

The first bicentenary.

The intention to restore order and dignity to the events was practically implemented in the late 19th century by forming some city committees which, active from ca. 1875, arbitrarily chose 1898 as the “first centenary” of the reorganization that took place in a non-specified year as a result of the work of Brother Antonio Maria Baroffio, while the *landvogt* was still present. Every aspect was reconsidered for about 15 years, from the order of the two processions, with the definition of the characters and the addition of secondary figures, musical bands, confraternities from other towns, to new costumes that were ordered from the Scala Theatre’s workshop in Milan, to the completion of the original series of “Trasparenti” by ordering two new “doors” to replace the ones that had disappeared, and the introduction of a new one along the final sector of the route in the south, which was, perhaps, partly modified compared to the previous one.

It would seem that, to document works and events, at the time somebody collected papers and books that had survived the closure of the Servant’s of Mary’s archive, which caused its contents to be scattered. As a matter of fact, some deficiencies can be found in the few collections present today, leaving us practically without useful texts published before the decades that paved the way for the first centenary. A dozen at most of texts published in the 1700s and early 1800s on the processions and “Trasparenti” are left (and they are often indirect citations), while the number increases from the late 1800s.

Especially the involvement of the press, both local and foreign, achieved an exceptional increase in the attendance of spectators to such an extent that additional trains were organized from Lugano to Mendrisio along the “new” Gotthard line. A considerable number of “Trasparenti” and lamps created between 1890 and 1942 are the work of Silvio Gilardi from Brè and of other local artists, but Professor Pietro Anastasio was assigned three of the new “doors.” He decided to cite famous paintings, such as the Last Supper by Luini, but since he did not know the technique, following criticisms to their first exhibition, he was forced to retouch them, aggravating their condition; hence, very soon they could neither be exhibited nor recovered (the ones displayed today are copies).

Though the processions were prevented by the rain, the second bicentenary in 1998 witnessed several wiser initiatives focused on study, promotion, restoration and conservation of each decisive element for this ever alive and deeply felt tradition.