



Operalia

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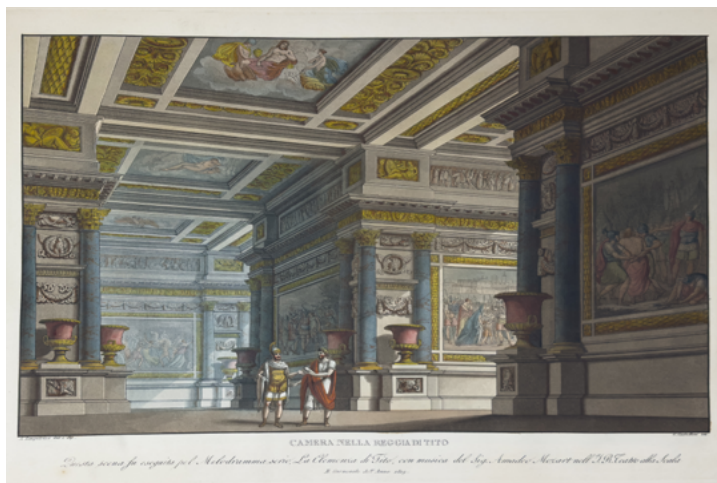
1 Coppola, *Le nozze degli dei*. Florence, 1637.

p. 1



2 Sbarra, *Il Pomo d'Oro*. Vienna, 1667.

p. 5



3 Sanquirico, *Raccolta di varie Decorazioni Sceniche*. [Milan, 1827.] p. 9

From its birth in the Camerata de' Bardi in Florence at the end of the XVIc, opera has set the outer limits of the ambition of performance. Drawing principally on the belief — now established fact — that ancient Greek theatre was musical, humanists constructed a new form of musical drama built on monody instead of the high renaissance polyphony, which could render words almost unintelligible.

The earliest opera was Peri's *Dafne* of 1598, though its music does not survive. The first opera to survive to us is Peri's *Euridice* of 1600, composed for the marriage of Marie de' Medici to Henri IV of France; indeed, the early history of opera production is very much occasional. It is fitting, then, that the first — Coppola's *Nozze degli dei* (1) — in this succinct group of operatic works at Arader was also composed for another Medici wedding: that of Marie's first cousin twice removed, Ferdinando II, to Vitoria della Rovere in 1632.

Thirty years later, Sbarra's *Pomo d'Oro* (2) was commissioned for the wedding of the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I to Margarita Teresa of Spain. It too told of heavenly love. For reasons all too familiar to the modern operaphile, the work was not ready for its intended event in 1667, and so it was performed instead for the bride's seventeenth birthday in 1668 (over two days, no less). Scholars consider it the most ambitious and elaborate opera of the XVIIc.

Two centuries after opera's invention, Italy remained the dominant exporter of the form and its practitioners. While Germany and France had long contributed to the development of the form, Italian opera was and for many is the defining mode. The paragon of that mode was La Scala in Milan, as it remains. The final work in the collection is Sanquirico's *Decorazioni Sceniche* (3), 53 aquatint-engraved plates depicting sets for 36 operas that were staged at La Scala. Ours is a presentation copy to Marie Louise, Duchess of Parma (and wife of Napoleon), herself the founding patron of the Teatro Regio di Parma.

Opera is unparalleled in its marshalling of spectacle: dance, costume and scenery. These three volumes are linked by their illustrations, conveying the spectacular effect on the noblest and most distinguished patrons.

J.L. Rosenberg (D.Phil, Oxon.)
Head of Rare Books, Arader Galleries

1 Coppola

Coppola, Giovanni Carlo. *Le nozze degli dei favola Dell' Ab' Gio. Carlo Coppola Rappresentata in Musica in Firenze nelle reali nozze De Serenis.^{mi} Gran Duchi di Toscana Ferdinando II. e Vittoria Principessa d'Urbino.* Florence: Amadore Massi and Lorenzo Landi, 1637. First edition.

BOUND WITH

[Rondinelli, Francesco]. *Relazione delle nozze degli dei favola dell' Abate Gio: Carlo Coppola Rappresentata nelle reali Nozze de' Sereniss. Gran Duchi di Toscana Ferdinando II. E Vittoria Principessa d'Urbino. Alla Medesima Gran Ducchessa di Toscana.* Florence: [Amadore] Massi and [Lorenzo] Landi, 1637. First edition.

