



GIUSEPPE BEZZUOLI (1784-1855)
Carlo Sisi **THE DEATH OF FILIPPO STROZZI
IN CASTEL SAN GIOVANNI**

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FRONT COVER
Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Death of Filippo Strozzi in Castel San Giovanni* (detail)
Oil on canvas, 258x193,5 cm
SIGNED AND DATED: G. Bezzuoli 1838

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Giuseppe Bezzuoli (1784-1855)
The Death of Filippo Strozzi on Castel San Giovanni
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CONTENTS

1.

Carlo Sisi

NICCOLÒ PUCCINI, GIUSEPPE BEZZUOLI
AND A PAINTING REDISCOVERED

6

BIBLIOGRAPHY

37

2.

Laura Amorosi and Veronica Balzani

RESTORATION

38

3.

APPENDIX

50



¹ 'Giornale del Commercio', 15 August 1830, p.131. The letter informs us that "Strozzi dead in prison" and the paintings of Antonio Bertoli, Emilio Busi and Carlo della Porta are already finished.

² See C. Mazzi, C. Sisi, *La collezione di Niccolò Puccini*, in *Cultura dell'Ottocento a Pistoia. La collezione Puccini*, exhibition catalogue (Pistoia) ed. C. Mazzi and C. Sisi, Florence 1977, pp. 13-20.

³ See the essays by E. Donati, *Niccolò Puccini e il Risorgimento a Pistoia*, pp. 13-55; and G. Capecchi, *Intellettuali e letterati nel circolo di Scornio*, pp. 57-81, in *Monumenti del Giardino Puccini. Un luogo del Romanticismo in Toscana*, ed. C. Sisi, Florence 2010.

A reader wrote a letter to the editor of the 'Giornale del Commercio' in August 1838 to announce that: "Yes, my friend, in Pistoja, where everything passes under modest silence, a great love of Country still thrives, and it is from that very place that there has appeared the most brilliant vision, that on more than one occasion there has arisen a patron of the Fine Arts in the person of Cav. Niccolò Puccini, known for so many noble deeds that he has now sought to foster emulation in our educated youth, of which contest we shall be the fortunate admirers ..." (fig. 1). His letter was clearly alluding to the patriotic messages enshrined in the subjects of the historical pictures commissioned by Puccini between 1837 and 1839, both from successful masters and from young painters enrolled at the Accademia in Florence, who, thus "relieved of their inertia", would encounter their first major opportunity to prove their talent in the loftiest of all genres beloved of the Romantic canon.¹

At the time the article was published, Giuseppe Bezzuoli had already been commissioned *The Death of Filippo Strozzi in Castel San Giovanni* (March 1837), Carlo della Porta had been commissioned *Machiavelli's Will for Italian Freedom* (1837-8), Antonio Bertoli had been commissioned *The Death of Francesco Ferruccio, Captain of the Florentines* (January 1838) and Emilio Busi had been commissioned *The Expulsion of the Germans From Genoa* (April 1838). But the exemplary 'gallery' imagined by Puccini for his suburban residence in Scornio was eventually to include a number of other crucial historical paintings: Giuseppe Bezzuoli's *Lorenzino de' Medici Stabbed to Death on Piazza San Giovanni e Paolo in Venice* (December 1837), Giulio Piatti's *Origin of the Sicilian Vespers* (February 1838), Enrico Pollastrini's *Slaying of Duke Alessandro* (October 1838), Luciano Fiorucci's *Savonarola Called to Lorenzo de' Medici's Deathbed, Offering Him the Salvation of His Soul in Exchange for Three Things, Including Florence's Freedom* (1838), and Giuseppe Sabatelli's *Farinata degli Uberti at the Battle of the Serchio* (February 1839). At the exhibition held in conjunction with the Accademia's three-yearly competition in 1837 Niccolò Puccini also bought another painting by Giulio Piatti depicting *Raimondo de' Pazzi Taking Leave of His Wife To Join the Other Conspirators Against Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici*, a subject inspired by Vittorio Alfieri's tragedy which, once imbued with the nationalist and populist vigour of the figurative arts, would come to complete the libertarian and anti-tyrannical project nurtured by the 'Lord of Scornio'.²

