

# A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF BENIGNO ZERAFÀ (1726–1804): A MID-EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MALTESE COMPOSER OF SACRED MUSIC

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The outstanding (though still insufficiently recognized) development of Maltese sacred music in the mid-eighteenth century culminated in the works of Benigno Zerafa (1726–1804), a highly talented priest-composer who served as *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of St Paul at Mdina from 1744 to 1786.<sup>1</sup> Zerafa's entire collection of sacred vocal works, with one exception, was discovered in 1969 by the then-curator of the Archives of Mdina, Mgr Rev John Azzopardi.<sup>2</sup> The collection, comprising, among others, masses, Credo settings, psalms, graduals, offertories, litanies, hymns, sequences, antiphons, Holy Week responsories and motets,<sup>3</sup> was transferred to the archives of the cathedral, where it was professionally catalogued and shelved. One work, a recently discovered Requiem Mass for four voices and organ,<sup>4</sup> is preserved in the Archivio Crypta Sancti Pauli (CSP) at Rabat. The compositions, numbering 148, are divided into two categories – (1) for voices and instruments (104), and (2) for voices and organ (44) – and range, in scoring, from works for eight, five, four, three and two voices, to others for solo voice.<sup>5</sup> This essay aims to provide information on Benigno Zerafa's life.<sup>6</sup>

Benigno Zerafa was born at Rabat, Malta,<sup>7</sup> on 25 August 1726 (Figure 1), the fifth child to Nicola Zerafa, a surgeon by profession,<sup>8</sup> and Teresa, and baptized on the same day in the cathedral church, Mdina.<sup>9</sup> On 1 May 1735 Benigno, then nine, together with his brother Giuseppe, was appointed to serve in the Cathedral of St Paul at Mdina (Figure 2) as a *clericus chori*. On 4 September 1737 Mgr Paulus Alpheran de Bussan, Bishop of Malta,<sup>10</sup> appointed the eleven-year-old Benigno 'di voce soprano' to the *cappella*

1 The first detailed scholarly study of Zerafa's life and music, including a thematic catalogue, is Frederick Aquilina, 'The Life and Music of Benigno Zerafa (1726–1804): A Mid-Eighteenth-Century Maltese Composer of Sacred Music' (PhD dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2001).

2 John Azzopardi, 'Musical Archives', in *Maltese Baroque: Proceedings of a Seminar on "The Baroque Route in Malta"*, ed. G. Mangion (Beltissebħ: Ministry of Education, 1989), 51.

3 See the Appendix for a detailed list.

4 Mgr Azzopardi discovered the work in December 2000 in a private collection that has subsequently been bought by the Rabat Parish.

5 No instrumental works or operas by Zerafa have survived, and there is no certainty that he composed any. His music was written explicitly for functional use, and being fully attached to the Cathedral of Malta as composer, copyist, teacher, director and performer for over forty years may explain why, it seems, he refrained from producing any such works.

6 My sincere thanks to Professor Michael Talbot (University of Liverpool) for his helpful comments and suggestions.

7 Malta, a small island measuring approximately seventeen by nine miles, is situated in the central Mediterranean about fifty-eight miles south of Sicily (the island's closest neighbour geographically). Historically, Malta formed part of the 'Kingdom of Sicily' from 1091 to 1798. Mdina and Rabat are two neighbouring towns perched on a single ridge in the west of Malta, separated by a series of bastions and gates. Mdina was the island's capital city until 1568, when the Knights of St John transferred the capital to the newly built city of Valletta. Its present area covers only a third of its original size, which extended up to the centre of modern Rabat; see John Azzopardi, 'Mdina', in John Azzopardi, Victor J. Camilleri and Bruna Polimeni, *Mdina, Rabat - Mosta* (Rome: Plurigraf Narni-Terni, 1988), 4–5.

8 Archiepiscopal Archives of Malta, AAM, *Patrimonium* of Benigno Zerafa (1747), 16.3.74, 2, 6.

9 John Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa (1726–1804): A Biography', in *A Concert of Maltese Baroque Music by Benigno Zerafa* (Mdina, Concert Programme, 1987), 1.