Quarto (9 5/8" x 6 3/4", 236mm x 172mm): †⁴ A-N⁴, ₂A-F⁴ ₂G² [\$2 signed; -†1, ₂A1]. 82 leaves (56, 26), pp. [8] (title, blank, 2pp. dedication, 2pp. to the reader, 2pp. dramatis personae), 1-104; ₂1-2 ₂3-50, [2] (privilege and colophon, blank). With an engraved title-page integral to the text, and 7 folding engraved plates by Stefano della Bella after designs of Alfonso Parigi.

Bound in contemporary limp laced vellum. Author and title ink manuscript to the spine.

Soiling to the edges of the binding, with some loss to the front upper fore-corner. Text-block loose although not precarious, split at H1. A little worming to the paste-downs and to the first free end-paper, not affecting text. F4 laid in, and a dampstain to the lower fore-corner of ₂E-F2. A totally unsophisticated copy, with the long stubs of the plates. With the bookplate of Paul and Marianne Gourary (from their sale) on the front paste-down. (Ownership?) signature twice of "Sig.^r Gio(rgio) Pavoli" on the verso of the final free end-paper.

Ferdinando II de' Medici (1610–1670) became Grand Duke of Tuscany at the age of 10, and his mother and grandmother served as his regents and matchmakers. They arranged a marriage in 1634 to his first cousin, Vittoria della Rovere, granddaughter of the last Duke of Urbino. The aim of the union was to merge the Duchy of Urbino into that of Tuscany, but the gambit ultimately failed; Urbino was absorbed by the Papal States.

The products of the marriage, therefore, were their two children who lived to adulthood and the account of the splendid wedding celebrations. As befitted the union of two of Italy's great noble families, the wedding was a multi-day spectacle at the Palazzo Pitti. In these early days of opera, the totality of the art-form (Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*) was perfectly suited to these grand occasions.

Giovanni Carlo Coppola (1599–1651) was the librettist of a tale (*favola*) of the marriage of the gods Venus and Vulcan (which was perhaps prescient; Venus famously cheated on her husband with Mars; conversely, Vittoria is said to have found her husband in bed with his pageboy), Jupiter and Juno (in heaven), Neptune and Amphitrite (in the sea) and Pluto and Proserpino (in the underworld). The music was overseen by Marco da Gagliano, maestro di capella of the Medici court, but there were in fact five composers commissioned to contribute (p. ₂7), with Ferdinando Saracinelli conducting. Agnolo Ricci was choreographer of the several *balli* bracketing the drama, and Alfonso Parigi designed the sets (including the elaborate stage machines). These sets are reproduced in the folding plates, and give a sense of the grandeur of the production.

Coppola's libretto is the first portion of the work, and the second part is a description, attributed to Rondinelli, of the production as a whole, a surpassingly rare account of early operatic stagecraft. We

learn, for instance, that there were around 150 singers and at least 25 dancers in the production. In addition, this appears to be the earliest recorded usage of the word “opera” to mean a musical drama, rather than “works,” which is its literal translation; the *Oxford English Dictionary* places the earliest usage in this sense two years later in 1639.

Most intriguing is the double signature to the verso of the final free end-paper of Giorgio Pavoli, who was *gonfaloniere* (mayor) of Livorno, the great port of Tuscany, in 1631. Ferdinando II oversaw a major modernization of the city from 1629, and in the year of Pavoli’s mayoralty the Chiesa di Sant’Anna was opened, doubtless a major event. It is possible that Pavoli was invited to the wedding, and bought the book three years later as a souvenir.

