
Book Section:
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Liberalitas in Musical Exchanges in Florence and Ferrara

Tim Shephard

The Florentine chansonnier V-CVbav Urbinates Latini 1411 (hereafter V-CVbav Urb. lat. 1411), a small manuscript containing just nineteen songs, opens with an inscription recording that it 'was given to Piero de Archangelo de li Bonaventuri of Urbino by the Magnifico Piero di Cosimo de' Medici of Florence'.[1] Piero d'Archangelo, an agent of the ruler of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro, probably received the manuscript from Piero di Cosimo some time between 1474 and 1479; but James Haar has shown that behind this straightforward donation lies a much more complex history of musical exchange, extending both earlier and later in the fifteenth century.[2] Very likely the book was first made for the Medici intimate Ugo della Stufa c. 1445; but Ugo soon lent it to the celebrated organist Antonio Squarcialupi, and subsequently, in all likelihood, gave it to his close friend Giovanni di Piero de' Medici. The manuscript must have entered the library of Giovanni's brother Piero following the deaths of both Giovanni and their father Cosimo, in 1463 and 1464 respectively; the gift to Piero d'Archangelo, associate of Federico da Montefeltro who held several Florentine military condotte, must have followed these deaths, and preceded Piero di Cosimo's own in 1469. But the book did not remain long in the possession of Piero d'Archangelo; at the latest by the

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[1] The inscription reads 'Questo libro de Musicha fu donato a: Piero de Archangelo de li Bonaventuri da Urbino dal Mag[nifi]co Piero di Chosimo de Medicj di Fiorenza'. James Haar, Città del Vaticano Ms. Urbinas Latinus 1411 (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 2006), p. 13.

[2] Haar, Città del Vaticano Ms. Urbinas Latinus 1411, pp. 15, 17, 20–21, 23, 59 and 66–67.

time of Piero's death in 1474 or 1475 it made its way into the library of his employer Federico, very likely once again as a gift. Federico, for his part, then recorded his ownership of the book—and also commemorated its donation by Piero di Cosimo—by adding to it his arms, quartered with those of the Medici.

V-CVbav Urb. lat. 1411 is one of a number of surviving Italian music manuscripts dating from the mid-fifteenth to the early-sixteenth century which have been identified as gifts, through direct or—more often—indirect evidence. Another Florentine chansonnier, D-Bkk MS 78.C.28 of the 1460s, was once identified as a wedding gift for Margherita Castellani (its ultimate owner) and Bernardino Niccolini, although more recently Sean Gallagher has argued persuasively against the theory.[3] The Neapolitan 'Mellon Chansonnier' (US-NHub 91) of the 1470s bears indications that it was prepared in honour of Beatrice d'Aragona, and its modern editors—Perkins and Garey—suggested that it should be understood as a gift marking her wedding to Matthias Corvinus in 1476.[4] Also for Beatrice was I-Nn VI E 40, preserving the cycle of six 'Naples' L'homme armé masses, the last page of which bears a dedicatory verse addressing her as 'Ungarie Reginam'; although Cohen has shown that the manuscript must have been prepared initially for the Burgundian court, and only reached Italy in the possession of Beatrice following the ultimate failure of her

[3] Berlin, Staatliche Museen der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78.C.28. David Fallows, 'Polyphonic Song in the Florence of Lorenzo's Youth, Ossia: the Provenance of the Manuscript Berlin 78.C.28: Naples or Florence?', in La musica a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico, ed. by Piero Gargiulo (Florence: Olschki, 1993), pp. 47–61; Flynn Warmington, 'The Missing Link: The Scribe of the Berlin Chansonnier in Florence', in La musica a Firenze, pp. 63–68; and Sean Gallagher, 'The Berlin Chansonnier and French Song in Florence', Journal of Musicology, 24 (2007), 339–64.

[4] Leeman L. Perkins and Howard Garey, The Mellon Chansonnier, 2 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), I, 17–20 and 30–31.

Hungarian enterprise in 1500.[5] Lewis Lockwood has placed the Ferrarese chansonnier I-Rc MS 2856 in 'close connection' with the betrothal of Isabella d'Este and Francesco II Gonzaga in 1480, implying that it may have functioned as a gift in that context.[6] The Florentine chansonnier studied by Howard Mayer Brown—I-Fn MS Banco Rari 229, dating to c. 1490—was owned by the Florentine diplomat Alessandro Braccesi, and Brown suggests that it arrived in his possession as a gift from Lorenzo de' Medici.[7] A manuscript of frottole completed in 1496, I-MOe MS α.F.9.9, includes prefatory texts identifying it as a gift for a man named Francesco, whom Giovanni Zanovello has suggested was likely a student in Padua.[8] I-Bc Q19, a choirbook containing predominantly motets, dated by Robert Nosow to 1516–18, was in Lowinsky's view a gift from Costanzo Festa to Diane de Poitiers, although this theory has not been widely accepted.[9] In 1525 the former papal chapelmaster Carpentras

[5] Judith Cohen, *The Six Anonymous L'Homme Armé Masses in Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS VI E 40* (n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1968).

[6] Lewis Lockwood, Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400-1505 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 224–26 and 269–72; also *A Ferrarese Chansonnier: Roma, Biblioteca Casanatense 2856, 'Canzoniere di Isabella d'Este'*, ed. Lockwood (Lucca: Libreria musicale Italiana, 2002).

[7] A Florentine Chansonnier from the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent: Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale MS Banco rari 229, ed. by Howard Mayer Brown, 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), esp. Text Volume, pp. 40–41.

[8] I-MOe MS α.F.9.9. Giovanni Zanovello, '"With tempered notes, in the green hills and among rivers": Music, Learning and the Symbolic Space of Recreation in the Manuscript Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, α.F.9.9', in The Music Room in Early Modern France and Italy: Sound, Space and Object, ed. by Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 163–75.

[9] The Medici Codex of 1518, ed. by Edward E. Lowinsky, 3 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), I, 52–65. The theory is rebuffed, for example, in Michell Brauner's contribution to the present volume. For the dating, Robert Nosow, 'The Dating and Provenance of Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q 19', Journal of Musicology, 9 (1991), 92–108 (p. 107).

(Elzéar Genet) dedicated the manuscript V-CVbav MS Capp. Sist. 163, containing his Lamentations of Jeremiah, to Pope Clement VII (nephew of his former employer Leo X), supplying a laudatory verse; evidently this source functioned as a gift in an Italian context, although Carpentras appears to have been based in Avignon, not Rome, at the time of its manufacture.[10] In the late 1520s the Florentine Newberry-Oscott Partbooks (US-Cn Case MS VM1578.M91 and GB-SC Case B No. 4), containing madrigals and motets, were very likely presented to King Henry VIII as a gift of state.[11]

The manuscript known as the Medici Codex, meanwhile, has long been linked to the marriage of Lorenzo II de' Medici and Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, which took place in France in 1518 and was subsequently celebrated in Florence upon the couple's return later in the same year.[12] In a 2010 article I considered at length what it might mean for our understanding of this source to think of it as a gift in that context, drawing on Marcel Mauss' classic anthropological study of the gift to situate the manuscript within a complex and richly meaningful exchange involving Pope Leo X, Lorenzo and Madaleine, and King Francis I.[13]

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[10] V-CVbav MS Capp. Sist. 163. Thomas Schmidt-Beste, "Dedicating Music Manuscripts: On Function and Form of Paratexts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Sources", in Cui dono lepidum novum libellum: Dedicating Latin Works and Motets in the Sixteenth Century, ed. by Ignace Bossuyt, Nele Gabriëls, Demmy Verbeke and Dirk Sacré (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008), 81–108, at 99 with Appendix 4.

