Europa Rossi: A Question of Identity

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Europa Rossi appears as a musician on Mantuan Court payrolls between 1589 and 1592. Listed as "Europa di Rossi" and "M.ª Europa his [Salamone Rossi's] sister," she performed for events at the Gonzaga Court and has the distinction of being the only known professional Jewish woman musician in sixteenth-century Mantua.[1] Despite this, "Madama Europa," as she is popularly known, remains a mysterious figure. Due to limited surviving biographical evidence and a lack of published works, constructing a clear image of Europa Rossi has proven to be particularly challenging. Moreover, her brother's towering status in Jewish musical scholarship has almost entirely eclipsed her role in Mantuan Jewish musical culture. Don Harrán's 1995 article in *Festa Musicologica* remains the most comprehensive study, and she makes only brief appearances in more recent scholarship—a fact perhaps best encapsulated by her Grove article, which, as of the time of this writing, allots a single sentence to the entirety of her life and accomplishments: "Italian singer, sister of Salamone Rossi."[2]

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[1] Europa Rossi is listed in Mantua, Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga (hereafter referred to as ASM; AG) 395, August 1589, "M.ª Europa sua sorella," and AG 3146, date 1592. The full payroll records have been transcribed by Susan Parisi in "Musicians at the Court of Mantua during Monteverdi's Time: Evidence from the Payrolls," in *Musicologia Humana: Studies in Honor of Warren and Ursula Kirkendale*, ed. Siegfried Gmeinwieser, David Hiley, and Jörg Riedlbauer (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1994), 183–207, at 188, 191. See also Susan Parisi, "Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587–1627: An Archival Study" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1989), 28–29. For studies on Europa Rossi, see next note.

[2] Don Harrán, "Madama Europa, Jewish Singer in Late Renaissance Mantua," in *Festa Musicologica: Essays in Honor of George J. Buelow*, ed. Thomas J. Mathiesen and Benito V. Rivera (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 197–231; "Europa, Madama," *Grove Music Online* (2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42445, accesssed June 28, 2024. Europa receives slightly better treatment in the biography for her brother in the same source. See Iain Fenlon, "Rossi, Salamone," ibid., https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.23896, accessed June 28, 2024. She appears briefly in other studies, including Harrán, *Salamone Rossi: Jewish Musician in Late Renaissance Mantua* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36–37; Pietro Canal, "Della musica in Mantova," *Memorie del R. Istituto Veneto di Scienza, Lettere ed Arte*, 21 (1879): 655–774, at 736–37; Alessandro Ademollo, *La bell'Adriana ed altre virtuose del suo tempo alla corte di Mantova* (Castello: Lapi, 1888), 29–31; Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 287–88; Shlomo

The lack of any recent study focusing on Europa Rossi is surprising. As a musician, she operated within a thriving community of Jewish and non-Jewish performers, functioning in a capacity similar to the one her brother served—as a so-called "marginal mediator."[3] Her work at the Gonzaga court would have provided direct engagement with contemporary performance practices and repertoire, providing an opportunity to explore the conflicts and alignments of those practices with Jewish culture and music-making. Indeed, Rossi's fourfold status as a professional Jewish woman musician provides an opportunity to glean a greater understanding of Jewish women performers in non-Jewish and secular musical spheres during the sixteenth century, a subject that has long been overlooked.[4]

Evidence concerning Europa Rossi is scant but tantalizing. This has led to a certain amount of conjecture, and even wishful thinking, in many attempts to describe her life. These efforts have created an almost mythical impression of Rossi as an extraordinary soprano singer unique among her male Jewish peers—a virtuosa of the Renaissance who moved her adoring audiences to tears.[5] Indeed, many historians continue to fall into what Rebecca Cypess has identified as a narrative of exceptionalism, which would limit the lived experiences of marginalized figures such as Europa Rossi to "representative of

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Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1977), 675–76; Howard Zvi Adelman, *Women and Marriage Negotiations in Early Modern Italy: For Love and Money* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 12; and Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 490. See also brief but important mentions in Sarah Emily Robinson, "'In her right hand she bore a trumpet, in her left and olive branch...': Performance Space and the Early Modern Female Wind Player" (PhD diss., Newcastle University, The International Centre for Music Studies, 2017), 72, 76, 77; Erith Jaffe-Berg, "Jewish Women and Performance in Early Modern Mantua," in *Gender in the Premodern Mediterranean*, ed. Megan Moore (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 2019), 191–200, at 196; Iain Fenlon, *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1:43; and Eduard Birnbaum, *Jewish Musicians at the Court of the Mantuan Dukes (1542–1628)*, ed. Hanoch Avenary, trans. Judith Cohen (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1987), 16.

[3] Stefano Patuzzi, "Salamone Rossi's *Songs of Solomon: The Pleasures and Pains of Marginality*," in *Music and Jewish Culture in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Lynette Bowring, Rebecca Cypess, and Liza Malamut (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022), 185–96, at 186.

[4] Most studies on early modern Jewish women in secular spheres focus on patronage. For a few exceptions, see Harrán, "Madonna Bellina, 'Astounding' Jewish Musician in Mid-Sixteenth-Century Venice," *Renaissance Studies* 22 (2008): 16-40; and literature on Sarra Copia Sulam, who may have been a musician as well as a writer and salonnière: Lynn Lara Westwater, *Sarra Copia Sulam: A Jewish Salonnière and the Press in Counter-Reformation Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 27; Sarra Copia Sulam, *Jewish Poet and Intellectual in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Works of Sarra Copia Sulam in Verse and Prose along with Writings of Her Contemporaries in Her Praise, Condemnation, or Defense*, ed. and trans. Don Harrán (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 82, 84.

[5] These sentiments assume that Mantuan court chronicler Federico Follino's description of *Il ratto di Europa* refers specifically to Europa Rossi. Follino, *Cronache Mantovane: 1587–1608*, ed. Claudio Gallico (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2004), 191–92.

Jews' wider engagement with musical thought and practice," rather than a representation of their complex and individual identities.[6]

Robert Bonfil rightly cautions us against this attitude, arguing that historians should seek to answer "the complex question of the definition of an identity in the context of a nascent awareness of the Self as organically interrelated with the Other, without for all that becoming confused with the Other, and still less annihilated by it."[7] Accordingly, I will attempt in this article to simultaneously recontextualize Europa Rossi within the framework of her environment in the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of Mantua, while honoring both her individuality and her agency within those overlapping domains.

Europa Rossi's Life: Myths, Facts, and New Discoveries

A re-exploration of extant scholarship, as well as a retracing and, in some cases, reinterpretation of archival evidence, reveals that we know both less and more about Europa Rossi than previously thought. All historians agree that she was a singer, though there is in fact no written evidence that confirms this. The records in the Gonzaga Archives list only her name, with no indication of her duties. The first of these, a musician payroll that Susan Parisi and Warren Kirkendale have dated between August 4 and September 1, 1589, lists her under the subheading "estraordinarij," alongside "S.^{r} Alessandro Striggio," "M. Isachino della Profeta hebreo," and "M. Salamone di Rossi hebreo."[8] Europa appears beneath Salamone as "M.^{a} Europpa sua sorella," meaning "his [Salamone's] sister."[9] Her honorific probably means "Madonna" and not "Madama," the former being a common form of address for women not of the nobility.[10] She was paid the same fee as her brother and several other singers: 13–19 lire for one month.[11] The second record is found in another payroll, also transcribed by

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[6] Cypess, "Introduction," in *Music and Jewish Culture*, 7.

[7] Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Olcorn (London, Berkeley, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 286.

[8] AG 395; Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 188–89, 189, n. 9; Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 28, 54, n. 74; Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence during the Principate of the Medici: With a Reconstruction of the Artistic Establishment* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1993), 78, n. 123; Kirkendale, "Alessandro Striggio und die Medici: Neue Briefe und Dokumente," in *Festschrift Othmar Wessely zum 60. Geburtstag* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1982), 325–53, at 346, n. 26.

[9] AG 395; transcribed in Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 189; Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 28.

[10] See the entry for "Madonna," in John Florio, *A Worlde of Words* (London: Arnold Hatfield for Edw. Blount, 1598), 210. Europa is also identified as "Madona [*sic*]" in other documents addressed later in this article.

[11] For discussion of Salamone Rossi's pay scale in comparison to other musicians, see Don Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 16–18.

Parisi, with the approximate date of 1592.[12] Here, "Europa di Rossi" appears among a list of musicians, instrument tuners, and other court staff, with the same fee as before.[13]

The two payrolls represent the only records of Europa Rossi that identify her as a musician. Beyond that, information is scarce. From a series of documents located in the Mantua Jewish Community Archives, we know that her husband was David Rossi (their surnames were the same) and that they had at least two sons, Angelo and Bonaiuto Rossi.[14] Her name is mentioned in a 1607 letter between officials in Turin and Mantua in reference to her two sons, "Messer Angelo figliolo della Europpa Musico et virtuoso dell'eccelentissimo Signore qui Don Amedeo" and "Messer Buonaiuto de Rossi pur ancor lui figliolo dela europpa."[15] As the first of these indicates, Angelo Rossi continued in the family's musical trade, performing in Turin for Vittorio Amadeo and the subsequent dukes of Savoy.[16] It is worth drawing attention to the letter's reference to *Europa* Rossi—rather than Salamone or even her husband David Rossi. While we should resist the temptation to attach too significant a meaning to this reference, it is nevertheless apparent that Europa's name was known both in Mantua and Turin at the turn of the seventeenth century.

Indeed, her unusual name has been the subject of some debate. Despite being disproven by Harrán, the myth persists in popular culture that "Madama Europa" was a stage name derived from her alleged performance as the title character in the intermedio *Il ratto di Europa*, performed as part of Guarini's comedy *L'Idropica* for the marriage of Francesco Gonzaga to Margherita of

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[12] AG 3146; Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 191; for clarification of the date, see 190–92, especially 190, n. 17; see also Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 29; and Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 92, n. 1.

[13] Europa, Salamone, and "Isachino della Profeta [Massarano]" are the only personnel to appear without an honorific on the 1592 list—and they are also the only personnel who can be definitively identified as Jewish. Since all three appear with titles in other records, it is impossible to judge the significance of this, other than to speculate about the personal prejudices of the scribe.

[14] ADCEM., filza 16, docs. 17–20, 1620–22. Simonsohn identified a series of communications about a lawsuit between merchants in Turin and Mantua, in which both Angelo and Bonaiuto are empowered to act on behalf of the Mantuan merchant. The documents include several references to Angelo as both a "musician of the chamber" for the Duke of Turin and "Angelo Rossi, son of David." Bonaiuto Rossi is also repeatedly referred to as "son of David." Simonsohn, *History*, 676; see also Harrán, "Madama Europa," 215, and Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 37. In "Madama Europa," Harrán cites Simonsohn but refers specifically to ADCEM., filza 19, doc. 7, 1625, for references to David Rossi as the father of Bonaiuto. I was unable to find this phrase in that document, and Harrán appears to have corrected this in *Salamone Rossi*—at least, he makes no mention of this specific source in connection with David Rossi.

[15] ASAG 734: from a letter written to Alessandro Chieppio by the Confaloniero di Valeriano in Turin dated December 18, 1607; quoted in Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 36, n. 104; see also Harrán, "Madama Europa," 217–18.

[16] Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 37–38; Harrán, "Madama Europa," 218; Ademollo, *La bell'Adriana*, 30–31.

Savoy in 1608.[17] Putting the subject of Rossi's participation in the intermedio temporarily aside, Harrán correctly observes that "Europa" already appears in the above-mentioned payrolls several decades before the performance, and that—while uncommon—records of other women bearing the name Europa also appear during this time period.[18] Even in the Jewish community, where boys were frequently given traditional biblical names (such as Salamone), girls were much more likely to be given Italian or secular names.[19]

Beyond the evidence already mentioned, Europa Rossi has not until now been positively identified in any additional sources from Mantua or anywhere else. Happily, though, a document has come to my attention that clarifies several of these matters and provides new insight into her whereabouts through at least December 1610. The Jewish Community Archives of Mantua contain a register labeled Volume Ac, "Libro de gli assegni del Ghetto."[20] The register begins with a copy of Vincenzo Gonzaga's decree announcing the formation of the Mantua ghetto, dated 1610, and follows with several detailed lists of assignments and reassignments of Mantuan Jews to new homes in the designated area.[21] The first list in the register is in alphabetical order by first name, and an index number is assigned to each individual in corresponding order, presumably to keep track of the new residents. The register is fascinating for many reasons, not least because it provides a real-time chronicle of changes that needed to be made to create the ghetto. In private communication, Bonnie Blackburn has pointed out that, in addition to listing assignments of Jewish individuals and families to new homes, the register also lists non-Jewish inhabitants of the designated area who were required to vacate their homes as

[17] This claim originated with Canal, "Della musica in Mantova," 736–37, and was repeated without evidence by Simonsohn, *History*, 675, and Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 286. Harrán debunked this theory in "Madama Europa," 207–10. Nevertheless, the myth still appears frequently in popular literature and concert program notes, and even Harrán did not completely dismiss a possible relationship of her name with *Il ratto di Europa,* suggesting that her given name perhaps influenced her assigned part (rather than vice versa), and that it was "likely" that she sang the role, though there is again no evidence to support this claim. Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 37.

[18] See Harrán, "Madama Europa," 231.

[19] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 241.

[20] Archivio della Comunità Ebraica di Mantova, hereafter referred to as ADCEM, Volume Ac, "Libro de gli assengi del Ghetto."

[21] I am deeply indebted to several people who provided generous assistance with the interpretation of this document: Bonnie Blackburn, who helped with the initial transcription and interpretation of the handwriting; Daniel Meyers, who assisted with the Italian translation; and Laura Ingallinella, who assisted with the interpretation and translation of the early Italian. I could not have moved forward with this exploration without their knowledge and expertise.

Table 1. Europa and David Rossi's names in order by date in ADCEM Volume Ac "Libro de gli Assegni del ghetto 1610"

Libro delli Assegni, che si fanno dalli Signori della Gonzaga sopra il Recinto delli hebrei di Mantua delli casi, et luoghi d'esso Recinto alli detti hibrei[22]

Listed by name	Date	Folio	Index no. assignment	Index no. reassignment	Notations
Europa Rossi[23]	Apr. 20, 1610	11r	115	—	Mem. no. 26; Un partimento di casa goduto da Agnol Ascoli, una loggieta a basso che ha una porta che risponde al Carmine. Sempre che la casa entri nel Ghetto, et il nominato si contenta
David Rossi	Dec. 2, 1610	9r	98	—	e acasato in compagna di Mad[a] Europa
—	Dec. 13, 1610	56r	—	138[24]	Voi Mad.[a] Europa Rossi, et m. David Rossi entrarete nell' appartamento di casa goduto da m. Agnol Ascoli una logieta a basso, che ha una porta che risponde al Carmine, sempre che la casa entri nel Ghetto, et il nominato si contenta, assignatavi per vostra [unreadable word above] habitatione per proviggione tenendo a . . . ma[unreadable]
—	Dec. 17, 1610	61r	—	204	Voi m. David Rossi restareti acasato in compagnia di Madona Europa per modo di proviggione
Europa Rossi[25]	undated	unpaginated	115	138	—
David Rossi	undated	unpaginated	98	204	—

[22] "Book of Assignments that are made by the Gonzaga lords regarding the homes in the Enclosure of the Jews of Mantua, and the sites of this Enclosure for the said Jews," ADCEM, Volume Ac, unpaginated, located in a folio after a transcription of Duke Vincenzo's decree and before the beginning of the first list.