This was the name by which a speaker would call Niccolò Puccini when he wished to allude to the evocative scenario of the garden that Puccini had begun to create on the outskirts of Pistoia in the 1820s (fig. 2), a huge and demanding undertaking which, in causing landscape and monuments to converge in a single, symbolic path, gradually came to be considered a compulsory destination for the Tuscan reformists banding together around Giovan Pietro Vieusseux's 'Antologia' and, on a broader level, for the intellectuals and artists of the Italian Risorgimento.³



1. Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *Portrait of Niccolò Puccini*, 1843. Pistoia, Museo Civico.

2. *Gothic Castle and Monument to Francesco Ferrucci*. Pistoia, Giardino Puccini.

The historical paintings commissioned for the purpose and shown to the public on the occasion of the annual Festa delle Spighe, or Ears of Corn Festival, completed the ideological itinerary by offering an illustration of those events and players in modern history considered a surrogate for heroic action "impossible to undertake in our own day and age" and thus left to art and literature's capacity for evocation: "Once tyrants' deaths were brought about, today they are painted", Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi wrote in this connection, with the intention of encouraging Puccini's libertarian inclination and generosity.⁴ When Puccini decided to commission Giuseppe Bezzuoli to portray *The Death of Filippo Strozzi* (fig. 3) – the first in an iconographical series intended to decorate his estate in Scornio – he showed that he had already

⁴ The matter is discussed in P. Luciani, *Le committenze di Niccolò Puccini*, in *Cultura dell'Ottocento* op. cit., pp. 23-28, reprinted in *Monumenti* op. cit., pp. 239-247.

3. Giuseppe Bezzuoli,
*The Death of Filippo Strozzi in Castel
San Giovanni*, 1838.
Private collection.



⁵ *Della vita e delle opere del Professore Cav. Giuseppe Bezzoli maestro di pittura nell'I. e R. Accademia delle Belle Arti di Firenze e membro delle più celebri Accademie di Europa. Memorie raccolte da alcuni scolari ed amici*, Florence 1855, p. 73, note 3.

⁶ P. Luciani, *op. cit.*, 1977, p. 24; *op. cit.*, 2010, pp. 240-241.

embraced the cause and demands of the political and literary circles which he frequented with such assiduity, and indeed he illustrated them to the artist with unbridled enthusiasm: “A fellow citizen of Strozzi’s 300 years after the latter’s demise, with immortal brush you shall show both our own generation and posterity how a fine death erases a life of infamy and perfidy. And your picture’s tragedy shall spawn a noble debate on life and death. Take courage, my dear Professor, you have in your hands one of the most picturesque subjects in our entire History!”⁵ In Puccini’s pictures, the cult of the grand gesture was to acquire a conscious ideological function dependent on a ‘system’ that was to be gradually perfected over time, comprising on the one hand the literary texts used as a repertoire for subjects (the tragedies of Alfieri and Niccolini, together with the 16th century historians or with coeval historians such as Carlo Botta), and on the other, militant writers of the calibre of Niccolini and Guerrazzi adopted as representatives of the classicist and Ghibelline *milieux* respectively.⁶

