

## LUCA FANCELLI IN MANTUA \*

A Checklist of his 185 Letters to the Gonzaga. With an Appendix on the Dating of Letters Regarding Luca Fancelli and Giovanni Bellini

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*In Honor and in Memory of Stefano Davari*

Luca Fancelli's name figures prominently in any history of Italian Renaissance architecture more for his role in realizing Leon Battista Alberti's churches of Sant'Andrea and San Sebastiano than for his intrinsic merits as architect and civil engineer in his own right. Recent attempts to redefine and clarify his *œuvre* have served to refocus attention on the genius of the man who, in serving three generations of Gonzaga (1450 - c. 1495), gave Renaissance Mantua the distinctive character it still possesses. In addition to the buildings that survive to bear witness to his ability to absorb the Florentine idiom and bend it to the requirements of a North Italian situation, there is preserved in the State Archives in Mantua that corpus of primary source material which provides Fancelli quantitatively, if not also qualitatively, with the most ample documentation available for any quattrocento personage in his category. Given the factotum-like status Fancelli enjoyed during his two decades in Mantua, his letters quite naturally touch upon and reveal, often in surprising depth, all aspects of the multifarious labors performed by a man of his varied abilities. It is all the more lamentable therefore that this rich body of memorabilia has remained largely unexplored; primarily because scholars have limited their archival pursuits to those areas that might shed light on the construction of the two churches designed by Alberti. There has consequently been no serious attempt to study the remaining documents or to build upon the eminently useful study published in 1876 by Willelmo Braghirolli.

\* *This article was written during the period I held a grant from the Canada Council (1971). All documents cited here come from the Archivio di Stato in Mantua. In transcribing the documents the orthography of the originals has been modernized, abbreviations spelled out and the accent marks added where required. Fancelli's frequent habit of doubling letters in words has not been respected in the transcriptions where „nonni” has been given as „non” and „lle” as „le”; and this so as to make his communications more readable.*

*The principal texts in which Fancelli documents have been published are as follows:*

Willelmo Braghirolli, Leon Battista Alberti a Mantova. Documenti e notizie inedite, in: Archivio Storico Italiano, ser. III, tom. 9, I, 1869, pp. 3-31 (cited as *Braghirolli*, '69).

*Idem*, Luca Fancelli, scultore, architetto e idraulico del secolo XV, in: Archivio Storico Lombardo, 3, 1876, pp. 610-638 (cited as *Braghirolli*, '76).

Umberto Rossi, Il Pisanello e i Gonzaga, in: Archivio Storico dell'Arte, 1, 1888, pp. 453-456 (cited as *Rossi*).

Stefano Davari, Ancora della Chiesa di S. Sebastiano in Mantova e di Luca Fancelli, in: Rassegna d'Arte, 1, 1901, pp. 93-95 (cited as *Davari*).

Girolamo Mancini, Vita di Leon Battista Alberti, 2nd ed., Florence, 1911 (cited as *Mancini*).

Francesco Rodolico, Le pietre delle città d'Italia, Florence, 1953 (cited as *Rodolico*, '53).

*Idem*, Ricerca ed acquisto di “pietre antiche” alla Corte dei Gonzaga, in: Archivio Storico Italiano, 114, 1956, pp. 749-753 (cited as *Rodolico*, '56).

Climio Cottafavi, Saggi inediti su edifici della Corte di Mantova, a cura di E. Marani, in: Atti e Memorie - Accademia Virgiliana di Mantova, n.s. 34, 1963, pp. 5-39 (cited as *Cottafavi*).

Maria Rosa Palvarini, La casa di Giovan Boniforte di Concorezzo, Mantua, 1964 (cited as *Palvarini*).



Of Fancelli's 185 autograph communications to Ludovico, Federico and Francesco II Gonzaga, the contents of less than one fifth have entered into the art historical literature. In the checklist that follows bibliographic citations are provided for those 38 letters which have previously been published either in their entirety or, as is more commonly the case, with the "crucial" passage excerpted. Only the most convenient or classic reference is given and, unless it is followed by the letter T, it may be presumed that the published transcription is not complete. Not included in the present catalogue are the numerous and highly illuminating letters written to Fancelli by members of the Gonzaga household or the communications of other citizens in which the architect and his works were nominated. Also excluded are the several documents preserved in archives other than Mantua. In controlling the literature I have relied on Marani-Perina.<sup>1</sup> It would have been impossible to control the documents themselves without the painstakingly accurate manuscript inventory of the "Corrispondenza da Mantova e Paesi dello Stato" prepared by the late 19th century archivist Stefano Davari.

Devoid of all commentary this checklist serves a limited purpose. It graphically illustrates how little has been published and it provides the interested researcher with the needed archival citations. So as to give it a greater meaning, the year 1475 will be taken and used here as a demonstration piece of the range and depth of the unpublished correspondence.

Sixteen letters survive from this year, concerning which only a single sentence from one of the documents has thus far entered the literature. That sentence, quite naturally, concerns Fancelli's progress on the Albertian church of San Sebastiano. Wherein Luca Fancelli's own correspondence fails to be complete, or to require further clarification, it can be supplemented by the letters addressed him by the Marchese of Mantua. Although this category of documents has been excluded from the checklist, it may be called upon here for the purpose of examining Fancelli's activities during 1475. From this later font it is possible to have recourse to no fewer than fourteen of Lodovico Gonzaga's letters. Yet even now that the number of documents approaches thirty, the possibilities of finding primary source material in the Mantuan archives to elucidate the year under consideration have not been entirely exhausted.<sup>2</sup>

The letter Lodovico Gonzaga addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici on July 12th, requesting that he once again intercede on Fancelli's behalf in the matter of tax monies owed the Florentine Republic, has been published by Braghirolli.<sup>3</sup> Unpublished however is Fancelli's letter of the same date asking Lodovico to speak on his behalf, and in which he spelled out the issues involved. More interesting still is the Marchese's response, which also bears the date July 12.

<sup>1</sup> Mantova. Le Arti, vol. II: Dall'inizio del secolo XV alla metà del XVI. Testo di *Ercolano Marani e Chiara Perina*, Mantua, 1961 (cited as *Marani-Perina*).

<sup>2</sup> Busta 2893, Copialettere, Libro 77, c. 92 r March 5  
   c. 96 r March 8  
   Libro 78 c. 57 r June 3  
   c. 66 v June 25  
   c. 86 r July 10  
   c. 87 v July 12  
   c. 88 r July 12  
   c. 91 r July 15  
   c. 96 r July 17  
   Libro 79 c. 2 v July 18  
   c. 57 r September 12 (Fig. 1)  
   cc. 60 v - 61 r September 15  
   c. 62 v September 15  
   c. 66 r September 18  
   c. 67 r September 19.

