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Author(s): Irving Lavin

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they appear in Dr. Vey's catalogue, though this may not be their true chronological relationship.)

How are we to understand this intensive preparation? Dr. Vey ponders the question briefly (p. 20) but cannot decide whether these multiple studies were due to "extraordinary conscientiousness or indecision," whether they reflect "a weak imagination" or the very opposite, "an abundant fantasy which the artist found difficult to control." I wonder whether the answer is not to be found on another level.

Throughout his life Van Dyck lived in the shadow of the genius of Rubens. For a highly gifted and obviously ambitious young man this overwhelming presence must have created problems of a complex nature. It is not difficult to imagine how during those first Antwerp years (between 1616 and 1621) Van Dyck's attitude toward the great master (in whose house he appears to have lived for some time) must have been charged both with admiration and envy. He surely wanted to please and to impress his teacher and to show himself worthy of his praise and protection. At the same time, if only unconsciously, there may have been resentment and a wish to rival and possibly outdo him. The paintings Van Dyck did in these years and for which he made these numerous studies are mostly scenes of drama and excitement, precisely the kind of subject for which Rubens had an unsurpassed gift. They disappeared almost completely from Van Dyck's oeuvre after he had found the subjects appropriate to his talent, the lyrical and slightly sentimental religious themes, and above all portraiture, a field Rubens shunned as much as possible.

For some years the young Van Dyck evidently made an intense effort to prove himself another Rubens. Straining against the very nature of his talent, he worked with tremendous concentration and under great tensions; I believe the multiple studies and sketches for his early paintings remain as the mute witnesses of a pertinacious and somehow pathetic struggle toward his goal. Seen in this perspective, the forced boldness in the graphic conventions of many of these drawings also makes good sense, especially the introduction of heavily inked areas and of broad contours done with the brush (see for instance figs. 4, 5, 11, 84, 89, and 116). These contrasting patterns of light and dark are the graphic equivalent of the rather coarse brushwork of many of Van Dyck's early paintings—and like it may be a sign of overcompensation. One of the most feminine of all painters was trying, for some time at least, to be known as an artistic "he-man."

As one leafs through Dr. Vey's illustrations one can trace the gradual subsiding of these efforts. In the last analysis, Van Dyck's claim to be admitted among the draftsmen of rank rests less securely on the studies

for compositions than on the masterly sketches for his painted portraits, the sensitive studies for the "iconographie," and last but not least on the unassuming and tender pen sketches and watercolors of landscapes.

JULIUS S. HELD
Barnard College, Columbia University

GIAN LORENZO BERNINI, *Fontana di Trevi, Commedia inedita*, with introduction and commentary by Cesare d'Onofrio, Rome, Staderini Editore, 1963. Pp. 114; 6 pls. Lire 2,000.

In a quiet way, a major art historical event has taken place; a comedy by Bernini has been published. For anyone wishing to understand Bernini as a "total" artistic personality, his activity in the theater presents one of the most intractable problems. From all accounts, and there are many, it is clear that he spent a great deal of time and energy throughout his life writing, producing, staging, and acting in plays. Beginning in the early 1630's,¹ during the *Carnival* season, he would either produce something for one of his patrons or, more regularly, put on a comedy of his own. His efforts were extremely successful and—to judge from his conversations in Paris in 1665, which are full of anecdotes about his productions—he was ingenuously proud of his accomplishments. Bernini was passionately involved in the world of the stage.

From a broader historical point of view as well, Bernini's theatrical activities are of extraordinary importance. He lived through a decisive period in the creation of the opera not only as a musical and dramatic but also as a visual art form. And although he had had many predecessors as artist-scenographer (not so many as artist-playwright and artist-actor), it is with Bernini that the relationship between "art" and "theater" becomes a critical question. The phrase "Baroque theatricality," meaning both exaggerated emotionalism and a direct transfer of formal devices from the one field to the other, is almost synonymous with "Bernini." In a sense, therefore, it might be said that our conception of the whole period, as well as of the artist himself, has been colored by Bernini's activity in the theater.