[11] US-Cn Case MS. –VM 1578.M91; and GB-SC MS Case B No. 4. H. Colin Slim, A Gift of Madrigals and Motets, 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), esp. I, 105–16. My brief review of musical gift manuscripts in Italy over this period is no doubt far from comprehensive.

[12] The Medici Codex is properly Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Acquisti e Doni 666, or I-Fl MS Acquisti e doni 666. On this manuscript, see Tim Shephard, 'Constructing Identities in a Music Manuscript: The Medici Codex as a Gift', Renaissance Quarterly, 63 (2010), 84–127; and Joshua Rifkin, 'The Creation of the Medici Codex', Journal of the American Musicological Society, 62 (2009), 517–70.

[13] Shephard, 'Constructing Identities in a Music Manuscript'; Marcel Mauss, The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: Routledge, 1990).

The present study extends this approach, this time founding its analysis not in Mauss' anthropological insights, but rather in the extensive discourse on gifts and gift exchange found in the Italian courtly literature of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. My rather straightforward contention is that, by taking account of the ways in which elite Italians conceived of giving in general, we can achieve a more subtle and refined account of what it might mean for a music source specifically to be understood as a gift in Italy around 1500. This approach has the potential to generate richer and more historicized readings of musical gifts in their social contexts than have been achieved to date.

Of my two case studies, the first will concern a documented musical gift already discussed at some length by Bonnie Blackburn, and will function as a short test case; the second, more extended case study will throw substantially new light on the circumstances under which Alfonso I d'Este's chapel choir—together with associated music books—ended up in Mantua in the employ of Francesco II Gonzaga.

The Gift in the Courtly Literature

In the courtly and humanist literature of Renaissance Italy, gifts and giving are treated as central aspects of the virtue of 'liberalitas', meaning roughly 'generosity' but encoding aspects of the ethics and economics of nobility along with the root 'liber' ('free').[14] Alongside the other Classical and Christian virtues, liberalitas played a central role in defining sanctioned behaviours for the Italian elite, offering a more-or-less clearly understood and universally accepted principle against which the behaviour of individuals could be

[14] The essential study of liberalitas in Renaissance Italy is Guido Guerzoni, 'Liberalitas, *Magnificentia,* Splendor: The Classic Origins of Italian Renaissance Lifestyles', in Economic Engagements and the Arts, ed. by Neil De Marchi and Craufurd D. W. Goodwin (= History of Political Economy, 31 (1999)), pp. 332–78. However, Guerzoni deals almost exclusively with later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sources, so what follows here is a new analysis based on earlier literature.

measured, and through which praise or blame could be articulated. The virtues, more than any other social technology, effectively described what it meant to be 'noble', and thus all noble identities were constituted and manifested through and in dialogue with them. They are, inevitably, absolutely central to the contemporary literature on decorous behaviour, from the Florentine accounts of family duties, through the 'specula principum' literature, to the models of courtliness offered by Castiglione and others.

Like several of the other virtues discussed in Italian literature, liberalitas was, of course, a borrowing from the ancient world. The Renaissance discourse on liberalitas was modelled very closely on the treatment of liberalitas in Book 4 of Aristotle's immensely influential treatise on virtue, the so-called Nicomachean Ethics. Nonetheless, it is not Aristotle himself who concerns me here, but rather the readings of Aristotle's liberalitas found in Renaissance sources. In what follows, I will itemise and describe what I see as six central principles of the Renaissance discourse on liberalitas, with the help of four contemporary sources: the Florentine Leon Battista Alberti's Della famiglia of the 1430s; two treatises 'De principe', by Giovanni Pontano (1468) and Il Platina (1471), addressed to Aragona and Gonzaga heirs respectively; and Baldassare Castiglione's well-known Il cortegiano, written over the first three decades of the sixteenth century and set at the court of Urbino.

i. The prince must give to those who are worthy, and his judgement in this respect is a measure of his own virtue.

To be considered a virtue, generosity must be subjected to reason, giving in proportion to merit. This feature foregrounds the donor's ability to judge the virtue (and thus the merit) of others; judgement of worth becomes in itself central to the demonstration of liberalitas, elevating indiscriminate generosity to ethical liberality. Castiglione explains that the prince

'should love those near to him, according to their rank, observing in some things, such as justice and liberty, a strict equality; and in other things a reasonable inequality, as in being generous, in rewarding, in distributing honours and dignities, according to the differences in their merits'.[15] This focus on the liberal man's judgement of merit and worth is found in all discussions of liberalitas in Italy in this period, and also in their Aristotelian model.

Platina reminds us that one of the kinds of worth deserving liberal reward is learning: 'we can acquire an immortal reputation for generosity through learning and erudition since these qualities impress themselves on men's minds.'[16] He gives the example of the rewards received by the famous humanist Vittorino da Feltre in Gonzaga service. Pontano adds an amusing anecdote to illustrate the same point: 'When Pope Nicholas V asked Lorenzo Valla why he, an old man, already accomplished in Latin literature, was making such an effort to learn Greek, he retorted: "So that I can get a double stipend from you, your holiness."'[17] The

[15] 'dovesse amare i propinqui di grado in grado, servando tra tutti in certe cose una pare equalità, come nella giustizia e nella libertà; ed in alcune altre una ragionevole inequalità, come nell'esser liberale, nel remunerare, nel distribuir gli onori e dignità secondo la inequalità dei meriti'. Text Baldassare Castiglione, Il cortegiano, con una scelta delle opere minore, ed. Bruno Maier (Torino: UTET, 1955), p. 488; translation Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 308.

[16] 'Doctrina praeterea et eruditione comparare nobis liberalitatis immortale nomen possumus, cum ii habitus animis hominum imprimantur.' Text Bartholomaei Platinae, De principe, ed. Giacomo Ferraù (Palermo: Il Vespro, 1979), p. 136; translation Il Platina, 'On the Prince', trans. Nicholas Webb, in Political Philosophy, ed. by Jill Kraye, Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 88–108 (p. 100).

[17] 'Laurentius Valla, cum ab eo quaesisset Nicolaus Quintus Pontifex Maximus cur senex iam, et in latinis litteris consummatus, tanto studio graecas disceret: "Ut duplicem, inquit, abs te, Pontifex, mercedem accipiam."' Text Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, ed. by Eugenio Garin (Milan: Ricciardi, 1952), pp. 1021–63 (p. 1044); translation Giovanni Pontano, 'On the Prince', trans. Nicholas Webb, in Political Philosophy, ed. by Kraye, pp. 69–87 (p. 78).

donor's demonstration of liberalitas through his capacity to recognise and reward erudition will be important to my first case study.

ii. Gifts should be unlooked-*for, so that they reflect better on the donor's judgement, and the* rec*ipient's merit.*

Castiglione advises the courtier that 'he should wait for favours to be offered freely rather than seek them, as do only too many who are so grasping that it seems they will die if they are refused, and who, if they happen to fall out of favour or if others are preferred instead, suffer such agonies that they find it impossible to conceal their envy. In this way, they win nothing by ridicule'.[18] It seems clear that by asking for a gift, the courtier would be pre-empting the judgement of merit, from which gifts should properly arise, and he would thus debase the whole exchange for both parties.

iii. T*he worthy service of the prince's courtiers places him under obligation to* them; his gifts to them place them under obligation to him.