[23] Europa and David Rossi first appear in a list of home assignments organized alphabetically by first name. Europa and David are each assigned an index number that corresponds to the order of the names on this list. Additional notes provide information about their housing situation.

[24] The next two entries are in a new list that includes changes in accommodation plans for some of the ghetto's future inhabitants. The entries are not in alphabetical order, and the Rossis' index numbers change. Per the notes on each entry, the Rossis' housing situation remained the same.

[25] Europa and David finally appear in a list of index number reassignments. The list is alphabetical by first name and is located at the back of the volume. It is unpaginated and undated.

the ghetto was built. Indeed, the effort and expense involved in forced segregation took a toll on many Mantuan residents in addition to Jews.[26]

Europa Rossi's name appears five times on the register. Out of those five times, she appears three times alongside her husband David Rossi. As shown in Table 1 and the Figures 1–5, Europa first appears on her own on April 20, 1610, index no. 115 (Fig. 1). She is tentatively assigned to "a part of the house owned by Agnol Ascoli, a low lodging that has a door that faces the Carmine, provided that the house enters the ghetto and the owner agrees."[27] On December 2, 1610, David Rossi's name appears with Europa's (Fig. 2). He is assigned to index no. 98 and is "housed in the company of Madona Europa."[28] The pair next appear on a new list that includes updates to accommodation plans for some of the ghetto's future inhabitants. The list is not alphabetical, and both Europa and David's index numbers change. Europa's entry, now no. 138, occurs on December 13, 1610, with nearly identical text that reiterates her April 20 housing assignment (Fig. 3). It includes the same provisions—indicating, perhaps, that Agnol Ascoli had not yet signed off on the move.[29] David's entry, now no. 204, occurs on December 17, 1610, with the text "M. David Rossi will stay at home in the company of Madona Europa as per the manner provided" (Fig. 4).[30] Finally, an undated list in the back of the register records Europa and David Rossi's reassigned index numbers (Fig. 5).[31]

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[26] The expenses and logistics associated with the formation of the Mantua Ghetto are addressed in Simonsohn, *History*, 40–44.

[27] Literally, "and that the named party is satisfied." "Un partimento di casa goduto da Agnol Ascoli, una loggieta a basso che ha una porta che risponde al Carmine. Sempre che la casa entri nel Ghetto, et il nominato si contenta ..." ADCEM Volume Ac, fol. 11r. English translation assistance from Bonnie Blackburn, Daniel Meyers, and Laura Ingallinella.

[28] "e acasato [*sic*] in compagnia di Mad[a] Europa," ADCEM Volume Ac, fol. 9r. Deciphered by Bonnie Blackburn in private communication, May 27, 2024.

[29] "Voi Mad.[a] Europa Rossi, et m. David Rossi entrarete nell'appartamento di casa goduto da m. Agnol Ascoli una logieta a basso, che ha una porta che risponde al Carmine, sempre che la casa entri nel Ghetto, et il nominato si contenta, assignatavi per vostra [unreadable word above] habitatione per proviggione tenendo a..ma [unreadable]," ibid., fol. 56r.

[30] "Voi m. David Rossi restareti [*sic*] acasato in compagnia di Madona Europa per modo di proviggione." Ibid., fol. 61r.

[31] Ibid., unpaginated.

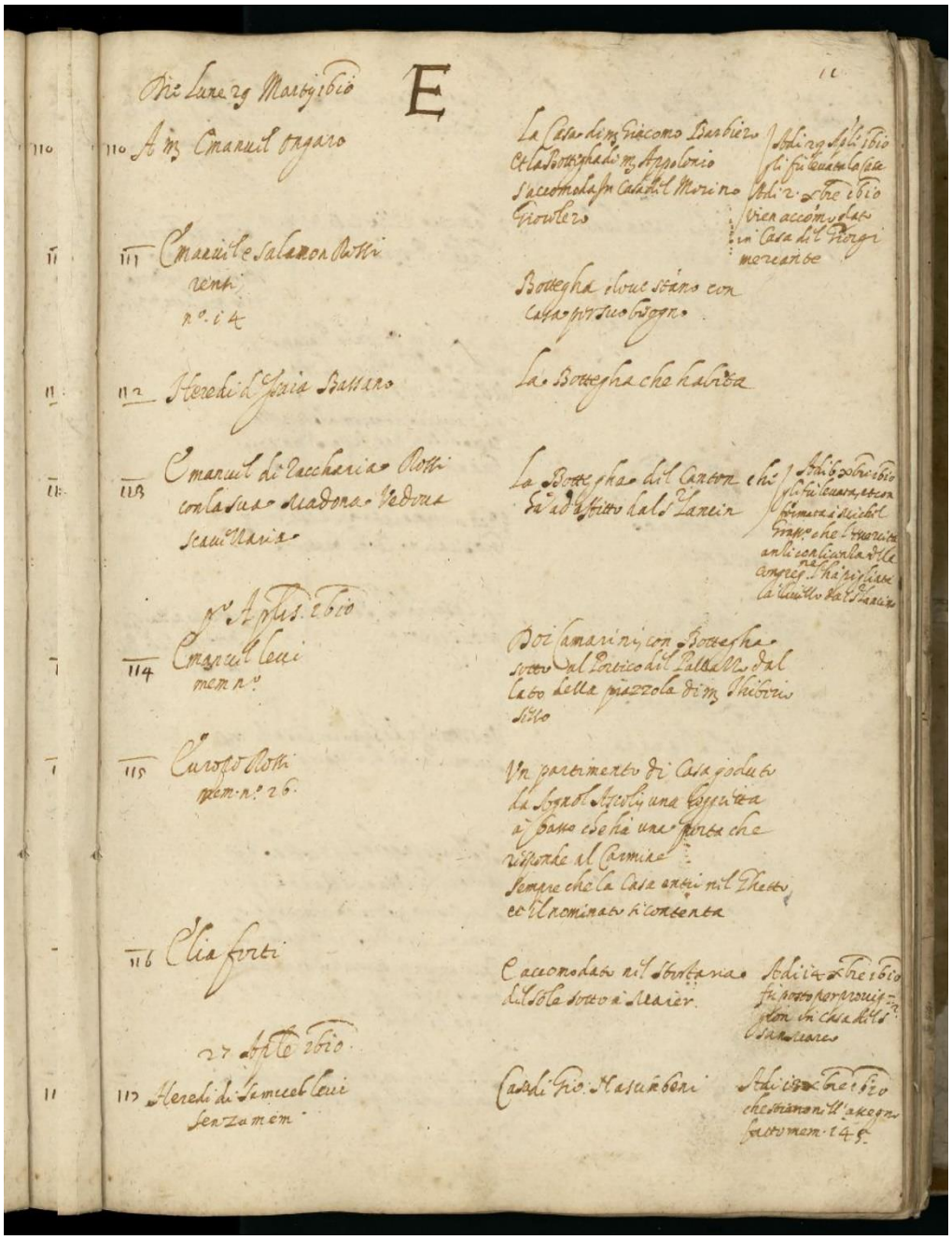

Figure 1 ADCEM, Volume Ac, "Libro de gli Assegni del ghetto 1610," 11r, April 20, 1610, Archive of the Jewish Community of Mantua, Biblioteca Teresiana. All reproductions of ADCEM in this article are gratefully used with permission from the Jewish Community of Mantua.

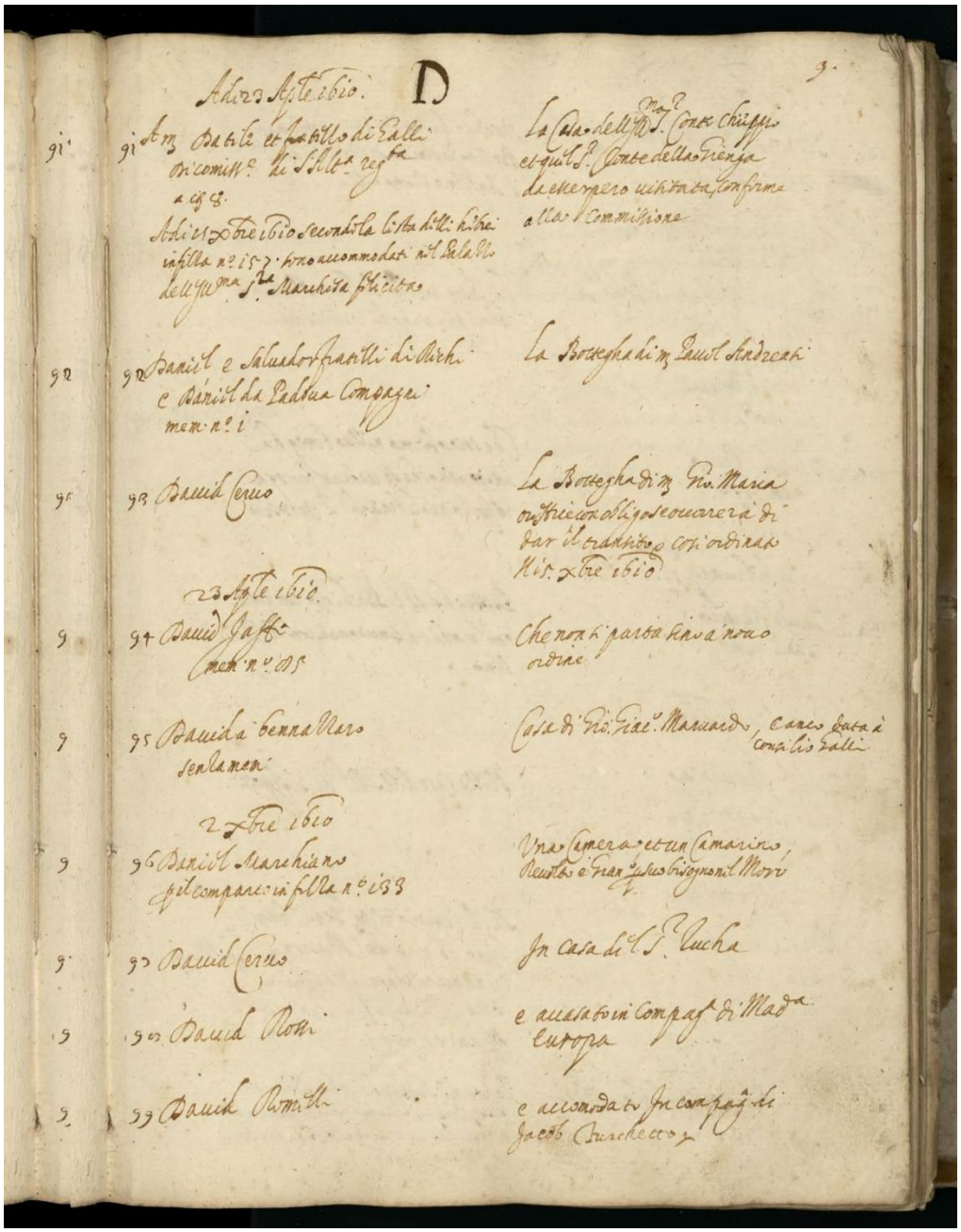

Figure 2 ADCEM, Volume Ac, "Libro de gli Assegni del ghetto 1610," 9r, December 2, 1610

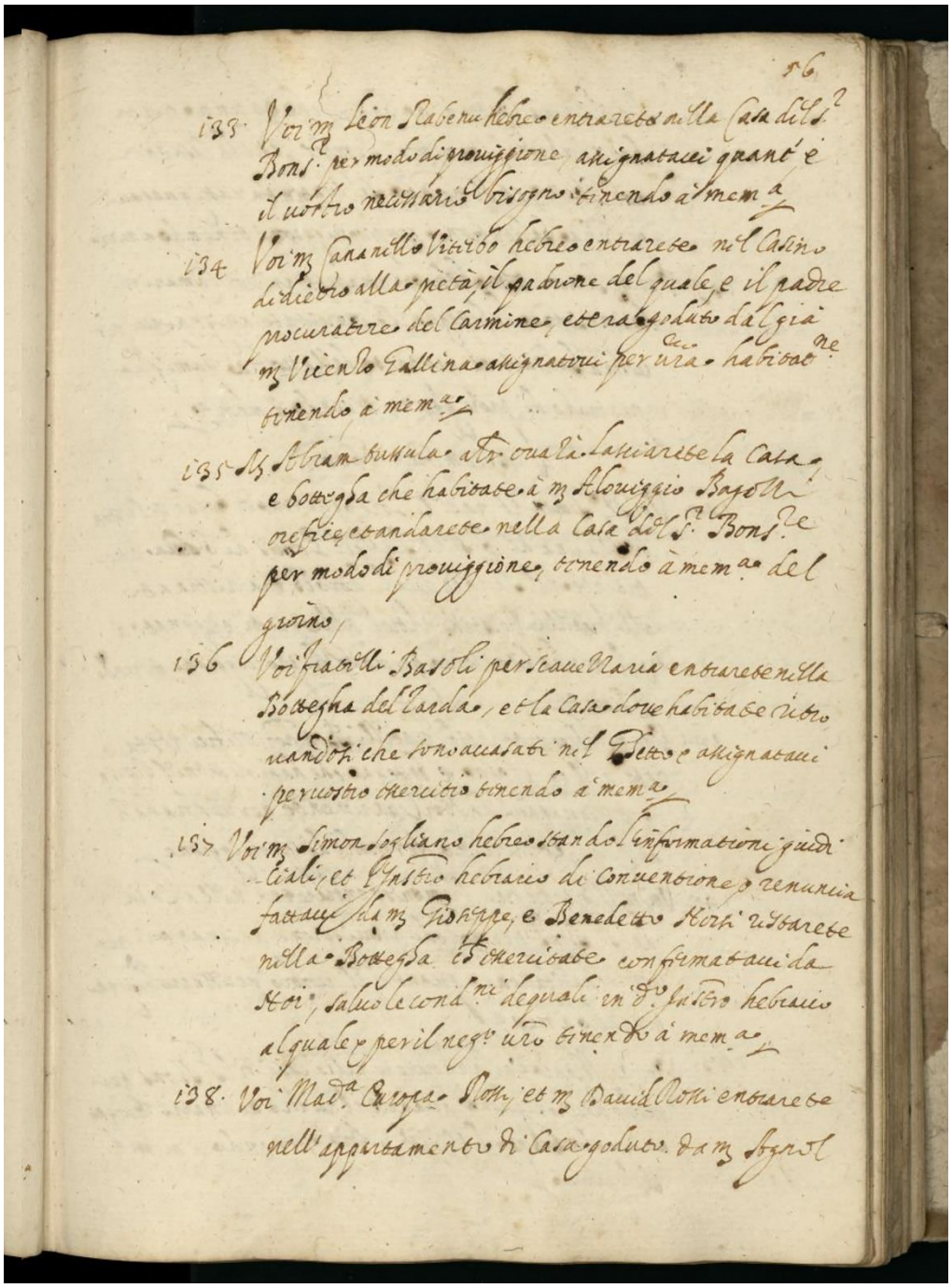

Figure 3 ADCEM, Volume Ac, "Libro de gli Assegni del ghetto 1610," 56r, December 13, 1610