There were several occasions when both the Marchese and Fancelli sent more than one communication on a given day as is seen both in the preceding listing and in the checklist.

<sup>3</sup> *Braghirolli*, '76, p. 627.



to Luca.

Vogliamo che domane tu vegni da noi a Borgoforte: e porti cum te li Squadri: et havemo  
 anche scripto a Petro Philippo che ne mandi .XII. gumiselli de laza da tirare corde: perche  
 zobia di matina deliberamo andare a Cavallara per designare et squadrare quella casa li.  
 Et tu sai che in questi principii el discipulo non puo far bene senza el magistro: pero te  
 avisaromo domane de li Squadri: ad avisandote che non te teniremo desviato sendo  
 zorno. Saviola. .XII. Septembris 1475.

1 Lodovico Gonzaga to Luca Fancelli, September 12, 1475. Archivio di Stato, Mantua, Busta 2893, Copialettere, Libro 79, c. 57.

*La litera de recommendatione che ne rechiedi al Magnifico Lorenzo in favor tuo te la mandiamo qui alligata et aperta, acio che tu vedi quanto scrivemo. Quando l'haverai vista se la te satisfarà, la portarai a la Cancellaria in Castello et faralla sigillare. Poi la porai mandare a tuo piacere.*

The haste with which the Marchese sought to satisfy Luca's needs, the cordial relationship that existed between Lodovico and his architect, is more powerfully revealed in a document regarding a house the Marchese intended to build at Cavallara near Viadana. This aspect of Fancelli's activities, during the calendar year under consideration, is documented by a single communication preserved in the Marchese's *Libri dei Copialettere*. It provides as well support for a claim that Lodovico Gonzaga was an amateur architect, or perhaps more accurately, that he took a keen interest in the diverse aspects of the discipline.

*Magistro Luce. Vogliamo che domane tu vegni da noi a Borgoforte et porti cum te li squadri, et havemo anche scripto a Petro Philippo che ne mandi .XII. gumiselli (gomitoli) de laza (spago) da tirare corde, perché zobia di matina deliberamo andare a Cavallara per designare et squadrare quella casa lì. Et tu sai che in questi principii el discipulo non può far bene senza el magistro, però te aspectiamo domane cum li squadri, avisandote che non te teniremo desviato se non un zorno. Saviola .XII. Septembris 1475 (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup>*

The Marchese Lodovico appears as well to have been a severe critic. While at Saviola, from where he send the letter just cited, he took strong exception to one aspect of the work Fancelli had projected.

*Non vogliamo già però tu stimi che questo scrivere nostro sia perché 'l discipulo voglia dare lege al magistro, ma solamente per dirli el parere suo. Noi dubitamo che, volendo mettere le cornice a le fenestre de la sala, como era rasonato, non ge possino ben cadere et venirano troppo sotto a li lioncelli del zuffo (zoforo?). Però al discipulo pareva de non mettergele et ha vogliuto avisartene acio gli faci pensare et parendo questo medesimo a te, non tuogli la spesa de far fare esse cornice, non havendo a bixognare. (September 15)*

Fancelli's response on the 16th would have been more enlightning had it not dealt solely with the financial aspect of the problem.

*A la parte delle fenestre scrivete che non si faccia spexa, questo non importa perché a tenpo nuovo ne serà fate per chi ne vorà e fenestre e uci (uscii) e d'altre opere asai perché ho diliberato tegnirvi .25. ducha' (ducati) del mio in alturio (in aiuto) del maestro acio posa tegnir di lavori fati, perché, quando se ne vorà, non s'abia a farli.*

<sup>4</sup> Whether it might be possible to identify *quella casa lì* with the Fancellesque house in Viadana (under whose jurisdiction Cavallara was) remains problematic on several levels. *Marani-Perina*, p. 84, Plate 79.



Thus a lively and well rounded picture of Fancelli's labors for the Gonzaga court begins to emerge as attention is focused away from the star sentence: *A San Bastiano si è murato due archi* (June 24). Serious attention can now be given as well to the disastrous condition of the staircase in the fortress at Ostiglia that required repairs, the monies needed *per chonperar la tela per le spere da la rocheta da Borgoforte*, the cement being prepared in the *fornaciari da Governo(lo)*, and the *priete vive*, being shipped to Saviola, the departure of the barge *chole colone e ferì e legniami della chaxa di Maestro Gudo*, as well as such personal matters as the financial pressures from Florence already discussed.

On August 2nd Fancelli wrote that:

*Ieri de sera circha .21. ora, essendo a Sancto Andrea, entrando en una chapella oltre a una serata d'axe, nel chalare mi feci male a uno testicholo.*

It would be foolish to claim this unpublished letter as being even a minor addition to the documentary history of the building of Sant'Andrea on which construction had begun in 1472.<sup>5</sup> But it does serve to reveal the man and to add the human element to the often drier and complexly technical matters the communications normally raise.

I leave aside altogether the complex but fascinating issue of Antonio de Caprioli's conflict with Giovanni de Boniforte regarding certain additions the former wished to make to his bottega and concerning which Fancelli was called upon to arbitrate. Rather I conclude this survey of the year 1475 by treating in some detail one of the issues which has thus far been ignored.

For the *noze de la Illustrissima Madama Marchesana* (Isabella d'Este), an ornate ceremonial *bucintoro* was built in Ferrara under Biagio Rossetti's supervision in 1490 and a similar barge was orded for Alfonso d'Este who married Lucrezia Borgia two years later.<sup>6</sup> It is regretablely not known what motivated Lodovico Gonzaga in 1475 to require Luca Fancelli to provide him with a similar vessel. From such information as is contained in Luca's letters, it is possible however to determine the precise size of the *bucintoro* with respect to the older vessel it was designed to replace, as well as a certain amount of information regarding the difficulties in finding suitable wood for its construction.<sup>7</sup>

*Illustrissime Princeps et Ecellentissime Domine Domine mi singularissime et cetera,*

*La provigione per fare el bucentoro si è duchati .94. senza la dipintura e la chioderia. Niente di mancho, io credo che anchor la chioderia entra en gran parte en questa suma perché quela entenda e (i) legniami chosterano, sichondo el creder mio, duchati .60.; el resto manifatura e chioderia e, volendo Vostra Ecelentia far la spexa, bisognieria la mità dei dinar de legname senza endugia perché el tempo è brieve, perché fo pensier essere domenica sera a Verona choi charri.*

*Nè altro, alla gratia di quela chontinuo mi rachomando. Mantua .3. Marzo 1475. Vester fidelissimus servitor Lucha fiorentin.*

Five days later Fancelli advised Lodovico of the less than satisfactory results of his trip to Verona.