The idea that gifts can both discharge and create obligations is a fundamental tenet of Mauss' gift theory. Although reciprocation in gift exchange is not specified, it is expected, and indeed it is encouraged by the social inequality created by giving: to give carries higher status than to receive.[19] In Renaissance Italy, and especially at the courts, the 'service' offered to a prince was conventionally configured as a gift, and so was the 'reward' given in return.

[18] 'aspetti che i favori gli siano offerti, più presto di uccellargli così scopertamente come fan molti, che tanto avidi ne sono, che pare che, non conseguendogli, abbiano da perder la vita; e se per sorte hanno qualche disfavore, o vero veggono altri esser favoriti, restano con tanta angonia, che dissimular per modo alcuno non possono quella invidia; onde fanno ridere di sé ognuno'. Text Castiglione, Il cortegiano, p. 219; translation Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, p. 127.

[19] Mauss, The Gift, pp. 1–3 and 11.

We can see the extent to which the language of liberalitas permeates discussion of service and reward if we read between Platina's lines, paying attention not so much to what he says as the way he says it: 'Honours and high-ranking positions are to be awarded [committendi] to those who ... deserve [meriti] well both of you and your city on account of their character, their morals, their diligence, their resourcefulness, their handiwork, their effort. ... By means, too, of giving counsel and making speeches we can deserve [mereri] well of men. Someone who puts forward a true opinion and gives useful advice about uncertain and doubtful matters, whether in relation to public or private affairs, should rightly be considered generous [liberalis] as well'.[20] For Platina, service to the lord and his state is in itself a form of 'generosity', and it is the generous service of a retainer that makes them 'deserving', amounting to an obligation placed upon the prince. Castiglione also acknowledges that the ruler's liberality responds to his indebtedness to those who serve him: 'just as those who build are not all good architects, so those who give are not all generous. … Some give to whom they shouldn't, and leave in wretchedness and misfortune those to whom they are indebted [quegli a' quali sono obligati].'[21] The gift of service offered to a prince or magnate by his associates was in itself a form of liberality, and placed the prince under an obligation to give back in proportion to merit.

[20] My emphasis. 'Iis igitur dignitates et honores sunt committendi qui, ut dixi, ingenio, moribus, industria, solertia, manu, opera de te ac tua civitate bene meriti sunt ... Consilio quoque et oratioe bene mereri de hominibus possumus. Nam qui in consultatione cum publica tum privata de rebus dubiis et incertis veram sententiam et consilium affert beneficum, merito et liberalis haberi debet'. Text Bartholomaei Platinae, De principe, p. 136; translation Il Platina, 'On the Prince', p. 100.

[21] My emphasis. 'sì come quegli che edificano non son tutti boni architetti, così quegli che donano non son tutti liberali … alcuni dànno a cui non debbono e lassano in calamità e miseria quegli a' quali sono obligati'. Text Castiglione, Il cortegiano, p. 497; translation Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, p. 313.

iv. Princely generosity wins love, loyalty and praise; it is an investment in good will.

This point is frequently emphasised, and it is not just about making friends for their own sake, it is about cultivating friendship as a political bond of real value and importance in the transaction of affairs. Pontano notes that 'the king who makes use of generosity transforms enemies into friends, strangers into intimates, traitors into dutiful subjects. He will even cajole foreigners and those who live in distant lands into loving him.'[22] Castiglione similarly opines that through liberality the prince 'would be not merely loved but almost adored by his subjects'.[23] Platina gives some specific examples, including that of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga who, 'On his own, by means of this excellent virtue [of generosity], has gained more renown and glory in Rome and wherever else he goes than all his fellow cardinals put together.'[24]

v. Liberality is a component of nobility, and sets the noble apart from those who instead seek to accumulate money through ignoble enterprise.

Alberti, as a member of a large mercantile family, is conflicted on this point, but nonetheless acknowledges that 'no occupation seems less attractive to a man of large and liberal spirit than the kind of labor by which wealth is in fact gathered. … Selling is, in truth solely mercenary. … Lending, on the other hand, would be noble generosity [liberalità] if you asked

[22] 'Princeps enim qui liberalitatem exercuerit ex hostibus amicos, ex alienis suos, ex infidis fidos faciet. Peregrinos etiam et in extremis terris agentes, ad sese amandum alliciet.' Text Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, ed. by Garin, p. 1026; translation Pontano, 'On the Prince', p. 70.

[23] 'sarebbe non ché amato ma quasi adorato dai sudditi'. Text Castiglione, Il cortegiano, p. 488; translation Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, p. 308.

[24] 'qui unus hac excellenti virtute plus nominis et gloriae sibi in urbe Roma et quoquo proficiscitur comparavit, quam omnes simul eiusdem ordinis.' Text Bartholomaei Platinae, De principe, p. 138; translation Il Platina, 'On the Prince', p. 101.

no reward for it, but then it would not count as a kind of work by which men gain wealth. Some people, moreover, think that these professions, which we shall call mercenary, are never quite clean … They urge that men of liberal mind spurn them altogether.'[25] In short, the urge to accumulate money is naturally anathema to the liberal man who desires only to give it away. There is an obvious social component to this principle: if accumulating money is contrary to liberality, then liberality (and thus the nobility it connotes) is only available to those with inherited means. Aristotle resolves this apparent injustice by arguing that liberality is proportional to means—thus, someone who gives little may yet be liberal if he has but little to give. Nobility is thus established to be an ethical, rather than an economic, state.

vi. The prince should give with pleasure and almost without restraint, which will demonstrate his noble disregard for wealth.

Arising from the link between nobility and the desire to distribute rather than accumulate wealth is the injunction that the liberal man should enjoy his generosity. Alberti notes that 'The truly virtuous and liberal man counts it a part of his good fortune to have an opportunity gladly to distribute his gifts.'[26] Castiglione similarly counsels the ruler to be 'a prince of great splendour and generosity, giving freely to everyone because, as we say, God is the treasurer

[25] 'Niuno essercizio, a chi hane l'animo magno e liberale, pare manco splendido che paiono quegli instituti essercizi per coadunare ricchezze. … in verità el vendere non è se non cosa mercenaria … El prestare sarebbe lodata liberalità, se tu non ne richiedessi premio, ma non sarebbe essercizio d'aricchirne. Né pare ad alcuni questi essercizii, come gli chiameremo, pecuniarii mai stieno netti … Però dicono al tutto questi come brutti e mercenarii sono a' liberali ingegni molto da fugire.' Text Leon Battista Alberti, Opere volgari, Vol. 1, ed. by Cecil Grayson (Bari: Laterza, 1960), pp. 3–341 (p. 141); translation Alberti, The Family in Renaissance Florence, trans. by Renée Neu Watkins (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 141–42.

[26] 'e se chi fia vero virtuoso e in prima liberale, riputerà in parte di buona fortuna avere dove e' ben collochi el dono suo'. Text Alberti, Opere volgari, p. 314; translation Alberti, The Family, p. 293.

of generous rulers.'[27] With great approval Platina gives two examples of noblemen fulfilling this brief. First he mentions Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, who 'left himself with nothing beyond the goodwill of men; for when he was not permitted to give money from empty coffers, he would give away whole estates and farms, claiming that he had done nothing in his life more gladly and with fewer regrets than that which he had performed out of munificence and generosity.'[28] Second he points to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, who 'does not know the meaning of holding on to gold, silver, gems, rings, garments, cloaks, horses, Corinthian vases, Damascene metal-work, rock-crystals, tapestries, embroideries.'[29] For the liberal man, giving is not so much an inclination as a compulsion, restrained only by its proper foundation in the judgement of merit.

