

= Duchess Violante Beatrice of Bavaria =

Violante Beatrice of Bavaria (Violante Beatrix ; 23 January 1673 ? 30 May 1731) was Grand Princess of Tuscany as the wife of Grand Prince Ferdinando of Tuscany and Governor of Siena from 1717 until her death . Born a Duchess of Bavaria , the youngest child of Elector Ferdinand Maria , she married the heir to the Tuscan throne , Ferdinando de ' Medici , in 1689 . Violante Beatrice loved him but Ferdinando did not return her affection , declaring her too ugly and too dull . Her brother @-@ in @-@ law , Prince Gian Gastone , befriended her out of sympathy , a friendship that lasted until Violante Beatrice 's demise .

Grand Prince Ferdinando expired from syphilis in 1713 , leaving his childless widow without purpose at the Tuscan court . Upon the return of the Electress Anna Maria Luisa de ' Medici , daughter of the then reigning , Cosimo III , thus Violante Beatrice 's sister @-@ in @-@ law , the Dowager Grand Princess contemplated retiring to her brother 's court at Munich ; however , Gian Gastone convinced her to stay , and Cosimo III appointed her Governor of Siena , where she then resided . As Governor , she formally defined the boundaries , names and number of Sienese Contrade ? akin to administrative divisions ? in 1729 . During Grand Duke Gian Gastone 's rule , the Governor was responsible for formal court audiences . Violante Beatrice , in collaboration with the Electress Anna Maria Luisa , attempted to withdraw Gian Gastone from the Ruspanti , his salacious entourage , by arranging banquets and public appearances . Gian Gastone , however , was immune to these approaches and spent the last eight years of his reign confined to bed , entertained by the myriad Ruspanti .

= = Childhood and marriage = =

Violante Beatrice , the youngest child of the Elector of Bavaria , Ferdinand Maria , and Henriette Adelaide of Savoy , was born on 23 January 1673 in Munich , the capital of Bavaria . Her siblings were Maria Anna Victoria , Dauphine of France , Elector Maximilian II and Joseph Clemens , Archbishop of Cologne .

Grand Duke Cosimo III of Tuscany in 1688 sought Violante Beatrice as a prestigious bride ? Bavaria was one of the most powerful states of the Holy Roman Empire ? for his elder son and heir , Ferdinando , Grand Prince of Tuscany . As Cosimo 's father , Ferdinando II , had embroiled Elector Ferdinand Maria in an abortive financial venture costing him 450 @,@ 000 ungheri worth of gold , relations between Munich and Florence were sour .

In order to acquire Violante Beatrice 's hand for the Grand Prince , Cosimo was obliged to reimburse Ferdinand Maria 's son Maximilian II . With this obstacle surmounted , the marriage contract was signed on 24 May 1688 , granting Violante Beatrice a dowry of 400 @,@ 000 thalers in cash and the same amount in jewellery . She married the Grand Prince by proxy in Munich on 21 November 1688 and was married in person on 9 January 1689 . The wedding reception was held at the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence . The new Grand Princess was instantly enamoured with the bridegroom , in spite of the fact he loathed her . Cosimo III , however , could not find fault in his daughter @-@ in @-@ law , saying , " I have never known , nor do I think the world can produce , a disposition so perfect " .

= = Grand Princess = =

The grand princely couple 's lack of offspring after six years of marriage perturbed the Grand Duke . Consequently , much to the Grand Princess 's mortification , he commissioned three days ' religious observance to remedy their lack of children in April 1694 . Any hopes of an heir were dashed when Ferdinando contracted , in 1696 , syphilis during the Carnival of Venice , a disease to which he succumbed seventeen years later . The Grand Princess , meanwhile , fell victim to a state of melancholy , which did not escape the notice of her brother @-@ in @-@ law , Prince Gian Gastone , who befriended her as a result . Violante Beatrice rarely alluded to her emotional pain in conversation , but , on one documented occasion , in the presence of her ladies , branded

Ferdinando 's lover Cecchino de Castris the focus of her woes . That Ferdinando often openly declared his wife " too dull and too ugly " only worsened matters .

The Grand Princess found herself , in 1702 , in the middle of a protocolary spat between Tuscany and Spain . The Grand Duke sent an agent to the court of Philip V of Spain with the objective of procuring a license for the Grand Prince and Princess ? who , hypothetically , acquired royal dignity with Cosimo III on 5 February 1691 from the Holy Roman Emperor , Leopold I 's , diploma ? to use the style Royal Highness in correspondence with Spain . Philip V initially deigned only to sanction his aunt Violante Beatrice 's use ; however , the agent , Pucci , eventually requisitioned full recognition .

