“The Dream Upon the Water”: Music, Ecology, and Politics in Venice ca. 1848

By

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Abstract

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When Italians took to their balconies during the early COVID-19 quarantine to play music and sing together as a conscious act of solidarity, they demonstrated how sound troubles the very notion of social distance. Similar instances punctuate the intertwined histories of music and politics in the Italian peninsula—histories built on the assumption that Italian music stimulates strong emotions that forge social and political bonds. Music has long played a crucial role in framing Italian identity: as "Southerners" Italians were naturally inclined toward song and the pursuit of sensual pleasures, which made them unfit for self-governance—an excuse often wielded to support the foreign governments ruling Italy. Throughout the nineteenth century Italians appealed to their northern neighbors for material and political support for the project of unifying as a European nation-state.

I examine how Venice—as both material and poetic space—mediated sound and politics around the period of the 1848 revolution and the subsequent Habsburg reconquest. The cultural products depicting Venice as watery, unmoored, and exotic have exerted an irresistible attraction for outsiders and yet (as ecocritic Serenella Iovino recently cautioned (2016)) also concealed a threat of ecological disaster. The long nineteenth century in Venice saw momentous changes to the city's political ecology, which disrupted the ecosystem and initiated an alienation of the people from the lagoon that recent "high water" events in the city continue to highlight. I trace how music by composers such as Giuseppe Verdi and Gioachino Rossini contributed to this mystification of Venice. In writing sound into ecocriticism, I reconstruct a frictive process in which musical form, politics, and environment are mutually constitutive.

Chapter 1 considers the essentially Venetian genre of the barcarolle in relation to the city's natural geography and built environment, focusing on the practical and

discursive changes effected when the first bridge to the mainland was erected in 1846. Chapter 2 examines the music performed at the concerts mounted to raise funds for the revolutionary cause in 1848 and the journalistic discourse around those performances, to show how music helped Venetians come together, spurring them to collective actions against the Habsburgs. Chapter 3 begins from the Habsburg reconquest in 1849 and the expected return to "normalcy" in public spaces, including the opera house. The chapter juxtaposes instances of music, noise, and (resistant) silence in the public square with scenes of surveillance, mishearing, and lapsed communication in Giuseppe Verdi's 1851 opera *Rigoletto*, the first major premiere of the post-revolution period. Chapter 4 focuses on the Venetian premiere of Gioachino Rossini's 1829 opera *Guillaume Tell* in 1856, teasing out the attitudes to the operatic past and to tradition revealed in public reactions to Rossini's music a quarter-century after the peak of his success.

Per Tommy e Bianca con tantissimo affetto

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as well as Laura, Arthur, and Elsie Humphrey made sure that we did not talk shop all the time—and I think it should be made perfectly clear that I would not pretend to be in a woodland animal band (much less allow any physical evidence of this transgression) for just anybody in my life. Melanie Gudesblatt and Jamie Apgar both kept me grounded during this whole experience and offered advice and encouragement along the way. Rosie Ward was a walking buddy in Berkeley and in the UK—I had so much fun getting to know Arundel and Chichester through her. Anicia Timberlake is the big sister I always wanted.

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Introduction: The Lagoon

The word "lagoon" comes to us in part from the Italian word *lacuna*. The most common English definition of that word signifies a gap, such as a gap in knowledge waiting to be filled. Early Italian definitions, however, point back to Latin and to the landscape: the term refers to a lake or basin, and was often applied to stagnant waters. A *lacuna*, in other words, was not merely a gap or pit, but was also an isolated body of water, cut off from refreshment or tidal replenishment. On the surface, it might seem incongruous that the water surrounding the powerful city of Venice—the same water that carried its wealthy merchant fleets around the Mediterranean—came to be called a *laguna*, yet the implied gap between terra firma and canal city speaks to Venice's often fractured relationship with the rival city-states on the Italian peninsula.

In many ways, tributaries and slippage among spaces and concepts also define this dissertation, concerned as it is with sounds and music of the Venetian lagoon. The recent scholarly turn toward the sea—otherwise known as the "blue humanities"—seeks to recover the important links between modern Western culture and the sea.[1] Embracing this turn, I am concerned with the role sound plays in the poetics of the lagoon, the ways music participates in the movements of people, feelings, and goods. In investigating nineteenth-century Venetian ecology—environmental and political alike—I seek new understandings of how music helps us know the world, connecting us to both people and places. I approach the Venice of the mid nineteenth century as a place of perifluvial stagnation: as an "in-between" political geography emblematic of aesthetic indecision and political ambiguity.

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The fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797 ended local autonomous rule. From the perspective of a Europe both attracted to and repulsed by the French Revolution, the Republic had been a monument of Old Europe. For nearly a thousand years, noble families in the Great Council ruled the Venetian Republic, their names written into the Libro d'Oro (the Golden Book) as a record of their legitimacy. At its zenith, the maritime republic had resources enough to defy the will of both Heaven and earth as wielded by numerous Popes, resulting in several temporary

[1] On the blue humanities see especially Steve Mentz, *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization, 1550-1719* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

excommunications of the entire city. In 1797, however, the Republic fell (*pace* Eliot) with both a bang and a whimper. The city's governing body was in the middle of deliberating the terms of a surrender to Napoleonic forces on May 12 when shots rang out outside the Ducal Palace. Believing them to be signals of their imminent assassination, the 537 noblemen present rushed to vote. Only twenty voted against surrender, compelling Ludovico Manin to relinquish the Doge's robes for the last time in the Republic's history. Napoleon dealt the *coup de grâce* to the Republic that same autumn, when France and the Habsburg Empire carved up the Venetian territories as part of the Treaty of Campo Formio.[2] The Habsburgs and the French would trade control until the Congress of Vienna established the Habsburg claim for the final time in 1815. Except for approximately seventeen months over the course of 1848-9, the Habsburgs would control Venice until 1866, five years after the unification of the Italian peninsula.

For scholars of music, nineteenth-century Venice has so far held comparatively little interest: a lacuna itself trapped between the Casanovian excess of the eighteenth century and the austerity of the twentieth-century avant-garde.[3] Scholarship on music and cities has largely focused on the major urban centers of the nineteenth century, London and Paris.[4] For Italianists Milan has been the focal point, as a city that accrued cultural and political significance as the capital of Napoleon's Cisalpine Republic and the Habsburg Kingdom of

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[2] On the post-Republican history of Venice see Margaret Plant, *Venice, Fragile City: 1797-1997* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). One of the most vivid and informative accounts of Napoleonic Venice is a book on the Countess Lucia Memmo Mocenigo written by a descendant; Andrea di Robilant, *Lucia: A Venetian Life in the Age of Napoleon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

[3] The landmark study of eighteenth-century operatic culture is Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); on the twentieth century see Harriet Boyd-Bennett, *Opera in Post-War Venice: Cultural Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[4] William Weber discusses this in the context of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism in his chapter, "Opera and the Cultural Authority of the Capital City," in *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, ed. Victoria Johnson, Jane Fulcher, and Thomas Ertmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160-80. Representative of scholarship on the nineteenth century is Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Gerhard attributes to his dissertation supervisor, Carl Dahlhaus, the embrace in music studies of Walter Benjamin's characterization of Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century.

Lombardy-Venetia and was arguably Italy's first truly urban center.[5] According to these criteria Venice has sometimes been dismissed as a "provincial backwater" of opera, but such a characterization overlooks much that we know consider central to the history of the period.[6] Not only must we consider the rise of technologies that created a network of readily accessible cities such as the telegraph and the railroad, but Venice also sustained several theaters and a vibrant press that produced a steady stream of musical criticism.[7] Venice in fact can be seen as the vanguard of musical "progress," at least insofar as European opera is concerned. Throughout his career Giuseppe Verdi premiered five operas at Venice's Teatro La Fenice, a number surpassed only by Milan's Teatro alla Scala.

The name of Verdi invokes a long history of scholarship about Italians resisting Habsburg rule. The extent to which Venetians may or may not have disdained Habsburg leadership and bureaucracy is by no means an insignificant question in this dissertation.[8] Rather than taking sides in the historiographical debate about the role of the Vienna-based monarchy in northern Italy, I focus instead on trying to understand how Venetians lived in the everyday during a Habsburg reign. In contrast with the nationalist narratives of the Risorgimento, which necessarily climax with Italian unification, and with cosmopolitan celebrations of the "supranational" Habsburg Empire, I seek out the uncertainties of this historical moment. Rather than sorting historical actors, groups and events into "good" or "bad" categories, I lean into ambiguities, confusion, and feelings of stagnation. Each of the four chapters concern themselves with debates about Venetian "progress" tied to particular events, both political and musical, circa the disturbances of 1848.

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[5] On Milan's significance in the first decades of the nineteenth century, see Emanuele Senici, "Delirious Hopes: Napoleonic Milan and the Rise of Modern Italian Operatic Criticism," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27, no. 2 (2015): 97-127 (especially 100-5), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586715000026.

[6] Gerhard, 5.

[7] See Albert Schram, *Railways and the Formation of the Italian State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[8] This is still a point of contention for historians. For a more critical view of Habsburg management see Paul Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848-9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). As part of a revisionist turn that denies the Habsburg black legend specifically in Venice, see David Laven, *Venice and Venetia Under the Habsburgs: 1815-1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

Chapter 1 reaches back to the eighteenth century but is largely concerned with a dramatic change in Venetian poetics as a result of the opening of a railway bridge between Venice and the mainland in 1846. Both Italian republicans and Habsburg sympathizers celebrated that the city was connected to the mainland for the first time in history. Yet this newfangled infrastructure also put many of Venice's famed boatmen out of work. Just two years later nearly every major city in Italy rose up during the 1848 revolutions, and Venice was among the very last to fall back into Habsburg hands, finally succumbing to siege and disease in 1849. In Chapter 2 I examine how music helped Venetians come together once more under autonomous rule, spurring them to collective actions against the Habsburgs. Chapter 3 examines the aftermath of the Habsburg reconquest in 1849, focusing especially on the expected return to "normalcy" in public spaces, including the opera house. With all eyes on the reconquered Venetians, Venice became a site of particular international interest with the premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* in March 1851, an opera that helped mark a new level of success for the composer and would go on to conquer stages across Europe. But it was not only new music that interested the Habsburg city, which looked to wed Italian history with Habsburg modernity: Chapter 4 culminates with the Venetian premiere of Gioachino Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, twenty-seven years after the world premiere in Paris.

"Si può dire ancora qualcosa?"

In a recent essay, the Italian musicologist Fabrizio Della Seta asks whether there is anything more to say about the relationship between opera and the Risorgimento, the nineteenth-century political and cultural movement that culminated in Italian unification in 1861.[9] After decades of musicological debate on the subject, Della Seta has good reason to ask. Scholarship has long positioned Verdi as one of the great men of Italian unification, he who assumed the mantle of Italian culture to give voice to an oppressed people.[10] The famous "Viva Verdi!"

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[9] Fabrizio Della Seta, "Opera e Risorgimento: si può dire ancora qualcosa?," *Verdi Perspektiven* 2 (2017): 81-106.

[10] Philip Gossett has long championed this idea of revolutionary Verdi. See his "Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in Risorgimento Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 1 (1990): 41-64, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586700003104; "'Edizioni distrutte' and the Significance of Operatic Choruses During the Risorgimento," in *Opera and Society in Italy and France*, 181-242; and "Giuseppe Verdi and the Italian Risorgimento," *Studia Musicologica* 52, nos. 1-4 (2012): 241-57, https://doi.org/10.1556/smus.52.2011.1-4.19. Many publications

slogan mapped the name Verdi onto the future King—**V**ittorio **E**manuele, **R**e **d**'**I**talia—and allowed the Italian people to raise their voices, to otherwise bring politics into a public sphere—opera—in which it was not explicitly allowed.[11] In other words, opera has long played an important role in the historiographical understanding of this period, primarily as a medium through which Italians were seen as forging a common identity that allowed Italy to become a nation.

However, Roger Parker's work on the premiere of Verdi's *Nabucco* (1842) and the mythologized popularity of the chorus "Va, pensiero" promoted a revisionist history of this Verdi *politico*, one in which the politics of Verdi operas did not depend on outdated mythologies or hermeneutics.[12] The original mythology of "Va, pensiero" held that the piece was so rapturously received at the premiere that it was immediately repeated. Italians, in the old-hat narrative, were instinctively drawn to its subversive message—the Hebrew slaves' lamentation for their homeland was, in fact, a lamentation for Italy. Yet Parker's research proved that "Va, penisero" was neither encored at its premiere nor considered, as previously thought, a revolutionary chorus during the 1848 uprisings.

With the political valence of such cultural products in flux, historian Alberto Banti appealed to the concept of "culture" in a bid to apprehend the unifying aspect of the Risorgimento, arguing that the circulation of novels, poems, dramas, and memoirs as well as operas transmitted Risorgimento tenets across

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appeared during 2011—the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of unification—that perpetuated this view; see especially Simonetta Chiappini, *"O patria mia": Passione e identità nazionale nel melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2011), especially 130-72.

[11] For more on the emergence of "Viva V.E.R.D.I." see Michael Sawall, "'VIVA V.E.R.D.I.': Origine e ricezione di un simbolo nazionale nell'anno 1859," in *Verdi 2001*, ed. Fabrizio Della Seta, Roberta Montemorra Marvin, and Marco Marica (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2003), 1:123-31 and Francesca Vella, "Verdi and Politics (1859-1861)" *Studi verdiani* 24 (2014): 79-121.

[12] Roger Parker, *"Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati": The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 1997). For more recent takes on this revisionist view, see Mary Ann Smart, "Parlor Games: Italian Music and Italian Politics in the Parisian Salon," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 34, no. 1 (2010): 39-60, https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1039; Parker, "Verdi *politico*: A Wounded Cliché Regroups," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17, no. 4 (2012): 427-436, https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2012.690581; and Smart, "Magical Thinking: Reason and Emotion in Some Recent Literature on Verdi and Politics," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17, no. 4 (2012): 437-47, https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2012.690582.

class boundaries.[13] In this narrative, opera was an element of so-called "popular culture" that provided evidence of the broad reach of the Risorgimento in ways that political tracts and even newspapers could not. Banti has been criticized for not sufficiently dealing with questions of reception, for assuming—via a limited range of sources—that the supposed intention of a work was identical to what readers or audiences received.[14] Critiques of Banti's story of nationalist birth tend to draw upon notions of transnationalism instead of relying upon the genealogical trajectory of "culture." Historian Maurizio Isabella, for instance, has emphasized the international circulation of Risorgimento discourses via networks of exiled Italians living abroad, while Axel Körner argued that local culture responded to and reflected broader European debates.[15]

Further stirring up these muddied waters, other scholars took up Lorenzo Bianconi's call to consider the Italian public's relationship to Verdi's operas as a matter of sentimental education, one in which opera reflected cultural values and provided models of good and bad behavior. In contrast to the local or transnational critique of Italian nationalism, this approach allowed for the possibility that the politics and emotions of Italian opera in this period might be wielded for something other than (or at least in addition to) nation-building. This approach suggests something of an overlap between the heightened emotions of opera and those aroused by political life, where both are a mode of relating to the world (and people) around you. Susan Rutherford's *Verdi, Opera, Women*, for instance, examined the mirroring of the female spectators' interior lives on stage and the subsequent reflection of spectators on women's roles outside of opera. Mary Ann Smart invited a more nuanced understanding of historical listening by

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[13] Alberto Mario Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000). Banti elaborated on many of his ideas in his *L'onore della nazione. Identità sessuale e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal XVIII secolo alla grande guerra* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005) and in Banti and Paul Ginsborg, ed., *Storia d'Italia. Annali XXII. Il Risorgimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007).

[14] Axel Körner, "The Risorgimento's Literary *Canon* and the Aesthetics of Reception: Some Methodological Considerations," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 410-418, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2009.00401.x; Lucy Riall "Nation, 'Deep Images' and the Problem of Emotions," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 402-9, https://doi.org/10.1111/m.1469-8129.2008.00400.x.

[15] Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile: Italian Emigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

expanding the definition of political music to include music that has somehow shaped the way listeners understood reality.[16]

Opera: an Archive of Sonic Affect

The first sketches of this dissertation were occupied with developing a methodology to tackle that last question. In the nineteenth century Italians were criticized for confusing musical affects with political ones, for substituting communal singing for what should have been political actions. Yet the "sentimental" approach proposes that what singing and action had in common was a similar state of emotional intensity. What intrigued me initially was the possibility that musical styles could change in response to political events, suggesting music as part of a process through which historical actors understood their present circumstances. My thoughts here are prompted by the following quote by Abramo Basevi, who in 1859 published the first book-length study of Verdi's operas:

> The peoples that rose up in 1848—when, as if driven by a common ideal, they struggled to build new orders—appeared to be armed with that faith without which any edifice must crumble to dust. But alas, how quickly illusion dissolved when ideals were forged into deeds! […] Verdi's talent nonetheless underwent certain changes that made it better suited to the new period. The exaggeration that had been so often condemned in his music came to be much tempered. Almost instinctively, Verdi realized that, if recent events had not calmed emotions, they had at least restrained them; people were not so vigorous in their feelings, and the violent methods so much used before were therefore no longer appropriate. This new, collective mode of feeling became ingrained in Verdi and gave his music a new quality, one so well defined and distinct that it constitutes a "second manner."
>
> [I popoli sollevati nel 1848, allorchè, mossi come da unanime pensiero, attesero a formare ordini nuovi, parevano armati di quella

[16] Lorenzo Bianconi, "Risposta a Giuliano Procacci," *Verdi 2001*, 1:205-16; Susan Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Smart, *Waiting for Verdi: Opera and Political Opinion in Nineteenth-Century Italy, 1815-1848* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 9.

> fede senza cui ogni edifizio resolve in polvere. Ma ohimè! come tosto l'illusione è sparita, ove in atto si tradussero i pensieri! […] Non pertanto nel genio del Verdi s'operò una qualche modificazione, che lo resero meglio adatto al nuovo periodo. Quell'esagerazione che fu spesso condonnata nella musica Verdiana, venne d'assai temperata. Quasi per istinto conobbe il Verdi che gli ultimi avvenimenti, se non avevano mitigato le passioni, le tenevano però in freno; onde l'animo non era così vivamente mosso, nè perciò avevan lungo quei modi violenti adoperati tanto per lo innanzi. E intrinsecandosi nel Verdi questo nuovo modo di sentire dell'universale, operò sì, che la sua nuova musica assumesse un altro aspetto, e cosi determinato e distinto, da caratterizzarla per una *seconda maniera*.][17]

The seeming rupture enacted by the 1848 revolutions in terms both political and aesthetic offered an opportunity to poke at a core issue in the history of emotions, suggesting a "before" and "after" around which the historian might investigate a changing set of emotional standards.[18] (Thus the somewhat amorphous "circa 1848" temporality of this dissertation.) At the same time, I was both intrigued and stymied by the idea that the 1848 revolutions tempered the purported emotionality of Italians—and that Verdi's middle period operas were an example of this step back into affective and performative restraint. Basevi's attitude to the collective expression of emotion, as articulated in the passage above, suggests that a teleological "civilizing process" was necessary in order to enable unification, and casts the violence of revolution as excessive and irrational in contrast. More than whiggish historiography, this conclusion struck me as reactionary in the vein of Edmund Burke, portending a gloomy revision of triumphalist Risorgimento

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[17] Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tofani, 1859), 155-6; translated as Basevi, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, trans. Edward Schneider and Stefano Castelvecchi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 137-8.

[18] These changing standards are what William Reddy has called emotional "regimes" and Peter and Carol Stearns have called "emotionology." William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985), 813-36, https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/90.4.813.

historiography.[19] Where once unification could be read as the culmination of Italian self-determination, in a reactionary reading of the Risorgimento's success Italian opera begins to look less like a cosmopolitan product or a liberatory envoicing of a people and more like a weapon of European imperialism, in which opera functioned as an instrument that helped to shape Italians into "proper" European citizens.

The idea that Italian self-restraint led to Italian unification draws on work by Norbert Elias, who theorized that the centralization of sixteenth-century court culture effectively tamed the baser passions by consolidating power in the figure of the monarch.[20] This teleological history of emotions would necessarily value restraint at the expense of other modes of feeling. But Barbara Rosenwein has offered another way to apprehend collective emotions. As a medievalist, Rosenwein objected to the idea that those peoples who lived before court cultures were unsophisticated or childlike and proposed to reconfigure our scholarly attention toward smaller "emotional communities."[21] A more concentrated history of Italian emotions, in other words, could reveal ways in which Italians both adapted to and resisted the larger emotional "regime" of the European nation-state—as well as illuminating the role music played in these exchanges. Rosenwein's pluralities suggest that the historian may need to examine a unique set of sources for each community: in one chapter of her book, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, she investigates the use of emotional language on funerary epitaphs in three separate early medieval communities. In a certain sense, it seems intuitive to approach music—and especially Italian opera—as an emotional archive and scholars such as Andreas Giger and Francesco Izzo have implicitly taken similar approaches, focusing (for example) on censored words in librettos to Verdi operas to highlight terms and concepts that carried particularly intense religious or political meaning in the period.[22] Such

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[19] See Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism From Edmund Burke to Donald Trump*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[20] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

[21] Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 57-78; and "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821-45, https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.821.

[22] Andreas Giger, "Social Control and Censorship in Verdi's Operas, 1848-1859," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11, no. 3 (1997): 233-65, https://doi.org/10.1017/S095458600005061.

an approach works much like the guidebooks for behavior championed by Peter and Carol Stearns as sources that articulated standards for social interactions in historical societies (of largely European flavor). The way to interpret music—that which affects an audience and changes their reality—as historical seemed less obvious, especially given the "drastic" nature of musical performances.[23]

The field of affect theory offers a distinct mode through which to consider musical performances and to identify sources. The work of Lauren Berlant and José Muñoz has been especially valuable in suggesting ways to approach historical actors' attachments to imagined (and never realized) futures. Berlant, on one hand, traces the persistence of the "American Dream" within contemporary American society—in which most members will never achieve said dream. Muñoz, on the other, fights against the queer "death drive," arguing that, rather than adopting a pragmatic approach to queer politics, scholars should focus on the inherent optimism of queer "utopias" constructed in art and performance.[24] In both cases future imaginaries construct a collective within the present moment, performed through art, literature, and (I argue) music. Queer affect theory may not present an obvious link to the Italian Risorigmento, yet in investigating the attachments to various co-existing Italian "utopias" of the mid-nineteenth-century—be it unified Italian republic or kingdom, or cosmopolitan Habsburg protectorate—we sidestep the question of teleology.[25]

Francesco Izzo, "Verdi, the Virgin, and the Censor: The Politics of the Cult of Mary in *I Lombardi della prima crociata* and *Giovanna d'Arco*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 3 (2007): 557-97, https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2007.60.3.557.

[23] Carolyn Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 4 (2004): 505-36, https://doi.org/10.1086/421160.

[24] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) and José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

[25] In general I have found the constructivist (and historicist) camp of affect theory more helpful than cognitive approaches. Roger Mathew Grant (in *Peculiar Attunements: How Affect Theory Turned Musical* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2020]) has argued that modern affect theory is built on eighteenth-century writing about affect in music. Other scholars, most prominently Brian Massumi, have approached affect as pre-cognitive, a somatic response to external stimuli that precedes any intellectual processing. For critiques of that approach, see Brian Kane, "Sound studies without auditory culture: a critique of the ontological turn," *Sound Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 2-21, https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2015.1079063 and Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011): 434-72,

Because the source material that documents the history of collective emotion is at best fragmentary and often opaque, at many points in the dissertation, I engage in what Saidiya Hartman has called "critical fabulation." Hartman adopts this strategy of "playing with and rearranging the story, … re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view" in order to "jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done."[26] Treating the unrealized or imagined alternatives to Italian unification alongside Italian unification as it happened emphasizes how very undetermined history is.[27] Historical events become affective events, presentist and emotional in ways that overarching systems and hierarchies cannot account for. In the context of this dissertation this means I sometimes treat seriously anecdotes, perceptions or connections that might seem to the modern observer to be absurd, dissensual, indecisive, over-the-top, or impossible. In the pages ahead, I allow for the possibility that a listener could believe that a barcarolle would transport her to Venice, that a musical academy could lead to revolutionary action, that Rigoletto was himself listening within an operatic soundworld, and that listening to Verdi could drive a person insane. None of my descriptions tends to a single inevitable telos. But my wager is that by investigating the "what ifs" and "why can't we"s, we might begin to understand a broader range of emotions from our historical actors—unease, fear, frustration, suspicion, desire, contentment—that brought them together.

The Politics of the Dissertation

My interest in emotions goes beyond methodology. Self-proclaimed "feminist killjoy" Sara Ahmed examines how negative emotions such as hate and fear help to fashion a collective, demonstrating how collective thinking often acts to

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https://doi.org/10.1086/659353. Leys is more focused on disproving the neuroscience of affect theory, which hinges a great deal on evidence of a delay between the brain's activation on viewing an object and the cognitive awareness of said object.

[26] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 11, https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-2-1.

[27] Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1-8.

assimilate disordered bodies into an overarching social hierarchy.[28] Such killjoy critiques snap the bonds of the (hegemonic) collective, bringing marginalized subject positions to the forefront of the narrative: the protestors, the unheard voices lost to imperial archives, the marginalized. If our pressing task as scholars is decolonization, then this kind of critical approach is necessary groundwork for change by bringing awareness to the social hierarchies we musicologists have inherited in our work, making it possible for us not to perpetuate the status quo. Rather than assimilate a more diverse cast of historical actors into the stories we already tell, in other words, I am most interested in what happens if we challenge ourselves to tell different stories altogether.

One "story" I wish to play with and re-present is the narrative that ties Italian unification to a European identity. As I have hinted earlier, Italian emotionality was policed by European nations, suggesting responses to Italian opera as a kind of bellwether of Italy's European identity. The more Italians emulated their rational and restrained northern European neighbors, in other words, they tended to be accepted as more "European" themselves—or less likely to be swept up in violence. Following Roberto Dainotto, I am skeptical of "Europe" as a concept, instead understanding the dominant narratives of Italian unification as celebrating assimilation into a model of European imperialism. Dainotto explored Italy's position as a marginalized European subject during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an internal "Other" against which modern Europe was defined.[29] He examines the Italian and Spanish thinkers who located European origins in "the Orient," suggesting a vision of Europe that was not exclusively Christian and not exclusively white.

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[28] See Sara Ahmed, "Collective Feelings: Or, the Impression Left By Others," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21, no. 2 (2004): 30-1, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133.

[29] Roberto Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). On "southern thinking" see Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean*, trans. Norma Bouchard and Valerio Ferme (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). See also Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For an earlier deconstruction of Italian marginalization, focused primarily on superstition in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Naples, see Ernesto de Martino, *Magic: A Theory From the South*, trans. Dorothy Zinn (Chicago: Hau Books, 2015). Another model for this aspect of my research is the work of Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, which draws out how Colombians heard themselves—in relation to each other, but also in relation to Europe and "civilization"; see her *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

The question, then, is what a story about Italy around 1848 would look like if it were *not* focused on achieving European acceptance. Dainotto's suggestion that Eurocentrist thought obscures southern European knowledge production resonates with Roberto Esposito's recent project to trace a distinctly Italian philosophy.[30] Both Dainotto and Esposito take issue with the idea that European theory and philosophy tends to mean French, German, and occasionally English thinkers at the expense of southern Europeans. While centering Italian thought and experience risks seeming unduly nationalistic, Esposito claims that a certain alienation from from questions of nations and nationalism is endemic to Italian philosophy.[31] Seemingly drawing from Benedetto Croce's assertion that all history is contemporary history, Esposito instead argues that Italian philosophy is "living thought," forever looking outside of itself—to the past, to poetic experience—in order to reconstitute a "lexicon" within itself a way to discuss "an object that is unrepresentable."[32] At different points, then, Italian philosophy "came upside down and turned inside out" within particular historical and political contexts.[33] This rejection of transcendental—or metaphysical—thinking is also a rejection of Cartesian dualism, grounding subjectivity in life and life in subjectivity.[34] Such a conclusion runs parallel to work in affect theory—the work of Baruch Spinoza, whom Esposito somewhat fancifully identifies as the "most 'Italian'" philosopher, is an intriguing meeting point—in part by suggesting yet another anti-teleological (perhaps anti-Hegelian) mode in which to read and consider historical actors.[35]

Taking on Esposito, in Chapter 2 for instance, I will look at how throughout 1848 Italians used pastiche programs—music "upside down and turned inside out"—at musical academies as well as in a satirical form in newspapers to make sense of the revolutionary moment and to inspire concrete actions in the "real" world. By putting well-known pieces into new contexts, what initially looked like an epistemic rupture in 1848 can be reframed instead as a more conscious, even playful reconstitution of a relationship to the past and to politics. We will see further evidence of this in Chapter 4, with the change in the reception of Gioachino Rossini's works after 1848.

