

Giotto, Michelangelo, Ammannati and Early Music



Church of San Francesco, Lucca



Many travellers to Florence seeking out the glories of the Renaissance may not be aware that significant “cultural exchanges” have always taken place between Italian towns and cities.

Beginning on October 4th (for the Festa di San Francesco) and continuing until December 8th, Giotto's painting *The Madonna of San Giorgio alla Costa* (c. 1295) will be on display at the Chiesetta di San Franceschetto, the annex to Lucca's San Francesco Church. This beautiful fresco is from the Diocesan Museum of Florence's Santo Stefano al Ponte. Although damaged in a terrorist bombing in 1993, it has now been repaired. It seems appropriate that Giotto, the creator of the marvelous fresco cycle of San

Francesco at Assisi, be represented here, temporarily, in the beautifully renovated complex of San Francesco.

In 1962, a wooden crucifix with a nude polychrome Christ was re-discovered after it had been lost for almost 500 years, since its creation in 1492. Vasari had attributed this work to the great Michelangelo, who was learning about anatomy by dissecting corpses at the Santo Spirito hospital in Florence when he was only 17 years old. Today this gracious and stirring image is displayed in the sacristy of Santo Spirito. The Basilica itself, designed by Brunelleschi, contains many other impressive artworks by masters such as Jacopo della Quercia (known in Lucca for his ever-radiant *Ilaria del Carretto*), Filippino Lippi, and others.

On Friday evenings from 19 September to 31 October early music concerts are being held at Santo Spirito's Sala Capitolare. The cloister which opens onto the Sala Capitolare is usually closed but for these concerts will be accessible to the public. This beautiful space was designed by Ammannati (1511-1592), who also created the Fountain of Neptune in Piazza Signoria, the Pitti Palace (completing Brunelleschi's work), and Ponte Santa Trinità. Ammannati's name is recalled in Lucca as well. He completed the stately Ducal Palace, built on the site of Castruccio Castracani's palace, which was designed by the multi-talented Giotto. Castruccio's palace and fort were destroyed by the citizenry in 1370, and no trace remains except in historic memories.

For the concert series, authentic period instruments are played by masterful musicians. Reading this article on-line (www.luccagrapevine.com), you can hear the beautiful voice of Floriana Fornelli ([click here](#)), with the *Accademia de Li Spiritati* (Pamela Burrini is playing the harpsichord and Giovanni Cavallaro the recorder and baroque bassoon). This is a mere *aperitivo* to the upcoming inspiring and delicious feasts of music. For more details, see the Calendar in *Grapevine's* What's On section. For groups of 25 people, departure from Lucca can be arranged at 3 pm (allowing time to see the art in the Basilica, which is only open to the public until 5.30 pm, and to enjoy a pleasant dinner before the concert).

For more information and to reserve tickets on-line please consult www.accademiadelispiritati.org