

A BAROQUE DENOUEMENT: THE DIRECT INFLUENCE OF THEATRE ON BERNINI'S
ARTISTIC WORK

By

Amelia Francesco

Copyright © Amelia Francesco 2017

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

SCHOOL OF ART

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
WITH A MAJOR IN ART HISTORY

In the Graduate College

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2017

ProQuest Number:10283205

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10283205

Published by ProQuest LLC (2018). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This thesis titled *A Baroque Denouement: The Direct Influence of Theatre on Bernini's Artistic Work* prepared by Amelia Francesco has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for a master's degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that an accurate acknowledgement of the source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the head of the major department or the Dean of the Graduate College when in his or her judgment the proposed use of the material is in the interests of scholarship. In all other instances, however, permission must be obtained from the author.

SIGNED: Amelia Francesco

APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

Julie Plax
Professor of Art History

5/12/17

Date

Table of Contents:

- I. Abstract ... pg. 4
- II. Introduction ... pg. 5
- III. Literature Review ... pg. 7
- IV. “Early Works and Theatrical Performance” ... pg. 13
- V. “Divine Light” ... pg. 20
- VI. “1665 Travels to France” ... pg. 26
- VII. “Ban of Theatre in Italy and Bernini’s Final Years” ... pg. 36
- VIII. “Denouement” ... pg. 41
- IX. Figures ... pg. 42
- X. Bibliography ... pg. 52

Abstract

Gian Lorenzo Bernini is the most prominent architect of the High and Late Baroque periods and there is a vast amount of scholarship addressing his architectural, sculptural, and pictorial works. However, studies on the other aspects of his life and work are underdeveloped, especially that of his long and dedicated involvement with the theatre. As scholars Robert Fahrner and William Kleb note in a 1973 essay published in the *Educational Theatre Journal*, “Art historians seem interested in it [Bernini’s theatrical activity] only in general, as an ‘influence’ on Bernini’s more important (and tangible) sculptural and architectural achievements. Theatre historians seem to have ignored it almost entirely.” This vast oversight, caused by the arbitrary separation of the visual and performing arts, has greatly hindered any scholarly attempts at a fully realized understanding of the Baroque master.

In this thesis, I discuss the traditions and styles in 17th century theatre of Italy and France as well as Bernini’s involvement in and use of theatrical conventions in his sculpture and architecture. By tracing both his theatrical activity and artistic career, the connections become extremely evident, shedding new light on Bernini’s life and legacy.

Massimilian Montecucoli, a member of the Modena court had this reaction to one of Bernini's early Carnival performances. "The curtain fell, to reveal a perspective which, considering the size of the place, was nothing less than amazing. There was a sky, he wrote, so perfectly devised that it was astounding. The moon was shown in various stages; it was especially impressive for the way it borrowed light. Now and then clouds moved to obscure it so realistically, Montecucoli reported, that everyone remained absolutely suspended"¹ This spectacular moment exemplifies the mixture of theatre and art Bernini used throughout his career in both professions. The elision of art and theater that was so characteristic in seventeenth-century practice was not to be the case in the development of subsequent scholarly disciplines.

After the Enlightenment, scholarly studies became structured on rigid, arbitrary divides between disciplines. While the last few decades have seen a trend towards interdisciplinary scholarship, these divides still very much exist, always to the detriment of the subject. This is especially the case concerning eras before the creation of these divides. In 17th century Europe, there was little segregation of what we term today the fine arts- visual arts, architecture, theatre, music, dance, etc. In fact, most theatrical designers and directors worked full time as architects and artists.

Gilles Deleuze, theorist and historian of 17th-century Rome summarizes this period in his seminal text *The Fold*: "If the Baroque establishes a total art or a unity of the arts, it does so first of all in extension, each art tending to be prolonged and even to be prolonged into the next art, which exceeds the one before."² One such example of an artist who worked this way was Gian

¹ Robert Fahrner and William Kleb, "The Theatrical Activity of Gian Lorenzo Bernini" *Educational Theatre Journal* 25 (1973): 7-8.

² Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press, 1993), 141.

Lorenzo Bernini. As famous for his plays as his sculpture during his lifetime, Bernini's theatrical works are overlooked by art and theatre historians alike. Not only does this erase a major part of Bernini's history, but it neglects one of the most important influences on his sculpture and architecture. In this paper, I will contextualize the artistic works of Gian Lorenzo Bernini within his experience and career in theatre, as well as within the social-political atmosphere of Europe in the 17th century.

The following chapters of this thesis are organized not by medium or patron, but by time period in Bernini's life and career. After my literature review, my first chapter, entitled "Early Works and Theatrical Performance," looks at Bernini's beginnings as a papal artist and some of his earliest public works and Carnival performances. The following chapter, "Divine Light," does not follow a strict chronology, but discusses works throughout his career to show consistency in Bernini's theatrical and artistic use of lighting. "1665 Travels to France" takes a serious look at Bernini's stay in France, Italy's great rival, and the differences between France and Italian theatre and art. Finally, "Ban of Theatre in Italy and Bernini's Final Years," explores the effect the ban of theatre in Italy had on Bernini's art and follows the artist to the end of his life.

I have arranged the information primarily chronologically so that the connections between theatre and art can be clearly made. Categorizing in any other way would perpetuate the traditional disciplinary separation of art and theater when it is one of the goals of this thesis to demonstrate their inseparability. From Bernini's earliest works to his last theatrical performance, I will look at the use of art in theatre and theatre in art throughout Bernini's life.

Literature Review

While I use many different sources throughout this paper, the bulk of the inspiration and background for my thesis came from two works: Paul Fréart de Chantelou's *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France*, a contemporary account, and "The Theatrical Activity of Gian Lorenzo Bernini," an essay published in the *Educational Theatre Journal* by theatre historians Robert Fahrner and William Kleb. This publication provided me with references to other sources and directed my research in meaningful ways. I would first like to discuss Chantelou's diary, the primary source and then the more recent scholarship from which I drew my information.

Paul Fréart de Chantelou was a patron/collector of the arts in France and very public admirer of Bernini. Appointed by Louis XIV himself, Chantelou kept meticulous records of the artist's 1665 visit to France in *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France*. Not only is this diary a fascinating read, but an invaluable primary source detailing the daily activities and creative process of Bernini.

Though Bernini never produced any architectural works during his stay—in fact he only produced a portrait bust of Louis XIV during this time—Chantelou traveled with Bernini to many churches and public buildings, where he recorded the artist's thoughts on and reactions to French design, as well as his interactions with the king and other French nobles. The three most important types of information gained from this account are Bernini's discussion of his own theatrical works, Bernini's observations of French architecture, and the stature of the artist's reputation both in Italy and abroad.

At the time the Pope and Louis XIV coerced Bernini to go to France he was considered one of the most famous artists in Europe. Unfortunately, Bernini made few friends in France

beyond Chantelou himself, this was mostly due to his haughty attitude towards French art and society. Yet his most positive interactions with the French nobility involved discussions or retellings of his plays. Nobles would specifically ask Bernini about his theatrical performances, often curious if the rumors of his fantastic spectacles and effects were true.

On June 6th, Chantelou makes a small but vital comment while describing Bernini to his cousin:

“He is an excellent talker with a quite individual talent for expressing things with word, look, and gesture, so as to make them as pleasing as the brushes of the greatest painters can do. This is no doubt the reason why his comedies have been so successful. I believe they were generally acclaimed and made a great sensation in Rome, on account of the décor and surprising incidents which he introduced and which deceived even though who had been told about them beforehand”³

This one passage tells us a great deal about Bernini’s theatrical reputation as well as the connections between the visual arts and the theatre. Chantelou’s statement makes it very clear that Bernini’s comedies were well known throughout Europe, not only for the technical effects, but for the content as well. This suggests that his plays were more than just a hobby or historical footnote; they were held in a high enough regard that his plays were discussed with great interest in the theatrical center of Baroque Europe. While most historians pay little to no attention to Bernini’s comedies, they were a significant point of interest and discussion for his contemporaries.