10 In office from 1728 to 1757.

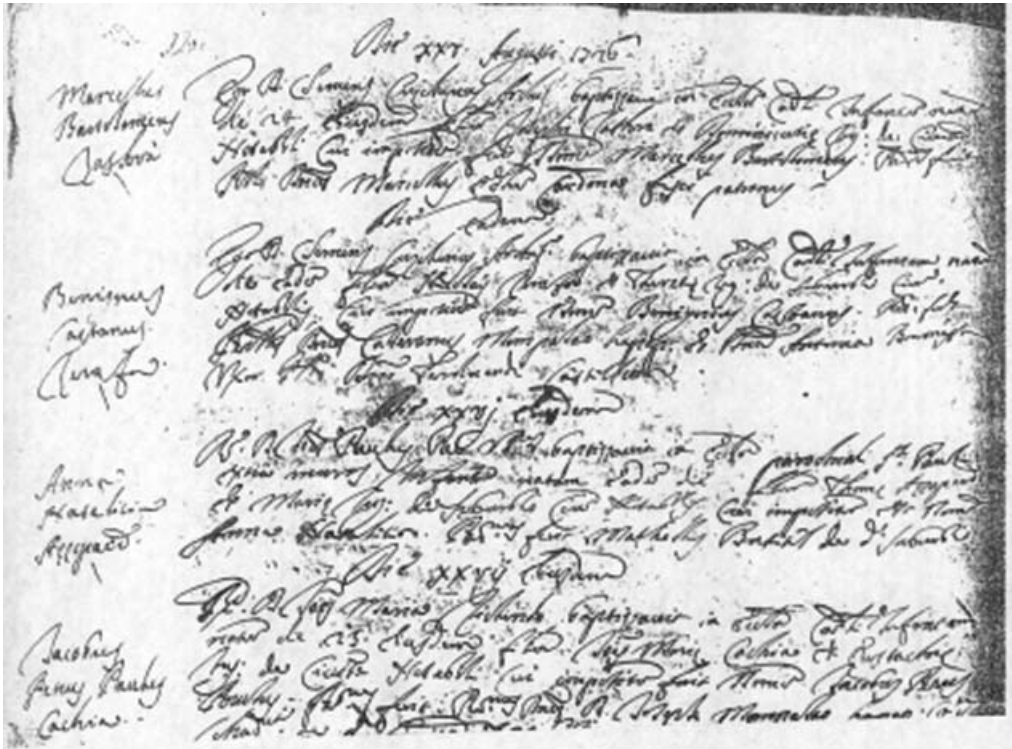


Figure 1 Zerafa's birth record, dated 25 August 1726. The second entry in the left margin reads: *Benignus Caitanus Zerafa* (Mdina Parish Archives, *Libro Bapt.*, volume 4 (1716–1751), 120)

*musicale*,<sup>11</sup> serving under the Maltese *maestro di cappella* Don Pietro Gristi (1696–1738).<sup>12</sup> Gristi died unexpectedly on 4 March 1738, leaving the post vacant.<sup>13</sup> The vacancy was temporarily filled by Carlo Imbert, organist of the cathedral church, until a successor to Gristi was found. The choice fell on the young Benigno.

Under the rule of the Knights of St John, Malta absorbed strong influences, both culturally and linguistically, mainly from southern Italy, including Sicily and, subsequently, Naples. The surviving works by Maltese masters offer powerful evidence of the once totally dominant Italianate style.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that, with a loan of 165 *scudi*<sup>15</sup> from the cathedral chapter, Benigno, then only eleven, departed for Naples to receive musical training at the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo,<sup>16</sup> one of the four main

11 Archives of the Cathedral of Malta, ACM, *Regestum Deputationum Personarum* (*Reg. Dep. Pers.*), volume 1 (1698–1851), 31.

12 Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa', 1. Gristi was the first Maltese person to benefit from the Neapolitan education system. He was sent to study music at the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo in 1713, later following a career as *maestro di cappella* at Mdina Cathedral from 1717 to 1738.

13 Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa', 2.

14 The cultural élite employed Latin, Sicilian and later Italian as an official language, which was used for lyric poetry and high culture; see Carmel Cassar, *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta* (Msida: Mireva, 2000), xxx, xlii.

15 The monetary system in use in Zerafa's time comprised seven principal coins: 6 *dinari* = 1 *grano*; 5 *grani* = 1 *cinquina*; 2 *cinquine* = 1 *carlino*; 2 *carlini* = 1 *tari*; 12 *tari* = 1 *scudo*; and 30 *tari* = 1 *oncia*. (Carmel Cassar, *Sex, Magic, and the Periwinkle* (Pietà: PIN, 2000), 34.) In relation to the current British pound sterling, one *scudo* coin was equivalent to about fourteen pence.

16 Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa', 1.



Figure 2 The Cathedral of St Paul, Mdina (Bruna Polimeni (photo), in Azzopardi and others, *Mdina, Rabat-Mosta* (Rome: Plurigraf Narni-Terni, 1988), 25. Copyright by Plurigraf Narni - Terni, Via di Pietralata 198, Rome, Italy)

institutions for boys. Composers and musicians involved in opera, and who also studied or taught at one of the four Neapolitan conservatories, had created a musical style that triumphed throughout Europe – hence the present-day label ‘Neapolitan’.<sup>17</sup> The number of well qualified composers who emerged from the conservatories during the eighteenth century included, among others: Nicola Porpora (1686–1768), Leonardo Vinci (1690/6?–1730), Francesco Durante (1684–1755), Francesco Feo (1691–1761), Leonardo Leo (1694–1744), Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736), Gaetano Latilla (1711–1788), Nicolò Jommelli (1714–1774), Girolamo Abos (1715–1760), Tommaso Traetta (1727–1779), Pietro Anfossi (1727–1797), Nicolò Piccinni (1728–1800), Antonio Sacchini (1730–1786), Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816) and Domenico Cimarosa (1749–1801) (Traetta, Anfossi, Piccinni and Sacchini were near-contemporaries of Zerafa).<sup>18</sup>

Zerafa’s arrival in Naples is recorded in a document of July 1738, preserved in the Archivio Storico Diocesano in Naples. The entry is as follows:

Benigno Zerafa from Malta was enrolled as a student by His Eminence [Cardinal Mgr Giuseppe Spinelli, in office 1735–1754] on the 8th of the said month.<sup>19</sup>

17 Michele Rak, ‘L’opera comica napoletana di primo settecento’, in *Musica e cultura a Napoli dal XV al XIX secolo*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Renato Bossa (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 222. The lightness and mobility of the Neapolitan style, contrasting with ‘the smooth and linear style of Venetian composers’, is the result of many features joined together: the preferred use of dotted rhythms (and avoiding stressing the downbeat); the frequent employment of rests to punctuate phrases; the rather active (often motivic) instrumental bass lines; virtuosic vocal parts with an abundance of ‘fioriture’ and complex passages; disjunct vocal lines; and the wide use of intervallic leaps. The correct declamation of the text was also often sacrificed in favour of an interesting musical idea. See Carolyn Gianturco, ‘Naples: A City of Entertainment’, in *The Late Baroque Era: From the 1680s to 1740*, ed. George J. Buelow (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 94–128, especially 110.