Thus Giuseppe Bezzuoli tailored his work very skilfully to this extremely modern and demanding context, keeping Puccini abreast of the various phases of the work and exchanging with him the thoughts and results spawned by the research that he conducted into historical sources with the authoritative assistance of Giovan Battista Niccolini. Niccolini considered Bezzuoli to be the most congenial interpreter, in the sphere of the figurative arts, of the modern historical novel, in other words of the narrative form best suited to recounting nature in its infinite variety, albeit through the mediation of the great writers (and, by analogy, the great artists) of the 16th and 17th centuries. In a letter to Puccini dated 29 December 1837, Bezzuoli pursues the dialogue on which the two men embarked when the painting was first commissioned, and reveals his dogged determination to be historically accurate when he discusses the subject with the documents to back up his arguments: “You ask me again whether the event really did take place at night? And I shall reply that I am certain of it, on the strength of a coeval manuscript lent to me by our common friend Giovan Battista Niccolini; if perchance you are unhappy with a nighttime effect, however, please tell me so freely inasmuch as, no interesting details differing, we can in all honesty forgo such. I chose it because it seemed to me to be picturesque, and the hour appropriate for the tragic event.”⁷ His extremely detailed notes, formerly in the Archivio Parri, confirm that on this occasion too Bezzuoli was true to his habit of jotting down his thoughts and descriptions of the subject in the pages of a notebook: for *The Death of Filippo Strozzi* he writes that he has consulted “the posthumous histories of Jacopo Nardi” and an autograph work on Strozzi’s life “written by his brother Lorenzo”, the latter probably loaned to him by Niccolini who was in any case very interested in the topic in connection with his own tragedy, *Filippo Strozzi*, which he was to publish in Florence in 1847. The appendix to this volume

⁷ Pistoia, Biblioteca Forteguerriana, Raccolta Puccini, Cassetta XI, 3.

“... you have in your hands one of the most picturesque subjects in our entire History!”

contains the *Notice* which serves as an introduction to the *Life* written by Lorenzo, listing the manuscripts that had led to the tradition being forged. They include, as being especially rich in variants and footnotes, the “good codex owned by Professor G.B. Niccolini”,⁸ which we imagine is the very one that Bezzuoli consulted while working on the composition of the large picture which was to inaugurate the secular ‘Stations of the Cross’ devised by Niccolò Puccini and eyed with suspicion by the grand ducal government’s emissaries, who had been busy for some time keeping a close eye on the monuments in the garden in Scornio, which continued to sprout inscriptions “of an unquestioned politically malevolent tendency”.⁹

Bezzuoli informed Puccini on 15 December 1837 that he had ordered the canvas from his favourite “paint supplier” and that he was already planning to study the composition from life of the “whole group at night” in order to avoid making any mistakes in transferring its natural aspect onto canvas.¹⁰ A few days later he told his patron that the composition was a success, that the canvas was finally on his easel and that he had produced a few studies for the painting while “the *bozzetto* has been painted from life”.¹¹ Two preparatory drawings in an album of miscellany formerly in the Archivio Parri can be associated with this phase of the work because, among other reasons, they paint a different picture of the event in a series of crude “snapshots” focusing on the main figure’s suicide.¹² Indeed the circumstances of that suicide had never been fully clarified, as Bezzuoli himself was able to conclude from his consultation of the historical sources available to him. Thus he will have read in Bernardo Segni’s *Istorie fiorentine*, for example, that: “It was reported thereafter in the year MDXXXVIII that Filippo had taken his own life in prison by putting a sword to his throat, a sword left there by chance by one of those guarding him. And moreover a number of his writings left on a desk were made public and they said: *While I may not have proven capable of living till now, I shall certainly prove capable of dying*. And imploring God’s forgiveness, he added: *If I do not deserve forgiveness, at least send me to the place where Cato resides*. Another one of his writings was also made public, and it said: *Exoriatur (sic) aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*. His body was never seen, nor was it ever known in what place he was buried. Rumour had it that he slew himself because he thought that he would be delivered up to the executioner and be put to death. Another rumour, credited by few, claimed that Filippo was slain

⁸ *Filippo Strozzi. Tragedia di G.-B. Niccolini corredata d’una vita di Filippo e di documenti inediti*, Florence 1847, p. VIII.

⁹ E. Donati, *Politica e cultura nella Toscana della Restaurazione. Il “caso” Niccolò Puccini*, in ‘Ricerche Storiche’, XIII, 3, September–December 1983, p. 803.

