ITALIAN INFLUENCE ON THE BEGINNINGS OF NEO-ARABIC REVIVALISM IN PORTUGAL

The artistic links that the magnanimous King John V (1707-50) established with Italy, and which marked the high point of the Baroque in Portugal, were instrumental in increasing the love of his son, Joseph I (1714-77), for opera. Encouraged by his father to satisfy — through orders placed in Italy — his every whim concerning the arts, Joseph summoned to Lisbon Giovanni Carlo Bibiena (1700-60), of the great family of Bolognese stage directors, to supervise work on the Tagus Opera or Royal Theatre of the Ribeira Palace. This first opera house in Portugal, of Italian style, was inaugurated on 2nd April 1755, with the opera *Alessandro nelle Indie*, by David Perez and Pietro Metastasio. But only a few months later the opera house collapsed, together with the whole of the lower part of Lisbon, in the tragic earthquake of 1st November 1755.

About forty years later, on 8th December 1792, the foundation stone was laid — at the initiative of private persons — of a new theatre, completed on 30th June 1793 and inaugurated with Cimarosa's opera *La Ballerina Amante*. Thus was born the San Carlos Opera House, destined to have a long and fortunate life throughout the following century, acting as backdrop to Romantic society.

Designed by an architect trained in Bologna, José da Costa e Silva (1747-1819) and inspired by Italian models (in particular La Scala in Milan), San Carlos — whose royal gallery was reportedly decorated by G.M. Appiani — has Francesco Lodi as its first impresario.

A great worker and full of initiative, Lodi brought to Lisbon all the foremost exponents of Italian *bel canto*, and also some of the most famous Italian stage designers. Between 1793 and about 1834-35 a succession of these singers appear at San Carlos: Antonio Baila (1793-94), Giuseppe Carlo Binetti (1797-99), Vincenzo Mazzoneschi (1793-95 and 1798-1806), Giovanni Chiari (1807-08 and 1812-17), Angelo Ferri (1818), Domenico Antonio Schioppetta (1818-22 and 1826), Giovanni Riccardi (1818-22), Teodoro Albinola (1823), Giovanni Boucher (1834) and Alessandro Merli (1835).

This period, during which the country suffered the Napoleonic invasions and the first institutional troubles caused by liberalism, was also characterized by a certain impoverishment of the arts, architecture and sculpture in particular. This aesthetic culture, towards the end absorbed by Neoclassical models, within a short time became permeable to the values of Romanticism. In the field of architecture, where as from the 1830s this influence was more appreciable, these values enjoyed a privileged vehicle in the patronage and the projects carried out by the Prince Consort, Ferdinand von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha. In the Serra di Sintra, made famous by Byron, he built one of the most romantic palaces in Europe, assisted, in the global conception of the work, by Baron von Echwege (1777-1855), who outlined the subsequent designs.

Erected between 1839 and 1849, the Pena Palace, "an admirable royal dwelling ... which fairy hands seem to have brought from the Orient,"[1] is one of the most emblematic works of Portuguese architecture. Its plan, initially obeying neo-Gothic criteria, gradually took in a medley of orientalizing and exotic elements, in which were included the rudiments of the first manifestations of neo-Arabic revivalism in Portugal. This architectural aspect, skillfully utilized in the domes, in the majolica facings, in the patios and in the relief decorations, using a variety of materials, was described by the Polish Prince

GIUSEPPE CINNATI - LITHOGRAPH BY MANUEL DE MACEDO

Lichnowski, who visited the palace in 1842: "Along the Rhine and in the Bavarian Alps there exist castles of kings and of princes (...) which have had the honour of being celebrated in numerous writings, in both prose and verse; yet how poor and imperfect they appear in their ornaments if we compare them with the delicate loops and the fantastic arabesques that at Pena rise along the arcades and, like ivy, embrace around the columns, and hang from the cusps and the balustrades of the windows, standing out admirably, with their clear colour, against the deep azure of a southern sky, and producing the same impression as dreams and Arab songs."[2]

Simultaneous with the entry of neo-Arabic revivalism onto the scene of Portuguese architecture, two Italian stage designers, Giuseppe Cinatti (1808-79) and Achille Rambois (1810-82), started their career at the San Carlos Theatre. The action of these two artists, who worked together there for forty-two years, went beyond the frontiers of the theatre and extended into the field of architecture, both public and private, and the restoration of monuments. In this way they had a twofold influence on the evolution of local taste, earlier through their operatic sets, and later with their architectural transposition into a real, romantic and urban world.