More important however, at least for the purpose of this paper, is Chantelou’s direct connection of painting and acting. Though contemporary artists and scholars have created a

³ Paul Fréart de Chantelou, and George Charles Bauer, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's visit to France*, ed. Anthony Frederick Blunt (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 15.

staunch, if not arbitrary, divide between the performing and visual arts, the concept of the Renaissance man was still alive and strong in Europe. Now, art and theatre rarely interact- they are even placed in separate buildings at major Universities. This attitude has caused a division in the study of art and theatre history, one that did not exist until the mid-19th century.

Fahrner and Kleb were the first scholars in the modern era to seriously address Bernini's theatrical history. Both men work as coordinators and directors of dramatic and creative arts at universities in California- their background clearly based in theatre, not art history. The authors do not set forth a significant theoretical argument in this article; rather, it is a survey of Bernini's activity in the theatre outlined chronologically with support from primary sources. This timeline of Bernini's theatrical life gave me a place to start for every chapter of my thesis. Most importantly, Fahrner and Kleb discuss the social/political role of theatre at the time, including the multiple bans of performance during Bernini's lifetime.

Unfortunately, the authors provided little documentation and incomplete citation of the primary sources they used. Letters are referenced by number and date, but they provide no further explanation of the location of these letters. Many of their citations seem to refer to an Italian work published in 1900, *Il Bernini: la sua vita, la sua opera, il suo tempo*, or from unspecified sources. Regardless, this article is a cornerstone in the studies of Bernini and 17th century theatrical practices.

In contrast to these two works, the rest of my sources provided only a few pages of useful information in regards to Bernini's art and theatre. Due to the 19th century convention of rigid separation of academic fields, I had to look at both theatre and art history texts in my search for information. Most art historical sources had little more than a passing mention of Bernini's theatrical passions while the major theatre history texts did not reference him at all. In the rest of

this chapter, I will discuss the approach (or lack thereof) the remainder of my main sources took to Bernini, art, and theatre.

Giovanni Careri's *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion*, examines the *bel composto*—the harmonic unification of painting, sculpture, and architecture—in three of Bernini's architectural works: The Fonseca Chapel, the Albertoni Chapel, and the alter at Sant' Andrea al Quirinale.⁴ What I anticipated to be an important source of analysis, especially considering the concept of *bel composto*, lost all credibility on the third page of the introduction. Though few scholars directly reference Bernini's involvement in the theatre, theatrical terms are often used to describe his works. Careri, however, not only refuses to do this, but actively works against this use of language stating:

“Bernini's chapels have often been described in terms of theater because of the nature of their decoration and because of the emotional impact they have on the viewer. Although these ensembles were conceived as ‘emotional machines,’ I believe that comparing them to the theater confuses rather than clarifies the issue. The theatrical paradigm is far too general a model both historically and theoretically. . . . The generalized comparison to the theater reduces the constitutive heterogeneity of the *composto* to mere spectacle and does not allow is to dismantle it in order to see how each component performs its specific function.”⁵

Careri's rejection illustrates the importance of looking at Bernini's unified treatment of art and theatre.

A better example of an art historian who uses Bernini's theatre is some form is Franco Mormando, who discusses the artist's theatre career throughout his book *Bernini: His life and his*

⁴ *Bel composto* literally translates to “the beautiful” whole. This refers to uniting architecture with painting and sculpture.

⁵ Giovanni Careri, *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3.

Rome. While Mormando does not make explicit connections between Bernini's art and theatre, he *does* recognize the importance of theatre in the artist's life. He, more than most of the scholars I have read, understands the use of theatre in politics during the tumultuous years of 1650-1680. His analysis of the timing of the creation of *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, which coincided with a difficult time in Bernini's career, influenced much of my discussions in the final chapter of this thesis.

In my opinion, the closest any scholar has come to marrying theatre and art in Bernini's life is Genevieve Warwick in *Bernini: Art as Theatre*. In this text, Warwick attempts to bridge the gap between the two arts. While she does very well discussing the general conventions of theatre, without a working knowledge and understanding of theatre practices, her arguments do not connect the two arts as well as they could. One cannot approach this subject seriously without an in depth knowledge and understanding of theatre history, theatrical conventions, and politics in all of Europe, not just in Italy. For the purposes of my research, this book was a guide to what art historians have already considered and where I can contribute my specialized knowledge to the scholarship as a whole.

Any theatre historian worth their salt started with Oscar Gross Brockett's *History of the Theatre*, written with Franklin Joseph Hildy. Considered the "bible" of theatre history, this text, now in its 10th edition, has been a staple in theatre education since publication in 1968. However, there is not a single mention of Bernini in the 688 pages of this book, despite discussion of other artist-designers including Picasso and Dali. While disappointing, this absence is understandable as Brockett attempts to discuss the entire history of theatre throughout the world in one book.⁶

⁶ With only one chapter dedicated to each non-Western part of the world, I would rather see more on Asian and African theatre than a small passage on yet another European figure.

Continuing to write until his death in 2010, Brockett and Margaret Mitchell collaborated on another massive text focused on scenic design and technology in Europe and the United States. *Making the Scene*, published in February 2010 (over forty years after *History of the Theatre*), focuses specifically on stage design with chapters dedicated to different eras in history. It is here that Brockett fails completely in regards to Bernini. Not only is Bernini once again completely ignored while his contemporaries, including Giulio Parigi and the Vigarani family, are discussed at length, Brockett proves that his knowledge of art history is severely lacking. He dedicates an entire subheading in his Renaissance and Baroque chapter to Giorgio Vasari, widely considered by art historians as an unreliable source. Brockett, however, praises Vasari's work, claiming his writing make research easier. These texts were helpful in the end however, providing historical context and illustrating the gaps in scholarship I am looking to fill.

Early Works and Theatrical Performance

Gian Lorenzo Bernini is the most prominent architect of the High and Late Baroque periods and there is a vast amount of scholarship addressing his architectural, sculptural, and pictorial works. However, studies on the other aspects of his life and work are underdeveloped, especially that of his long and dedicated involvement with the theatre. As scholars Robert Fahrner and William Kleb note in a 1973 essay published in the *Educational Theatre Journal*, “Art historians seem interested in it [Bernini’s theatrical activity] only in general, as an ‘influence’ on Bernini’s more important (and tangible) sculptural and architectural achievements. Theatre historians seem to have ignored it almost entirely.”⁷ This vast oversight, caused by the arbitrary separation of the visual and performing arts, has greatly hindered any scholarly attempts at a fully realized understanding of the Baroque master. I will argue in this paper that within the realm of contemporary theatrical practices and established traditions, we can find some of the keys to understanding Bernini’s uniquely dramatic style.

The Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent impacted the visual arts, and it affected theatre as well. Catholic leaders had a much harder time manipulating theatrical performances into pro-Church propaganda, due to the fact that live theatre varied between performances and allowed for improvisation. The official attitude towards theatre even changed pope to pope; some seeing it as another artistic contribution to the glorification of Rome, with others categorizing it as a depraved display of lower class amusement. Within Bernini’s own lifetime, theatre went from favored to disliked to formally banned, only to repeat the cycle at least one more time before his death.

⁷ Fahrner, 5.

Theatre during the late 16th and early to mid 17th c. in Italy was very different from what we consider theatre today. While carefully crafted written plays were a staple of English and Spanish theatre, it was commedia dell'arte that flourished in Italy. Beginning as unofficial street performances, later moving into private and sanctioned public venues, commedia dell'arte was, for all intents and purposes, the only secular theatre in Italy during the Counter Reformation.⁸ Commedia dell'arte consisted of several stock characters, most notably Harlequin, portrayed by actors following a loose scenario with most of the dialogue and physical comedy improvised.⁹

As these commedia troops gained popularity, their performances were moved into more permanent physical spaces and quickly evolved into *intermezzi*, comedic skits performed between the acts of a play or opera, and operatic productions.¹⁰ For the general public, these performances were mainly given during the Carnivals. The biggest Carnivals in Rome were hosted right before Lent, when all performance and revelry was forbidden by the rule of Catholic Lent.¹¹ The private sphere, however, is where these creators were allowed to explore, thanks to the financial support and artistic freedom provided by the hosts, who essentially served as the theatrical equivalent of artists' patrons.¹² It was here, in these public and private spaces, that Bernini was allowed to freely explore every aspect of 17th century theatre.