Lorenz*o de' Medici and Girolamo Donato*

My first case study concerns two letters published some years ago by Bonnie Blackburn, documenting the gift of a music book from the Florentine 'prince' Lorenzo de' Medici to

[27] 'dovesse essere liberalissimo e splendido e donar ad ognuno senza riservo, perché Dio, come di dice, è tesauriero dei prìncipi liberali'. Text Castiglione, Il cortegiano, p. 492; translation Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, p. 310.

[28] 'qui sibi nil reliqui fecit praeter benevolentiam hominum. Is enim, ubi pecunias exhausto aerario dare non licebat, integros fundos et agros donabat, asserens se nunquam libentius in vita quicquam fecisse et cuius minus poeniteret quam quod munificentia et liberalitate usus erat.' Text Bartholomaei Platinae, De principe, p. 137; translation Il Platina, 'On the Prince', p. 100.

[29] 'Quid sit retinere aurum, quid argentum, quid gemmas, quid annulos, quid vestes, quid chlamydes, quid equos, quid vasa Corinthia, quid Damascena, quid crystallina, quid aulaea, quid peripetasmata, nescit.' Text Bartholomaei Platinae, De principe, p. 138; translation Il Platina, 'On the Prince', p. 101.

Girolamo Donato, the Venetian ambassador to the Papal court in Rome and a noted literato.[30] At the time of the gift, the two men had not met, but had become familiar with one another's qualities through their mutual friend, the humanist and close Medici associate Poliziano. In July 1491, Lorenzo wrote to his agent in Rome responding to a request from Girolamo for a book of music:

> Thank the Magnificent Venetian ambassador for having requested these songs of me, because I count it a favour to have been so requested by his Magnificence, whom, because of his virtues and learning, I am much obliged (molto oblighato) to and hold in affection, and also because I know that I am much loved by his Magnificence, to whom commend me. And I am putting the aforesaid songs in order and shall send them to you quickly, I believe by the first post. If I knew what kinds he likes best, I could have served him better, because Arrigo Isaac, their composer, has made them in different ways, both grave and sweet, and also capricious and artful. I shall send a selection of everything, and after he has tasted it I shall know better what wine I shall need to serve.[31]

The letter is shot through with the language and principles of liberalitas. Lorenzo is pleased to be asked ('I count it a favour') because he judges Girolamo to be worthy of his liberality ('because of his virtues and learning … and also because I know that I am much loved'). Moreover, Girolamo's accomplishments place Lorenzo under an obligation ('whom … I am much obliged to') to recognise them with due reward. For Lorenzo to give in these circumstances will be an excellent demonstration of his liberality and his judgement of worth,

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[30] Bonnie J. Blackburn, 'Lorenzo de' Medici, A Lost Isaac Manuscript, and the Venetian Ambassador', in Musi*ca Franca: Essays in Honor of Frank A. D'Accone*, ed. by Irene Alm, Alyson McLamore, and Colleen Reardon (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996), pp. 19–44.

[31] Blackburn, 'Lorenzo de' Medici', p. 19.

something that it is highly desirable for him to do—hence he requires his agent first and foremost to 'Thank the Magnificent Venetian ambassador for having requested these songs of me'. Girolamo soon replied:

> Greetings, most noble sir (vir amplissime). If at a mere nod from me you in your incomparable kindness show yourself so generous (tam facilem praestas satis), I may easily surmise how much I shall obtain if I make any demand more insistently. That dignified charm of yours surpasses all, surpasses even yourself. Excellent sir, all are in your debt who love letters, who love noble manners, and in a word who love the virtues. But I am now bound to you by a tighter bond. I have received a book, or rather a large volume of music by our favourite Henricus Isaac, most eminent in that art, whose compositions have always given me wondrous pleasure; whenever it is time for music (which it is every day), there is nothing I more like to hear. In that volume I was able to take pleasure in every form of the art. How capable Henricus is in each one anybody with even an elementary knowledge can easily perceive. I wonder at that cheerful generosity (hilarem liberalitatem) of yours, I revere it, and I am grateful to it. Any leisure I have I gladly devote to music; the art is noble and gentlemanly enough in itself and has commonly been praised even by the ignorant. There are some who pursue it to make their names, others by custom, others for other reasons; and therefore only in a very few is it refined and polished. But to me the fruits of that art seem not so much pleasant as useful. For others it [induces?] sleep, but for me it takes away those most sluggish lethargies of daily sleep, it lightens my graver cares, it drives out sordid ones. I omit that it is an excellent gift of nature and so to speak the model of our mind.

> Farewell and keep my debt on your books (me in nominibus serva donec solvendo sim).[32]

This letter is so closely engaged with the discourse on liberality that I wonder if the author had Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics open on his desk as he wrote. Girolamo acknowledges that Lorenzo has, through the gift, demonstrated his nobility of spirit (vir amplissime), because in his liberality he has taken pleasure in giving (hilarem liberalitatem), an act that inspires Girolamo's 'reverence' and 'gratefulness'. Lorenzo has shown in particular that he can correctly judge the worth of the learned, and thus the learned in general are placed under obligation to him through his generosity ('all are in your debt who love letters'). Girolamo acknowledges that the gift has created a 'tighter bond' between them, and specifically has placed him under an obligation to Lorenzo ('keep my debt on your books').

In this instance, although the gift is of a music book specifically—something particularly appropriate to the music-lover Girolamo—the music book serves as a vehicle for the operation of a range of broader social mechanisms. Lorenzo and Girolamo engaged in this exchange not only because they both loved music, but because the exchange in and of itself formed an important part of their social relations, allowing Lorenzo to demonstrate his nobility and allowing Girolamo to be confirmed in his personal worth. From the language in the letters it is very clear that both Lorenzo and Girolamo knew that, and that they understood its significance. Looked at from the opposite angle, here we can see a music source taking on an important role in social relations, not as a leisured afterthought to the business of the day but fully immersed in the negotiation of status and identity. Music's particular suitability as a gift object in this context lies, at least in part, in the extent to which contemporary elite culture constructed musical taste and discernment as a sophisticated, rational discipline, and viewed its operation in moral terms: the judgement of merit, so important for the proper

[32] Blackburn, 'Lorenzo de' Medici', p. 21.

rational exercise of liberality and thus also for the articulation of ethical nobility, could be further demonstrated in the selection of an appropriate (musical) gift.[33] The contemporary discourse on liberality helps us to appreciate more fully the significance of this musical exchange.

Alfonso I d'Este and Francesco II Gonzaga

My second case study is rather more elaborate, and involves a gift of music books enmeshed in a broader period of exchange between the courts of Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, and Francesco Gonzaga, Marchese of Mantua, neighbouring rulers who were also brothers-in-law, for Francesco was married to Alfonso's sister Isabella. For the gift of music books to take on its full significance in this case, it will be necessary to indulge in a lengthy preamble, presenting new primary evidence to establish the context.

In contrast to his father Ercole, whose efforts to maintain a large chapel choir have made him something of a celebrity within the literature on Renaissance music, Alfonso has had a more limited and ambiguous reception among musicologists. The centrepiece of any assessment of his music patronage is the fact that, five years into his reign, many members of the choir his father had gone to such efforts to build and maintain departed Ferrara for Mantua, where they formed the core of the first Gonzaga chapel choir.[34] As he had not

[33] The discussion of musical judgement in Paolo Cortesi's De Cardinalatu is perhaps the best-known reference point here (see Nino Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies in 15th Century Italy', Journal of the American Musicological Society, 19 (1966), 147-155), but there are several others; see Tim Shephard and Patrick McMahon, 'Stupid Midas: Visualising Musical Judgement and Moral Judgement in Italy ca.1520', in Music, Myth and Story in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ed. by Katherine Butler and Samantha Bassler (Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).