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[30] Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought: Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).
[31] Esposito, 18-19.
[32] Esposito, 11-12.
[33] Esposito, 10.
[34] Esposito, 31.
[35] Esposito, 43. Spinoza, of course, was not Italian: he was born in Amsterdam to a Portuguese-Jewish family and wrote in Dutch and Latin.

Highlighting this (almost) ex post facto construction of Italian emotionality is an explicit effort to both destabilize musicology's Europeanness from within and to outline southern forms of musical thought. Drawing on Esposito's "living thought" in concert with Berlant's and Muñoz's dreams and utopias, we can consider various ways in which historical actors (and Venetian actors in particular) used musical experience to help define and shape their circumstances. I want to take seriously how Venetians made sense of their musical experiences, as an integral part of how they made sense of their lives. Given this relationship to "life," however, I also want to be alert to situations in which musical experience can be wielded to maim, kill, or sicken.

Given the importance of Venetian lagoon to the city, it is important to emphasize that sound more than music can bring us outside traditional performance spaces such as opera houses, salons, or conservatories and into contact with the communal and quotidian life of the city and its inhabitants. What I am proposing is a kind of acoustemological listening through which Venetians situated themselves in the world.[36] Chapter 3, for instance, examines discourses about noise and silence in reconquered Venice, suggesting ways in which different political stances—e.g. republican, imperialist—established habits and norms for listening within different public spaces in the city, and explores how such local stances were connected to broader European discourses.

On a Venetian Ecology

While the lagoon plays a key role in Venetian histories, we have yet to consider how the city's aquatic environment shaped the city's soundscape or how modes of listening developed in the canals may have influenced Venetian music. What kinds of insights can we draw out, in other words, when we listen to the construction of a railway bridge not with an ear attuned to urban progress but to environmental destruction? With "ecocriticism" now a common methodology in both musicology and Italian studies, such investigations seem overdue. As a city of islands Venice's eco-credentials predate such a turn: Piero Bevilacqua first explored the city's appeal as a "planetary metaphor" in the late 1990s.[37] For Bevilacqua, Venice's particular environmental concerns spoke to what is now a more universal precarity between humankind and nature, allowing it to act as a microcosm of the larger issue. Since 2019, very human fears of being swallowed

[36] Steven Feld, "Acoustemology" in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 15.
[37] Piero Bevilacqua, *Venezia e le acque. Una metafora planetaria* (Rome: Donzelli, 1998).

by the sea were renewed through the international circulation of pictures of Piazza San Marco (one of the lowest points of the city) flooded with nearly waist-high water and video of a regional council office flooding moments after rejecting proposals to combat climate change. It is no coincidence that the barrier system designed to isolate the lagoon during high water events is named MOSE (MOdulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico), "per la difesa di Venezia e della laguna dalle acque alte" ("for the defense of Venice and the lagoon from high waters").[38] While the name evokes something that could belong to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the system has (in contrast to its Biblical namesake) become a symbol of almost comic bureaucratic ineptitude. MOSE has been plagued by charges of corruption, staggering budget overruns, and the "humble mussels" that attached to the unfinished structures.[39] As I observed in Venice in December 2019, a piece of trusty plywood blocking a doorway with "Mosè" satirically scribbled in black marker at the top seemed more likely to preserve personal property than the vaunted high-tech system.

Ecocritic Serenella Iovino has recently urged scholars to consider the Venetian lagoon as an organism itself, to pierce the poetic veil that has historically separated Venice's material histories from the aestheticized reflections so familiar to the nineteenth century.[40] As Iovino, Enrico Cesaretti, and Elena Past write in the introduction to a recent volume, there is currently a scholarly shift in perspective on the Italian landscape, moving "from the idealized Grand Tour representations to the living nightmares of ecomafia and the post-seismic rubble."[41] For Venice the Grand Tour involved activities that harmed the

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[38] "MOSE," Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti, accessed December 30, 2019, http://mosevenezia.eu/mose/.

[39] For a scathing take, see Roberto Giovannini, "Venezia e il suo MOSE, storia di un fallimento," *La Stampa*, October 10, 2017, http://lastampa.it/tuttogreen/2017/10/10/news/venezia-e-il-suo-mose-storia-di-un-fallimento-1.34400149.

[40] See Serenella Iovino, "Cognitive Justice and the Truth of Biology: Death (and Life) in Venice," in *Ecocriticsm and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation* (London: Bloomberg Academic, 2016), 47-82. See also Jennifer Scappettone, *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). In her quest to "discover and recover a materialist poetics of collective space," Scappetone eschews the representations made famous by the Grand Tour in favor of a new materialist viewpoint, invoking Venice as a "living" multiplicity.

[41] Serenella Iovino, Enrico Cesaretti, and Elena Past, ed., "Introduction," in *Italy and the Environmental Humanities: Landscapes, Natures, Ecologies* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), 8.

local ecosystem. The majority of Venice's subsidence within the past century is due not to overall rising sea levels—as MOSE might have us believe—but rather to the effects of groundwater pumping on the nearby coasts, the culmination of a process of cultivation and industrialization that began in the early part of the nineteenth century.[42] In other words, the Napoleonic, Habsburg, and, finally, the unified Italian governments dismantled the Venetian infrastructures that allowed the Venetians to live in comparative harmony with the *acque alte* for centuries.[43]

Why such a turn to ecocriticism should reverberate within music studies seems obvious: Italian music has been tied to the Italian landscape (although not usually the seascape) since the days of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, along with the Baron de Montesquieu, helped popularize the idea that climate influenced the temperament of peoples. In the case of the Italians, the "southern" climate fostered a natural inclination toward song and melody.[44] Drawing on Iovino and others, I approach sound as integral to the materialist poetics of collective space and explore links between collective feelings and the environment. Through such lines of inquiry I argue for a connection between supposedly picturesque representations of Venice in music circulated throughout Europe and a kind of (colonial) extraction of natural resources. Only in piercing the poetic veil of Venice can we suggest how picturesque musical representations might be extractions themselves, taken as they were from within the material spaces of Venice to be resold as commodities.

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Pursuing the unique constellation of tourism, marine navigation, and festivity that defines Venice, Chapter 1 probes the histories and valences of the gondolier's song, tracing the particular notion of folk expression it represents: from the magpie boat songs of the eighteenth century whose stolen tunes highlighted the circulation of people and sounds within the city to the nineteenth-century salon collections by Antonio Buzzolla and Rossini through which a foreign listener

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[42] Luigi Tosi, Pietro Teatini, and Tazio Strozzi, "Natural versus anthropogenic subsidence of Venice," *Scientific Reports* 3, no. 2710 (2013): https://doi:10.1038/srep02710.

[43] On the history of the *acqua alta*, see Gianpietro Zucchetta, *Storia dell'acqua alta a Venezia dal Medioevo all'Ottocento* (Venice: Marsilio, 2000), especially 88-111 for a thousand-year chronicle of *acqua alta* events.

[44] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Essay on the Origins of Language, which treats of Melody and Musical Imitation," in *On the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

could immerse herself in all things Venetian. The gondolier led outsiders through their first encounter with Venice's amphibious environment via the sound of his voice, creating the impression that—with proper mediation—anyone could inhabit the viewpoint of the native Venetian. The chapter closes by exploring how the construction of the railway bridge in 1846 disrupted this intersubjective experience and erased the labor of the gondolier, forever changing the city's poetics.

In Chapter 2 I examine journalistic discourses around performances of opera during the Italian revolutions of 1848. Whereas most scholarship on the revolutionary period assumes that opera temporarily faded into irrelevance around 1848 and focused instead on patriotic songs, I contend that operatic expression served to stimulate and direct the emotions of the population. A spate of articles in the popular press described imaginary concerts consisting of well-known operatic scenes to comment on and poke fun at the political leaders of the moment. Like the fundraising potpourri concerts (or "musical academies") to which they alluded, these satirical essays exploited the intense emotions communicated in operatic arias and ensemble finales to dramatize local reactions to international events. In analyzing the programs for these events, I show that the mood and pacing of the musical selections reflected the affective temperature of the local community. These musical programs were designed to heighten public commitment to resisting Habsburg rule.

Chapter 3 turns to the re-entry of Habsburg forces into Venice after the revolution was subdued, to explore how the local population wielded silence as a tool of self-determination. From boycotts of the opera houses to conspicuous absences during the daily military band concerts in the city square, Venetians reappropriated the city's "natural" silences in order to win international sympathy. In the chapter's final section, I interpret this silence through local listening practices. The Venetian audiences who heard the first performances of Verdi's *Rigoletto* were struck by the scenes of surveillance, mishearing, and lapsed communication that mirrored their local situation in ways that decisively shaped the opera's early reception.

My fourth chapter examines how Verdi and Rossini were increasingly defined against the other throughout the first half of the 1850s. When operagoers identified a new lack of feeling in the reception of Rossini's operas after 1848, they also identified a manic excess in enthusiasm for Verdi's operas. Those *classicisti* who championed Rossini sought to channel this unhealthy excess into new and reformed conservatories in cities such as Milan and Florence. At the same time, in Venice the overdue premiere of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* at Teatro La Fenice in 1856 was positioned as a foundational link between Habsburg modernity and Italian genealogy. The theme of "convalescence" in Venice during this period suggests that the musical institutions integral to the nationalist Italian

state were in fact beholden to imperialist bureaucracy.

Submerging ourselves in the Venetian lagoon, we see how the long-held notion that sound can connect people over distances is not mere poetic mystification, but instead signifies the circulatory relationship between people and their environment—a remainder of bodies in work and motion as well as a mode of collective attunement. The ecological stagnancy of nineteenth-century Venice necessarily contains multiple (often conflicting) versions of such relationships. In rewriting the story of 1848, then, we can draw out more than the common narratives of an empire and its possession or that of the proto-national laboratory, and instead wallow in the dissensual, the ambiguous, and the impossible.

Chapter 1: *Un ziro in gondola*

The frontispiece for an 1847 collection of Venetian songs composed by Antonio Buzzolla shows a gondolier pausing in the middle of an oar stroke. What he may be contemplating beyond the frame is no great mystery, since only a little knowledge of Venetian geography provides a reasonable clue. We can assume that he is passing the quay that leads to Piazza San Marco, with the Church of the Redeemer behind and to his right. Perhaps he is listening to the toll of a bell, or maybe he finds himself enchanted by a glint of gold reflecting off the mosaics on the south façade of the Basilica. Perhaps the winged lion of St. Mark atop a column catches his attention, or some movement in the Doge's Palace. The camera obscura effect highlights the gondolier, yet the frozen movement of the gondoliers and the sails in the background along with the picturesque view of one of Venice's more famous churches recall the classic panoramic works of Canaletto. An 1860 frontispiece for another Buzzolla collection of Venetian songs (see Figure 1) offers a similar scene, looking at the Piazzetta from the opposite shore of the Giudecca Canal. This time the gondolier looks down and away from what appears to be an animated conversation between his two passengers.

More than just picturesque representations, these two frontispieces open up—to those in the know—a whole world, encouraging the viewer to take up a position (however fantastically) in the Piazzetta along the quay or near San Giorgio Maggiore across the Giudecca. The image of sound completes the effect. In travel literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the gondolier's song was often described as a duet, during which two gondoliers traded stanzas as they rowed. The pair of boatmen used sound to track the distance between them as much as to pass the time. Looking at the 1847 frontispiece again with this in mind, one might imagine that the voices traverse the distance between the fictional gondolier and the holder of the sheet music, who is imaginatively transported to Venice and acts as the gondolier's echo performing the pieces within. This engraving is both completely unremarkable—typical as it is of the art included in so much nineteenth-century sheet music—and tightly bound to the place it purports to depict, adumbrating a particularly Venetian poetics of space in

Figure 1: Frontispiece for *Mattinata a Venezia* by Antonio Buzzolla (Milan: Francesco Lucca, 1860).

which sound (especially voices), both real and imagined, work to collapse or mediate distance.

Yet this sketch of "real" Venice also reflects the mass-market appeal of such collections in the bourgeois salon. The first song in the 1847 collection, "Un ziro in gondola," reinforces this sense, beginning with Buzzolla's dedication to Antonietta Hiller, the wife of the composer Ferdinand Hiller. Although the song's text was arguably the most popular poem in Venetian dialect at the time, it was first committed to print by the novelist George Sand, who included it in her *Lettres d'un voyageur* (1837). Sand identified the piece as a barcarolle sung by gondoliers—and lacking any other source later commentators thought it written by her. Nowadays the text is attributed to neither Sand nor gondoliers, but rather to Sand's Venetian lover, a doctor named Pietro Pagello.[45]

Sand's obfuscation of the text's provenance draws on a longer literary history that treats the gondola as something of a liminal space, ferrying people between the public and the private and also—as Sand's own affair suggests—transporting them beyond the boundaries of traditional societal mores. In Pagello's text a narrator implores a woman to join him in a gondola to escape the din of the city for the stillness of the sea, which would allow the woman to leave behind any tormented thoughts. He soothes and flatters his lover, comparing her to Venus birthed in a shell. On one level, this scene offers a simple exoticization of Venice for the enjoyment of foreign tourists. On the other, it draws on traditions that can be traced to a local eighteenth-century genre known as the *battello*, which will be discussed in some detail in what follows. Both frontispiece and song, in other words, present themselves as extractions of an authentic Venetian folk culture while they are demonstrably anything but.

In this chapter I examine the material experience of Venetian space and the various ways of moving through that space at mid-century alongside the raft of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century songs cast in the voice of an imaginary gondolier. In addition to being musical postcards that exploited the picturesque city, these songs also captured something of the realities of Venice and functioned as musical records of and responses to the natural and built environments of the city. After the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, commentators complained of

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[45] Edmund Flagg, *Venice; The City of the Sea, From the Invasion by Napoleon in 1797 to the Capitulation to Radetzky in 1849* (New York: Scribner, 1853), 1:67-8. Sand met Pagello when her erstwhile (and jealous) lover, Alfred de Musset, came down with a fever and required treatment at the Hotel Danieli during their trip there in 1833-4. See Paul Mariéton, *Un Histoire d'Amour: George Sand et A. de Musset* (Paris: G. Harvard Fils, 1897); Augustin Cabanès, "The Love-Romance of Three Celebrities" in *Curious Bypaths of History, Being Medico-Historical Studies and Observations* (Paris: Charles Carrington, 1898), 303-45.

a pervasive sense that the city was in decline in terms of both its commercial and political strength. But while the city's updated, industrialized infrastructure as championed by the Habsburg Empire symbolized a renewed Venetian "health" in terms of European benchmarks of progress, these technological developments also disrupted circulation on the lagoon and the canals. A bridge between the city and the mainland opened in 1846, changing how people experienced the city and removing a major source of work and income for the gondolier and other boatmen. Nineteenth-century Venetian songs, then, conjured a poetic space somewhat alienated from the lived realities of city, as much as social commentators capitalized on the gondolier's increasing commercial precarity by salvaging the music of a song-world that was slowly ebbing away.

History of the Barcarolle

Despite attempts to define its generic markers, the essence and character of the barcarolle remain somewhat elusive, for scholars and listeners alike. Most would agree that the piece typically uses a 6/8 time signature and evokes the rocking of a boat with lilting accompaniment.[46] It is also uncontroversial to posit that the genre is inspired by the songs of the gondoliers in Venice, although many a piece labeled "barcarolle" lacks any recognizable tie to the city. The barcarolle begins to look generically less stable once one tries to characterize it any more precisely—looking, for example, for a unifying affect or melodic contour. The genre's ambiguity did not prevent a wealth of composers—Schubert, Rossini, Donizetti, Mendelssohn, Offenbach, etc.—from writing pieces that either explicitly or implicitly evoked the barcarolle; in fact the genre's capaciousness may have served as an invitation for nineteenth-century composers with broadly picturesque intentions. Rather than attempt to tease out a set of criteria for

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[46] See, for example, Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, "On the Limits of Genre: Some Nineteenth-Century Barcaroles," *19th-Century Music* 24, no. 3 (2001): 252-67, https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2001.24.3.252. Some scholars have approached the issue through specific works, such as Michele Callela, "Auf dem Wasser gesungen: Die Tradition des venezianischen Liedes in Franz Liszts *Venezia e Napoli*" *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 76, no. 3 (2019): 200-21, https://doi.org/10.25162/AFMW-2019-0010; and James Parakilas, "The Barcarolle and the *Barcarolle*: Topic and Genre in Chopin" in *Chopin and His World*, ed. Jonathan Bellman and Halina Goldberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 231-48. Sabine Meine, ed., *Barcarola: Il canto del gondoliere nella vita quotidiana e nell'immaginazione artistica* (Venice: Viella, 2016).

defining the barcarolle, then, I shall focus on how it speaks to a longer history of Venetian mobility and circulation.

The years 1742-3 are an important meeting point of two strands of the barcarolle's history. One strand winds through Paris via the work of Rousseau (explaining why in English we eschew the Italian *barcarola* in favor of its French inflection). The other leads us to the famous London publishing house of John Walsh. Rousseau first encountered the gondoliers' songs in person, instilling an appreciation for Italian voices and sound that would have no small consequences for musical discourse in the eighteenth century. Walsh, on the other hand, published an influential collection of *Venetian Ballads*, likely without any direct experience of the city or its sounds. In their own ways, both French and English lineages reveal an interest in collecting and collections in the mode of the cabinet of curiosities, in which the "authentic" Venetian song was extracted from its native context and repackaged (reinterpreted) for foreign consumption.

Today accounts of the barcarolle tend to overlook Italian origins in favor of foreign interpretations. The brief entry for the barcarolle in *Grove Music Online* waves away any prehistory of the genre with the assertion that "[t]hese songs were already widely known in the eighteenth century," without putting any pressure on that phrase "widely known" to explain where or how the songs were popularized, or by whom. As the article's author Maurice Brown writes, these songs were renowned enough that Charles Burney, arriving in Venice in 1771, expressed excitement about hearing the songs of the "*Gondoleri* [sic], or Watermen, which are so celebrated that every musical collector of taste in Europe is well furnished with them." In contrast, Walsh's 1742 collection of *Venetian Ballads* had made no mention of gondoliers, citing as sources only the composer Johann Adolph Hasse and an unnamed group of "celebrated Italian masters." Even so, many of the songs in the Walsh collection printed texts in Venetian dialect, which suggests a connection with an eighteenth-century genre known as the *canzone da battello* (or a song sung from a boat), rather than a direct link to the utterances of working gondoliers.

The mid-eighteenth-century frenzy for the *battello* was short-lived, born of what Giovanni Morelli describes as a contemporary desire to "photograph" (or otherwise preserve) an oral tradition.[47] Although these songs were undoubtedly Venetian in origin and character, it is unclear from *whose* oral tradition—especially in terms of class and education—the songs supposedly sprung. The surviving collections of songs prove the *battello* to be adaptable to almost any performance context and formal features, requiring only a bipartite design with a

[47] Giovanni Morelli, "Un genere povero ma illustro," in *Canzoni da Battello (1740-1750)*, ed. Sergio Barcellona and Galliano Titton (Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 1990), 1:5.

singable melody.[48] Perhaps the most surprising source that has been suggested are the dramatic and ornamented arias of Metastasian *opera seria*. The composer Benedetto Marcello verified that the *battello* was often a reduction of a well-known opera aria, yet he—with tongue firmly planted in his cheek—imagined these reductions as executed by lowly copyists, who made their marks on operas only by messing up words, keys, and accidentals.[49] Most accounts suggest that the earliest and best-known performers of the *battello* were women, including Marcello's wife, Rosanna Scalfi Marcello.[50] Sergio Barcellona has argued that over the course of the eighteenth century the genealogy of Venetian song in a sense inverted itself: while the *battello* was sometimes derived from reductions of opera arias (with texts rewritten in Venetian dialect) by amateur poets and composers looking to imitate the cultured style, by the turn of the nineteenth century Venetian "popular" songs were devised by professional artists looking to imitate the simplified folk.[51]

This resistance to generic definition is arguably a Venetian specialty. While water was perhaps enough to evoke Venice for the contemporary listener or reader, the *battello* draws on a longer history of what Jennifer Scappettone has called Venetian anachronism: the persistent idea that Venice was unmoored from modernity, or otherwise existed outside of the present moment.[52] The city's resistance to the "synthesizing gazes" of modern urban denizens like the flâneur—who is better suited to Hausmann's broad boulevards than the city's

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[48] Sergio Barcellona, "La canzone da battello nel settecento veneziano: fonti e testimonianze" in *Canzoni da Battello*, 1:7. For the *canzone da battello* as an influence on Rossini's aria "Di tanti palpiti," see Emanuele Senici, *Music in the Present Tense: Rossini's Italian Operas in their Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 199.

[49] Benedetto Marcello, *Il Teatro di musica alla moda*, ed. Etienne L.G.E. Audin (Florence: Guglielmo Piatti, 1841), 34. "I copisti accorderanno con l'impresario un tanto per opera, e questa poi faranno scrivere a soldi sei il foglio, compresa la carta, inchiostro, penne, polverino, etc.; e, cavando loro parti dell' opera, sbaglieranno parole, chiavi, accidenti, etc., lascieranno facciate intere, etc.

Venderanno a forestieri, che desiderassero buone arie d'opera, carte vecchie col nome de' professori migliori; sapranno comporre, cantare, suonare, recitare, etc., riducendo la maggior parte dell' arie dell' opera in canzon da battello, etc."

[50] Barcellona," La canzone da battello…," 1:9-10.

[51] Barcellona, "La canzone da battello…," 1:9.

[52] Jennifer Scappettone, *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 10.

twisty *calli*—meant that an outsider could not navigate it alone.[53] (This perhaps explains in part why the city's gondolier-navigator came to be so closely associated with such an amorphous musical genre.) As much as the flaneur, who famously rejects the all-encompassing-omniscient view, the speaking and singing personas of the *battello* thematize movement. In Venice, the song-form represents the movement of people from the confined and static spaces of the palazzo and the opera house to the fresh air provided by the circulating gondola, from the refined and literate space to the "natural" space, from the built environment to the sea. Walsh's collection—authentically Venetian or not—reinforced this porous sense of the relationship between Venice, song, and boat (with all their accompanying cultural associations) in the European imagination.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, tourists were further drawn to hear the gondoliers in person thanks to the transformative experience described by Rousseau. Rousseau heard the gondoliers during a stay in Venice in 1743-4 and brought back to Paris an enthusiasm for Italian voices and music that would play a crucial role in the *querelle des bouffons* ten years later. In his *Confessions* (1782), Rousseau traced his conversion to Italian music back to the barcarolle. He admitted: "I had brought from Paris the prejudice against Italian music that one has in that country: but I had also received from nature this delicate sensibility which prejudices could not touch. […] On hearing the barcarolles, I found that I had never heard singing up until that moment."[54] Rousseau's enthusiasm inspired others to make the musical pilgrimage to the city to hear the gondoliers as well as the gifted students of Venice's famed *ospedali*. Echoing Marcello's description of the *battello* as a reduction of the operatic aria, Rousseau's entry on the barcarolle in his *Dictionnaire de musique* highlights simplicity over any ecstatic pleasures, defining the genre only as "a kind of song in Venetian dialect that the gondoliers sing in Venice."[55] The entry also perpetuated the story that gondoliers would

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[53] Scappettone, 14.

[54] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions* (Paris: Didot frères, 1849), 292. The original French: "J'avois apporté de Paris le préjugé qu'on a dans ce pays-là contre la musique italienne: mais j'avois aussi reçu de la nature cette sensibilité de tact contre laquelle les préjugés ne tiennent pas. […] En écoutant les barcarolles, je trouvois que je n'avois pas ouï chanter jusqu'alors…"

[55] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris: veuve Duchesne, 1768), 39. "Sorte de Cansons en Langue Vénitienne que chantant les Gondoliers à Venise. Quoique les Airs de *Barcarolles* soient faits pour le Peuple, & souvent composes par les Gondoliers mêmes, ils on tant de mélodie & un accent si agrèable qu'il n'a pas de Musicien dans toute l'Italie qui ne se pique d'en savoir & d'en chanter. L'entrée gratuite qu'ont les Gondoliers à tout les Thèâtres, les

attempt to memorize in its entirety the sixteenth-century epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* ("Jerusalem Delivered") by Torquato Tasso. Like Burney, Rousseau's appreciation of the gondoliers' performance focused especially on the dual nature of each song, its antiphonal rendition by a pair of singers. Rousseau recalled with pleasure that the gondoliers would pass their summer nights alternating stanzas between one boat and another, a fact confirmed with less enthusiasm by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who grumbled that "they are making a tremendous noise on the canal under my window, though it is past midnight."[56]

The broader eighteenth-century understanding of the Venetian song was one of circulation, and, in this light, it is no surprise that the barcarolle's tradition of alternating stanzas that linked two voices in motion was read as a symptom of Venetian health and virility. From the perspective of many an outsider, by the end of autonomous Venetian rule in 1797, the health of the polis was in decline. The city and its lagoons initially went to the Habsburg Empire in the Treaty of Campo Formio, but both Habsburgs and the French would trade control until the Congress of Vienna established the Habsburg claim for the final time in 1815. Nearly twenty years of political instability took a toll on the local economy and fomented resentment among the Venetians.[57] Habsburg control led to widespread deregulation of lagoon industries such as fishing, which in turn began to devastate the local environment, but also to new political myths woven by the two foreign

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met à portée de se former sans fraix l'oreille & le gout; de forte qu'ils composent & chantant leurs Airs en gens qui, sans ignore les finesses de la Musique, ne veulent point altérer le genre simple & naturel de leurs *Barcarolles*. Les paroles de ces Chansons son communément plus que naturelles, comme les conversations de ceux qui les chantant: mais ceux à qui les peintures fidelles de moeurs du Peuple peuvent plaire, & qui aiment d'ailleurs le Dialecte Vénitien, s'en passionnent facilement, séduits par la beauté des Airs; de forte que plusieurs Curieux en ont de trés-amples recueils.

N'oublions pas de remarque à la gloire du Tasse, que la plupart des Gondoliers savent par coeur une grand partie de son Poëme de la *Jérusalem délivrée*, que plusieurs le savent tout entire, qu'ils passent les nuits d'été sur leurs barques à le canter alternativement d'une barque à l'autre, que c'est assurément une belle *Barcarolle*, que le Poëme du Tasse, qu'Homere seul eut avant lui l'honneur d'être ainsi chanté & que nul autre Poëme Épique n'en a eu depuis un pareil."

[56] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Letters from Switzerland and Travels to Italy*, trans. Rev. A.J.W. Morrison (Boston: S.E. Cassino, 1882), 133.

[57] On pre-1848 Venice, see Marco Meriggi, *Amministrazione e classi sociali nel Lombardo-Veneto (1814-1848)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983) and *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto* (Turin: UTET, 1987).

governments—the French and the Habsburgs—wrestling for power.[58] For both foreign powers, maintaining control of the city required heading off any potential nostalgia for the halcyon days of the Republic that might inspire local revolt. Early historical studies highlighted Republican "tyranny," somewhat by default casting the foreign governments in charge as welcome liberators.[59]

Such portraits of the fallen Republic were perhaps most widely circulated in the work of Byron, who arrived in Venice in 1816 and left in 1819. In plays like *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*, he depicted Republican leaders as entangled in ponderous political dramas filled with murder and treason. The threat of such shadowy "conspiracies" lingered and seemingly justified some of the harsher aspects of Habsburg rule. While Byron certainly took some poetic license in depicting the Venetians as silent pacifists, he was nonetheless responding to concrete political circumstances. In the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* he famously depicted the gondoliers as confined to the past:

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[58] On fishing see: T. Fortibuoni, R. Gertwagen, O. Giovanardi, and S. Raicevich, "The Progressive Deregulation of Fishery Management in the Venetian Lagoon after the Fall of the Repubblica Serenissima: Food for Thought on Sustainability," *Global Bioethics* 25, no. 1 (2014): 42-55, https://doi.org/10.1080/11287462.2014.894707.