Though Bernini began sculpting around 1609 with the small sculpture *The Goat Amalthea with the Infant Jupiter and a Faun*, his first major papal commission, the Baldacchino,

⁸ Oscar Gross Brockett and Franklin Joseph Hildy, *History of the Theatre* (Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), 159.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ operaThe contemporary intermission derives from this tradition. Ibid, 159.

¹¹ Fahrner, 6.

¹² Brockett, *History of the Theatre*, 160.

came in 1624. (fig. 1) Fahrner and Kleb note the overlap between this commission and the beginning of Bernini's theatrical career.

“In 1624 ... Bernini's intimate friend and great patron Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini) awarded the artist, then twenty-six, the Baldacchino commission. Bernini spent almost a decade working on the canopy. It was during these years- helped by his brother Luigi, the painter Guido Ubaldo Abbatini, and various assistants and students- that he began writing and producing theatrical entertainments for the Roman Carnival seasons each year.”¹³

Over the next ten years, Bernini experimented with theatre while designing his first work that combined both sculpture and architecture.

A baldachin, or canopy of state, began as a cloth hanging over a throne or alter, eventually evolving into a solid, architectural form. Though a common element of church decoration, Bernini's Baldacchino was at its time unique in both size and detail, larger than any other indoor sculpture before and overflowing with decorative imagery. Yet before discussing the design of the Baldacchino, its function must be considered. While most baldachins functioned solely as decorative, symbolic objects, Urban VIII required more of the baldachin for St. Peter's Basilica. St. Peter's Basilica was at the time (and before this time, and well after this time) under construction. Ongoing construction put the art and objects of the basilica at great risk, most importantly the remains of St. Peter himself.¹⁴ The Baldicchino's role was to be twofold: serve as a new baldachin, decorated in accordance with the new St. Peter's Basilica and protect the remains of the founder of the Catholic Church.

¹³ Fahrner, 6.

¹⁴ Rudolf Wittkower, Joseph Connors, and Jennifer Montagu. (*Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750*. Vol. 3. Yale University Press, 1999), 53.

The completed Baldacchino was a masterpiece of both sculpture and architecture, unlike any that had come before it. It seems as if Bernini spent his ten years of planning figuring out the perfect blend of these two mediums to create a truly unique effect. This uniqueness did not just stem from Bernini's talent, but from the fact that he was able to mix the two media with seemingly little hesitation. Towering Solumnic columns twist upwards towards the bronzes canopy, covered in papal symbols and Biblical imagery. The interior of the Baldacchino roof depicts the dove of the Holy Spirit, who watches over the mass and the blessing of the Eucharist. While many artists at this time practiced painting and sculpture and architecture, few could blend them together, and none as masterfully as Bernini. This does, however, raise an interesting question: where did this ability come from?

To find any sort of satisfactory answer, we must look at Bernini's work in the theatre. Unlike 21st century theatre, with clearly defined duties for actors, directors, etc., 17th century theatre require all types of work from everyone involved in the production. Actors would also direct, writers would also make and design sets. During his time in the theatre, Bernini did it all. In 1635, Bernini produced a play in a private home for the Carnival, a mere year after the Baldacchino. Though performed a year later, Bernini was known for spending an entire year on his Carnival productions, making it very likely that he was creating this show as he was finishing the Baldacchino. A Bolognese seminarian working for the Vatican attended one of these performances, documenting his experience in two letters to his cousin.¹⁵

“Part of the evening featured the participation of painters and sculptor in on-the-spot creation of non-dramatic works of art as a part of an over-all, multi-media effect; ... on the stage were ‘two academies’, one for painting, the other for sculpturing. In the course of the presentation, work went on constantly in both areas. The dialogue included an attack on vices in the papal court, love interest,

¹⁵ Fahrner, 6.

and a variety of charming absurdities- all while statues and paintings were being produced in full view. The event was carried off with extraordinary ease and naturalness. There was such a variety of effects Hondedei's commented, that the spectators never wearied; every detail was perfect."¹⁶

In this firsthand account, we see that Bernini is perfectly comfortable not only functioning in multiple roles (he, at the very least, wrote and directed this piece) but in fully integrating performance and visual art, having the actors (also artists) paint and sculpt *on stage*. It is clear that Bernini understood the intricacies of combining different forms of art through theatre, bringing this realization to his design of the Baldacchino.

The influence of theatre on Bernini's design of the Baldacchino was not a singular event. Another example of his theatrical work leading into his sculptural design involves his *Fontana del Tritone* (1642-43) and an earlier play, *Inondazione del Tevere* (The Flooding of the Tiber, 1638).¹⁷ Mounted in the theatre of the Palazzo Barberini for the 1638 Carnival, Bernini reimagined and retold the overflow of the Tiber that flooded Rome the year before.¹⁸ This production marked Bernini's greatest theatrical effect yet, possibly the best in his entire career. The set for this play included a river of real water, which the actors ferried across just as the residents of Rome had the year before. During the climax of the play, the water breaks from the barrier, seemingly by mistake.

“But suddenly the barricade broke and water poured onto the stage, rushing furiously toward the audience. Some of the spectators sitting closer to the stage, believing the embankment has accidentally collapsed, jumped up to run away. But just as the water was about to pour into the hall, a barrier rose at the edge of the stage and the water ran off harmlessly.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 7.

Bernini creates a series of firsts with this production. Not only was this the first use of water on stage in Italian theatre, but he also used it as a dramatic element, not just a passive set piece like most uses of water in theatre at this time.¹⁹ In productions designed by Giulio Parigi and Carlo Vigarani, both of whom will be discussed later in this paper, water effects were created with machinery, not actual water. These techniques included barrels with waves that would turn in the background or flats painted as waves moved back and forth. (fig. 2 & 3) This knowledge and use of real water as a dramatic element is later incorporated into one of his most famous public works, the *Fontana del Tritone*.

The *Fontana del Tritone*, the *Fountain of Triton* (fig. 4) in English, functioned as a civic fountain to provide water from the aqueducts to the general public of Rome.²⁰ Unlike most public fountains, which were normally basic basins decorated with architectural embellishments, the *Fontana del Tritone* emulates the fountain designs found in the gardens of Italian nobility. Beyond the extravagance of these stylized fountains, which Bernini fully embraced in his design, the *Fontana del Tritone* goes a step further, employing spectacle through the use of water.

The flow of water, a requirement for public fountains, was not a passive element begrudgingly included for necessities sake, but became, under the hand of Bernini, an actively sculptural component. The stream of water jets from the conch shell held by Triton, creating a dramatic arc through the air before returning to the basin.²¹ The active use of water seen in *Fontana del Tritone*, although new for public fountains, was by this time an old trick for Bernini.

¹⁹ This is the first recorded incident, according to my research, of the use of water in a Commedia or Carnival production.

²⁰ Anatole Tchikine. "Galera, Navicella, Barcaccia? Bernini's fountain in Piazza di Spagna revisited." *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 31, no. 4 (2011): 312.

²¹ Ibid.

The water of the fountain, just like the water in *Inondazione del Tevere*, is not just visually dramatic, but *functionally* dramatic.

This “Golden Age” of commissions and Commedia, however, did not last for Bernini. In 1644 Urban VIII, Bernini’s greatest patron, died. Innocent X, his successor, did not care for Bernini’s style nearly as much, and threatened Bernini’s position as a favored Papal artist. Worst still, Innocent X disapproved of theatre, eventually outright banning theatrical performances in Rome by 1650.²² With few commissions and no theatrical creative outlet, the works that Bernini did do during this time became more dramatic and illusionistic than his previous works. It stands to reason that this change in style and increase of spectacle stems from a desire to continue his theatrical work in the only outlets available to him- architecture and sculpture.

²² Fahrner, 12.