18 Michael F. Robinson, *Naples and Neapolitan Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 17–18.

19 Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa’, 2: ‘A 8 detto (= July 1738) entrato Benigno Zerafa, maltese, posto da Sua Eminenza per alunno.’



Another entry, for May–August 1743 under the heading ‘Spese per le scarpe di figlioli’, records: ‘A pair of shoes provided to Zerafa – 2 tari, 10 grani’.<sup>20</sup>

The Poveri di Gesù employed two principal teachers during Benigno’s time, Durante (primo maestro from 1728 to September 1739)<sup>21</sup> and Feo (successor to Durante from 1739 to 1743);<sup>22</sup> they were assisted by Alfonso Caggi (no dates, employed from 1738 to 1740/1741)<sup>23</sup> and Abos (employed from 1742 to 1743).<sup>24</sup>

During his six-year period of study in Naples (1738–1744) Zerafa completed three major compositions, two of which are large-scale works for two choirs, two orchestras and soloists: the first, a *Dixit Dominus* (Z1, ACM, Mus. MS 288–289) dated 1 June 1743, composed at the age of sixteen; the second, a *Messa di Gloria* (Z2, ACM, Mus. MS 243) dated 22 September 1743, composed at the age of seventeen. The third composition, a Credo a 4 (Z3, ACM, Mus. Ms. 245), is a more concise work dated 8 October 1743.

It seems that Benigno acquitted himself well in his studies at the conservatorio: a testimonial by the Maltese teacher Girolamo Abos, issued on the completion of his studies, reads (see also Figure 3):

I, the undersigned, attest to you that the young man Benigno Zerafa is most capable and can produce any composition which will be required, and I can affirm this the more forcefully since I was maestro of the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo where he was at that time, and I can assure you that the compositions he sent to Malta are really his own unaided work, and I can state this with a clear conscience, and in confirmation of this I undersign myself,

Girolamo Abos.<sup>25</sup>

This certificate from Abos was endorsed by another, issued by the Rector of the conservatorio, Don Filippo Bottigliero (see also Figure 4):

To all who shall see these writings by right, I the undersigned, Rector of the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo, declare and testify that Benigno Zerafa of the city of Malta has received the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist more than once a week and has taken part in all devotions in the same conservatorio, and for five years has been an example of a good life and virtue, in which he has distinguished himself greatly, and has been a good example to his companions; we sign this with true faith and with our zeal.

At Naples, from the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo,

18 June 1744, I, Don Filippo Bottigliero, Rector.<sup>26</sup>

20 Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa’, 2. ‘Dato le scarpe a Zerafa - tari 2, grani 10.’

21 Hanns-Bertold Dietz, ‘Durante, Francesco’, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), volume 5, 741.

22 Hanns-Bertold Dietz, ‘Feo, Francesco’, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), volume 6, 465–466.

23 Salvatore di Giacomo, *I quattro antichi conservatorii musicali di Napoli, MDXLIII–MDCCC* (Milan: Remo Sandron, 1928), volume 2, 151.

24 Abos was of Maltese birth but resided in Naples. After 1743 he served as *maestro di cappella* at the *Conservatorio di S. Onofrio*. Among his most notable works are a *Stabat mater* (ed. Joseph Vella Bondin (Middleton, WI: A–R Editions, 2003)) and several operas.

25 Curia Episcopalis Melitensis, CEM, *Acta Originalia*, volume 294, 266: ‘Io qui sottoscritto li fò fede che il Giovine Benigno Zrafa [sic] l’è di buonissim[a] abilità ed è capace di far qualsiasi co[m]posizione, che si richiede e maggiormente l’attesto perche mi son trovato Maestro del Cons[ervatorio]o de Poveri di Giesù dove stava allora lui, e l’assicuro, che q[ue]lle compositioni à mandate lui in Malta sono sue proprie e sole fatighe e di q[ue]sto l’acerto in mia coscienza, ed in fede di ciò mi sottoscrivo, Girolamo Abos.’

26 Curia Episcopalis Melitensis, CEM, *Acta Originalia*, volume 294, 266: ‘Omnibus ad quos presentes litteras inspicere de jure spectat, Ego infrascriptus Rector Collegij Pauperum Jesu Xsti [Christi], indubiam fidem facio; atq[ue] testor Benignum Zerafa Civitatis Melite sacrosanta penitentiae, e[t] Eucaristie Sacramenta pluries in ebdomada suscepisse atq[ue] omnibus dicti Collegij devotionis, pietatis, et studiorum exercitiis p[er] quinque annos operam navasse, et



Io qui sottoscritto. ho fede, che il Giovine Benigno Zerafa  
 l'è di buonissima abilità ed è capace di far qualivisa composi-  
 sitione, che si richiede e maggiormente l'adesso, perche  
 mi son trovato Maestro del Conf. de' Boveni di Siracusa  
 dove stava allora lui, e l'assicuro, che ho fatto compo-  
 sitioni à mandate lui in Malta sopra sue proprie  
 e de' fatigue... e di qto l'accento in *mea capitula*, ed  
 in fede di ciò mi sottoscrivo.

Girolamo Abos.