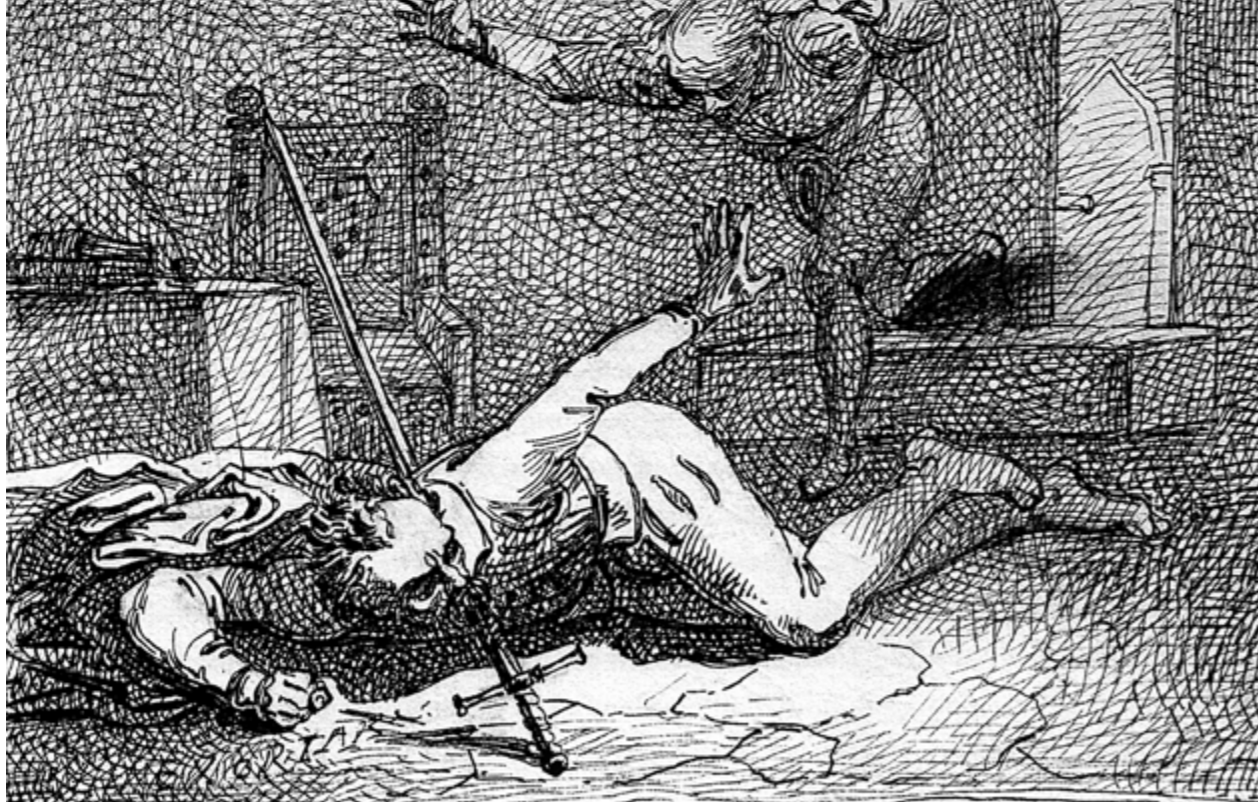
¹⁰ Pistoia, Biblioteca Forteguerriana, Raccolta Puccini, Cassetta XI, 2.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 1.

¹² See E. Marconi, *Giuseppe Bezzuoli, Niccolò Puccini e la pittura di storia*, in *Monumenti cit.*, p. 266, note 46. The two drawings are numbered 6 and 7 (“The Death of Filippo Strozzi, sketched in pen”) in the handwritten inventory of ‘Drawings, pen sketches, other sketches by Prof. Giuseppe Bezzuoli, contained in this album’, formerly in the Archivio Parri in Florence.