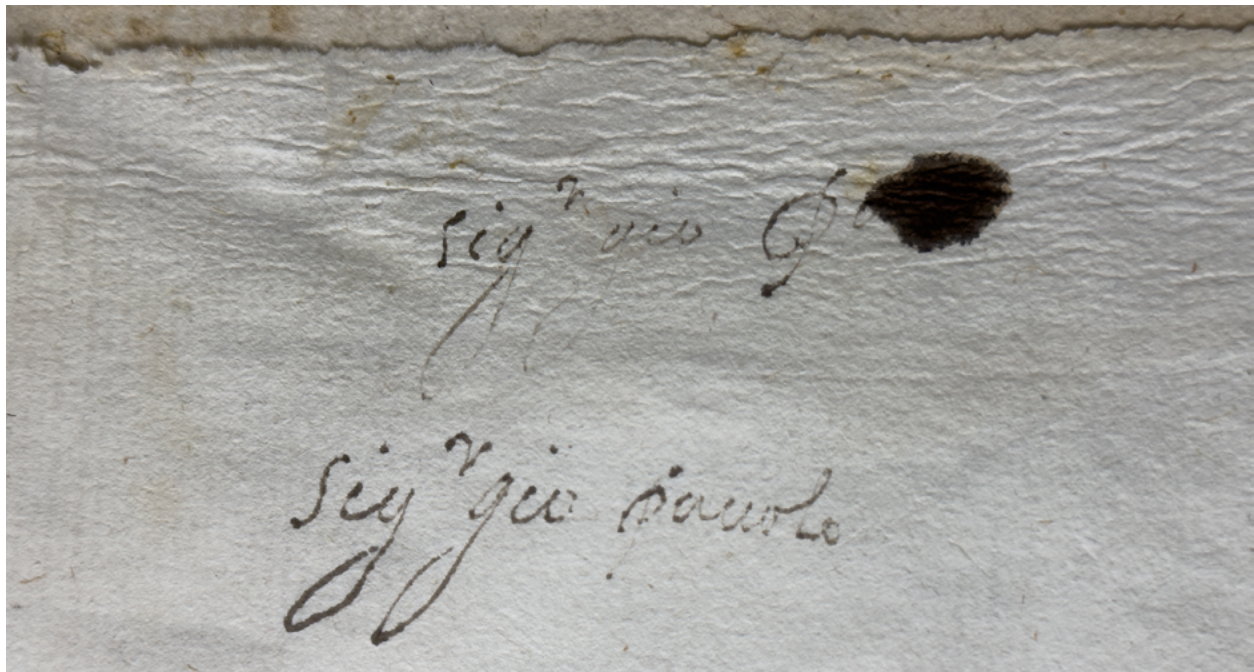
Centuries later, the present item joined the great collection of “fête books,” as they are known, amassed by Paul (principally) and Marianne Gourary. After Paul’s death in 2007, the collection — “Splendid Ceremonies” — was sold by Christie’s New York (12 June 2009), in which the present item was [lot 120](#).

Berlin, *Ornamentstichsammlung* 4116; Brunet II.262; Nagler, *Theater Festivals of the Medici*, pp. 162–174; Watanabe 1285.

\$28,000.







2 Sbarra

Sbarra, Francesco. *Il pomo d'oro Festa Teatrale Rappresentata in Vienna per l'augustissime nozze delle sacre Cesaree e Reali Maestà di Leopoldo e Margherita, Componimento di Francesco Sbarra, Consigliero di S.M.C.* Vienna: Matteo Cosmerovio, 1667. First edition.

Octavo (6 1/4" x 3 13/16", 159mm x 97mm): a⁸(-a1¹)_π B⁸ A-I⁸ K⁸(-K8) [\$5 signed; -a2, a4]. 94 leaves, pp. [30] (title, blank, 3pp. dedication, 8pp. argument, 4pp. dramatis personae, "actions" (i.e., fights and dances), 4pp. scene changes, 8pp. prologue), 1-158. With 24 (of 25?) folding etched-engraved plates.

Bound in (contemporary?) red card wraps. Presented in a red buckram drop-front clam-shell box.

Sunned at the spine, with a good deal of cracking and some losses to the wraps. Scattered foxing. The 14th plate (the *Arsenale di Marte*) at G7-8 disbound and laid in. A great many preserved lower deckles. Bookplate of Paul and Mariane Gourary to the front paste-down. A completely unsophisticated copy.

Francesco Sbarra (1611–1668) was in correspondence with the great librettists of the early decades of the development of modern opera, principally centered on Venice. From 1650, he worked regularly with composer Pietro (Marc')Antonio Cesti (1623–1669) from Arezzo. Unable to find real success in Italy, Sbarra emigrated from Lucca to Vienna, where from 1665 he was court poet to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I of Austria — himself a composer and patron of music. Leopold married his niece (and cousin) Margarita Teresa in 1666, and *Il pomo d'oro* (*The Golden Apple*; "pomodoro" became the Italian word for the American tomato) was commissioned to celebrate the wedding.

The story of the opera is the preamble to the Trojan War (see *Iliad* XXIV.25-30): Eris, personification of discord, was not invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (parents of Achilles). In revenge, she tossed into the wedding a golden apple inscribed "to the fairest," and the Trojan prince Paris was asked to judge among Hera (Roman: Juno), Athena (Minerva) and Aphrodite (Venus). Sbarra's sycophantic alteration to the plot is to have the golden apple presented, in the end, to Empress Margarita — though not on her wedding day but on her seventeenth birthday (rather, two days later).

