



Review: [untitled]

Author(s): Irving Lavin

Reviewed work(s): Theatre Festivals of the Medici, 1539-1637 by A. M. Nagler

Source: *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Dec., 1965), pp. 327-328

Published by: Society of Architectural Historians

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/988321>

Accessed: 10/09/2008 16:43

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sah>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

that he was the builder, although elsewhere he has been described as parsimonious. A more lavish person was his nephew Walid ibn al-Yazid, whom Hamilton considers as the other possible builder and the man portrayed in the statue of the façade. He may have been only caliph designate at the time when the palace was built, which fact could be deduced from the message of loyalty to Hishām.

As Kurt Erdmann has pointed out, early Umayyad art lies between late Roman, Byzantine, Sassanian, and early Islamic art, and clarifies the relations between these styles in a magnificent manner.

FREDERICK P. BARGEBUHR
State University of Iowa

Joan Evans, *Monastic Architecture in France from the Renaissance to the Revolution*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1964. xlii, 187 pp., 822 pls., 5 figs. \$27.50.

To anyone familiar with Joan Evans' earlier works on French mediaeval art it would be natural to expect the present work to be a by-product of her extensive exploration of earlier monastic sites, at many of which there was much building during and after the sixteenth century. Actually, however, the work was inspired by war-time service drawing up lists of buildings to be spared, if possible, by the Allied Forces. Realizing that she had hardly seen these buildings while studying the mediaeval structures, Miss Evans began mapping and preparing for the present study.

At the revolution much monastic architecture was destroyed. Much more has since disappeared due to neglect, war, and replacement by modern structures. Relatively few of the remaining buildings have been returned to monastic use but there are still a great many former churches and conventual buildings now serving as schools, hospitals, prisons, government offices, museums, insane asylums, garages, farms, and even cinemas. Except for a few of the larger churches the buildings of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries have attracted very little attention on the part of scholars or travelers. It is the author's hope that this study will focus interest on the neglected buildings and perhaps slow the attrition which is rapidly reducing their number.

In a disarmingly modest preface Miss Evans warns of the preliminary and imperfect nature of her survey and includes a considerable list of sites which she was unable to visit and about which she would welcome information. However, the study provides a vast collection of factual and pictorial material, much of it never before readily available.

After an introduction dealing with general historical and architectural backgrounds the study is divided into sections, each dealing with the history and buildings of a monastic order or group of related orders. Within these sections the material is broken down chronologically, then by building types. There are other ways the book could have been organized, but for such a mass of varied material this is a clear and useful arrangement.

There are a few obvious errors in references or in captions for the illustrations. For example, the text reference (p. 53) to the prior's house at Luxeuil is not in accord with the illustration (fig. 288) which better fits the next building mentioned, the prior's lodging at Commercy. References on pages 68 and 69 to figures 411 and 412 should be reversed, and figure 738 is a longitudinal section, not a chapel façade. There are also many bits of information about buildings which are mentioned only in the notes and are not included in the index. One decision regarding the content of the work seems regrettable. There are several mentions of mediaeval survivals but few illustrations of examples. It would have been helpful to have them.

The result of years of compiling facts, visits to all parts of France, and collecting photographs, this study provides a wide-ranging sampler of buildings grand and modest, bold and retardataire.

While it may confirm some in the conviction that French architecture of the period is best studied in royal palaces, aristocratic chateaux, and great urban structures, the work provides invaluable collateral material which should be most useful. Miss Evans expresses hope that her work will serve as a foundation for "more complete and perfect" studies, and that it may serve to make the buildings "more visible" to travelers and more seriously considered as objects for conservation. It should do all these things and in addition provide a rich and handy reference volume to anyone concerned with the building arts of the time.

HARRY H. HILBERRY
Trinity University
San Antonio, Texas

A. M. Nagler, *Theatre Festivals of the Medici, 1539-1637*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1964. 190 pp., 136 pls. \$15.00.

