared to the works in Vinci's collection, the text of Ciaula's *Lamentations* is clearer in the *declamato* sections than in the imitative passages. We find this reflected in the musical structure of the Responsories, where relatively static episodes alternate with more dynamic sections, once again with the purpose of emphasizing the liturgical message.

Conclusion

During the sixteenth century San Martino delle Scale boasted a large staff of musicians distinguished by their talent as both singers and instrumentalists. Among them, Mauro Ciaula stands out as a master composer who belonged directly to the abbey and was regarded as one of the most respected musicians of his day. The abbey also maintained close relationships with other well-known external musicians, among whom were composers, singers, instrumental players, and organ makers. Additionally, the abbey was remarkable for its promotion of events that helped to consolidate Palermo's distinctive character during the Renaissance. This in turn provided the foundation for the musical magnificence that would later mark the city during the baroque period. While San Martino delle Scale was but one member of a larger religious community that contributed to Palermo's rich musical life, the musical tradition that the Benedictines initiated in the sixteenth century continued unabated well into the nineteenth, and thus endows the institution with special status in city's musical heritage.

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Abstract

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Palermo was one of the most important musical centers of the southern Italy, particularly due to the role of the Palatina Chapel. There were other institutions, however, such as monasteries and convents, that played an equally important role in promoting musical events within the city. Among the religious orders most active in this respect were the Benedictines, who stood out for the richness and quantity of musical occasions in which they were involved. The most prestigious Benedictine institution was the abbey of San Martino delle Scale, situated outside the city walls. The extant documentation provides a great deal of information about the musical life at the monastery, for both the ordinary liturgy and for special occasions (such as Lent) that required a notable increase in musical activities. The abbey boasted a relatively large musical staff that included some of the most renowned musicians of the period. One of these was Mauro Ciaula, organist and probably *maestro di cappella* of the institution, whose *Lamentationes ac responsoria que in Hebdomada sancta cantari solent* were printed in 1597 with the abbey's financial support.

About the Author

Ilaria Grippaudo is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Palermo. In 2010 she completed the PhD at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' with a dissertation on sacred music in the churches of Palermo. Since 2005 she has collaborated with the Fondazione Cini of Venice on projects concerning musical life in Italian ecclesiastical institutions. Her areas of research include archival studies, musical life in Sicily, and the history of opera. In 2014 she was awarded the 'Pier Luigi Gaiatto' Prize for Sacred Music, established by the Fondazione Levi of Venice. She currently teaches in the Department of Scienze Umanistiche of the University of Palermo. Among her publications are various essays on sacred music in Sicily appearing in journals such as *Studi Musicali* and *Studi Pergolesiani*.