

Piero Morselli: DOCUMENTS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY ON SANTA CROCE, FLORENCE

A list of *stanziamenti* and *deliberazioni* of the Operai of Santa Croce, found in the course of my research in the Florentine State Archives, adds to the scarce documentation of this church in the Quattrocento (see Appendix). In fact, the documents reveal interesting information on the embellishment of the church interior in 1462 and on the artists who participated in it.¹

The appropriation of twenty-eight florins and ninety-five lire to Giuliano da Maiano „legnaiuolo“ is particularly noteworthy. First, it identifies a heretofore unknown wood-work of the artist, a high backed chair for the main altar (now lost)², and discloses his participation in the restoration of the early Quattrocento (1400-1430) monks' choir.³ Second, the dating of the document may have a significant importance for the artist's involvement in the Pazzi Chapel. In fact, due to recent discoveries⁴, art historian criticism tends to include within Giuliano's *oeuvre* not only the wooden entrance door⁵, but possibly the architectural conclusion of the chapel (1461) and most of its decoration.⁶ Giuliano's presence in Santa Croce at the time of the architectural completion of the Brunelleschi designed building reinforces this assumption.⁷

The second document records the *stanziamento* of twenty - one lire and twelve soldi to frate Giovanni da Mercatello for the rest of the expenditure to fix the organ.⁸ Whereas the kind of reparation is not specified, the participation of frate Giovanni, the famous “magistro organorum” who between 1457 and 1461 rebuilt the pipes of the two organs of the Cathedral of Florence,⁹ indicates a work of a similar nature.

The last two documents concern the remaking of a number of windows and roundels of Santa Croce¹⁰ by frate Antonio dei Vetri and the appropriation of twenty-one florins to settle the account for his work. Although the documents do not specify the windows or reveal the extent of the project, they identify a heretofore unknown craftsman specialized in glassmaking.¹¹ The presence of this artist in Santa Croce may also provide a precious indication to the authorship of the second and third windows (from the entrance) on the right aisle which date to the second half of the Quattrocento and whose attribution is uncertain.¹²

NOTES

¹ The list also contains deliberations for the reelection of Operai, concessions of burial places in the church, and appropriations to unidentified persons for unspecified works for the *Opera*.

² Most likely similar to the chair for the priest that Giuliano made for the main altar of the Duomo of Pisa and for which he was paid in 1477. *Vasari-Milanesi*, II, p. 468 and IV, p. 268, n. 3.

³ The meaning of the words „pro resto cori“ is ambiguous. In fact, they can be equally interpreted as the conclusion of a new work or the embellishment of an extant structure. An examination of the available information, however, points to the latter. The old choir of Santa Croce, traditionally attributed to Manno di Benincasa Mannucci (called *dei Cori*), was located on Alberti family soil between the old *tramezzo* and the main altar. *M. Hall*, *The Tramezzo in Santa Croce*, in: *Art Bull.* 56, 1974, pp. 325 ff. Repaired and restored on several occasions it remained in place until its dismantling in 1567 when some of the choir stalls were moved to the Cappella Maggiore where they are presently located. For the stalls see, *Paatz*, *Kirchen*, I, pp. 571, 595, 602; on the removal see, *F. Moisé*, *Santa Croce di Firenze*, Florence 1845, pp. 120 ff; and *Hall*, op. cit., pp. 325 ff, and, *The Tramezzo in S. Croce, Florence and Domenico Veneziano's Fresco*, in: *Burl. Mag.*, CXV, 1973, p. 207. An examination of the stalls confirms their early dating as well as a style different from anything known of Giuliano. If the document refers to this structure, and not to any other unidentified small choir which might have existed in other areas of the church, it is safe to assume that the *stanziamento* to Giuliano „pro resto cori“ indicates a restoration or some additions which have been lost in the later misfortunes of the choir.

⁴ For the dates found on the *cupoletta* of the portico (1461) and on the *cupola* of the chapel (1459) see *G. Laschi*, *P. Rosselli*, *P. A. Rossi*, *Indagini sulla Cappella dei Pazzi*, in: *Commentari*, I, 1962, pp. 24-41.

- ⁵ Attributed to the artist on the basis of his letter of June 9, 1478 to the *Ufficiali dei Ribelli* claiming the payment of L. 1800 from the Pazzi family for works he executed for their houses and for their chapel in Santa Croce. Document published by *C. Fabriczy*, Filippo Brunelleschi, Sein Leben und seine Werke, Stuttgart 1892. pp. 219 ff, *Paatz*, op. cit., pp. 507, 624 n. 99.
- ⁶ *Laschi, Rosselli, Rossi*, op. cit., pp. 26, 31-32 and *E. Battisti*, Filippo Brunelleschi, Milan 1976, p. 222.
- ⁷ The content of the document suggests that Giuliano must have been already engaged for some time in the work of the choir.
- ⁸ Nothing is known about this organ except that at the time of Vasari's renewal of the church interior it had been removed from its original location (on top of the *tramezzo* in an unspecified place) and placed on top of the Foresta Chapel on the *tramezzo* in the right aisle, and that it was described as „vecchio“. See the letter from the Operai of Santa Croce to Duke Cosimo describing the state of the remodelling activities, July 21, 1566, published by *Moisé*, op. cit., pp. 122-123; *Paatz*, op. cit., pp. 595, 687 n. 560; and *Hall*, op. cit., 1974, pp. 326-327.
- ⁹ See *G. Poggi*, Il Duomo di Firenze, Italienische Forschungen, KIF, Berlin 1909.
- ¹⁰ For the various restorations of the windows of Santa Croce see *G. Marchini*, Le Vetrate Italiane, Milan 1956.
- ¹¹ This adds to the scarce list of the artists working with glass in Florence in the fifteenth century. On this subject see the study of *H. van Straelen*, Studien zur Florentiner Glasmalerei des Trecento und Quattrocento, Wattenscheid 1938.
- ¹² *Straelen*, op. cit., pp. 98-99, assigned them tentatively to frate Cristoforo and frate Bernardo (of the convent of S. Giusto alle Mura, Florence) on the basis of a vague stylistic resemblance with a window in the Cathedral of Arezzo (1478) documented as a work of these two artists.
- I wish to thank Professor Gino Corti for his help with the transcription of the documents, and Professor Ulrich Mideldorf for discussing them and for his appreciated suggestions.

DOCUMENTS

A.S.F. Notarile Antecosimiano, C 192 (*Antonio Carsidoni, 1455-1469*), fol. 234 r
Die XI Maii 1462

Item stantiaverunt Iuliano Nardi legnaiuolo, pro resto cori et pro scranna iusta altare maius florenos 28 et libras 95, que faciunt liras 217.

.....
Item deliberaverunt et stantiaverunt frati Iovanni de Merchatello pro resto attaminis organi id de quo est debitor opere, scilicet libras 21 soldos 12.

Item commiserunt in Orlandum [Gherardi] et Iohannem Miniatis [Operai of S. Croce] faciendi computum fratris Antonii de refacimento fenestrarum per eum refectarum in ecclesia sancte Crucis et oculorum dicte ecclesie.

Item deliberaverunt et stantiaverunt frati Antonio de Vetri pro omni resto eius quod recipere debet pro omni laborerio alo [sic] opera usque in presentem diem florenos 21.

.....
(The Operai are) Matteo di Morello Morelli, Bernardo di Iacopo Ciacchi, Francesco di Gianozzo degli Alberti, Orlando di Bartolomeo Gherardi, Giovanni di Miniato Dini, Francesco di Tommaso Busini and Francesco di Michele Bechi (?).