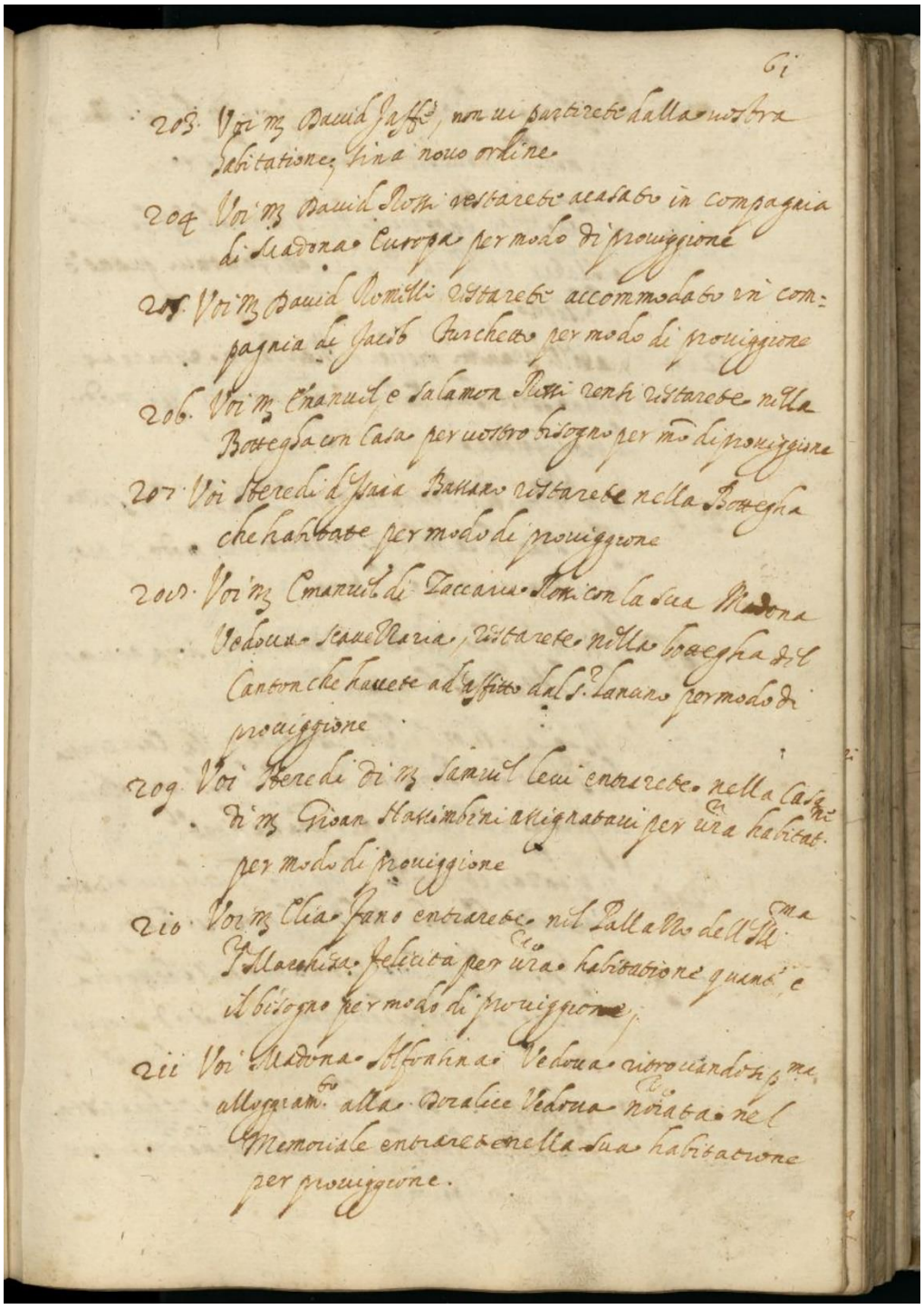

Figure 4 ADCEM, Volume Ac, "Libro de gli Assegni del ghetto 1610," 61r, December 17, 1610

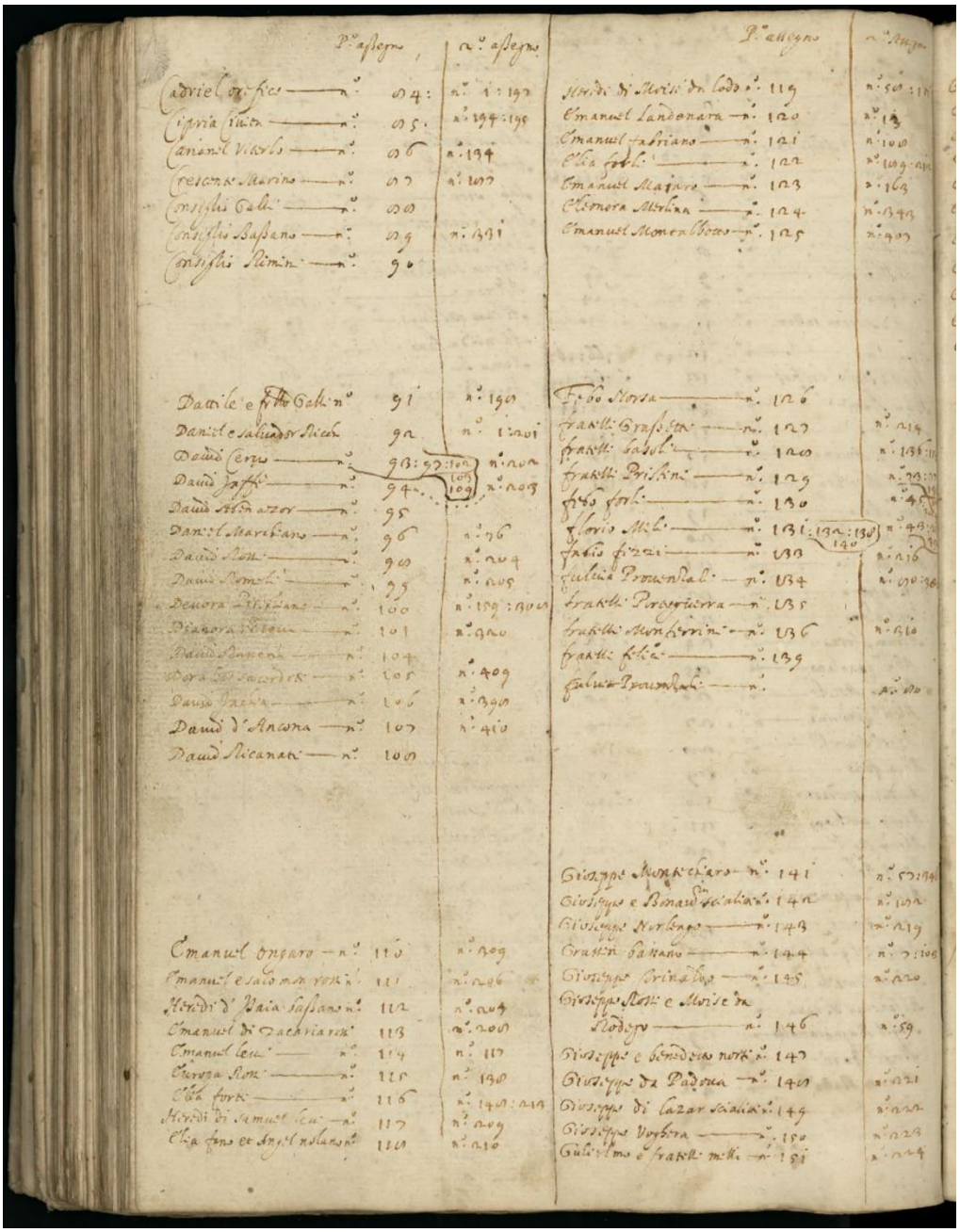

Figure 5 ADCEM, Volume Ac, "Libro de gli Assegni del ghetto 1610," list of ghetto reassignments

Thus, in this register, for the first time, Europa and David Rossi appear as a couple, corroborating beyond a doubt the conclusions about their marriage proffered by Simonsohn and Harrán. The register can also now be added to the list of sources that definitively confirm "Europa" as her given name. In fact, Europa is one of four women on the register with the surname "Rossi." The

others are Miriam (Meriam), Judit (Judita, Juditta), and Perna (di Rossi).[32] While it is not possible to ascertain whether any of the three women were related to Europa Rossi, their presence may open new lines of inquiry about Rossi women in Mantua's Jewish community.

The register also provides clearer information about Europa's status nearly three years after her last mention in the 1607 letter. It is now possible to conclude that, at least by the time the register was made in December 1610, Europa Rossi was alive in Mantua.

There is, of course, much we still do not know. The register gives no indication of her age, though the fact that the document was logged more than two decades after her first employment at the Gonzaga Court does provide a rough frame of reference. The Italian dukes were known to hire girls as young as 11 years old to sing at court, but many women performed well into their forties.[33] The previously mentioned documents show that Europa's sons were working adults by this time, which implies that she had been married—and thus a mature adult—for a significant amount of time.[34] However, some marriage contracts were drawn up for men and women as early as their teens during this time period, with varied lengths of engagement following the agreements.[35] As such, Europa's age cannot be guessed without more information.

We also have no indication of whether Europa Rossi made the move to the ghetto. The process of segregation was completed around 1612—two years after the register's final dates. The logistics, negotiations, and labor involved in managing such a large population transfer must have been very great indeed.[36] Since all records are silent on Europa's whereabouts after this register, we have no sure way of knowing whether she lived to see the drastic change soon to be imposed on the Jewish community of Mantua. Even so, a fascinating new idea

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[32] Ibid. Judit appears on fols. 22v, 53r, unpaginated; Miriam appears on fols. 28v, 30r, 64r, 71r, and on four unpaginated lists; Perna di Rossi only appears once with the surname "Rossi," on an unpaginated list, though "Madona Perna" appears twice more, on an unpaginated list dated July 2, list no. 109, and list no. 100, also unpaginated. It is possible that she married into the family.

[33] Ferdinando de' Medici apparently recruited an eleven-year-old singer to be trained at court in 1589, and Adriana Basile performed until the age of 49. Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians? Professional Women Musicians in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *Women Making Music: the Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 90–115, at 98; Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 406.

[34] ADCEM., filza 16, docs. 17–20, 1620–22; Simonsohn, *History*, 676; Harrán, "Madama Europa," 215; Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 37; ASAG 734, December 18, 1607; Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 36, n. 104; Harrán, "Madama Europa," 217–18.

[35] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 255, 257; Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage Negotiations*, 55.

[36] The most comprehensive history of the Mantua ghetto remains Simonsohn, *History*, especially 39–44. For an analysis of the social paradox created by the formation of Italian ghettos, including in Mantua, see Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 68–77; for the Mantua ghetto's effect on Jewish musical culture specifically, see Patuzzi, "Salamone Rossi's *Songs of Solomon*,' 187–89.

can now be explored: if Europa did make the move, where was the site of her intended lodging? What and where was the "Carmine," the location that the Rossis' lodging faced?

Modern-day Mantua contains a single small alleyway known as "Vicolo Carmine," probably named for the Palazzo del Carmine, or Palazzo della Dogana, a Carmelite friary dating back to 1444. The building that contained the friary is located on the southeast corner of the modern street Via Pompanazzo and Vicolo Carmine, with the address Via Pomponazzo 25–31, Vicolo Dogana, Vicolo Carmine. According to architectural research undertaken by Marco Introini, Luigi Spinelli, and the Mantua campus of the Politecnico di Milano, the friary was confiscated in 1783 and converted to a customs house.[37] As a result, the site was drastically changed, with a new façade created to emulate Renaissance architectural designs.[38] The authors note that there is a secondary entrance at 31 Vicolo Carmine that originally led to the Santa Maria del Carmine, a fifteenth-century church that was part of the Carmelite friary. Both entrances lead to the original Renaissance cloisters where, the authors inform us, some original art can still be seen. The church supposedly contained the tomb of the Carmelite Baptista Spagnuoli Mantuanus, and the remains of the building's apse is still visible from Vicolo Carmine, which runs east–west.[39]

Further exploration of this area reveals that Via Pomponazzo corresponds to the easternmost boundary of the Mantua ghetto from its establishment in 1612 to its destruction in the sack of Mantua by Austrian imperial forces in 1630.[40] The Palazzo del Carmine is on the east side of this north–south street.

The register indicates that the "low lodging" has "a door that faces the Carmine" and the proviso that the house "enters the ghetto." If the "Carmine" is indeed the Palazzo del Carmine, and if the ghetto's boundary is the Via Pomponazzo, it may be possible to identify the assigned lodging of Europa and David Rossi as an apartment on the west side of Via Pomponazzo with a door that opened to a view of the Palazzo del Carmine. This would place the lodging just barely within the ghetto's eastern boundary, on Via Pomponazzo between the parallel street corners of Via Giuseppe Bertani—a main ghetto

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[37] Marco Introini and Luigi Spinelli, *Architecture in Mantua from the Palazzo Ducale to the Burgo Paper Mill* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale S.p.A., 2018), 128.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Simonsohn, *History*, 43–44. A detailed fold-out map of the Mantua ghetto, unpaginated, can be found at the conclusion of the volume. Simonsohn's map is based on locations of the ghetto's gates as noted by Federigo Amadei, *Cronaca universale della città di Mantova,* Edizione integrale III (Mantua: C.I.T.E.M., 1956), 263–64, and Vittore Colorni, "Fatti e figure di storia ebraica Mantovana," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel*, seconda serie 9, nos. 5/6 (settembre–ottobre 1934), 217–39, at 238. See also the 1928 perspective map of Mantua by Gabriele Bertazzoli (Fig. 7 below), on which the ghetto's gates are clearly marked.

thoroughfare—and Via Dottrina Cristiana, the ghetto's northern boundary (see Fig. 6).