*E' stato difficile a trovar e (i) legniami al proposito nostro perché sono tuti legniami verdi e de verdi glie n'è*

<sup>5</sup> *Marani-Perina*, p. 128. *Braghirolli* ('69, pp. 24-26) published two other documents pertinent to monies allotted for the *fabbrica* in 1475 but other notices regarding it are hard to come by. Fancelli's letter might indicate a resumption of activities with the 200 ducats given the *fabbrica* on May 8. Fancelli's still unpublished letters of February 20 and 21 1473 are of importance not only in documenting delays in the construction of Sant'Andrea but also in further clarifying the architect's personal difficulties as a Florentine, and therefore a *forestiere* in Mantua.

<sup>6</sup> *Bruno Zevi*, Biagio Rossetti, architetto ferrarese, Turin, 1960, p. 591.

<sup>7</sup> The older vessel can be documented by the following letter the Marchesa Barbara of Brandenburg addressed Filippino de Grossis on January 6, 1452.

Busta 2095. *Vogliamo tu vedi per quella miglior via che te pare de ritrovare fin a vinticinque ducati et darli a quelli depinctori et altri che fanno quelle bandere (bandiere) per lo buccintoro et nave che se apparichiano per lo andare a Ferrara del Illustrissimo Signore Nostro (Lodovico Gonzaga) per la venuta del Serenissimo Re di Romani, che subito sarà li secondo che te ordinarà Bocalino cum lo quale te intenderai circa la exbursatione de detti dinari.*



*chopia. En suma en tuto Verona non n'ò trovato se non uno che avexe ase seche el quale non è mercha-  
tante che sia posente, anche per non voler dar en credenza non à dispazato le sue ase chome gli altri. Per questa  
chagione m'è bisognato tore ogni choxa a chontanti ed ò levato .160. beletissime ase cernute e seche, le quali  
io ho fate cernir a Maestro Vizenzo, vostro entarsiatore, el quale menai chon mi perché m'aitase a ciernir bona  
roba.*

In the same letter Luca sought to resolve the need for the remainder of the wood by asking permission to have:

*.22. asoni di piella (abete) di quelli che si truovano essere al Palazzo di Revere e quali io feci aparechiar li per  
quela opera e quali io farò rimetere immediate e questi non si torieno se non perché sono sechi e questi ch'io fò  
risegar adexo sono pieni d'acqua e non abiando tempo a farli sugar per questo bucentoro, aràno tempo a sugarsi  
per lo Palazzo. Siché Vostra Ecelentia può scrivere a Zuani Antonio di Rivari che l'è di Vostra entenzione  
che si toglia e diti asoni aciò non si faccia entervallo ne l'andar a toglia.*

A letter of March 2nd provides valuable information concerning the measurements for the two rooms located in the boat and thereby of the size of the *bucintoro* itself.

*E si lavora entorno al bucentoro e perché questa nave è pur un pocho magior che l'altra, chome savete, me pa-  
reria di tegnir onçe .6. piú alto el solaro di sopra che non è quello della vecchia e questo perché ne l'intrar drento  
serà piú chomido, però che l'ucio [uscio] del vecchio non è alto se non braccia .3., onçe .1.. E questo serà braccia  
.3., onçe .7. faciandolo piú alto onçe .6.. La sala serà braccia .13. e larga .7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>., e la camera serà braccia .7.  
lunga e larga da un chò [lato] .7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>. e da l'altro .7..*

The Mantuan *braccio*, as it is inscribed on the "Vitruvian Column" Bertani placed on the facade of his house in Via Trieste, measures 0,4766 m, and is dividable into 12 units called *onçe* each a fraction under 4 cms. Using 48 centimeters or 19 inches as the nearest convenient equivalent it is possible to arrive at the following. The *sala* was 6,24 m long and 3,08 m wide, while the *camera* although 3,24 m long was 12 centimeters shorter in width at one end than at the other. Its basic width, however, was 3,36 m. Translating this into feet and inches: the *sala* was 244 inches long and 136 inches wide or about 20 feet by 11 feet. The *camera*, on the other hand measured 11 by 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> feet circa.

Work seems to have proceeded slowly as is evidenced by Fancelli's statement of June 24.

*Al bucentoro non è fato niente perchè Piero dalla Chorona m'à tenuto en tempo di dí en dí che le asse veriano,  
anchora non sono venute*

By July 16, however, when the *bucintoro* is last heard of Luca was able to report that:

*El bucentoro è (i)ngiesato tuto dentro e di fuori e vasi seguitando.*

#### CHECKLIST OF THE LETTERS

1458	Revere	January	10	Busta 2393	<i>Braghirolli, '76, p. 613</i>
	»	September	8	» »	
	»	September	8	» »	
1460	Mantua	February	3	Busta 2395	
	»	March	31	» »	<i>Braghirolli, '76, p. 614</i>
	Florence	June	7	Busta 1099 c. 752	
1461	Mantua	May	30	Busta 2395 c. 536	
	Florence	April	20	Busta 1100 c. 30	
	»	August	23	» » c. 31	
	Riva	October	15	Busta 2396 c. 253	
1462	Mantua	March	6	Busta 2398	
	»	August	4	» »	
	»	»	7	» »	
	?	»	12	Busta 2397	



1462	Mantua	September	21	Busta	2398		
	»	December	27 <sup>8</sup>	»	»		
	?	?	?	Busta	2397 <sup>9</sup>		
	?	?	?	»	»		
1463	Battifolle	January	23	Busta	1100	c. 32	<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 616 <sup>10</sup>
	Mantua	August	27	Busta	2398 <sup>11</sup>		<i>Braghirolli</i> , '69, p. 20; '76, p. 617
	Battifolle	November	9	Busta	1100	c. 33	<i>Rodolico</i> , '56, p. 752
1464	Mantua	June	5	Busta	2401		<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 617
	»	June	6	»	»		
	Rome	December	2	Busta	842		<i>Mancini</i> , p. 398; <i>Rodolico</i> , '53, p. 144
1465	Mantua	September	28	Busta	2401		
1466	Cavriana	August	11	Busta	2406		
	»	»	20	»	»		
	»	»	24	»	»		
	Mantua	December	12	Busta	2405		<i>Braghirolli</i> , '69, p. 21 (T)
1468	Cavriana	August	7	Busta	2408		<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 617
	»	»	13	»	»		
	»	»	28	»	»		
	»	September	18	»	»		
	»	October	20	»	»		
	»	»	21	»	»		
1471	Mantua	January	1	Busta	2413	c. 207	<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 617
	Gonzaga	March	21	Busta	2412		
	»	»	27	»	»		
	»	»	29	»	»		
	»	»	29	»	»		
	»	April	2	»	»		
	»	»	3	»	»		
	»	»	4	»	»		
	»	»	4	»	»		
	»	June	15	»	»		
	»	»	17	»	»		
	»	»	18	»	»		
	»	»	18	»	»		
	»	»	20	»	»		
	»	»	22	»	»		
	»	»	26	»	»		
	Mantua	»	28	Busta	2413	c. 208	<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 617
	Gonzaga	July	3	Busta	2412		
	»	»	3	»	»		
	»	»	6	»	»		

<sup>8</sup> The letter is dated 1463 *stile della Natività*.