[59] On nineteenth-century myths of Venice see David Laven, "Lord Byron, Count Daru, and Anglophone Myths of Venice in the nineteenth century," *MDCC* 1 (2012): 5-32, https://doi.org/10.14277/2280-8841/MDCCC-1-12-1 and James Johnson "The Myth of Venice in Nineteenth-Century Opera," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no. 3 (2006): 533-54, https://doi.org/10.1162/002219506774929872. Venetians reportedly did not attend *en masse* the mandated Festival of Liberty—held on June 4-6—to celebrate the erection of a Revolutionary Tree of Liberty in Piazza San Marco. Aside from practical issues of public safety during a period of political unrest, some may have refused to witness events such as the "holocaust" in honor of liberty, during which aristocratic symbols of the Republic—including books and the Doge's robes—were tossed onto a bonfire. (One of the Venetians present audibly shuddered.) Yet there were others who celebrated the promise of a new system of government: the writer Ugo Foscolo rushed back to Venice on hearing the news and famously danced around the Tree of Liberty with aristocratic scion Maria Querini Benzon (the latter dressed in a Greek toga.) On the festivities during the initial French government, see Riccardo Carnesechi, "Ceremonie, feste e canti: Lo spettacolo della 'Democrazia Veneziana' dal maggio del 1797 al gennaio 1798," *Studi Veneziani* 24 (1992): 213-318, especially 236-8.

In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
And silent rows the songless gondolier;
Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
And music meets not always now the ear."[60]

A note accompanying Byron's lines describes a gondola trip to the Lido during which Byron and his editor John Hobhouse attempted to recreate these supposedly lost sounds. The two men heard a gondolier and carpenter sing the version of Tasso in Tuscan Italian (rather than in Venetian dialect), singing in unison rather than the conventional exchange of stanzas between two voices. Heard at close quarters, this experience was grating. In his critical notes to the first edition of *Childe Harold*, Hobhouse went on to quote an essay from Isaac Disraeli's collected *Curiosities of Literature* (1791) in which the author describes an experiment designed to solve this problem—returning to shore while leaving one of the singers in the gondola, the author was able to adjust his distance accordingly. Against the picturesque backdrop of a silent, moon-drenched Venice and at a distance, the performance was "inexpressibly charming, as it only fulfills its design in the sentiment of remoteness. It is plaintive, but not dismal in its sound; and at times it is scarcely possible to refrain from tears."[61]

It would doubtless have reduced Byron's enjoyment of the experience to know that the songs of the gondoliers were structured as they were for very practical reasons. The gondoliers themselves used (and still use) cries to announce changes in direction and in order to alert oncoming traffic. The idea was to allow others time to make space in the narrow canals, many of which require boatment to make blind turns.[62] As with the *canzone di battello*, then, Byron's perception of Venice was based in equal parts on romanticized notions of the city and very real experience of its urban design.

Once we begin to think about movement and the lyric navigation of space, questions of infrastructure come to the fore. The project to build a modern transportation infrastructure for Venice was at once an Italian republican and a

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[60] See George Gordon Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Canto the fourth* (London: John Murray, 1818), 4. The extent to which Byron defaulted to poetic exaggeration is somewhat unclear. Decades earlier—before 1797—Goethe declared the performance "must actually be ordered, as it is not to be heard as a thing, of course, but rather belongs to the half-forgotten traditions of former times." Goethe, 138.

[61] Isaac Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, ed. Benjamin Disraeli (London: G. Routledge and Co., 1858), 1:389-90.

[62] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853), 2:375-7.

Habsburg project, one undertaken in order to connect the city (in terms both literal and figurative) with wider European networks.[63] Yet this "modernization" project was fundamentally at odds with the needs of the local boatmen, who began to lose work to trains. In a sense, then, the continuing cultural value of the barcarolle as the nineteenth century progressed contradicted, belied, or perhaps even attempted to erase the material realities of inhabiting Venice in the present moment. In the next section, I examine the poetics of Venetian infrastructure, specifically after the opening of the railway bridge in 1846, which forever changed the visitor's first encounter with the city. If the eighteenth-century threads of the Venetian boat song suggest a relationship to healthy circulation, their early nineteenth-century echoes contend with the absence of such movement, while the mid-century iteration speaks to a new mediation of the city born of the relationship between infrastructure and imperial poetics.

Alienation

Even in 2021 the question of infrastructure in Venice is no small issue. As we saw with Byron's silent gondoliers, the idea that Venice could not be properly "photographed"—that it somehow eludes its own transubstantiation—gave rise to a decadent poetics of the city. Ecocritic Serenella Iovino recently warned that the persistence of such poetics still threatens ecological disaster in the contemporary city, that the "anti-historical" approaches to managing the Venetian lagoon have led to an alienation that facilitated (and still facilitates) industrial development at the expense of a harmonious ecosystem.[64] The majority of Venice's subsidence within the past century is due to the effects of groundwater pumping on the nearby coasts.[65] Heeding the injunction of the co-editors of *Italy and the Environmental Humanities* to move away "from the idealized Grand Tour representations" and to face up instead "to the living nightmares of ecomafia and the post-seismic rubble," we might see the frontispiece of the Buzzolla collection

[63] On infrastructure see Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[64] See Serenella Iovino, "Cognitive Justice and the Truth of Biology: Death (and Life) in Venice," in *Ecocriticsm and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation* (London: Bloomberg Academic, 2016), 47-82.
[65] See Luigi Tosi, Pietro Teatini, and Tazio Strozzi, "Natural versus anthropogenic subsidence of Venice," *Scientific Reports* 3, no. 2710 (2013): https://doi:10.1038/srep0271.

with which we began in a new light.[66] That image of the meditative boatman set against the cityscape positions the gondolier as a musical narrator of the city's secrets and meanings. The contemplative pose itself suggests a figure drawn out of time and into myth: by 1847 gondoliers and other Venetian boatmen were seething, angry about the loss of work resulting from technological innovations in public transportation—railways especially, but also the new omniboats able to bring more people across the lagoon in relative luxury.[67] The growing silence of the gondoliers, in other words, presaged today's post-seismic rubble.

There is a close relationship between infrastructure, technology, and modes of knowing, if we take knowledge to be gained through the senses such of seeing and hearing. Multimedia spectacles such as the peep show or magic lantern show transported audiences to times and places that were otherwise inaccessible. The telescopic magnification of such optical entertainments—which, in representing historic or fictional events, "zoomed in" on something otherwise unseen by the audience—opened up the possibility of new and hidden realms.[68] Although musical genres like the barcarolle operate only on the aural plane, they can nevertheless offer an immersive for the listener and can function as points of access to new knowledge and experience. The barcarolle's evocation of motion through water, paired with mimesis of the voices of the gondoliers, foregrounded a pre-modern form of perpetual motion and offered up the city of Venice as at once knowable and unknowable to a distant audience. In his 1870 essay on Beethoven, Richard Wagner recounted a night in Venice during which he stood on his balcony and listened to the alternating cries of gondoliers as they floated down the Grand Canal. The voices "seemed at last to melt into unison" before falling silent once again, allowing the city to return to its slumber. Wagner characterized his experience as a specific example of what he called "sympathetic listening," in which sound could transport an enchanted listener to "a dreamlike state" in which the ear revealed to the listener the "inmost essence" of things.[69]

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[66] Serenella Iovino, Enrico Cesaretti, and Elena Past, ed., "Introduction," in *Italy and the Environmental Humanities: Landscapes, Natures, Ecologies* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), 8.

[67] Adolfo Bernardello, *La prima ferrovia fra Venezia e Milano. Storia della Imperial-Regia Privilegiata Strada Ferrata Ferdinandea Lombardo-Veneta (1835-1852)* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, 1996), 378-82.

[68] Deirdre Loughridge, "Magnified Vision, Mediated Listening and the 'Point of Audition' of Early Romanticism," *Eighteenth Century Music* 10, no. 2 (2013): 179-211, https://doi.org/10.1017/S147857061300004.

[69] William Ashton Ellis, trans., *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1896), 5:73-4.

By the time Wagner was writing, and even during the era of Buzzolla or Byron a few decades before, the barcarolle largely promoted a fake aesthetic experience, at odds with the contemporary material realities of life in Venice. Experienced alongside new infrastructures and technologies, the pre-mechanical and highly embodied mode of spatial navigation inherent to the gondoliers' songs and to the barcarolle offered a unique opportunity to "know" a distant space. As we shall see, this came at the expense of the very people and life-world the barcarolle purportedly evoked.

The most obvious change to the city's design was the opening of the railway bridge in 1846, which changed the way that people approached the city. When traveling to Venice for the first time today, a novice tourist hoping for a first view of the floating city might press their face against the train's window as the cars lumber away from Mestre station and pick up speed for the final approach. With a knowing smile, the initiate might enjoy their last minutes with the newspaper, preferring not to watch the tourist's brows come together as the train first passes parking garages and old industrial plants and then furrow as one of the regional trains blocks the brief view of the lagoon. (Those with a birder's eye admittedly may find something more pleasing during this part of the journey.) Stepping away from the stark, Fascist lines of the Santa Lucia station, the tourist is treated to a first view of the Grand Canal, with the oversized, oxidized cupola of San Simeone Piccolo laying claim to the church's status not as the most beautiful, but at the very least as the first to be admired by millions of visitors each year. In *Italian Hours*, Henry James cursed the "perfidious" Canaletto for his picturesque misrepresentation of this view of church and Canal, writing: "It is the beginning of [the visitor's] experience, but it is the end of the Grand Canal."[70]

If we compare this impression with descriptions written before the construction of the railway bridge, we might conclude that the railway despoiled the city's glamor. At the risk of stating the blindingly obvious, the experience of traveling *by* water is different from the experience of traveling *over* water. Only a few years before the opening of the bridge, an enchanted Charles Dickens approached the city at night by boat, his oarsmen taking their orientation from the burning lights of the city and guided along a "dreamy kind of track, marked out upon the sea by posts and piles." Dickens so embraces the surreal in his description that by the time his boat floated by the preternatural quiet of the cemetery-island of San Michele, we would not be surprised to find his gaze had fixed on the rowers' hands to discern whether the moonlight bleached bone or flesh. His whole stay passed as if in a dream, leaving him with this final thought:

[70] Henry James, *Italian Hours* (London: William Heinemann, 1909), 52.

> But, close about the quays and churches, palaces and prisons: sucking at their walls, and welling up into the secret places of the town: crept the water always. Noiseless and watchful: coiled round and round it, in its many folds, like an old serpent: waiting for the time, I thought, when people should look down into its depths for any stone of the old city that had claimed to be its mistress.[71]

Within these "hydropoetics" of Venice we find more than fantasy and distortion. The introduction of the railroad to Venice impacted the perception of the city, celebrating imperial progress and urban planning at the expense of more elemental resources. Water is itself a natural resource, but viewed with infrastructure in mind, the Venetian lagoon played a role in various extractive and disciplinary activities endemic to colonialism.[72] Venetian voices were not absent in discussions of transportation and development at mid-century, but I would argue that such discussions largely took part in a hydrocolonial context, wherein the lagoon's wider ecosystem was commodified largely for the benefit of a foreign government, the Vienna-based Habsburg Empire. While using the term "colonialism" in relation to pre-Unification Italy might justifiably provoke skepticism, scholars such as Paul Ginsborg have argued for Venice's "quasi-colonial" status under the Habsburgs, wherein the Empire exploited the region of the Veneto for its raw materials and yet also undercut the local industry, in part by allowing in imperial imports without duties and in part through deregulation.[73] In contrast to the treatment of the Habsburg port of Trieste, it took nearly fifteen years of local lobbying before the emperor Francis I granted Venice free-port status in 1829.[74] David Laven has argued that the long delay before making Venice a free port was in fact due to a careful consideration of the local economy, which was already struggling and might have ground to a halt with the free

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[71] Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1846), 118.

[72] Recent work in literary studies defines "hydrocolonialism" as the "colonization of water (occupation of land with water resources, the declaration of territorial waters, the militarization and geopoliticization of oceans.)" Isabel Hofmeyr, "Provisional Notes on Hydrocolonialism," *English Language Notes* 57, no. 1 (2019): 13, https://doi.org/10.1215/00138282-7309644.

[73] Paul Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848-9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2-4.

[74] For a recent take on the now-Italian Trieste's issues with "imperial nostalgia" see Giulia Carabelli, "Habsburg coffeehouses in the Shadow of the Empire: Revisiting Nostalgia in Trieste," *History and Anthropology* 30:4 (2019): 382-92, https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2019.1611574.

movement of British and French goods as well as cheap wine from the Dalmatian coast and Cyprus.[75] In addition, the loosening of strict controls on fishing practices was in part meant to combat starvation by allowing individuals to fish for their own sustenance.[76] But cholera outbreaks forced strict quarantine measures and in 1835 only forty-nine ships bearing an average of 250 tons officially entered the port.[77]

Whether or not Venice was a colonial "milch cow" in the first fifteen years of the second Austrian domination, after Venice regained free-port status the disciplinary mechanisms of imperial control became more obvious. Ships were quarantined not just to control cholera, but in order to search for subversive materials such as books or images—the latter of which proved difficult to police, forcing their immediate deposit in a central censorship office.[78] The searches were so invasive that it took some diplomatic wrangling between the Austrian governor, Johann Baptist Spaur, and the British consul to secure a promise that British citizens would not have their books seized.[79] While careful not to overstate the efficacy of Austrian censorship, Laven notes that this process may explain why many a foreign visitor (including privileged British citizens) complained about the lack of a Venetian reading culture, given how difficult it could be to "get hold of anything worth reading."[80] This blurred line between infrastructure and media suggests yet another way that the Venetian lagoon had an impact on the Venetian sensorium and perhaps points to one more reason why sound was so important to the experience of the city.

Within this context, we can better understand why even zealous Italian republicans would have argued for an imperial railway line connecting Milan and Venice. While it would unite two Habsburg cities, the line would also allow for the easy circulation of Italian goods and people, founding new relationships between the two regions. This was, of course, easier said than done. Although unified under the Habsburg name, Lombardy and Venetia were historically

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[75] David Laven, *Venice and Venetia Under the Habsburgs: 1815-1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98-102. As Albert Schram details in his book on railways in nineteenth-century Italy, Venice's port continued to languish through the latter half of the century; see his, *Railways and the Formation of the Italian State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 129-36.

[76] Fortibuoni et al. "The Progressive Deregulation…"

[77] Bernardello, *La prima ferrovia fra Venezia e Milano*, 15.

[78] Laven, *Venice and Venetia Under the Habsburgs*, 188-92.

[79] I mention the name of the Austrian governor in part because it lives on in Verdi's dedication of *Ernani* to Spaur's daughter, Clementina Mocenigo-Spaur.

[80] Laven, *Venice and Venetia Under the Habsburgs*, 187.

separate regions and the question of whether one region should help pay for the line in the other was no small matter.[81] Such questions were not unrelated to the federalist sentiments many Risorgimento patriots would express in 1848-9, making the railway line something of an early laboratory for the practical issues of Italian unification. The many debates about the railway line—inaugurated in 1837—in fact starred a number of future revolutionaries, including Carlo Cattaneo (a key figure during Milan's insurrection in March 1848) and Daniele Manin (who would go on to run the Venetian provisional government for much of 1848-9.) The bridge in particular represented a symbolic end to Venetian isolation, being intended, of course, could be for the city's betterment (the original plans included tubes to bring gas to the city) or detriment (such as those concerns about what would be a newfound ability for a military to invade.)

Although the bridge was only the very beginning (or end) of the line, it was one of the more difficult parts of the project to engineer. That, of course, made it a particularly expensive element of an endeavor for which both regions were expected to pay. As a secretary of the Lombard contingent, Cattaneo published a *Rivista di varj scritti intorno alla strada ferrata da Milano a Venezia* in 1841, which discussed plans for the bridge as published by the project's then head engineer, Giovanni Milani. Cattaneo noted that while the bridge accounted for only one-seventieth of the whole line, the difficulties it posed meant it occupied half of Milani's project.[82] Milani's original design called for a swing bridge that would allow for larger ships to pass, before reaching the city near the inlet of Santa Lucia. He argued that in beginning the bridge at Fort Marghera there need be no concerns about invasion and by connecting at Santa Lucia only two houses (numbers 99, 100, and 101) were to be demolished. Cattaneo, on the other hand, argued that the bridge should be the last project to be completed, claiming that, even though thousands of passengers might descend on Mestre, boats could bring them across the water without incurring the costs of building the bridge, which he argued would bring the overall costs to the amount of a railway ten times the length of what they were proposing.[83]

Debates on the bridge, then, threatened the continued employment of the gondoliers. Despite Cattaneo's cost-cutting proposal, it was increasingly unlikely

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[81] For a comprehensive history of the railway line, see Bernardello, *La prima ferrovia fra Venezia e Milano*.

[82] Carlo Cattaneo, *Rivista di varj scritti intorno alla strada ferrata da Milano a Venezia* (Milan: Luigi di Giacomo Pirola, 1841), 33. See also Giovanni Milani, *Progetto di una strada a guide di ferro da Venezia a Milano* (Venice: Antonelli, 1840). Perhaps the fact that one sees the line as running from Milan to Venice and the other from Venice to Milan needs no further commentary.

[83] Cattaneo, 37.

that gondoliers or other boatmen would bring visitors to city. The bridge threatened their livelihood, but so did the new omnibus-boats that promised a seamless journey in coordination with the new railway—a threat dire enough that frustrated gondolieri reportedly murdered an omnibus-boat captain in 1843.[84] The complaints of the gondolieri and boatmen went largely unheeded in the name of free enterprise, forcing the transformation of the gondolier into the ferryman of tourists that he is today. Their dissatisfaction and early attempts at protest arguably helped foment the revolution of 1848 along with the frustrated workers of the Venetian Arsenal, who helped propel Daniele Manin to power.[85] More than cautionary revolutionary tale, the gondoliers' displeasure makes clear the ways in which questions of imperial progress as much as Italian unification papered over local concerns.

To try to relate Venice's "quasi-colonial" status to specific instances of musical culture might seem quixotic, but I would argue that the workings and practices of real things such as railway bridges, quarantines, and boatmen are key to rehearing the otherwise picturesque nineteenth-century depictions of the city. The violence of 1843 prefigured the violence that would come in 1848—when the murder of a Habsburg official sparked the *arsenalotti*. The extent of the attention paid to the imperial spectacle of the railway bridge suggests the extent to which local concerns went unheard, even as barcarolles played in salons across Europe. If it was no longer a musical testament to healthy circulation on the canals as in the *battello*, what can we make of the mid-century imitations and facsimiles of the gondoliers' song?

Gondolas of the Mind

Today Antonio Buzzolla may be better known to music history for his 1855 installment as maestro di cappella at the Basilica, following in the footsteps of Cipriano de Rore, Claudio Monteverdi, Francesco Cavalli, and Baldassare Galuppi; but like the many men who preceded him, Buzzolla too dabbled in opera and other vocal music. The 1847 collection of Venetian songs was not the first time that he took on the figure of the gondolier: never shying away from participation in symbolic Venetian functions, four years earlier he had composed a "Barcarola" on the subject of a boatman's beloved for that year's regatta (held

[84] Bernardello, 378-82.

[85] Bernardello (381-2) essentially makes this argument: due to the nature of their profession they were not quite part of the more skilled artisanal class of workers, leaving them (especially during these days of scarcity) as an increasingly bonded group of the working class.

on June 5.)[86] While all the texts in the 1847 collection are in Venetian dialect, many songs in the volume fit into some broader categories that are not necessarily Venetian. "La discrezion," for instance, is a comic patter song in which a male character offers conflicting evidence when attempting to assure his Nina that he is discreet; "El marìo a la moda," on the other hand, is an amusing soubrette piece that details the required traits for a modern husband. Along with "L'amante timido," these can be understood as character pieces, which is not surprising given that most of the songs are dedicated to accomplished singers: Antonietta Hiller, Elisabetta Beltrami-Barozzi (who was also a published composer), and Amalia Astori Duodo. Only three of the songs explicitly mention a gondola and none of these seem to be expressed from the perspective of a person who makes a living as a gondolier.

Yet the point of such Venetian songs is not to capture an authentic perspective on Venice, such as that offered by the gondolier. These songs married imperialist modes of knowing with Venetian modes, offering the foreign consumer the possibility of an imagined experience of Venice. The spatial knowledge to which the ear could provide access granted something of an audiovisual simulacrum—an embodied experience that primed listeners for imperialist spectacle at the expense of local knowledge. While drawing on native practices, the varying points of views of Venetian songs clearly set in Venice established a virtual poetic space, removed from that of the city itself. The ensuing alienation of the city from itself—recognized most forcefully in the violence of the silenced gondoliers—blurred the lines between reality and poetics in a city built between land and sea.

At first the seventh song in the collection, "La barcheta," seems to offer a stereotypical example of a barcarolle: it is in 6/8, marked andante, with a repetitive rocking accompaniment (see Example 1). The text begins with the narrator inviting his unnamed lover to observe the beautiful scene from the window, then (as in the initial song in the collection, "Un ziro in gondola") urging her to take advantage of the picturesque night and go out in a gondola. But then another gondola comes into view—interrupting the scene—and the intimate drama between narrator and lover is mirrored by the distant couple occupying the other boat, Tonin and Marieta. The narrator at first describes the romantic scene to his love, then exhorts her to join him in a gondola so they can be as happy as the other two.

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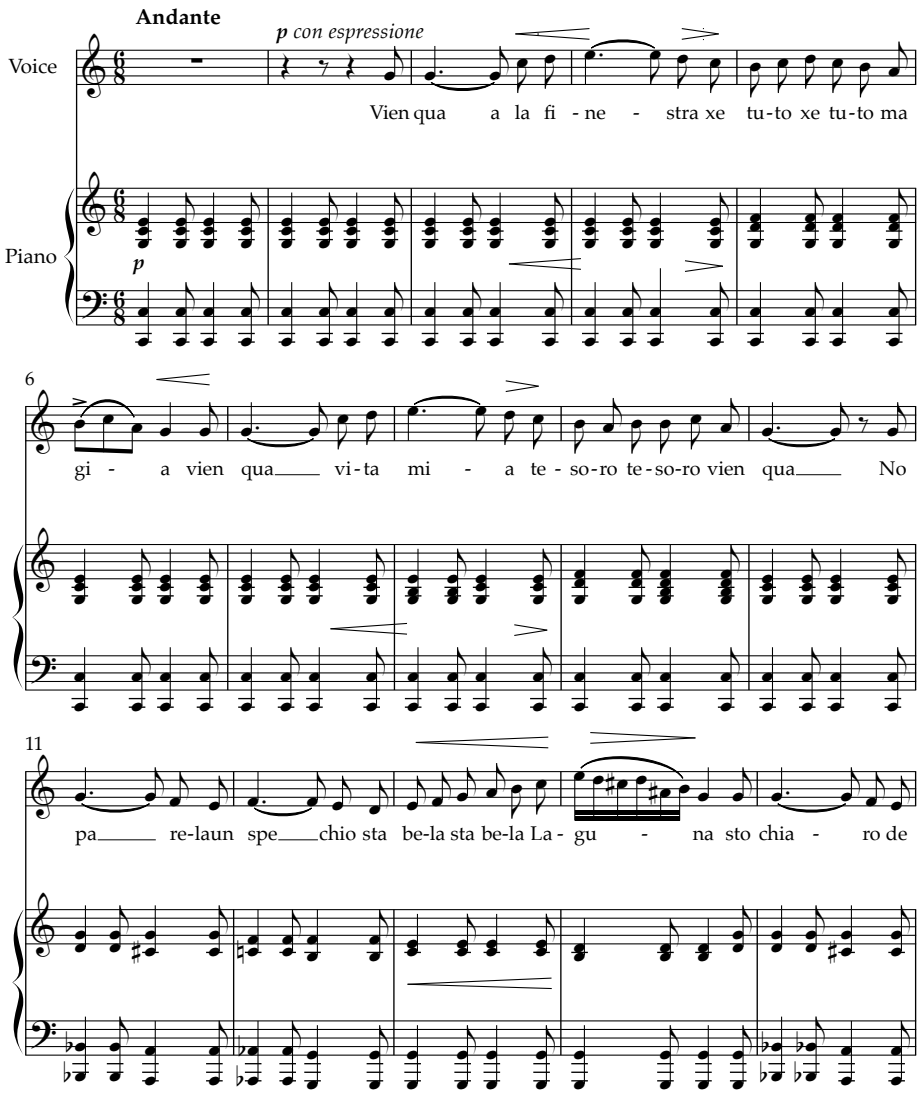
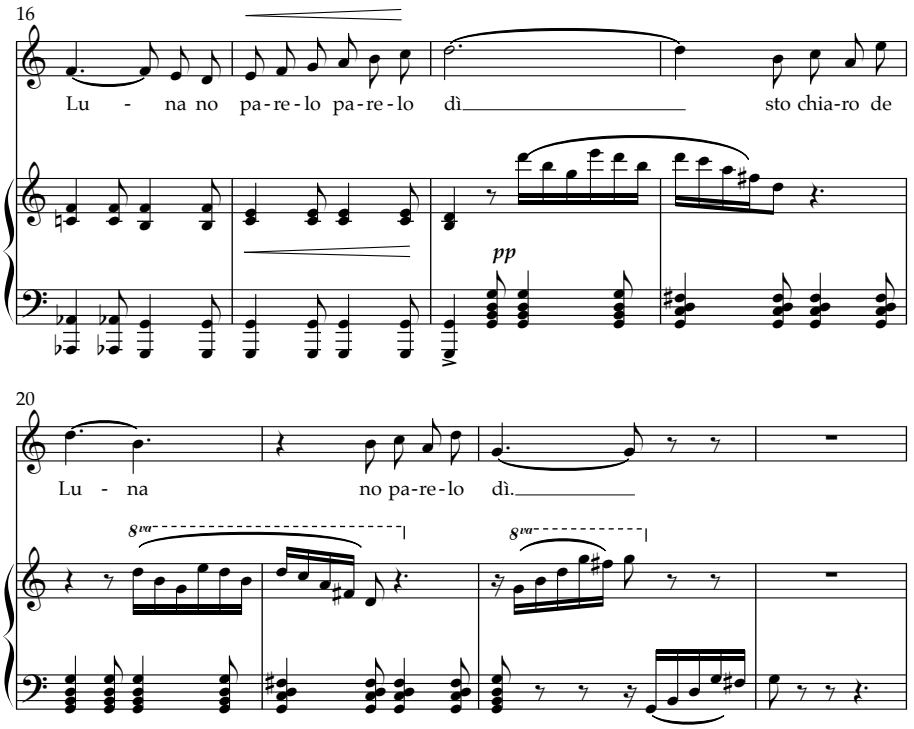
[86] *Lettera di Emanuele Antonio Cicogna a Cleandro Conte di Prata intorno ad alcune regate Veneziane pubbliche e private*, 2nd edn. (Venice: Giambattista Merlo, 1856), 82. On Buzzolla see Francesco Passadore and Lidia Sirch, eds., *Antonio Buzzolla: Una vita musicale nella Venezia romantica* (Rovigo: Associazione Culturale Minelliana, 1994.)