ACHILLE RAMBOIS - LITHOGRAPH BY MANUEL DE MACEDO

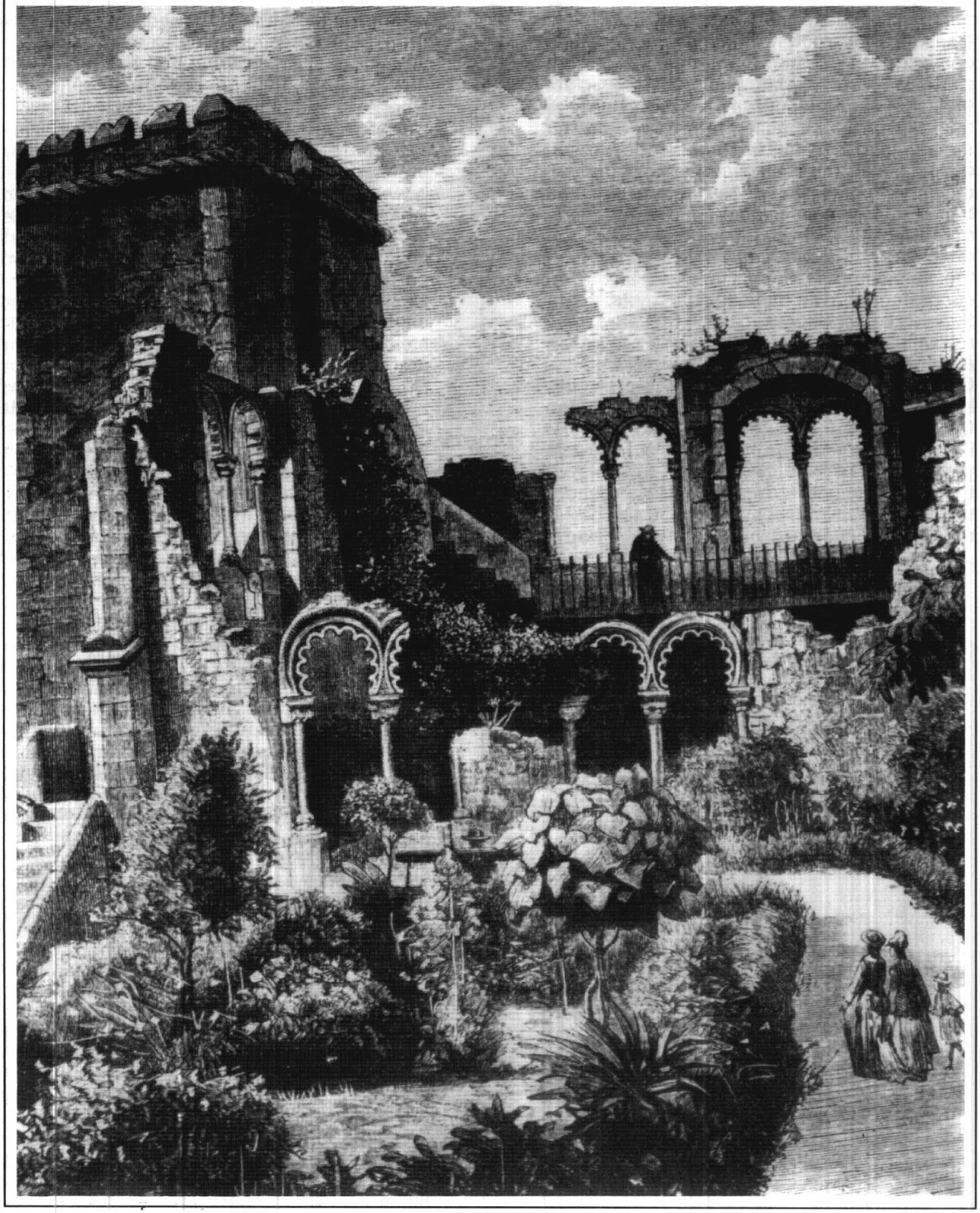
Giuseppe Cinatti was the first to devote himself to architecture. He designed noteworthy façades of palaces, creating a new image of the large urban house. His works are characterized by a certain Classicism and harmony in the design of the rooms, decorated with carved stonework or small busts of Romantic flavour. But he was also, in his sets or in his architectural designs, one of the first executors of revivalism, applied to domestic programmes. This is the case of the neo-Gothic style, in which he constructed to coach depots in the house of Eugenio de Almeida, and a number of tombs, in particular that of the aforesaid superintendent of the House of Charity, who had commissioned him to restore the Jerónimos Monastery at Belém. This ambitious project, begun in 1866, was fated to end in catastrophe: the great central tower, of scenographic appearance, which he had designed to make the façade more imposing, collapsed twelve years later — thereby doing its duty, according to the irreverent quip of a Portuguese writer, in that "being unable to fall from old age, it fell out of shame."[3]