Figure 3 Girolamo Abos's certificate (CEM, *Acta Originalia*, volume 294, 265–267)

While still in Naples,<sup>27</sup> Benigno petitioned for the post of *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral of Malta; his petition, dated 20 August 1744,<sup>28</sup> along with the two certificates sent from Naples and the works he had already composed, earned him a laudatory report from the Church Deputies for Music. On 21 August 1744 they issued a report recommending the young composer to Bishop Alpheran.<sup>29</sup> The final part of the report reads:

we have been able to obtain very clear evidence, accompanied with the most dispassionate praise, . . . of his very great capacity and progress in counterpoint, in addition to which he has devoted himself to the playing of the violin and the double bass; he is therefore qualified to direct the *Coro*. We therefore feel that we shall please your Most Reverend Lordship [Bishop Alpheran] if we humbly ask you to perform an act of the greatest justice and charity, considering also that he is a son of our country, and that before he left for Naples, he had already served in this Holy Cathedral Church.<sup>30</sup>

On 22 August 1744 Bishop Alpheran issued a decree appointing Benigno Zerafa *maestro di cappella* of the Cathedral Church of St Paul, Mdina;<sup>31</sup> Zerafa was just turning eighteen. The following is an extract from the decree:

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bone vitæ, odore, et virtutum omnium splendore enituisse, ac eius Sociis in bene agendo exemplum prestasse: in quorum fidem has presentes litteras propria manu subscripsi, proprioq[ue] sigillo munivi. Neapoli ex edibus d[icti] Collegij Pauperu[m] Jesu Xsti [Christi] die XVIII. mensis Junij 1744. Ego D[omi]n[u]s Philippus Bottigliero, Rector.'

27 Zerafa returned to Malta on 11 September 1744. John Azzopardi, 'Chapter I: The Music Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina - Malta', in John Azzopardi and Matteo Sansone, *Italian and Maltese Music in the Archives at the Cathedral Museum of Malta* (Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, 2001), 29.

28 CEM, *Acta Originalia*, volume 294, 266.

29 CEM, *Acta Originalia*, volume 294, 265v.

30 CEM, *Acta Originalia*, volume 294: 'distintamente informati con spassionatissima lode, . . . della sua gran capacità e progresso nel contrappunto essendosi anche l'oratore applicato nel suono del violino e contrabbasso; capace per tanto alla prefettura del coro Musicale. Siamo per tanto del sentimento che aggrattando V[ost]ra S[ignoria] Ill[ustri]ssima e Rev[erendissima] l'or[ator]e di quanto umilmente supplica eserciterà un atto di somma giustizia e carità tanto più che è figlio del paese: e prima della sua partenza per Napoli era in actual servitio in questa S. Chiesa Cattedrale.'

31 Services during which the full participation of the *cappella musicale* was expected were of two kinds: Mass (said in the morning) and Vespers (performed in the afternoon). The parts of the liturgy that were set to music were: (a) Mass







Orders on 21 January 1747.<sup>36</sup> After obtaining an additional ‘subsidiary patrimony’ offered by his father, Zerafa was allowed to take Holy Orders,<sup>37</sup> receiving the Subdiaconate on 30 March 1748, and the Diaconate on 21 September of the same year.<sup>38</sup> He was ordained priest at the episcopal palace at Valletta on 19 September 1750 at the age of twenty-four.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately his early years as *maestro di cappella* were marred by a series of disputes with the authorities. On 13 November 1751 Zerafa was unexpectedly dismissed by unanimous decision from his post. Bishop Alpheran’s decree, signed by Chancellor Domenico Falzon on 13 November 1751, reads:

the above-mentioned Most Reverend Mgr Paulus Alpheran de Bussan . . . since he was rightly moved to do so, removed from his office as . . . maestro di cappella of his cathedral, Don Benigno Zerafa, and ordered that the above be revoked and abolished.<sup>40</sup>

On Zerafa’s dismissal his official salary was terminated<sup>41</sup> and the situation remained unchanged throughout 1752. Clues regarding the reasons for Zerafa’s dismissal can be found in a short note of 22 November 1751:

The obligation on the feast of Sta Domenica with Vespers and High Mass, as well as other low Masses every week, owed to the icon removed from the church of the same title, which was interdicted in 1699, is to be fulfilled by the beneficiary, Don Benigno Zerafa.<sup>42</sup>

An order dated 10 April 1753 addressed to Benigno reads:

. . . by a new order of the Illustrious Lord Baron Marc’ Antonio Inguanez, . . . to the Rev. Don Benigno Zerafa, who has to decide, and is obliged to start the restoration of the Beneficial Church of Santa Domenica, situated in the feud of the same Baron known as *Djar il Bniet*, and subsequently to render it again fit and worthy for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by virtue of a decree sent to him by the *Gran Corte*.<sup>43</sup>

It appears from these documents that Zerafa’s dismissal was due primarily to a religious oversight, possibly aggravated by financial complications. Zerafa was reappointed *maestro di cappella* of the cathedral church on 14 April 1753 by Bishop Alpheran himself, who even granted him the higher salary of 200 *scudi* a year.<sup>44</sup> Zerafa

36 Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa’, 2.

37 AAM, *Patrimonium*, 35.

38 Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa’, 2.

39 Azzopardi, ‘Benigno Zerafa’, 2.

40 ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, volume 1, folio 42v.: ‘Prælibatus Ill[ustrissi]mus et R[everendissi]mus D[omi]nus Fr[at]er Paulus Alpheran de Bussan Archiep[iscop]us Damiatæ . . . ob causas animum suum digne moventes amovit a servitio suæ Ecclesiæ Cathedralis et ab officio præfecti chori musicæ sive magistri cappellæ ejusdem Cathedralis . . . Don Benignum Zerafa, mandavitque revocari et aboleri dictam notam et ita.’ The concluding part of this document explains why no surviving documents exist which give the precise cause to Zerafa’s dismissal.

41 ACM, *Depositeria*, volume 12 (1750–1752), 381.

42 AAM, *Visite Pastoralis Alpheran de Bussan (1751)*, volume 35, folio 77r.: ‘Onus item Festivitat[is] S[an]ctæ Dominicæ cum suis Vesperis et missa cantatis nec non onus missæ lectæ qualibet hebdomada, ratione iconæ translatae ab eccle[sia] eiusdem tituli interdicta ab anno 1699 adimpletur per beneficiatum sacerdotem Don Benignum Zerafa. Die XXII mensis Novembris 1751.’