King Philip V and Frederick IV of Denmark paid Violante Beatrice visits in 1703 and 1709 , respectively . The former chose to ignore the other members of the Tuscan Royal Family and reluctantly deigned only speak to her . The latter , on the other hand , was taken with Violante , going as far as to refuse to leave the room while she was changing clothes .

The Grand Prince , after much suffering , died from syphilis on 31 October 1713 , sparking a succession crisis and leaving his wife a childless and therefore purposeless widow . The Dowager was so distraught that she had to be bled by doctors in order to calm her down . Cosimo III gave her a set of blue sapphires as a token of mourning . Violante Beatrice considered returning to her homeland when she caught wind of the Electress Anna Maria Luisa de ' Medici 's , born a Tuscan princess , impending return ; the two did not get along . Violante Beatrice , additionally , would be usurped as first @-@ lady of Tuscany . To quell any future tiffs regarding precedence , Cosimo III appointed Violante Beatrice Governor of Siena , whose duties as such kept her away from the Tuscan court , and gave her possession of the Villa di Lappoggi , which became , in the words of historian Harold Acton , " a sort of literary academy " . Here , she feted poets Lucchesi , Ghivanzizi and Morandi . Although precedence was laid out cognisant of Violante Beatrice 's dignity , the Electress on several occasions disregarded it . Thus , Violante Beatrice refused to appear with her in public .

= = Governor of Siena = =

The Governor entered her domain in April 1717 , taking up residence in the city @-@ centre . Violante Beatrice 's most memorable act as Governor was the reorganisation of the Sienese Contrade ? akin to administrative divisions ? whose names , number and boundaries she formally defined which remain there to this day . The Grand Duke Cosimo III died on 31 October 1723 ; Gian Gastone ascended to the throne . He immediately recalled Violante Beatrice to Florence and banished his sister to the Villa La Quiete . Violante Beatrice dominated the royal court as Gian Gastone resigned his public duties to her , and literally chose to spend most of his time in bed . The " religious gloom " of Cosimo III gave way to a period of rejuvenation : Violante Beatrice instituted French fashions at court , compelled myriad Ecclesiastes to retire and patronised Siense poets Perfetti and Ballati . Violante Beatrice brought Perfetti to Rome in 1725 and stayed at the Palazzo Madama . During her time in the Papal States , she met Pope Benedict XIII , who found her so agreeable that he bestowed upon her the golden rose , a great mark of Papal favour .

Upon her return from Rome , Violante Beatrice and the Electress Anna Maria Luisa decided to do something about Gian Gastone 's public image and the Ruspanti , his entourage . In order to distract him from the Ruspanti , Violante Beatrice threw banquets , to which she invited the foremost members of Tuscan society . The Grand Duke 's behaviour , vomiting , belching and cracking rude jokes , literally sent the guests scrambling to leave . The Electress was more fortunate for her part . She succeeded in making Gian Gastone appear on Saint John the Baptist 's day , 1729 . However , during the ceremony , the Grand Duke became so intoxicated that he had to be dragged back to his palace , the Pitti , on a litter .

Just five months before the arrival of troops on behalf of Gian Gastone 's Spanish heir , Violante Beatrice of Bavaria , Dowager Grand Princess of Tuscany , Governor of Siena , died . During the funeral procession , her hearse briefly paused before the Pitti , an action that incensed the Grand Duke , who ordered the hearse to move along in words a contemporary dubbed " unfit for the lowest

of harlots , let alone for a gentle high @-@ born princess " . The bulk of Violante Beatrice 's remains were interred in the Convent of Saint Teresa , Florence ; her heart was placed in her husband 's coffin in the Medicean necropolis , San Lorenzo . When in 1857 her sarcophagus was re @-@ discovered , it bore the imperial stamp of Napoleon I of France , who had had it moved from the convent to San Lorenzo . On 26 February 1858 , she was restored to the convent , brought there in the royal hearse .

= = Ancestors = =

= = Titles , styles , honours and arms = =

= = = Titles and styles = = =

23 January 1673 ? 9 January 1689 : Her Serene Highness Princess Violante Beatrice of Bavaria , Duchess of Bavaria

9 January 1689 ? 5 February 1691 : Her Highness The Grand Princess of Tuscany

5 February 1691 ? 31 October 1713 : Her Royal Highness The Grand Princess of Tuscany

31 October 1713 ? 12 April 1717 : Her Royal Highness The Dowager Grand Princess of Tuscany

12 April 1717 ? 30 May 1731 : Her Royal Highness The Governor of Siena

= = = Honours = = =

Dame of the Golden Rose (1725)