[34] This event is discussed and documented in Lewis Lockwood, 'Josquin at Ferrara: New Documents and Letters', in Josquin des Prez, ed. by Edward E. Lowinsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 103–37

previously had to furnish a chapel choir with repertoire, in these circumstances Francesco found it necessary to seek a loan of music books from the singers' original employer, Alfonso.

These events played out against the backdrop of the Italian Wars, in which both Alfonso and Francesco Gonzaga were closely involved. On 19 April 1509, Alfonso joined the League of Cambrai, an alliance of French, Papal and Imperial forces designed to reverse the expansion of Venetian territory on the Italian mainland, as commander of the Papal armies.[35] Initially the war went well, and Alfonso took the opportunity to reclaim on his own account Ferrarese territory lost several years earlier to the Venetians. However, alliances quickly

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(p. 110, fn. 22); William F. Prizer, 'La cappella di Francesco II Gonzaga e la musica sacra a Mantova nel primo ventennio del Cinquecento', in Mantova e i Gonzaga nella civiltà del Rinascimento (Mantua: Arnaldo Mondadori, 1977), pp. 267–76; Lockwood, 'Jean Mouton and Jean Michel: New Evidence on French Music and Musicians in Italy, 1505-1520', Journal of the American Musicological Society, 32 (1979), 191–246 (pp. 209–11); Prizer, Courtly Pastimes: The Frottole of Marchetto Cara (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1980), pp. 14–23, 46–52 and Appendix II, Documents 51–58; Lockwood, 'Musicisti a Ferrara all'epoca dell'Ariosto', Quaderni della Rivista Italiana di Musicologia, 5 (1981), 7–29 (p. 14–15); Prizer, 'Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia as Patrons of Music: The Frottola at Mantua and Ferrara', Journal of the American Musicological Society, 38 (1985), 1–33 (pp. 8–9); and Prizer, 'Music in Ferrara and Mantua at the Time of Dosso Dossi: Interrelations and Influences', in *Dosso's Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Luisa Ciammitti, Steven Ostrow, and Salvatore Settis (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1998), pp. 290-308 (pp. 294–95).

[35] The standard contemporary history of the Italian Wars is that written by Francesco Guicciardini (Francesco Guicciardini, The History of Italy, trans. and ed. by Sidney Alexander (New York: Macmillan, 1969), esp. pp. 191–279). The standard modern accounts are Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes, From the Close of the Middle Ages, 3rd ed., 12 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1906-), VI, 299–436; and, from the Ferrarese perspective, Edmund G. Gardner, The King of Court Poets: A Study of the Work, Life and Times of Lodovico Ariosto (London: Constable, 1906), pp. 55–105. A more up-to-date account can be found in Christine Shaw, Julius II: The Warrior Pope (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 209–315. My brief summary rests on these sources.

shifted as Italian leaders became uneasy at the free movement of French soldiers through Italy. In early 1510 Pope Julius II sought a new agreement with Venice to eject the French and reclaim the Duchy of Milan, annexed to the French crown in 1499, as an Italian state. Alfonso held fast to his family's historical allegiance to France, and was replaced as commander of the papal armies by Francesco. Bordering Venice and the Papal States, Alfonso and Ferrara found themselves in the front line in the ensuing conflict, and after early successes their position became extremely dangerous. Matters were resolved only by the death of Julius II in February 1513; the new pope Leo X proved more conciliatory in his foreign policy.

In light of this context, the conventional explanation for the departure of Alfonso's chapel choir—falling in late 1510 and early 1511—has been to point to privations resulting from the war. William Prizer, for instance, writes that 'Francesco Gonzaga's success was founded on the ill fortune of his brother-in-law Alfonso d'Este, for the majority of the singers who comprised the new cappella came to Mantua directly from Ferrara, where they had been in the duke's service. Alfonso, at war with Pope Julius II, was constrained to release his singers because of the severe financial strain attendant to this war and the Papal sanctions resulting from it.'[36] The financial strain argument is troublesome for a number of reasons, however. The cost of maintaining the 19-man choir listed in the Memoriale del Soldo for December 1509 was approximately 4000LM per annum.[37] This figure represents at the very most 2 per cent of the total expenditure recorded in the Memoriale del Soldo for 1510, which at a conservative estimate must be well north of 200,000LM—and the Memoriale del Soldo

[36] Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, p. 14.

[37] Modena, Archivio di Stato, Memoriale del Soldo 29 (1509), fol. 294r. This entry is useful in establishing the membership of the choir before the upheavals of 1510, but salary information has to be pieced together from entries in 1510 and 1511. Most members of the choir earned either 18LM or 12 LM per month – LM is Lira marchesana, the standard Ferrarese monetary unit.

is just one of several ducal account books in which different categories of expenditure were recorded.[38] Meanwhile, Alfonso maintained three visual artists at court for the whole of 1511 at a cost of almost 1500LM.[39] So, on the one hand, dismissing the choir would have made a negligible impact on the duke's massively increased costs during the period of war; and on the other hand other, proportionately more expensive and equally 'non-essential' staff were maintained while the singers departed. At the same time, in February 1511 the Este agent Benedetto Brugia noted candidly in a letter to Francesco that the marchese's financial problems were comparable to Alfonso's.[40] In fact, the reasons for the choir's departure from Ferrara, and for their arrival in Mantua, were both more specific and more subtle than the standard account suggests.

The specific motivation is easy enough to find. In response to his continuing support for the French, on 9 August 1510 Alfonso was excommunicated by Julius II and his city placed under interdict, meaning of course that he could no longer hear Mass. The impact of this move was not primarily musical. The Bollette dei Salariati for 1509 and 1510 record regular monthly payments of the small sum of 16LM to 'La capella d. la glorioxa n.ra dona d. corte'—the large, publicly accessible court chapel, known as Santa Maria del Corte, which

[38] I-MOs Memoriale del Soldo 30 (1510). To obtain this very rough figure, I added up the totals for a random selection of openings to obtain an average, then multiplied by the number of openings in the book. Other major account books maintained in parallel with the Memoriale del Soldo included the Bolletta dei Salariati, the account book of the Guardaroba, and that dedicated to Munizioni e Fabbriche, so the total expenditure will be very much greater.

[39] I-MOs Memoriale del Soldo 32 (1511), fol. 326v: Antonio Lombardo scultore, paid 768.16.0LM in the year; Antonio tard. intagliadore di legnari, paid 372LM; and Pelegrino da udine picture, paid 330LM.

[40] 'Credo che anche vostra Cel.ne habia bisogno de denari: come anche Lo Ill.mo Sig.re duca' (I believe that your Excellency also has need of money, as does the Illustrious Lord duke). I-MAa B.1243.IV, letter of 17 February 1511.

had housed the Este choir and served as the public face of Este piety since early in Ercole's reign.[41] Presumably these funds covered some aspect of the day-to-day expenses of the chapel, which had a staff of chaplains in addition to the singers. In September 1510 these payments cease, and they are not resumed, at least during the period of war, suggesting that the chapel itself was closed. The profile of the payments to singers also changes abruptly in August 1510, suggesting that the relocation of some singers to Mantua during the remainder of the year was connected directly to the closure of the chapel.