Cinatti also made constructions in neo-Doric style (the Palmela tomb), whereas he reserved the neo-Arabic for the imaginary reconstruction of many piazzas and palaces and interior scenes of his sets, as in the case of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni.*

Furthermore, neo-Arabic revivalism was also present in the recreation of the famous "mock ruins" in the Public Gardens of the town of Eovra, which he undertook in 1867. In many of these works, especially in the reconstruction of the Jerónimos Monastery, he was assisted by Achille Rambois, his trusted collaborator.

As from the latter half of the 19th century, neo-Arabic revivalism began to be adopted as an architectural programme, above all in the showiest of the houses in the famous Serra de Sintra. Such is the case of the Quinta do Relógio (in the Fifties), by the architect António Tomás da Fonseca, and of the fanciful Monserrate Palace (1863-65) based on an outline by the Englishman James Knowles Sr., inspired in part by the Brighton Pavilion. Worthy of mention in Lisbon are the Ribeiro da Cunha houses (1877), in the Príncipe Real area, by the architect H.C. Affonso, and Conceiçao e Silva (1891), in the Avenida da

"MOCK RUINS" OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN ÓF EVORA; G. CINATTI, 1867



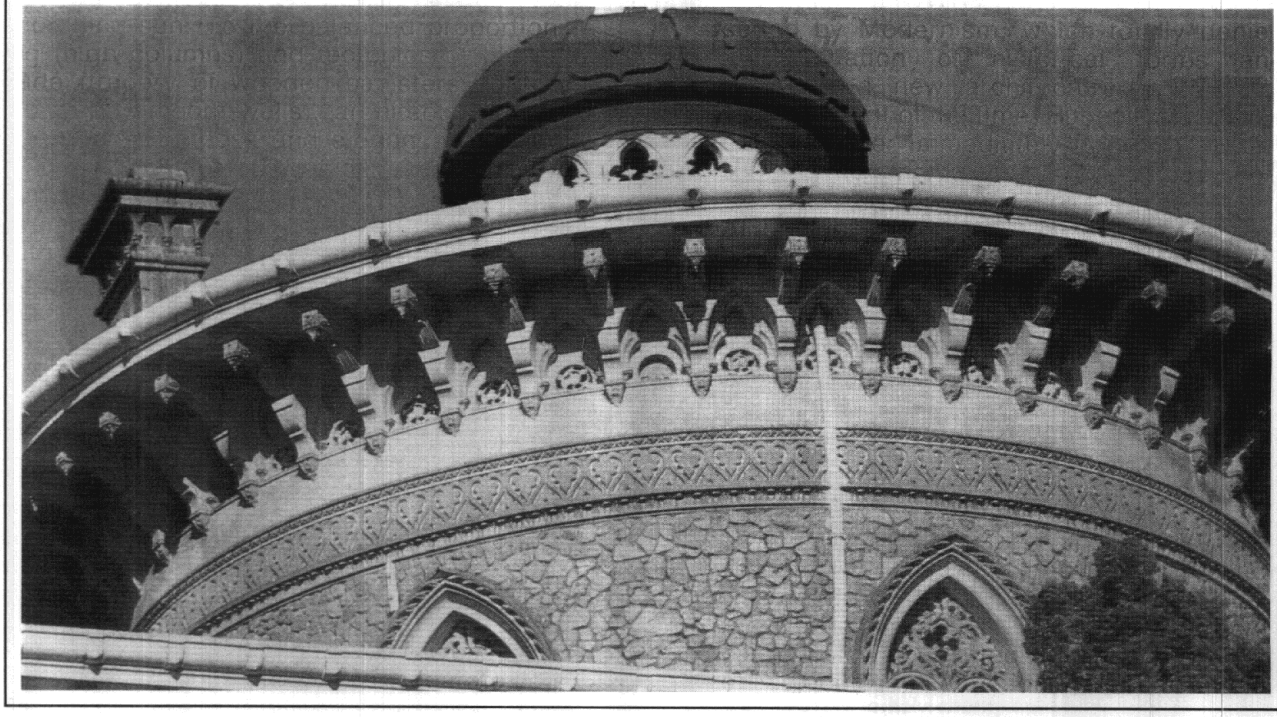
Liberdade, by the French architect Henri Lusseau. In Oporto, we note in particular the celebrated "Arab Salon" of the Stock Exchange Building, constructed between 1862 and 1880 following a design by Golçalves de Sousa. Moreover, already during the period of greatest eclecticism, the neo-Arabic style was to continue to underpin the programmes of fair pavilions (Brussels Exposition Pavilion, 1865), arenas, especially the one in Lisbon (architect A.J. Dias da Silva, 1890, who also designed the interior of the Alentejo House in Rua Portas de Santo Anto, in Moorish style), and in addition inner patios, kiosks and public fountains (the fountain at Sintra, by the sculptor José da Fonseca, approx. 1890-1910).