The production — Cesti's score exists only in an incomplete autograph manuscript (prologue and acts I, II and IV) at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek ([Mus.Hs.16885/1-4](#)) — was the largest and most ambitious of the XVIIc. Indeed, so legendarily grand was the work with its 23 sets that it failed to be mounted for its intended purpose in 1667. When finally staged in 1668, its scope was so vast that its performance was split over two days: 12 and 14 July 1668 in a purpose-built theatre (the prototype of the "Cortina").² It was designed by Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini (1636–1707), the great Venetian theatrical designer who inaugurated the "Viennese style" that strongly influenced German houses for many decades. The plates, engraved by Mathäus Küsel (Matthäus Küssel, 1629–1681), show the dazzling machinery and fantastical sets constructed for the production. Küsel had also worked in Venice before moving to the Viennese court.

OCLC records 10 copies in institutions: 3 copies in U.S. institutional libraries ([Princeton](#) (20 plates), [Columbia](#) (21 plates) and [Harvard](#) (no plates; lacking a1 and K8)³) and 7 further (2 in France, 3 in

1 The Christie's description for the item suggests that a1 and K8 are bound as paste-downs, which appears to be the case but cannot be verified because of the item's fragility.

2 12 July was the Empress's birthday; was the 13th skipped because it was a Friday?

3 Their cataloguer proposes that a1 is a half-title; the ÖNB example (v.i.) has a blank before the title, though it is not clear whether this is a binder's blank or a printer's blank.

Germany, 1 in Denmark, 1 in Switzerland).⁴ Rare Book Hub records the 1667 edition coming to auction three times: Dominic Winter 26 July 2006 (24 plates) and the present item twice: at Christie's in 2009 (*vide infra*) and in 2019 at Bonham's. The full plate-count ought to be 25 — the frontispiece, 23 sets and an illustration of the theatre itself — but no copies with the full suite are noted in institutional collections or at auction. Perhaps the final illustration of the theatre was not circulated with the work.

The present volume was in the great collection of “fête books,” as they are known, amassed by Paul (principally) and Marianne Gourary. After Paul's death in 2007, the collection — “Splendid Ceremonies” — was sold by Christie's New York (12 June 2009), in which the present item was [lot 512](#). Gourary had bought the volume from the Zurich firm L'Art Ancien SA (cat. 45, no. 36 (1956)) run by Dr. Erwin Rosenthal.

\$36,000.



⁴ The *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* also holds a copy ([225478-A MUS MAG](#)) with only 11 plates. They also hold the complete suite of 25 plates ([Misc.143-GF/1-25](#)), viz. the 24 in the present example plus a view of the theatre proper, probably a dedication set to Emperor Leopold I.



**PRESENTATION COPY TO MARIE-LOUISE,
EMPRESS OF FRANCE & DUCHESS OF PARMA**

Sanquirico, Alessandro. *Raccolta di varie Decorazioni Sceniche inventate e dipinte dal Pittore Alessandro Sanquirico per per l'I:R: Teatro alla Scala in Milano*. [Milan: ca. 1826.

Oblong folio (15 7/16" x 18 7/16", 392mm x 469mm). With a calligraphic ink manuscript title-page; graphite, ink and water-color dedication to Maria Luisa, heightened in gold; a calligraphic ink manuscript dedication to Maria Luisa; and 53 hand-colored aquatint-engraved plates. Sheets watermarked J. Whatman Turkey Mill, with dates as late as 1825; most dated 1816.

Bound in contemporary cross-grained red morocco panelled gilt. On the spine, seven panels with pointillé six-pointed stars gilt. Gilt roll to the edges of the boards. Gilt inside dentelle.¹

Rubbing to the lower edges, with wear to the fore-corners. Small spots of worming to the front hinge. Starting at the head. End-papers renewed. Tanning to the water-color dedication leaf. Some tanning and foxing to the tissue guards, and quite sporadically to the plates. Bookplate of Calvin Bullock to the front paste-down. Sotheby's ticket (26 July 1933, lot 228) to the recto of the rear binder's blank.