Text of "La barcheta"

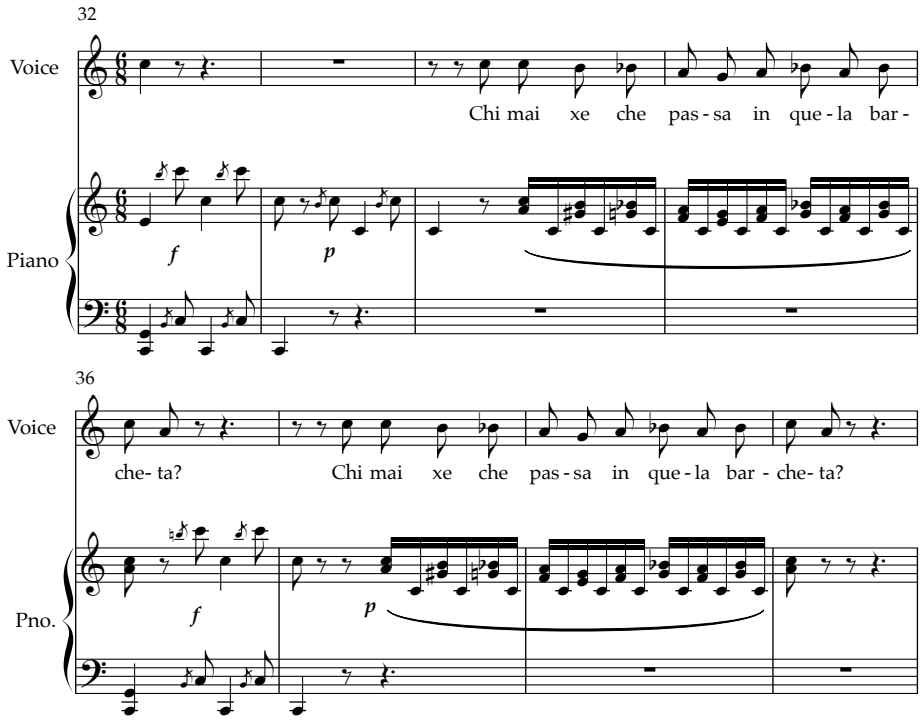
Vien qua a la finestra xe tuto magia	Come to the window, it is magical
Vien qua vita mia tesoro vien qua.	Come, my love, my treasure, come here.
No parela un spechio sta bela Laguna	Does this beautiful lagoon not seem like a mirror,
Sto chiaro de luna no parelo dì.	This moonlight not seem like day?
Che gusto andar soli in barca a sta ora	What pleasure for the two of us to go in a boat at this hour
E veder l'aurora su l'acqua spuntar.	And see the dawn appear on the water.
Chi mai xe che passa in quela barcheta?	Who could be in that boat?
Culia de Marieta col caro Tonin.	It is Marieta with her dear Tonin.
I bei cavei d'oro molai su la copa	Her beautiful golden hair shines at her nape
La bava ghe ingropa ghe fa svolazzar.	And flutters as the breeze envelopes her.
Tonin varda e tase si Marieta el ga a rente,	When Marieta is next to him, Tonin only has eyes for her.
Nol vede nol sente el par incantà.	He is lost to the world, he seems enchanted.
E ti cossa distu te piase sto incanto?	And you what do you say, do you like this spell?
Eben altretanto via femo anche nu.	We could also be like this.
Cussì poderemo beati e contenti	We could also be happy and content.
Passer quei momenti parlando d'amore.	Spending time speaking of love.
Vien vien…	Come, come…

The centrality of the window as a frame for the song's action, together with the alternation between conventional barcarolle figures (in the accompaniment) and more rhapsodic vocal gestures, suggests that this song (and the many, many other commodified barcarolles in similar style) was designed to work as a kind of touristic transportation device, transporting listeners to new spaces by employing a series of standard audiovisual techniques. Central to the experience of listening to "La barcheta" is the song's manipulation of what film theorists have called the "point of audition," which is simultaneously an objective, spatialized listening position within a scene (here from the window) and a more psychological, subjective listening position (the scene *as heard by*) our musical


Andante
p con espressione
Voice
Piano
p
Vien qua a la fi - ne - stra xe tu-to xe tu-to ma
6
gi - a vien qua vi-ta mi - a te - so-ro te-so-ro vien qua No
11
pa re-laun spe chio sta be-la sta be-la La - gu - na sto chia - ro de



Example 1: Buzzolla, "La barcheta," from *Il gondoliere* (1847), mm. 1-23.



Example 2: Buzzolla, "La barcheta," from *Il gondoliere* (1847), mm. 32-39.

narrator.[87] In an attempt to clarify the listener's agency in creating the point of audition, Neil Verma has recently suggested instead the term "audioposition," which he defines as "a place for the listener that is created by coding foregrounds and backgrounds."[88]

The text of "La barcheta" suggests changing foregrounds and backgrounds—a relational sense of space we are already primed for in Venice by the traditional alternating stanzas of the gondoliers' song—and this is further underlined in the music. The opening lines are accompanied by a familiar lilting barcarolle figure (mm. 1-2), with a short vocal flourish on the word *laguna* (m. 14) that illustrates the shimmering lagoon. This gesture is then picked up and mutated in the accompaniment (mm. 18-23) to also depict the shining moon. But then: a call from the piano in the form of ornamented octave leaps (see Example 2, mm. 32-33.) "Whoever is passing in that boat?" the narrator asks, directing

[87] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Claudia Gorman, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 89-90.
[88] Neil Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 35.

both eye and ear. With this interruption, the action moves from the proscenium of the window to a more intimate drama happening in the distant gondola.

After a reassuring descending line in which the narrator observes that it is Marieta's boat "with the dear Tonin," the *laguna*/*luna* twinkling gesture briefly returns as the narrator describes Marieta's shining blonde hair fluttering in the breeze. Another musical shift arrives with the description of Tonio watching and going silent at the side of his lover—"he neither sees nor hears, he appears enchanted." But the narrator, momentarily carried away by the scene, returns his attention (and therefore the listener's attention) back to his lover and to the window's frame. Buzzolla's interrupting octave call in the piano and the narrator's description of the scene, in other words, suggest the gondola as the new foreground to the window's background. If we approach this song in terms of the spatialized point of audition, we might imagine that the listener is "zooming in" on the action in the gondola. But rather than a telescopic view of Marieta and Tonin, I would suggest that the song's audiopositioning invites the listener into (to tweak Verma's phrase) a gondola of the mind.

This interior gondola represents more than the literal spaces of the gondola, with the dual sonic spaces of the gondoliers' song. It is also a poetic space in which the listener can fleeting experience the freedom from obligations and expectations described in Pagello's text for "Un ziro in gondola"—an "unmoored" Venice that sits outside of time and beyond earthly consequences. The musical interruptions and ruptures of this otherwise picturesque song signal this as a kind of listening endemic to—or perhaps fostered by—Venice. The boundaries of the window-frame and the narrator's spinning imagination are broken by the "real-life" calls of the gondolier; engrossing the narrator, the listening-but-silent lover embedded in the scene, as well as the more distant listener in the otherwise wordless scene unfolding between Tonin and Marieta. I want to distinguish this experience from, for instance, the multiple points of view on a single dramatic situation that were typically juggled within the finales of Italian comic opera. The narrator's invitation into the gondola positions the gondola as something of a political space, one in which narrator and listener can experience comparative social freedoms. The play-within-the-play performed by Tonin and Marieta rehearses this freedom and the shifts in foreground and background blur boundaries for the listener, arguably allowing them to believe they can experience this freedom through listening to the song. These musical and narrative shifts also destabilize the song's sense of spatiality, perhaps bringing it closer to the spatial poetics common to audiovisual technologies from the twentieth century.

Another conventional situation that served as the basis for numerous Venetian boat songs in the nineteenth century was the regatta. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regattas—a series of boat races for different

kinds of Venetian boats—were often (although not exclusively) given in conjunction with lavish festivities for visiting dignitaries.[89] While Venetian regattas tended to be spectacular events that attracted the attention of tourists and foreign dignitaries, the regatta-themed songs of the nineteenth century occupy a more intimate register. Typically these songs depicted a scene in which a lover watches her beloved race the Venetian regatta. By far the best-known example of this sub-genre is a set of three songs by Gioachino Rossini—titled "La regata veneziana"—first published in 1878, although music from the first song was previously used in a "Barcarolle" (yes) set to a French text in 1858.[90] Set to Venetian texts written by Verdi's longtime collaborator, Francesco Maria Piave, the three songs follow Anzoleta as she watches her lover, Momolo, race (and win) the regatta.[91]

In contrast to a piece like "La barcheta," in which the change in foreground and background is signaled by musical interruptions, the triptych of songs that make up "La regata veneziana" relies on the interplay between Anzoleta and the silent Momolo. The way in which Anzoleta keeps Momolo "in sight"—and in the foreground of the dramatic action—regardless of the different affects and styles of the songs recalls yet again the relational space of the gondoliers. I would suggest that such exchanges of foreground and background are more than simply conventions of the Venetian picturesque, they also communicate a way of knowing a space that is endemic to Venice. In other words it is the way in which the emotional and physical spaces of the regatta are painted

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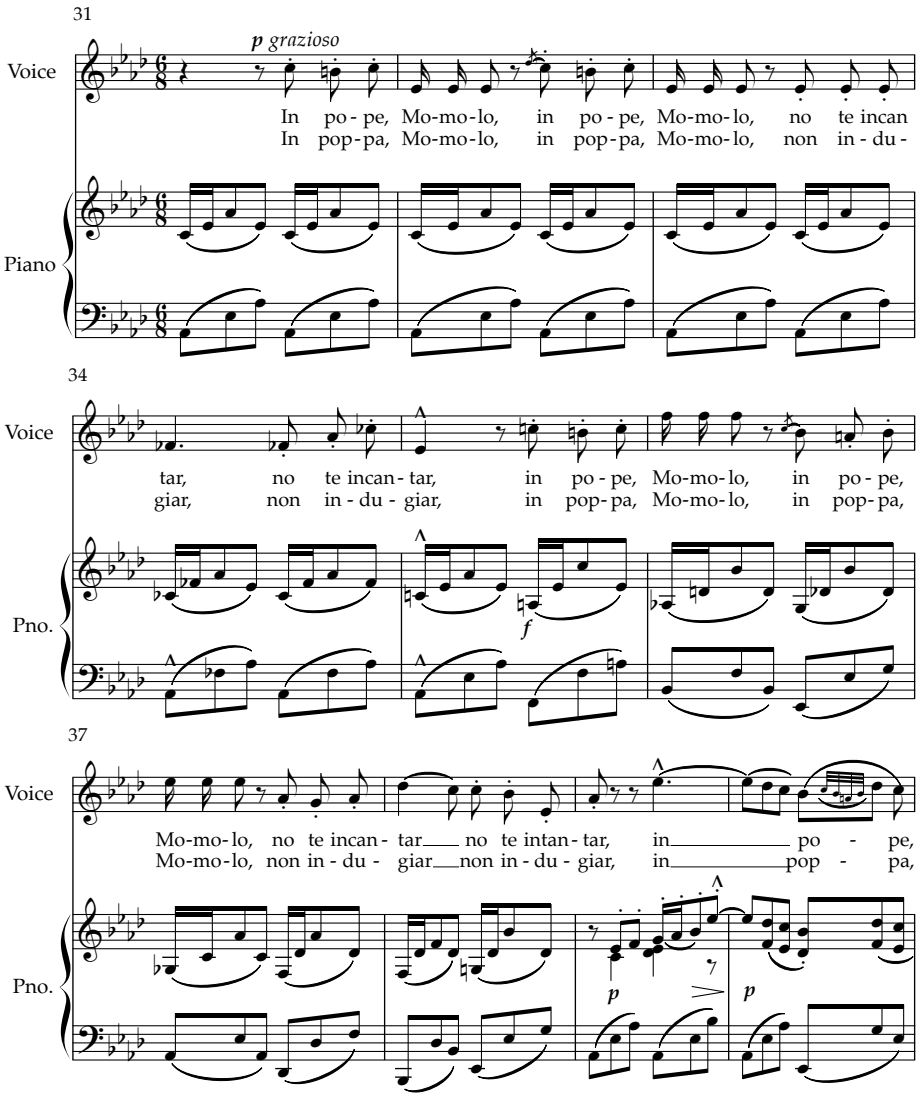
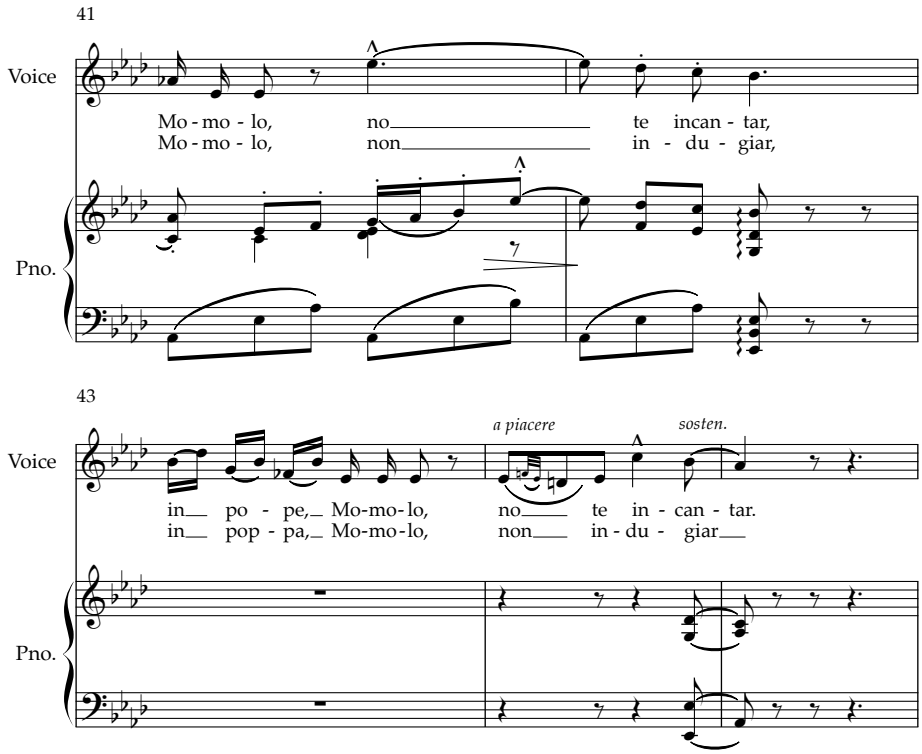
[89] Including the Duke of Brunswick in 1685, Frederick IV of Denmark in 1708, the Duke of York in 1764, Emperor Joseph II in 1775, and the Grand Duke of Russia in 1782. See Pompeo Molmenti, *La Storia di Venezia nella vita privata dalle origini alla caduta della Repubblica* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1912), 3:146-57.

[90] Gioachino Rossini, *Musique Anodine. Album Italiano*, ed. Marvin Tartak (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1995), xxxi. Tartak hypothesizes that the Barcarolle predated "La regata veneziana," so we can assume that the three songs were composed after 1858, but there is little information to date them more precisely than that.

[91] Rossini had earlier composed Venetian songs in his *Soirées musicales*, with texts—including one in dialect—written by the exiled Count Carlo Pepoli. While shorter, the earlier Rossini-Pepoli piece titled "La regata veneziana" (1835) too takes a lover's point of view as she watches her Tonio compete in the regatta. From the very beginning, the 1878 work's Venetianness was somewhat suspect: the reviewer for the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* compared it somewhat unfavorably to Venetian canzonette by Perucchini and Buzzolla, both of whom, being Venetian, possessed the "secret" to marrying local dialect with the music.


31
Voice
Piano
p grazioso
In po - pe, Mo-mo-lo, in po - pe, Mo-mo-lo, no te incan
In pop-pa, Mo-mo-lo, in pop-pa, Mo-mo-lo, non in - du -
34
Voice
Pno.
tar, no te incan - tar, in po - pe, Mo-mo-lo, in po - pe,
giar, non in - du - giar, in pop-pa, Mo-mo-lo, in pop-pa,
f
37
Voice
Pno.
Mo-mo-lo, no te incan - tar no te intan - tar, in po - pe,
Mo-mo-lo, non in - du - giar non in - du - giar, in pop - pa,
p
p



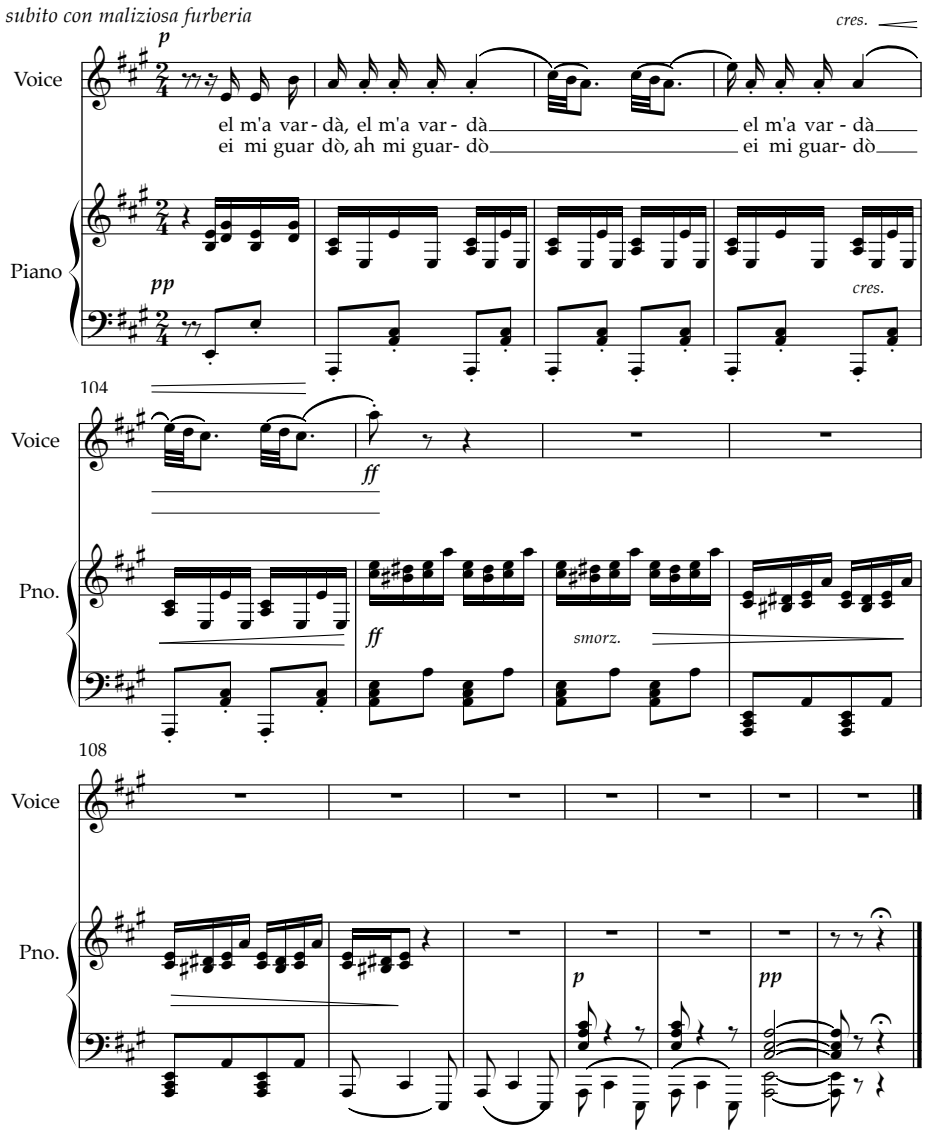
Example 3: Rossini, "Anzoleta avanti la regatta," from *La regata veneziana* (1878), mm. 31-45. Original Venetian text by Francesco Maria Piave, Italian translation by Angelo Zanardini.

for the listener in both text and music that make them more like a gondoliers' song more than the mere presence of boatmen and water.

The first song is indeed in 6/8, as we might expect from a barcarolle, with the repetitive accompaniment representing the boatman's steady stroke during which Anzoleta urges Momolo to victory by pointing out the flag that he will take if he wins the race. This moment already establishes a foreground and background—Anzoleta tells him to look to the stage where the flag is flying—and more than mere mimicry the repetitive strokes of the barcarolle gesture suggest both Momolo and Anzoleta's focus on the race yet to come. In a contrasting "ritornello" section (as Filippo Filippi of the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* called it) she urges Momolo onto the stern of his boat.[92] Yet the two seem reluctant to part: even as Anzoleta tells Momolo not to linger, her vocal line does exactly that, ornamenting and drawing out the moment (see Example 3).

The second song, in which Anzoleta watches the race, is in 2/4 and features a skimming sixteenth-note accompaniment as Anzoleta loses sight of Momolo and worries about the headwind. When she finds him again she realizes he is in second place and her anxiety leads to an operatic outburst, in which her reaction—"Che smania mi confondo!"—briefly takes over the scene and the listener "loses sight" of Momolo. She then encourages him and narrates the rest of the race, paying close attention to where he is (at one point half a boat's length ahead) and whether he sees her. At the very end of the song, it is only through Anzoleta's reaction that we understand it likely that Momolo has won: she exults, "He looked at me!," complete with ornaments and leaps of a fifth (see Example 4). This moment and the short coda again blur boundaries between emotional (or psychological) space and physical space, or Anzoleta's emotions and momentum of Momolo's final strokes taking him over the finish line. It also recalls Anzoleta's urging in the first song, during which she told him to look to the flag: the return of Momolo's gaze to Anzoleta helps to complete the circuit of gazes, so to speak, signaling in more than one way that this moment is a return.

[92] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, February 2, 1879.



Example 4: Rossini, "Anzoleta co passa la regatta," from *La regata veneziana* (1878), mm. 100-114.

In the dancing third piece—in 3/8—Anzoleta turns coquettish in the style of Zerlina, ordering her beloved to kiss her as well as telling him to sit and let his sweat dry. She retells the events of the race, expressing more confidence in the outcome than it seemed in the moment. (When he looked at her, she tells him, she breathed easier and knew he would take the flag.) Boundaries between past and present blur as she uses words that recall earlier songs: instead of urging him to take (*ciapar*) the flag, for instance, she urges him to take a kiss. Anzoleta ends

with a celebration—a coronation—of the fact that Momolo is the best *barcarol* (boatman).

The importance of knowing where her lover is at all times, and of knowing that he knows where she is, is given dramatic weight, as when their moment of reconnection ("He looked at me!") pushes him over the finish line in the second song. The importance of this connection between Anzoleta and Momolo recalls again the alternating stanzas of the gondoliers' song: just as the traditional exchanges between the gondoliers marked out space and distance between boats and embankments, the usually concrete musical depiction in Rossini's songs instantiates both the emotional situation of the two lovers during the race and the physical space Momolo must traverse in the regatta. While the race is the clear focal point, the sense of time is also intriguingly split: the actual regatta takes up little space in the three songs, suggesting an emotional arc in which Anzoleta and Momolo are together, apart, and then returned to each other, not unlike many an operatic reconciliation. The sense of Venetian scale—all-encompassing, yet intimate—distinguishes the pieces, but they are not simply an operatic scene in miniature. The different musical styles recall the Buzzolla collection and the many pieces gathered under the title of the *battello*: that is, they suggest a way of knowing rather than any particular musical style.

Another striking detail in this song cycle is Anzoleta's reference to Momolo's sweaty body in the third song—a reference that admittedly makes sense in the context of a boating race, but that otherwise stands out for representing the extent of Momolo's physical exertion. Most of the representations of gondoliers discussed so far make no reference to the position as an actual, paid occupation. As with the gondolier on the frontispiece to Buzzolla's 1847 collection, Momolo's silence is representative of the general wordlessness of gondoliers in most barcarolles or other published Venetian ballads, which, as we have established, may have gestured towards an ethnographic archive, but did not actually center upon the gondolier. So while in some ways we might look to celebrate this relational style of Venetian listening as a particular way of knowing a space, the silent gondolier is a reminder that (once written down, as in published scores) it also let distant cosmopolitan audiences believe they could "occupy" Venetian spaces.

I have argued that the sense of being able to cover distances and inhabit a foreign space—however poeticized—is an inherently imperialist sense. If we take seriously the idea that such songs rendered something of Venetian spaces in music—that these songs "know" Venice—then it is important to recognize that they worked not primarily as indices of local experience for local inhabitants, but as a commodity to be consumed in the European salon. Both the song and the silence of the gondolier in this poetic space erased the actual labor of the gondolier, who increasingly existed only as a phantasmagoria in both the Marxist

and Adornian sense. In looking closely at examples of such songs, we can see how poetic and material spaces were confused—how they overlapped or were otherwise entangled—in Venice under Habsburg occupation. This confusion suggests how music lets us see the question of whether Venice was exploited in a new light: not only do we see how music itself was something of a natural resource, we also see how within these song collections the poetic space was "mined" at the expense of local transport workers.

Chapter 2: Operatic Affects and Revolution in 1848

Those who think and write about opera in nineteenth-century Italy are familiar with Giuseppe Verdi's change in style from *Nabucco* (1842) to *La traviata* (1853), a period in which Verdi began to eschew the musical forms that dominated the first half of the century in order to develop more nuanced modes of expression that could represent the internal lives and attachments of characters.[93] This swerve has often been explained as reflective of Verdi's turn away from public engagement towards a private life and domestic concerns, but Verdi's new focus on intimacy was also in tune with the collective emotional temperature and new strategies of political communication that were shaped by experiences of the 1848 revolutions. In the years before 1848 political leaders adopted the melodramatic mode to provoke in the Italian public intense emotional reactions that they could then channel into the revolutionary movements.[94] When Restoration governments—especially the Habsburg monarchy, who controlled much of northern Italy—regained control in 1849, free speech was drastically curtailed, which placed opera in a new role, not as outlet for patriotic ideas and images but as a crucible for public emotion.[95]

Yet the mere notion of a sharp divide in Verdi's style relies on the historian's omniscience, with all the usual platitudes about the benefits of

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[93] On Verdi's "middle" period, see Martin Chusid, ed., *Verdi's Middle Period: Source Studies, Analysis, and Performance Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Chusid is fairly typical in arguing that Verdi's style change began with his *Luisa Miller* (1849), but there is no widespread agreement on the periodization. Julian Budden, for instance, declares that "anyone who hopes to find in [*Luisa Miller*] a style obtrusively different from that of his preceding operas will be disappointed." See Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi: From* Oberto *to* Rigoletto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:423. For a compendious biographical account of Verdi's life, see Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). On Verdi's personal relationships, see Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

[94] Paul Ginsborg, "Romanticismo e risorgimento: l'io, l'amore, e la nazione," in Alberto Banti and Ginsborg, ed., *Storia d'Italia*, Annali 22, "Il risorgimento," (Turin, 2007), 5-67; Carlotta Sorba, *Il melodrama della nazione: Politica e sentimenti nell'età del Risorgimento* (Rome: Laterza, 2015).

[95] Alberto Mario Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000). For a critique see Axel Körner, "The Risorgimento's Literary *Canon* and the Aesthetics of Reception: Some Methodological Considerations," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 410-8, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2009.00401.x

hindsight. From the perspective of mid-2021 the paralysis of living in between civic regimes and in a state of constant uncertainty feels especially relevant, and these are states of mind that we should perhaps take more into account in interpreting events of the past. Lauren Berlant has argued that historians can excavate the collective "intuition" of—the process of feeling one's way through—such moments, as a way to account for the visceral experience of historical conditions.[96] The stylistic swerves that occurred after 1848, in other words, threaten to taint or retrospectively distort the historian's understanding of listening *during* 1848.

In what follows I will trace various sites and practices of listening in which Italians in 1848 and immediately after turned to familiar sounds of the past in order to negotiate their relationship with an otherwise unstable present. My focus is on Venice, which was among the first Italian cities to revolt, and in August 1849 would be among the last to fall. Citizens there developed a siege mentality, partly because they lacked a standing army or navy, and so were somewhat defenseless against Habsburg bombs and blockades. The tenacity of the Venetian resistance inspired others around the peninsula: Italians invested both materially and emotionally in Venice's survival, including by mounting benefit concerts that reanimated theatres otherwise shuttered by unrest and financial precarity.

Analysis of the programs for these concerts reveals an unsurprising reliance on popular composers and familiar musical numbers, but it also suggests some less obvious dimensions to these performances. Rather than waste resources on elaborate stagings of full operas, many programs adopted a "greatest hits" model: they featured a series of extracted, large-scale scenes culled from recent operas by the likes of Gaetano Donizetti and slightly older—but still popular—operas by Gioachino Rossini. While these concerts (or "academies," as they were termed) drew on an inventory of operatic works and styles that was, on the surface, unremarkable, the familiar musical and emotive effects they featured took on new significance in the revolutionary context. As I will demonstrate, concert organizers typically put together collections of operatic excerpts that staged and commented on the melodramatic aspects of the real-world situation, highlighting operatic forms to create in the listeners an emotional surplus that they hoped could be reinvested into the material realm, whether in the form of financial donations to the state, military enlistments, or other sacrifices.[97] Ubiquitous

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[96] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 52.
[97] Describing the music for one such program in Venice, Roger Parker notes, "[M]uch of it was clearly chosen for its resonance with the times." See Roger Parker, *"Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati": The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 1997), 129.

musical conventions such as the slow crescendo known as the "groundswell" and the ritornello were harnessed in concert—and in the journalistic writing of the period—to stoke emotions and to move people to action. Although charges of excessive emotionality have often been laid against Italians as a condemnation, I reclaim this emotionality to demonstrate how the visceral reactions provoked by these and other operatic conventions instead played a fundamental role in forming Italian collectives across distance and through various forms of media.