Yet we know very little about this aspect of his work. By and large, historians have been content to repeat the more spectacular instances of his scenographic wizardry, while neglecting the many other references and descriptions the sources contain. It is also unfortunately true that until now nothing Bernini created for the theater has been known at first hand. One drawing that had been thought to be the design for a stage set by Bernini was subsequently ascribed to

1. The date is significant since it coincides with the beginning of a major phase of Bernini's development, with which the writer hopes to deal in a separate study. In a letter of 1634 Fulvio Testi speaks as if Bernini had been giving comedies for some time ("conforme al solito degli altri anni"; S. Fraschetti, *Il Bernini*, Milan, 1900, p. 261 n. 3). But the earliest notice we have of a play by him is in February 1633 (*ibid.*, p. 261

n. 1); this must in fact have been among his first, since the date corresponds reasonably well with Domenico Bernini's specific statement that his father began writing plays during an illness that occurred when he was approaching the age of 37, i.e. in 1635 (*Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino*, Rome, 1713, pp. 47f.).

Juvara, an attribution now widely accepted.² Nor can Bernini be credited with the sets for the famous Barberini operatic production of the early 1630's, *Sant' Alessio*, recorded in a group of eight engravings by Collignon; from the documents in the Barberini archive in the Vatican it appears that Bernini had no share in this production.³

The first major breakthrough on this front is the present publication by Cesare d'Onofrio, whose *Fontane di Roma* is known to every student of Roman Baroque art, of the one play by Bernini that has actually come down to us. It is preserved in one of three manuscripts containing a considerable mass of Bernini material, in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. The manuscripts have been known, though surprisingly little used by scholars, for over half a century. D'Onofrio has transcribed the text, adding a brief introductory essay on Bernini and the theater, and an appendix containing some of the more important published sources on Bernini's theatrical activities.

The play, in a scribe's hand, has no title. It is written in a fascicule inscribed "Fontana di Trevi MDCXLII" that was originally intended as a ledger of accounts for work on the fountain (hence the purely conventional title d'Onofrio has given to the publication). Only a few entries were made, however, the latest of which dates from April 1643.⁴ Scene two of the second act contains an anti-Spanish jibe, which D'Onofrio feels would not have been written under the Hispanophile Innocent X; and since Urban VIII died in July of 1644 the most plausible assumption is that the play was intended for the Carnival season of that year.

The plot, briefly, is as follows: Cinthio, a young gentleman in the service of a prince, is in love with Angelica, the daughter of Dottor Gratiano, an aging and famous master of scenography, who also writes and acts in his own plays. Cinthio has no money and Coviello, his charming and scheming Neapolitan valet, proposes a stratagem that will net enough at least to make a show of wealth. A certain mysterious stranger, Alidoro, will pay a thousand scudi to see Gratiano's marvelous stage effects. Cinthio tells Gratiano that the prince has ordered him to do a comedy. Gratiano re-

sists, but is finally persuaded by his maidservant Rosetta (with whom he has a flirtation). Gratiano tells Rosetta the plot he has devised: a certain Dottor Gratiano is enamored of his maidservant, named Rosetta. Gratiano is married, but his wife is "un pezz de carnaccia vecchia che sà di rancido che appesta."⁵ Gratiano will try to accommodate the situation by making use of Rosetta, "in anticipation" of his wife's demise, to have a child. In a remarkable conversation between the real Dottor Gratiano and the imaginary one the latter scolds the former roundly for having such dirty thoughts ("sporchi pensieri"). The second act has a brilliant scene in which at a trial lowering of the "cielo" (sky) the mechanism fails to perform adequately. Gratiano expresses his dissatisfaction vehemently, making two canonically "Baroque" aesthetic pronouncements: that stage machines are supposed to amaze people, not amuse them; and that invention, design ("inzegn, el desegn") is the magic art that fools the eye so as to cause astonishment. Alidoro, it turns out in the last act, is himself a producer of plays who also acts in them and paints the scenes. With Zanni, Dottor Gratiano's manservant, as an accomplice, he dons a disguise in which he will be employed to assist with the preparations and thus learn Gratiano's techniques. The manuscript comes to an end as Cochetto, a French scene painter, is about to put Alidoro to work.