Divine Light

As a sculptor and architect, light would, of course, be taken into consideration by Bernini, especially since the majority of his works were designed for the space (or even *were* the space). Yet as a director and scenic designer, light was crucial for a successful performance; there is no point performing a play if no one can see it. Bernini's fascination with light surely stems from the theatrical lighting technology, or lack thereof, in 17th century Europe.

The use of windows and light were vital to works of Bernini and his contemporaries in the creation of divine and holy spaces. The *Chair of St. Peter* and the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* are the two most prominent examples of Bernini's use of light in sculpture and architecture; however, there are many more examples of his use of light in both sculpture and architecture, including the alter at San Andrea al Quirinale and the statue of Constantine, another work at St. Peter's. While many scholars have discussed the role of light in his works, such as Warwick and Carari, there is a clear and direct connection to theatrical convention that is constantly missed. In this chapter, I will argue that not only are Bernini's glories explicitly imitate stage design, but that his use of light in sculpture and architecture stem from experimentations with light that could not be achieved with lighting technology at the time.

Since the practice and construction of indoor theatres became prevalent in the 16th century, lighting these spaces was one of the leading issues for theatrical practitioners. The only source of light available to illuminate a room, aside from sunlight, were candles, which wouldn't be replaced with oil lamps until the 1780s.²³ While modern theatre lighting at its most basic level requires a dark house (audience) with a lit stage, indoor theatre during the 16th and 17th centuries simply could not create this dramatic contrast. Elizabethan theatre in England, such as

²³ A. M. Calberg, "A Brief Outline of the History of Stage Lighting"

Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse, did not even bother to try to create this difference, leaving both the audience and actors in equal light. French and Italian theatres however, did attempt to control the candle light by rigging large chandeliers with hundreds of candles to be raised and lowered by a rope and pulley system.²⁴ This left the audience in lower light while the stage was illuminated by additional lighting, including footlights and ladders, which resided between the legs in each wing.²⁵

Yet despite these restrictions, 17th century designers still managed to construct fantastic lighting effects that wowed audiences, common and noble alike. Colored water in jars placed in front of candles and lights placed behind painted flats are just two techniques that were used to create spectacle in Baroque theatre. The specific techniques used by Bernini were developed in the sacred performance of the Quarantore devotion, "...the display of the Eucharist on a decorated alter for forty hours during Carnival."²⁶ A tradition started in the mid 1500s, by the beginning of the 17th century, these displays became architectural sets accompanied by hidden light effects. The precedent for these spectacles was established decades earlier by Giulio Parigi, a well-known designer for the Medici court in Florence.

Born in 1571, Giulio Parigi was born into a family of architects and designers who had worked for the Medici for decades. Parigi's father, Alfonso Parigi the Elder, worked for the Medici before Giulio's birth, known most famously for completing the Uffizi Gallery in 1581,

²⁴ This process of raising the chandeliers before the beginning of a show is where the term "lights up" comes from. While now it means turn on the lights of the stage, it originally cued technicians to elevate the chandeliers, literally bringing the lights up and darkening the audience for the beginning of the play.

²⁵ Ibid. Legs are curtains or dividers that hid actors and scenery in the wings, which are the sides of the stage the audience is not meant to see.

²⁶ Lisa Margaret Beaven, "Claude Lorrain's Harbour Scenes: Sun, science and the theatre in the Barberini years" in *Art, Site and Spectacle*, ed. David R. Marshall (The Fine Arts Network, 2007): 148.

which was started by Giorgio Vasari in 1560. Giulio, however, is known for his contributions to theatre, specifically six *intermezzi*²⁷ he designed for the Medici court. Popularized through etchings created after-the-fact in conjunction with Cantagallina, Parigi's work soon became known all over Europe.²⁸

In 1608, Cosimo II de' Medici married the daughter of Charles II of Austria, Maria Maddalena of Austria. As Cosimo II's former tutor and celebrated designer, Giulio Parigi was the logical choice to design the backgrounds for the wedding celebrations. Now known as *Seven Interludes*, etchings based on these *intermezzi* reside in The Metropolitan Museum collection. While the museum websites offer little information regarding the subjects, the titles show a clear inspiration from Greek mythology. The fifth interlude is titled *Vulcan* (fig. 5), after the Greek god of fire and volcanos.

Vulcan shows not just the set itself, but also the actors in the midst of performance as well as cutaways displaying the mechanical contraptions and the people running them. Letters A-E appear as labels throughout the image, presumably corresponding to descriptions that would accompany the works in souvenir pamphlets. Most important for our study of light is the cutaway upstage center, labeled as "B". Here, Cantagallina is showcasing Parigi's machinery, actually displaying the inventions that would be hidden during a real performance.

Two machines are visible in this section; the barrels on an axel are used for the creation of sound effects, most likely the sound of cackling fire in this scene. The machine on the left is what creates the flickering effect, making the painted flames seem more realistic. A small (real)

²⁷ While the series is called *Seven Interludes*, it seems that Parigi only designed and etched the first six.

²⁸ Nina Eugenia Serebrennikov, "Spectacularly Small: Jacques Callot at the Medici Court" *Midwestern Arcadia: Essays in Honor of Alison Kettering* (2015): 134.

fire is created backstage in a contained area, most likely made of polished tin. When stoked by the bellows- seen here attached to the tin structure- the fire grows and flickers wildly. The resulting light is reflected off the tin enclosure, shining all over the painted flames and creating the effect of real, flickering fire with the true source of the light hidden.

This technique was modified and improved by Bernini two decades later in his Quarantore devotion at the Pauline Chapel during the 1628 Carnival.²⁹ The Quarantore, or Forty Hours, was a devotion during the annual Carnival in which the Eucharist was displayed on an altar before an elaborate painted backdrop called an *apparato*. These backgrounds became more extravagant with every year, culminating in Bernini's design in the late 1620s.

“The *apparato* was constructed of canvas, plaster and papier-mâché and was illuminated by lamps of varying sizes and shapes and the tabernacle was lined with tin to reflect their light, creating an effect of dazzling light that seemed to emanate from the host itself. In places the *apparato* was silvered or gilded and burnished to increase the reflective power of the lights. Cortana's drawing implies that a dazzling, luminous light would have spilled out from within the arch and its framing architecture- which functioned like the proscenium arch of secular theatre- into the church towards a spectator approaching it from the nave.”³⁰

This Quarantore marks the birth of the concept of ‘divine light’ in theatre and the practical glory in art. From the papal halls, the use of hidden light moved outward into both secular theatre and fine art. While setting a mood with lighting was still out of reach for theatrical designers in the 17th century, divine light became a vital tool in representing magic, deities, and (of course) fire.

As a fine artist, this lack of control over lighting must have been infuriating for Bernini, more so than for the average thespian. What he could not manipulate in the theatre Bernini took to the extreme in his sculptural works.

²⁹ Beaven, 148.

³⁰ Ibid.

The most obvious and eminent example of this technique is *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (fig. 6), which resides in Rome's Santa Maria della Vittoria. According to 2008-2009 Rome Prize recipient David Erdman, "Bernini manipulates natural light into an extreme state of artifice- it glows. Pushed, torqued, and sculpted, light takes on synthetic and plastic qualities."³¹ Through careful planning and hidden windows, Bernini creates with natural light an effect not possible in theatre until 1904: the spotlight.³² The light in *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* serves the same function of the modern spotlight, to clearly inform the audience where the action is taking place and on what they should center their focus. The audience for this sculpture is not just the live viewer, but the sculptural groups surrounding St. Teresa as well. Seated in viewing or Cardinal's boxes on either side of the main sculpture, these holy figures are literally viewing a sacred play.

The 'spotlight' serves a religious function as well, both a theatrical and divine light; reflecting off the bronze rays and polished white marble, Teresa and the angel glow in the light of god. This is in stark contrast to the cardinals who remain in dim light, onlookers to the scene instead of participants. The viewer, however, can cross between these two worlds. While still in the realm of the Cardinals, by kneeling and praying at the altar, they too are bathed in the holy light, a glimpse of what could be if they live a pious life.

An inviting holy light is used again by Bernini in the altar at Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, (fig. 7) completed in 1670. A glory opens at the top of an altar, bronze angels and rays of light spilling out over the walls and frame of Guillaume Courtois's *Martyrdom of Saint Andrew*.