OVERLEAF
Giuseppe Bezzuoli,
The Death of Filippo Strozzi in Castel San Giovanni, detail.





4. Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Death of Filippo Strozzi*, 1837. Private collection.

5. Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Death of Filippo Strozzi*, 1837. Private collection.

¹³ *Istorie Fiorentine dall'anno MDXXVII al MDLV scritte da Bernardo Segni, pubblicate per cura di G. Gargani giusta una copia scritta da Scipione Ammirato*, Florence 1857, pp. 370-371.

¹⁴ See *Disegni dell'Ottocento dalla collezione Batelli*, exhibition catalogue ed. C. Sisi, Florence 1987, p.75. A scroll on the back of the painting has the following dedication: "Giuseppe Bezzuoli gave this sketch to his friend Abbot Lenzi" (L. Caramel, C. Pirovano, *Galleria d'Arte Moderna. Opere dell'Ottocento*, Milan 1975, pp. 25-26, n. 191). The painting was shown by Giuseppe Lesca at the Exhibition

by order of the castellan or of the Marchese del Vasto, both having promised him that they would not deliver him up to the Duke; and so, on hearing of the resolve of the Emperor who wished to please Duke Cosimo, they had him slain and bruited it about that he had taken his own life. It was also said that those words, aired in public as being by Filippo's own hand, were written by Pierfrancesco of Prato, the Duke's tutor when he was *in minoribus*. Several gave easy credit to the story that Filippo had taken his own life, because they considered him to be a godless wretch who did not believe in Christ; whence the populace said that God had visited that punishment on him deservedly, and as a fitting example for one who had always scorned religion".¹³

The two drawings mentioned above address different moments in the tragic story, both of them implicit in the narrative. In one (fig. 4), Strozzi has just thrust the swordpoint into his own neck and written *exoriar.* on the floor, as a gaoler breaks into the prison; in the other, Strozzi is shown wounded in the chest in a narrow cell close to a table on which we see his books and his writings (fig. 5). Both drawings document the phases leading up to the final composition, a composition almost complete in the oil study (fig. 6) which Bezzuoli was later to dedicate to Abbot Fenzi, an associate of Niccolò Puccini and a great friend of the painter during his time in Pistoia.¹⁴ The compositional solutions that we find in the final painting begin to take shape in the study, for instance the nighttime setting, the idea of the body supine on the floor of the cell and of the men-at-arms leaning over it as they pore over the sheet of parchment with the victim's last words, or the gaolers peering in to gaze at the scene in astonishment; all elements taken up and perfected in the very fine drawing that once belonged to Luigi Bardi (fig. 7), in which the artist studies the same com-



position but from the opposite side – as in the final painting – achieving naturalist effects in his rendering of the figures' features and in the detail of Strozzi's clothing.¹⁵ The result achieved in the final painting, in which Bezzuoli complemented the drama of the figures with meticulous architectural details and details of the setting and furnishings, reveals clear affinities with the passage in Iacopo Nardi's *Istorie*, another important source into which Bezzuoli must have dipped in his preliminary studies in an effort to determine the exact circumstances of the death: "He was kept in a very comfortable chamber, albeit a prison, with a low barred window out of which he could look at will, and his custody was in the hands of three soldiers in the mesnie of the Castellan, Don Giovanni. Now when he wished to put what he had determined to do into practice, it being already evening, and one of those soldiers being outside his room for some chore, he sent the other to light the lamp, and to the third who was standing on the threshold he said that he would call him back and at the same time he pushed him out through the door, shutting it in his face and bolting it from the inside, crying: *Here, here I want to die*. The door was strong, as doors are wont to be in prison, so that he had the time to write what people say he wrote, and to fulfil his purpose, there being no one to prevent him; moreover, concerning the writing that he left on the table, it is highly likely that he had written it before, at his ease. Then he took up the sword which the last soldier had left in the chamber, and did the deed that people say of him".¹⁶