The play is thus, basically, a conventional commedia dell'arte farce, with conventional commedia dell'arte characters who speak informally and often spicily, in conventional commedia dell'arte "dialects." (D'Onofrio explains some of the difficult passages, though his foreign readers will wish there were more notes of this kind; on certain passages, even D'Onofrio admits he is stumped.) It seems never to have been performed, certainly not from this copy which, though clearly written, contains a number of lacunae and errors made by the scribe. I wonder, in fact, whether the play as it stands is really finished; lacunae aside, the third act is exceedingly short (only two scenes) and the ending seems not a proper denouement at all. Furthermore, the one reference in the sources that I suspect might possibly be connected with this play (see below) con-

2. H. Brauer and R. Wittkower, *Die Zeichnungen des Gianlorenzo Bernini*, Berlin, 1931, pp. 33f., pl. 15. Cf. A. E. Brinkmann, in *Filippo Juvara. Comitato per le onoranze a Filippo Juvara*, Turin, 1937, I, pp. 146, 162; R. Battaglia, *La Cattedra berniniana di San Pietro*, Rome, 1943, p. 119 n. 2; L. Grassi, *Bernini pittore*, Rome, 1945, p. 48 n. 51, p. 59.

3. The attribution to Bernini (which seems to occur first in G. Martucci, "Salvator Rosa nel personaggio di Formica," *Nuova Antologia*, 83, 1885, p. 648) never had any basis in fact. To begin with, a monogram that appears in the corner of one state of the Collignon engravings (e.g. Rome, Bibl. Vaticana, Stamp. Barb. N. XIII. 199) was misconstrued as referring to Bernini (by F. Clementi, *Il carnevale romano*, Città di Castello, 1939, p. 473 [first edition Rome, 1899], and again by A. Schiavo, "A proposito dei 'Disegni inediti di G. L. Bernini e di L. Vanvitelli' di A. Schiavo," *Palladio*, n.s., IV, 1954, p. 90). Then Frascetti (*op.cit.*, p. 261) quite gratuitously interpolated Bernini's name into the account of the performance given in Giacinto Gigli's *Diario Romano* (ed. G. Ricciotti, Rome, 1958, p. 140); no such reference occurs in the manuscripts of the

diary (Rome, Bibl. Vittorio Emanuele, MS 811, fol. 139v [autograph]; Bibl. Vaticana, MS lat. 8717, p. 141; San Pietro in Vincoli MS, p. 147).

The monogram, by analogy with that of François Collignon himself, which appears in the opposite corner of the engravings, should be read as "F.B." A payment was made to the painter Francesco Buonamici for unspecified work on the production of 1634 (Bibl. Vat., Archivio Barberini, Armadio 100, Giustificazioni No. 1751-2000, Card. Francesco Barberini, 1632-1634, No. 1907; cf. Arm. 86, Libro Mastro "B," Card. Francesco, 1630-1634, p. 346); Pietro da Cortona had helped with the sets of the 1632 production (Arm. 155, Alfabeto di entrata e uscita della guardarobba, Card. Antonio, 1632, fols. 44v, 145r).

4. D'Onofrio through a lapsus gives August 1643 at the bottom of p. 28.

5. Compare Bernini's description, reported by Baldinucci, of a painting of "una rancida, e schifosa vecchia, che viva, e vera ci apporterebbe nausea, e ci offenderebbe" (*Vita del cavaliere Gio. Lorenzo Bernino*, Florence, 1682, p. 71).

cerns an "idea" for a comedy that Bernini never carried out.

In his pleasant introduction D'Onofrio duly emphasizes the importance of the theater in Bernini's artistic life, noting that often there was a close link between his work in the theater and his other activities; for example, in one comedy he defends himself against his detractors, punning cleverly on the old *conchetto* about Time discovering Truth, which in turn was the subject of one of his most famous sculptures (about 1646). Such instances lead D'Onofrio to conceive of Bernini's comedies roughly on the analogy of the modern stage "review," consisting of more or less occasional "sketches" that might, when they met with particular success, be repeated in a subsequent work. Conversely, D'Onofrio observes, for Bernini the theater was not limited to the stage; he was always acting, always "producing" something splendid and dramatic, in conversation no less than in the studio.

