



POLITECNICO
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Honors thesis

COURSE IN ARCHITECTURE
(MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY DESIGN)

Abstract

**The italian baroque *Oratorio* between musical genre,
architectural and acoustic solutions.**

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«[...] Without art, man would be blind to himself and to his inner life. Among all arts, music and architecture enhance the universal harmony, arousing the brotherhood of man [...]». (Pope Giovanni Paolo II). Also thanks to this quotation, I have realized that all arts, in particular those to which I am more accustomed, architecture and music, are indissolubly tied; so, I tried to analyze them, looking for common aspects. My analysis, developed at the same time by several points of view, has in fact touched three different fields, which I have analyzed with an historical, compositional and physical approach. The examination is conducted by going into three fields: the musical field, especially the baroque "oratorio" genre, the architectural field from the point of view of composition relationships between architectural solution and music; and, at last, the acoustic field, which gave me the method to investigate scientifically the answer to the sound impulse in those buildings used for listening to music.

As well as the XVII-XVIII century "oratori" were tripartite, so will be structured this work, being divided into three wide sections: the first section investigates the "oratorio" subject in the historical and sociological aspect, looking over its evolution and its didactic and religious function, by examining the various types of "oratorio". A chapter will be dedicated to the Italian composer Alessandro Stradella, whose "oratori" got an extraordinary reputation thanks to their circulation into national and European courts. All "oratori" written by Stradella will be analyzed, focusing on instrumental and poetic characters, given by the score itself in relation with the environment in which they were executed. Once again the study opens to the architectural field, individuating the main Italian "oratori" (intended as architectural events). At their time they were considered as models to be emulate in Italian country.

The second section is the proper study-case. First of all, it's examined the Alfieri's chapel, inside the Cathedral of Casale Monferrato (Alessandria). The analysis has the aim of understanding the architectural structure. The historical notes and the *in loco* researches clarified the reasons of the architectural composition and the position in regards of the building area. Thanks to the instrumental relief, I could make more scientific my architectural analysis, producing some papers in scale, from long time missing in town and in historical archives. Subsequently, I concentrated myself in Alfieri's architectural composition, recovering the method and the architectural building arguments, in order to outline a general view of his architecture. Particularly interesting are the sources in which is described his architectonic language, found out after a very careful study of the lessons given by Alfieri to his students. Parallel to the architectural study of Sant'Evasio, some documentations were found in archives, about music in the Cathedral of Casale from the

second half of XVI century until late XVIII century. From this research, the possibility arose that Casale may have been the stage of some important "oratori". From these suggestions, I rebuilt the events which led to the representation of the most famous Italian "oratori" in Casale. The last chapter is entirely dedicated to the examination of the objective and subjective parameters which characterize the concert halls. The analysis permitted me to value scientifically the architectural structure, but also to suggest "not upsetting solutions" to be eventually used to adapt the hall for a baroque music concert. The acoustic simulations studied the evasian chapel during distinct moments of the musical event: during the rehearsals before the concert and the same day of the execution, with or without audience.

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