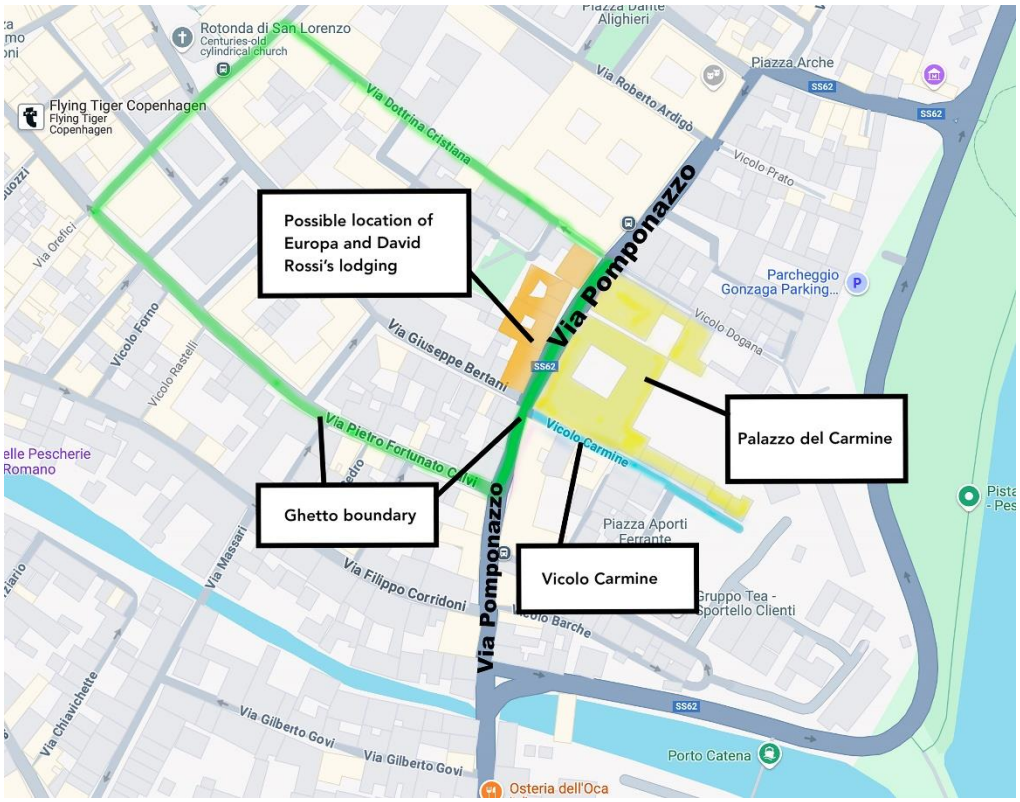

Figure 6 Map of modern Mantua showing the ghetto boundary, location of the Carmelite friary, and Europa and David's intended lodging (image taken from Google Maps, https://maps.app.goo.gl/3mCxFMkK4aX3dvcDA, accessed November 27, 2024)

The phrase "sempre che la casa entri nel Ghetto, et il nominato si contenta" is curious: the lodging is acceptable as long as it "enters the ghetto." If the home was unquestionably located within the ghetto's boundary, why would it be necessary to clarify this point? One answer could be that the door that faced the Carmine would be closed when Europa and David moved in and when the ghetto was fully gated, and another entrance that opened directly into the ghetto would then be used. This possibility could explain the necessity of the clarifying phrase. In other words, if the building was physically inside the ghetto's boundary, and if the Rossis could enter the building from inside the ghetto even if a portion of it bordered the street, perhaps this was enough to satisfy both the inhabitants and the Mantuan officials.

An earlier map clarifies this further (Fig. 7). Gabriele Bertazzolo's 1628 perspective map of Mantua clearly indicates the ghetto's gates, allowing us to

identify the location of its boundaries.[41] The map is rotated, with north pointing to the lower righthand corner. However, even with this altered orientation, Via Pomponazzo is easy to find. The Carmelite friary is also clearly visible and is labeled "113," which corresponds to "S. Maria del Carmine" under the category "Conventi de frati" on the map's legend. Vicolo Carmine and Vicolo Dogana can also be identified. A side-by-side comparison of Bertazzolo's map with a modern Google map thus allows us to identify the possible area of the "low lodging," with a "door that faces the Carmine."

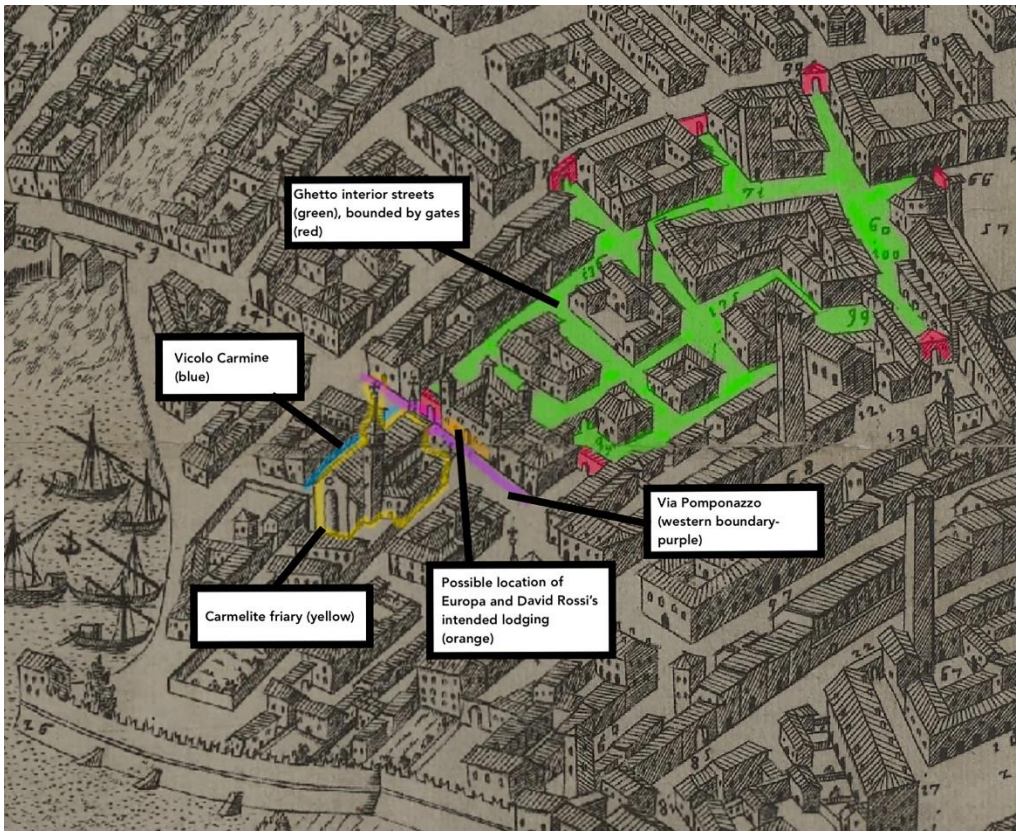

Figure 7 Detail from a 1628 map of Mantua by Gabriele Bertazzolo showing the ghetto area. North points toward the bottom right-hand corner of the image. The ghetto's interior streets are highlighted in green. Europa and David Rossi's intended lodgings are shown in orange. Via Pomponazzo, indicated in purple, is the eastern boundary of the ghetto. The Carmelite friary is highlighted in yellow. It abuts Vicolo Carmine and Vicolo Dogana, which are perpendicular to the ghetto's boundary and are highlighted in blue. The ghetto's gates are highlighted in red

Without more information, it is impossible to hone in further. However, it is clear from the registry's description that Europa and David Rossi were assigned to a lodging within view of the Palazzo del Carmine, which allows us to narrow

[41] Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Urbis Mantuae descriptio* (1628), Biblioteca Digitale Teresiana, http://digilib.bibliotecateresiana.it/sfoglia_stampe.php?g=Rotoli&sg=ROT001&identifier=ROT001&target=bertazzolo&catatarget=stampe&f=s&pag=1 (accessed November 27, 2024).

down their location to a mere 90-meter length of street—or, as Google Maps suggests, a one-minute walk.

It is now possible to say that Volume Ac contains the most recent evidence of Europa's activities and whereabouts, though these findings raise new questions about whether more information is hidden elsewhere in the archives. For now, though, Europa's remaining biographical details remain conjectural. Some have theorized that she perished during the War of Italian Succession and the severe plague that followed. However, many Jews fled Mantua during that time, settling in cities such as Milan, Venice, Ferrara, and others. It is tempting to hope that she may have joined her son Angelo in Turin, which did not establish a ghetto until 1679. If Europa did escape Mantua, though, no evidence has appeared to confirm it.

Europa Rossi's Music

Europa Rossi lived on the cusp of what Anne MacNeil has referred to as a time of "earth-shattering" musical change—the movement from the *prima prattica* to the *seconda prattica*, or the shift from music as a "harmonic, proportional, and mathematical entity to its apprehension as an expressive device, based on rhetorical principals."[42] In other words, the music that Rossi and her colleagues played and sang was evolving from the strict counterpoint of note-against-note polyphony to dramatic text-based oration, innovative use of consonance and dissonance to convey the breadth of human emotion, and a new aesthetic of instrumental and vocal virtuosity that eventually led to the *stile moderno* and the rise of monody.[43] Monteverdi has long been credited as the catalyst for this change, but he was preceded by a diverse array of performers and composers who all contributed to Italy's musical evolution, especially in Mantua.[44] His mutual influence with Salamone Rossi, for example, can be heard in the unprepared dissonances of Rossi's heartrending "Cor mio, deh non languire" (see Fig. 8); as well as his breathtaking "Rimanti in pace," whose words provide

[42] Anne MacNeil, "The Nature of Commitment: Vincenzo Gonzaga's Patronage Strategies in the Wake of the Fall of Ferrara," *Renaissance Studies* 16 (2002): 392–403, at 400.

[43] Lynette Bowring observes that this evolution can already be seen in Artusi's theoretical works. See Bowring, "Orality, Literacy, and the Learning of Instruments: Professional Instrumentalists and their Music in Early Modern Italy," PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2017), 102–3, and Giovanni Maria Artusi, *Seconda parte dell'arte del contraponto: Nella quale si tratta dell'utile et uso delle dissonanze* (Venice: Vincenti, 1589). Rebecca Cypess addresses the rise of instrumental virtuosity in *Curious and Modern Inventions: Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), especially 21, 34–41, 68, 102–4, 188–208.

[44] Composers who contributed to the development of the *seconda prattica* prior to Monteverdi are discussed by Laurie Stras and include Carlo Gesualdo and Luzzasco Luzzaschi. Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 306–8. On instrumental idioms, see also Bowring, "Orality," 197–202.

a metaphorical representation of loss (see Fig. 9).[45] As I will show, the dramatic, expressive, and technical facility of Mantua's women performers, including Europa Rossi, no doubt also played a role in musical composition during this time period.

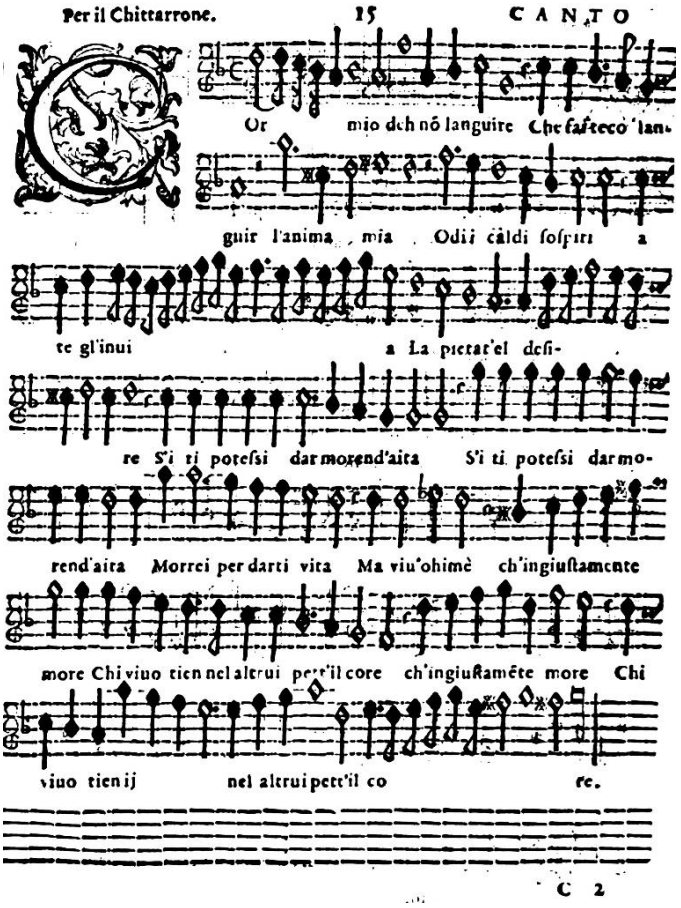

Figure 8 Canto part, "Cor mio deh non languire," in Salamone Rossi, *Il primo libro de madrigali a cinqvue voci* (Venice: Amadino, 1600).

[45] Both madrigals are found in Salamone Rossi, *Il primo libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice: Amadino, 1600).

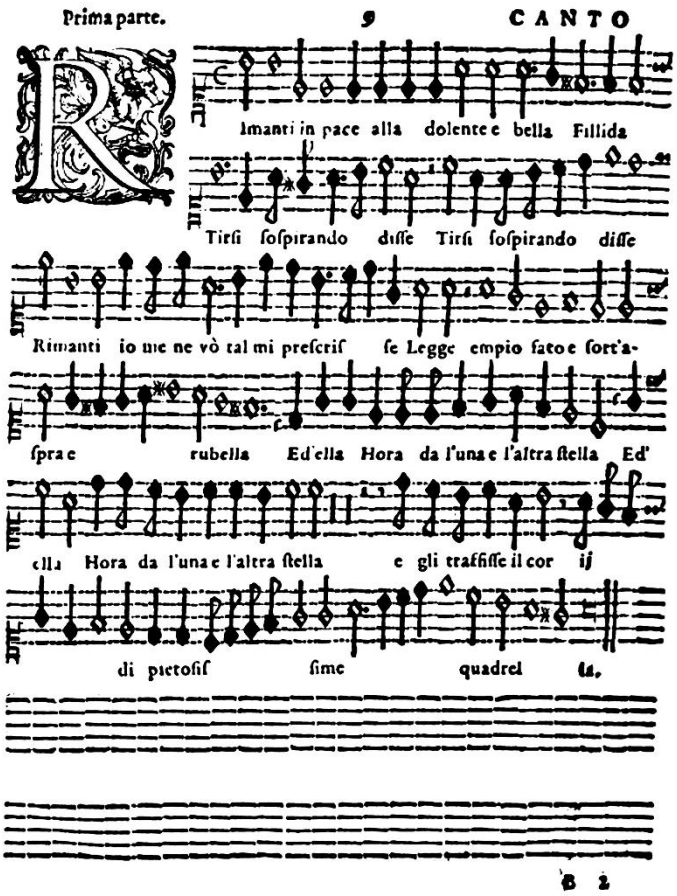

Figure 9 Canto part, "Rimanti in pace," in Salamone Rossi, *Il primo libro de madrigali a cinqvue voci* (Venice: Amadino, 1600)

The two payrolls on which Europa Rossi appears give no indication of the musical events her fees covered, much less the repertoire she performed. Theories abound, mostly conjectural: that she was a member of Mantua's version of the *concerto delle dame*, the consort of skilled women musicians in emulation of Duchess Margherita Gonzaga d'Este's celebrated vocal ensemble in Ferrara; that she sang soprano and played chitarrone; that she sang in Monteverdi's lost opera *Arianna*;[46] and that, most famously, she participated in the festivities for Francesco Gonzaga's marriage to Margherita of Savoy in 1608, playing the role of "Europa" in Guarini's eight-hour dramatic spectacle *L'Idropica* and drawing praise for her "most delicate and sweet voice."[47]

[46] There is no evidence for this claim, though it is found in Irene Heskes, "Miriam's Sisters: Jewish Women and Liturgical Music," *Notes* 48 (1992): 1193–1202, at 1199; and Simonsohn, *History*, 675.

