



Villa Contarini - Fondazione G.E.Ghirardi / Piazzola sul Brenta (Pd)

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**DIGITAL PHILOLOGY  
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# VILLA CONTARINI - FONDAZIONE G.E.GHIRARDI PIAZZOLA SUL BRENTA - ITALY



Among the most famous Villas under the rule of the Republic of St. Mark, Villa Contarini in Piazzola sul Brenta “for its architectural richness, for its large spaces in the wide stretch of parks and waters and the great unified conception of the whole set, can be compared to a real Royal Palace” (Guido Perocco).

The central Palladian body of the monumental building was built in the mid 1500s keeping the basement and the underground part of a previous medieval castle.

The lateral expansions are the result of enlargements occurred during the 1600s, under the influence of the Baroque’s ideas of wealth and theatricality.

It is not only the Villa itself with its almost 200 metres of

façade that conveys impressiveness to the whole, but also the front square enclosed in a hemicycle by a building used for residential purposes which is laid on the gigantic columns of a monumental portico.

That building was originally designed to host boarders to singing, music and acting and a printshop specialized in music editions and librettos. Among these, those contained in the volume “L’Orologio del Piacere” (The Clock of Pleasure) edited by F.M. Piccioli (1685). Nowadays, the terraces over the portico can be reached through a walkway located on the roof of an extension of the Villa completed in 1680 at the behest of the Serenissima Venetian Republic procurator Marco Contarini.

When it was built, the Villa’s interior was constituted by a very high salon, 80-metre long, described at that time as “Hall of the Princes”. Through this, guests could go directly from the Villa to two big theatres adjoining the porticato of the square.

The Auditorium and the original Music Hall, called the hall “of the inverted guitar” for its particular shape that has extraordinary acoustic qualities, welcome and introduces the guest to visit the several rooms of the Villa. Among the most famous: The Ball Room or room of stucco, the room of Bacchanal with frescos from the school of G. Romano, the Gallery of Shells, the Library, the Hall of Mirrors and the Swing Room, with a young and smiling girl painted on the ceiling by Pietro Pajetta (1845-1911), designated in Boardroom.



## FONDAZIONE G.E. GHIRARDI ONLUS NON-PROFIT FOUNDATION

In 1969 Villa Contarini was purchased by Giordano Emilio Ghirardi (1898 – 1990), University Professor of Human Physiology and founder of a pharmaceutical company. He assumed the challenging task of starting the necessary restauration works of the building and of its park, saving it from the serious condition of neglect that occurred after that the Camerini’s family had left the property.

In 1970, restored to its ancient magnificence, the Villa and its park were opened to the public and to national and international scientific and cultural events for the first time.

In 1986, as a further proof of his social commitment in the field of medical research and in line with the reputation of the cultural events hosted in the Villa in the two previous decades, G.E. Ghirardi created the Giordano Emilio Ghirardi non-profit Foundation to promote cultural events and socially useful initiatives, collaborating with national and international institutions. Its aims are both the research and information about health and prevention, with particular attention to degenerative diseases and cancer, and the enhancement of the cultural and monumental heritage of the Villa in Piazzola sul Brenta.

On May 12th 2005, the whole property was purchased by the Region of Veneto. It then became public heritage and upon explicit agreement between the parties, it was named “Villa Contarini – Fondazione G.E. Ghirardi”. The terms include the use of the monumental building for cultural and scientific events, defined by a 30-year agreement with the G.E. Ghirardi Foundation, previous owner.

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