Alessandro Sanquirico (1777–1849) was the leading set-designer and scenographer for the Imperiale Reggio Teatro all Scala, which surely has claim to being the pre-eminent opera house in the world. Much of what is now thought of as grand opera is inflected by Sanquirico's fantastical visions of exotic places and distant times, with fully built architectural elements and often a mobile back-drop. The present work is an essentially private issue of illustrations — drawn, doubtless, from Sanquirico's own preparatory sketches — depicting scenes in productions on La Scala's stage from 1812 through 1826.

Even for the operaphile, many of the productions depicted (36 *in toto*) are *recherché*: von Winter's 1818 *Due Valdomiri* (5 plates), Soliva's 1817 *Zingare d'Asturia*, Mosca's (1821) *Emira Regina d'Egitto*. What emerge with a thrill, however, are those operas still in popular repertoire — many in their premières: Meyerbeer's *Crociato in Egitto*, Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito* (2 plates), five works of Rossini (*Maometto [II]* (1822), *Bianca [e Falliero]*, *La Gazzza Ladra*, *Ciro in Babilonia* (2 plates) and *Semiramide*) and Paveri's *Gioventù di Cesare* (2 plates). A further eleven of the productions depicted are “coreodramme” — danced dramas — by Salvatore Viganò, a composer and choreographer who was director of La Scala's ballet school from 1804.

The volume seems to have had no fixed number of plates; some have suggested a total of 79, but they were doubtless printed over rather a long span (some estimate 1816–1832, roughly Sanquirico's tenure at La Scala). The present work, with its watermarks as late as 1825 and productions through 1826, was likely assembled shortly thereafter. Save a copy offered in 2022 by Aste Bolaffi, the bound copies that have come to market have all been colored. Uncolored single sheets are held in institutional libraries; they were probably sold piece-meal. Many of the plates bear the legend “A. Sanquirico inv. e dip.,” suggesting that the artist himself was the colorist.

¹ Essentially identical bindings are found on at least two other copies that have come to auction: Sotheby's London 19 July 2022 [lot 77](#) and Sotheby's New York 20 April 2012 (Jacques Levy) [lot 292](#).

Sanquirico's involvement becomes likelier considering the recipient of the volume: Marie Louise of Austria (Maria Luisa or Maria Luigia, 1791–1847), Empress of the French and Queen of Italy (from her marriage to Napoleon in 1810 to his abdication in 1814) and then Duchess of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla. She was great-granddaughter of the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa, who accepted the original plan for La Scala in 1776; she herself was the founding patron of the Teatro Regio di Parma, the opera house most closely associated with Verdi. Sanquirico must have eventually come to know her, as he designed the coronation of Marie Louise's brother Ferdinand I as King of Lombardy-Venetia (r. 1835–1848).

Between the calligraphic title-page and dedication-page is an illuminated allegorical presentation of the initials of Marie Louise executed in graphite, ink, watercolor and gold (the preparatory pricking can be seen under raking light). The central ML is coronetted and surrounded by rays of light chasing pale pink clouds to the extremities of the nearly square central panel with a yellow foliate border. Minerva is enthroned below and flanked by Greek pots: a pyx at left (with a winged putto removing a scroll) and a black-figure amphora at right (with two winged putti playing with small vessels). A pair of symmetrical panels flank this central scene, each with an elaborate tripod candelabrum with a caryatid of winged Fame holding a pair of trumpets, surmounted at the torch with the tools of art and science. The whole is surrounded with a gilt-and-red floral border. Though composed of stock elements, this is surely an original design by Sanquirico for this volume.

As assured by the ticket at the rear of the volume, the volume was lot 228 in the 1933 Sotheby's London sale of "The Library of Marie Louise, Archduchess of Austria, Empress of the French etc.," where it was bought by Maggs. Perhaps Maggs sold it to Calvin Bullock (1867–1944), the investment banker and pioneer of mutual funds who assembled one of the greatest collections of Napoleonia. His collection ("Napoleon, Nelson and Their Time") was put up by his heirs at Christie's London on 8 May 1985, but the present volume was not in that sale; it was retained by his daughter, Katherine Seymour Bullock Cole (1908–1995), an Oxford graduate and débutante. Purchased at Doyle 7 May 1997, lot 195.

\$78,000.