³¹ David Erdman, "Glow (ing)" *Log* 17 (2009): 49.

³² Calberg.

Serving as the main altar for the church, Sunday parishioners would experience a priest preaching the word of God, all while bathed in a holy light.

The same year Sant'Andrea al Quirinale opened its doors, Bernini completed a papal commission that took nearly two decades to complete. *The Vision of Constantine*, (fig. 8) an equestrian statue at the foot of the Scala Regia, exemplifies divine light as more of a spotlight than his other works. While the light does represent Constantine's divine inspiration, its greater role is to simply illuminate the work. Positioned high above the viewer in an alcove, this work would have been difficult to see in normal circumstances. By adding a divine light, Bernini both added a spiritual quality and made the work easily visible.

Bernini's use of light in sculpture and architectural works anticipated the invention of the spotlight over 300 years later, creating the prototype for a visual technique that has become crucial in modern and contemporary theatre.

1665 Travels to France

In 1665, Bernini was chosen by Louis XIV to complete the Louvre, instigating his trip to Paris from June to October of that year. During this time, his constant companion Paul Fréart de Chantelou, kept a diary. However, the trip only resulted in one work, *Bust of Louis XIV*, the journey becoming little more than a footnote for most historians. By neglecting this period of his life, scholars miss yet another important theatrical influence. Unlike Italy, theatre in France thrived during the reign of Louis XIV. Bernini was very vocal concerning his dislike for French art and architecture, as well as his opinions on the theatre of France.

Louis XIV (reigned 1643-1715) was the most prominent and influential patron of the performing arts in 17th century Europe. Louis XIV's almost obsessive interest in theatre stems from his personal enthusiasm for ballet. His passion was reflected in all aspects of his life, including the most famous portrait of the monarch by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1701), in which Louis XIV poses with his legs revealed, a direct reference to his dance career. In less than 20 years, Louis XIV performed 80 roles in 40 ballets, a number on par with the career of a professional dancer.³³ Yet these performances were more than a mere creative outlet: they functioned as a form of propaganda, elevating Louis XIV's status to that of the characters he played. The most famous of these was that of the god Apollo, a role which he played numerous times during his performance career.

Chantelou's diary has no record of Bernini actually attending any performances in Paris during his stay, there are three logical reasons for this. First, it is quite possible that Chantelou simply did not record the attendance, or go with him to the theatre. Chantelou's account of

³³ Julia Prest, "Dancing King: Louis XIV's Roles in Molière's Comédies-ballets, from Court to Town" *The Seventeenth Century 16* (2001): 285.

Bernini's visit is focused much more on his artistic practice and anecdotes related to that practice than anything else. Additionally, there are many entries where he is either ill or off on business, unable to escort (and therefore record) Bernini on his activities.

The second of these reasons is due to Bernini's own prejudice towards the French style of theatre. In a discussion with the King on August 23, 1665, Bernini stated about his plays "What gave him pleasure was that, as he had all these things fixed up at home and at his own expense, they cost so very little."³⁴ In Italy, theatre was considered a lay entertainment, with tickets costing mere pennies. In fact, Bernini cut costs even more by using his studio assistants as actors and relying on patrons for performance spaces.³⁵ Despite his renowned artistic and engineering abilities, scenery and mechanical apparatus were used sparingly in his productions, compared to the French.³⁶ Bernini balanced plot, action, and spectacle, which is in direct contrast to theatrical practices in Louis XIV's France.

Unlike Italian theatre, French ballet and opera were first and foremost for the entertainment of the royal, noble, and upper classes. The effects, costumes, machinery, and sheer number of people in each cast inflated the ticket prices exponentially. In fact, this constant inflation of prices led to the collapse of French theatre in the 18th century, for not even nobles could afford the ridiculous prices.³⁷ Furthermore, productions became utterly obsessed with spectacle, to the point that plot became almost nonexistent. Late court ballet, practiced from 1661-1669, had the gallantry, pleasure, and grandeur of early ballet with the addition of

³⁴ Chantelou, 143.

³⁵ Ibid, 339.

³⁶ Ibid, 341.

³⁷ Brockett, History, 235.

propagandas imagery of sovereign power.³⁸ These practices, especially those of propaganda, are in complete disagreement with Bernini's own sense and devotion to theatrical truth. On of Bernini's anecdotes noted in the August 23rd diary entry echoes these sentiments.

“The Cavaliere told us how a prelate who had heard that he was to be represented in one of his plays came to ask him to be so kind as not to put it on; he would have liked to comply with his wishes, but as the Pope and other eminent people at court were especially interested in it, he had to go ahead. However after the first five or six words the thread of the play was interrupted by the fall of a wall which of course was pre-arranged, and the thing was then abandoned.”³⁹

Yet this was likely not a compromise for the prelate's sake, but part of Bernini's original plan. Bernini's plots included not just fantastic effects, such as the falling wall, but barbs at political and religious figures, including the Pope himself.⁴⁰ Simply put, official French theatre was too propagandized and focused on banal spectacle for Bernini's taste.

The third, and potentially most influential, reason for Bernini's lack of attendance to the theatre was Louis XIV's own lack of participation during 1665, due to both time constraints and personal health. Based on Chantelou's documentation, Louis XIV was almost completely preoccupied by Bernini's visit and projects, both the work on the Louvre and his portrait bust. Louis XIV would visit Bernini at least once a week, most often than not travelling to his lodgings in Paris to sit for the artist. On the rare occasion that Bernini called upon the King at Versailles, he was almost always with his mother, who was dying of breast cancer. Fully absorbed in both his mother's health and the plans for the Louvre, performing was clearly low on his list of priorities.

³⁸ Georgia Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press 2008), 41.

³⁹ Chantelou, 143.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 340.

Louis XIV's own constitution at this time is also questionable. Having received a botched bloodletting in 1663 that almost resulted in death by exsanguination, Louis XIV only underwent bloodletting once in the next 23 years, despite the prominence of the practice at the time, especially in France.⁴¹ This single instance occurred on the 23rd of August, 1665; the treated extremity was his foot.⁴² For Louis XIV to undergo bleeding again, only two years after this nearly fatal experience, the appendage must have caused him serious concern. As a dancer, Louis XIV undoubtedly took good care of his feet. If he underwent a bleeding to solve an issue, he would have been in no condition to dance for a long while. Due to the fact this treatment occurred right in the middle of Bernini's trip, it is extremely unlikely that Louis XIV performed in any ballets during his visit. With his host and patron decommissioned, Bernini had no social obligation to attend the style of theatre he so clearly despised.

Bernini may have detested French theatre, but the French had a quite different feeling about Bernini's own theatrical works. Chantelou's first reference (of many) to Bernini's theatrical fame occurs on June 6th, less than a week since his arrival in France.

“He is an excellent talker with a quite individual talent for expressing things with word, look, and gesture, so as to make them as pleasing as the brushes of the greatest painters do. This is no doubt the reason why his comedies have been so successful. I believe they were generally acclaimed and made a great sensation in Rome, on account of the décor and surprising incidents which he introduced and which deceived even those who had been told about them beforehand.”⁴³

This passage sets the tone for later conversations of Bernini's plays.

⁴¹ Leon Bernard, "Medicine at the Court of Louis XIV" *Medical history* 6 (1962): 206.

⁴² Chantelou, 139.

⁴³ Ibid, 15.