Where the musical academies encouraged engagement with Italian public life, the satirical press often wielded those same conventions to exaggerate the comical chaos and dissensus of the situation, lampooning in particular the folly and petty dramas of political leaders. The second section of this chapter investigates the comic use of the operatic effect sometimes called "*stupore universale*" (or universal shock) in a spate of humorous articles published in late 1848 and early 1849. In this odd subgenre of journalist writing, writers drew on well-known operatic arias, characters, and situations to convey frustration with the lack of political resolution and to cast opera as the counterfeit posturing of the elite. The chapter's final section explores the tension between engagement and disengagement, to show that even those interactions in which the people could express their opinions to an authority—through the extra-operatic rallying cries, symbols, and celebrations of revolution—were dictated by the stylized patterns of musical convention as well as the affects fostered by those conventions.

Radetzky versus the Devil; or The Rhythms of Revolution

The first revolution of 1848 occurred not in Paris or Vienna—nor in Habsburg-controlled Milan or Venice, for that matter—but among the lemon trees of Palermo. The Bourbon King Ferdinand II granted his defiant subjects a constitution before the barricades went up in Paris at the end of February. In the months that followed, revolutions on the Italian peninsula sketched the borders of an imagined nation. The Milanese rose against the Habsburgs in March during the famous *cinque giornate* ("Five Days"), when street fighting forced the occupying troops out of the city and allowed the formation of a provisional government. Almost concurrently the assassination of a Habsburg captain at the Arsenal in Venice triggered a revolt and the triumphant Venetians soon formed the Republic of San Marco. After preemptively signing a constitution in Turin in early February, King Carlo Alberto I of Sardinia took advantage of the Austrian disorganization to declare war and march his armies east, hoping to take on the

retreating Field Marshal Joseph Radetzky and unify northern Italy under his crown.[98]

A satire published in Genoa after Radetzky's surprise retreat from Milan imagined a conversation between Radetzky and the Devil in which Radetzky failed to make a pact in order to foil the Italians.[99] The cause, the Devil said, was already lost: "Non vedi tu, che gli italiani sono in via di trionfo? Che vanno avanti, avanti, avanti; e tu vai indietro, indietro, indietro?" ["Don't you see that the Italians are on the path of glory? That they are forging ahead, ahead, ahead; and you are going back, back, back?"] While undoubtedly propagandistic, this short dialogue reveals such confidence about future events that the modern historian may find herself moved to pity. In the months to come, Carlo Alberto's armies would suffer numerous defeats while Radetzky mounted a hawkish defense of the Habsburgs' claimed territories. Yet the optimistic sense of momentum and rhythm—"*avanti*, *avanti*, *avanti*"—is unmistakable.

The Devil's assured rhythm evokes the clippity-clop of a horse's gallop, a military topos that draws our attention to the question of how music does (or does not) represent reality and the peculiar role that Italian musical styles have played in that debate. The bravura and repetition of the Devil's mocking statement belong to a longer history of Italian "theatricality." During the eighteenth century, Italian comic opera called into question music's ability to represent and evoke emotion through its funhouse reflection of serious opera, prompting the flurry of pamphleteering that became known as the *querelle des bouffons*.[100] More than merely a musical aesthetic, this idea of theatricality pervaded Italian public life,

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[98] Although the name "Sardinia" refers to the island in the Mediterranean, the seat of the Kingdom of Sardinia was Turin in the region of Piedmont. I will use "Sardinia" to indicate the political-military entity and "Piedmont" to refer to the geographical area. On the revolutions in 1848 in southern Italy, see John A. Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions (1780-1860)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). On Venice in 1848, see Paul Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848-9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Alvise Zorzi, *Venezia austriaca* (Gorizia, 2000), 83-108. On Rome, see David Kertzer, *The Pope Who Would Be King: The Exile of Pius IX and the Emergence of Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). On the Habsburg Empire in 1848, see Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[99] British Library, General Reference Collection, shelfmark 37/804.k.13.(327.).

[100] On the role of Italian comic opera in this debate, see Roger Mathew Grant, *Peculiar Attunements: How Affect Theory Turned Musical* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 61-85.

especially after the destruction and restructuring of public institutions of the Napoleonic period, which (as Emanuele Senici has argued) left Italians suspicious of the state—and of the gestures, symbols, and narratives that were meant to inspire attachment to the state.[101] Italian theatricality, in other words, came to represent a lack of political engagement.

This perceived disinvestment from public institutions perhaps explains the traditional musicological assumption—recently questioned in Senici's work, among others—that during this period Rossini was merely the frivolous counterpoint to a portentous Beethoven.[102] As discussed in the Introduction, proponents of this view believe that Italian music and Italian politics came into alignment in the 1840s, with the chorus "Va, pensiero" from Verdi's *Nabucco*: as the Hebrew slaves onstage sang of their lost homeland, so too mourned the foreign-ruled Italians in the audience.[103] The events of 1848-9, however, frustrate this model of subversive engagement. Most historians conclude that, rather than playing a central role in public life, opera faded to near-invisibility as Italy geared up for and fought what Italians call its "First War of Independence"—because theaters were closed and funds redirected to military and political causes, but also because the public preferred explicitly patriotic music that seemed to address the circumstances of the moment.[104]

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[101] Emanuele Senici, *Music in the Present Tense: Rossini's Italian Operas in Their Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 147-53.

[102] For a re-evaluation of these "twin styles" of the early nineteenth century, see *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini: Historiography, Analysis, Criticism*, ed. Nicholas Mathew and Benjamin Walton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[103] See Philip Gossett, "Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in Risorgimento Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 1 (1990): 41-64, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586700003104; Parker, *"Arpa d'or"*; "Verdi *politico*: a wounded cliché regroups," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17:4 (2012): 427-36, https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2012.690581; Mary Ann Smart, Smart, "Magical Thinking: Reason and Emotion in Some Recent Literature on Verdi and Politics," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17:4 (2012): 437-447, https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2012.690582.

[104] For the latter, see Riccardo Carnesecchi, *"Venezia sorgesti dal duro servaggio": La musica patriottica negli anni della Repubblica di Manin* (Venice, 1994). The one possible exception is the appropriation of Verdi's choruses for political purposes. The more famous examples are from two years *prior* to 1848, when, in honor of the young Pope Pius IX's ("Pio Nono") liberal reforms, Pius' name was substituted into previously written texts. Mary Ann Smart has recently argued that Italians listened to operas as "a series of pithy lines, catchy tunes, and

With a focus on affects both musical and political, I aim to shift the debate on music in 1848 away from individual composers and towards the political potential of musical convention, especially conventions that repeat and interrupt the flow of action, thereby heightening awareness of the dramatic situation. The "dramatic situation" in play was the revolutions and their unknown outcomes, and I would suggest that only through music that was already well-known could Italians convincingly express collective emotions about their present circumstances.

The Groundswell

The fundamental formal device that structures the Italian opera of this period is based on the juxtaposition between a character's static contemplation and their subsequent actions, played out musically in contrasting sections of slow and fast music, and of plot-driven and more melodically static segments. (This is the four-part scenic design known as the *solita forma*, or conventional form.[105]) In widespread use throughout the bel canto era, the cabaletta—the fast section that often ends an aria or duet—signaled action with a propulsive musical affect and overstated outburst of emotion that was occasionally derided as excessive by critics.[106] The emotional intensity stoked through techniques of contrast and

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indelible performances of single arias or ensembles," suggesting that such substitutions were less a nod to Verdi's political significance than to the appropriately majestic sound of the work; see her *Waiting for Verdi: Opera and Political Opinion in Nineteenth-Century Italy, 1815-1848* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 180-182. For an affirmative account of Verdi's political relevance, see Gossett, "Giuseppe Verdi and the Italian Risorgimento," *Studia musicologica* 52, nos. 1-4 (2012): 241-57, https://doi.org/10.1556/smus.52.2011.1-4.19.

[105] Gossett uses the terms "kinetic" and "static" to refer to the movement of plot (rather than describing the musical affect) in "The 'candeur virginale' of *Tancredi*," *The Musical Times*, 112, no. 1538 (1971): 326-9, https://doi.org/10.2307955893. Harold Powers describes the *solita forma* in "'La solita forma' and 'The Uses of Convention'," *Acta Musicologica*, 59, no. 1 (1987): 65-90, https://doi.org/10.2307/932865.

[106] On some of the critiques of the cabaletta's affects see Scott Balthazar, "Ritorni's *Ammaestramenti* and the Conventions of Rossinian Melodramma," *Journal of Musicological Research*, 8, nos. 3-4 (1989): 296-7 and 300, https://doi.org/10.1080/01411898908574601. Peter Lichtenthal, the famous Austrian-born critic living in Milan, was the first to attempt a definition of the

repetition was "vented" in this final section, providing an emotional structure that some imagined powerful enough to inspire Italians to real-world actions.[107]

This assumes, however, that revolutions consist of a chain of aggressive actions. More often than not they also involve significant periods of waiting, during which diplomats replace soldiers as standard bearers. The operatic styles featured in the benefit concerts I examine in this chapter recognize and play with the emotional realities of these situations, where Italians were forced to turn to the more diplomatic art of persuasion. Throughout much of 1848, many nascent Italian states were held in stasis as they waited for larger powers equipped with their own militaries to come to terms. Although Sardinia and Austria signed an armistice in late summer, the two combatants continued to squabble, forcing both France and England to mediate the fate of northern Italy. This obvious lack of control in the matter paired with the lull in action made it difficult to sustain local material and emotional investments, especially as the presence of Austrian troops on land and a renewed blockade by sea so clearly threated the survival of the independent Venetian government.[108] Many Italians understood independent Venice's importance within the political imagination of the moment on both the local and transnational levels. As the Tuscan paper *Il Lampione* proclaimed in September 1848: "If Venice receives our aid it could again withstand the might of the Austrian army, [and] the roar of the Lion of St. Mark… will be Italy's protest against the injustice of Diplomacy." ["Se Venezia mercè i nostri soccorsi potrà reggere ancora all'impeto dell'armi austriache, il ruggito del Leone di S. Marco si

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word in 1826. On the many possible origins of the word (and the potential relationships to its musical affects), see David Rosen and Carol Rosen, "A Musicological Word Study: It. *cabaletta*," *Romance Philology*, 20, no. 2 (1966): 168-176; Marco Beghelli, "Alle origini della cabaletta," in *"L'aere è fosco, il ciel s'imbruna": Arte e musica a Venezia dalla fine della Repubblica al Congresso di Vienna*, ed. Francesco Passadore and Franco Rossi (Venice, 2000), 593-630.

[107] The concept of "venting" comes from Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 1:16. He goes on: "For an Italian of the period emotion was like a charge of electricity to be earthed, not a warm bath in which to soak. It was not until Puccini and the 'Veristi' that composers enjoyed pricking the heart to make it bleed." On the release of emotion and aggression afforded by the cabaletta, see also Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 570-594; and Simonetta Chiappini, *"O patria mia": Passione e identità nazionale nel melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2011), 101-22, especially 114.

[108] *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Italy. From July to December 30, 1848*, (London: Harrison and Son, 1849), 440-3.

farà udire fin dove si trattano le nostre sorti e sarà la protesta d'Italia contro la ingiustizia della Diplomazia."][109]

Action, in other words, did not only occur on the battlefield: it could happen in the concert hall, where experiencing emotions together—as a collective—was itself a kind of revolutionary act. This was especially true in the case of the musical academies, performances organized to raise funds for the war efforts, many of which benefitted Venice in particular. For the month of October, the Venetian newspaper *L'Indipendente* reported a total of 19,504 Venetian lire donated by groups or individuals in Genoa, Florence, Rimini, Ravenna, Siena, Frosinone, Pontremoli, Bagnone, and Prevesa (a former Venetian holding). Nearly half of that amount—9,505—came from an academy held in Genoa.[110] To put these amounts in perspective, *L'Indipendente* later complained that in November a total of L24,999.50 had been raised across all Italy, "enough [for us] to live for five hours," whereas the citizens of Venice had contributed seventeen million in the same month.[111] Not all of the academies brought in such copious amounts—one in Ferrara in late October raised only L291—but it seems possible that even the mere gesture of planning and staging and academy had value in raising morale and articulating shared support for the cause.[112]

On November 15 citizens in Venice gathered at the Teatro La Fenice to raise funds and spirits for their poor republic with a musical academy of their own. La Fenice had stood silent and empty ever since the Venetians rose against the Habsburg troops at the end of March, infusing this academy with a sense of chronological confusion. The editor of *L'Indipendente*, Giambattista Varè, asked, "When the curtain rose who did not flashback to a time that is no more than eight

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[109] *Il Lampione*, September 19, 1848. The editor of *Lampione* was a young Carlo (Lorenzini) Collodi, who would later find fame as the writer of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883.)

[110] *L'Indipendente,* November 10, 1848.

[111] *L'Indipendente*, December 17, 1848. This total seems to include "private deposits" rather than outright donations—in October the amount earmarked as donations from Venetians came to around L40,000, so only a bit more than double what came in from "foreign" sources. It is possible, too, that citizens were contributing more money than actually reached Venice: on February 16, 1849 the newly formed Roman Republic issued a proclamation prohibiting any collection for Venice without the express authority of government authorities, in an effort to crack down on the "abuses" of citizens' charity. For more on the financial situation at this time see Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin*, 301-6.

[112] See Giuseppe M. Napoleone Renzoni, *Per la Grande Accademia vocale instrumentale e drammatica tenuta nel Teatro Communale di Ferrara a benefizio dei combattenti nella Venezia* (Ferrara: Domenico Taddei, 1848).

months behind us and yet seems a hundred years in the past?" ["Chi all'alzarsi della tenda non volò col pensiero ad un tempo, che non distà di noi più che otto mesi e pur ci separa dal passato di un secolo?"][113] This anachronism was not unwelcome: according to the satirical newspaper *Sior Antonio Rioba*, when the curtain rose it revealed a crowd of two hundred performers—including members of the noble classes—behind which hung a backdrop featuring an ancient temple and statues of famous Roman figures, "the greatest heroes of Rome and of liberty." In response to the tableau the audience all but went insane.

Memories of the days before the revolution were roused by the first operatic piece performed that evening. According to the program printed for the academy, after a *sinfonia* the performance began with an amalgam of two choruses from Verdi's *Macbeth*: the lamenting "Patria oppressa" fused with the belligerent "Patria tradita."[114] While both numbers are heard in the opera's final act, in its original context "Patria oppressa" features a chorus of dispossessed Scots, while "Patria tradita" is a duet sung by Malcom and Macduff calling for armed resistance against the tyrant Macbeth, with contributions from the chorus. During the first run of *Macbeth* at La Fenice in 1847 and 1848, audiences had regularly demanded repetitions of both pieces. According to Varè's recollection, it was during these performances of *Macbeth* that "[the Venetians] uttered the first cries of liberty, applauding constantly that chorus of *Macbeth* that closely alluded to the unhappy conditions of our country."[115] Placed at the beginning of the

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[113] *L'Indipendente*, November 16, 1848. Varè was one of forty people exiled by the Austrians when they reconquered the city in August 1849. In addition to running *L'Indipendente*, he was a member of the government and a close associate of Daniele Manin. For an admittedly biased description of his life, see A.S. De Kiriaki, *Giambattista Varè: Commemorazione* (Venice: M. Fontana, 1884). A plaque honoring him can still be found near Piazza San Marco in Venice.

[114] A physical copy of the program—under the title "Grande Accademia vocale ed istrumentale che per argomento di patria cittadina carità sarà data nel gran teatro la Fenice da numerosa schiera di dilettanti, etc."—can be found in the British Library, in the General Reference Collection, shelfmark 8033.c.41.(7.). A digital copy of this program can be consulted here: http://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc_100043361699.0x000001#ark:/81055/vdc_100043361726.0x000003. The performers included one of the directors of the concert, the composer Antonio Buzzolla, as well as two of the presidents of La Fenice, Carlo Mazari and Alvise Mocenigo—all of whom would keep their various positions once the Austrians returned to power.

[115] A letter from Venice published in *L'Italia musicale* on January 12, 1848 highlighted how moving "Patria oppressa" was, but also noted that the tenor

program for the 1848 academy, the hybrid chorus invoked a memory so touching that, as Varè noted, "the public could hardly contain themselves when calling for an encore." The printed text in the program indicates no solo voices and includes no break between the texts, so it seems possible they applauded the two numbers together, as a bipartite work (see Figure 2). By thinking about how the two numbers build and channel energy, we can gain a sense of how the Venetian audience was moved to collective expression.

"Patria oppressa" begins atmospherically, with an ominous drumroll and loud minor chords in the brass, soon contrasted with a repeated plaintive oboe gesture and strings that descend to a near whisper before the chorus enters. As the number progresses, the chorus reaches emotional crests that threaten to break this mood, but they are always forced back into a pianissimo despair. The music slowly accrues textural complexity, layering new orchestral sections one after another and repeating the plaintive gesture, building to a climax as the chorus sings of Heaven responding to the people's daily cries of grief. The repetition of short motivic phrases feeds the growing emotional intensity, which cannot yet find full release. The second number, "Patria tradita," works to vent the intensity of "Patria oppressa." It features a call and response between soloists and chorus that perhaps evoked impromptu communal singing, with the response an echo that paradoxically grows louder.

The rest of the evening's program largely eschewed such obvious references to past political events and instead highlighted familiar music and powerful affective structures, including a surprising number of operatic finales that featured tense and unfinished dramatic situations, perhaps tapping into the atmosphere around the still-unfolding Venetian situation. The concert included the second-act finale from Verdi's *Attila* (1846), the first-act finale of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* (1830), and the second-act finale from Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell* (1829), an opera that would not receive its official Venetian premiere until 1856.[116] (On the atmosphere around that premiere, see Chapter 4.) These scenes project neither triumphant victories nor passive grief. If they connect at all to the

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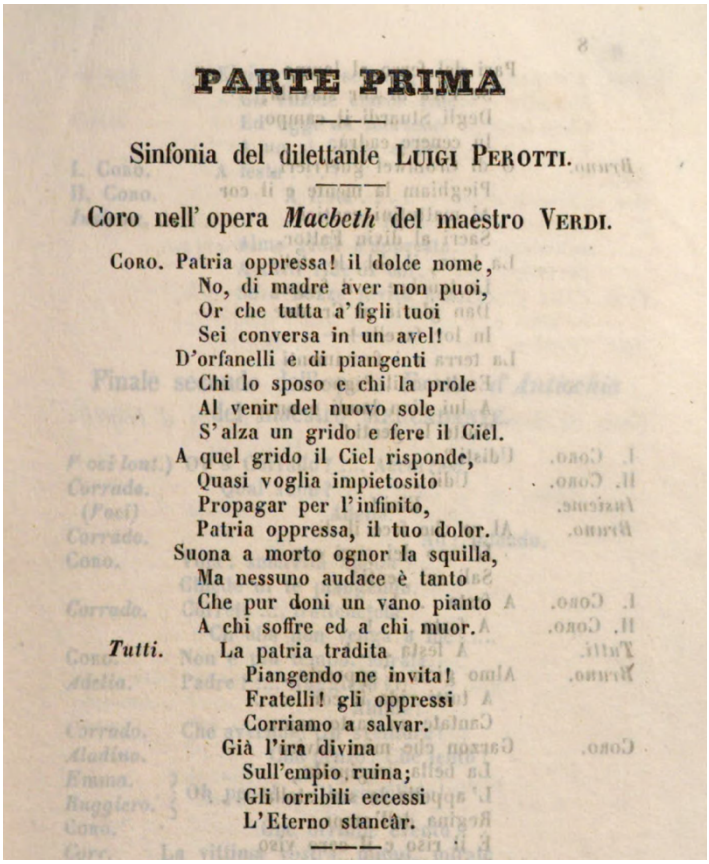
"adagio" as well as the "allegro" with chorus—the latter referring to "Patria tradita"—was repeated every night.

[116] Other operatic excerpts included on the program were the "introduction" to Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani* (in reality much of the first scene, up to the chorus announcing Elvira's wedding), the second-act finale from Saverio Mercadante's *Emma d'Antiochia* (premiered at La Fenice in 1834), a chorus from Giovanni Battista Ferrari's *Maria d'Inghilterra* (premiered at La Fenice in 1840), and an oath scene from Francesco Malipiero's *Alberigo da Romano* (premiered at La Fenice in 1847).



PARTE PRIMA

———

Sinfonia del dilettante LUIGI PEROTTI.

———

Coro nell' opera *Macbeth* del maestro VERDI.

CORO. Patria oppressa! il dolce nome,
No, di madre aver non puoi,
Or che tutta a' figli tuoi
Sei conversa in un avel!
D'orfanelli e di piangenti
Chi lo sposo e chi la prole
Al venir del nuovo sole
S'alza un grido e fere il Ciel.
A quel grido il Ciel risponde,
Quasi voglia impietosito
Propagar per l'infinito,
Patria oppressa, il tuo dolor.
Suona a morto ognor la squilla,
Ma nessuno audace è tanto
Che pur doni un vano pianto
A chi soffre ed a chi muor.

Tutti. La patria tradita
Piangendo ne invita!
Fratelli! gli oppressi
Corriamo a salvar.
Già l'ira divina
Sull'empio ruina;
Gli orribili eccessi
L'Eterno stancàr.

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Figure 2: Program for the Academy held at Teatro La Fenice on November 15, 1848, © British Library Board, General Reference Collection 8033.c.41.(7.)

public mood, they speak more to the siege mentality of the Venetian citizenry at that moment. While few of these excerpts featured literal versions of the gradually intensifying musical effect that has been dubbed the "groundswell," the term is nevertheless apt to characterize the moments in these finales in which the sequential repetitions of motives bring the music to a pleasurable crest of emotion.[117] In *Sior Antonio Rioba*'s retelling the music of the academy program,

[117] A groundswell is the section in the slow part of a finale that often starts at the tense moment when the chorus comes in, then builds sequentially to a climax (often accompanied by a cymbal crash). After coming to this cadence composers will often draw out the dramatic tension of the groundswell through an immediate repetition. See Joseph Kerman and Thomas S. Grey, "Verdi's Groundswells: Surveying an Operatic Convention," in *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, ed.

in toto, was all "warlike, because whether or not one likes it, now we are and must be at war."[118]

The concert was scheduled to end on a quiet note, with the prayer from Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto* in which Moses and the Hebrews beg for God's compassion. While God eventually acknowledges their prayer by parting the Red Sea, the prayer itself is sung, like "Patria oppressa" (and, for that matter, "Va pensiero" from Verdi's *Nabucco*), in a moment of hopelessness and desperation. It is easy to imagine a debate among the concert organizers about whether the prayer was a fitting end to the evening, since its poetic gesture of faith inspired contemplation rather than stirring up or venting emotion in the ways that might best have stimulated donations. As *Sior Antonio Rioba* reported, the academy did not, in fact, end with the prayer, but rather with the second-to-last piece listed on both program and poster: the *Attila* finale. The journalist for *Sior Antonio Rioba* noted the audience's confusion when the prayer was played at the beginning of the third part of the concert rather than the end. After this initial surprise, he wrote, everyone calmed and quieted to the point that he could hear his neighbor sing along (with invented lyrics).

If the affective sequence in *Macbeth*—from lamentation to battle, or from doubt to resolve—fostered a sense of the collective by directing emotions externally, the *Attila* finale created an even greater dramatic impetus. It is not incidental that the opera's plot had powerful contemporary resonances: the foreign "barbarian" Attila the Hun (a figure often invoked in the press when describing the Austrian Field-Marshal Radetzky) has temporarily halted his westward march in the ancient Adriatic city of Aquileia—near Venice—as both Aquileians (standing in for Venetians) and Romans plotted against him to save their homelands. The opera's central finale includes a groundswell, which acts as a moment of comparative calm before yielding to the rollicking final *stretta*.[119] A sextet of soloists, followed by chorus, repeat the same text three times:

L'orrenda procella,
Qual lampo sparì.
Di calma novella
Il Ciel si vestì!!

Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 154-5.

[118] November 17, 1848.

[119] See Helen Greenwald's discussion of the storm and ensuing sunrise in the Prologue to *Attila* (and their relation to Venice) in her "*Son et lumière*: Verdi, *Attila*, and the Sunrise Over the Lagoon," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 21, no. 3 (2009): 267-77, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586710000170.

[The horrendous storm,
the lightning has ceased.
The sky has clothed itself
in newfound calm!!]

This ensemble captures a shift in the winds, momentary clarity replacing confusion; but the situation is still unfinished and with the stakes laid out vengeance is *everyone's* best option. (Spoiler alert: not all characters will achieve their objectives.) Orchestra and chorus double the solo voices to provide a sense of unison, the tempo speeds up toward the end, and the bass drum comes in to add some fortissimo emphasis—all exaggerated musical signifiers of a shared purpose.

By replaying the emotions of the revolution in several forms, this musical academy seems to have succeeded in building a collective—an "us"—among its Venetian listeners and was perhaps even more successful in creating an antagonist (or "them") against which the audience could unite. This version of "us" and "them" drew on Venice's (and Italy's) history with "barbarians" such as Attila, rehearsing and then appropriating a familiar pathway to Italian pride. It exaggerated the fear that, with the Austrian troops so near, the Venetians might not succeed in repulsing the hordes, a fear revived in order to remind them that it was their destiny to succeed.[120] The boundaries of the Venetian collective were mediated by local mythologies and the affects those stories encoded, reanimated in the present moment by rising anger and frustration at what the Austrians had inflicted upon Venetians.[121] The performance of this section of the *Attila* finale, with its simulacrum of atmospheric calm before a furious release into force and action, would have worked to direct any emotions stirred by the music *at* something or someone. Indeed, the patriotic elements of Verdi's works may derive from this kind of emotional prodding, which tested the boundaries of the

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[120] The resonance with Martha Feldman's conclusion about a similar moment of political upheaval in 1797 suggests that this might be a particularly Venetian brand of destiny: "Thus, for 'revolutionaries' in Venice, democracy was figured not so much through a calculus of total rupture and genesis as one of reinvention, restoration and regeneration of an ancient past." Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 434.

[121] See Sara Ahmed, "Collective Feelings: Or, the Impression Left By Others," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21, no. 2 (2004): 25-42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133.

collective in order to encourage its reinforcement, rather than from any resemblances between plot situations and life off the stage.[122]

On the very night of the academy, an assassin's dagger in Rome delivered a fatal blow to the Pope's lay Minister, Pellegrino Rossi, an event that—when news reached the city within a few days—would soon draw Venice's full attention.[123] The ensuing unrest precipitated the Pope's melodramatic flight from the city a few days later, dressed as a common priest and traveling under a false name, and forced the Catholic powers of France, Spain, and Austria into action on behalf of the Pope. The resulting political vacuum in the Vatican would have favored Venetian interests, as did the overall state of chaos, which could draw Habsburg troops away from the Veneto to restore order in the name of the Pope. At the same time Rossi's assassination—viewed by many as a brutal murder, and not in any way justified by the revolution— threatened not only to blow away the few wisps of foreign support that existed for Italian unification, but also to cast the actions of the revolutionary forces as criminal in international eyes. [124]

The Venetians turned to womanly tears—or at least to musical ones. A new academy program, again at La Fenice, on 9 December featured a different slate of musical selections, although it began with two of the pieces performed during the previous academy: the first-act finale of *Anna Bolena* and an oath scene from Francesco Malipiero's *Alberigo da Romano* ("Siam fratelli: l'eguale

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[122] Douglas Ipson makes the argument that the revolutionary resonances in *Attila*'s plot would have been unmistakable to contemporary audiences; see his "*Attila* takes Rome: The Reception of Verdi's Opera on the Eve of Revolution," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 21, no. 3 (2009): 249-56, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586710000157.

[123] On November 20 *L'Indipendente* noted that "everyone" [la pubblica voce] was talking about the news of Rossi's death, which seemed to reach the city late the day before.