Regarding the play at hand, D'Onofrio is undoubtedly right when he sees in Dottor Gratiano a strong autobiographical note;⁶ he is a man of genius and fame, from whom others would seek to pilfer what they imagine to be the secrets of his success. But to interpret Dottor Gratiano simply as a man anxious to protect his inventions is a mistake. Gratiano explains unequivocally (p. 46) that he is reluctant to do the comedy altogether, because of the taxing creative effort and the time required ("sien cos che rezercan tutt l'hom e molto tempo").⁷ He also makes it clear (p. 51) that he wants people kept away from the preparations, not in order to prevent his ideas from being stolen, but because advance knowledge will spoil the effect ("e si quand se sann non son più belle").

While D'Onofrio regards the machines by which Bernini achieved his "special effects" as the basis of his popularity, he also emphasizes, with much greater justice, that what is most impressive in the play is the quality of freshness and spontaneity; even from the linguistic point of view, he notes, it contrasts with the often ponderous and labored style of his contemporaries (though, in all fairness, the comparison ought to be confined to the relatively informal tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*).

The excerpts from the sources in D'Onofrio's appendix are taken from Chantelou and the reports quoted by Fraschetti. We may mention two serious omissions, the letters describing Bernini's production of 1635, which was set in an academy of painters and sculptors in Naples;⁸ and the accounts of the very famous "Fiera di Farfa" *intermedio* in the 1639 version of the opera *Chi soffre spera*, libretto by Giulio Rospigliosi (later Clement IX).⁹

For a proper understanding and evaluation we can

6. The suggestion that Alidoro is a reference to Salvator Rosa is much less convincing, and D'Onofrio is wise to offer it only tentatively.

7. Compare Bernini's phraseology concerning the various labors of the orator: "Ciascheduna di quelle operazioni ricercava tutto l'uomo . . ." (Baldinucci, *loc.cit.*).

only hope that the play will eventually receive the attention it deserves from those truly competent in the complex history of the Italian regular comedy and the *commedia dell'arte*, since it is closely related to both of these traditions. In the meantime, I should like to make use of the new evidence it provides in offering some tentative observations on the nature of Bernini's achievement in the theater.

The sources leave no doubt that one of the reasons for Bernini's success in this field, especially at the outset, was his daring satires of important people. Indeed, it seems unlikely that the ordinary *commedia dell'arte* troupes could have had an immunity from reprisal such as Bernini, darling of the Barberini, enjoyed. He could poke fun in public at anyone, including the Barberini themselves (in their very presence!), and get away with it. I am perfectly willing to believe that no one had seen anything like it before. But these direct references to highly placed people and their doings should not be thought of merely as reflections of Bernini's privileged position. They were also a device—they helped Bernini break through theatrical convention and establish links with the real world.

An analogous point may be made about Bernini's use of illusionistic devices, the second and perhaps chief source of his renown. In the great court spectacles and to some extent also in the regular theater, more or less elaborate stage effects had a long history. But the *commedia dell'arte*, to which Bernini's own private productions belong, was above all the domain of the performer, and scenic elements were secondary and largely stereotyped. Actual practice varied considerably, needless to say, and the great actor-dramatist Giovan Battista Andreini, who was Bernini's predecessor in more ways than one, introduced a considerable visual interest into the production of some of his *commedia dell'arte* plays.¹⁰ He seems to have done so, however, mainly through the use of lavish settings and costumes—which was probably rarely the case in Bernini's own productions—with no hint of the surprising special effects for which Bernini was acclaimed.