Alta Maestà
di
MARIA LUIGIA
ARCIDUCHESSA D'AUSTRIA
Duchessa di Parma Piacenza e Guastalla
Dama dell'Ordine della Croce Stellata
Gran Maestra dell'Ordine Costantiniano di S. Giorgio
— o. o. o. —
Questo saggio di due sceniche composizioni
Il Pittore Alessandro Sanquirico Milanese
Stimilmente consacrata



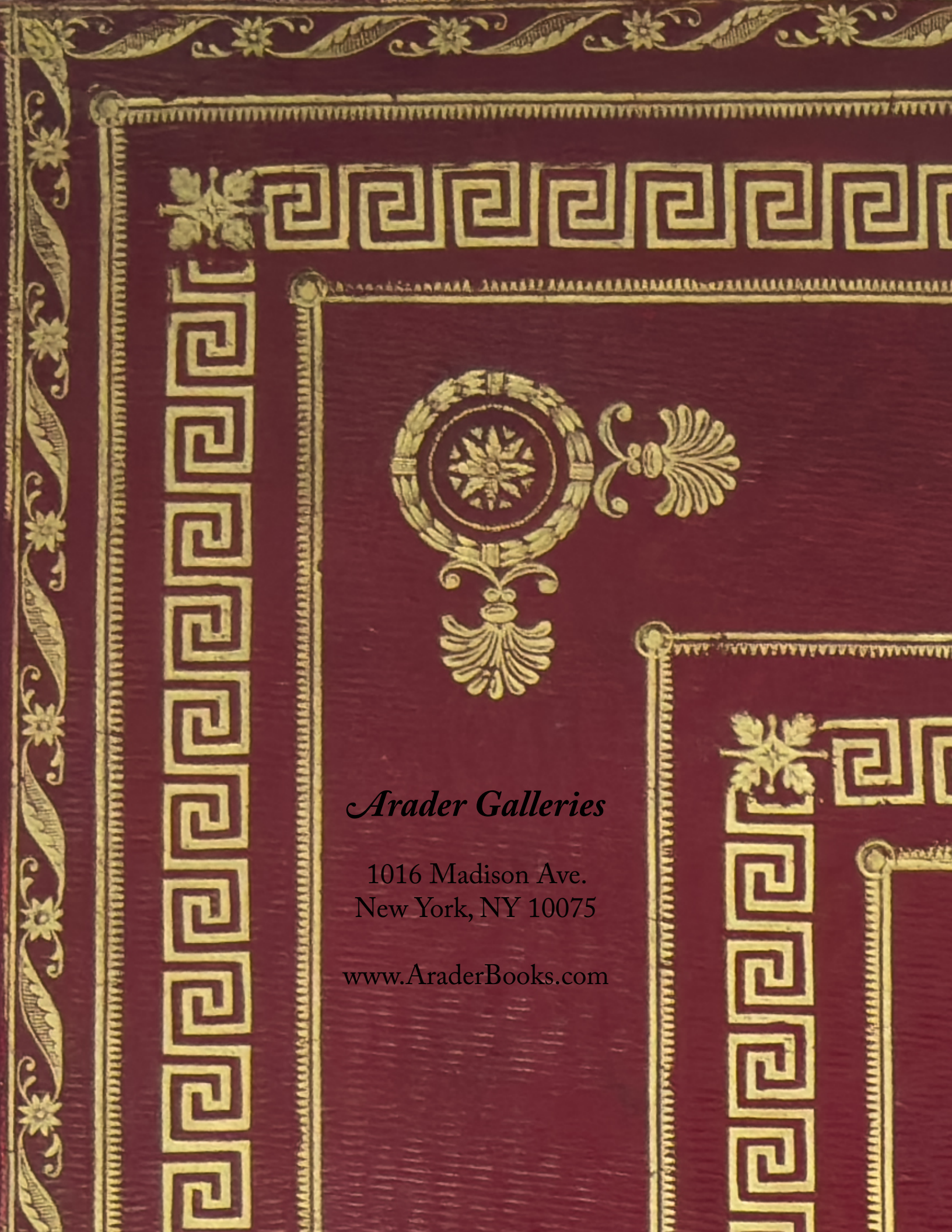
SALA DEL CONSIGLIO NEL PALAZZO REALE

Questa scena fu eseguita pel Melodramma serco Cairo, posto in musica dal Sig. maestro G. Mosca nell' R. Teatro alla Scala il Generale del 1784.



PORTO DI DAMIATA

Scena eseguita pel Melodramma serco il Cicerone in Egitto, posto in musica dal Sig. Giovanni Mayerbeer e rappresentata nell' R. Teatro alla Scala la Domenica dell' anno 1841.



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