[124] On the assassination from the Roman perspective, see Kertzer, 102-12. In legal terms assassination occupied a different legal and political space than that of "revolutionary" action. In England, for example, any assassination attempt on the monarch was treated on par with murder rather than treason, in part since the latter guaranteed more legal protections for the perpetrator. On a pivotal moment in the prosecution of treason, see Richard Moran, "The Origin of Insanity as a Special Verdict: The Trial for Treason of James Hadfield (1800)," *Law & Society Review*, 19, no. 3 (1985): 487-519, https://doi.org/10.2307/3053574. On the eight assassination attempts on Queen Victoria, see Paul Thomas Murphy, *Shooting Victoria: Madness, Mayhem, and the Rebirth of the British Monarchy* (New York, 2012).

pensiero"). These two pieces, along with the third-act finale from what the program calls Rossini's "new" *Mosè* (in fact rewritten for the Paris Opéra in 1827 as *Moïse et Pharaon*) constituted the first third of the concert, suggesting a familiar theme of wrongful imprisonment as Moses again implored the Pharaoh to let his people go. The concert's final section seemed conceived to focus on the effects of personal and systemic betrayals, drawing together a patriotic chorus by Antonio Buzzolla, the second-act finale from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a lamenting chorus sung by Gertrude's ladies from Buzzolla's *Amleto* (*Hamlet*), and the internal finale from *Maria Tudor* (also known as *Maria d'Inghilterra*) by Giovanni Battista Ferrari.[125] Each of these operatic scenes featured broken promises, betrayals, and tears. The libretto printed for the event, however, suggests that this finale was dropped from the performance, and that the concert in fact ended with the first-act finale from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

The drastic change in mood between one academy and the next may be read as a reactionary response to the tumult of Rossi's assassination.[126] What the last part of the December 9 program makes clear is that the dominant mood of the moment was grief; the scenes performed all feature progressions in which music triggers not purposeful action, but hasty decisions and further betrayals. Both *La Sonnambula* and *Lucia* feature groundswells—the one from *Lucia* is the textbook example. In the finale Lucia has signed her marriage contract with Arturo, breaking a promise to her lover, Edgardo (who she believes has been unfaithful).

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[125] The difference in titles for the Ferrari opera is likely explained by the source material: Victor Hugo's *Marie Tudor*, identified by the inclusion of the fictional favorite Fabiano Fabiani.

[126] In an anecdote published by *Sior Antonio Rioba* on November 23, the editor described learning the news of Rossi's assassination in a café. While perhaps itself a dramatization, it illustrates some of the cultural differences that likely led to divergent responses to the news. When a man rushes in to tell the news, he signals his association with the "old" ways of doing things: before he tells the story, he orders a restorative drink of hot water and lemon and gives too many details about how and where he heard things. When he finally gets the story out—drawing out the moment as long as he can—he expresses a peculiar disbelief: "To kill a man *of that sort*—a genius, the best economist of the century. Have you ever heard anything worse? Oh, what times we live in!" Emphasis mine. ["Ammazzare un uomo di quella sorte, un genio, il più grande economista del secolo. --- Si può sentire di peggio? oh! in che tempi viviamo!"] To emphasize the division between various groups, *Rioba* notes that in the midst of handwringing over the Pope's potential fate, a young man stood up and ordered Madeira. He moved next to the group of "old men" and announced that he instead would be drinking a toast to Rossi's assassin.

Edgardo arrives and, finding himself betrayed, curses Lucia. According to the libretto for the academy, however, the concert featured the emotional groundswell moment in which the characters react to Edgardo's dramatic entrance, but cut the second half of finale, leaving the emotions unvented and Edgardo's curse unsaid. In the scene from *La Sonnambula*, Elvino almost seems to speak for the muted Edgardo, when, believing himself betrayed by the sleepwalking Amina, he publicly labels her a liar ("È menzogna") and calls off their wedding. This time the finale—*stretta* included—was performed in full, ending the concert with the lovers' broken vows. The difference between the call to action in *Attila* and the broken promises of *Lucia* and *La Sonnambula*, then, was not a matter of form or technique, but rather one of affect, communicated through the manipulation of operatic conventions. Centering on characters such as the heroines of *Lucia* and *La Sonnambula*, whose truths are not heard and about whom the worst is believed, the second academy also produced an "us" in opposition to an outside force, but it did so via a different emotional pathway, one less secure about the possibility of success and one less inclined to action.

The *stupore universale* of 1848

In the first issue of the satirical Venetian newspaper *Il Mondo Nuovo*, editor Augusto Giustinian adopted the metaphor of the magic lantern to explain how his new publication would depict the world as a drama that came in and out of focus, inviting readers to adopt shifting points of view. The paper's title, alongside the image on its masthead, referenced the technology's origins as a form of street entertainment, but over time the magic lantern became less a magical instrument of phantasmagoria and more one of scientific inquiry, employed as a telescope that could magnify particular views of the world.[127]

The kaleidoscopic vision of the world promoted by Giustinian was necessary in the face of the recent oversaturation of news from the various regions of Italy. With various heads of state issuing new rights and constitutions at a rapid pace through in the first half of 1848, journalists were able to publish opinions that months before could only have been whispered in the back of a café.

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[127] *Il Mondo Nuovo*, January 22, 1849. One English commentator in 1854 made specific reference to the magic lantern as a scientific instrument, noting that the differences between the old iteration and the modern were as much "as between the first rude telescope of Galileo and the achromatic telescope of the Greenwich Observatory." See *The Magic Lantern; Its History and Effects: Together with an Explanation of the Method of Producing Dissolving Views, The Chromatrope, Phantasmagoria, &c.* (London: Joseph, Myers, and Co., 1854), 5-6.

Unsurprisingly some of the loudest new voices were those of stalwart republicans, who had little time for either music or musicians and saw opera as outdated and elitist. A notable exception was the satirical press, including *Il Mondo Nuovo*, which would occasionally "stage" theatrical pieces, academies, or operas, alongside their tongue-in-cheek discussions of topical issues.

Many of these satirical papers were named after stock characters, such as *commedia dell'arte* types, puppets, and talking statues, drawing on a long tradition of Italian political protest connected to those figures. The Roman paper *Cassandrino*, for instance, was named for a local personality: an older reactionary with a penchant for petticoat-chasing. Other satirical publications were named for (or featured) famous talking statues—such as the Gobbo (Hunchback) and Sior Antonio Rioba in Venice and Pasquino in Rome—that "spoke" truth to power by obscuring the identity of those who dared paste a pamphlet to their base or anonymously publish a screed against a powerful figure.[128] This tradition of speaking *through* something means that the satirical papers would often discuss political situations through musico-theatrical metaphors, assigning appropriate operatic excerpts for political figures to perform.

On 12 August, *Cassandrino* playfully adopted the language of the theatre to explicate the current state of the political situation, or "drama", playing out on the peninsula and beyond:

> All that's left to guess is whether the music in third act will be old or new, since this would not be the first time that the words of new libretti [are adapted] to old music… In any case, after the many repetitions of the chorus "Guerra, guerra" from *Norma*, a *pezzo concertato*, [and] an *obbligato* duet with an English horn, the public will be paying attention… It remains to be seen whether one will leave the theatre drowsy or happy![129]
>
> [Ora resta ad indovinare se la musica di questo terzo atto sarà vecchia o nuova; perchè non è la prima volta che si adattano le parole di libretti nuovi ad una musica vecchia…Ad ogni modo, dopo le tante ripetizioni del Coro della Norma "Guerra, guerra," un pezzetto concertato, un duetto obbligato a corno inglese,

[128] Stendhal ties the history of Pasquino to the marionettes via laughter at powerful figures, arguing in particular that censorship forced laughter to take refuge in the theatre; *Rome, Naples, et Florence*, 3rd edn. (Paris: Delaunay, 1826), 2:322.

[129] August 12, 1848. It was republished in *Sior Antonio Rioba* on August 19.

fermeranno l'attenzione del pubblico… Sta a vedere se si sortirà
dal teatro sonnacchiosi o contenti!]

Figuring an operatic performance as dramatizing the various phases of a war, *Cassandrino* positions musical style as a metaphor for political change. A new libretto—or perhaps the newfangled constitutions of a political regime—can look revolutionary, but still *sound* old.

As we saw with the curated affects cultivated in the programs for the academies at La Fenice, such fictional programs can reveal much about the affects that animate a particular historical moment. The arrangement of operatic excerpts as a succession of intense—and purposefully arranged—affects paralleled the style of news reporting. Both listeners and readers were expected to focus in and out of intense dramatic situations, keeping track of competing plots and characters. And demonstrated by the groundswells that were staged and explored in the academy programs, opera also had a unique ability to control dramatic pacing and channel emotion. Rather than issuing a call to action, these journalistic satires depicted a suffocating stasis, one that was controlled (if at all) by the whims of pettifogging political leaders while readers sat by waiting helplessly for some change.

One of the most successful examples of this satirical trope was the program for a fictional musical academy published in the Florence-based *Il Lampione*, which took the concert-as-war metaphor much further. On August 21, the paper announced that a grand academy would be held at the "Teatro della Guerra" ("Theater of War") to benefit "the holy cause." Since the performance was meant to take place during a six-week armistice, the editor announced, the various participants in the conflicts throughout Italy had agreed not to fight each other, but instead to perform operatic excerpts. The fanciful program is a dizzying blend of operatic contexts and political situations, indicating that the paper's readers must have possessed an impressive literacy in both realms—and that they were somewhat obsessed with Donizetti. If, as James Carey has argued, newspapers performed particular worldviews as an ongoing drama, we can look to this academy as one of the most detailed staging manuals for such an imagined performance.[130] For much of the program the excerpts are indicated by a line or two of text from the pieces, the brevity of the allusions suggesting readers' easy familiarity with both musical and political contexts.

The music is mostly by the major composers—Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and (less commonly) Verdi—but the selections rely more on operatic context than

[130] James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York, 2009), 11-28.

operatic sound. The evening of opera assembled by *Il Lampione* begins with the chorus "O Signore, dal tetto natio" from Verdi's *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (1843) imagined as sung by the retreating Sardinian army. The academy was timed to coincide with the ceasefire brought about by the signing of the Salasco armistice by the Sardinian kingdom and the Habsburg Empire. The armistice had disrupted Sardinian plans to fuse Lombardy with Venetia and forced the army to retreat back into the Sardinian-ruled Piedmont. In its original context in Verdi's opera, the massed chorus (here a group of Lombard crusaders outside the walls of Jerusalem) expresses despondency in light of their failure to take control of the Holy City. When inserted into the fictional concert program devised by *Il Lampione*, the chorus refers to the failure of their contemporary crusade in Lombardy, as much as to the perceived hopelessness of the current situation.[131] Expressing complete unawareness of his army's emotional state, the "Grand Captain" of the troops, Carlo Alberto, performs a longing aria sung by the mad baritone from Donizetti's *Il furioso all' isola di San Domingo* (1833). Readers in the know would certainly have drawn a connection between Carlo Alberto and the "furioso," or madman of Donizetti's title.[132] Referring to his ignominious retreat westward, the program notes that an optimistic Carlo Alberto had first wanted to sing his favorite piece, a triumphant aria from Donizetti's *Parisina* (also 1833) performed in the opera on the banks of the River Po in the eastern part of the peninsula, but for what may be obvious reasons he was unable to do so.

Leaving behind the problems of the Sardinian army, in the next excerpt a Bolognese chorus sings a rousing call-to-arms—perhaps too predictably the "Guerra, guerra" chorus mentioned by *Cassandrino*—from Bellini's *Norma* (1831). The Bolognese had revolted against the Austrians on 8 August, and the text's promise to force out the occupying Romans resonated with these recent events in the Papal States. A chorus of Sicilians then sings "Una volta c'era un re" from Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (1817). This choice possibly hinges on the first few lines of the text, which refer to a king who is bored by his solitude. With the Sicilians ruling their own republic from Palermo, the allusion would seem to

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[131] Although his focus is spring and early summer of 1848, Roger Parker notes the lack of critical interest in "O Signore, dal tetto natio" during performances of *I Lombardi*. See Parker, *"Arpa d'or"*, 91-2. That it appears here in this despondent context suggests, perhaps, that the lamenting affect of the "patriotic" Verdian choruses was not as effective as we might think—or, as I will discuss below—that lamentation alone was not particularly inspiring.

[132] The association of Carlo Alberto with madness perhaps threatened to exaggerate the folly of his campaign, which at times seemed like it just might succeed, but most likely meant to portray his rulership as an unlikely and we might say unwanted idea for the time.

mock King Ferdinand's continued inability to recapture the island. Ferdinand's raging response, "Sciagurata! Hai tu creduto," from *I Lombardi* (to the accompaniment of cannon blasts) only confirms his frustration and seemingly foretells the events that would earn the real Ferdinand to earn his famous moniker, "King Bomb," after he bombarded his own subjects.[133] The concert goes on in this vein, zooming in and out of different contexts, each represented by a snippet of operatic text.

The common language of opera helped the same jokes resonate in Rome, Florence, and Venice and quickly: only a month separates *Cassandrino*'s description of a "Duetto e gran finale con cori" from *Sior Antonio Rioba*'s own take on the genre, a long description for a "[G]rande Accademia Pittorico-Instrumentale."[134] With no new action to reinvigorate the political situation, the repetition of this specific satirical genre produced an effect akin to that of the *stupore universale* of a Rossinian comic act finale, in which all the characters on stage sing their reactions to a surprising event, sometimes all at once. Decades earlier Rossini had faced criticism for producing noise and nonsense through the multiple layered vocal lines of his finales, which often rendered the text

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[133] The rest of the imaginary performance described in *Il Lampione* included: the Modenese singing of better days in both "Ah! bello a me ritorna" from *Norma* and "Vi ravviso, o luoghi ameni" from Bellini's *La sonnambula*; the Duke of Parma and his son playing a four-hand waltz; Pope Pius IX's lamenting "Tu vedrai la sventurata" from Bellini's *Il Pirata*; Italian journalists performing self-aggrandizing excerpts from Pietro Generali's *Jefte* and Donizetti's *Marino Faliero*; Daniele Manin (President of the Venetian Republic) taking on the Duke of Ferrara's call for vengeance from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*; the Piedmontese writer and thinker Vincenzo Gioberti urging to take a poison's antidote, also from *Lucrezia*; the Romans performing the "old" music of Antonio Caldara and Metastasio; the Republic of San Marino singing the ironically carefree ballad "Il segreto per esser felici" from *Lucrezia*; a commission of Florentines sleepwalking their way through *Sonnambula*; and a concluding series of jabs at the audiences of such events.

[134] On August 23, *Il Lampione* announced that it had republished the issue containing the Grande Accademia based on the "requests of many"; on August 25 it announced that it would publish the next day a special issue of the paper's most popular articles, including the Grande Accademia. The program was also published in *L'Arlecchino* in Naples on August 28, *Sior Antonio Rioba* in Venice on September 3, and *Il Diavoletto* in Trieste on November 12. In addition to its own version of the fictional program published on September 11, which explicitly referenced the success of *Il Lampione*'s example, *Sior Antonio Rioba* published a yet another example on September 17.

completely incomprehensible. The ever-shifting perspective of the magic lantern articulated by Giustinian in the inaugural issue of *Il Mondo Nuovo* suggests that these satires from across the peninsula could "sound" all at once in the public imagination, creating a stereotypical cacophony. On October 7, *Il Lampione* published a cartoon titled "Order" that featured numerous visual references to overlapping, simultaneous sounds—a barking dog, a violinist covering his ears, the obvious physical exertions of the players, etc. Every player is playing from a different score: Rossini's *Mosè*, Donizetti's *Elisir d'amore*, Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*. The players are all in different forms of dress, from the revolutionary-associated Phrygian hat of the man sitting beneath the conductor to the man with powdered wig, signaling the *codini* (or pony-tailed reactionaries) of the *ancien régime*. Part of the joke is that scene suggests no order at all, yet at the same time, it seems to suggest, this chaos is the order of the day. In opera, a climax arrives and the curtain eventually falls to break the confusion, but there was no real-life equivalent for such resolution.

The *Ritornello*

Throughout this period Venetians (and not only Venetians) were living in what political theorists term a "state of exception"—when a sovereign suspends the law to restore order.[135] Both sides held paradoxical abilities to make and unmake laws for conflicting restorations. From the Habsburg perspective, Field-Marshal Radetzky had declared martial law in Lombardy-Venetia in February 1848 and as he recaptured Italian cities he installed military governments, rendering the Venetian government illegitimate.[136] To make matters more confusing, the

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[135] Carl Schmitt famously assigned power to the sovereign to decide an exception to the law—or a state of exception in the form of emergency powers, etc.—and more recently Giorgio Agamben argued we live in a current, continuous state of exception. See especially Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[136] He battled with Prince Klemens von Metternich on the issue before receiving permission to declare martial law after numerous scuffles between members of the military and citizens over smoking. (In response to the longstanding Austrian monopoly on tobacco, the Milanese organized a boycott of cigarettes beginning on January 1, 1848.) See Alan Sked, *Radetzky: Imperial Victor and Military Genius* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 130. Metternich, on the other hand, saw greater nuance between the "political" wars of kings and generals and the "social" or "civic" unrest in towns and cities. For more on Metternich's difference between "political" and "social" conflicts on the Italian peninsula, see *Memoires,*

Venetians voted to fuse with the Sardinian kingdom in July, which made their status after the armistice of Salasco unclear: in withdrawing into Piedmont, was Carlo Alberto legally handing Venice over to the Austrians? (The Venetians cried foul in a flurry of communiqués.) From the Venetian side, secure insecurity reigned: with the Sardinian fusion all but declared void by the armistice the former President of the Venetian government, Daniele Manin, took sole control of the city on August 11 after unrest prompted by news of the Salasco armistice. Two days later Manin announced the formation of a triumvirate and declared that the government should still be considered provisional until the Austrian threat was neutralized.[137]

With perhaps greater awareness of their precarity after the assassination of Rossi, Venetians organized a replay of the November 15 academy to coincide with celebrations honoring the foundation of the Lombard League, which had pushed back the Teutonic invaders from the Italian peninsula. *L'Indipendente* reported that audience members at this performance shouted political slogans between pieces, creating a potent mix of song and cry that the audience then carried out of the opera house and into the streets. The paper's editor pointed to what he understood as a crucial signal of contemporary political relevance:

> That [the audience shared] a political thought was demonstrated [through] the unanimous, lively, and prolonged acclamations in response to the cry *Viva la Costituente Italiana*, which was twice repeated, and then taken up again in Piazza San Marco like a ritornello to spontaneous outburst of patriotic song.[138]
>
> [[C]he vi fosse un pensiero politico lo dimonstrarono unanimi vivissime e prolongate acclamazioni al grido di *Viva la Costituente Italiana*, che fu a due riprese ripetuto, e che poi si rinnovò in piazza a san Marco come ritornello ad improvvisati canti patriottici.]

In this context, the term "ritornello" invokes not so much the recurring blocks of music that characterize the da capo arias of eighteenth-century opera as the larger

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documents et écrits divers laissés par le Prince de Metternich, ed. Alfons Klinkowström (Paris: E. Plon and Co., 1884), 8:470-2.

[137] Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin*, 264-270. The British consul, Clinton Dawkins, reported to Viscount Palmerston that Manin's "harangue, which at least has the merit of boldness, was received with applause by the Republican party and in silence by the others." *Correspondence*, 3:214.

[138] December 2, 1848.

communicative structure that underpins it: a device for structuring responses between singers and listeners, signaling a moment in which audience members were "prompted to demonstrate."[139] While *L'Indipendente*'s use of the word was more poetic than literal, the movement of the ritornello-cry from inside the theatre to the city beyond is striking in its suggestion of a unified audience and of a real-world sound can shift from being a musical effect to become a structuring element of the collective political entity. The cry had the potential to disrupt the political imaginary developed in the satirical papers or even the academy itself.

The cry Venetians uttered that night, "Viva la Costituente Italiana," championed a nineteenth-century vision of a collective Italian identity grounded in representative self-governance. The idea had been popularized in the Mediterranean port city of Livorno in early October. After a prolonged period of political unrest threatened violence, the Grand Duke of Tuscany sent the politician Giuseppe Montanelli to act as an interim governor.[140] While in Livorno, Montanelli gave a speech calling for the creation of a centralized Italian assembly—a *costituente*—that would "personify" a unified Italy. As reports of Montanelli's speech were transmitted to Venice, the story accumulated intensity as demonstrations grew and dispersed with no clear emotional release. I am interested in not only how the cry was adopted and repeated by people in piazzas all over the peninsula, but also how newspapers drew on something resembling a

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[139] Feldman, 53.

[140] Giuseppe Montanelli is my great-great-great-great uncle. When he died without an heir, his named passed down through his sister Teresa, who had married Francesco Gori. The "double-barreled" Gori-Montanelli is my mother's surname. In addition to his position as a law professor, Montanelli was a veteran of the Battle of Curtatone, a former prisoner of war, and a poet. Montanelli was competent enough in his latter role that during his later exile in Paris he would write and translate plays for Adelaide Ristori and collaborate with Verdi on the libretto for the first version of *Simon Boccanegra* (1857). See Giuseppe Montanelli, *Memorie sull' Italia e specialmente sulla Toscana, dal 1814 al 1850*, 2 vols. (Turin: Società Editrice Italiana, 1853-55); Montanelli, *Opere politiche, 1847-1862*, ed. Paolo Bagnoli, 2 vols. (Florence: Polistampa, 1997); Paolo Bagnoli, *Democrazia e Stato nel pensiero politico di Giuseppe Montanelli (1813-1862)* (Florence: Olschki, 1989); Paolo Bagnoli, ed., *Giuseppe Montanelli: Unità e democrazia nel Risorgimento* (Florence: Olschki, 1990); and Axel Körner, *America in Italy: The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 138-146. On the libretto to *Simon Boccanegra*, see Frank Walker, "Verdi, Giuseppe Montanelli and the libretto of *Simon Boccanegra*," *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Studi Verdiani* 1, no. 3 (1960): 1373-90.

musical ritornello effect in their reporting on such events. The sheer proliferation of accounts of these events, and the extreme detail with which papers reported them (sometimes including copies of the texts of statements issued by revolutionaries and by the governments reproduced in full) worked simultaneously to amplify the cry (and its idea) and—in casting communities across the peninsula as the collective *tutti*—to shrink the physical, geographical space between otherwise isolated locations. In sharp contrast to the incomprehensible cacophony of the satires, this cry offered a unitary perception of the political situation.

On October 11 *L'Indipendente* carried descriptions of a demonstration from the night of October 5, alongside a proclamation from Montanelli, in which he expressed his gratitude for his warm welcome to the city but refrained from announcing any plans. The sense that the Livornese thought something *should* have happened is evident in the details provided about a seemingly failed demonstration. That evening around eight o'clock a crowd gathered in the main piazza, perhaps in response to Montanelli's deferral. The paper reported that the crowd began about four- or five-thousand strong and grew as it wound through the streets. Voices shouted constantly: "Viva Montanelli the minister!" "Down with the ministry!" The restless crowd then called out numerous times for Montanelli to appear. When he did not, the moment died and the crowd along with it.

There is no further news about the situation until October 14, when *Indipendente* collated materials from several local sources to give the closest thing possible to a first-hand account. Eschewing summary and analysis in favor of documentary plenitude, it published in succession Montanelli's proclamation of October 7, a copy of a speech given on his arrival, a copy of a speech given on October 8, and two descriptions from October 9 of the resulting peace in Livorno. It was in the speech of October 8 that Montanelli issued a heartfelt call for a constitution.

Rather than transcribing that speech verbatim, in its report the *Corriere Livornese* depicted the scene by drawing on the structures and emotions of a dramatic performance. Just after Montanelli explained that at the heart [*anima*] of this revolution was the desire to personify Italy in a national Italian government, the paper reports, a boisterous crowd arrived on the piazza. People banging drums and waving flags preceded the bulk of crowd, amongst which many carried political placards: "Viva la Costituente Italiana!" "Viva Montanelli in the ministry!" ["Viva Montanelli al Ministero!"] "Viva [Domenico] Guerrazzi and Montanelli!" and the ever-present "Down with the ministry!" ["Abbasso il Ministero!"] Some carried portraits of Guerrazzi, Montanelli, and of the folk hero Giuseppe Garibaldi. Montanelli paused to let the crowd join those already listening. When he began to speak again, some of the more agitated in the crowd

interrupted him. But Montanelli repeated again for the newcomers his desire to see Italy personified in a unified government, encouraging, "Our cry everywhere must be 'VIVA LA COSTITUENTE ITALIANA!'" ["Il nostro grido dappertutto dev' essere 'VIVA LA COSTITUENTE ITALIANA!'"] He ended with a call to the Livornese to help lead the way, asking them to fight—peacefully—for representation. The next day *L'Indipendente* confidently predicted for its Venetian readership that the speech was "one of those events that is heavy with consequences, one of those events that can define an epoch in the history of a nation." ["…il discorso di Giuseppe Montanelli ai Livornesi è uno di quei fatti che sono gravidi di conseguenze, di quei fatti che possono segnare un'epoca nella storia della nazione."][141] The speech and Montanelli's idea soon spread throughout the peninsula. The ritornello-cry migrated to the Venetian canals and, through repeated demonstrations, created both a local and "national" sense of unity.

That sense of unity, however, need not be strictly constitutive; it could also be disruptive, destabilizing common practices in order to make way for new ones. Viewed from the outside, Italian disruption—and especially Italian noise-making—has almost universally been regarded as a signal of backwardness. Travelers to Italy throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries commented on the general noisiness of the Italian theater, which left most music unheard, save for the loudest bits.[142] Foreign observers frequently linked the Italian soundscape to a lack of civility, figuring noise (itself a cultural construct, as scholars of sound studies have shown us) as the transgression of a societal boundary.[143] Over the next month the cry for the constitution was treated in various ways as noise, although within Italy it was consistently heard as a

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[141] On October 12 the ministry in Florence resigned. Leopold II initially proposed a reactionary [*retrogrado*] new ministry, but after an outcry Montanelli was summoned to Florence. On October 22—the news reached Venice the same day—Leopold II asked Montanelli to form a ministry.

[142] Writing about the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, for instance, Charles Burney noted, "As to the music… nothing could be heard distinctly but those noisy and furious parts which were meant merely to give relief to the rest; the mezzotints and back-ground were generally lost, and indeed little was left but the bold and coarse strokes of the composer's pencil." *The Present State of Music in France and Italy: Or, The Journal of a Tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect Materials for a General History of Music*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Becket and Co., 1773), 352. Also quoted in Feldman, 53.

[143] See, for instance, Karin Bijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008); John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford, 2003).

disruptive in the positive sense. A report from late October originally published in the Neapolitan *Libertà italiana* and picked up by *L'Indipendente*, clearly conveys this sense of a voice that gathers force and heralds change:

> This cry had for a theatre nothing but the august city walls of Livorno and was echoed by the small Livornese population; [both] cry and echo could have been easily suffocated, easily forgotten, if twenty-six million Italians had not taken them up. The cry of Livorno, [although] always remaining a courageous and elevated sentiment, could be a lost voice in a remote corner of Italy and merely remembered as the expression of bold and confident souls, but it could also be the voice that will rouse from somnolence an Italy once again drowsy.
>
> [Questo grido non ebbe per Teatro che le auguste mura di Livorno, per eco lo scarso popolo livornese; grido ed eco che sarebbero ben presto soffocati, ben presto obliati, se non li ripetessero venti sei milioni d'italiani. Il grido di Livorno, restando sempre un coraggioso ed altissimo conato, può essere una voce perduta in un angolo dell'Italia, e tenuta come l'espressione di animi baldi e confidente, ma può anche essere la voce che ridesterà novellamente dal sonno quest' Italia una seconda volta assonnata.]

The creation of a collective voice does not happen in a single gesture, but through irresistible repetition that commands the collective ear.

Opera did not *become* an intimate mode when Verdi's became disillusioned after the 1848 revolutions, settled down to domestic life with Giuseppina Strepponi, and turned away from composing unison choruses and spectacular dramatic tableaux. In an often overlooked passage in his 1859 study of Verdi's early operas, Abramo Basevi described this pared-down mode of feeling as "tempered" ["temperato"], writing that "Verdi realized that, if recent events had not calmed emotions, they had at least restrained them [le tenevano però in freno]..."[144] One way of understanding this new expressive restraint would be as the result of a kind of civilizing process, in which Italians gained the ability to govern themselves—and to gain control of a new, unified nation—by learning to rein in their emotions.

But such an interpretation depends too much on a retrospective view, in which Italy does achieve unification, through a process that could be achieved

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[144] Abramo Basevi, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, trans. Edward Schneider and Stefano Castelvecchi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 137-8.

only through skillful diplomacy, tempered speech, and political compromise. Furthermore, such a view overlooks the importance of the kinds of musical engagement I have discussed here. As we have seen from the programming choices and journalistic responses to the academies of 1848, opera was already tightly woven into the affective life of its listeners. Engagement with musical conventions throughout 1848 such as ensembles based on the groundswell effect, or configurations of characters frozen into a single state of astonishment in a finale—in real-life academies, printed satires of those concerts, and the proliferation of dramatized news reporting—was a key component in establishing what the music critic Basevi had called a "new, collective mode of feeling," a set of feelings accessible to all Italians regardless of their native dialect or location on the peninsula.[145] The shared experience enabled by the benefits concerts was translated to the national plane through imaginary concerts described in the satirical press. The print media's ability to transmit affects between the local and proto-national contexts—evident in the stylized mode of reporting—was key to reproducing the shouted political slogans that echoed in piazzas throughout Italy. Sound made it possible to feel that Italians were fighting, suffering, celebrating, and laughing together throughout 1848-9.