[47] "con voce molto delicata, e dolce ..." Follino, *Cronache Mantovane*, 84. There is no indication that Follino is talking about Europa Rossi.

Rossi's possible inclusion in the Mantua *concerto delle dame* deserves serious consideration.[48] As Anthony Newcomb observed, the 1580s were a crucial decade for the rise of professional women's ensembles in Italy, with Ferrara's *concerto delle dame* becoming more or less established in 1580.[49] That ensemble consisted primarily of three women singers—Laura Peverara, Anna Guarini, and Livia d'Arco—known popularly as the "three ladies of Ferrara." A fourth woman, Tarquinia Molza, joined the ensemble briefly in 1583. The ensemble also regularly included a male bass singer, Giulio Cesare Brancaccio.[50] Only two years before Europa Rossi's name shows up on the Mantua court payroll, Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga began the hiring process for his own version of his sister's ensemble.[51]

An alluring coincidence now presents itself. If Parisi is correct in her deduction that Lucia and Isabetta Pellizzari were included in the large payment made to Antonio Pellizzari in 1589, Europa's presence on that payroll under the *estraordinarij* heading brings the number of women musicians to three—the same number as regularly formed the Ferrarese *concerto* that Duke Vincenzo hoped to emulate. The same trio appear again on the 1592 payroll. Again, they are the only women on the roster, this time unseparated from the rest of the ensemble and listed under their individual names:

> Europa di Rossi
>
> M.ª Isabetta di Pelizzari
>
> M.ª Lucia di Pelizzari[52]

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[48] The idea was first proposed by Harrán, who was careful to categorize it as a conjecture. "Madama Europa," 228–29.

[49] Laurie Stras argues that the development of a women's ensemble in Ferrara was the result of a longer evolution than previously known. Stras, *Women and Music*, especially 214–16; Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians," 93, 99.

[50] Stras notes that the "three ladies of Ferrara" were previously misidentified as Lucrezia Bendidio, Tarquinia Molza, and Laura Peverara. This misidentification is attributed to Angelo Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense* (Castello: Lapi, 1981), lxvi–lxxv. See Stras, *Women and Music*, 392. For backgrounds of the women in the *concerto*, see ibid., 218–20. For more on the formation and function of the 1580s *concerto*, see Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579–1597* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 20–52; Donald C. Sanders, *Music at the Gonzaga Court in Mantua* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 101; and MacNeil, "The Nature of Commitment," 393. For Brancaccio's relationship to the women in the *concerto delle dame,* see Richard Wistreich, *Warrior, Courtier, Singer: Giulio Cesare Brancaccio and the Performance of Identity in the Late Renaissance* (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 104–5, 239, 243–6.

[51] Sanders, *Music at the Gonzaga Court*, 102; Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians," 98; Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 145.

[52] Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 191; Parisi transcribed the payroll from AG 3146. See also Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 29.

Is it possible that Rossi was hired as one of the *estraordinarij*—an "extra"—to complete Duke Vincenzo's new ensemble of *dame* in 1589? If so, her rehiring in 1592 implies that she was successful in meeting the duke's high musical standards. Indeed, the duke would almost certainly have sought to equal or surpass the quality of the Ferrarese ensemble—not least because his sister had poached two of her singers from his very own city.[53]

Additional questions remain. How long did Rossi sing with the Pellizzari sisters? Parisi notes that only seven payrolls survive between 1577 and 1627. Europa Rossi does not appear on the first payroll of 1577, which includes only men. No records have been found between that date and the 1589 and 1592 payrolls, where the trio appear. Parisi dates the next surviving payroll as no earlier than 1603.[54] Europa is not on it. The Pellizzari sisters remain, now joined by two other women: Lucrezia Urbana, a harpist and singer, and Caterina Romana (assumed to be Caterina Martinelli, who died of smallpox before she could sing the title role of Arianna written for her by Claudio Monteverdi).[55] Parisi notes that the surviving portion is not complete, though she does not include Europa Rossi on it or on any subsequent payroll reconstruction, presumably because there is not enough additional information about her activities to place her there. The three-year gap between the 1589 and 1592 payrolls, in addition to the incomplete rosters from 1603 and onward, present enticing, if unanswerable, possibilities that I will shortly address.

One such question is whether Europa Rossi could have had additional, non-musical employment at the Gonzaga court. Anthony Newcomb, Jane Bowers, and Laurie Stras have discussed the evolution of the *concerto delle dame* from its origin in the "musica secreta," the private chamber music performed for the court nobility and a few privileged guests by talented women courtiers in Ferrara, Mantua, and other cities. Their research has revealed that the original members of the Ferrara *concerto* began their careers not as professional musicians, but as ladies-in-waiting to the Duchess Margherita.[56] However, it is unlikely that Europa Rossi was a courtier. For one, the women of Ferrara were recruited from middle- and upper-class families whose occupation was other than music. They would have been taught music by outside tutors and hired

[53] Margherita Gonzaga took Laura Peverara with her from Mantua to Ferrara. Livia d'Arco was also born in Mantua. See Stras, *Women and Music*, 217–18.
[54] Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 193.
[55] Her replacement was Virginia Ramponi Andreini. There is no indication that Europa Rossi took part in this opera. See Harrán, "Madama Europa," 212; Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1:16, 94–95.
[56] Stras, *Women and Music*, 1–2, 214–16; Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians," 93, 98; Jane Bowers, "The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566–1700," in *Women Making Music*, ed. Bowers and Tick, 116–67, at 121–22.

when it was discovered that their talents in singing would enhance the court.[57] In contrast, performers such as the Rossis and the Pellizzaris came from families with homogenized musical trades, and their participation in the court's musical activities most likely occurred as a result of their being already known in those capacities. In addition, the Gonzagas simply did not welcome Jewish courtiers. Even Europa's brother Salamone was never truly accepted; despite 40 years of service, he remained an outsider.[58] Even were that not the case, Jewish and Christian restrictions against specific types of dress, food, and other activities would have made such a career difficult.

Nevertheless, none of these observations precludes the possibility that Europa participated in ad-hoc court activities. She would have been well equipped to entertain, since her education would have included poetry, rhetoric, music, and other intellectual and domestic pursuits that paralleled that of their Christian peers.[59] In addition, as I will shortly address, the restrictions on the Jews of Mantua were not always observed and may not necessarily have constituted a barrier to participation in court events. In light of these observations, it is interesting to contemplate what might turn up if a more comprehensive search for Europa Rossi's name among the Gonzaga archives were to be attempted.

Whatever her path to the Gonzaga court, it is apparent that Europa enjoyed some measure of success. Could she have been one of the first singers in Mantua's first *concerto delle dame?* That she sang is nearly beyond doubt, as it would have been unusual during this period for a professional woman musician only to play an instrument, and singing was of course the main attraction of the *concerto delle dame*. Her vocal range would have needed to be what Nicolo

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[57] Stras notes that the purpose of a humanistic education for middle-class and upper-class women differed, with middle-class women being trained for domestic life and upper-class women to "arbitrate and govern when their husbands were absent." Stras, *Women and Music*, 69.

[58] Don Harrán opined that the language in Salamone Rossi's dedications to his patrons, as well as his request to be exempt from wearing the Jewish badge (which was granted), implies that despite his frequent activity as a court composer, he was never fully accepted by his non-Jewish peers. Harrán, "Salamone Rossi as Jew among Gentiles," *OUP Blog*, January 20, 2015, https://blog.oup.com/2015/01/salamone-rossi-jew-gentiles-renaissance/ (accessed August 11, 2024). This situation mirrors that of Leone de' Sommi, the Jewish Mantuan playwright who was tasked with writing plays for the theatrical Accademia degli Impediti despite never being allowed official membership. See Giuseppi Veltri, "Le accademie italiane e gli ebrei," in *Oltre le mura del Ghetto: Accademie, scetticismo e tolleranza nella Venezia barocca*, ed. Giuseppe Veltri and Evelien Chayes (Palermo: New Digital Frontiers, 2016), 35; David Kaufman, "Leone de Sommi Portaleone (1527–92), Dramatist and Founder of a Synagogue at Mantua," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 10, no. 3 (Apr. 1898): 445–61, at 451; and Liza Malamut, "L'Accademia degli Impediti: A Reevaluation," in *Music and Jewish Culture in Early Modern Italy*, 233–57, at 246.

[59] Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage*, 10–13; Harrán, "Madonna Bellina," 32; Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 133.

Vicentino, composer and theorist at the Ferrarese court, called "soprano," keeping in mind that the sixteenth-century version of this word would have simply referred to the highest voice of an ensemble and was usually written in C1, C2, or G2 clefs.[60] Accounts of the Ferrarese women's virtuosity, paired with the high expectations of Duke Vincenzo for his own *concerto* in Mantua, can perhaps provide a baseline with which to consider Rossi's musical capabilities. The women of Mantua received great praise, as reported by Vincenzo Giustiniani in *Discorso sopra la musica* (1628):

> The ladies of Mantua and Ferrara were highly competent, and vied with each other not only in regard to the timbre and training of their voices but also in the design of exquisite passages delivered at opportune points, but not in excess . . . Furthermore, they moderated or increased their voices, loud or soft, heavy or light, according to the demands of the piece they were singing; now slow, breaking off with sometimes a gentle sigh, now singing long passages legato or detached, now groups, now leaps, now with long trills, now with short, and again with sweet running passages sung softly, to which sometimes one heard an echo answer unexpectedly. They accompanied the music and the sentiment with appropriate facial expressions, glances and gestures, with no awkward movements of the mouth or hands or body which might not express the feeling of the song. They made the words clear in such a way that one could hear even the last syllable of every word, which was never interrupted or suppressed by passages and other embellishments.[61]

In addition to singing, it is highly likely that Europa played an instrument. Jewish and Christian women, especially those in the upper classes, were trained on the lute, harp, or viol as preparation for entertaining in domestic spheres.[62] For professional musicians, these skills would have been even more important. Practically speaking, instruments could be used as bass or tenor lines in ensembles containing mostly high voices, and most professional musicians

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[60] Owen Jander, Elizabeth Forbes, Stanley Sadie, J. N. Steane, Ellen T. Harris, and Gerald Waldman, "Soprano," *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26243 (accessed July 18, 2024).

[61] Vincenzo Giustiniani, *Discorso sopra la musica*, trans. Carol MacClintock, Musicological Studies and Documents (American Institute of Musicology, 1962), 69.

[62] Christian and Jewish education were akin in their philosophies regarding the education of girls. Comparisons to other cultures are difficult because literature is sparse; very little scholarship can be found on the Muslim presence in Mantua, for example. Some parallels may be made between the Jewish community in Mantua and the Muslim community in Venice, though the political situation was very different. See Benjamin Ravid, "Venice and its Minorities," *Centro Primo Online Monthly* (February 14, 2017), https://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/venice-and-its-minorities/ (accessed June 15, 2024). Scholarship on Muslim women in Italy is generally lacking, and remains an area that deserves more attention. See Anna Wainwright, "Teaching Race in Renaissance Italy," in *Teaching Race in the European Renaissance: A Classroom Guide*, ed. Matthieu Chapman and Anna Wainwright (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS Press, Arizona State University, 2023), 187–200, at 197–99, online at https://asu.pressbooks.pub/race-in-the-european-renaissance-classroom-guide/ (accessed June 15, 2024).

could accompany themselves. In Ferrara, Peverara played the harp, Guarini played the lute, and d'Arco was not permitted to join the *dame* on a consistent basis until she was able to play the viol competently.[63] In Mantua, the Pellizzari sisters played the cornetto and the trombone.[64] Whether Europa played the chitarrone, as has been suggested, is debatable, but chances are high that she played some sort of plucked or bowed instrument with which she could accompany herself in solo or ensemble singing.[65]

The theory that Europa Rossi performed regularly with the Pellizari sisters in emulation of the Ferrara ensemble is further supported by the significant quantity of music for three voices that has survived from Mantua during this time period. Salamone Rossi's rarely performed three-voice canzonettas are one such example. *Il primo libro delle canzonette* (1589) is dedicated to Duke Vincenzo and contains nineteen pieces.[66] Of these, four pieces are written for three high voices with clefs C3 through G2 (modern "alto" through "soprano" range; see "Donna il vostro bel viso," Fig. 10), and the rest are for two high voices with a "basso" part at F4 through C4 (modern "tenor" through "bass" range; see "Correte amanti," Fig. 11). With instruments, assuming the use of a trombone or viol on the bottom line of the lower pieces, the entire collection would have neatly fit the capabilities of Europa Rossi and the Pellizzari sisters.[67]

All this stated, it is easy to fall into the trap of assumption. While Salamone Rossi may have had the three women in mind, the Gonzaga court was home to a diverse array of performers, both Jewish and Christian, who would have been capable of performing the works. The third voice could have been sung by a boy (or a man, in the case of the lower-voiced canzonette).[68] The publication, with its dedication supplicating Vincenzo to "deign to listen" to the canzonette,

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[63] Stras, *Women and Music*, 234, 219–20.

[64] The story of the Pellizzari sisters is unusual, since it was not generally considered respectable for women to play wind instruments in public during this time period due to the sexual undertones associated with the act. Those who did play usually did so in controlled environments where their decorum would not be called into question, such as convents. Robinson suggests that the Pellizzari sisters played wind instruments in public as child prodigies and not as mature women, and thus may not have been subject to these views ("'In her right hand,'" especially 31–32, 74, 88, 173, 249–50).

[65] Harrán, "Madama Europa," 255.

[66] Salamone Rossi, *Il primo libro delle canzonette a tre voci* (Venice: Amadino, 1589).

[67] The pieces are quite flexible. Assuming the possibility of *chiavette* for the high-clef pieces, the top voices are sufficiently high as to be performable by an all-women ensemble, assuming the inclusion of a low-voiced instrument. Kept at written pitch, the pieces sit on the high end of vocal range if performed at Italian Renaissance pitch standards, but the option of the cornetto (played by a Pellizzari) adds further possibilities. For pitch standards in Renaissance Mantua, see Bruce Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of 'A'* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), 73–74.