This book consists almost exclusively of English paraphrases of the Italian sources concerning the great spectacles produced for the Grand Dukes of Tuscany during the period between the marriage of Cosimo I to Eleonora of Toledo (1539) and that of Ferdinando II to Vittoria della Rovere (1637). The theme could hardly be more important. The Medici productions set the standard for all Europe, and they contributed fundamentally to the development of the modern theater in many of its aspects, music, scenography, as well as theater architecture (this last despite the fact that the Medici never had a theater building in the proper sense). That it was a remarkably self-conscious contribution is evidenced by the fact that elaborate verbal descriptions, often accompanied by engraved illustrations, were published to commemorate the events. The descriptions tend to be very prolix and sometimes difficult to understand, and Professor Nagler has performed a useful task by summarizing the most important of them carefully and gathering much of the relevant visual documentation (in reproductions that do little credit to the publisher). The English reader can for the first time gain a general picture of the magnificent series as a whole.¹ It is regrettable, however, that the author makes practically no attempt to interpret historically the material he presents. Hence, a comprehensive study of the Medici productions remains one of the major desiderata in the entire field of Italian Renaissance art.

I append some brief observations that may be of interest. Nagler suggests (pp. 68, 82) that Buontalenti might have used sliding flat-wing sets for his 1586 and 1589 productions in the Medici theater, which he had installed in the Uffizi for the earlier occasion. This system—the last major step in the transformation of the stable, static scene of the mediaeval and early perspective theater into the mobile stage of modern times—is usually thought to have been first envisaged by Giovanbattista Aleotti, the great North Italian engineer and architect, for the Farnese theater in Parma in 1618.² The performances never took place, however, and the documents leave some room for doubt. The evidence becomes incontrovertible only with the 1628 performances at Parma by Francesco Guitti, an important

1. Perhaps it should be emphasized that Medici sponsorship of theater productions by no means ended with the marriage of Ferdinando II in 1637; the festivities of that year were regarded by Angelo Solerti, the great historian of Italian melodrama, as marking the end of the formative period of the opera in Florence.

2. For what follows, cf. I. Lavin, "Lettres de Parme (1618, 1627-28) et les débuts du théâtre Baroque," in J. Jacquot, ed., *Le lieu*

figure in the North Italian development after Aleotti.³ It is possible to show a number of specific influences from Florence in Parma. The Farnese theater in the Palazzo della Pilotta clearly was built in competition with that of the Medici and its long, narrow shape with semicircular end opposite the stage seems to have come from that source. Further, in 1628 Guitti built a proper orchestra pit in front of the stage, and this too may have had its source in Florence. On the other hand, it is also certain that the North Italians made significant contributions of their own, which might easily have included the wing set. Nagler's suggestion is based chiefly on the fact that the method of changing angle wings (a form that preceded flat wings), described in Nicola Sabbattini's treatise of 1638, requires that the upper edge of the frames be straight, whereas the buildings depicted in Buontalenti's 1589 set had chimneys from which perfumed smoke seemed to rise. But what Sabbattini says is that you cannot have chimneys that physically project (*di rilievo*); he had in mind, surely, that they be painted on the frame along with the buildings themselves, and I believe this was the case in Florence. Strong argument, albeit *ab silentio*, against the possibility that flat-wing sets were used in Florence is that Joseph Furttentbach, the German architect and engineer who wrote several treatises that include important discussions of theatrical matters, does not mention them. Furttentbach had been to Florence and studied with Buontalenti's successor, Giulio Parigi, and much of his work is avowedly dependent on what he learned there. He speaks of a true orchestra pit (*Architectura civilis*, Ulm, 1628, p. 28), but never of flat wings.⁴

Nagler reproduces (figs. 130-136) several of a group of some forty drawings in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma (MS 3708) with indications in the captions that they may have been made for the 1628 Farnese productions. But another set of ten very different drawings, now in the Sciolla collection in Rome, had already been associated with these performances, four of them quite conclusively on the basis of accompanying inscriptions.⁵ The Palatine drawings seem by style and conception much later, derived in my opinion from the engraved sets of Giacomo Torelli.

IRVING LAVIN
New York University

théâtrale à la Renaissance, Colloques internationaux du centre national de la recherche scientifique, Royaumont, March 1963, in press.

3. It was Guitti, not G. Magnani as Nagler states, who designed the temporary theater in the Cortile di San Pietro Martire in 1628.

