

From Matteo Palmieri, *Historia Florentina*

Translated from Matteo Palmieri, *Liber de Temporibus*, followed by *Annales*, ed. Gino Scaramella, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 26, part 1 (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1903), pp. 172–174; see also Nerida Newbiggin, ed., *Nuovo Corpus di sacre rappresentazioni fiorentine* (Bologna: Commissione per i Testi di Lingua, 1983), p. xxviii.; Paola Ventrone, “Sulle feste di San Giovanni: Firenze 1454,” *Interpres* 19 (2000) 89–101 (pp. 94–96); and Daniela Delcorno Branca, “Un camaldolese alla festa di San Giovanni: la processione del Battista descritta da Agostino di Porto” *Lettere italiane* 55 (2003) 1–25.

For the Feast of St John the Baptist in 1454, they changed the order of events. Instead of having the display of wealth on June 22, the procession of religious companies, friars, priests and pageant-wagons on the morning of June 23, with the dedication of the flags in the evening, and then on St John the Baptist’s Day itself, the offerings in the morning and then the horse-race during the day, they changed it as follows. On the 21st they would have the display of wealth, and the morning of the 22nd, the procession of all the pageant-wagons, which in that year were the following, and proceeded as I shall now describe.

1. At the head went the Cross of Santa Maria del Fiore [the cathedral church of Florence] with all the clergy and little boys, and behind them, six singers.
2. The [boys’] confraternities of Iacopo the cloth-shearer and Nofri the shoe-maker, with about thirty little boys dressed in white as angels.
3. The pageant-wagon of St Michael the Angel, over which God the Father was suspended in a nimbus, and in the square opposite the Palazzo della Signoria [the seat of government] they did their *rappresentazione* of the battle of the angels, when Lucifer was chased from heaven with his angels that were damned.
4. The [boys’] confraternities of Antonio [the notary] and Piero, son of Mariano [Muzi, the purse-maker], with about thirty little boys dressed in white as angels.
5. The pageant-wagon of Adam, that did its *rappresentazione* of when God created Adam and then Eve, and gave them the commandment, and their disobedience until he chased them out of paradise, with the temptation before of the serpent, and other appurtenances.
6. A Moses on horseback, with a great cavalcade of the leaders of the people of Israel and others.
7. The pageant-wagon of Moses, that did his *rappresentazione* in the square of when God gave him the Law.
8. Lots of prophets and sibyls with Hermes Trismegistus and others who prophesied the Incarnation of Christ.
9. The pageant-wagon of the Annunciation of the Virgin, which did her *rappresentazione*.
10. The Emperor Octavian [Augustus Caesar] with a great cavalcade and with the Sibyl, to do its play, when the Sibyl predicted to him that Christ was to be born, and showed him the Virgin in the sky with Christ in her arms.
11. The Templum Pacis with the pageant-wagon of the Nativity to do its *rappresentazione*.

The Arrival of the Madman

And it happened that, when the pageant-wagon was in front of the Signoria, and Octavian had got off his horse and gone up onto the pageant-wagon, under, or rather, into the temple, to begin his *rappresentazione*, there arrived a mad German, wearing just a thin shirt, and at the foot of the pageant-wagon he asked: “Where is the King of Aragon?” Somebody answered him: “There he is,” and pointed to Octavian. The German got up onto the pageant-wagon, and lots of people thought he was one of the people who had to appear in the *festa*, so nobody stopped him. First of all he took the idol that was in the temple and hurled it into the square,

then he turned to Octavian who was dressed in a very rich robe of peacock-purple velvet embroidered with gold, and took hold of him and tossed him head over heels onto the people into the square, then he climbed up a column of the temple to get up so some small boys who were standing on the top of the temple dressed as angels, and when he did so, bystanders reached him with the maces they had in their hands, and by striking him heavily, with great difficulty they brought him to the ground, but he got up again, and tried to climb up again until, struck repeatedly by the maces from above and below, he was finally overcome.

12. A magnificent and triumphant temple for the pageant-wagon of the Magi, in which was concealed another octagonal temple, with the Virgin and the Christ-Child inside, and Herod did his *rappresentazione* around this first temple.

13. Three Magi, with a cavalcade of more than two hundred horses, decorated with great magnificence, and they came with presents for the Christ-Child.

The Passion and Entombment was left out, because it seemed that it was not suitable for a *fiesta*, and it continued:

14. A cavalcade of Pilate's cavalry, sent to guard the Sepulchre.

15. The pageant-wagon of the Sepulchre, from which Christ rose again.

16. The pageant-wagon of Limbo, from which he led the Old Testament Righteous.

17. The pageant-wagon of Paradise, where he put the Old Testament Righteous.

18. The Apostles and the Maries who were present at the Assumption [*here read: Ascension*].

19. The pageant-wagon of the Assumption of Christ, that is, when he ascended into heaven.

20. A cavalcade of Three Kings and Queens, maidens and nymphs, with dogs and other appurtenances of the Quick and the Dead.

21. The pageant-wagon of the Quick and the Dead.

22. The pageant-wagon of the [Last] Judgement, with a cart for the Tombs, and Heaven, and Hell, with its *rappresentazione*, as we believe in faith it will be at the end of time.

All the above pageant-wagons did their *rappresentazioni* in the square in front of the Signoria and they lasted until midday [mid-afternoon?].