Throughout his visit, Bernini was constantly taken to different churches and palaces, to “appreciate” the French style, though based on Bernini’s attitude towards French works, very little appreciating was actually done. Early on during his stay in Paris, Bernini met Carlo Vigarani, who took him on a tour of the famous playhouse Théâtres des Tuileries, more commonly known as the *Salle des Machines*. On this tour of the theater, a lively discussion of Bernini’s plays and venues begins:

“He studied it’s [the playhouse] layout, and then sitting down in front of the place where the queens are seated, he discussed the structure of the hall, the difficulty of hearing either spoken verse or the performance of music in so large a space built in such a way. He then told us about various places where he had put on plays, among them one where he had represented an auditorium on the further side of the stage, just as if there were two theatres... so skillfully hidden that it seemed real.” The illusion was then revealed through a window, “...through this appeared a representation of the Piazza of St. Peter’s in strong moonlight; there were hundreds of torches some big, some medium, some small, some no greater than a pin’s head, so arranged to give the illusion of perspective, their light diminishing toward the rear; this representation deceived everyone.”⁴⁴

This illusion, according to Bernini, only need 24 ft. of space and could be looked at from more than one point of view. The Cavaliere compares his use of perspective to the Farnese gallery, which he greatly criticizes for the Carracci’s use of perspective that fails in all but one spot.⁴⁵

On February 7th, 1662 the newly constructed theatre at the Tuileries palace opened its inaugural performance of Cavalli’s *Ercole Amante* (*Hercules in Love*) in celebration of Louis XIV’s marriage to Maria Theresa of Spain.⁴⁶ However, after the four scheduled performances of *Ercole Amante*, there was not another production produced at this theatre for nine years. It is the

⁴⁴ Ibid, 82-3.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 83.

⁴⁶ Wendell Cole, "The Salle Des Machines: Three Hundred Years Ago" *Educational Theatre Journal* 14 (1962): 225.

flaws, as noted by Bernini that caused these issues; however, Bernini's comments are more than just technical- they are regional.

Designed by Gaspare Vigarani and constructed in conjunction with his two sons Carlo and Lodovico, the Salle des Machines was the largest theatre in Europe to date.⁴⁷ Over 50% of the space was dedicated to the stage in order to accommodate the spectacle machinery the Vigaranis were known for. These machines, which gave the theatre its popular name *Salle des Machines* (The Machine Room), became the main focus of productions to the detriment of everything else. Although the space permitted astounding feats of mechanical mystery, the shape and depth of the stage and house made hearing and seeing the actors near impossible. "Ironically the checkered history of the Salle des Machines for opera and ballet is due to its great size: while staged effects in the theatre were visually magnificent, the acoustics were deplorable. ... Acoustically the room proved to be a disaster, especially for opera, which was so dependent on solo singing."⁴⁸

According to historian Wendell Cole, it has been suggested by many scholars, including T. E. Lawrenson in *The French Stage in the Seventeenth Century* believe that "...it was Vigarani himself who insisted on the inordinate stage depth which amazed us today; even Vigarani's contemporaries were astounded by this deep stage, but there were also contemporary complaints

⁴⁷ The dimensions of the Salle des Machines are as follows: entire space- 260' x 58'; stage/backstage- 146' x 58'; auditorium- 114' x 58'; stage height- 24'; fly space- 37'; below stage space- 15'; auditorium height- 57' (3 balconies); lower stage- 90' x 58'; upper stage- 45' x 58' (height unknown- however, considering the auditorium height and subtracting the stage height and fly space, there is about 18' of space between the lower stage and beginning of the fly space [$57-(24+15)=18$]. Typically, upper stages must be taller than a person standing on the lower stage, making the height between the lower stage and upper stage a minimum of 6', with a likely maximum of 10' to leave at least 8' of space for machines and scenery.); rake- 40" front to back.

⁴⁸ Barbara Coeyman, "Theatres for Opera and Ballet during the Reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV" *Early Music 18* (1990): 24.

about the poor acoustics which were undoubtedly partially caused by this depth.”⁴⁹ As terrible as the sound was reported to be, the space was initially a success, involving machines and stunts never before seen on the stage.

"Comments about productions from eyewitnesses suggest the scope of visual effects possible with this machinery. Menestrier reported that the machines were quite magnificent, enabling gods and goddesses to make fantastic ascents and descents. The first act of *Hercule amoureux* attracted the attention of de Pure, who cited one machine measuring 45 feet by 60 feet (13.7 meters by 18.3 meters) that held the entire royal family -- thirty dancers as the fifteen imperial families of France -- plus sixty unspecified performers. De Pure also notes the folly of this maneuver, should the machine have malfunctioned. The largest clouds reportedly could hold 300 performers at once."⁵⁰

Yet the acoustics weren't the only issue with the constructions of the Salle des Machines.

While the expected spectacle dictated the design of the stage, the delicate social hierarchy and conventions of Louis XIV's court affected the audience's space as well. While performances in Italy at the time had begun to use two- and three-point perspective to create the illusion for as much of the audience as possible, the French continued to use one-point perspective. This meant that the house of the *Salle des Machines* had to be built so that the king had a perfect view; the farther away from the center one sits, the worse their view (and social standing) were.

As poor as the one-point perspective was for the orchestra seats, this was nothing compared to the backstage view of the upper balconies. The height of the theatre allowed space for three balconies which accommodated the large crowds expected for any performances for

⁴⁹ Cole, 225.

⁵⁰ Barbara Coeyman, "Opera and Ballet in Seventeenth-Century French Theatres: Case Studies of the Salle des Machines and the Palace Royal" *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini* (Winona, Minnesota: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1998), 54.

and by Louis XIV.⁵¹ However, the second and third balconies, which were 19 and 38 feet above the auditorium respectively, could see over the the stage and into the otherwise masked areas.⁵² Bernini himself, during his visit to the theatre escorted by Carlo Vigarani, pointed out this flaw, chastising the depth of the stage for allowing so much machinery that it was clearly visible in the balcony spaces. “The Cavaliere [Bernini] pointed out that the real and counterfeit do not go together, that it was two or three times as long as it should be and half as wide...”. He then goes on to explain what he would have done: “...there should be no raised seats because the people in them could see the apparatus, which is a great mistake; the ceiling should slope down from the stage so as to give good acoustics; a sea on this stage would look no more than a fountain; no one could see or hear; and a lot of other faults.”⁵³

It is here that we see the major differences between the theory or philosophies of French and Italian theatre in the 17th century. Based on Bernini’s comments, it is clear that a believable illusion and audience experience are the most important factors; the *whole* audience, not just the king or patron. Bernini and his Italian contemporaries were committed to creating convincing illusions- Bernini going so far as to discuss this in one of his earliest plays. “Machines aren’t made to be laughed at, but to cause astonishment”⁵⁴ Machines are a means to an end, not the performance itself.

Conversely, theatrical productions were second to the social performances in French society. The spectacles of the playhouse were the background on which Louis XIV performed he

⁵¹ Reports claim the theatre could hold between 6000 and 8000 people.

⁵² Auditorium height = 57’. $57/3=19$. If created evenly, which following the Renaissance tradition of symmetry, each balcony would have been about 19’ in height. See footnote 47 for dimensions.

⁵³ Chantelou, 266.

⁵⁴ Chantelou, 74. (Quoted from Bernini’s play *Fontana di Trevi*.)

role as king, both on and off the stage. These productions were a show of wealth by the crown and form of flattery for the crown. There was even a hidden passage between the backstage area and the king's box that allowed the king to make "surprise" appearances in every performance.⁵⁵ As atrocious as the acoustics and visuals could be, the true function of this theatre was for the king to see and be seen.

While it is easy to attribute Bernini's criticisms to the Italian-French rivalry, a quick look at his works- both theatrical and sculptural- prove his belief and dedication to an illusionistic style of theatre. As discussed in the previous chapters, Bernini's theatrical presentations such as *The Flooding of the Tiber* and the Quarantore show a clear stylistic choice: hidden effects and machinery. However, the best example of his illusionistic tendencies lies in a sculptural work: *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*.

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* is presented as a sacred play; Teresa and the angel are framed by a proscenium while the cardinals look on from theatrical boxes. Hidden in the ceiling is a stained glass window, the divine light engulfing the scene in an ethereal glow. The scene's function is twofold: an expression of faith and a didactic example of how one should view and experience a religious scene.

In *The Fold*, Gilles Deleuze discusses how illusions operated and were meant to be experienced in the Baroque era. "But the essence of the Baroque entails neither falling into nor emerging from illusion but rather *realizing* something in illusion itself, or of tying it to a spiritual *presence* that endows its spaces and fragments with a collective unity."⁵⁶ The holy men in *The*

⁵⁵ Coeyman, *Salle des Machine*, 54.