The painting, which was completed in November 1838 after a number of second thoughts and – as we can imagine, if we remember the notebooks that he filled with his notes – after seriously studying the historical sources recommended to him by

of the Società di Belle Arti of Florence in 1933 (*Società delle Belle Arti di Firenze. Esposizione Commemorativa del 90° anno della fondazione*, May–June 1933, Florence 1933, s.p.: "n.106. Detail of 'Death of Filippo Strozzi', prof. G.Uff. Giuseppe Lesca". That same year Lesca proposed that the Soprintendenza di Firenze purchase the picture, but to no avail (the correspondence with Soprintendente Nello Tarchiani is now in the Archivio della Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Palazzo Pitti).

¹⁵ See *Disegni cit.*, pp. 74-76, n. 51.

¹⁶ *Istorie della città di Firenze di Iacopo Nardi ridotte alla lezione de' codici originali con l'aggiunta del Decimo Libro inedito e con annotazioni per cura e opera di Lelio Arbib*, II, Florence 1838-41, pp. 365-366.



6a. Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Death of Filippo Strozzi* (recto), c.1837. Milan, Galleria d'Arte Moderna.

6b. "Giuseppe Bezzuoli gave this bozzetto by his own hand to his friend Fr. Lenzi and it is accurately done, before the painting of the

picture that the excellent Cav. Puccini has singled out on account of the protection that he affords talent; as for [?] the realisation of the picture in Cav. Puccini's so-called large villa, there is an interesting variety because I liked [?] Bezzuoli that the best of art pursues a different path."

Niccolini, appeared thus to Giuseppe La Farina, whom Puccini had commissioned to describe in his book entitled *Monumenti del Giardino Puccini* published in Pistoia in 1845 (fig. 8): "Filippo has already fallen supine on the ground, oblique to the observer. He has already paid the price in blood for the crime of helping in some way to enslave his country. Two soldiers run in, fully armed; they pore in astonishment over a parchment bearing the famous words: *Exoriare aliquis ex nostris ossibus ultor*. Beside the dead man lies an open book dripping with blood. It is Polybius, which he may have been reading to avail himself of it against the man dominating the fatherland".¹⁷ In that year the picture 'gallery' conceived by Niccolò Puccini was starting to be complete, to reflect the exact configuration that he had devised with a sequence of events and players taken from the historical episodes best suited to foreshadow the aspirations and ideals which would fuel the struggle for independence and love of country also among the intellectuals of Pistoia from the 1830s. An

7. Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Death of Filippo Strozzi*, c. 1837. Florence, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi.

¹⁷ G. La Farina, *Villa Puccini – Quadri moderni*, in *Monumenti del Giardino Puccini*, Pistoia 1845, pp. 106-107.

OVERLEAF
Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Death of Filippo Strozzi in Castel San Giovanni*, detail.



ARTIST: **Giuseppe Bezzuoli**

DATE: **1838**

SUBJECT: ***The Death of Filippo Strozzi***

DIMENSIONS: **258 X 193.5 cm**

SUPPORT: **linen twill prepared with primer (t/o 18/10)**

TECHNIQUE: **oil on canvas**

NEXT PAGE

Two sets of details of the picture during restoration, taken with different photographic techniques: diffused light, infrared reflectography 1100nm and false colour infrared.

Details of the tear (front and back).

The painting is still on its first canvas mounted on an expanding stretcher frame with a central crosspiece. The nailing, using hammered nails with heads, is original. The canvas is in excellent condition and the fibres are not particularly polymerised. In fact, the painting is still sufficiently taut and the support fulfils its function to perfection. There is only very minor distortion of the crosspiece.

The twill is torn in three places, two of which are small and slightly distorted by the blow that caused them. The third tear, on the other hand, is approximately 8 cm. in length (see photographs) and is uneven, with small flakes of paint in a precarious condition. The tear has been clumsily repaired with strong glue and strengthened with a patch glued using plant-based adhesive, causing serious contraction and distortion of the fibres in the surrounding area.