<sup>9</sup> Although catalogued among the letters written in 1462, this communication is not dated. If *Braghirolli* is correct in stating that Fancelli arrived in Mantua in 1450 ('76, pp. 612, 628) then the phrase, *e gli è già passato .10. anni ch'io sono di qua dall'Alpi per servar et servando a chomandamenti di quella*, suggests that the communication was actually penned in 1460.

<sup>10</sup> *Braghirolli* incorrectly gives the year as 1464.

<sup>11</sup> In providing both the salutation and conclusion for this and other letters *Braghirolli* ('69) created the impression of having published complete transcriptions. This is not however always the case as is evidenced, for example, by his treatment of Fancelli's communication of August 27, 1463 which ends in his transcription with the phrase *questo fo per chomissione de Messer Batista* (Alberti). The suppressed passages begin with a further reference to work on San Sebastiano and only then does Fancelli change the subject by dealing with the church at Soava which *Braghirolli* mentioned in his 1876 article. The untranscribed sentences pertaining to the Albertian church read as follows: *Questa settimana che viene lavoro chon oto casuole: spiero si farà un gran lavoro perché sono fati e ponti e altri aparechi. Bisognerà danari!*



1471	Gonzaga	July	7	Busta 2412		
	»	»	10	»	»	
	»	»	12	»	»	
	»	»	15	»	»	
	»	»	15	»	»	
	»	»	17	»	»	
	»	»	20	»	»	
	Mantua	October	10	Busta 2413	c. 209	
	»	»	15	»	»	c. 210
	»	»	18	»	»	c. 211
	»	November	4	»	»	c. 212
	Gonzaga	November	16	Busta 2412		<i>Palvarini, p. 45 (T)</i>
	Mantua	?	?	Busta 2413	c. 213	
	»	?	?	»	»	c. 214
1472	Mantua	January	14	Busta 2413	c. 576	
	»	»	25	»	»	c. 577
	»	April	22	»	»	c. 578
	»	»	25	»	»	c. 579
	»	»	27	»	»	c. 580
	»	»	30	»	»	c. 581
	»	June	2	»	»	c. 583 <sup>12</sup>
	»	July	2	»	»	c. 582
	»	»	21	»	»	c. 584
	Gonzaga	»	6	Busta 2414		<i>Braghirolli, '69, pp. 22-23 (T)</i>
	»	»	8	»	»	
	Reggiolo	»	8	»	»	
	Gonzaga	»	14	»	»	
	Mantua	»	21	»	»	
	»	August	4	Busta 2413	c. 585	
	»	»	6	»	»	c. 586
	»	September	26	»	»	c. 587
	»	»	27	»	»	c. 588
	»	October	13	»	»	c. 589
1473	Mantua	January	22	Busta 2416	c. 467	
	»	February	9	»	»	c. 468
	»	»	20	»	»	c. 469
	»	»	21	»	»	c. 470
	»	March	2	»	»	c. 471
	»	»	13	»	»	c. 472
	»	April	3	»	»	c. 473
	»	May	8	»	»	c. 474
	»	»	14	»	»	c. 475
	»	»	15	»	»	c. 476
	»	»	17	»	»	c. 477
	»	»	19	»	»	c. 478
	»	»	20	»	»	c. 479
	»	»	31	»	»	c. 480
	»	June	29	»	»	c. 481
	»	July	13	»	»	c. 482
	»	»	23	»	»	c. 483
	»	»	24	»	»	c. 484
	»	»	29	»	»	c. 485
	»	»	30	»	»	c. 486
	»	August	4	»	»	c. 487
	»	»	7	»	»	c. 488
	Sermide	»	19	Busta 2415	c. 913	<i>Braghirolli, '76, p. 618</i>

<sup>12</sup> The numbering of the letters in this Busta is not always consistent and this is also true of those for the year 1475.



1474	Mantua	August	22	Busta 2416	c. 489	
	Sermide	»	23	Busta 2415	c. 914	
	»	»	25	»	»	c. 915
	Mantua	September	2	Busta 2416	c. 490	
	»	October	6	»	»	c. 491
	»	»	8	»	»	c. 492
	»	»	10	»	»	c. 493-94
	»	»	13	»	»	c. 495
	?	»	16	Busta 2415	c. 1159	
	Mantua	November	10	Busta 2416	c. 496	
	?	?	?	Busta 2415	c. 1160	
1475	Mantua	March	2	Busta 2416	c. 983	(Fig. 2)
	»	»	3	»	»	c. 986
	»	»	5	»	»	c. 985
	»	»	8	»	»	c. 984
	»	June	24	»	»	c. 979
	»	July	8	»	»	c. 991
	»	»	11	»	»	c. 990
	»	»	12	»	»	c. 980
	»	»	16	»	»	c. 989
	»	»	17	»	»	c. 987
	»	»	17	»	»	c. 988
	»	»	19	»	»	c. 981
	»	August	2	»	»	c. 993
	Saviola	»	9	Busta 2417		
	Mantua	September	16	Busta 2416	c. 994	
	»	»	17	»	»	c. 982 <sup>13</sup>
1477	Mantua	February	22	Busta 2418		<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 628 (T)
	»	June	17	»	»	<i>Braghirolli</i> , '76, p. 619
	Cavriana	June	27	Busta 2419	c. 198	
	Mantua	August	20	Busta 2418		
	»	September	15	»	»	
	»	»	17	»	»	
	»	»	24	»	»	<i>Braghirolli</i> , '69, p. 28 (T)
1478	Mantua	March	7	Busta 2422		<i>Davari</i> , p. 94 (T)
	»	»	10	»	»	
	»	May	17	»	»	<i>Davari</i> , p. 94 (T)
	»	»	27	»	»	<i>Davari</i> , p. 94 (T)
	»	»	30	»	»	
	Florence	July	13	Busta 1101	c. 506	
	Cavriana	August	14	Busta 2420		
	»	»	17	»	»	
	»	September	11	»	»	
	Mantua	November	28	Busta 2422		
1479	Mantua	February	16	Busta 2422		
	»	May	25	»	»	<i>Davari</i> , p. 94 (T)
	»	September	22	»	»	
1480	Mantua	July	10	Busta 2424 <sup>14</sup>		
	»	September	9	»	»	
	»	»	13	»	»	
	»	»	26	»	»	
	»	December	15	»	»	<i>Rossi</i> , pp. 455-56

<sup>13</sup> It remains to be determined to which letter c. 992 (a postscript) belongs.