⁵⁶ Deleuze, 143.

Ecstasy of St. Teresa are doing both, realizing something due to the illusion and feeling a spiritual presence because of the illusion.

The two main illusions in this sculpture are the divine light and the floating cloud on which St. Teresa lays. The creation of a spiritual space is the most evident of Deleuze's functions; hidden light and floating stone imbue the small chapel with the feeling of religious encounter performed before the viewer. Realizing something within the illusion, however, is less obvious. It is here that the cardinals perform their main role by showing the Baroque viewer how to come to a realization. The group in the right box play the role of the average viewer, looking on in shock and wonder, bodies turned to each other in astonishment. (fig. 9) One figure leans out of the box, as if looking for the source of light, searching for the hidden illusion. The figures in the left grouping represent those of higher learning- academics and leaders of the faith. (fig. 10) Two are in deep discussion, gesturing in a more refined manner. The other two reference a text, most likely St. Teresa's diary, connecting the written account to the physical manifestation. Even the skeletons inlaid in the floor are didactic, posed in expressions of piety and faith.⁵⁷ (fig. 11)

Bernini's dedication to the Italian conventions of illusion was present in his theatrical productions and his sculptural works. This accounts for both his stylistic tendencies in all his works and his clear disdain for French theatre and, to a lesser extent, French art and architecture. To Bernini, the French focused on spectacle to the point that illusion was nonexistent, leaving no place to learn from or find spiritual connection. It is no wonder this trip resulted in nothing more than a bust and sketches of the unrealized Louvre façade.

⁵⁷ Genevieve Warwick, *Bernini: Art as Theatre* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012), 56.

Ban of Theatre in Italy and Bernini's Final Years

The death of Urban VIII in 1644 ended not only the age of great papal artistic patronage in Rome, but Bernini's favor in the Vatican as well. Urban VIII's successor, Innocent X, had little love for Bernini and his works, the artist's connection to the theatre did not help his case with the strict pope.⁵⁸ Preferring a more traditional and reserved style, Innocent X turned to Alessandro Algardi, a sculptor who worked in the Carracci style and was considered one of Bernini's major rivals.⁵⁹ Of course, this loss of favor did not happen overnight; "Even though he did not make any special demonstration of affection or esteem toward the artist as Urban had at the beginning of his reign, the newly elected Pop Innocent at the same time made no overt moves against him. He did not, for example, strip Bernini of any of the job titles and responsibilities bestowed on him by pope Urban, most notably that of architect of St. Peter's."⁶⁰ The biggest threat to Bernini's career was not the new Pope, but a combination of anti-Barberini sentiment and the cracks in the unfinished bell towers.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Innocent X was considered an enemy of the Barberini, of which Urban VIII belonged. Due to Bernini's relationship with this now enemy family, his enemies took this time to slander his name to the new pope.

⁵⁹ Henry H. Hawley, "Alessandro Algardi: Pope Innocent X" *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 49 (1962): 81.

⁶⁰ Franco Mormando, *Bernini: His life and his Rome* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 149.

⁶¹ Mormando perfectly summarizes the issues with the bell towers and the subsequent investigation: "The situation - cracks in the structure of the most venerable shrine in Christendom- lent itself easily to hysteria. And so, the investigative process was a convenient occasion for all our artist's enemies, most especially Francesco Borromini, to have free play against the detested Bernini, even if they were not convinced that he was really culpable. As they furthermore knew, they could now attack Bernini with impunity, since the reigning pope had no particular sympathy for the artist. Innocent would not be personally offended by their assault and would make no move to punish them." Despite the attempts to salvage the project, the towers were officially scrapped in 1647. (Mormando, 151.)

It was always the intention for St. Peter's to have bell towers, for "... what is a church without bell towers?"⁶² Bernini was handed this project already in construction, ordered by Urban VIII to complete the towers, but larger and more grand in design. This order is what ultimately led to the structural failure. Although Bernini followed the pope's demands, the existing structure could not handle the additional load, resulting in a cracked base before the first tower was even revealed. Due to the bias against his Barberini connections, Bernini was solely blamed for the failure, despite having little actual control over the project as a whole.⁶³

Faced with disgrace and possible financial responsibility for the demolition of the towers, Bernini once again turned to theatre, not as an emotional outlet, but as a form of currency. Looking to prevent the dismantling of the towers, Bernini looked to buy the intervention of nobles including Donna Olimpia, the sister-in-law of Innocent X himself. Bernini gave her not only 1,000 doubloons, but agreed to produce one of his most popular comedies for the 1647 Carnival in her name, "...no small favor in terms of time, talent, and energy."⁶⁴

"The untitled production satirized self-righteous pious hypocrites, with shocking swipes also at Bernini's former patrons, the exiled Barberini. The play was filled to scandal-raising degree with sexual double entendres. People expected further troubles for Bernini for these theatrics, but as this was all happening at the home of and under the sponsorship of the mighty and untouchable Olimpia, no retaliations were forthcoming. However, Bernini's gifts and favors failed in their immediate purpose, to prevent the demolition of the towers- the failure may not have been due to lack of trying on the part of at least Donna Olimpia."⁶⁵

The complete failure of the bell towers and subsequent lack of papal commissions, while a hit to his reputation, allowed Bernini the time to take outside work for the first time in decades.

⁶² Mormando, 136.

⁶³ Ibid, 138.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 153.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The most important and famous of these commissions was, of course, the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*. Consigned the same year the bell towers were destroyed, 1647, the five-year project saw Bernini through the most difficult time in his personal and professional life. Not only was his career in question, but halfway through construction Innocent X officially ban theatre in 1650. Two of Bernini's great passions in life were threatened or outright destroyed, forcing him to the one thing he still had left: his faith.

According to those who knew him best, including his two sons, Bernini was an extremely pious man; he faced these troubles by working hard and putting his faith in God. "The Cavaliere, the subject of all this talk, alone kept silent... enduring this bout of ill fortune without false ostentation of a steady spirit or useless laments."⁶⁶ Despite the rumors, gossip, and general ill-will surrounding him, Bernini did not falter, but threw himself into his greatest work to date.

Authors such as Mormando and Warwick have discussed the importance of the timing of this work in relation to Bernini's personal troubles. However, the focus of the discussion is on his artistic standing, completely ignoring his loss of theatre at this time as well. While the highly religious emotions evoked by *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* are due to his piety and faith in god for the future, the dramatic style and creation of a theatre space (both stage and audience are presented here) have their roots in the embargo of theatre. Luckily for Bernini's artistic future, the piece was praised by all when revealed- reaffirming his position as the best sculptor in Rome.

With the success of *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* and papal approval of the *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* (*Fountain of the Four Rivers*), Bernini's professional life steadily improved under Innocent X. After the pope's death and Alexander VII's appointment, Bernini was once again

⁶⁶ Ibid, 154. (Mormando appears to be quoting Bernini's sons, but does not provide a source either in text or notes.)

secure in his position as a papal artist. Alexander VII (1655-1667) liked Bernini much more than Innocent X even did, but unfortunately theatre was still prohibited throughout his tenure.

The 1667 election of Clement IX was a great time for Bernini: theatre returned in full force during his reign. Unfortunately, this was short lived, ending with his death in 1670 and the appointment of Clement X. Clement X did not dislike theatre- he hated it. It was not until the Lenten Carnival of 1676, at the end of Clement X's reign, that Bernini mounted another production with his new patrons, the Colonna family of Rome. "In 1676 the Bernini name was again paired with that of the Colonna on the occasion of a musical drama, *La donna ancora è fedele* (The woman is still faithful), staged by the Bernini family for the Carnival season in the 'salon nuovo' of Palazzo Rucellai on the Corse, already the venue of earlier Bernini comedies. The production was dedicated to Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna..."⁶⁷

This relationship proved fruitful for Bernini; the following year Innocent XI was crowned as pope and limited Carnival performances to puppet shows, excluding live performances in which Bernini would have participated.⁶⁸ However, Lorenzo Onofrio convinced Innocent XI to make an exception for Bernini, and in 1677, he produced the only proper play of the Lenten Carnival that year.⁶⁹ "Maintaining this precious, conspicuous social connection, the Bernini family Carnival play of the following year, 1677, could publicly boast of being offered 'under the protection of' Lorenzo Onofrio."⁷⁰ In 1680, Innocent reduced his restrictions on theatre. In February of that year, Bernini staged his final play, attended by numerous notable people,

⁶⁷ Ibid, 330. Head of the Colonna family, Lorenzo Onofrio married the former favorite of Louis XIV. His family held great power in Italy as well as personal connections to France.