The primer and paint are perfectly preserved and there is no visible cracking other than in the vicinity of a scratch in a typical herringbone pattern on the back.

The transparency of certain fields of colour clearly reveals the preparatory drawing, which was extensively modified by the artist when painting the final version of the work.

The paint is applied largely in overlaid transparent fields of colour, which enhance the depth of the dark areas and lacquers, while the light areas and the details of the armour and fabrics are achieved with firm and very textural gestures. The colour impasto shows a correct ratio between pigment and binder.

As is so often the case in Bezzuoli's work of this period, he finished off the painting, after varnishing it, with a few final brushstrokes of colour. Of particular interest are the strokes underscoring the pathos of the man-at-arms in the middle of the scene.

The original layer of varnish was unevenly applied in a painterly fashion, with considerable thickness in certain areas.

An earlier restoration is responsible not only for the attempt to mend the tear but also for small cleaning tests which, in completely removing the original layer of varnish, also removed layers of paint (*velature*), and for a thick and seriously yellowed layer of varnish mixed with wax. This varnish also has a low vitreous transition temperature (Tg) which has caused it to become a trap for ambient dust and dirt deposits. The painting is obscured by a thick grey layer which flattens the contrasts and depths of the darker colours, such as the browns and the red, green and blue lacquers.





I.

(Letter published in *Della vita e delle opere del Professore Cav. Giuseppe Bezzoli /.../ Memorie raccolte da alcuni scolari ed amici*, Florence 1855, p.73, note 3).

28 March 1837

(...)

I would consider that I was doing you a wrong if I were to ask you the price you require and the time you think you shall need; I defer to your generosity and discretion; the opinion I have formed of you makes it incumbent upon me to act thus; but given that with others I have acted and shall continue to act otherwise, I pray you keep silent regarding this agreement of ours, and bruit it about that we have struck an agreement. A fellow citizen of Strozzi's 300 years after the latter's demise, with immortal brush you shall show both our own generation and posterity how a fine death erases a life of infamy and perfidy. Your picture's tragedy shall spawn a noble debate on life and death. Take courage, my dear Professor, you have in your hands one of the most picturesque subjects in our entire History! Your genius will unfold this story in marvellous fashion; you shall gain both renown and profit from it, and the motherland will seek consolation for its woes in this new glory that you shower upon it. Of your kindness, please reply to your honoured servant,
Niccolò Puccini

II.

Pistoia, Biblioteca Forteguerriana, Raccolta Puccini, Cassetta XI.
(The numbers reflect the inventory of Puccini's papers published in *Raccolta Puccini*. Inventory by M. Solleciti, revised by A. Giovannini and F. Savi, Florence 2002.
Only those parts of the letters relevant to the production of the *Filippo Strozzi* are quoted)

(1) 6 December 1837

My dear Sir,

[...] I believe that I have determined the execution of your painting, which you have

had the kindness to commission from me (myself having executed many commissions). I shall paint it at the same time as I paint Demidoff's, and I hope that you shall have it sooner than you imagined. I am certain that, being a man of spirit, you will not object if we agree to a fee without in any way spoiling our relations, but if perchance such a proposal sits ill with you, you may still be sure of my unchanging friendship. The fee that I require for my labours is 300 Florentine scudi, one-third of which I would ask you to provide when the commission is placed, according to the common custom; I believe that you will not find me indiscreet, being persuaded that I treat you not as I would a foreigner but as my very own compatriot always eager to promote the Fine Arts [...]

P.S. The picture will contain lifesize figures.

(1) 15 December 1837

[...]

I have received your wonderful letter which serves to bind us with a contract for the painting agreed on, for a fee of 300 Florentine scudi. Between honest persons (may heaven be thanked!) there is need for nought else. I am happy that you are content with the manner of my dealing with you, while I am immensely pleased at having dealings with persons of genius capable of sorting the wheat from the chaff.

