

From Matteo Palmieri, *Historia Florentina*

BNCF, Magl. XXV.511, fols. 50^v–51^v, mod. num. Edited (with omissions) in Matteo Palmieri, *Historia Florentina*, part of *Liber de Temporibus*, and appendix, *Annales conosciuti sotto il nome di Historia Florentina*, ed. Gino Scaramella, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 26, part 1 (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1906–1915), pp. 172–175. See also Paola Ventrone, “Sulle feste di San Giovanni: Firenze 1454,” *Interpres* 19 (2000): 89–101 (pp. 94–96); and Daniela Delcorno Branca, “Un camaldolese alla festa di San Giovanni: la processione del Battista descritta da Agostino di Porto” *Lettere italiane* 55 (2003): 1–25.

In this latest version, I have left *edificio* in Italian. I am no longer convinced, as I was in 1983, that the performance space is a wagon. It may have been a platform with superstructure, waiting on trestles in the piazza, or else, as Vasari describes in his *Vita del Cecca* (1568), a litter, carried in on the shoulders of porters.

For the feast of San Giovanni in 1454, they changed the order of events. Instead of having the display of wealth on 22 June, the procession of religious companies, friars, priests, and *edifici* on the morning of 23 June, with the dedication of the *gonfaloni* in the evening, and then on the feast day of San Giovanni itself the offerings in the morning and then the horse race during the day, they changed it as follows. On the 21st they would have the display of wealth, and the morning of the 22nd the procession of all the *edifici*, which in that year were the following, and proceeded as I shall now describe.

1. At the head went the Cross of Santa Maria del Fiore with all the clergy and little boys, and behind them, six singers.
2. The confraternities of Jacopo the cloth-shearer and Nofri the shoe-maker, with about thirty little boys dressed in white as angels.
3. The *edificio* of St. Michael the Angel, over which God the Father was suspended in a *nimbus*, and in the square opposite the Palazzo della Signoria they did their *rappresentazione* of the battle of the angels, when Lucifer was chased from heaven with his angels that were damned.
4. The confraternities of Antonio and Piero, sons of Mariano, with about thirty little boys dressed in white as angels.
5. The *edificio* of Adam, that did its *rappresentazione* of when God created Adam and then Eve, and gave them the commandment, and their disobedience until he chased them out of paradise, with the temptation beforehand of the serpent, and other appurtenances.
6. A Moses on horseback, with a great cavalcade of the leaders of the people of Israel and others.
7. The *edificio* of Moses, that did his *rappresentazione* in the square of when God gave him the Law.
8. Various prophets and sibyls with Hermes Trismegistus and others who prophesied the Incarnation of Christ.
9. The *edificio* of the Annunciation of the Virgin, that did her *rappresentazione*.
10. The Emperor Octavian [Augustus Caesar] with a great cavalcade and with the Sibyl, to do its play, when the Sibyl predicted to him that Christ was to be born and showed him the Virgin in the sky with Christ in her arms.
11. The *Templum Pacis* with the *edificio* of the Nativity to do its *rappresentazione*.

The Arrival of the Madman

And it happened that, when the *edificio* was in front of the Signoria, and Octavian had dismounted and gone up onto the *edificio*, under, or rather, into the temple, to begin his *rappresentazione*, there arrived a mad German, wearing just a thin shirt, and at the foot of the *edificio* he asked: “Where is the king of Aragon?” Somebody answered him: “There he is,” and pointed to Octavian. The German got up onto the *edificio*, and lots of people thought he

was one of the people who had a part in the *fiesta*, so nobody stopped him. First of all he took the idol that was in the temple and hurled it into the square, then he turned to Octavian who was dressed in a very rich robe of purple velvet embroidered with gold, and took hold of him and tossed him head over heels onto the people in the square, then he climbed up a column of the temple to get up to some small boys who were standing on the top of the temple dressed as angels, and when he did so, bystanders reached him with the maces they had in their hands, and by striking him heavily, with great difficulty they brought him to the ground, but he got up again, and tried to climb up again until, struck repeatedly by the maces from above and below, he was finally overcome.

12. A magnificent and triumphal temple for the *edificio* of the Magi, in which was concealed another octagonal temple, adorned with the Seven Virtues, and in the east the Virgin and the Christ Child, and Herod did his *rappresentazione* around this first temple.
13. Three Magi, with a cavalcade of more than two hundred horses, decorated with great magnificence, and they came with presents for the Christ Child.

The Passion and Entombment was left out, because it seemed that it was not suitable for a *fiesta*, and it continued:

14. A cavalcade of Pilate's cavalry, sent to guard the Sepulchre.
15. The *edificio* of the Sepulchre, from which Christ rose again.
16. The *edificio* of Limbo, from which he led the Old Testament Righteous.
17. The *edificio* of Paradise, where he put the Old Testament Righteous.
18. The Apostles and the Maries who were present at the Assumption [*here read: Ascension*].
19. The *edificio* of the Assumption of Christ, that is, when he ascended into heaven.
20. A cavalcade of Three Kings and Queens, maidens and nymphs, with dogs and other appurtenances of the Living and the Dead.
21. The *edificio* of the Living and the Dead.
22. The *edificio* of the [Last] Judgment, with litters for the Sepulchres, and Heaven, and Hell, with its *rappresentazione*, as we believe in faith it will be at the end of time.

All the above *edifici* did their *rappresentazioni* in the square in front of the Signoria and they lasted until midday.

On the evening of the 22nd all the people who are appointed to city offices in the palace went to make their offering, and there were forty-two offices and a total of 288 citizens. And after them came the Six of the Merchants' Tribunal with their captains.

On the 23rd there was the procession of all the youth and flagellant confraternities, and then the regular friars and priests with their standards and their litters with their relics and with an enormous array of vestments, richer than anyone ever remembered.

In the evening the offering of the Signoria, and then the XVI standard-bearers with their companies in the usual fashion.

On the 24th in the morning the usual offerings, namely: First, the Parte [Guelfa], and this year it was much more numerous with more than 730 citizens. 2. The banners. 3. The great wooden torches. 4. The great wax tapes, alight. 5. The [wagon of the] Mint. 6. The Prisoners. 7. The racehorses. And behind them the *palio* for San Giovanni and Sant'Eligio. And last, our Signori.

In the evening, they raced for the rich brocade *palio* in the usual fashion.

And this year, the celebrations for Corpus Domini came in the middle of this feast, and these were Corpus Domini on the 20th, and on the 25th, the feast of Sant'Eligio, the *fiesta* for the miracle of Sant'Ambrogio, which is celebrated by the Notaries' Guild.