[145] Basevi, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, 138.

Chapter 3: Noise and Silence in *Rigoletto*'s Venice

According to the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, the Austrian Field-Marshal Joseph von Radetzky's arrival in Venice on August 30, 1840 was marked by cannon fire that began announcing the Field-Marshal's arrival at nine in the morning, the booms sounding closer and closer to the city as first Forte Marghera on the mainland and then the island of San Secondo celebrated his approach.[146] Grateful citizens hung damask carpets and draperies from their windows to fête the conquering hero as he processed down the Grand Canal, greeting him with waving handkerchiefs and shouted acclamations as church bells pealed across the city. When the procession of gondolas arrived at Piazza San Marco and Radetzky disembarked, the warships anchored in port celebrated the end of the revolution with more cannon blasts as the bells of the Basilica of San Marco tolled their own welcome. Military bands played the Austrian national hymn during the review of troops, after which the Field-Marshal entered the Basilica to hear Mass. The Venetian Patriarch's blessing wedded the desires of church to state once more, a symbolic marriage witnessed by ecclesiastical, military, civic, and municipal functionaries.

Let us envision this same scene once again, this time as described by the British consul stationed in Venice at the time, who reported that during the procession "*perfect silence* was maintained, scarcely any of the inhabitants appearing at the windows."[147] Without the acclamations from spectators, Radetzky's triumphal march begins to sound more like a dirge for reconquered Venice. The consul, Clinton Dawkins, observed that the windows were decorated—not surprising since the Austrian government had threatened a fine of sixty zwanzigers if windows of the palazzi along the Canal went bare.[148] In

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[146] *Gazzetta di Venezia*, August 31, 1849.

[147] Quoted in G.M. Trevelyan, *Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1923), 240-1; emphasis mine. For more on Dawkins, see Paul Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848-9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 352; Harry Hearder, "La rivoluzione veneziana del 1848 vista dal console generale inglese," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 46 (1957), 734-41.

[148] The government's official mouthpiece, the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, confirmed this on September 16 when responding to a report on Radetzky's procession published on September 1 in the Genovese newspaper, *Bandiera del popolo*. The Austrians forced the Venetians' hand in part by levying punitive taxes in Austrian currency, which the Venetians had abandoned, so they could not afford to pay the fines. On the various new taxes implemented after 1848 see William A. Jenks, *Franz Joseph and the Italians, 1849-1859* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 37-8. For an (Austrian-friendly) overview of the pre-1848 economy in

hanging their carpets, the silent Venetians artfully dodged the legal requirements of celebration.

As representative of a rival empire, the British consul could be accused of passing along a partisan fantasy, except that neither Dawkins nor his government had supported the revolutionary Republic of San Marco. Marooned in the city during the long Habsburg siege, Dawkins may have acquired a sense of fraternity engendered by the communal suffering: denizens were left hungry and in the dark as food and oil stores dwindled, with conditions deteriorating to the point that a cholera epidemic broke out right before the Venetians surrendered. Note, for instance, the sympathetic slippage in Dawkins' account between a literal silence and the metaphorical silencing of a political body. Reliant as we are on sources like this we are unlikely to confirm whether the Venetians were in fact silent during Radetzky's entrance, but this historical impasse can prompt insights into the biases of historical listeners and their chronicles.

In what follows, I approach this silence and others like it as forms of evidence. Jumping off from the initial conundrum posed by Dawkins' report, I want to attend to how people listened in public spaces—including the opera house and inside the fictional world of opera—in the months after the Habsburg reconquest of 1849. Recent scholarship on sound and war suggests that we might hear this silence as evidence of trauma inflicted by the Habsburg counter-revolution.[149] Such an interpretation risks withdrawing agency from Venetians and reassigning it to bombs and disease.[150] Silence, after all, can be chosen. Yet my aim is not to envoice the Venetians, since that would seem to betray their preference for a stance of passive resistance in the face of discourses imposed by the Habsburg Empire.[151]

When Radetzky set foot on Venetian ground that day in August 1849, he was celebrating the successful end of a campaign to keep Lombardy-Venetia part of a now-resurgent Empire. In Austria, where the young Emperor Franz Joseph dressed in military uniforms and concerned himself with a neo-absolutist renewal

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Lombardy-Venetia, see Marco Meriggi, *Il Regno Lombardo-Veneto* (Turin: UTET, 1987) 215-37.

[149] On wartime sound and listening, see J. Martin Daughtry, "Thanatosonics: Ontologies of Acoustic Violence," *Social Text* 32, no. 2 (2014): 25-51, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2419546; Jim Sykes, "Ontologies of Acoustic Endurance: Rethinking Wartime Sound and Listening," *Sound Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1-26, https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2018.1461049.

[150] Lauren Berlant, "History and the Affective Event," *American Literary History* 20, no. 4 (2008): 845-860, https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajn039.

[151] Wendy Brown, "Freedom's Silences" in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 83-97.

of court pomp and celebration, citizens monumentalized *Vater* Radetzky with statues, odes, and, most famously, the march by Johann Strauss Sr. that bears his name.[152] Earlier in 1848 Venetian newspapers had condemned Radetzky as a modern barbarian, the contemporary incarnation of Attila the Hun and Genseric; now he and his men were in charge.[153] The flood of troops into the Piazza San Marco for Radetzky's review was only one of many facets of the Habsburg domination of Venetian public spaces, in the years just before and just after 1848. In filling those spaces with processions, spectacle, and performances, the Habsburg administration tried to dictate the sensory experiences available to residents—not only by controlling physical access to piazzas and waterways, but also by determining how they were lit and what music was heard, and even shaping sensory details such as how things smelled, what papers were read in cafés, and what currency jingled in people's pockets.[154] In this chapter I

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[152] On Franz Joseph, see Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Vienna, 1848-1916* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2005), 17-9; Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34-41; and Peter Urbanitsch, "Pluralist Myth and Nationalist Realities: The Dynastic Myth of the Habsburg Monarchy—A Futile Exercise in the Creation of Identity?," *Austrian History Yearbook* 35 (2004), 101-41, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237800020968. For an extensive exploration of monuments (both material and cultural) to Radetzky after 1848, see Cole, *Military Culture*, 67-107. On the *March* see Zoë Lang, "The Regime's 'Musical Weapon' Transformed: The Reception of Johann Strauss Sr.'s *Radetzky March* Before and After the First World War," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 134, no. 2 (2009): 243-69, https://doi.org/10.1080/02690400903109075.

[153] *Il Libero italiano*, March 31, 1848 and *L'Indipendente*, April 15, 1848. Following his surprising retreat from Milan after the famous five days of street fighting in March 1848, newspapers published descriptions of Austrian atrocities purportedly uncovered by the Milanese, including the brutal murder and mutilation of malnourished prisoners as well as the horrendous sight of dead children still pierced by bayonets, their bodies primed for a gruesome procession around the region. The fullest contemporary account appears in *Raccolta delle atrocità commesse dagli austriaci durante la rivoluzione di Milano*, (Turin: Pietro Lombardi, 1848). The newspaper accounts closely resemble that in the *Raccolta*, suggesting, if not historical accuracy, at least a swift standardization of mythology.

[154] Jenks, *Francis Joseph*, 51-6. For a history of earlier policing practices in Venice, see David Laven, "Law and Order in Habsburg Venetia, 1814-1835," *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 2 (1996): 383-403,

investigate the various listening practices cultivated in the city, particularly in spaces where Venetians and Austrians were expected to interact—or where Venetians were expected to conform to Habsburg standards.

Any history of the Venetian ear in this period must take seriously the idea—as we saw with Dawkins' account—that listening could be a public act, meaning one in which it was necessary for the act of listening *to be seen*. A crucial moment in this history, I argue, was the premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* in March 1851, when international attention was focused on the opera's reception by the reconquered Venetians.[155] While the fact of *Rigoletto*'s immediate acclaim has long been central to Verdi historiography, my research shows how the public's rapid embrace of the work was enmeshed with local politics—not the nationalistic, patriotic politics of the Risorgimento, but rather the messier politics of day-to-day living in a mid-nineteenth-century Italian city. The chapter juxtaposes the operatic archive with the archive of local urban sounds, first by reconstructing the historical Venetian soundscape and considering its implications, then by listening for the 'sound' of the city as conveyed through music criticism, and finally by proposing the operatic soundworld of *Rigoletto* itself as a kind of soundscape—one steeped in historic listening stances.

The Gondolier's Cry

The perception of Venetian silence was not a simple symptom of imperial politics. Once displaced from the industrial bustle of London or Paris, many visitors were struck by the city's preternatural quiet. During her stay there in the early part of the 1840s Mary Shelley noted that there was "no noise" at all in Venice—save for the ringing of church bells, which were in fact "too much"—and that silence became "superlative stillness" as tourists reached the outlying islands of Murano and Burano.[156] As Shelley herself was aware, this was a

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X0002029X. Laven argues that censorship was always an area in which the Habsburgs tended to overdo things, but that in many other ways they efficiently wielded the centralized bureaucracy to monitor good governance in cities like Venice.

[155] For a documentary account of *Rigoletto*'s genesis, see Marcello Conati, *La bottega della musica: Verdi e La Fenice* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1983). See also Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 263-87; and Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi: From* Oberto *to* Rigoletto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:477-84.

[156] Mary Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (London, 1844), 2:101. In a series of meditative vignettes on the possibilities of

soundscape constructed through cultural comparisons: heard from the vantage point of European modernity, Venice's silence marked it as prehistoric.

Part of Venice's pre- and post-1848 draw for visitors, in fact, was its anachronistic stillness, engendered by the difficulties posed by its unique landscape: Venice is a winding canal city built atop a watery forest of petrified tree trunks placed there by enterprising fishermen. Caught between the powerful exhalation of the Po River and the forceful tides of the Adriatic Sea, the Venetians cultivated a harmonious relationship with the environment around them: a cultivation epitomized by the annual marriage to the sea, when the Doge would toss a consecrated ring into the waters and declare city and sea forever wed. The calm rocking of the gondola was heralded as medicinal, enticing the traveler to a state of surreal somnolence.[157] The gondolier's famous song further lulled the weary passenger to sleep, although it was in reality no song at all, more a half-sung, half-spoken recitation of poetry by writers such as Torquato Tasso.[158] In other words the city was an oasis, unmoored from both the mainland and modernity.

While this perception played into stereotypes of the *dolce far niente* attitude supposedly endemic to Italy, the Habsburgs supported the modernization of the city's infrastructure, most overtly through the construction of the railway bridge discussed in Chapter 1. At the same time, the competing global narrative of nineteenth-century industrialization redefined Venice's relationship with its waters by displacing administrative care of the lagoons to landlocked cities like Vienna or (eventually) Rome, leading by the twentieth century led to the coastal groundwater pumping primarily responsible for the rises in water levels that create the illusion that the city is "sinking."[159] Nineteenth-century observers,

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researching an "Italian sound," Hillel Schwartz quotes Henry James making a similar comparison later in the century between Florence and New York; Schwartz, "Fifth Elements: A Research in Program in Italian Sound," *California Italian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 12-14, https://doi.org/10.5070/C341012667.

[157] *Venezia e le sue lagune* (Venice: Antonelli, 1847), 2,I:306. Later in the 1850s Venice became a site of medical tourism, which brought so many people into the city during the summer months that the Teatro La Fenice started a summer season; see *L'Italia musicale*, July 30, 1856 and *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, July 27, 1856.

[158] See, for instance, Shelley's description in *Rambles*, 2:125-6, or Byron's evocation of the gondolier in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* discussed in Chapter 1.

[159] Serenella Iovino, "Cognitive Justice and the Truth of Biology: Death (and Life) in Venice," in *Ecocriticsm and Italy: Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation* (London: Bloomberg Academic, 2016), 51-2; Luigi Tosi, Pietro Teatini, and Tazio Strozzi, "Natural versus Anthropogenic Subsidence of Venice," *Scientific*

however, were more familiar with isolationist narratives of stubborn Venetian self-dependency, underlining the proud people's willingness to founder rather than reconnect with the outside world.

This last point comes from the modern strand of the mythology known as the city's *leggenda nera* or "black legend" of Venice, which stressed the decadence, tyranny, and corruption of the Venetian Republic, stretching back for centuries. Following the devil-may-care decadence of the last few centuries, Venetians supposedly required intervention from a more benevolent foreign government: in this case the "liberal" Habsburgs. By the 1840s there were decades' worth of tales that fetishized the unveiling of the labyrinthine conspiracies supposedly rampant in the old Republic, a mania that filtered into popular culture as an obsession with masks, assassins, and convoluted political machinations.[160] The exaggerated Venetian settings of Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833) and *Marino Faliero* (1835), and Verdi's *I due Foscari* (1844), all drew on sources influenced by this strand of historiography.[161] In

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Reports 3, no. 2710 (2013): https://doi:10.1038/srep02710. For more on the "age of water" beginning in the fifteenth century, see Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, "An Ecological Understanding of the Myth of Venice," in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 39-64. On Venetian isolation, see Peter Burke, "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication," in *Venice Reconsidered*, 389-419.

[160] On Venetian historiography during this period, see David Barnes, "Historicizing the Stones: Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and Italian Nationalism," *Comparative Literature* 62, no. 3 (2010), 246-61, https://doi.org/10.1215/00104124-2010-013 and Filippo de Vivo, "Quand le passé résiste à ses historiographies Venise et le XVIIe siècle," *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherche Historiques* 28-29 (2002), https://doi.org/10.4000/ccrh.1122. Many historians have turned to the nineteenth-century French historian Pierre Daru as a primary source of this version of the *leggenda nera*, followed closely by Lord Byron. See David Laven, "Lord Byron, Count Daru, and Anglophone Myths of Venice in the Nineteenth Century," *MDCC* 1 (2012): 5-32, http://doi.org/10.14277/2280-8841/MDCCC-1-12-1; Claudio Povolo, "The Creation of Venetian Historiography," in *Venice Reconsidered*, 491-519. Daru's Napoleonic allegiances and wartime Italian interests bore surprising musicological fruit: he brought with him his young cousin, Stendhal.

[161] On the history of masks in Venice, see James Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011); and his "The Myth of Venice in Nineteenth-Century Opera," *Journal of*

resurrecting such historical narratives, Franz Joseph's spectacular neo-absolutism made clear the progress of the present regime, and the Habsburgs sought to turn Venice into a permanent exhibition of Austrian progress.[162]

While these seem to be two competing historical impulses—preservation and modernization—their common ground was the sense of Venice as an ecosystem, in which citizens were cast as *part of* their environment.[163] Venetians were heard as silent in part because Venice itself was heard as silent. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than with the treatment of the gondolier. The gondolier exerted himself to carry visitors to the city and ferry them around the canals within, yet most listeners are more familiar with his leisurely pace as depicted in the barcarolle. Rather than depict the gondolier's muscular mastery of the waters, the barcarolle's accompaniment mimicked the gentle rocking of a boat, and its melody translated his speech-song into a melancholy tune. The barcarolle, in other words, transformed the active into the passive—or the cultured into the folk—by emphasizing the dreamy influence this silence had on the foreign listener.[164] When Richard Wagner visited the city in 1858 he declared the gondolier's song impossible to transcribe:

> Suddenly [the gondolier] uttered a deep wail, not unlike the cry of an animal; the cry gradually gained in strength and formed itself, after a long-drawn "Oh!" into a simple musical exclamation "Venezia!" This was followed by other sounds of which I have no distinct recollection, as I was so moved at the time.[165]

Interdisciplinary History 36, no. 3 (2006): 533-54, https://doi.org/10.1162/002219506774929872.

[162] Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *new formations* 4 (1988): 73-102.

[163] Steven Feld, "Acoustemology" in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 12-21; and Ari Y. Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies," *The Senses and Society* 5, no. 2 (2010): 212-34, https://doi.org/10.2725/174589210X12668381452845.

[164] Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 32-75. In their wordlessness or general incomprehensibility to foreigners, I believe the gondoliers' songs distinguish themselves from the (European) democratized and radicalized "natural" language discussed by Francesca Brittan in *Music and Fantasy in the Age of Berlioz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 141-9.

[165] Richard Wagner, *My Life* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1911), 2:697.

It is difficult to believe that at no point during his stay did Wagner manage to gather himself enough to transcribe the cry. Yet as we saw in Chapter 1, this particular *enchantment* to the sound—and the accompanying loss of one's sense of self—had by that point become a Venetian trope, and in all likelihood Wagner exaggerated both the incident and its effect to conform to the genre of the travelogue.

During the 1850s one figure worked to correct this fantasizing impulse, even as he embraced what he thought beautiful in the city: the English art critic John Ruskin. In an appendix to the second volume (1853) of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin assumed the role of amateur ethnographer, explaining the gondolier's song in relation to its navigational function. Ruskin described the boatmen calling out "Premi, premi-è!" from around the corner, announcing his attention to make a left turn. On hearing his call, gondoliers in oncoming traffic would shift their oars back to turn to *their* right in order to give room to the gondolier making his left turn. Listening only from their own vantages in the gondolas, foreign tourists were comically mistranslating "premi" to mean a move to the right rather than correctly hearing it as the forewarning of a left turn. The mistranslation that Ruskin corrected is a tiny detail, but perhaps emblematic of such encounters between Venetians and outsiders.[166]

The lack of Venetian articulation highlighted—for different purposes—in both Ruskin's and Wagner's accounts suggests the animalistic howls of the colonial archive, which blurred boundaries between speech and song, and human and nature. In other words, visitors listened to the gondolier's cries as if he were an exotic Other, robbing him of any proper expression of Western subjectivity—the expectation most often embedded in the concept of "having a voice." With a wider focus, such dehumanization fits neatly within existing discourses on both sides that lamented Italian degeneration, whose rate of change—depending on who the speaker was—accelerated or slowed in response to foreign domination.[167] By reacting to their environment rather than shaping it, Italians proved themselves in need of policing.

This assertion that Italians required the steady guidance of "paternalistic" Austria is recognizable as classic imperialist logic, yet one accruing new value in

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[166] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853), 2:375-7; see also Jennifer Scappettone, *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 43-86.

[167] See Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Giovanni Prati makes similar assertions in the preface to his *Nuovi versi* (Venice: Pietro Naratovich, 1848), 5-8.

recent Habsburg revisionist histories. Historians such as Pieter Judson and David Laven have emphasized how the Empire's efficient, centralized administration favored the local peoples in making sure to stamp out any petty tyrants threatening to kindle conflicts. By promoting healthy bureaucracies, the thinking goes, the Empire in fact fostered the eventual emergence of independent states.[168] In the Italian context Habsburg revisionism works against what was once an unshakeable nationalist Italian historiography, albeit one that had crumbled under the pressure of Antonio Gramsci's famous critique of the Italian *Risorgimento* as a "passive revolution" that established a top-heavy cultural hegemony. In combatting what can appear as Italian propaganda, these historians risk reinscribing the idea that Italians were—and still are—susceptible to a contagion spread by ill-intentioned revolutionaries, a susceptibility that can also seem to infect historians of Italy, who can be accused of partiality.

My aim is not to come down on one side or the other of an historic political struggle, but rather to highlight the ways in which such imperialist listening can color our understanding of Italy and Italians even in contemporary scholarship. We still listen to Italians in this period much as tourists and visitors listened to the gondoliers—entrenched in their environment and without agency.

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[168] Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016); see also David Laven, *Venice and Venetia Under the Habsburgs: 1815-1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Alan Sked, *Radetzky: Imperial Victor and Military Genius* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 134. Sked's project is unabashedly recuperative: as a corrective effort he often takes Radetzky's point of view to the extreme at the expense of the Italians. In wanting to portray Radetzky as a "military genius," however, Sked details the deteriorating relationship between Austrians and Italians in Italy in the later 1840s in order to show how Radetzky anticipated the 1848 revolutions—in the face of administrative inaction and incompetence—and therefore makes a point that contradicts Laven's more sceptical readings of Italian tensions. Sked, in turn, notes that Italian revolutionaries paid "scant attention to reality" in ignoring that the Habsburg administration was "less oppressive than in most Italian states," but the original reference is Laven on the "age of restoration" (again, *before* 1848) in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58-9. The somewhat circular nature of all these references—centering Laven—suggests that the seeming Anglophone consensus on both Italy and Venice during this period deserves further scrutiny.

The Venetian Ear

Within a few months in 1850 and 1851, two events occurred that brought international attention to the contours of the Venetian ear: the Belgian critic François-Joseph Fétis published a two-part article on the state of modern Italian music and Verdi's *Rigoletto* received its first performances, at Venice's Teatro La Fenice in March of 1851. *Rigoletto* represented a triumph for Verdi, and its near-immediate popularity around Europe would become a point of pride for Venetians.[169] This pride, and local critics' attendant worries that if they misjudged the work they might appear misguided to outsiders, highlights the difficult of reading the local press, at least in a place like Venice. Just as the silence of the canals was registered by visitors to the city, who compared it to industrial European cities, so too did Venetians listen to local premieres with those northerly operatic capitals in mind. Music criticism is often understood as hyper-local, and Italian operatic criticism in particular is seen as a receptacle of sublimated urban politics, wherein discussions that would have been censored in other arenas were enacted via interpretations of operatic plots, devices, and effects.[170] The entanglement of opera and city meant that through criticism local discourses could circulate far beyond their city of origin; but this also meant, from the opposite point of view, that local critics could absorb and disseminate ideas

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[169] Outside of Italy *Rigoletto* premiered in Vienna in May 1852 (*Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, May 23, 1852), Budapest in December 1852 (*Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, January 16, 1853), Corfu in December 1852 (*L'Italia musicale*, January 29, 1853), Saint Petersburg in March 1853 (*L'Italia musicale*, March 12, 1853), London in May 1853 (*The Musical World*, May 21, 1853), Barcelona in (presumably) January 1854 (*L'Italia musicale*, February 1, 1854), Lisbon in (presumably) February 1854 (*L'Italia musicale*, February 22, 1854), Bucharest in February 1854 (*Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, April 2, 1854), Odessa in early summer 1854 (*L'Italia musicale*, July 5, 1854), Tbilisi in autumn 1854 (*L'Italia musicale*, November 15, 1854), and reached New York in February 1855 (*The Musical Gazette*, February 17, 1855). Paris is noticeably absent from this list, in part because Victor Hugo objected that in adapting his *Le Roi s'amuse* the opera infringed on his rights. He even went so far as to pursue a ban on performances when *Rigoletto* premiered at the Théâtre Italien in 1857; see *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, January 18, 1857 and February 1, 1857. The case attracted considerable attention in the Italian papers. (See, for example, *Gazzetta musicale di Napoli*, February 7 and 14, 1857).

[170] Emanuele Senici, "Delirious Hopes: Napoleonic Milan and the Rise of Modern Italian Operatic Criticism," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27, no. 2 (2015): 97-127, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586715000026.

from elsewhere. A local review of a local performance, then, could sometimes be a reflection of or a response to foreign ideas.

Writing from Venice at the end of 1850, Fétis excoriated Italians for what he called the decline of their musical tastes, pointing in particular to Verdi as representative of everything wrong with Italian music. Particularly riling—and inexplicable—for Fétis was how Italian audiences had managed to renounce their natural penchant for melody in favor of Verdi's derivative noisiness. He scoffed:

> What could have changed the Italian nature to such a point that the noise that was completely contrary to its genius is now exactly what it loves; for whom an orchestra of ninety parts is not enough, and still needs to add the clamor of one or two military bands with their cortege of trombones, tubas, and bass drums—does the presence of these bands on stage overturn good sense?
>
> [Che cosa dunque ha potuto cangiare a tal punto la natura italiana, che il rumore tanto contrario al suo genio, è precisamente ciò ch' ella ama adesso; per cui un'orchestra di novanta parti non le basta più, e bisogna aggiungervi lo strepito d'una o due bande militari con tutto il corteggio dei loro trombone, officleidi e grandi case, dovesse anche la presenza di queste bande sulle scena rivoltare il buon senso?]

Fétis went on to his own question: revolutionary sentiments had so wound up the Italians over the course of twenty-five years that they needed to see their own heightened, violent emotions reflected on stage, translated into sound as excess and noise. When the noise was orchestral, that excess was symbolized by military bands; when it was vocal Fétis and many others resorted to a lexicon of "shouts and screams", decrying a sound-world in which the "force of the lungs" replaced the Italian "art of singing."[171] On the surface, concerns about operatic noise and excess might appear as the opposite of the silence and accompanying lack of agency I discussed in the previous section, but I would argue that they are closely related. Both point to a gap in Italian articulation, where inclination towards excess overwhelmed the listener's ability to hear the Italian voice in the city as well as in the opera house, rendering it not unheard but indecipherable.

Fétis was not the first to condemn Italian opera for its noisiness, nor was he the first to link operatic noise to political upheavals. Whereas decades earlier

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[171] *L'Italia musicale*, September 10, 1850. Guido Salvetti discusses Fétis's articles in relation to other Verdi detractors in "'Ho detto male… di Verdi.' Saggio di ricezione negative," *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 48 (2013): 105-41.

critics had grappled with the idea that the nervous excitement of Rossini's orchestral noise threatened revolutionary agitation, Fétis' concerns seem less about action and more about inaction.[172] As proof of the Italians' disinterest in developing the art, Fétis pointed to Italy's empty theaters, including La Fenice, which had come close to cancelling the 1850-51 season until the Austrian government intervened to provide the necessary funding. His reading of Italian passivity opens into broader discourses of the Italian revolutions as theatrical spectacles themselves, which, while possibly encouraging widespread participation, also invited accusations of political insincerity.[173] Instead of concentrating on the kinds of progress necessary to demonstrate their ability to self-represent, in other words, Italians were fighting for the emotional thrill of singing together in the streets.

This very issue of the need and desire for excited stimulation was one discussed throughout Italy in the context of *Rigoletto*, which premiered only months after Fétis's condemnation of Verdi and did itself no immediate favors by featuring a plot in which the title character schemes to murder his employer. It was furthermore a common criticism that Venetians in particular tended towards the moribund, and therefore required exaggerated entertainments to stimulate them. In 1823, Stendhal had painted a bleak picture, describing Venice as a place in which "everyone is slowly dying of boredom" and in such an environment, "[a grotesque satire] has all the impact of startling originality."[174] After the premiere critics fretted that some of the shocking aspects of the plot—especially the murder of Rigoletto's daughter, Gilda, at the very end of the opera—promised to elicit a terrible *frisson* that would attract audiences for all the wrong reasons.[175] The critic

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[172] Melina Esse, "Rossini's Noisy Bodies," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 21, no. 1 (2009): 27-64, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586709990024. See also Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sounds of Modern Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Emily I. Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 233-57.

[173] On the theatrical elements of the 1848 revolution in Milan, see Carlotta Sorba, "*Ernani* Hats: Italian Opera as Repertoire of Symbols During the Risorgimento," in *Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music*, ed. Jane F. Fulcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 428-51; and Mary Ann Smart, *Waiting for Verdi: Opera and Political Opinion in Nineteenth-Century Italy, 1815-1848* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 152-3.

[174] Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, trans. Richard N. Coe (Oxford: Oneworld Classics, 2008), 441-2. On his relationship with Pierre Daru see n. 160.

[175] Abramo Basevi wrote: "if we consider the present depravity of taste—when audiences seek recreation in the stimulus of the revolting, just as paralyzed limbs

for the *Gazzetta Uffiziale di Venezia*, Tommaso Locatelli, opened his first review of *Rigoletto* with a warning that Verdi and librettist Francesco Maria Piave "searched for the beautiful ideal in the deformed, the horrible" and that they wielded effect not for the education of the soul, but for its "torture and horror." "We cannot in good conscience," he wrote, "praise these tastes."[176]

Locatelli was in part positioning himself against the historic expectations for Venetian—and Italian—audiences and so it could be easy to dismiss him as having internalized negative stereotypes. But I want to approach his criticism instead as a set of instructions on how to listen like a Venetian, and therefore also on how to listen *to* Venice. Given the intense interest in Verdi's new work, editors all over Europe were waiting for the judgment of the local critic. In the rush to print first impressions, newspapers like Vienna's *Wiener Zeitung* extracted Locatelli's lavish praise of the opera's orchestral writing, while the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* simply reprinted the entire review. Since Verdi's publisher owned the *Gazzetta musicale* it is perhaps no surprise that that paper printed numerous other reviews or bits of news about *Rigoletto*. Locatelli's subsequent reviews were clear deviations from his paper's norm, a sign of both newsworthiness and popularity; and perhaps even of an "official" Habsburg seal of approval, since the paper was the administration's mouthpiece.