What is essential is a more balanced assessment of the character and underlying motivation of Bernini's scenographic technique. In my view, far too much emphasis has been placed upon the sheer mechanics of stage engineering. It is understandable that the astonishment expressed by contemporaries, his association with the extravagant Barberini productions, and the "spectacular" quality of much of his art generally, should have given rise to the belief that Bernini was a major figure in the development of the Baroque machine spectacle. But I doubt that this was the case. To begin with, Bernini's name can in fact be attached securely to only *one* of the big Barberini productions during Urban VIII's lifetime, and not to the whole

8. A. Saviotti, "Feste e spettacoli nel seicento," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, XLI, 1903, pp. 71ff.

9. A. Ademollo, *I teatri di Roma nel secolo decimosettimo*, Rome, 1888, pp. 28ff.

10. Cf. K. M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, Oxford, 1934, I, pp. 320ff.

performance but to only one of the *intermedi*, the aforementioned "Fiera di Farfa," of *Chi soffre spera*.¹¹ It should also be borne in mind that for the most part the scenes of the Barberini productions were not done by stage designers at all but by artists, mainly painters, who were primarily employed by the family in other tasks, like Andrea Camassei, G. F. Romanelli, G. F. Grimaldi, Andrea Sacchi. Apart from Giulio Parigi and his son Alfonso in Florence, the main line of evolution of Italian scenography was north Italian. There a great tradition emerged in the early seventeenth century, in Ferrara and Bologna with G. B. Aleotti and his successors Francesco Guitti and Alfonso Chenda, in Venice with Giuseppe Alabardi and Giovanni Burnacini, culminating in the work of the *grande stregone* of High Baroque stage design, Giacomo Torelli.¹² They made stage design and theater architecture a full-time, professional occupation and it is naïve to ascribe to Bernini rather than to them the leading role in the development of Baroque stage technology.

Conversely, it can be shown that none of the specific effects for which Bernini is touted was actually invented by him. In 1637 and 1638 he produced a comedy that involved *two* prologues and *two* theaters. This was certainly related to the play-within-a-play idea, which had had a significant recent development; Andreini had even done a comedy (*Le due commedie in commedia*, Venice, 1623) that included two successive performances as part of the plot.¹³ When sometime before 1645 Bernini staged a frightfully convincing fire,¹⁴ he was profiting from the sophisticated devices of theatrical pyrotechnics that had been developed especially for Hell scenes, long a regular part of the great court spectacles.¹⁵ As to background for Bernini's equally alarming Flood of the Tiber in 1638, we need but mention that G. B. Aleotti of Ferrara, in

addition to being an important theater designer, had been one of the founders of modern hydraulic engineering; he wrote several treatises on the subject with experience gained from such projects as the regulation of the waters of the Po at Ferrara and land reclamation in the Polesine region of northeast Italy. Francesco Guitti, his successor, had arranged to flood the huge Teatro Farnese on the second story of the Palazzo della Pilotta in Parma for a marine spectacle in 1628; Guitti, indeed, was the one real stage designer who did work for the Barberini, on productions in 1633 and 1634.

The truth is that Bernini did not really have much use for elaborate contraptions. He ridiculed them as too slow and cumbersome. The secret, he said, is to avoid doing things that will not succeed perfectly. He recommended a stage no more than twenty-four feet deep, and advised against scenes that could be seen from only one point. What pleased him was that he had achieved his successes with productions in his own house, at his own expense, which had cost him no more than "tre baiocchi." Most characteristically, he said that the important thing is to have ideas, in which case one can hire someone who knows how to paint scenes, and someone who understands machines, to carry them out.¹⁶ In some respects, it is evident, Bernini's principles were diametrically opposed to those underlying the vast machine productions that were the hallmark of the period.