[...]

Whenever you choose to let me have the 100 scudi, one-third of the sum agreed on, I shall show my gratitude for your kindness. This morning I talked things over with my paint supplier to order the canvas for our picture, and in the coming week I shall attempt the whole group at night in order to guard against any errors caused by my flights of fancy. Nature is a tribunal at which all artists are called to account, and no artist failing to respond shall ever be safe from her vengeance [...]

(2) 29 December 1837

My dear friend,

I consider it my duty to inform you that Mr. Amilcare Vergili has given me 100 Florentine scudi in advance payment, being one-third of the sum agreed between us for the picture that I am to paint of Filippo Strozzi's death in Castel S. Giovanni. You ask

me again whether the event really did take place at night? And I shall reply that I am certain of it, on the strength of a coeval manuscript lent to me by our common friend Giovan Battista Niccolini; if perchance you are unhappy with a nighttime effect, however, please tell me so freely inasmuch as, no interesting details differing, we can in all honesty forgo such. I chose it because it seemed to me to be picturesque, and the hour appropriate for the tragic event. Where its companion piece is concerned, I failed to reply to you not knowing what topic I might adopt for it; now that I have thought about it I offer you a subject which I consider to be in keeping with the Filippo. The subject in question is the Death of the Brute of Tuscany Lorenzino de' Medici, which murder was perpetrated in Venice by order of Cosimo and executed by a certain Bava who took the bloody deed upon himself in an effort to curry favour with Cosimo I. Segni relates the episode at some length in his *Storia* [...] Concerning the difficulty that you mention to me of the misshapen figures, I had thought about it and I shall paint them as they are in nature, for I, too, am not enamoured of this kind of measure so fashionable in our century [...]

6 inst. (1838)

[...]

You seek news of your Filippo; here it is. I have finished the composition; the studies and the preparatory work painted from life; the canvas is on my easel, and you may count on having it by September 1838; I cannot give you my word that it will be ready before then. I have already devised a companion piece, the death of Lorenzino in Venice; it is delightful and truly picturesque in its effect.

(1) 14 July 1838

[...] I am busy with your painting; I have made many changes, I believe for the better.

(1) 9 November 1838

[...] I believe you will be happy to hear that I have finished my picture, executed your commission [...] For the other companion piece dealing with the death of Lorenzino dei Medici, the commission has been established and the canvas will be brought to my workshop at any moment [...]

(1) 16 November 1838

[...]

My painting of Filippo will be unable to travel to meet its owner until it is in a condition to undertake the journey. If paint is not perfectly dry, it becomes black when one packs it and deprives it of air, and thus it loses its transparency; so I would urge you to be patient a while longer, not wishing to see spoilt a picture which cost me so much effort and with which I am not at all displeased [...]

22 November 1838

[...] at the same time I shall bring the exact dimensions of the Filippo painting: I am fairly sure that I shall be at the Villone by three in the afternoon on Monday 26th inst. [...]

(10) 27 December 1838

[...]

I can now advise you that your picture is perfectly dry. It is at your disposal whenever you may be pleased to send for it [...]

(13) 30 September 1839

[...]

I hear that you are amenable to sending the picture of Filippo to Florence in order to show it in public; do so, as long as you do not fear the Aristarchi who, without a charitable thought for their fellow man, will tear you, and me, apart without considering the virtues of a patron of the arts or the tribulations of an artist in managing to do what little I do at present. (...) For your information, the show takes place on the feast day of St. Matthew, patron of the venue; the picture should be here ten or twelve days before that date [...]

(14) 1 October 1839

[...]

On the last day of the show I managed to sell your, and my, painting of Filippo to an American gentleman. He plans to stay in Florence throughout the winter. Who can say but that some further deal may be waiting in the eaves [...]