43 AAM, *Atti Civili*, volume 112 (1752–1753), folio 451v.: ‘d’ord[ine] n[ost]ro ad i[stan]za dell’ Ill[ustrissi]mo Sig[nor] Bar[on]e Marc’ Antonio Inguanez, prefig[ge]te ter[mi]ne di glior[ni] otto al Rev[erendo] Sig[nor] Don Benigno Zerafa fra li q[ua]li voglia, e debba onninamente incominciare la ristaurazione della V[eneranda] Chiesa Beneficiale di S[anta] Domenica sita nel feudo d’esso Sig[nor] Barone denominato ta’ Diar il Bniet, e susseguent[ement]e quella restituire idonea, e conducente alla celebrazione del Santis[sim]o Sacrificio della Messa . . . e ciò in vigor di decreto spedito a relaz[ion]e di q[uesta] G[ran] C[orte].’

44 ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, volume 1, 66.

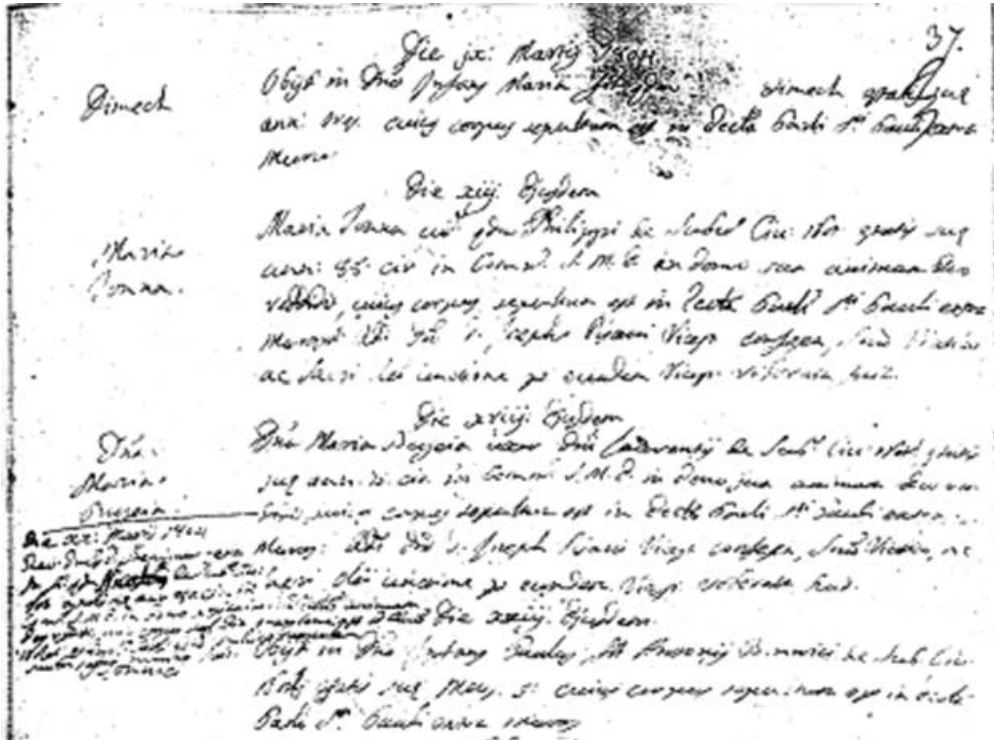


Figure 5 Zerafa's death record. The entry, written anomalously in the left margin, suggests that it was inadvertently overlooked (Mdina Parish Archives, *Libro Def.*, volume 5 (1801–1809), 37)

settled all outstanding debts,<sup>45</sup> concluding all his legal entanglements by 1759.<sup>46</sup> From the 1760s Zerafa extended his musical activity by directing the music in a number of other churches, among them the church of St Publius at Rabat which belonged to the Order of St John.<sup>47</sup>

On 12 December 1786 Benigno, who had been sick for a few years, submitted a *supplica* to the cathedral chapter, asking to be allowed to retire.<sup>48</sup> On his termination of contract on 7 January 1787<sup>49</sup> the cathedral chapter unanimously assigned to him a *giubilazione* (retirement pension) and a further one hundred *scudi* awarded in order to provide him with the necessary garments and to enable him to retire to the Hospital of San Nicola de Saura in his home town, Rabat.<sup>50</sup> Zerafa's position as *maestro di cappella* was taken by Francesco Azopardi (1748–1809).<sup>51</sup>

Benigno Zerafa died on 20 March 1804, aged seventy-eight (Figure 5). His body was transported to the cathedral church the following day and laid to rest.<sup>52</sup> Zerafa was remembered and honoured by Paolino Vassallo, *maestro di cappella* of the same cathedral a hundred years later, who, on examining Zerafa's

45 AAM, *Atti Civili*, volume 113 (1753–1754), 145.

46 AAM, *Atti Civili*, volume 118 (1758–1759), 475.

47 John Azzopardi, 'Muzika u Muzicisti fil-Kolleggjata ta' San Pawl, Rabat', in *Il-Festa Taghna* (Rabat, Parish Programme, 1989), 7.

48 ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, volume 12 (1786–1793), f. 41v, 42.

49 ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, volume 12 (1786–1793), f. 41v, 42.