[68] Malvezzi reports that a similarly voiced trio sang a three-part madrigal in *La Pellegrina.* The music was sung by two young women and a boy. Cristofano Malvezzi, ed., *Intermedii et concerti, fatti per la Commedia rappresentata in Firenze nelle Nozze del Serenissimo Don*

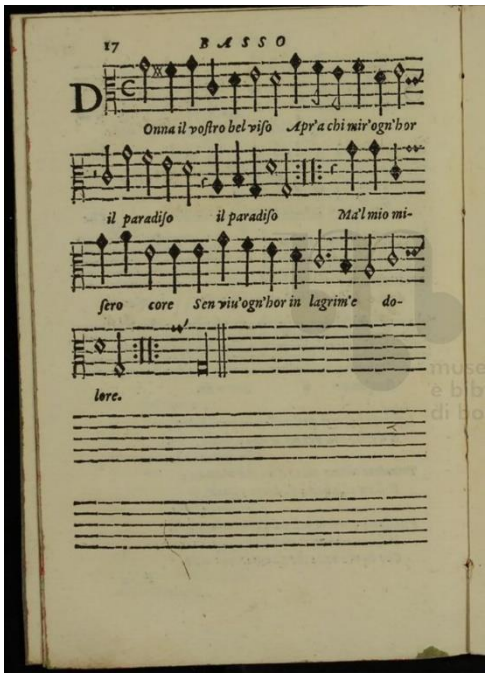

Figure 10 Basso part in C3 ("alto") clef, "Donna il vostro bel viso," in Salamone Rossi, *Il primo libro delle canzonette* (Venice: Amadino, 1589). The print is held by the Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica di Bologna. Images used with permission

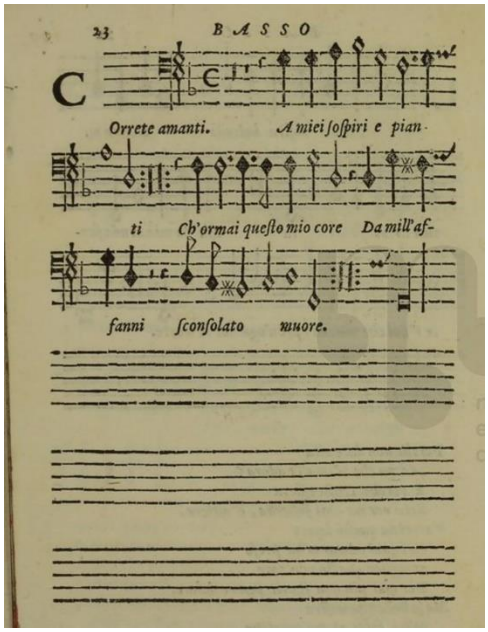

Figure 11 Basso part in F4 (modern "bass") clef, "Correte amanti," in Salamone Rossi, *Il primo libro delle canzonette* (Venice: Amadino, 1589)

Ferdinando Medici, e Madama Christiana di Lorena, Gran Duchi di Toscana (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1591), 8.

was more likely intended to remind Rossi's patron of his compositional talents (and his value to the Gonzaga court) than as performing material for specific musicians.

The missing payrolls likewise create difficulties in pinpointing the events at which the music would have been performed and in which Europa Rossi may have taken part. Despite this, various theories have been suggested. That she sang the title role in *Il ratto di Europa* during the 1608 Gonzaga wedding festivities is one of these, despite the lack of evidence that she was working as a musician by that time at all. As mentioned, Pietro Canal's original claim regarding Europa's alleged stage name has long since been disproven, but his suggestion evidently struck so strong a chord with historians that her association with the event remained from that time forward.

Admittedly, several factors support her participation in *Il ratto di Europa*. The wedding festivities were famously extravagant, costing the duke 270,000 ducats and boasting "the most grandiose manifestations of personal power mounted by Vincenzo Gonzaga during his life."[69] *L'Idropica* alone lasted eight hours and contained five intermedi that called for a tremendous cast of characters. Five thousand audience members attended the performance. Despite Vincenzo's attempts to borrow musicians from foreign courts, only two were engaged from outside Mantua. Of the performers, only one woman is named: Virginia Ramponi Andreini, who played the title role in Monteverdi's *Arianna*. Among the veritable army of local participating musicians, Salamone Rossi's name appears as a composer for one of *L'Idropica*'s intermedi, *Il ratto di Proserpina.* If Europa Rossi was still performing, it seems almost impossible that she would not have been involved.[70]

Did she play the part of "Europa"? We simply do not know. Much has been made of Federico Follino's description of the event, though in fact it differs little from his accounts of the other intermedi. He appears to have cared little for the identities of the performers, identifying them only by the names of their characters (e.g., Manto, Proserpina, Europa). The performer who played Europa is described as "being a woman very knowledgeable about music" who had a "delicate and sweet voice"[71] and who produced "the sweetest harmony . . .

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[69] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 144.

[70] The entire event is described in Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 148–51, with *L'Idropica* on 149–50. See also Follino, *Cronache Mantovane*, 180–203 (facs., 72–95); with *Proserpina* described in 186–91 (facs., 78–83) and *Europa* in 191–96 (facs. 83–88); Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, 1:73–103, with Salamone Rossi mentioned as the composer of the first intermedio (*Proserpina*) on 92; Paulo Fabbri, *Monteverdi* (Turin: E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino via Alfieri, 1985), 124–48; Amadei, *Cronaca universale*, 3:222–49. The music from *L'Idropica* has not survived.

[71] "con voce molto delicata, e dolce ...". Follino, *Cronache Mantovane*, 192 (facs., 84).

which aroused tears of pity in the listeners."[72] Hyperbole, though, is a common characteristic of Italian writing during this time period, and Follino's flowery descriptions of "Europa" are in fact no more or less admiring than those concerning other performers in the same report. Indeed, there is nothing in the entirety of Follino's chronicle that points to Europa Rossi's participation in *Il ratto di Europa* at all.

Even so, Europa's presence on the payrolls proves that she was performing *somewhere.* Minimally, those performances would have taken place between 1589 and 1592. Curiously, few attempts have been made to align Rossi's fluency with other musical events that took place during these times. For example, who came with Duke Vincenzo to Ferrara to perform for the April 14, 1589 performance in honor of the Medici ambassador Horatio della Rena? The dispatch reports that the duke brought "four ladies from Vicenza who sing very well and play the cornetto and other instruments."[73] Newcomb and Fenlon have suggested that the women from Vicenza were the Pellizzari sisters, and that the two other women were Lucrezia Urbana and Caterina Romana—neither of whom were from Vicenza—assuming a scribal error on the part of the dispatcher.[74] However, this theory seems to rely on an incorrectly dated payroll that lists Urbana and Romana as Mantuan court musicians around 1591.[75] Parisi has since proven that the date on this payroll is actually 1603 or 1608, leaving a gap of almost 14 years between the Ferrarese performance and the appearance of Urbana and Romana at the Mantuan court.[76] Europa Rossi's appearance on the 1589 and 1592 payrolls, though, together with the Pellizzaris, points to a much higher likelihood that she, rather than Urbana or Romana, travelled to Ferrara for the performance. The fourth woman remains a mystery.[77]

The payroll dates raise two additional possibilities. Eighteen days after the private performance for the ambassador, the famous Florentine intermedi for Girolamo Bargagli's *La Pellegrina* were performed for the wedding of

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[72] "che destarono per la pietà le lagrime ne gli ascoltanti ..." Ibid.

[73] Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter referred to as ASF), Archivio Mediceo, f. 2905, no. 86. The dispatch is transcribed and translated in Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara*, 99, 273, and quoted in Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 132, and Robinson, "Performance Space," 72, n. 126.

[74] Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara,* 99–100, 273; Fenlon, *Music and Patronaga,* 132. The Pellizzari sisters were the only confirmed women in this suggested group to hail from Vicenza. They performed at the Accademia Olimpica. See also Bowers, "Women Composers," 136; and Robinson, "'In her right hand,'" 62–78, especially 63–71.

[75] The payroll is transcribed with a date of 1591 in Carol MacClintock, *Giaches de Wert, 1535–1596: Life and Works* (American Institute of Musicology, 1966), 48, n. 126, and referred to in Newcomb, *Madrigal at Ferrara*, 99–100, and Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 132.

[76] AG 395; Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 192–95.

[77] Harrán briefly mentions the possible inclusion of Europa Rossi in this entourage in "Madama Europa," 201. Parisi only mentions the Pellizzaris in her interpretation of the event. Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 153, 199, n. 111.

Ferdinando de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine in May 1589.[78] The performance, which took place in Florence, included a significant number of Mantuan musicians. The most prominent, including Vittoria Archilei, Lucia Caccini, Alessandro Striggio, and others, are listed in Malvezzi's edition of the music.[79] However, the scoring calls for more musicians than are actually listed. For example, "O qual risplende nube," written for six voices, requires 24 singers—four to each part, with the potential for up to 12 high voices singing simultaneously.[80] "O fortunato giorno," for 30 voices, requires two to a part for a total of 60 singers. According to Malvezzi, many of these came with Vincenzo from Mantua.[81] The inclusion of so many Mantuan musicians points to the possibility of Europa's involvement. Indeed, Newcomb has successfully argued that her colleagues the Pellizzari sisters were featured in one of the intermedi.[82]

The second major musical event that aligns with Europa's name on the payrolls is the attempt to perform Guarini's *Il pastor fido* with intermedi in Mantua in 1592.[83] Of special relevance to Europa Rossi's potential participation is the heavy involvement of Mantua's Jewish community. The Jewish playwright and polymath Leone de' Sommi directed the rehearsals, and the musician and dancing master Isacchino Massarano choreographed the

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[78] Major sources for *La Pellegrina* include Malvezzi, *Intermedii et concerti*, Nona parte; Bastiano de' Rossi, *Descrizione dell'apparato e degl'intermedi. Fatti per la commedia rappresentata in Firenze. Nelle nozze de' Serenissimi Don Ferdinando Medici e Madama Cristina di Loreno, Gran Duchi di Toscana* (Florence: Anton Padovani, 1589); ASF, Manoscritti, 140, c. 866v, *Diario Fiorentino di Francesco Settimanni*; excerpts from the latter are reproduced in Solerti, *Gli albori del melodramma*, : 2:15–42; Giuseppe Pavoni, *Delle feste celebrate nelle solennissime nozze delli serenissimi sposi, il sig. don Ferdinando Medici, & la sig. donna Christina di Loreno gran duchi di Toscana* (Bologna: Giovanni Rossi, 1589); and Simone Cavallino, *Raccolta di tutte le solennissime feste nel sponsalitio della serenissima gran duchessa di Toscana, fatte in Fiorenza il mese di maggio 1589* (Rome: Paolo Blado, 1589).

[79] Malvezzi, *Intermedii et concerti*, Nona parte; Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 153; Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 128–32.

[80] "Il madrigale che segue fù concertato con quattro leuti, quattro viole, due bassi, quattro tromboni, due cornetti, un salterio, una mandola, l'arciviolata lira, un violino con ventiquattro voce." Malvezzi, nona parte, 16.

[81] "Il seguente madrigale a sette Chori si fece con gli primi sopranominati strumenti e tutti gli altri e le voci furono al numero di sessanta, e fra molti altri nelli Chori cantò Tomasso Benigni, Ceseri di Messere, Placido Marcelli, e Giulio Cima Tenore del Serenissimo Duca di Mantova." Malvezzi, nona parte, 17.

[82] Newcomb, *Madrigal at Ferrara*, 99–100; Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 132–33.

[83] For the evolution of *Il pastor fido* in Mantua, see Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 146–52; Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle at the Gonzaga Court, c. 1580–1600," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 103 (1976–77): 90–105; and Lisa Sampson, "The Mantuan Performance of Guarini's 'Pastor fido' and Representations of Courtly Identity," *The Modern Language Review* 98, no. 1 (January 2023): 65–83. Other accounts include Vittorio Rossi, *Battista Guarini ed* Il pastor fido: *Studio biografico-critico con documenti inediti per Vittorio Rossi* (Turin, Florence, and Rome: Ermanno Loescher, 1886); and Alessandro D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano: Libri tre con due appendici sulla rappresentazione drammatica del contado toscano e sul teatro mantovano nel sec XVI* (Turin: E. Loescher, 1891), 2:535–75.

production.[84] A surviving list of actors and dancers includes several Jewish names, including Paolo Marchi and Angelo Sacerdoti.[85] Giaches de Wert and Francesco Rovigo commissioned the music for the attempted 1592 performance, but a later version also included music by Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi.[86] According to Guarini, the elaborate musical elements required "ensembles that were many, varied, and full, and many choirs of voices and instruments."[87] Massarano and de' Sommi appear to have had particular trouble mounting the complicated *Balletto della cieca*, the dance that took place during an erotic game of blind man's buff that incorporated a "chorus of nymphs" who sang and danced between orations given by the actors.[88] Rehearsals took place in November and December of 1591, with a planned performance at the Palazzo del Te. Due to numerous technical complications followed by the death of the young Prince Guglielmo, the play was postponed despite significant preparations. It was not performed for an audience until 1598.[89]

Of all the major musical events in Mantua that coincide with Europa Rossi's payroll records, her participation in *Il pastor fido* seems the most likely.[90] The Jewish community had already been involved with numerous theatrical productions for the duke—most often plays taking place during carnival—and the activities of de' Sommi and Massarano, along with the parallel activities of Salamone Rossi as a court musician the same year, indicate

[84] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 154, 201, n. 18. Massarano's involvement is described in Alessandro D'Ancona, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 7 (Turin: Ermanno Loescher, 1886), 55, 57, 74; Antonino Bertolotti, *Musici alla corte dei Gonzaga in Mantova* (Milan: G. Ricordi & C., 1890), 63. De' Sommi's involvement is suggested in D'Ancona, *Origini*, 2: 540. See also Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 151, and Sampson, "Mantuan Performance," 81–82.

[85] From a letter written by Castiglione on May 15, 1592, transcribed in D'Ancona, *Origini*, 2:551–52; see also Sampson, "Mantuan Performance," 81–82. The list is only men, and includes amateur actors. Musicians do not appear on the list.

[86] Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara*, 43; Sampson, "Mantuan Performance," 77; MacClintock, *Giaches de Wert*, 178.

[87] "concerti molti et vari et pieni, et molti chori et di voci et d'instrumenti." From a letter to Vincenzo Gonzaga from Giambattista Guarini dated March 22, 1593, quoted in D'Ancona, *Origini*, 2:560, and Sampson, "Mantuan Performance," 76.

[88] Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 150–52; Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle," 93–94; Newcomb, *Music and Patronage*, 43; Sampson, "Mantuan Performance," 77; MacClintock, *Giaches de Wert,* 179–80; Sanders, *Music at the Gonzaga Court*, 106.

[89] Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 149–50; Fenlon, "Music and Spectacle," 93; MacClintock, *Giaches de Wert*, 185.

