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Review of *Vasari on Theatre*, by Thomas A. Pallen

Nancy Dersofi
Bryn Mawr College

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tinctly sacred flavor to the setting. I have summarized an elegant argument in rather bald terms, but here again Steinberg finds religious meaning in what many consider an exercise in geometry and naturalism, or even secularism. And not surprisingly, this part of his argument has found little support. After all, it is, as he himself freely admits, beyond proof.

On many levels, Steinberg's book is an object lesson in how to interrogate a painting, and one which opens up many new interpretative possibilities: a painting often thought of as clear and direct becomes rich and multivalent. Even if we don't agree with all of Steinberg's assertions and hypotheses, we can only marvel at his ability to question and to consider, to look and to see. Steinberg's study of Leonardo's famously famous painting must be judged, now as before, as one of the classics of art-historical scholarship.

LEW ANDREWS

University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Thomas A. Pallen. *Vasari on Theatre*

Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999. 159 pp. \$39.95. ISBN: 0-8093-2161-0.

In his *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Giorgio Vasari describes a number of pageants and theatrical performances worked on by artists whose biographies appear in his work. To make Vasari's references to theatrical practices available in English, Thomas A. Pallen has extracted and newly translated pertinent excerpts from the *Lives*. In addition to the translations, the book provides commentary on Renaissance performances and practices, including some omitted by Vasari, and adds several other documents pertaining to Renaissance theater history. An appendix of cross-references to artists in the De Vere and Milanesi editions of the *Lives*, a list of the artists' life spans, an informative introduction, and notes complete the volume. Renaissance historians will be interested in Pallen's focus on early theater, while the cultural context generated by Pallen's commentary advances development of the relatively new study of theater history.

Divided into four parts, the volume first reports on Triumphs and Pageantry in Florence, where semitheatrical processions and pageants played a role in civic life and politics. In a chapter on *ingegni* for mystery plays and festivals, Pallen reviews Vasari's descriptions of theatrical machinery designed by Filippo Brunelleschi and Cecca (Francesco d'Angelo) for Florentine celebrations of the Annunciation and the Ascension. Translated passages from Ludovico Zorzi's interpretations of these spectacles and related commentary on the theological and humanistic implications of the Florentine mystery plays argues that the plays were the work of intellectuals concerned with the humanist education of young men in Florence's confraternities. In a chapter on theatrical scenery, Pallen proposes an arc from the early work of Girolamo Genga extending through contributions by Baldassarre Peruzzi, Giulio Pippi, called Giulio Romano, Bastiano da San Gallo, called Aristotile, Battista Franco, Bronzino, and Vasari himself. Although Vasari omitted from the *Lives* any

description of the scenery he designed for a Venetian production of Pietro Aretino's *Talanta*, deferring to commentary elsewhere, Pallen reviews interpretations of Vasari's scenic development of the "piazza and street" into an "infinite" street. Pallen notes that Vasari also omits reference to his innovative use of a painted *sipario* (curtain), decorations of the auditorium and stage, and interaction between the *intermezzi* and the action for a production of *Cofaneria* in Florence in 1565 with *intermezzi* designed by Buontalenti. Pallen's final chapter in Part One discusses the theatrical work of Fra Giocondo, Cesare Cesariano, and Palladio. Vasari's omissions of Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael as scenographers are lacunae here remedied by descriptions of their contributions to scenography.

In Part Two, excerpts from twenty of Vasari's biographies contrast markedly with the ten volumes in Gaston DeVere's English translation of the *Lives*, and that of course is Pallen's point: to make the information about theater in Vasari's monumental work accessible in English. Part Three contains supplemental documents including Baldassare Castiglione's *Letter to Ludovico di Canossa* describing the stage apparatus for the 1513 performance of *Calandria* in Urbino, and a description of the same event found in a manuscript in the Vatican. *A Letter from Vasari to Ottaviano de' Medici* describes the apparatus made in Venice for a performance of Pietro Aretino's *Talanta*. Vasari's description of the wedding festivities for Francesco de' Medici and Giovanna of Austria and his *Letter to Raffael dal Borgo* on the apparatus made in Florence for the entrance of Emperor Charles V complete the documents. Notes and a Bibliography bring into play recent studies on early theatrical scenery, interpretations of their relation to civic life, and theoretical interests in the practical developments leading to modern theater. The English reader will be glad to know that Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo's seminal *Li due Orfei. Da Poliziano a Monteverdi* (2nd ed., Torino: Einaudi, 1981), cited in Italian, was published as *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi*, translated by Karen Eales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Overall, Pallen's bibliography is useful and his book gives English readers valuable new access to the study of early modern stagecraft and to theater and spectacle in Renaissance Florence.

NANCY DERSOFI

Bryn Mawr College

Hidetoshi Hoshino. *Industria tessile e commercio internazionale nella Firenze del tardo Medioevo*

Eds. Franco Franceschi and Sergio Tognetti. (Biblioteca Storica Toscana, Serie I, vol. 39) Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2001. xvi + 204 pp. L 42,000. ISBN: 88-222-4964-X.

In 1991 Florentine scholarship lost one of its most influential economic historians: Hidetoshi Hoshino. Eleven years later, his impact on Florentine historiography still resonates. Scholars who were fortunate enough to do research in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze in the 1970's and 1980's will certainly remember Professor Hoshino with fondness. His erudition, courtesy, and graciousness impressed established scholars and graduate students alike. An expert on the late