⁶⁸ Fahrner, 13.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

including Christina, the Queen of Sweden.⁷¹ It is through her letters that we know of Bernini's final performance; Bernini died only nine months later.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Denouement

Art and theatre have a deeply entwined history that modern scholars have forcibly separated for the sake of arbitrary classifications; because of this and subsequent education styles, it has become very difficult to seriously study these subjects as one. Having degrees in both theatre and art history have given me a unique perspective on this topic. With both a working knowledge of theatrical practices and history, as well as a specialization in 17th century Italian art and architecture, I have been able to remarry these disciplines as embodied by the life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini. I hope not only to use this thesis as a building block for my own scholarship, but to inspire other scholars to step out of their rigid fields and fully explore the scope of pre-Enlightenment theory, art, and society.



Figure 1

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Baldacchino*, 1623-34. Bronze, 20 m., St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, Italy.

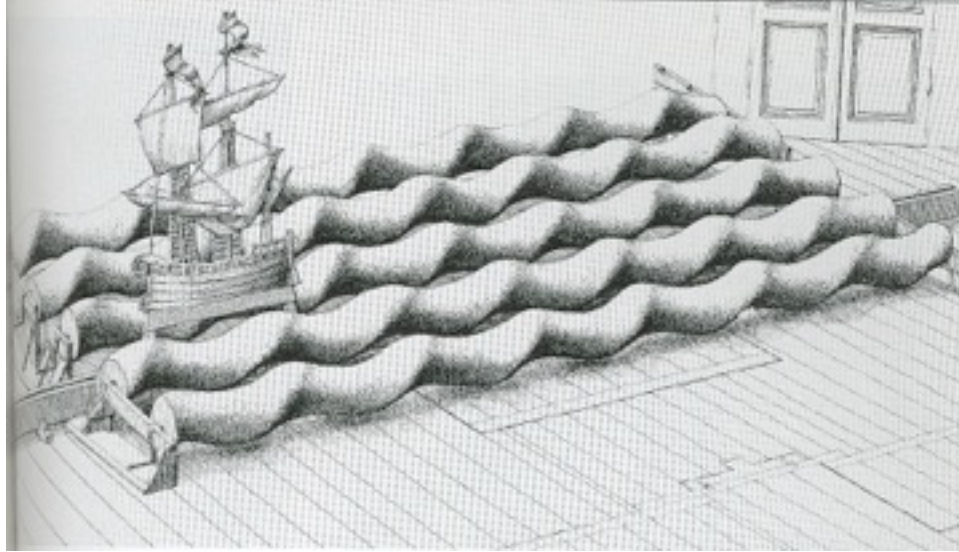


Figure 2

Example of wave machinery during the baroque era.
Nicola Sabbatini, 16th century.

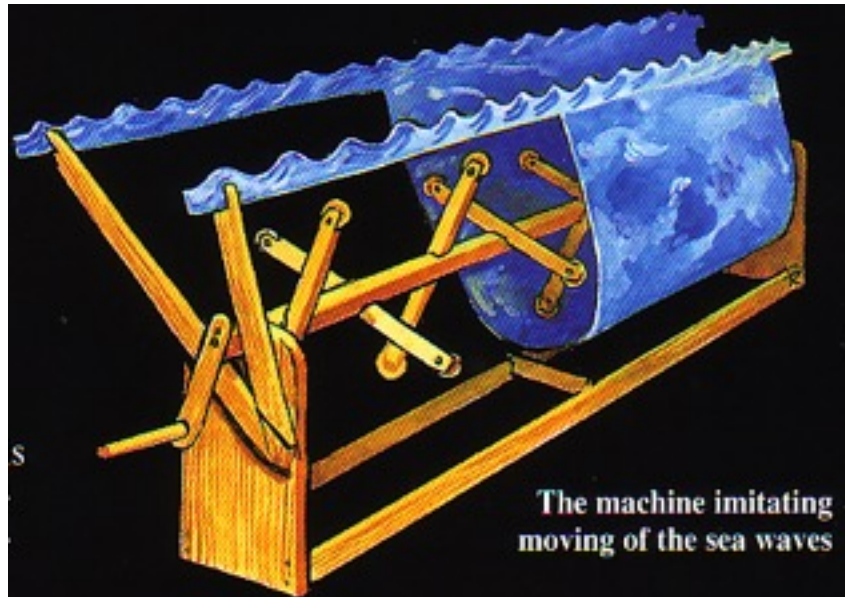


Figure 3

Alternate type of baroque wave machine.



Figure 4

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Fontana del Tritone*, 1642-43. Stone, Palazzo Barberini, Rome, Italy.



Figure 5

Giulio Parigi, *Vulcan*, 1608. Etching, The British Museum, London, England.



Figure 6

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, 1647-52. Marble, Life-size, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, Italy.



Figure 7

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Altar at Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*, 1670. Marble, Over life-size, Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, Rome, Italy.



Figure 8

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Vision of Constantine*, 1670. Marble, Life-size, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, Italy.



Figure 9

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (detail), 1647-52. Marble, Life-size, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, Italy.



Figure 10

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (detail), 1647-52. Marble, Life-size, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, Italy.



Figure 11

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (detail- Piety and Faith), 1647-52. Marble, Life-size, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, Italy.

Bibliography

- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Paul Fréart de Chantelou, and George Charles Bauer. *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's visit to France*, edited by Anthony Frederick Blunt. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Careri, Giovanni. *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Fahrner, Robert and William Kleb. "The Theatrical Activity of Gian Lorenzo Bernini." *Educational Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (1973): 5-14.
- Brockett, Oscar Gross, and Franklin Joseph Hildy. *History of the Theatre*. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1991.
- Wittkower, Rudolf, Joseph Connors, and Jennifer Montagu. *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750 Vol. 3*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Tchikine, Anatole. "Galera, Navicella, Barcaccia? Bernini's fountain in Piazza di Spagna revisited." *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 31, no. 4 (2011): 311-331.
- Calberg, A. M. "A Brief Outline of the History of Stage Lighting."
- Beaven, Lisa Margaret. "Claude Lorrain's Harbour Scenes: Sun, science and the theatre in the Barberini years." in *Art, Site and Spectacle*, Edited by David R. Marshall. The Fine Arts Network, 2007.
- Serebrennikov, Nina Eugenia. "Spectacularly Small: Jacques Callot at the Medici Court." *Midwestern Arcadia: Essays in Honor of Alison Kettering* (2015): 132-142.
- Erdman, David. "Glow (ing)." *Log* 17 (2009).
- Prest, Julia. "Dancing King: Louis XIV's Roles in Molière's Comédies-ballets, from Court to Town." *The Seventeenth Century* 16, no. 2 (2001): 283-298.
- Cowart, Georgia. *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Bernard, Leon. "Medicine at the Court of Louis XIV." *Medical history* 6, no. 03 (1962): 201-213.
- Cole, Wendell. "The Salle Des Machines: Three Hundred Years Ago." *Educational Theatre Journal* 14, no. 3 (1962): 224-227.
- Coeyman, Barbara. "Theatres for Opera and Ballet during the Reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV." *Early Music* 18, no. 1 (1990): 22-37.
- Coeyman, Barbara. "Opera and Ballet in Seventeenth-Century French Theatres: Case Studies of the Salle des Machines and the Palace Royal." *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini*. Hal Leonard Corporation. (1998): 37-72.
- Warwick, Genevieve. *Bernini: Art as Theatre*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Hawley, Henry H. "Alessandro Algardi: Pope Innocent X." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 49, no. 4 (1962): 80-82.
- Mormando, Franco. *Bernini: His life and his Rome*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2011.