[90] The possibility of Europa's participation in the eventual 1598 production is mentioned in Harrán, "Madama Europa," 201. Parisi mentions an account of "three women with lutes who sang with marvelous sweetness" in one of the play's intermedi. The account is found in "Intermedi fatti nella Pas.le del Cav.re Guarino in Mantova nel mese di giugno 1598" (Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, MS 1307), 98–99), transcribed and translated in Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 474, 613.

that Jewish performers were particularly active at the time of the production.[91] In addition, the 1592 payroll itself is revealing: several of the named staff involved in preparations for *Il pastor fido* appear alongside Europa Rossi's name. These include Wert, Rovigo, and Massarano.[92] Taken together, the evidence points to a high possibility that Europa Rossi took part—at the very least—in the attempted 1592 production.

There were, of course, numerous other secular events that involved the Mantuan Jewish community during this timeframe. Among them were a comedy by Signor Calandra that was performed with intermedi in 1589,[93] and another comedy for carnival performed by the Jewish theater troupe in 1590 (though there is no indication of whether it included intermedi).[94] De' Sommi's play *Le tre sorelle* (The Three Sisters) was written in 1588 and dedicated to Vincenzo; whether it was performed in 1589 is not known, but its 1598 performance probably included intermedi.[95] Four unnamed women participated in the musical entertainments held during a tournament staged for a visit from the Duke of Nevers in 1594.[96] These do not even include the many theatrical activities that Mantuan Jews held for the benefit of their own community.[97]

Europa Rossi could have performed for any of these occasions—or none of them. Indeed, some may rightly argue that attempts to place Rossi within *any* major musical events in Mantua can be, at best, thought experiments that lack

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[91] Sources for Jewish theatrical activity in Mantua are, among many, Emily Wilbourne, "Travestied Sound, Ethnic Performance, and the Eloquence of the Body," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63 (2010), esp. 9–11; Erith Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre Making in Mantua, 1520–1650* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022); Erith Jaffe-Berg, Commedia dell'Arte *and the Mediterranean: Charting Journeys and Mapping "Others"* (London: Routledge, 2016), 125–44; Claudia Burattelli, *Spettacoli di corte a Mantova tra Cinque e Seicento* (Florence: Casa editrice Le Lettere, 1999), especially 143, 145, 155–59; Birnbaum, *Jewish Musicians*, 14–16; Simonsohn, *History*, 656–69; Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 40–43; Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 247–68; Sampson, "Mantuan Performance," 81–82; Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 184–88; and Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 152, 153, 155–57, 161–64, 166–69; 250, 302, 304, 308–9, 313–14, 320.

[92] AG 3146; Parisi, "Musicians at the Court of Mantua," 191, and Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 29. There is no record of the musical personnel for the rehearsals leading up to the 1592 *Il pastor fido* attempt.

[93] Vincenzo borrowed a castrato from the Marchesa of Soragna for this performance. Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 152, 199, n. 109.

[94] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 153, 200, n. 114; evidence for the performance can be found in a payment dated 1590 in ManAS, AG 3141.

[95] Erith Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre Making in Mantua, 1520–1650* (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2022), 127, 174.

[96] Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 472. The event is mentioned in Follino, *Breve descrittione della barriera fatta in Mantova il primo di maggio dell'anno MDLXXXXIIII* (Mantua: Francesco Osanna Stampador Ducale, 1594), 5.

[97] The holiday of Purim was one occasion that often included theatrical events. See Harrán, *Salamone Rossi*, 187; Harrán, "'Dum Recordaremur Sion': Music in the Life and Thought of the Venetian Rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648),' *AJS Review* 23, no. 1 (1998): 58–59; Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre Making*, 25, 55, 80.

enough evidence to obtain true knowledge of her activities. Nevertheless, it is important to contextualize Europa Rossi within the cultural landscape of Mantua to obtain a more vivid picture of her musical and social identity. To do this, her relationships with Mantua's musical spectacles cannot be ignored, even if they cannot be fully substantiated. Indeed, the existing evidence of her musical activities, while meager, indicates that her participation in Italy's quickly evolving musical and social soundscape is far greater than we can currently perceive.

Europa Rossi's Community

Europa Rossi belonged to a thriving Jewish community whose members participated actively in the artistic, social, scientific, financial, and cultural spheres in the city of Mantua. The relationship between the Jews of Mantua and the Christian society in which they lived has been explored in depth by Simonsohn, though more recent scholarship has acknowledged that those connections were more complex than they initially appeared. Bonfil, for example, viewed the Mantuan Jewish community as paradoxically, yet intrinsically, interwoven with those of their Christian peers. Jewish merchants, bankers, doctors, and artisans were essential players in the Mantuan economy, and thus essential to the region. As Bonfil notes, since the Jews of Mantua were "*necessary* to the economies of the Italian cities, they were *integrated* fairly easily into the socioeconomic fabric of these economies."[98]

In a striking parallel to the significant musical evolution during this period, Europa's community was undergoing a drastic change of its own. The formation of the ghetto in 1612 transformed Mantua's Jewish community from an integrated society into a segregated one.[99] Per the payroll evidence, Europa was performing prior to this event and, presumably, her family lived dispersed among Jewish and Christian residents during this time.[100] Despite widespread tactics designed to convert Jews to Christianity following the Counter-Reformation, no surviving evidence indicates that Europa or other members of

[98] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 102.

[99] Simonsohn contends that Mantuan Jews welcomed the formation of the ghetto, which protected them from rising anti-Jewish violence toward the end of the sixteenth century. Simonsohn, *History*, 39–40. In a slightly more nuanced approach, Bonfil observes that the formation of ghettos, while marginalizing, provided a means for Jews to more freely operate within society and promote more tolerance from the Christian majority—"a halfway house between acceptance and expulsion." See Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, especially 72–73.

[100] Bonfil notes that, even before the ghettos were formed, Jewish residents lived in city centers near marketplaces and main thoroughfares that benefited their trade. See *Jewish Life*, 74–75. According to Simonsohn, by the sixteenth century Mantuan Jews were already beginning to self-segregate in an area referred to as "Contrada degli Ebrei" or "Contrata Hebraeorum" ("District of the Jews"). See Simonsohn, *History*, 40.

her family were pressured to convert.[101] Indeed, Europa most likely lived what we might call a "normal life," if we define "normal" as existing simultaneously within the societal constructs of a minority community, with its own traditions, laws, and customs—what Bonfil deemed "the Other"—and a dominant Christian society that nevertheless contained numerous secular pockets in which Europa and her peers could operate.

Still, it would be a mistake to assume that this existence was always harmonious. Europa's experiences probably paralleled those of her brother and other Jewish musicians who moved between cultures whose accepted practices often opposed each other. This sense of conflict would have been further amplified by Europa's status as a Jewish performing *woman*. Jewish and Italian societies alike had many opinions regarding this matter, and while our view of them may be colored by the perspective of modernity, they nevertheless contributed to what Europa would have perceived to be "normal," and must be addressed here.

Europa's upbringing probably aligned with that of other girls in affluent Jewish families in Mantua, with the obvious distinction being the apparent depth of her musical education due to her family's trade. As mentioned previously, high-ranking Jewish girls received a humanistic education that included poetry, rhetoric, music, and other liberal arts.[102] These subjects were considered part and parcel of their domestic duties in preparation for making a suitable marriage match and entertaining in the home.[103] We have no way of knowing whether Europa's upbringing conflicted with her professional work, or vice versa. However, it is possible that Europa may have needed to navigate more complicated social situations than those of her Christian women colleagues due to her need to operate within two distinct—yet overlapping—cultures.

The case of Sarra Copia Sulam provides some insight into the care Europa may have needed to take to maintain her respectability and, by extension, the standing of her family and her community. While it is necessary to acknowledge that Copia Sulam's function as a patron and intellectual differed from Europa Rossi's role as a freelance musician, and that Copia Sulam's home region of Venice was more restrictive than Mantua toward women and Jews, evidence of

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[101] Simonsohn contends that Jews experienced little pressure to convert during this period, claiming an exception for poorer Jews, who may have viewed conversion as a means to more access and financial stability. Bonfil, on the other hand, observes that conversion was a "widespread phenomenon" during this period, but attributes it to crises of faith rather than a path to an easier lifestyle. However, Gianfranco Miletto provides evidence that forced conversion of Mantuan Jews was not uncommon, as demonstrated by the case of the harpist Abramino dell'Arpa. See Simonsohn, *History*, 524–25; Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 117–18; and Gianfranco Miletto, "Rabbi Yehuda Moscato and a Case of Forced Conversion," *Frankfurt Jewish Studies Bulletin* 34 (2007–2008): 149–63.

[102] Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage*, 10–11; Harrán, "Madonna Bellina," 32.

[103] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 133; Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage*, 10–11.

her activities nevertheless reveals a nearly constant effort to balance her intellectual interests with the social and religious expectations placed on her by Jewish and Christian cultures alike. Educated by her father, Copia Sulam was a brilliant thinker and writer who spoke multiple languages, played music, and hosted a salon in her home where Jews and Christians engaged in intellectual discussions and debates. She maintained close correspondences with several Christians, most notably the priest Baldassare Bonifacio and the monk Anselmo Cebà. She is most known for her poetry, polemical writing, and salons.[104] Copia Sulam was proud of her Judaism while remaining highly aware of the Venetian Inquisitors' close proximity to her community, and Westwater notes that her published works reflect an apologist effort to reconcile differences between Judaism and Christianity by drawing attention to likenesses between the two.[105] In private, Copia Sulam was more critical of Christianity, rejecting the nearly constant pressure to convert.[106] In the end, this attempt at balance was doomed to failure, as both Bonifacio and Cebà turned against her when it became clear that her intellect and religious faith proved resilient to their persuasions.[107]

As Roni Weinstein observed, "A society where people are forced to meet neighbors, colleagues, fellow parishioners and fraternity brothers on a daily basis, develops a high degree of social cohesiveness leading to solidarity and cooperation, but also to endless tensions and confrontations."[108] Like Copia Sulam, Europa Rossi would have internalized not only Jewish doctrines, but Christianity's perception of her Judaism and its effect on her activities and behavior. She would have needed to operate—on a conscious and subconscious level—in ways that aligned with both cultures' views on which behaviors were religiously, socially, and morally acceptable for Jewish women in Mantua. These efforts would have manifested in both her public and private life.

Mantuan society was inherently patriarchal, though there is evidence that Mantua was more liberal toward women than other Italian cities such as Venice.[109] Even so, women's roles were usually domestic. The home provided

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[104] The only book-length biography of Sulam is Westwater, *Sarra Copia Sulam*. Biographical details can also be found in Harrán, "Volume Editor's Introduction," in Copia Sulam, *Jewish Poet and Intellectual*, 15–38.

[105] Westwater, *Sarra Copia Sulam*, 121.

[106] Ibid., 121–22.

[107] Copia Sulam was eventually forced to defend herself against accusations of heresy by Bonifacio, who publicly attacked her standing in both the Jewish and Christian communities of Venice. See Copia Sulam, 37–38, 45–56; and Westwater, *Sarra Copia Sulam*, 53–75. Cebà's publication of their private correspondences also likely contributed to the end of Copia Sulam's literary career. Ibid., 122–25.

[108] Roni Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style: A Historical Anthropological Perspective on Early Modern Italian Jews* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 217–18.

[109] Westwater discusses Venetian's inherently patriarchal society in *Sarra Copia Sulam*, 12.

a safe haven for women's sexuality, which was reserved for married life.[110] This was, as William Caferro observed, a necessity in order to curb the power associated with women's sexuality; according to both Jewish and Christian cultures, a woman could singlehandedly destroy the honor and status of an entire family by improper sexual behavior.[111] Accordingly, Jewish women were considered ready for betrothal as soon as they showed signs of sexual maturity.[112] Once married, a Jewish family's respectability depended on a dynamic in which a woman showed "obedience, compliance, and deference" to her husband.[113] Any divergence from that custom was perceived as damaging to the household, which meant that women were encouraged to avoid the public eye.[114] Furthermore, a woman's social standing needed to be equal to, or lower than, her husband's; a woman who was more socially powerful than her husband could undermine his appearance of control and damage the family unit.[115]

Jewish and Christian sumptuary laws reflected these views, though a distinction should be made between them. Jewish sumptuary laws were self-imposed to preserve the community's internal social hierarchy, to prevent assimilation, and to avoid drawing attention and envy from Christian authorities who might then be tempted to impose penalties.[116] Christian laws were enacted to reinforce the Jewish community's lower social status.[117] Many of the restrictions from both communities targeted women. Of the Christian restrictions, most familiar to us are the laws that required Jewish women to wear a yellow hood or veil—the same headgear reserved for prostitutes.[118] Other Christian laws included censorship of Jewish books, requirements for Jews to listen to sermons on Sundays, payment of heavy tax burdens in comparison to

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[110] Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals*, 232.

[111] Ibid.; and William Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance* (Chichester and Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 63.

[112] Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals*, 61–67; Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage*, 55; Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians?", 98; and Parisi, "Ducal Patronage," 406. This also paralleled Christian customs. See Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance*, 68.

[113] Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals*, 232.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., 234–35.

[116] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 104–11; Howard Adelman, "Rabbis and Reality: Public Activities of Jewish Women in Italy during the Renaissance and Catholic Restoration," *Jewish History* 5, no. 1 (1991): 29.

[117] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 106–7.

[118] Ibid., 244; Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-Making*, 17–18, 52–53, 125; See also Diana Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past & Present* 112 (August 1986): 30; and Benjamin Ravid, *Studies on the Jews of Venice, 1382–1797* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 179.

their non-Jewish peers, and prohibitions on interfaith relationships, which were punishable by excommunication or even death.[119]

As noted, Jewish sumptuary laws were distinct from Christian laws, and they fluctuated throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The laws are documented through a series of publications called *pragmatiche* which were approved by the dukes of Mantua and published in Hebrew and Italian.[120] The first Mantuan Jewish pragmatica was published in 1599, during Europa's lifetime.[121] Among other restrictions, it prohibited Jewish women from being "in close contact with men or to link arms with them in public during the day."[122] Women who had borne children or were in mourning were forbidden from walking to synagogue accompanied by more than eight other women, though brides could be accompanied by up to ten women.[123] Both women and men were required to refrain from wearing flamboyant clothing, including certain types of cloth and gems such as velvet, visible fur, unconcealed silk, unconcealed necklaces, and large amounts of visible gold.[124] Women were discouraged from public displays of ostentatiousness, which could include "loitering" outside their homes or shops.[125] (In theory, the markets were the only places where they were allowed to go unescorted, but even that drew the ire of some rabbis.)[126]

Despite the prevalence of sumptuary laws, *halakha*, or Jewish Law, provided the true foundation of Mantuan Jewish society. Sumptuary laws were localized and influenced by transient perceptions of social needs, but halakha was embedded in Jewish culture and informed the structure of everyday life. Halakha determined the time of the Sabbath (sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday), dietary laws, observances of holidays and festivals, and even rules for music-making. That is not to say that everyone agreed on how these customs should be followed, and it is not always clear that strictures imposed by rabbinic authority were always carried out in practice. The burgeoning popularity of

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[119] The edict against relations between Jews and Christians is from a letter in ASM, AG, b. 3382, c.193, August 28, 1577, quoted and translated in Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-Making*, 126. The punishment for the crime was a fine of 50 scudi and a beheading. For notes on restrictions against Jews during Duke Vincenzo's rule, Simonsoh, *History*, 32–33.