<sup>14</sup> All letters formerly in Busta 2424 are now preserved in the Raccolta d'Autografi.



1475-11. Marzo  
 Mantova 983  
 H. p. 7 reg due due mi singularissime 72 Jo ha semto  
 M. 10 me ho fatto unpocho amata etta andata di uozona  
 feke azuata Lanau delle oname de meff pollo unhero tao  
 trouata una altra nau delle. m. 2. doue si troua 130. o. 72  
 di uoz. che manchaua pla puzon di amola et troua la lamandea  
 m. 10. et li lauoz entro no albucentoz et che geta nau  
 epue unpocho magoz che later d'ome fauer me parer  
 ditamz om. 6. piu alto et lozo di sap che non e queo della uoz  
 etto peche uelutur drento et la piu d'om. 10. et che uoz  
 uerho no ne alto feno. 7. 3. et. etto. 7. 7. om. 7. framuo  
 piu alto om. 6. laia et. 13. et. 7. 7. et. etto. 7. 7.  
 ungo etto da unbu. 7. 7. et. etto. 7. 7. Jo ho uoluto nuffe et fozza  
 dettate alla qual d'ontinu my R. etto mando mantua 11 marzo 1475

f. d. s.  
 f. d. s. f. d. s.

2 Luca Fancelli to Lodovico Gonzaga, March 2, 1475. Archivio di Stato, Mantua, Busta 2416, c. 983.

1482	Dui Castelli Sermide	May September	15 1	Busta 2427 Busta 2428		
	»	»	7	»	»	Braghirolli, '76, p. 619
	»	»	17	»	»	
1483	Mantua	February	20	Busta 2430 c. 630		Cottafavi, p. 14
	»	August	22	» » c. 633		
	»	»	23	» » c. 632		Cottafavi, p. 14
1484	Governolo	January	4	Busta 2435		Braghirolli, '76, p. 620
1486	Mantua	March	8	Busta 2434 c. 237		
1488	Mantua	August	19	Busta 2434 c. 569		
1490	Mantua	December	11	Busta 2438 c. 602		
1491	Florence	May	4	Busta 1102		
	Naples	»	13	Busta 807		Braghirolli, '76, p. 634 (T)
	Florence	November	10	Busta 1102		Braghirolli, '76, pp. 634-35 (T)
1492	Florence	April	20	Busta 1102		Braghirolli, '76, pp. 635-36 (T)
	Mantua	November	23	Busta 2441		Braghirolli, '76, p. 623
1493	Mantua	January	4	Busta 2443		Braghirolli, '76, p. 637 (T)
	»	February	26	» »		
	»	March	7	» »		Braghirolli, '76, p. 622
	»	April	1	» »		
	Florence	April	22	Busta 1102		
1494	Florence	April	18	Busta 1102		Braghirolli, '76, pp. 637-38 (T)



## APPENDIX

“Stile dell’Incarnazione” and “Stile del 1<sup>o</sup> Marzo” in the Dating of Letters Regarding Luca Fancelli and Giovanni Bellini

*Illustrissime Domine mi maxime honorande,*

*Perché Maestro Luca architecto è nel numero de miei intimi amici, da me molto amato per le sue virtù, venendo epso ad Vostra Illustrissima Signoria non ho voluto venga senza mia commendatione che mi confido in la benignità di Vostra Signoria tanto che spero, intendendo quella Maestro Luca essermi amico, si degnarà raccoglierlo humanamente et favorirlo, di che io serò ad epsa obligatissimo.*

*In bona gratia della quale sempre mi raccomando,*

*Florentiae – Die .XXIII. Februarii .M CCCC L XXXX IIII.*

*Eiusdem Vestre Illustrissime Dominationis Servitor – Laurentius de Medicis.<sup>15</sup>*

There is nothing unusual about this species of “form letter”, written in commendation of the court architect who had absented himself from Mantua in order to undertake work in Florence. Having discharged those duties, it was obligatory — if not a sign of good manners — that a letter of thanks and of commendation be written by those who had employed him in anticipation of Fancelli’s resumption of his normal duties. That Fancelli was indeed an intimate of the Medici circle, that the reference to his virtues was not an empty polite platitude, is suggested by the fact that “Il Magnifico” was instrumental in having him elected *capomaestro* of Florence Cathedral as well perhaps as by other less well documented ties. In tone the letter is not dissimilar to the one written by Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza in 1487 when Fancelli prepared to return to Mantua after having assisted the Milanese in resolving the problem of repairs to the cupola of their cathedral.<sup>16</sup>

It may be conjectured that Fancelli, upon his return in March of 1494, would have taken up where he left off on two projects: the repaving of the city streets and the completion of the *casa-bottega dei Gropelli*, which bears the date 1495 and which until its destruction in 1944, defined the angle of the facade of Sant’Andrea facing the Rotonda of San Lorenzo.<sup>17</sup> It is necessary to backtrack, having said all of this, and reconsider critically each of the forementioned statements especially the first. The attribution of the *casa-bottega* is at best conjectural and the project for repaving Mantua may not have been resumed under his direction. Yet the assumption that Fancelli was in Mantua in 1494 is open to sterner criticism on several grounds. Not the least of these is the possibility that the Medici letter was dated according to the Florentine usage which would mean that it was in fact written during the modern calendar year 1495.

Braghirolli believed that Fancelli last worked in Mantua during 1493. Bertolotti subsequently pu-

<sup>15</sup> Busta 1085, c. 286.

<sup>16</sup> Braghirolli, ’76, pp. 629-630.

<sup>17</sup> The attribution of the *casa bottega dei Gropelli* is discussed by Marani-Perina, p. 96. The project to pave the streets was inaugurated shortly before 1460 as is now known from the text of a proclamation dated October 23, 1461.