50 ACM, *Reg. Del. Cap.*, volume 12 (1786–1793), f. 42r.

51 ACM, *Reg. Dep. Pers.*, volume 1, f. 96v.

52 Azzopardi, 'Benigno Zerafa', 4.





collection of sacred manuscripts, declared: 'His compositions . . . deserve to be exhibited in all the major European academies [of music]'.<sup>53</sup>

The years 1720–1780 are pivotal to an understanding of Zerafa's place in the history of Western music. In his book *Music in European Capitals*, Daniel Hertz demonstrates how the galant style in music flowered in Naples during the 1720s, 'whence it spread widely, dominating music for much of the century and defining it as a musical-historical epoch'.<sup>54</sup> It continued until the 1780s, when the majority of composers who had dominated the mid-eighteenth century died, among them Hasse, Gluck, Emanuel Bach, Jommelli, Holzbauer, Galuppi, Traetta, Sacchini and Johann Christian Bach.<sup>55</sup> The concept of a sixty-year epoch is shared by James Webster, who describes it as the 'Enlightenment-galant' period. Webster argues that the 'central' eighteenth century is a period that guarantees continuity across the baroque/classical divide at mid-century.<sup>56</sup>

Hertz's definition of the galant style lays stress on Leonardo Vinci, who 'led the way to the creation of the galant style in his comic and serious operas . . . followed by the visiting Hasse, Pergolesi, and other composers born or trained in Naples'.<sup>57</sup> Hertz argues that these composers 'fashioned a simpler, more direct musical language in their vocal music by rejecting contrapuntal complexity and other intricacies of the past'.<sup>58</sup> The new style meant 'freedom of dissonance treatment and . . . freedom to vary the number of voices in the texture'.<sup>59</sup> David Schulenberg summarises the main features of this style by stating that the 'term galant is nowadays used more specifically to refer to mid-eighteenth century works whose melody, harmony, and texture represent a simplification of those of the preceding late Baroque period'.<sup>60</sup> In fact, the overall aim of the galant 'was a directness and simple elegance that could not be achieved in the older style'.<sup>61</sup>

Zerafa certainly counts as a mid-eighteenth-century composer of the Neapolitan galant period. His compositions copiously employ harmonic and melodic sequences, chordal sequences of sevenths, the rhetorical use of the diminished-seventh chord and series of descending sixth chords; there is an abundant use of wide leaps in his melodies, melodic motions in parallel thirds and sixths, and the specific employment of chromatic notes for emotional effect; triplet figures, the extensive employment of the I-IV-V-I cadential progression in repetitive forms, syncopation, diatonic vocal coloratura, the use of Lombardic rhythms and appoggiaturas are all found in his works. The galant period favoured the major over the minor mode – out of a total 148 compositions, Zerafa set 130 in the major. The basis of Zerafa's galant style can be seen in the opening instrumental ritornello (first twelve bars only) of the *Laudamus te* bipartite aria (movement four) for soprano solo (Example 1, strings and basso only), from the *Messa a due cori* in D major (Z2, 1743). Typical of his writing for solo voice, it benefits from a multitude of devices employed by the composer throughout his career, namely irregular phrases, use of ornaments, two- or three-part texture, omission of the viola, imitation, employment of triplets and an independent bass line.<sup>62</sup>

53 Vincenzo Caruana dei Conti Gatto, *Malta Artistica Illustrata* (Hamrun: San Giuseppe, 1910), volume 2, 25: 'Questi suoi componimenti . . . degni di essere esposti nelle prime accademie di Europa.'

54 Daniel Hertz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style, 1720–1780* (New York: Norton, 2003), 23.

55 Hertz, *Music in European Capitals*, 1005.

56 James Webster, 'The Eighteenth Century as a Musical-Historical Period?', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 1/1 (2004), 54–55.

57 Hertz, *Music in European Capitals*, 999.

58 Hertz, *Music in European Capitals*, 999.

59 Hertz, *Music in European Capitals*, 999, 1003.

60 David Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 308.

61 Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque*, 308.

62 'Figured basses continued to be used in certain types of score, especially recitative and sacred choral music, into the 1820s.' See Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque*, 58.



Andantino

Violin 1

Violin 2

Basso

5 7 6 #4

6 5 4 6 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 7 5 6 4

Example 1 Z2, *Messa a due cori* in D major, 1743, *Laudamus te*, bars 1–12 (ACM, Mus. MS 243)

## APPENDIX: THE WORKS OF BENIGNO ZERAFÀ

In this listing Zerafa's works are identified by the number assigned them in Acquilina, 'The Life and Music of Benigno Zerafa (1726–1804): A Mid-Eighteenth-Century Maltese Composer of Sacred Music'; the brackets following give the shelfmark at the Cathedral of Malta Archives, Mdina, which includes both scores and parts (\* = score only; \*\* = parts only). This is followed by the key, vocal scoring (8vv = SATB Coro I, SATB Coro II; 5vv = SSATB; 4vv = SATB) and date (marked on the score or parts). Standard instrumental abbreviations are used to indicate the accompaniment. In those cases where horns substitute for trumpets in certain movements, the designation is 2 tpt (hn); bc = basso continuo, comprising vc, db and org.

### Sacred vocal works for voice(s) and instruments

*Masses*: Kyrie–Gloria, Z2 (243), D, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc (I), 2 vn, bc (II), 22 September 1743; Z8 (245A), C, 4vv, ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, bc, 28 September 1744; Z11 (246), F, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, bc, 1745; Z13 (247), D, 5vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 18 June 1745; Z16 (248), *in Pastorale*, A, 4vv, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 1746; Z18 (249), D, 5vv, ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 25 June 1747; Z21 (250), E flat, 4vv, 2 fl, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 28 June 1751; Z22 (251), F, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, vla, bc (I), 2 vn, vla, bc (II), 21 April 1752; Z32 (252), G, 4vv, 2 hn, 2vn, bc, 12 September 1753; Z96 (253), G, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, vla, bc (I), 2 vn, vla, bc (II), 25 June 1756; Z103 (254), D, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, vla, bc (I), 2 vn, vla, bc (II), 21 June 1758; Z113 (255\*\*), G, 3vv (SSB), 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1764; Z122 (258\*), D, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 11 June 1772