I do not by any means wish to underestimate the significance of pure spectacle for Bernini. It is important to realize, however, that his "secret" lay not in lavishness or complex engineering, but in the *way* he used the techniques of illusion. When Bernini adopted the play-within-a-play motif he created the impression that two plays were going on *simultaneously*, confronting the audience with duplicate actors and a duplicate

11. Cf. above, note 3. The sets of the Barberini production of Rospigliosi's *Palazzo d'Atlante* (1642), attributed to Bernini by Baldinucci and Domenico Bernini, were actually by Andrea Sacchi; cf. the letters of the eyewitness Ottaviano Castellini to Mazarin (H. Prunières, "Les représentations du Palazzo d'Atlante à Rome [1642]," *Sammelbände der internationalen Musik-Gesellschaft*, XIV, 1912-13, pp. 218ff.), the *Avvisi di Roma* (G. Canevazzi, *Di tre melodrammi del secolo XVII*, Modena, 1904, pp. 44f.), and payments to Sacchi in March 1642 "in conto delle spese p le scene della commedia" (Bibl. Vat., Arch. Barb., Arm. 76, Libro Mastro "c," Card. Antonio Barberini, 1636-1644, p. 342).

12. The picture of this whole period has been very much enlarged and enriched in recent years by the pioneering researches of Elena Povoledo, in a long list of articles published in the *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*, Rome, 1954ff., and by Per Bjurström's monograph *Giacomo Torelli and Baroque Stage Design*, Stockholm, 1962 (Nationalmusei Skriftserie, 7). On Guitti's work as a theater architect, the writer has contributed "Lettres de Parme (1618-1627, 28) et les débuts du théâtre Baroque," in J. Jacquot, ed., *Le lieu théâtral à la Renaissance* (Colloques internationaux du centre national de la recherche scientifique, Royaumont, March 1963), now in course of publication.

13. Lea, *op.cit.*, pp. 322ff.; cf. F. Neri, "La commedia in commedia," *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire générale et comparée offerts à Fernand Baldensperger*, Paris, 1930, II, pp. 130ff.

14. A *terminus ad quem* is provided by the fact that when Bernini described the production in Paris in 1665, the Abbot Francesco Butti says he had been present; by 1645 Butti, who was secretary to Cardinal Antonio Barberini, had left Rome for Paris (cf. *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Kassel-Basel, 1949ff., II, cols. 532f.). The other comedies mentioned are dated by contemporary descriptions.

15. The treatise of Nicola Sabbattini, which certainly does not represent the most advanced technique of its day, even contains a chapter titled "Come si possa dimostrare che tutta la scena arda." Another of Sabbattini's chapters, "Come si possa fare apparire che tutta la scena si demolisca," shows that Bernini did not invent the trick for his comedy (1638) in which a house collapsed on stage (N. Sabbattini, *Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri*, Ravenna, 1638, ed. E. Povoledo, Rome, 1955, pp. 70f.).

The sunrise that Baldinucci and Domenico Bernini mention (which must date before 1643, since Louis XIII, who died in that year, requested a model) belonged in a tradition of sunrises and sunsets that goes back at least to Serlio (cf. ed. Venice, 1566, Book II, p. 44). I suspect, incidentally, that the biographers are actually referring to the *sunset* that Bernini staged in the "Fiera di Farfa" *intermedio* of 1639 (Ademollo, *loc.cit.*).

16. Fréart de Chantelou, *Journal du voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France*, ed. L. Lalanne, Paris, 1882, pp. 68, 69, 115, 116f., 213.

audience as well. When Francesco Guitti flooded the Farnese theater, it was for a marine performance in the middle of the arena; when Bernini did his trick, the water was on stage, and threatened to spill out over the spectators. (Guitti's was no doubt a far more ambitious engineering feat.) Bernini's fire was not presented as part of the play, in a scene of Hell; in a feigned accident with a torch carried by an actor, it threatened to burn down the theater itself.

Clearly, it was by means of these sudden thrusts into the mind and heart of the spectator—which could be and were intended to be achieved without elaborate machinery—that Bernini produced his wonderful effects. Upon the illusion normally expected in the theater he superimposed another illusion that was unexpected and in which the audience was directly involved. The spectator, in an instant, became an actor, aware of himself as an active, if involuntary, participant in the “happening.”