*Havendo lo Illustrissimo Principe et Excelentissimo Signore nostro Signor Messer lo Marchese de Mantua et cetera per bene e utile de questa sua citade e principiado el salegar de le strade cum se vede che tuta hora se va dreto façando e che non fesse provisione che quelle stesse munde e nette seria spesa butada via, per questo la Sua Excellentia fa fare publica crida e comandamento a cadauna persona cossì terrera como forastera, de che conditione voglia essere, e sia habitante ne la citade de Mantua, da mò inante de sabado in sabado, e venendo el sabado in festa comandata se intenda el di precedente, debia haver portado o fatto portare fora de le strate e rezole de la ditto citade ogne immunditia de fango, spazadure e qualunque altra immunditia se ritrovasse suso le ditte strate per mezo le lor stancie, fontighi, e boteghe sotto pena de soldi vinti per cadauno che contrafarà overo serà ritrovato contrafare per ciascuna fiata per lo zudese dil Comune de Mantua deputato sopra tutto ciò per lo prelibato Illustrissimo Signor nostro, la qual pena irremissibiliter serà scossa de fatto e la mità de quella applicada a la Camera del prefato Illustrissimo Signor nostro e l’altra mitade al ditto zudese. ITEM: che’l non sia persona alcuna de qualunque conditione voglia essere se sia habitante ut supra che olsi nè presuma da mò inante butare nè far butare lavadure, spazadure nè qualunque altra immunditia per usso nè per fenestra de le lor stantie over boteghe suso le ditte strade e rezole publice.. (Busta 2038-29: Gride, Fasc. 5, c. 18).*

Although Luca Fancelli may have been involved in the project from its inception, nothing is thus far known for certain until 1471: Braghirolli, ’76, p. 617, letter from Fancelli dated January 1, 1471 concerning the *contrade* de S. Gervasio. See also pp. 622, 637-638 for Fancelli’s letters of March 7, 1493 and April 18, 1494 from which it becomes clear that the project was realized only in slow stages. Thus it was only in March of 1494 that Isabella d’Este ordered that stones be procured for *le strate che vanno a Porto quale lo Illustrissimo Signor nostro et nui frequentemo*: Busta 2991, Copialettere, Libro 4, cc. 34 v – 35 r, no. 112-114.



blished proof of the architect's intent to return during the following year.<sup>18</sup> Bertolotti's source was the letter just cited; a letter which he claimed bore the signature of Lorenzo the Magnificent who had however already been dead for two years. Without attempting to inquire into the precise nature of the error, Marani chose to dismiss Bertolotti's statement outright. This has made it possible for others to call into question the basic value and reliability of his extensive research.<sup>19</sup> Since the letter does exist and does in fact bear the signature of *Laurentius de Medicis*, it is necessary only to shift the identification from "Il Magnifico", to "Il Popolano", who died 1503, to arrive at the truth.

In addition to having misidentified the author of the communication, Bertolotti may have been guilty of yet a second error of judgment. He overlooked the possibility that the Medici would probably have dated their letters according to the Annunciation calendar (*Stile dell'Incarnazione*) by which the Florentines functioned. If this was the case then all correspondence from this city written during the period January 1st through March 24th 1495 would nonetheless have borne the date of the year preceding. I have quite deliberately prefaced the preceding statement with the modifier "if", since as often as not correspondents "corrected" their own dates in what might be described as a type of conformity to the modern system of notation. This occurred naturally *only* when letters were destined for cities in Italy employing a different system of calculating time. In the instance under consideration, the recipient city Mantua functioned according to the Nativity calendar by which the new year began on December 25.<sup>20</sup> As can easily be imagined, letters addressed to the Gonzaga from either Florence or Venice, where however the year changed on March 1st, can cause modern researchers not inconsiderable difficulties. When a response from Mantua to a Florentine or Venetian communication has been preserved, the problem is easily resolved. But when this is not possible, when the response has not survived, then the decision to "correct" or to leave as is can be achieved only through more oblique reasoning.

The methodology to be employed when confronted with a problem such as is posed by the Medici communication has too rarely been discussed in the literature. In the interest of clarifying the issue and in order to point out the several approaches possible for resolving it, it would seem advisable to first explore an even more "classic" instance of the problem. Reference is made to a letter addressed Isabella d'Este by Lorenzo da Pavia in which Giovanni Bellini's name occurs. The background to the letter is as follows. The first round of negotiations between Isabella and Bellini (1501-1502) for an allegory for her *studiolo* had resulted in failure. Lorenzo, who served together with Michele Vianello as an intermediary between artist and patron, was able however to prevail upon the artist to paint a Nativity.<sup>21</sup> This picture was completed and delivered in July of 1504. Negotiations for the allegory the Marchesa had originally desired, and was still determined to obtain, were reopened in the spring of 1505 when Pietro Bembo visited Mantua. Several letters written between August of 1505 and May of 1506 bear witness to the limited progress that was made. When last heard of Bembo had not yet begun to compose the "*poesia*", and Isabella had yet to provide the artist with the *mesure dil quadro et de le figure et l'ara*.

Wind has written: "The fact that no further correspondence on this subject is known has been construed as decisive evidence that the picture was never painted; but no legitimate inference, either positive or negative, can be drawn from the absence of documents. As a matter of fact, the documents are not quite so silent as has been claimed. In a letter written from Venice to Isabella on 9 January 1507, Lorenzo da Pavia excused himself for some delays of his own by referring to those of Bellini: 'I seem to have caught Messer Zuan Bellini's malady'; which would seem to imply that new delays on the part of Bellini followed after the correspondence about the measurements".<sup>22</sup>

The document in question (Fig. 3) is one in which the Venetian maker of musical instruments apologized for having procrastinated in his promise to build an ebony viola. Although Lorenzo actually gave the year as 1506, Yriarte who published the texts in a French translation chose — most unfortunately without advising the reader — to "correct" the date.<sup>23</sup> Was he justified in assuming that a letter

<sup>18</sup> *Braghirolli*, '76, pp. 622-623. *Antonio Bertolotti*, *Architetti ingegneri e matematici in relazione coi Gonzaga Signori di Mantova nei secoli XV, XVI, XVII*, Genoa, 1889, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Marani-Perina*, p. 103, note 37. *Paolo Carpeggiani*, *Luca Fancelli architetto civile nel contado mantovano: Ipotesi e proposte*, in: *Civiltà Mantovana*, 4, 1969, pp. 87-114 (p. 105, note 2).

<sup>20</sup> See however *Busta 2906* (Copialettere, Libro 150, cc. 49 v - 50 v) where two letters of December 28 are dated 1494 while another written on the 30th is inscribed 1495.

<sup>21</sup> A critical edition of the documentation will be included in my forthcoming monograph on "Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia - Documents for a History of Art and Culture in Renaissance Mantua".

<sup>22</sup> *Edgar Wind*, *Bellini's Feast of the Gods*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1948, pp. 23-24.