*Requiem mass*: Z9 (244\*\*), f, 4vv, 2 hn, 2vn, bc, 1744; Z119 (256), f, 5vv, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 29 November 1765

*Mass sections*: Credo, Z3 (245), D, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 9 October 1743; Z33 (260\*\*), G, 4vv, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1753; Z102 (261), F, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 9 January 1758



*Graduals*: Constitues eos, Z63 (262), G, S, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Qui operatus est, Z65 (262), G, T, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Dilexisti iustitiam, Z67 (262), G, 3vv (STB), 2 vn, bc, 1754; Propter veritatem, Z69 (262), D, 3vv (SAB), 2 vn, bc, 1754; Benedicta et venerabilis, Z71 (262), D, 3vv (SAB), 2 vn, bc, 1754; Locus iste a Deo, Z73 (262), D, B, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Timete Dominum, Z75 (262), D, T, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Tecum principium, Z77 (262), F, B, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Viderunt omnes, Z79 (262), F, S, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Sederunt principes, Z81 (262), G, A, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Exiit sermo, Z83 (262), G, B, 2 vn, bc, 1754

*Offertories*: Confirma hoc Deus, Z59 (262), G, A, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Intonuit de cælo, Z60 (262), F, A, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Portas cæli, Z61 (262), F, A, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Sacerdos Domini, Z62 (262), F, A, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Constitues eos, Z64 (262), D, S, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Mihi autem, Z66 (262), F, S, 2 hn 2 vn, bc, 1754; Filiæ regum, Z68 (262), G, 3vv (STB), 2 vn, bc, 1754; Assumpta est Maria, Z70 (262), D, 3vv (SAB), 2 vn, bc, 1754; Beata es virgo Maria, Z72 (262), G, 3vv (SAB), 2 vn, bc, 1754; Domine Deus in simplicitate, Z74 (262), G, T, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Justorum animæ, Z76 (262), D, T, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Lætentur cæli, Z78 (262), D, T, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Tui sunt cæli, Z80 (262), d, B, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Elegrunt apostoli, Z82 (262), e, A, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Justus ut palma, Z84 (262), G, B, 2 vn, bc, 1754

*Introductory versicles*: Deus in adiutorium, Z4 (273), G, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1744; Z5 (274), G, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1744; Z90 (275), D, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 24 January 1756; Z91 (275\*), D, 4vv, 2 ob [?], 2 tpt [?], 2 vn, bc, 24 January 1756, incomplete; Z109 (303), F, 3vv (SSB), 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 30 Jan 1764

*Psalms*: Dixit Dominus, Z1 (288–289), G, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, bc (I), 2 vn, bc (II), 1 June 1743; Z10 (291), D, 5vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 18 January 1745; Z12 (290), F, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1745; Z20 (292), F, 4vv, 2 fl, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 24 June 1751; Z34 (293), G, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 24 September 1753; Z47 (294), F, 4vv, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 30 December 1753; Z86 (276\*), F, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, vla, bc (I), 2 vn, vla, bc (II), 22 June 1755; Z88 (277), D, 4vv, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 29 October 1755; Z95 (295), G, 8vv, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, vla, bc (I), 2 vn, vla, bc (II), 10 June 1756; Z100 (296), D, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 30 December 1757; Z110 (303), F, 3vv (SSB), 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 30 January 1764; Z123 (306\*), G, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, bc, 13 June 1773; Confitebor, Z37 (278), G, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1 October 1753; Z89 (277), C, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 29 October 1755; Z117 (297), D, S, 2 vn, vc obligato, bc, 16 August 1765; Beatus vir, Z14 (280), F, B, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2 vn, bc, 3 December 1745; Z35 (281), D, 4vv, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 27 September 1753; Z48 (279), e, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1 January 1754; Z118 (298), F, S, 2 vn, vc obligato, bc, 24 September 1765; Z120 (299), E flat, B, 2 vn, vc obligato, bc, 8 January 1766; Laudate pueri, Z36 (283), F, 4vv, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 29 September 1753; Z50 (301\*\*), G, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1754; Z111 (303), D, 3vv (SSB), 2 ob, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 3 Febraury 1764; Z115 (304), G, S, 2 ob, 2 hn (tpt), 2vn, vc obligato, bc, 3 July 1764; Z147 (287), D, S, 2 vn, bc, undated; In exitu, Z51 (286), F, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 5 March 1754; Laudate Dominum, Z38 (300\*\*), d, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1753; Z49 (284), F, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 4 January 1754; Lætatus sum, Z23 (282), D, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 28 January 1753; Nisi Dominus, Z87 (302\*\*), F, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1755; Z116 (305), G, S, 2 vn, mandolino obbligato, bc, 20 September 1764

*Canticles*: Magnificat, Z6 (307), a, 5vv, 2 tpt, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1744; Z46 (308), G, 4vv, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 22 December 1753; Z85 (309/711), D, 4vv, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 9 June 1754; Z101 (310), F, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1 January 1758; Z112 (303), G, 3vv (SSB), 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 5 February 1764

*Antiphons*: Sacerdos et pontifex, Z104 (322), D, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 26 June 1758; Sancte Paule Apostole, Z105, (322), D, 4vv, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 26 June 1758

*Hymn*: Te Deum laudamus, Z17 (269), D, 4vv, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 1746

*Responsory*: Posui adiutorium, Z132 (325), D, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 23 October 1776

*Sequences*: Veni Sancte Spiritus, Z27 (270), G, 4vv, vn, bc, 1753; Lauda Sion salvatorem, Z31 (271), A, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 12 June 1753; Victimæ paschali laudes, Z54 (272), D, 4vv, 2 vn, bc, 1754