These considerations have, I think, a special relevance to the comedy now published. It, too, evidently refers to the play-within-a-play motif. But here Bernini forsakes the normal convention by not actually showing the “inner” play at all, only the preparations for it. Thus it is not strictly a play that contains a play, but a play about the creation of a play, a kind of “8½” *avant la lettre*; at one point Gratiano even admits, “La mazzor difficoltà lè 'l trovar un sozzet.” The inner play, therefore, instead of being merely an episode within the main plot, becomes itself part of the subject of the comedy, or rather the preparations for it do; the levels of illusion completely interpenetrate. And when the characters being created for the inner play turn out to be, in part, duplicates of those in the main plot¹⁷—the chief character of the main play actually holding a conversation with his fictitious self—still further links are added to the chain.

If all this seems excessively “literary,” it should be emphasized that the ultimate point of the play was a visual one. Its chief purpose, surely, was to give scope to the beautiful notion of having Gratiano try out stage devices that do not perform to his satisfaction. Thus a scene that functions badly becomes the perfect illusion. Obviously, it was something that could be done with “tre baiocchi,” since the sets did not really have to work; and since, conversely, the sets need only fail, it also fulfilled Bernini's requirement not to try anything that could not be done convincingly. It is very tempting to see in this the “bella idea” for a comedy, mentioned by Balducci and Domenico Bernini, in which Bernini would have shown all the errors that occur in manipulating stage machinery, together with the means for their correction.

The reader may have been struck by the fact that without exception, the startling illusionistic “conceits” described in the sources can be dated to a period of less

than twenty years between the beginning of Bernini's interest in the theater in the early 1630's and the late 1640's, though his theatrical activity continued long afterward. Moreover, the accounts of the earliest comedies suggest that their appeal was due primarily to the element of “social satire,” whereas in subsequent examples and especially in the present case the interlocking spheres of reality are the main fascination. There are important gaps in the evidence and, certainly, the pungent dialogue did not cease to lend spice to Bernini's comedies. Yet the shift in emphasis that seems to emerge from the sources probably does reflect an actual development. A similar increase in the complexity, and underlying unity, of illusion can be discerned in Bernini's other work during the same period, reaching a climax in the Cornaro Chapel in Santa Maria della Vittoria (1647ff.), which is in fact the closest parallel to our play.

Publication of this comedy permits two further observations that are of some interest. It has been assumed that Bernini did not really “write” plays, but that his comedies were improvised in the “pure” *commedia dell'arte* tradition.¹⁸ The fact that the wit was frequently topical, that successful tricks might be repeated in different contexts, and above all the impression one gets from the sources of an extraordinary liveliness in the recitation, all seem to point in this direction.

But the conclusion is, I think, profoundly misconceived. We know that Bernini worked his assistants half to death preparing his productions, and that he would himself act out all the parts for them, so as to make sure they performed exactly as he wished. We know from the very gist of the play now published that he was a perfectionist when it came to the functioning of scenic effects. And finally the manuscript itself indicates that, unlike pure *commedia dell'arte*, where the plot was merely outlined in brief scenarios, Bernini wrote out the parts completely. It could hardly be maintained that there was never any improvisation in Bernini's productions. But there can be no doubt that here, as in his other works, the effect of immediacy and freedom was planned and calculated down to the last detail.

At the same time, it is equally significant that there is not the slightest indication from any source that Bernini ever intended to put his theatrical activity into permanent form by publishing the texts of his plays or prints of his sets. This fact alone would prevent our placing him in a class with real *hommes du métier* like Andreini or Torelli. But the same fact also makes it clear that his achievements in the theater were among the most deeply rooted and spontaneous products of his creative spirit.

IRVING LAVIN
New York University

17. Compare Andreini's *Lo Schiavetto* (eds. Milan, 1612, Venice, 1620), in which one of the characters proposes his own love intrigue, retaining the “real” names of the participants, as the theme for a comedy (ed. Venice, 1620, pp. 197f.; cf. Lea, *op.cit.*, p. 323).

18. I. Balboni, “Le commedie di Gian Lorenzo Bernini e un diario francese del seicento,” *Rivista di cultura*, III, 1922, pp. 231ff.; but see the remarks of C. Molinari, “Note in margine all' attività teatrale di G. L. Bernini,” *Critica d'Arte*, IX, No. 52, 1962, pp. 57ff.