<sup>23</sup> *Per una vostra è inteso quanto sia el desiderio de avere la viola d'ebano ovvero de sandelo che invero oramaie me vergogno de la mia vergogna, me pare avere preso de la malattia de Giovane Belino; tuta volta sono senpre sta' con speranza de gorno in gorno de trovare qualche belo peço de ebano*: *Busta 1441*, c. 402. See *Charles Yriarte*, *Isabelle d'Este et les artistes de son temps*, V, *Relations d'Isabelle avec Giovanni Bellini*, in: *Gaz. des B.-A.*, III<sup>e</sup> per., 15, 1896, p. 228, where a french translation is provided.



1506: 9. Gene.<sup>o</sup> Venezia  
402

Ilma et bona matrona p[er] dona nostra o m[ol]to quanto siad d[omi]no  
 stante lancia labano ch[er]o d[e] s[an]cto et m[ol]to oramai m[ol]to p[er]o  
 della mia vergogna m[ol]to p[er]o d[e] la malicia d[e] p[ro]nari  
 b[er]lino z[er]o nostra sono s[em]pre p[er]o s[em]pre d[e] g[er]no m[ol]to  
 d[e] z[er]o qualqu[er] b[er]lino p[er]o d[e] b[er]lino d[e] p[ro]nari sono  
 g[er]no fine allora e m[ol]to et a b[er]lino n[on] m[ol]to n[on] z[er]o  
 p[er] labra n[on] d[e] b[er]lino et m[ol]to et labra bono et m[ol]to d[e] g[er]no  
 et p[er]o qualqu[er] d[e] b[er]lino m[ol]to n[on] lancia z[er]o s[em]pre z[er]o  
 v[er]o d[e] b[er]lino et b[er]lino m[ol]to b[er]lino. C[er]co fare la forma et  
 fare la lunga d[e] la corda como il lino d[e] b[er]lino. Farla  
 co[m]e s[em]pre d[e] b[er]lino m[ol]to s[em]pre d[e] b[er]lino d[e] b[er]lino et co[m]e  
 f[er]re s[e]polm[en]to lancia s[em]pre p[er]o d[e] b[er]lino d[e] b[er]lino  
 b[er]lino op[er]a d[e] la g[er]no nostra p[er]o s[em]pre m[ol]to d[e] b[er]lino  
 g[er]no aquila como fidelissimo s[em]pre d[e] b[er]lino d[e] b[er]lino

vostro Lorenzo da Pavia  
*Lorenzo*

3 Lorenzo da Pavia to Isabella d'Este, January 9, 1506. Archivio di Stato, Mantua, Busta 1441, c. 402.

from Lorenzo written and posted from Venice after January 1st and prior to March 1st would conform to the Venetian calendar? A copy of Isabella's letter to which Lorenzo responded has not been preserved among the *Libri dei Copialettere* (Busta 2994), making it impossible to control the problem from the most obvious vantage point. Unfortunately a study of Lorenzo's correspondence during the years in question, where the object of his procrastination and shame — the *viola d'ebano* — is referred to, yields confused and thereby inconclusive information. Although commissioned in August of 1504<sup>24</sup> Lorenzo's continual attempts to find a suitable piece of wood were constantly frustrated. Throughout 1505 and 1506 he repeatedly apologized for his failure. *Zuro a Dio che maie non ò trovato ebano nè sandelo che sia belo*, he wrote on September 28, 1506, while the preceding December (1505) he had confessed that *non trovandeme al presente qualche instromento masime la viola d'ebano quale me ordina la Ecelencia Vostra, me vergogno a comparire avante a quela, ma Dio sa che el non è mio defeto. Non ò maie trovato ebano che sia al preposito*.<sup>25</sup> Neither statement makes it possible to control the calendar year in which Lorenzo sought to excuse himself by confessing to have *preso de la malatia de Giovane Belino*.

One argument, that of analogy, still remains and it is through it that Lorenzo da Pavia's presumed adherence to the Venetian calendar can be resolved. In a letter dated by Lorenzo January 3, 1504, reference is made to Bellini's progress on the painting of that Nativity which Isabella d'Este actually received in July of that year.<sup>26</sup> Any attempt to "correct" Lorenzo's dating, on the assumption that *stile*

<sup>24</sup> Busta 2994, Copialettere, Libro 17, no. 94.

<sup>25</sup> Busta 1891, cc. 81, 83, 318, 326.

<sup>26</sup> Busta 1890, c. 324. The finished picture is referred to by Lorenzo on July 6, 16 and August 13, 1504: Busta 1890, cc. 336, 337, 341.



*veneto* had been intended, involves one in the painfully paradoxical situation of having him writing in January of 1505 about progress made on a picture he knew to have been finished and delivered some six months earlier! This proves that in this one instance, and by analogy perhaps in all such instances, that Lorenzo employed the Mantuan calendar when writing to the Marchesa. Indirect evidence therefore suggests that the reference to the *malatia de Giovane Belino* occurs in a letter datable from 1506 and that it refers, as Robertson intuited, to Lorenzo's recollections of the first round of negotiations with Bellini.<sup>27</sup>

To return now to Luca Fancelli and to the question of the dating of the Lorenzo de' Medici letter. Since the communication as it stands requires and required no response from the recipient, it is not possible to control the date from the vantage point of Francesco II Gonzaga's *Libri dei Copialettere*. It is furthermore not possible to resolve the problem by taking the next course of action open, since Fancelli's name does not occur in letters written by Mantuans during the period under consideration (1494-1495).<sup>28</sup> Two paths still remain open, the second of which provides the more secure gauge.

Had letters from other years been preserved from Lorenzo de' Medici written between January 1st and March 24th, for which Gonzaga responses also existed, the matter could easily be resolved. Otherwise it is necessary to argue by analogy. For this purpose I have chosen a letter written by Pier Francesco de' Medici in response to an extant communication from Mantua. The Gonzaga letter which announces the birth of a daughter, and contains as well a request for the loan of a *retrato al naturale de la citade de Paris*, bears the date January 8, 1494.<sup>29</sup> The Medici letter which touches on both issues is however dated, in conformity to the Florentine calendar, 16 January 1493.<sup>30</sup> This would suggest, and additional examples are easy to find, that the same might apply to communications written by other members of the Medici family and in particular "Il Popolano's" letter of commendation for Fancelli.

That the argument by analogy is in this instance both procedurally sound and factually correct is suggested by one other document and securely proven by yet a second. When Luca Fancelli wrote from Florence on April 18, 1494 he spoke only in the most general terms of returning to Mantua. Yet the Medici letter of February 23 presupposes an imminent departure from Florence. This also argues in favor of placing the latter communication in 1495. It will be recalled that at the expressed wish of Lorenzo il Magnifico, Fancelli was elected *capomaestro* of the *fabbrica* of Santa Maria Reparata in 1491. He served in this capacity until shortly before February of 1495. Having then discharged his duties, and this is the real reason for the Medici letter, Fancelli made preparations to return to Mantua. This once again locates the Medici letter in the calendar year 1495.

