



Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore  
Sala Carnelutti and Piccolo Teatro  
17 October 2025 – 2 March 2026

## *Casanova and Europe. Opera in più atti*

*This is the second chapter of the exhibition project dedicated to Giacomo Casanova — An Opera in Several Acts — created in collaboration with the Fondazione Teatro La Fenice. Here, Europe becomes a stage, and the scenography unfolds as a journey through artworks, materials and historical documents from the collections of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini.*

For the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the renowned Venetian traveller, intellectual and diplomat, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini has conceived a two-part exhibition project. The first – which opened on 26 September – was held at Palazzo Cini and is devoted to the cultural and artistic world of early eighteenth-century Venice, the period in which Casanova lived for the most part in the lagoon city.

The second part, *Casanova and Europe. An Opera in più atti*, is to be installed in the Sala Carnelutti and the Piccolo Teatro on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore. It has been put together in collaboration with the Fondazione Teatro La Fenice of Venice, with the participation of all the Institutes and Study Centres of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, and **will be open from 17 October 2025 to 2 March 2026.**

*Casanova and Europe. An Opera in più atti* is not an exhibition in the conventional sense, but a **surprising scenic machine** that unfolds throughout the rooms. It tells a story with Europe as its perspective and Venice as its vantage point – both experienced by Casanova in his search for values shared across different cultures.

The **exhibition design, conceived by Massimo Checchetto**, Director of Stage Design at Teatro La Fenice, brings to life a narrative journey constructed through fragments, intervals, movements and appearances, guided by Casanova's interests, his relationships, the themes he explored as a writer (including his Memoirs), the places he visited and the great European cities he stayed in.

Along this journey, visitors encounter **historical materials from the Foundation's collections**, including rare books on esotericism, antique puppet theatres, Nino Rota's scores for Fellini's *Casanova*, and prints from Piranesi's *Carceri d'invenzione*. These works were selected from hundreds of objects and documents through extensive iconographic research carried out across the Institutes and Study Centres of the Foundation.

The Institutes' research formed the core of the **work by the ARCHiVe Digital Center**, which combined **art, new technologies and digital languages** into a corpus of three video installations created by director Sara Francesca Tirelli. These cinematic works draw inspiration from the tradition of the magic lantern, enhanced through applications of artificial intelligence.



**Gianfelice Rocca, President of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini**, states: “One of the most striking aspects of Casanova’s life is his ability to embody a European spirit in a restless age, one of great transformations. It is a profound awareness he gains while travelling, perceiving the cultural codes shared between nations that are nonetheless belligerent, jealous and competitive. **Today, that European spirit is evoked as a shared asset.** Europe – despite having found a collective form of coexistence over the last seventy years – feels fragile and vulnerable, subject to aggressive threats and nationalist pressures. The challenges of our times demand a common diplomatic and cultural reflection. Today, more than ever, a Foundation such as ours is called upon to reaffirm its vocation as an incubator of cultural diplomacy.”

**Daniele Franco, Scientific Director**, adds: “The exhibition *Casanova and Europe* highlights the extraordinary heritage preserved and studied by the Institutes of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. The challenge the Foundation set for itself was to reveal Casanova’s varied interests and the facets of his time, without attempting to reduce them to a coherent, uniform image, **allowing differences and contradictions to emerge.** What comes forth is a restless man moving through a vibrant cultural panorama, a world in transition, leading into the Napoleonic period and the liberal and industrial transformations of the nineteenth century. The Serenissima, which seemed eternal, would ultimately be swept away.”

## An Opera in Several Acts

**At the entrance, visitors are given a lantern:** the first clue that this second chapter of the exhibition dedicated to Casanova **is not a conventional show, but an exploration** – one in which the senses remain alert, gradually unravelling discoveries of details, mechanisms, maps, documents and visions.

**The journey begins along the narrow streets of a nocturnal Venice and ends in a theatre of theatres:** it is that of Casanova’s Europe, traversed over hundreds of journeys, from Constantinople to Paris, from Warsaw to Vienna, from London to Naples. Observing his travels, visualised on a map, one understands how Casanova’s Europe is a tangle of relationships, a flow intertwining city after city.

In this opera in several acts, **visitors become Casanova**, moving through mirrored rooms or spaces draped in red velvet, a *Wunderkammer* of objects, paintings and mysteries, from the vertigo atop the Piombi to the puppet theatres that brought drama into private salons. From room to room, ten doors await visitors, for – just like Casanova’s life – Europe was a revolving door of stops, discoveries and departures.

**The doors mark the acts of the opera.** The image of the door frequently recurs in Casanova’s *Memoirs* as well, where he describes the European space as “an apartment with many doors,” and the Masonic world he frequented as “a gateway to invisible power.”

**Renata Codello and Massimo Checchetto, who coordinated the entire project, explain the significance of this original production**, born from the collaboration between the Fondazione Giorgio Cini and the Fondazione Teatro La Fenice: “Our



goal from the very beginning was to explore new or different possibilities of ‘exhibiting’. We sought to experiment with new display coordinates capable of blending languages, creating a mechanism of diverse stimuli, and exploring a physical environment inhabited both by the plausible and the invisible.”

They further emphasise that “**the themes, as well as their novel expressions and resonances, multiply and reflect one another like a game of mirrors**, possessing the power to transform, expand and repeat indefinitely. It is no coincidence that the perfectly smooth, flat mirror, which offers clear and luminous yet elusive and intangible images, was patented in Venice in 1540 by Vincenzo Redor, later becoming the coveted symbol of Venetian craftsmanship and a city that seems itself to be a reflection and duplication. Likewise, Casanova’s personality appears to be multifaceted, specular, contrasting, distorted, lucid, opaque, virtual and real – but ever vital and in motion.”

The environmental staging, the Foundation’s historical and artistic collections, and Sara Francesca Tirelli’s unique and original video installations translate Casanova and Europe into an opera in several acts.

**Info:**

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The exhibition is open every day (except Wednesdays) from 10 am to 6 pm.

Free admission