And it was in this context, in the last quarter of the 19th century, that the stage designer Luigi Manini (1850-1910) made his mark as an architect. However, in spite of this eclecticism, neo-Arabic revivalism still characterized a number of his best sets, such as those he made for Verdi's opera *Simon Boccanegra*, Alfredo Keil's *D. Branca* and Meyerbeer's *Roberto Il Diavolo*. All the same, his favourite style was "neo-Manueline" which was very popular in this period and through which he made his greatest contribution to Portuguese architecture in these times (Palace Hotel of Buçaco, 1888).

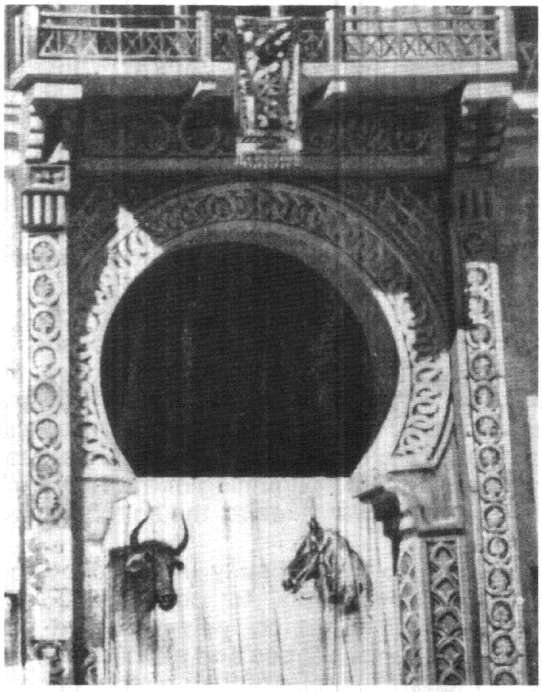
Starting in 1884, after a reform of artistic education, many foreign teachers were given contracts and came to Portugal. Among the foremost ones were the Italians Cesare Inaz (?-1901), Nicola Bigaglia (?-1908) and Leopoldo Battistini (1865-1936). Taken on in the first place to teach in the new schools of industrial artistic education, they very soon devoted themselves to architecture, especially Inaz and Bigaglia. To Battistini is owed a profound renewal of traditional majolica decoration, in the workshop he opened in Lisbon — the Fabbrica Constança, in the Janelas Verdes area.