4. The author points out (pp. 108, 168) that in 1608 and 1637 Giulio Parigi and his son, Alfonso, were apparently still using revolving prisms (also in 1624, cf. p. 136). In general, Professor Nagler's own earlier summary of the development seems more just ("The Furttentbach Theatre in Ulm," *The Theatre Annual* II, 1953, pp. 49ff.).

5. E. Povoledo, "Macchine e ingegni del Teatro Farnese," *Prospettive* XIX, 1959, pp. 49ff. ¶ With regard to an eleventh drawing in the Sciolla collection, Povoledo says without further reference that it is a "late copy of a machine invented for the Teatro di S. Salvador in Venice in 1675" (*ibid.*, p. 54 and fig. 12). In fact, the Sciolla drawing is a schematized rendering of one of the drawings in the Biblioteca Palatina. P. Bjurström, who reproduces three of the Palatina drawings, notes that one of them is inscribed with a scale in Venetian feet, and cites references to Venice in others (*Giacomo Torelli and Baroque Stage Design*, Stockholm, 1962, p. 56, n. 11, figs. pp. 57, 110, 229). ¶ Bjurström also called this writer's attention to the fact that a set of drawings virtually identical to those in the Sciolla collection (except that there are at least four more) is preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Parma (Mappe IV; one reproduced by Bjurström, fig. p. 141, and cf. p. 140, n. 18).

Alan Gowans, *Architecture in New Jersey: A Record of American Civilization*, Princeton, D. Van Nostrand and Co., Inc., 1964. 161 pp., 65 illus. The New Jersey Historical Series, VI. \$3.95.

At first glance, and even through the first fifty pages, the impression given is that here we have nothing more than a compressed history of American architecture limited to the monuments of a single state, one which by no means produced the most significant buildings in each identifiable age. As the author proceeds into his discussion of middle and late nineteenth-century architecture, however, his vision broadens and his ideas multiply as though freshly invigorated by each new and extraordinary perversion of past styles and by every suggestion of an era of architectural reform. Whether the social and economic reasons he offers to explain changing style are in every case acceptable may be open to question. He nevertheless shows sound thinking on problems which have not really been solved yet by anyone.

Small as New Jersey is in comparison with other states, there are still a very large number of cities and towns, and much countryside, from which to select buildings of more than passing interest. But in a book of this size and scope it is not possible to refer to more than a few very carefully chosen buildings. This the author has ably done in order to comply with the requirements of the historical series of which this forms a part. The series was planned for celebration of the state's three hundredth anniversary. The book should and will interest those nonspecialists who are seeking a survey of their state's history. For lack of sufficient examples it will not help the architectural historian probing his field in depth. Nor will it serve the tourist public as well as Pevsner's county building histories of England. In fact it is not a guide or ready reference book at all. To ask that the book be something other than is intended would be unfair, since it was not written to serve these other purposes. Rather, one should hope that, before it is too late, in New Jersey and in fact in every state there will soon be scholars sufficiently farsighted to begin series like Pevsner's in England or Dehio and Gall's in Germany, so that we may become more aware of our own heritage.

With its wealth of ideas about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Professor Gowan's book is so stimulating that one could wish many of them would be expanded at length elsewhere. In his enthusiasm he almost forgets towards the end of the book that he is writing on New Jersey architecture, for he allows all the great American architects to enter his discussion, whether they had connections with New Jersey or not. As an instance, the enormously important problem of the academic versus the progressive architect is fully discussed apart from the local scene. As a balance, however, the little-known New Jersey architect Gustav Stickley is given prominence. Here again is a theme for expansion. A full account of this romantic's work would be most entertaining as well as historically important.

Should there be another edition of this book it would be worthwhile correcting a number of typographical errors, and removing the confusion between pages of text and captions to illustrations. The latter complaint could be met by giving each illustration a figure number. Although the captions are set in type of a different size, the change is so slight that it escapes the eye on turning from a page of text to one of the many pages with a caption at the top. Perhaps a clearer scheme was originally devised by the author but abandoned by the editors, because on page 100 there are references to illustrations by number, whereas not one in fact is given an identifying number. Most of the illustrations are good, but page 48 undoubtedly has one of the worst ever published.

It must be repeated that this seemingly unassuming little book is the product of much research over the years and of broad thinking