Seen not as the dismissal of the choir, but rather as the closure of the chapel, this becomes not so much an act of musical sacrifice in straightened circumstances, as a practical response to the pope's censure. We might even read it as symbolic, as Alfonso pointedly turning his back on the policy of public piety that had underpinned his father's regime. In fact, the change may have had relatively little impact on Alfonso's own musical life. The earlier months of 1510 already reveal the operation of a two-tier roster among his singers.[42] The administrator responsible for the Memoriale del Soldo helpfully notes how many months' work each singer was paid for in the year 1510, and the choir falls into a core of four who were paid for all or nearly all the year, and a wider pool of fifteen 'reinforcements' each

[41] I-MOs Bolletta dei Salariati 19 (1509) and 20 (1510). On the building of this chapel, see Thomas Tuohy, Herculean Ferrara: *Ercole d'Este, 1471*–1505, and the Invention of a Ducal Capital (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 93–95.

[42] Such a system is also implied in a later exchange of letters, published by Lockwood. In a letter of 7 November 1517 Bidon, who had defected from Alfonso's service to that of Leo X a few years before, recommends to Alfonso a friend of his, another singer named Piedrossono. He suggests that if the duke doesn't need him as a regular singer, he might still keep him on a modest wage for when he required the fuller sound of a large choir ('quando se avesse di bisogno di cantare qualche cossa a piena voce'). See Lewis Lockwood, 'A Virtuoso Singer at Ferrara and Rome: The Case of Bidon', in Papal Music and Musicians in Late Medieval and Renaissance Rome, ed. by Richard Sherr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 224–39 (pp. 238–39).

of whom was paid for between two and five months' work.[43] The four core members were Ianes Pexenin, Bidon, Zoanne Michele and Gian Grivion, and indeed these four remained on staff throughout 1511 (pace a lengthy absence for Gian Grivion) and 1512 (joined occasionally by Ilario Turlurone).[44] They form the nucleus of the post-conflict choir recorded in the Memoriale del Soldo for 1514, with the addition of a fifth member, Metregian (Maistre Jhan).[45] It seems clear, then, that Alfonso's musica segreta, an ensemble large enough to serve for his personal entertainment and to ornament his observance in a smaller private chapel, was unaffected by the closure of Santa Maria del Corte.[46] Rather, it was the additional forces required to stage a magnificent observance in that large public space that became superfluous to requirements.

[43] I-MOs Memoriale del Soldo 30 (1510). The December entries in the Memoriale del Soldo generally include a summary of the year, including the number of months and days worked, the monthly salary, and the total pay. This information can, of course, be verified against the payments listed, and it is usually accurate within an acceptable margin of error.

[44] I-MOs Memoriali del Soldo 32 (1511), 33 (1512) and 34 (1512). According to the December summaries in the 1511 book, Gian Grivion was paid for just four and a third months, whereas the others were paid for all twelve (he spend some of the year in Mantua—Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, fn. 47). Ilario Turlurone received a payment in excess of one month's wages in July 1512; according to the December summary he worked three and half months (although the maths here is ambiguous).

[45] I-MOs Memoriale del Soldo 35 (1513–14), fols 220r-v, giving figures for the year. Metregian joined from 1 May 1513 with a salary of 6LM per month (fols 101r-v).

[46] It is also worth noting in this connection that Alfonso spent much of 1510 in the field: he was in camp with the French in the Veneto in May-July that year, and again in September and October (Gardner, The King of Court Poets, pp. 70–79). At least one musician from his core group, Jean Michel, accompanied him on campaign (Lockwood, 'Jean Mouton and Jean Michel', pp. 201–02).

Prizer has documented the movement of twelve singers from Alfonso's choir to Mantua, temporarily or permanently, between December 1510 and about March 1511.[47] Francesco himself was personally instrumental in bringing this about: he arranged for singers' belongings to be brought from Ferrara and encouraged further members of Alfonso's choir to take their colleagues' lead.[48] For his part, Alfonso was complicit in their departure: his agent, Benedetto Brugia, and adviser, Gerardo Saraceno, helped arrange the removal of the singers' families and effects, and Alfonso granted safe passage for the comings and goings involved.[49] In fact, the movement of the singers forms part of a wider pattern of co-operation and traffic between Ferrara and Mantua during the years of war. For example, in April 1511 Francesco wrote personally to Alfonso in terms of great deference, requesting the loan of two falcons:

> Illustrious and Excellent lord, our dearest Brother-in-law and Brother: seeing your lordship occupied with other matters for which we have the sympathy that they deserve, let us be bold enough to write to you to ask for two of your falcons, those that will be named by Philippo Greco, with which we pray that you will comply, and if at a calm moment you want them, we will be ready to return them, and make

[47] See especially Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, pp. 14–23, 46–52 and Appendix II, Documents 51–58.

[48] See Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, p. 15, and Appendix II, Documents 51–53.

[49] Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, p. 15. Mantua, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Gonzaga, Busta 1243 contains a quantity of correspondence between Benedetto Brugia and Francesco concerning the singers. When a matter arises in which Benedetto is powerless to help, in a letter of 16 August 2011 concerning the singer Felice da Nola, he refers the marchese to 'Gerardo Saraceno who is advisor to His Excellency the Duke' ('M. Gerardo Saraceno quale e consiliario de la Ex.tia del Duca').

available to you as many as we have, And in all we offer and recommend ourselves to you…[50]

Francesco stresses his family connection with Alfonso, refers sensitively to his difficult military situation, implies that it has taken courage to approach Alfonso with such a request, and assures the duke that he will return the favour when an opportunity arises. In the following month, Francesco requested that Alfonso grant several salvacondotte for agents of his who had business on the Po River, including one whose task it was to take a boat to Venice as a gift.[51] In August Francesco heard that Alfonso was sending him an engineer (Biagio Rossetti) and a builder in response to yet another request.[52] In October Mario Equicola, a retainer of Francesco's wife Isabella d'Este, spent several days with Alfonso in Ferrara coming up with subjects for paintings to adorn the duke's study.[53] It is in this context of frequent and cordial exchange that we should understand the movement of singers from Ferrara to Mantua, and not at all as one ruler's misfortune rendering his singers the prey of another.

Such a climate of exchange was hardly consonant with Francesco's position as commander of the papal forces ranged against Alfonso, and the marchese's ambivalent

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[50] 'Ill.me et Ex.me d.ne Cog.te et fr. n.r char.me: vedendo la s. v. in altra occupatione de che gli havemo la compassione che la merita, pigliamo ardire di mandargli a dimandare dui falconi di li sui, quali per Philippo greco gli saranno nominati, unde la preghemo ci ne compiacia, che se a tempo piu quieto la ne vocra, saremo aparechiati di rendergli questi, et accommodarla di quanti altri nhaveremo, Et allei tutto ni offerimo et raccommandarno Mantuae xx aprilis M D X I'. I-MAa, Archivio Gonzaga, Busta 2918.214, fols 34v–35r.

[51] I-MAa, Archivio Gonzaga, Busta 2918.214, fol. 49v, letter dated 1 May.

[52] I-MAa, Archivio Gonzaga, Busta 1243, letters from Hieronymo Zilioli (camerlengo of the Este court) to Francesco dated 1 and 11 August 1511.