An isolated case was the arrival in 1891 of the Milanese architect Sebastiano Giuseppe Locati, recommended by Alfredo de Andrade to his brothers. In the Pâtio do Torel he left four houses designed by him, two of them to be residences for the artist's family. In Estoril, another house by Andrade himself revealed, again, a Moresque taste in the design of the inner patio standing on a colonnade. And,

MONSERRATE PALACE, SINTRA (1863-65); ARCHITECT JAMES KNOWLES SR

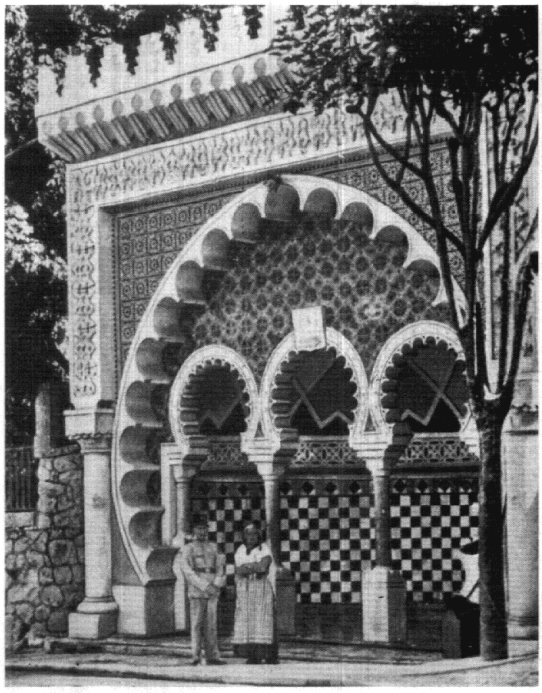


RIBEIRO DA CUNHA HOUSE (1877) IN THE PRÍNCIPE REAL AREA OF LISBON; ARCHITECT H. CARLOS ALFONSO



E. BERTINI AND A. PRESSI (1904-1923); ARENA

MORESQUE SPRING, SINTRA (c.1900-10)



even excepting the case of Alfredo de Andrade (1839-1915), a Portuguese architect who studied and lived in Italy, and the political and cultural influence of the queen herself, Maria Pia of Savoy (1862-89), these are the final traces of a certain artistic exchange between the two countries, which was in any case always associated, in this fertile century, with the fantasy of opera and *bel canto*.

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[1] Murri, Romolo, *Dalla Monarchia alla Repubblica — Lettere Portoghesi di Romolo Rurri, deputato al Parlamento*, Milan, Fratelli Treves Editori, 1910, p. 81.
[2] Cf. Franca, José-Augusto, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XIX*, I, Lisbon, Liv. Bertrand, 1966, p. 306.
[3] Rangel de Lima, *A Arte*, I, January 1879, p. 15

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

Giuseppe Cinatti — born in Tuscany, at Siena, in 1808. His father lived in Lombardy and was a very well-known architect. Cinatti was a pupil of his father and studied also at the Fine Arts Academy in Milan. He left Italy for political reasons, and went to Lyon where he started his activity as stage designer. In 1836 Antonio Lodi, director of the San Carlos Opera in Lisbon, invited him to transfer to Portugal. In 1837 he married Maria Rivolta, a descendant of a Milanese family who lived in Lisbon. He devoted himself to architecture, and at Evora has left behind the most interesting testimony of the neo-Arabic revivalism of Portuguese architecture in this period, in his arrangement of the Public Gardens. The materials of this fanciful construction erected in 1860 came from the old palace of the Counts of Vimioso. He died in 1879, after the collapse of the Jerónimos Tower, his most emblematic architectural work.
Achille Rambois — born in Milan in 1810, studied drawing and architecture at the Fine Arts Academy in his native city. He later transferred to the Accademia Scenografica in Milan, where he was a pupil of Sanchirico. He made his début at La Scala, and in 1834 signed a contract for the San Carlos Opera House in Lisbon. Two years later he started his collaboration with G. Cinatti, which lasted forty-two years. The most important of their works in collaboration was the design for the restoration of the Jeronimos Monastery at Belém.
Luigi Manini — born at Crema in 1850, was a pupil of Carlo Ferrario at the Brera Academy in Milan. In 1879 he took over from the stage designers Cinatti and Rambois at the San Carlo Opera House in Lisbon. His architectural designs are very close to the neo-Manueline style: the most famous one is the Grande Hotel at Buçaco, near Coimbra. He returned to Italy shortly before his death in 1910.