*Litany of Loreto*: Z7 (328\*\*), G, 2vv (SA), 2 vn, bc, 1744

*Motets*: Læta surge, dulcissima aurora, Z19 (316\*\*), F, 4vv, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 1749; Ascendit Deus, Z24 (319), D, 4vv, vn, org, 28 May 1753; O Rex gloriæ, Z25 (319), D, 4vv, vn, org, 28 May 1753; O Quam suavis est, Z28 (318A\*\*), F, 4vv, vn, org, 1753; Ego sum panis vivus, Z29 (318A\*\*), C, 4vv, vn, org, 1753; O Sacrum convivium, Z30 (318A\*\*), a, 4vv, vn, org, 1753; Ad astra, ad sidera, Z39 (318\*\*), D, 4vv, 2 tpt, 2 vn, bc, 1753; Rorate cæli, Z97 (320), F, B, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 9 December 1757; O felix carina, Z98 (321), F, S, 2 ob, 2 hn, 2 vn, bc, 29 Dec 1757;



Omnes ergo, Z99 (321), D, S, 2 ob [?], 2 tpt [?], 2 vn, bc, [?] 29 December 1757, incomplete; Ad faustum, ad faustum, Z107 (323), D, 4vv, 2 ob, 2 tpt (hn), 2 vn, bc, 4 May 1759

Sacred vocal works for voice(s) and organ/basso continuo only

Masses: Kyrie-Gloria-Credo-Sanctus (without the Benedictus)-Agnus Dei, Z133 (257), F, 4vv, org, 2 November 1779; Z134 (257), G, 4vv, org, 2 November 1779; Z135 (257), A, 4vv, org, 2 November 1779; Z136 (257), d, 4vv, org, 2 Nov 1779; Z137 (257), c, 4vv, org, 2 November 1779

*Requiem mass*: Z121 (CSP\*), B flat, 4vv, org, 4 March 1766

*Intros*: Quasi modo infantes, Z92 (268), F, 4vv, org, 24 April 1756; Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas, Z106 (322), F, 4vv, bc, 26 June 1758; Z124 (266), C, 4vv, org, 16 February 1775; Charitas Dei diffusa [alternatim], Z131 (267), F, 3vv (SSB), org, 13 May 1775

*Gradual*: Alleluia in Die resurrectionis, Z93 (268), F, A, org, 24 April 1756

*Alleluia verses*: Alleluia confitebuntur cæli, Z55 (262), D, A, org, 1754; Alleluia ascendit Deus, Z57 (262), b, A, org, 1754

*Offertories*: Confitebuntur cæli, Z56 (262), D, 2vv (AT), org, 1754; Ascendit Deus, Z58 (262), D, 2vv (AT), org, 1754; Angelus Domini, Z94 (268), F, A, org, 24 April 1756

*Holy Week*: 27 Responsori per la Settimana Santa, Z15 (311), f, 4vv, org, 10 March 1746; Z108 (315\*\*), d, 8vv, org (I), org (II), 1763; Improperia per il Venerdì Santo, Z52 (312), f, 4vv, org, 26 March 1754; Miserere [alternatim], Z53 (313), B flat, 4vv, org, 29 March 1754

*Anthems (BVM)*: Salve Regina, Z114 (330), G, 3vv (SSB), org, 17 June 1764; Alma Redemptoris, Z148 (329\*\*), C, B, org, undated

*Hymns*: Salutis humanæ Sator/Æterne Rex altissime, Z26 (319\*\*), F, 4vv, org, 28 May 1753; Z26a (319\*\*), F, 4vv, org, 28 May 1753; Te Deum, Z26b (319\*\*), F, B [?], org, 1753, incomplete

*Litanies of Loreto*: Z144 (327\*\*), e, 4vv, org, 1782; Z145 (327\*\*), G, 4vv, org, 1782; Z146 (327\*\*), in *Pastorale*, C, 4vv, org, 1782

*Motets*: Rorate cæli desuper, Z40 (317), A, 2vv (SA), org, 1753; Super te Jerusalem, Z41 (317), D, 2vv (SA), org, 1753; Ecce veniet Deus, Z42 (317), G, 2vv (SA), org, 1753; Ecce apparebit Dominus, Z43 (317), F, 2vv (SA), org, 1753; Jerusalem gaude, Z44 (317), F, 2vv (SA), org, 1753; Montes et omnes, Z45 (317), a, 2vv (SA), org, 1753; Magnus Dominus, Z125 (324), G, 4vv, org, 11 March 1775; Magnificentiam gloriæ, Z126 (324), D, 4vv, org, 11 March 1775; Et virtutem, Z127 (324), C, 4vv, org, 11 March 1775; Memoriam abundantiae, Z128 (324), F, 4vv, org, 11 March 1775; Miserator Dominus, Z129 (324), D, 4vv, org, 11 March 1775; Suavis Dominus, Z130 (324), D, 4vv, org, 11 March 1775; Fidelis Dominus, Z138 (326), C, 4vv, org, 16 June 1781; Allevat Dominus, Z139 (326), C, 4vv, org, 16 June 1781; Oculi omnium, Z140 (326), F, 4vv, org, 16 June 1781; Aperis tu manum, Z141 (326), B flat, 4vv, org, 16 June 1781; Justus Dominus, Z142 (326), g, 4vv, org, 16 June 1781; Prope est, Z143 (326), g, 4vv, org, 16 June 1781

Miscellaneous

*Psalms*: Dixit Dominus, Z34a (293\*\*), Verse no. 4 'Tecum principium', D, T, nineteen-bar melody written on f. 2v of the alto part of Z34, undated, incomplete