[53] See John Shearman, 'Alfonso d'Este's Camerino', in *'Il se rendit en Italie': Etudes offertes à André Chastel* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1987), pp. 209–30.

politics did not escape the pope's notice. In January 1511 Francesco wrote to his agent attached to the papal entourage, Ludovico Brognolo, instructing him to reassure the pope that his motives were consonant with the pope's objectives:

> when the occasion arises, give to his holiness in addition to what we have already mentioned the assurance, that from every dealing with Ferrara we have abstained, from the day that his holiness declared the duke his enemy: never have I sent that way, except for bringing the singers, and for other things, which may be quicker to displease than to please the duke.[54]

When read alongside the deferential and fraternal tone of the letter concerning falcons, it becomes obvious that Francesco is playing a double game, and the reasons are equally obvious. The marchese was married to Alfonso's powerful sister Isabella, and he was a close friend of Alfonso's wife Lucrezia. In short, he had more reason to treat Alfonso as a close ally than as a deadly enemy. On the other hand, the pope held the marchese's son Federico hostage, to secure his loyalty.

It is in this political context, and cognizant of the contemporary discourse on liberalitas outlined above, that we should re-read two letters already published by Prizer. In February 1511 Alfonso sent his most celebrated singer, Bidon, to Mantua with a letter of introduction.[55] Francesco wrote back the following month, requesting that he be allowed to keep the singer on loan for several months:

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[54] 'quando la occasione vi venga dicate a sua s.ta che sopra cio vi havemo imposto la assecurati, che da ogni commercio da Ferrara ce siamo abstenuti, dal di che sua s.ta declaro per suo nemico il gia Duca: ne mai havemo mandato a quella via, se non per condure gli cantori, et per altre cose, che possono essere piu p[re]sto a dispiacere che a piacere al ditto Duca' – letter not dated, but shortly after 20 January. I-MAa, Archivio Gonzaga, Busta 2918.215, fols 6v–7r.

[55] Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, p. 16.

In recent days Messer Bidon has been here with us, and, for the love of Your Lordship in that he is [your] servant and for respect of his ability (virtù), we have taken him to us and keep him here to the great pleasure of our spirit. However, [we are ready] always to return him to your service whenever you wish. And so that he may have more [opportunity] to be involved with music (which he does not have there now [in Ferrara]), we beg of you as strongly as possible to be content for him to remain here with us for five or six months if it appears [convenient] to concede him to us, as we will be extremely thankful to you and promise to return him every time you wish. And it must not displease you that the above-mentioned Messer Bidon remain near us, for every day we have him sing in our cappella. In this manner he exercises his voice, and your Lordship knows how important this is, that it would be unfortunate indeed for such a man to lose his voice or make it worse through lack of use. It was for this reason that Your Lordship came to send him here [for the sake of] Messer Bidon and his ability, and we have equal care of one [i.e. Bidon's person] and the other [i.e. Bidon's voice]. We recommend ourselves to Your Lordship.[56]

[56] 'Passando gli dì passati de qui Messer Bidone, et per amore dela Signoria Vostra per esserle lui servitore et per respecto de le virtù sue, lo raccogliessimo appresso de noi, et tenemolo qui con grande piacere con animo perhò sempre de renderlo alli servitij di quella tutt'hora che le piacerà, et che l'habbia più aciò de attendere al spasso de la musica, che adesso là non ha. Pregamola ben quanto possemo ad essere contenta che'l stij con noi quelli cinque o sei mesi che la parirà de concedercilo, che l'haremo grattissimo da lei et promettemole de rimandarlelo tutta volta che la vorrà. Nè le deve spiacere che fra tanto el preditto Messer Bidon stia appresso de noi, chè ogni dì lo facemo cantare in la nostra capella et a questo modo l'exercita la voce sua, che la Signoria Vostra sa quanto importa, et seria pur male che un tale homo per non se exercitare perdesse la voce o peggiorasse, sì che la prefata Signoria Vostra viene a depositarci appresso et Messer Bidon et la virtù sua, et noi haveremo pari cura de l'uno et l'altra. Alla Signoria Vostra de core ne raccomandiamo.' Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, Appendix II, Document 54. The translation is based on Prizer's (pp. 16–17), but extended and slightly altered.

This letter is rich in the rhetoric of liberality. Francesco reminds Alfonso of his own worth by stressing his love for the duke ('for the love of Your Lordship'), and explaining the good service he is doing Alfonso by looking after Bidon and his voice ('In this manner he exercises his voice, and your Lordship knows how important this is'). This, of course, prompts Alfonso to judge Francesco's merit favourably, and allows the duke to configure his accession to the request as a demonstration of his ennobling liberalitas. Francesco acknowledges that in allowing Bidon to stay with him the duke is showing the marchese—his social inferior—favour ('we beg of you … to concede him'), and he duly accepts that this favour places him under an obligation to the duke ('we will be extremely thankful to you').

An earlier letter, and the one that sits at the heart of this case-study, concerns a loan of music books. In January 1511, lacking repertoire for his new choir, Francesco wrote to Alfonso requesting music books from which to copy Masses and psalms:

> Finding myself poorly furnished with things to sing for my choir, I beg Your Lordship as much as I am able to agree to lend me some of your books, according to the requests of Perisone, the bearer [of this letter]. But above all a book covered in red that he will request, and the book of Fra Piero. As soon as I have had some masses copied, I will return them to you ... I also ask Your Lordship to agree to send me the other two books of psalms for Holy Week which like the rest will be well and quickly returned.[57]

Francesco is here asking for a favour ('I beg Your Lordship … to agree to lend'), and the sharing of these sources amounted to a liberal gesture on Alfonso's part, with all that such a

[57] 'Ritrovandomi mal fornito di cose da cantare per la mia capella, prego quanto posso la Signoria Vostra che le piaccia di prestarmi qualche libro di suoi, secundo che le dimandarà Perisone presente exhibitore, ma sopra tutto un libro coperto di rosso che'l dimandarà et lo libro di Fra Piero, che subito che ne habbi fatte copiare alcune Messe gli le rimandarò ...'. Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, Appendix II, Document 51. The translation is based on Prizer's (p. 24), but extended and slightly altered.

gesture implies in terms of virtue and status. Whilst Francesco promises to return the books, he acknowledges that this loan will involve the gift of the music contained in the sources, which he means to have copied.

Seen in the context of the contemporary understanding of gifts and giving, Francesco's repeated requests of Alfonso—for music books, for singers, for falcons, for engineers—are striking, for by calling on Alfonso's liberalitas they have the effect of embodying Francesco's lower status, and placing him in debt to the duke, whilst at the same time demonstrating the duke's nobility and virtue. This is certainly why Alfonso was ready to accede to Francesco's requests, and indeed to make gifts unbidden (such as the loan of Bidon): showing Francesco liberality constituted an effective way to tie the enemy commander more closely to him, whilst at the same time demonstrating his own ethical claim to retain his position of rule. Like Lorenzo in the previous case study, and contrary to the spin Francesco put on things for the pope, Alfonso must have been delighted to be asked.

This raises an important question: what did Francesco get out of these exchanges? To find an answer, we must learn a little about Francesco's own circumstances in 1510 and 1511, for in many respects they were hardly more comfortable than Alfonso's. In the war of the League of Cambrai in 1509–10, Francesco fought unsuccessfully on the side of the pope. On 9 August 1509 he led a Papal army to a crushing defeat and was captured and imprisoned by the Venetians. He left his state in a condition of distress: although in the competent hands of Isabella as regent, cultural activity came to a standstill.[58] Upon his release in July 1510, he was appointed to lead the Papal armies against Alfonso and France, but on the condition that he send his son and heir to Rome as a hostage to guarantee his loyalty.