It is perhaps ironic that, for the moment, it is the Mantuan archives rather than those in Florence which enable one to resolve the *terminus post quem* for Fancelli's work in the Duomo. Conflicting statements regarding this were published by Milanese and Paatz, who knew of no better source, repeated them without comment.<sup>31</sup> In a note accompanying Vasari's reference to Fancelli in the Vita di Leon Battista Alberti, Milanese gave the date of discharge as December 1494. But in commenting on Perugino's wife, who was Luca Fancelli's daughter, Milanese modified his stand. Whereas first he had written that Luca succeeded Giuliano da Majano „nel carico di capomaestro di Santa Maria del Fiore, nel quale stette dall'Agosto del 1491 al dicembre del 1494. Mori sul finire dell'anno seguente", Milanese now affirmed „è morto capomaestro del Duomo di Firenze sul finire del 1495".

The Medici communication aside, nothing is known of Fancelli or his activities after the letter he addressed to the Marchese Francesco II on April 18, 1494. The absence of subsequent notices has been taken, perhaps correctly, to mean that he died shortly thereafter and in Florence. It is only in 1502 that a secure reference to his demise can be found.<sup>32</sup> The redating of the Medici letter provides a more secure *terminus ante quem*. It presupposes furthermore a state of sufficient physical well being on the part of the 64 year old architect that he could contemplate resuming his duties in Mantua. If he did not return, the answer should lie somewhere in the State Archives in Florence. That he did leave Florence and reenter Mantua must remain for the present entirely in the realm of conjecture for reasons already stated.

<sup>27</sup> Giles Robertson, Giovanni Bellini, Oxford, 1968, p. 139. It is unfortunate that the author chose to be so singularly vitriolic in his condemnation of Yriarte's scholarship (p. 138). His statement (p. 136) that "Yriarte cites one (letter) of 27 August 1501 but his dates are often demonstrably unreliable and I think this is a mistake", is ill-conceived since the document in question is to be found in Busta 1439, c. 312. It contains the evocative phrase, *Giovane Belino dice farà una bela fantasia cercha al quadro de la Signoria Vostra, ma ancora non l'ha principiato. È longo omo, se scusa che l'ha da depencere ancora in Palacio ma che l'atendarà al'uno e al'altero*. Lest it be overlooked, it was first published by Braghirolli in 1877 (p. 372).

<sup>28</sup> Busta 2906 and 2907 and 2961 (Libri di Copialettere), Busta 2445-2448 (Correspondenza da Mantova e paesi dello stato).

<sup>29</sup> Busta 2906, Copialettere, Libro 149, c. 6 v.

<sup>30</sup> Busta 1085, c. 280. *Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier*, Mantova e Urbino, Turin-Rome, 1893, pp. 68-69.

<sup>31</sup> *Vasari-Milanese*, II, p. 546; III, p. 590. *Paatz*, Kirchen, III, pp. 334, 465-466 note 115.

<sup>32</sup> *Carlo D'Arco*, Delle arti e degli artefici di Mantova, Mantua, 1859, III, p. 48, no. 60.



## ADDENDA:

Jesus

*Illustrissime et Excellentissime Domine Domine mi Singularissime et cetera,*

*Al partir di qua de Vostra Signoria, dise a quella mi bisognava danari per comprar oro per dorare le colone de Vostra Signoria et quella me dise ordenaria me fossino dati. Mi par quella non abia hordenato niente, chredo sia stato per domentichanza. Prego quella li piaque scriver de qui a la Magnificentia de l'ambasador di Vostra Signoria, overo a Francescino servidor di quella, acio posa comprare oro et fornir dicte colone, e quelle fornide mandar a Vostra Signoria*

*a la qual umilemente me ricomando,*

*Ex Venetiis die .XIII. Januarii 1496*

*El servidor di Vostra Signoria Luca Bianco intaiador scripsit*

Bertolotti, who first published this document, failed to recognize that Luca had intended *stile veneto* when he gave the year as 1496; something that can be proven inspite of the fact that additional correspondence concerning the columns had not been preserved.<sup>33</sup> Luca states that he had spoken with the Marchese when the later had visited Venice. This could only have occurred late in 1496 and perhaps on the same day in November when Alberto da Bologna advised Isabella d'Este that: *Eri sera el nostro Illustrissimo Signore me disse che Zohan Belino, che hè pintor exelemtissimo (sic), farà uno quadro nel studio de la Signoria Vostra et Sua Signoria el vol far fare.*<sup>34</sup> There is, in addition to this, an annotation on the verso of Luca Bianco's letters, made by an official in the Chancellery office in Mantua, which reads: *1497 Luce Bianchi intagliatoris R(ecevuto) .XVIII. Januarii Mantuae.* It is to be regreted that such annotations are more the exception than the rule.

<sup>33</sup> Busta 1436, c. 366. A. Bertolotti, *Le arti minori alla Corte di Mantova nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII*, in: *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, Ser. II, 15, 1888, p. 987. It is not impossible that these columns were intended to offset the *fasti gonzagheschi* executed between 1495 and 1496 for the Ducal Palace at Gonzaga.

<sup>34</sup> November 26, 1496. Busta 1436, c. 356.

## RIASSUNTO

Il presente studio ha due finalità, la più importante delle quali è richiamare l'attenzione sul ricchissimo materiale documentario riguardante Luca Fancelli, che si conserva nell'Archivio di Stato di Mantova. Delle 185 lettere che Fancelli indirizzò alle tre generazioni dei Gonzaga da lui servite, finora meno di un quinto è stato trattato dagli studiosi, i quali si sono limitati a quei documenti che trattano la costruzione delle chiese albertiane di San Sebastiano e di Sant'Andrea. Tuttavia, se si considera la posizione quasi di *factotum*, di cui godé il Fancelli durante le due decadi da lui trascorse a Mantova, è naturale che le sue lettere trattino e rivelino — talvolta con sorprendente ampiezza — tutti gli aspetti dei molteplici lavori compiuti da un uomo di capacità prismatica. L'elenco delle lettere „autografe“ del Fancelli, che può servire da guida per altri ricercatori, è preceduto da una discussione sul contenuto dei documenti relativi alle attività del Fancelli durante l'anno 1475. Questo può servire come esempio della molteplicità e del valore della corrispondenza inedita.

La questione di „Stile dell'Incarnazione“ e „Stile del 1° Marzo“ nelle date delle lettere riguardanti Luca Fancelli e Giovanni Bellini è discussa nell'Appendice che tratta il problema che si pone quando si considerano le peculiarità di certi calendari regionali.