[120] Erith Jaffe-Berg, "Jewish Women," 197; Simonsohn, *History*, 530–36.

[121] Simonsohn, *History*, 531–32. A copy of the pragmatica can be found in ADCEM, filza 6 doc. 16.

[122] Ibid., 532. Exceptions were made for women who were over 60 years old, ill, or in mourning.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., 532, 534. Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage*, 29. The ordinances regarding dress did not apply to travelers.

[125] Adelman, "Rabbis and Reality," 30.

[126] Ibid., 36. See also an example of a rabbinic responsa written in protest of women "[going] to the market like loose women, with their hair uncovered..." Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, MS 4087, 215, transcribed and translated in Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals*, 239–40.

Kabbalah greatly influenced how Jews observed halakha, creating tension between medieval and early modern Jewish practices.[127] Nonetheless, as Weinstein observed, "Halakha is perceived as the crucial border that distinguishes the Jewish collective abiding by its traditions [*More Judeorum*] from what is alien, threatening, external."[128] Halakha's importance to the Jewish community, then, prompts consideration of what might have been possible for Europa as a performer. For example, halakhic restrictions on working on the sabbath would very likely have limited her performance opportunities—as they probably would have for Salamone and other Jewish musicians—generally excluding performances that took place on Friday evenings or on Saturdays before sundown.[129] She would also have been subject to customs specific to women and musical performances. While women sang, played instruments, and danced, they typically did not sing alongside men in the synagogue and were physically separated from them in religious spaces.[130] In courtly performances, however, Europa must have deviated from halakhic norms.

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[127] See Bonfil, "Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis: Italian Jewry at the Close of the Sixteenth Century," *Jewish History* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 12. Bonfil argues that Kabbalah was an "agent of modernity," or a mediator "between the medieval and modern worlds." Ibid., 14. See also idem., *Jewish Life*, 169–177, 180.

[128] Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals*, 458.

[129] Jewish law differentiated between singing and playing musical instruments on the sabbath. The former was allowed and the latter was not. Business transactions were also prohibited. It is debatable whether singing for pay (as opposed to singing for pleasure or for liturgical reasons) would have constituted a business transaction in Mantua during this time period. There is evidence that Mantuan Jews requested that theatrical performances take place on days other than the Sabbath, but the objection appears to refer specifically to the operation of special effects machines, implying that the troupe may have been willing to perform without them, if needed. It is unclear how music fit into this petition. See documentation in D'Ancona, *Origini*, 2:427–28. The communication is reproduced and translated in Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-making,* 131. Halakha and its commentary pertaining to Jewish Sabbath laws is vast. For the purposes of this article, I have used Tractate Shabbat, Seder Moed in the Babylonian Talmud, ca. 450–ca. 550, which discusses the 39 *melachot* (creative work prohibited on the Sabbath), prohibitions, and commandments for the holiday. A translation can be found at *Sefaria*, "Shabbat," the William Davidson Edition, https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat?tab=contents (accessed July 27, 2024).

[130] Exceptions were made for weddings and the holiday of Purim. See Irene Heskes, "Miriam's Sisters," 1199–1200. Little survives in the way of literature that addresses women and music specific to Renaissance Italian religious rites. Some Ashkenazic authorities were extremely strict; for example, the sixteenth-century figure R. Moses Isserles (known by the acronym "Rema"), an interpreter of the *Shulhan Arukh*, wrote that women's voices are "indecent," "even if it is your own wife," unless it is a voice that one is "accustomed to." Nevertheless, the applicability of the Rema's rulings to the Italian Jewish community is unclear. See *Sefaria*, "Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayyim 75,"
יש ליזהר משמיעת קול זמר אשה בשעת ק"ש הגה ואפי' באשתו אבל קול הרגיל בו אינו ערוה [ב"י בשם אוהל מועד והג"מ]
quoted and translated in Emily Taitz, "Kol Ishah—The Voice of Woman: Where Was It Heard in Medieval Europe?" *Conservative Judaism* 38, no. 3 (The Rabbinical Assembly: Spring, 1986), 49. Taitz notes that communal singing in the home was acceptable in medieval Europe,

Jewish women were also discouraged from taking part in public performances. De' Sommi, whose theater treatise *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche* (ca. 1565) includes opinions on music and rehearsal processes for intermedi, vehemently argued against the inclusion of any women—Jewish or not—in theatrical spaces due to their vulnerability to scandal, especially if they were not in a protected class (for example, a "prince's daughter").[131] According to de' Sommi, "[performing in public] is not allowed to citizens' daughters because in the city there are thousands of their own class; going out of doors, therefore, brings to them much danger of evil happening. She who values her honour must avoid the chance of scandal, even if that be purely baseless."[132] Due to de' Sommi's opinions and considerable influence in the Jewish community, Jaffe-Berg contends that few Jewish women would have worked as performers in the theater—though many women probably worked behind the scenes in "shadow" roles as seamstresses or costumers.[133]

It is understandable, in light of these observations, that many historians have positioned Europa Rossi as an exception rather than a rule. If she performed at the Gonzaga court, she would have needed to sing publicly and in the presence of men—including Jewish men. If she took part in court spectacles, she would have needed to wear eye-catching costumes and, perhaps, portray characters who would have been perceived as sensual or erotic.[134] (The *balletto della cieca* in *Il pastor fido* comes to mind, among others.) How would she have navigated these apparent social obstacles? Would it have been possible for Europa to perform with the *concerto delle dame* under these circumstances, let alone to travel with Vincenzo's retinue to Ferrara, Florence, and other cities? These questions demand acknowledgment of an alternative possibility: that Europa Rossi was not hired frequently at all, and was in fact only called to perform for rare events that did not require her to engage in what others may have viewed as compromising activities.

Despite this possibility, the reality was probably more nuanced. For one, scholars mostly agree that Jewish sumptuary laws were created with the

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but women's love songs were frowned upon. Importantly, she notes that evidence for whether these restrictions were actually followed is scant. Ibid., 49–50; 56.

[131] Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-Making,* 26–27; and Jaffe Berg, "Jewish Women," 194–95. The dialogue is translated in Catherine Anne Blanchard-Rothmuller, "Leone Ebreo De Sommi's 'Four Dialogues on Stage Presentations': A Translation with Introduction and Notes" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1973). This viewpoint is supported by the idea that noblewomen could be virtuosi in the protected space of the court without having their respectability threatened. See Stras, *Women and Music*, 72.

[132] Quoted in Jaffe-Berg, "Jewish Women," 195; translated by Allardyce Nicoll, "The Dialogues of Leone di Somi," in *The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginning to the Present Day* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1966), 258.

[133] Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-making*, 26–28; Jaffe-Berg, "Jewish Women," 196.

[134] For commentary on the importance of costumes, see Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-Making*, 90.

intention to curb normal behaviors that community leaders feared would either compromise the security of Mantuan Jews or result in assimilation—implying that the forbidden activities were, in fact, regularly in practice.[135] Indeed, Europa was evidently performing a full decade prior to the 1599 pragmatica, which was so unpopular that it was cancelled just three years after its publication.[136]

In addition, despite the status of halakha as a theoretical bedrock of Jewish religious life, it needed to compete with a complex web of local social and religious customs that affected how individuals in the community behaved. The Jewish community of Mantua was not homogenous, but rather comprised of several distinct cultural subcommunities—the Italiani, Ashkenazim, and Sephardim—each with their own rites and customs.[137] As a result, halakha was often inconsistently applied, manipulated to fit changing circumstances, or, at times, even completely disregarded in favor of local practices or individual needs.[138] This flexibility would have been important for Jews who worked as musicians, dancers, actors, and teachers of performing arts, where the requirements of halakha often conflicted with those of their jobs.[139] It is possible, then, that the restrictions against women were not always as stringent as they may initially appear, and at times they simply went unheeded. As Adelman noted, "The public behavior of women during the Renaissance did not conform to rabbinic expectations . . . [it] was determined by a give-and-take that counterpoised such forces as galactic texts and traditions, their current rabbinic interpretations, the needs of the Jewish community, and the strivings of individual Jewish women themselves."[140] This adaptability may have allowed Europa to perform at court, an activity that would otherwise have been against Jewish law. Whether the privilege was granted to her alone—perhaps due to her family's influence with the Gonzagas—or whether other Jewish women were allowed to perform in public spaces is unknown. However, it is possible that

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[135] Adelman, "Rabbis and Reality," 29; Bonfil, *Jewish Life,* 105, 107, 110–11; Simonsohn, *History*, 534–35.

[136] Subsequent drafts were enacted in 1619, 1635, and 1651. See Weinstein, "Jewish Women," 197; and Simonsohn, *History*, 530–36.

[137] Bonfil urges us to view the heterogeneity of this period with cultural, economic, and migratory considerations in mind. See Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, 185–87. Jaffe-Berg, *Jewish Theatre-Making*, 22, 24–26, 28, 99, 149. Simonsohn contends that the majority of Mantuan Jews were Italiani, with a large minority belonging to the Ashkenazi community, and that there were often conflicts between the two. Sephardic Jews mostly assimilated into one of the two groups. Simonsohn, *History,* 500.

[138] Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals*; 460, 462; Adelman, *Women and Jewish Marriage*, 20–21.

[139] Daniel Jütte discusses the tension inherent in Jewish performing careers in "The Place of Music in Early Modern Italian Jewish Culture," in *Musical Exodus: Al-Andalus and Its Jewish Diasporas,* ed. Ruth F. Davis (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 45–61, esp. 46.

[140] Adelman, "Rabbis and Reality," 28.

performing opportunities for Jewish women may have been more numerous than they appear.

In addition, Europa's fluency began more than two decades before the establishment of the Mantua ghetto and just two years after Vincenzo's rise to power—the height of Jewish theatrical activity in Mantua and the golden age of women virtuosi and commedia dell'arte.[141] During this time, the Counter-Reformation and the movement of the Jesuits into the city during Guglielmo's rule contributed to an escalation of anti-Jewish violence.[142] Without the protective walls of the ghetto, moving through the city may have been dangerous for Jewish women during this time, even with the protection of an escort. After the ghetto was established, Jews were required to stay within its gates after dark—a stricture which surely affected Jewish performers.[143] Despite this, there are indications that anti-Jewish restrictions in Mantua were not consistently enforced until the beginning of the seventeenth century. For example, there is evidence that Jews defied the order to wear the infamous badges in such strong numbers that authorities found the law impossible to carry out.[144]

Indeed, Vincenzo's initial attitude toward the Jewish community was tolerant, if complex. The duke resisted the most draconian edicts of the Council of Trent, and even enacted laws that protected Jews from the Inquisition and from aggressive conversion tactics such as the baptism of young children without consent.[145] Even when laws grew stricter and moved toward forced segregation, the process of ghettoization did not hamper Jewish activity entirely. In fact, Bonfil observed that the construction of the ghetto may have paradoxically contributed to a decrease in anti-Jewish violence, making it easier for Mantuan Jews to move about more freely.[146] If Europa did relocate to the

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[141] Jaffe-Berg, "Jewish Women and Performance," 196.

[142] Simonsohn, 24–28, 30–39; see also Erith Jaffe-Berg, "Performance as Exchange: Taxation and Jewish Theatre in Early Modern Italy," *Theatre Survey* 54, no. 3 (September 2013): 399. Jaffe-Berg notes that Guglielmo resisted the edicts from the Council of Trent, but was motivated more by the desire to claim autonomy from the church than by a desire to protect the Jewish community.

[143] Amadei's description of the ghetto claims that "the petulant sacrilegious arrogance of the Jews ... required that they no longer live together as before mixed with Christians; therefore it was thought best of all to unite them in a single enclosure of houses and to lock them up with doors at night to completely segregate them." ("La petulante sagrilega arroganza de' Giudei ... esigeva che costoro più non convivessero come prima mescolati tra Cristiani; quindi fu pensato meglio di tutti unirli in un solo recinto di case e rinchiuderveli con porte di nottetempo per segregarli affatto.") While it is indeed possible that Mantuan officials were strict in this regard, Amadei's vitriolic writing makes it impossible to view him as an unbiased witness. Amadei, *Cronaca Universale*, 263.

[144] Simonsohn, *History*, 117.

[145] Jaffe-Berg, "Performance as Exchange," 400.

[146] Bonfil, *Jewish Life*, especially 72–73.

apartment near the Palazzo del Carmine, she may have enjoyed a relatively peaceful living situation prior to 1630.

Finally, it is very possible that Europa's domestic and performing life were in harmony, rather than opposition. This is supported by the fact that other women performed well into their married lives, including after childbirth. Adriana Basile was one such performer; she had three children and performed until the age of 49.[147] Nothing is known about Europa's relationship with her husband David, but her presence at court implies at least some level of agency in her marriage. While uncommon, accounts of Jewish women's power or agency in married relationships are not without precedent. Parallels may again be drawn with Copia Sulam, who was empowered to choose a husband who made her happy and, moreover, she possessed a dowry generous enough so that she was not dependent on her husband for financial stability.[148]

In fact, marriage (and widowhood) provided some level of freedom for women musicians, who were no longer vulnerable to having their veneer of chastity threatened.[149] In addition, Salamone Rossi's presence at court may have made things easier for Europa. As part of a Jewish family with special standing in the eyes of the Gonzagas, Europa may have been able to perform in public without risking her respectability, perhaps approaching the category of the "prince's daughter." As Robinson observed, many women musicians in Italian courts worked under male "guardians" who may have served as protectors.[150] This arrangement shielded women's social reputations and prevented the possibility of scandal—real or perceived—that so concerned de' Sommi. Indeed, all indications are that Europa Rossi was well respected by both Jews and Christians.

Conclusion: Europa Rossi's Identity

Harrán refers to Europa Rossi as a "shadowy figure."[151] This is undeniably true, since the evidence of her activities is so scant as to relegate her to the realm of marginality—a minority among minorities within the vast network of performers in early modern Italy. Even so, I argue that it is not only possible, but necessary, to reexamine Europa's identity in the context of her community, culture, and individuality. As with any marginalized individual, this task is essential to understanding Europa Rossi on her own terms, rather than as an exceptional or mythical figure without consideration for the complexity of her

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[147] Parisi, "Ducal patronage," 135, 406.
[148] Westwater, *Sarra Copia Sulam*, 192–94.
[149] Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series," in *Sarra Copia Sulam: Jewish Poet and Intellectual*, xxvii–xxviii.
[150] Robinson, "Performance Space," 76.
[151] Harrán, "Madama Europa," 198.

individual persona or her relationship to Mantua's overlapping, and sometimes conflicting, environments.

By reinvestigating archival evidence, exploring musical and cultural events that align with her activities, and reevaluating her role within Jewish and Italian cultures, it is not only possible to form a clearer image of Europa Rossi as she operated within the fabric of her communities, but to gain important insight into her individual identity. It is my hope that this undertaking will contribute not only to a broader understanding of Europa Rossi, the person, but of the richness and complexity inherent in the lives of Jewish performing women in early modern Europe.