[58] On Mantua in the period of his imprisonment see Alessandro Luzio, 'La reggenza di Isabella d'Este durante la prigionia del marito (1509–1510)', Archivio storico lombardo, 14 (1910), 5–104.

A mercenary commander from a dynasty of mercenary commanders, Francesco's public image was founded on military heroism, emphasising his prowess as a commander and the prestigious contracts under which he served.[59] However, he suffered from a paucity of actual military success, leaving a credibility gap that might easily have undermined his rule. His most conspicuous engagement was the Battle of Fornovo, of 1495 – an indecisive affair which nevertheless succeeded in ejecting Charles VIII from Italy.[60] Although it would be difficult to argue that the battle was won according to Francesco's plan, and it entailed heavy casualties and rampant desertion on the Italian side, the Marchese made it the lynchpin of his strategy of self-presentation. Immediately after the battle he instigated a campaign of visual and verbal rhetoric to assert for himself the victory and the title 'liberator of Italy'. In Gonzaga propaganda he was compared to Julius Caesar, Hector and Alexander; his broken battle-lance to St Longinus' spear.[61] Further, he began two new projects that can only have been intended to construct a cult around his victory, working a story that he had successfully invoked the Virgin's aid in the midst of battle. Firstly, he had a small church built in the

[59] On Francesco's strategies of self-presentation see Molly Bourne, 'Renaissance Husbands and Wives as Patrons of Art: The Camerini of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga', in Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy, ed. by Sheryl E. Reiss and David G. Wilkins (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2001), pp. 93–123 (pp. 102–09); Bourne, 'Francesco II Gonzaga, condottiero e committente d'arte', in Mantegna a Mantova, 1460–1506, ed. by Mauro Lucco (Milan: Skira, 2006), pp. 19–25; and Bourne, 'Mantegna's Madonna della Vittoria and the Rewriting of Gonzaga History', in *The Patron's Payoff:* Conspicuous Commissions in Italian Renaissance Art, ed. by Jonathan K. Nelson and Richard J. Zeckhauser (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 166–83.

[60] In the immediate aftermath of the battle most observers concluded that the French had won, but Francesco persuaded Italy otherwise. See David S. Chambers, 'Francesco II Gonzaga, marquis of Mantua, "Liberator of Italy"', in The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects, ed. by David Abulafia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), pp. 217–29; and Bourne, 'Mantegna's Madonna della Vittoria', pp. 168–73.

[61] Chambers, 'Francesco II Gonzaga', pp. 224–26; Bourne, 'Mantegna's Madonna della Vittoria', pp. 170–73.

centre of Mantua dedicated to Santa Maria della Vittoria, for which Mantegna painted a large altarpiece showing Francesco in full armour presented to the Madonna by soldier saints.[62] Secondly, Francesco began a more ambitious and expensive project to decorate with marble the chapel of Santa Maria dei Voti, established in the cathedral of Mantua by his grandfather Ludovico Gonzaga.[63]

In light of this strategy of self-presentation, it is obvious that Francesco's defeat and capture in 1509 constituted something of a blow for his public image. His release in July 1510 was quickly followed by a spate of elaborate festivities, an obvious distraction tactic.[64] In the following year Francesco had to issue a command impelling his nobles to attend the major Gonzaga-orchestrated summer festivals, presumably in response to a collapse in attendance at the San Leonardo festival on 16 August 1510.[65] It is almost certainly appropriate to see the arrival of the choir as another element in Francesco's redoubled efforts to demonstrate his princehood.

In fact, the choir's new home was precisely the chapel of Santa Maria dei Voti, connected with the cult of Francesco's heroism and located in the very public space of the cathedral in Mantua. Every effort was made to make the singers clearly visible, to emphasize their significance and to associate them closely with the Marchese. The space was specially decorated for their inaugural performance at Mass on 12 January 1511, attended by Francesco and a crowd that spilled out into the main body of the cathedral. Later the same day they sang Vespers in the church of S. Francesco (n.b. 'Francesco') attended by the entire court, after

[62] On the Madonna della Vittoria and its role in constructing Francesco's image see Bourne, 'Mantegna's Madonna della Vittoria', pp. 173–78.

[63] On Santa Maria dei Voti see Bourne, 'Francesco II Gonzaga', pp. 20–21.

[64] Bourne, 'Renaissance Husbands and Wives as Patrons of Art', p. 110.

[65] Anthony B. Cashman, III, 'The Problem of Audience in Mantua: Understanding Ritual Efficacy in an Italian Renaissance Princely State', Renaissance Studies, 16 (2002), 355–65 (p. 363).

which they were treated to a dinner at the castle alongside members of the court. Amico della Torre wrote a detailed account of the day's events for Federico Gonzaga, who was with the pope at Bologna and was no doubt expected to comment conspicuously on his father's evident piety when in company with Julius II.[66] The choir's services, usually held in the chapel of the Madonna, continued to prompt the attendance of Francesco, Isabella and their court, and to draw large crowds.[67] The obvious publicity of their role and their association with a space charged with Francesco's vision of his princely identity, combined with the opportune timing after the Marchese's imprisonment, make the conclusion inevitable: the choir was hired as one among a range of strategies designed to render Francesco's recently tarnished princely illusion resplendant once again.

In sum, then, the movement of musicians and music books between Ferrara and Mantua, following on from Alfonso's excommunication and the closure of Santa Maria del Corte in August 1510, has the character of a gift. The practicalities of the exchange, and the terms in which Francesco addressed Alfonso when making requests, are redolent of the contemporary discourse on princely liberalitas. This necessarily prompts a particular, politically charged reading of the exchange. On the one hand, through musical and other gifts Alfonso was able to play the virtuous prince, and at the same time to place his 'enemy' under obligation to him, making it tangibly more difficult for Francesco to mount the pope's assault against Ferrara. The power of this mechanism is evident in the pope's concern that Francesco should have no dealings at all with his brother-in-law. Meanwhile, Francesco's requests, and

[66] See Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, p. 19 and fn. 73. On Federico's broader role as a Gonzaga advocate in the pope's court, see Julia Cartwright, *Isabella d'Es*te, Marchioness of Mantua, 1474–1539: A Study of the Renaissance, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1903), II, 44-61.

[67] See various contemporary accounts detailed in Prizer, Courtly Pastimes, pp. 20–21.

especially his establishment—with Alfonso's help—of a chapel choir, contributed to a broader campaign to rebuild his public image in the face of conspicuous military failure.

In conclusion, the contemporary discourse on gifts and giving, encapsulated within the virtue 'liberalitas', provides a coherent account of the social and political operation of the Renaissance gift economy that can be of the greatest assistance in interpreting particular music sources as gifts. Drawing on Aristotle, liberalitas was configured as an embodiment of ethical nobility, concerned with the joyful distribution of resources based on the correct judgement of merit, and providing an ethical mechanism for the management of obligation and status. To give liberally connoted virtue, nobility and sound judgement, and discharged obligations created by worthy service; to receive confirmed merit, and at the same time imposed a debt to be worked out through further meritorious conduct and service. In the two cases studied here, documents referring to musical gifts draw freely on these principles and mechanisms, both in the language used and in the practical dealings they reveal. Reading them with this in mind significantly furthers our understanding of the role of musical exchange—of repertoire, books, and musicians themselves—in social and political relations, and in the articulation of noble identities in Renaissance Italy. I would venture to suggest that other Italian musical 'gifts' of the period, including perhaps some of those mentioned in my introduction above, could productively be examined through the same lens.