From the very first reviews critics focused on Verdi's instrumentation, positioning the military band as symbol of sonic excess, as Fétis had done only a few months earlier. The critic for *L'Italia musicale*—by no means a pro-Verdi paper—observed that while Verdi still "sacrificed" singing voices to the volume of the instruments, as he had done in earlier works, his orchestration was now less overbearing: the voices were no longer subjected to brutal domination by the "bass drum, the trombones, and that ridiculous exaggeration of *tinte*." "The reign of the bass drum … is as good as done," the critic proclaimed with satisfaction. A judgment like this can become a bid to associate Italian sound with the temperance of northern Europe, if read from the perspective of a critic like Fétis.

But Locatelli took a different tack, comparing *Rigoletto* with Rossini's *Semiramide* (which had premiered in Venice in 1823) and explaining that Verdi,

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quiver at strong electric shocks—our wonderment is easily quelled"; *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, trans. Edward Schneider and Stefano Castelvecchi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 162-3.

[176] *Gazzetta Uffiziale di Venezia*, March 12, 1851. Budden gives Locatelli too little credit, I think, when he reads this review as noting only the "bewildering novelty" of the piece. Mary Phillips-Matz is kinder, saying that such reviews "reflect confusion about the score and the moral issues it raised." Both Budden and Matz focus only on Locatelli's first article, ignoring his later articles on the opera. See Budden, 1:483 and Phillips-Matz, 284.

like Rossini nearly thirty years earlier, had "moderated the intemperance of the instruments" in response to critiques from "the public voice." In this formulation Venice is positioned as a historic site of a more rational critique, resisting or correcting voices from the outside rather than responding to them. There was no possibility to argue that the Venetians were seeking out excessive stimulation, since *Rigoletto*'s successes proved they were in fact moderating any overindulgence. In other words, Venetian judgments were sound.

In order to follow Locatelli's local listening, however, there is reason to look outside of the opera house. It is difficult to conclude that there were many Venetians attending La Fenice after 1849 or that the behavior of those who might have been in the audiences should be taken at face value, in part due to what many understood as an intentional boycott of opera houses throughout Italy after the re-imposition of Habsburg rule.[177] The Habsburg administration honed in on well-attended theatrical performances as a symptom of stability, and opera houses were ideal sites for gathering the local population and promoting the values of the governing regime. In response—and in parallel to the silences that greeted the triumphant celebrations of the state—the theater became a site of discourse in which many Italians across the region refused to participate. In Mantua in January 1849, for example, a particularly comical Austrian order alluded to shadowy figures intimidating people away from the theater and threatened arrest and punishment to those who disturbed performances by instilling fear and unrest in "good citizens."[178] The order specifically tied regular theater attendance to peace, order, and acceptance of the "legitimate" (meaning Habsburg) government; which meant that *not* attending the opera was implicitly defined as criminal behavior. Thus campaigns to discourage patronage of the theaters became a Republican cause, one that continued after the restoration of 1849.[179]

Nearly two years after this revolutionary moment, the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* claimed that *Rigoletto* had managed to repopulate not only La Fenice,

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[177] Peter Stamatov, "Interpretive Activism and the Political Uses of Verdi's Operas in the 1840s," *American Sociological Review*, 67, no. 3 (2002), 345-66, https://doi.org/10.2307/3088961. For a more critical view on the opera house as a (straightforward) site of subversive politics, see Susan Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 27-33.

[178] *L'Indipendente*, January 12, 1849.

[179] In a letter to her mother, John Ruskin's wife Effie Gray lamented that much of Italian society refused to return "not on account of the Austrians at all, but are kept in a sort of fear by what the Republican party would say in Venice and it is a want of moral courage on their part." Mary Lutyens, ed., *Effie in Venice: Unpublished Letters of Mrs John Ruskin written from Venice between 1849-1852* (London: John Murray, 1965), 91.

but also the city itself, drawing in spectators from adjoining cities and towns. Given the rumors of continued boycotts and of a wholesale withdrawal of Venetian aristocrats to the countryside to avoid conflict with the Republicans, such a declaration reads as "proof" that *Rigoletto*'s excellence as an aesthetic object transcended political concerns. This theory is belied somewhat by the daily numbers of those entering and leaving the city by railroad as published in the *Gazzetta Uffiziale*, since the numbers from the days of performances are almost indistinguishable from those on which the theater was "dark."[180] Opera and politics became especially tangled when, with great pomp and circumstance, a visiting Franz Joseph attended the final three performances, joined on 27 March by Radetzky and Archduke Maximilian.[181] The opportunity to see the young emperor was as much of a draw as the novelty of a Verdi opera and, according to news reports, he and Radetzky were warmly received. On those nights blocks of seats were reserved for members of the military, which meant that *Rigoletto*'s first run ended not accompanied—as we might have once assumed—by the heated applause of Italian patriots, but rather with cries for the Habsburg emperor.

These theatrical politics complicate the concept of the Venetian ear in two provocative ways. First, *Rigoletto*'s success may have been significantly more inflected by Austrian values than usually thought, since stereotyped notions of Italians as noisy and impulsive may have promoted the idea of *Rigoletto* as more moderate in sound and because those loyal to the Emperor ensured its financial (if

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[180] The *Gazzetta musicale* published this claim on March 23, 1851. Performances of *Rigoletto* took place on 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, and 30 March. The train numbers from the *Gazzetta Uffiziale di Venezia* are as follows: March 10: 567 in, 647 out; March 11: 610 in, 528 out; March 12: 485 in, 487 out; March 13: 477 in, 435 out; March 14: 406 in, 517 out; March 15: 773 in, 506 out; March 16: 697 in, 525 out; March 17: 540 in, 672 out; March 18: 649 in, 546 out; March 19: 728 in, 554 out; March 20: 678 in, 580 out; March 21: 582 in, 568 out; March 22: 615 in, 472 out; March 23: 590 in, 501 out; March 24: 578 in, 501 out; March 25: 698 in, 592 out; March 26: 649 in, 626 out; March 27: 670 in, 394 out; March 28: 569 in, 622 out; March 29: 766 in, 481 out; March 30: 939 in, 593 out; March 31: 733 in, 888 out. Obviously these numbers alone would offer little information about the various inclinations—political, musical, or otherwise—of *Rigoletto*'s first listeners.

[181] In addition to the posters from Fenice that announce the emperor's presence on March 27, 29, and 30; the *Gazzetta Uffiziale di Venezia* published reports about his attendance at on March 27, 28, and 31, 1851. On March 31 the evening edition of the *Wiener Zeitung* translated and republished the Venetian report from March 28. For more on the financials, see Marcello Conati, *Rigoletto: un'analisi drammatico-musicale* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), 68n210.

not also its cultural) success. But at the same time, the interior of La Fenice during the performances of *Rigoletto* can be seen as another kind of visual spectacle, where the presence, enthusiasm or detachment of Venetians was carefully noted. The Venetian ear, I argue, also needed to be seen. In order to listen as Locatelli listened, or to divine what he heard, we should know more about the street and indeed the canals. Since Venice's aquatic landscape forced people into a few confined spaces, the Piazza San Marco acted a microcosm of Venice itself. At least there we know we can find Venetians—listening, watching, refusing to listen, being watched.

"Stiletto Every Soldier"

The Piazza sits between the Procuratie Nuove and the Procuratie Vecchie, two edifices built centuries ago to house the city's Procurators, with the so-called Piazzetta buffering the square from the Basilica (see Figure 1). Walking toward the sea on the Piazzetta—with the Basilica and Ducal Palace on the left and the campanile on the right—leads one to the Molo, the quay where Radetzky disembarked after his triumphal procession but which otherwise served as a spot to sit and socialize. It was on this spot that Mary Shelley recounted standing there while watching two gondoliers take turns reciting stanzas of Tasso in Venetian dialect until they remembered no more, singing in their monotonous way.[182] Tourists and Venetians alike flocked to the cafés lining the perimeter of the piazza, where in the 1850s any paying customer could sit outside to drink a coffee, eat an ice, or smoke (reportedly awful) Austrian cigars.

Everything—and everyone—in the square was visible both day and night. Contemporary observers understood that each café boasted a distinct clientele, marked off by class and politics. Caffè Florian, located in the Procuratie Nuove, played cosmopolitan neutral, its collection of foreign newspapers like *Galignani's Messenger* attracting the tourists that presumably helped ease tensions between Venetians and Austrians, who drew further boundaries within the café itself and took over different rooms in the back. Austrians and members of the military occupied Caffè Quadri across the way, where they were allowed to smoke their cigarettes.[183] Upper-crust Venetians, whose politics as a general rule could most generously be considered reactionary, whiled away their hours in Caffè Suttil; and younger Italians gathered at Caffè Specchi looking for a more affordable cup of

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[182] Shelley, *Rambles*, 2:125-6.

[183] William Dean Howells, *Venetian Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1907), 1:49; *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, 4th edn. (London: John Murray, 1852), 299.

coffee. Those with empty pockets could stroll under the arcades, which remained lit by gas throughout the evening, or gather on any free steps.

The Habsburg administration approved the installation and development of gaslight infrastructure in the city in 1839; and while the comparative ubiquity of gas anonymized the experience of lighting, its centralization represented the reach of the government, quite literally via the pipes that carried gas from the gasholders in far-off Piazza San Francesco.[184] The support for such technological advancements, however, is difficult to untangle from the Habsburg desire to oversee Italians. As we saw in connection with the theater boycotts, the administration remained paranoid about anything that took place behind closed doors or in shadows, a vulnerability that Italians throughout the peninsula took care to exploit: in numerous Italian cities silence and darkness went hand-in-hand as modes of resistance.[185] For a nineteenth-century administrator well versed in the shadowy threat of secret political societies like the *carbonari*, any rebellious—although not necessarily illegal—behaviors could indicate hidden plots meant to destabilize the government.[186] In September 1849, for instance, the Governor General Karl Gorzkowsi decried the fact "that some have attempted, by means of inscriptions or figures or similar things on walls, and with the diffusion of fake news [*false notizie*], to provoke aversion or contempt with the present order of things…"[187] In late 1852 the Habsburg administration condemned and later executed the "Belfiore martyrs," five out of the ten men accused of running

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[184] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 29.

[185] On accounts published in Venetian papers, see *Il Mondo Nuovo*, June 14, 1849 and *L'Indipendente*, January 12, 1849. For more information on the installation of gaslight in Venice see *Bollettino di notizie italiane e straniere e delle più importanti invenzioni e scoperte, o Progresso dell'industria e delle utili cognizioni.* (Milan, 1842), 57-60; and Gianjacopo Fontana, *Manuale ad uso del forestiere in Venezia* (Venice, 1847), 155.

[186] On the policing of the *carbonari* in Venice see Laven, "Law and Order," 392-6.

[187] See Pietro Cecchetti, ed., *Raccolta di leggi, notificazioni, avvisi, etc. pubblicati in Venezia dal giorno 24 agosto 1849 in avanti; giuntivi quelli emanate nel Regno Lombardo-Veneto dal 22 marzo 1848* (Venice: Andreola, 1849), 2,I:140. David Barnes lists other examples of graffiti in "Historicizing the Stones," 249, and notes one specific case in which graffiti was inscribed on the walls of the church of the Santi Apostoli. John Ruskin described graffiti on a sign prohibiting—in more polite language—the use of columns at the Ducal Palace as urinals under penalty of a fine. See John Lewis Bradley, ed. *Ruskin's Letters from Venice, 1851-1852* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 31-2.

"revolutionary committees" in the Veneto region, including within Venice; but beyond exhibiting "subversive tendencies," much of the concrete evidence against them relied on the dissemination of banned writings.[188]

Habsburg paranoia, then, found a worthy target in Venice, where everything did happen in shadows—or where the murky atmospheres of travel narratives, novels, dramas, and histories made them think so.[189] As we have seen, the most informative accounts of Italian-Habsburg confrontations come from foreign observers, who were less constrained by Austrian censorship, if still compromised by conflicting relationships to imperialist power structures. Since Venice was a site of international tourism, news of widely-seen Venetian protests could travel farther. If the expectations were that Italians would be noisy and ungovernable, then reports that reaffirmed these tendencies would hardly be newsworthy, much less compelling accounts of an oppressed people. For protests to catch the eye of the foreigner, they had to be performative and obvious.

Foreigner, Venetian, and Austrian came together in Piazza San Marco, and at approximately six each evening eyes and ears would turn to the center of the Piazza, where military band members would bring their music stands and candles and position themselves to play in full view of those patronizing the cafés. Although the bands would play Italian operatic melodies in an attempt to reflect local taste, likely these concerts were also the local iteration of what Claudio Vellutini has identified as an elaborate cultural program, one designed to promote the image of a "supranational" Empire.[190] In 1844 one French observer mentioned hearing excerpts by Gaetano Donizetti and Saverio Mercadante, and noted that the bands were likely to play whatever was currently popular at La Fenice.[191] These concerts were already a staple of the Piazza's soundscape well before 1848; but

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[188] Luigi Zini, *Storia d'Italia dal 1850 al 1866 continuata da quella di Giuseppe La Farina* (Milan: M. Guigoni, 1866), 2,I:352-7. As recently as 2009, a group of local intellectuals in Mantua questioned the decision to perform the "Radetzky March" as part of a New Year's concert, given Radetzky's treatment of local citizens; *Gazzetta di Mantova*, January 2, 2009.

[189] On the similar paranoia of American plantation owners and its exploitation by African slaves see Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[190] Claudio Vellutini, "Cultural Engineering: Italian Opera in Vienna, 1816-1848" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2015), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

[191] Jules-François Lecomte, *Venise ou Coup-d'oeil littéraire artistique, historique, poétique et pittoresque, Sur les Monuments et les Curiosités de cette Cité* (Paris: Hippolyte Souverain, 1844), 40.

sometime after Radetzky's reconquest in 1849 the nature of these events transformed.

In 1851 Ruskin reported that, far from expressing appreciation at hearing native melodies, Venetian listeners glowered at the band, as if they wished to "stiletto every soldier" that played.[192] Ruskin's intuition was sound: the tensions that boiled over from the lack of work did end with soldiers being murdered on the streets.[193] At the end of the decade, Wagner likened Austrian officers and Venetians to oil and water, noting that although Venetians listening to the performances numbered in the thousands, they would never applaud for fear of committing cultural treason.[194] Two American eyewitnesses—the consul William Dean Howells and Charles Henry Jones—contradicted Wagner's account, both claiming instead that the Piazza was "void" or empty during these performances. According to these men, Venetians would conspicuously not set foot in the Piazza while the band played, a tradition that Howells traced back to 1849.[195]

As Americans, Howells and Jones might be expected to express sympathy with the Venetians, but as a German political exile Wagner was in Venice by the grace of Archduke Maximilian and grateful enough to the Habsburg administration that (as he tells it) he happily doffed his hat to his protector while the Venetians attempted to slip away.[196] The English Ruskin was just as likely to skewer Italians as Austrians, although he often went out of his way to see Radetzky or Franz Joseph in person—even if he famously described the two as "a great white baboon and a small brown monkey."[197] If we focus on Ruskin's interpretation in particular, what is most striking is the intensity and drama with which he imbues the unruly, defiant stance of Venetians listening to these performances. Although Ruskin paints his Venetians with perhaps too broad a brush, he assigns them an interiority absent from the other descriptions of Venetian sound. Watching someone listen invites absorption in their world, and

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[192] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 2:67.

[193] Effie Gray recounted to her mother in a letter written on December 15, 1849 a story about an unemployed Venetian who killed the "Commandant" at the Arsenal and wounded another. The account published in the *Gazzetta di Venezia* on December 16 names the man as Giuseppe Comastri, aged somewhere in his sixties and, according to the Austrians, a drunk. That supposed fact—Gray's version spoke instead of his and his family's desperate hunger—kept it from being considered a conspiracy. Lutyens, *Effie in Venice*, 79.

[194] Wagner, *My Life*, 2:696.

[195] Howells, *Venetian Life*, 15. Charles Henry Jones, *Recollections of Venice* (Reading, Penn.: B.F. Owen, 1862), 22-3.

[196] Wagner, *My Life*, 2:702-3.

[197] Bradley, *Ruskin's Letters from Venice*, 10.

the cafés lining Piazza afforded the perfect vantage from which to contemplate—and keep an eye on—the Venetians. The theatricality of the situation—the spectator, the representation of listening, the dramatic unawareness of one of the parties—was also reproducible, encouraging daily contact with Venetian interiority.[198]

Yet it would be a disservice to all involved to see these historical interactions only as tableaux, in part because they did involve sound, a sound that, as we recall, was wielded as metaphor for Italian excess. Most importantly for our purposes, the polarities played out in the Piazza suggest a different interpretation of the terms that governed the early reception of *Rigoletto*, with Italians now the voices of moderation and the tuba-playing, bass-thumping, Austrians suddenly the noisy and warlike group imposing on a dignified Venetian serenity. In positioning Venice as a site of sonic restraint, then, the opera critic Locatelli was perhaps not attempting to equalize the volume of Italian music to meet European ideals, but rather drawing attention to the clamor of the Austrians.

I want to take this argument one step further to suggest that it is in such points of contact between urban soundscapes and operatic soundworlds that we can listen in on a process through which opera came to sound *like* the city and can be heard to encode the experiences of the city. With all attention focused on the Venetians for the premiere of *Rigoletto*, I want to look closely at a few scenes in which listening grants access to new information or changes the listener's understanding of circumstances. Earlier in the nineteenth century characters in such scenes could trust their ears, since examples of on-stage listening were most often a reaction to diegetic sound effects: off-stage trumpet or drums calls announcing the arrival of royalty or the outcome of a trial, mandolins or harps marking diegetic songs, off-stage party music to stage a banquet scene, etc. In Act I of Vincenzo Bellini's *La straniera* (1829), for instance, the eponymous foreign woman (Alaide) is introduced through her off-stage lament while—unbeknownst to her—the smitten Arturo listens from within her hut. Through Arturo as eavesdropper, the spectator learns about Alaide's sad (if still vague) past. When she enters her hut, Alaide immediately discovers Arturo and the two interact.

In *Rigoletto*, however, such acts of eavesdropping are often frustrated and confused, where the characters in Arturo's position are not necessarily caught and those introduced through diegetic song like Alaide are not signaling their "true" character. In other words, in *Rigoletto* sound can be mendacious, and listening suspect. Part of the temporal specificity of *Rigoletto*, I argue, is that listening becomes part of the dramatic spectacle, where sound's possible deceit prompts an interior processing that can be seen. Of course I am not suggesting that either

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[198] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Verdi or Piave wrote *Rigoletto* as an act of protest, but that among the opera's famed "fusion" of multiple styles or registers is one that mirrors or comments on the contested scenes of listening and not-listening that played out on a daily basis in the city's piazzas.[199] To put this another way, I want to explore the possibility that historical listeners interpreted the scenes based on their experiences listening outside of the opera house.

Rigoletto opens with military-band excess, which is quickly associated with the tyrannical Duke of Mantua. In this elaborate variation on the conventional operatic scene of festivity, three ensembles play cheerful music that is meant to be heard as emanating from the party on stage and heard by the characters.[200] We are first introduced to the Duke as a band plays party music off-stage. His first aria, itself a pure party piece ("Questo o quella") is accompanied by the orchestra in the pit, its sonorities less marked as realistic, less insistently audible. Finally, as he turns to his attempted seduction of the Countess Ceprano, he adopts a new poetic and musical register and yet a third ensemble joins him, this time a string quartet that plays a minuet and *perigordino* (a stylized local dance) giving the Duke's lubricity a veneer of courtly elegance. This scene exploits the conventional associations of stage (or *banda*) music with celebration and superficial, even callous sociability; but it also recalls the description of Radetzky's parade with which I began, where the appearance of festivity does not necessarily translate into gaiety for all. The most important effect of this careful sequencing of *banda* music is to mimic the Duke's manipulation of those around him. In other words, the knitting together of the three ensembles—off-stage, pit orchestra, and on-stage—does not merely invoke the easy flow of band music between the opera house and the street; it also juxtaposes the different moods and identities of the Duke, underlining for the listener in both musical and spatial terms his ability to overpower the scene by imposing his own desires.[201]

The tyrannical Duke, in other words, can be listened to as Venetians supposedly listened to the Austrian military bands—with disdain for his political and personal excesses, signified by excessive sound. His status as a villain is

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[199] Piero Weiss, "Verdi and the Fusion of Genres," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 35, no. 1 (1982): 138-156, https://doi.org/10.2307/831289.
[200] Based on the presence of three ensembles Pierluigi Petrobelli suggests an affinity between this scene and the final scene of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*: Petrobelli, "Verdi and *Don Giovanni*: On the Opening Scene of *Rigoletto*," in *Music in the Theater: Essays on Verdi and Other Composers*, trans. Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 34-47.
[201] Luca Zoppelli, "'Stage Music' in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 2, no. 1 (1990): 29-39, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586700003098.

seemingly solidified with his continual shift of registers, a fluidity that—like his libertine predecessor, Don Giovanni—underlines his ability to lie. Indeed his exploits become more and more exaggerated as the opera unfolds, starting when the audience learns that he has been seducing Rigoletto's daughter, Gilda, under a false identity. He sneaks into her house and, overhearing her innocent declaration of love, interrupts the unknowing Gilda and makes an impossible declaration of his own.

Rigoletto's later insistence that Gilda *see* the Duke for who he really is—a fraud—seems to stem from the last scene of Act I, when the Duke's courtiers abduct Gilda, thinking she is Rigoletto's lover rather than his daughter. The scene is total sensorial confusion: it takes place in a dark street with no outlet (*via cieca*, literally a "blind" street) and the courtiers have blindfolded Rigoletto. The courtiers' joke that in his blind state Rigoletto does not know what is happening as he helps to kidnap his own daughter and laughs as she cries. Rigoletto's acousmatic anxiety—in which he is unable correctly to assign a source to the sound—makes him distrust that which he cannot also see. When the Duke rapes Gilda off-stage in Act II, Rigoletto tries to cover his search for his daughter with seemingly unaffected "tra la"s as he surveils the Duke's courtiers.[202]

These issues come together in the famous Act III quartet, in which the Duke's musical and political deafness is so evident that we can see how Venetians might have construed his music as out of time as well as out of place.[203] At the beginning of the third act the Duke sings about capricious women in an inn—his famous aria "La donna è mobile"—as he is watched from the shadows by Rigoletto and Gilda, who by this point in the plot is also the Duke's lover. Rigoletto has engineered this moment of unveiling in order to convince Gilda that he is right to order the assassination of the amoral Duke. The ensuing quartet was celebrated from these first performances for delineating and connecting four simultaneous affects by focusing on the emotions of characters: Gilda's gasping

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[202] On the historical and political context of Gilda's rape, see Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 121-9. Elizabeth Hudson argues for Gilda's sexual agency in "Gilda Seduced: A Tale Untold," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4, no. 3 (1992): 229-51, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586700003785.

[203] Carolyn Abbate demarcates this deafness as a trait of pre-Wagnerian opera, although the nuance with which Verdi depicts other characters suggests that this deafness also worked to highlight the Duke's epochal transgression. The music "argues" that the Duke's libertine status, as Rutherford noted, was politically out of time as well as out of place; Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 119-55.

"sighs and tears" are matched by Maddalena's knowing laughter, while the Duke's carefree lovemaking contrasts with Rigoletto's attempts to soothe Gilda. The confusion of the scene should collapse into chaos; but the division of the characters into distinct pairs, separated both spatially and affectively, creates space for more complexity.

Figure 3: Frontispiece for vocal score of *Rigoletto* (Milan: Ricordi, 1852), © British Library Board, Music Collections E.190.aa.

The scene is the seeming inversion of Gilda's abduction and Rigoletto's humiliation at the end of Act I and so the questions of who is overhearing and who is watching are of the utmost importance (see Figure 3). Rigoletto and Gilda are now the most aware, watching and listening from outside, but therefore also the least visible to those within the scene. The unknowing Duke turns his attention to the skeptical Maddalena, who listens to him with the knowledge that her brother will soon kill the appealing young man, and seduces her with the scene's most melodic material, "Bella figlia dell'amore." The moment draws all eyes and ears to the Duke: he is the only member of the quartet whose words are heard in

full without the interruption of the other voices. When the other voices enter again his classically Italianate line moves forward mechanically, unaffected by the increasingly dense and troubled reactions from the other characters and oblivious to the presence of the eavesdropping Gilda and Rigoletto or Maddalena's involvement in the plot to murder him.

By eschewing melody after the Duke's initial iteration, Verdi gave more room to the thickly woven vocal textures and harmonies; exactly the sort of instrumental improvement that the critic from *L'Italia musicale* would attribute to the cosmopolitan influence of Beethoven and Meyerbeer. The celebration of the quartet's cosmopolitan textures rather than the Duke's Italianate melody indicated a clear path forward—a path for Italian cultural development that adhered to the foreign expectations articulated by critics like Fétis. As with the varying stances of performative listening on the Piazza or in Teatro la Fenice, however, the quartet's interplay between simplicity and complexity moves each of the other characters to unique and conflicting actions. While the Duke learns nothing from the experience and goes to sleep, Rigoletto believes Gilda has granted him sincere permission to carry on with his murderous plan and hurries away, while Maddalena—who does not have the benefit of knowing the Duke in other contexts and is therefore charmed—will soon convince her brother that the Duke is too charming to kill off. In the end, it seems as if no one was listening.

"Hidden in Silence and Darkness"

After hearing Maddalena convince Sparafucile to kill the next person that knocked on their door rather than the Duke, an agonized Gilda makes her decision and knocks. Only with this sound do Maddalena and Sparafucile become aware that someone else is there, confirmed once they open the door for a young boy—Gilda dressed in men's clothing—his silhouette lit by a flash of lightning. Maddalena closes the door behind her and the rest of the scene is "hidden in silence and darkness." This is a strange direction given that in this moment there is neither silence nor darkness, but rather the fortissimo crashes of a violent storm accompanied by sharp flashes of lightning. A more convincing reading, perhaps, is that it signals Rigoletto's great fear of that which he cannot see or that which he cannot make seen.

This fear is realized when Rigoletto hears a voice—the Duke's off-stage voice—singing a line from "La donna è mobile" in the distance. Unsure of the sound's origin, as when he was blindfolded in Act I, he opens Sparafucile's sack

to find his daughter dying instead.[204] I want to argue that the Duke's fateful interruption is, in fact, the moment that ties operatic interpretation to material Venetian realities. This dramatic moment sets the song as a horrible parody of a barcarolle, which in turn helps to "place" the opera in Venice (despite its nominal setting in Mantua). In Italian opera the dramatic function of the gondolier's song mutated from melancholy local color to a tuneful obliviousness that heightened the somber drama of a scene. In Rossini's *Otello* (1816), the gondolier is an off-stage voice intoning lines from Dante, both signaling the opera's Venetian locale and commenting on the dramatic moment. In two later Venetian-set operas, Donizetti's *Marino Faliero* (1835) and Verdi's *I due Foscari* (1844), off-stage gondoliers joyfully sing of calm waters while the drama indicates anything but—a juxtaposition that highlighted interior drama. As with the mistranslating foreign tourists, in these later depictions we hear the gondolier as without agency or awareness, where the listener reinterprets and gives meaning to his words. By mid-century, then, the operatic gondolier helped project a certain ideal of Italian song, but his picturesque meandering at the same time reinforced foreign stereotypes of Italian indolence and of Venice as a city without industry.

When published abroad "La donna è mobile" was sometimes inappropriately labelled as a barcarolle, as when the number was published as part of a "Musical Bouquet" of operatic hits in London in 1854 (see Figure 4). The aria lacks the generic markers of a barcarolle—it is in 3/8, to begin with—but I believe the labelling of this English arrangement is more than a bid for commercial success. When the aria is heard the second time in the opera, its placement and function correspond to what we would expect of an operatic barcarolle. Erasing the piece's original dramatic function—unveiling the Duke's betrayal of his innocent lover—the arrangement takes advantage of the creative license afforded to the foreign tourist to put the singer in the role of pleasure-seeker and to position the listener as wooed woman. The text of this English translation explicitly describes a romantic moonlit boat ride, even going so far as to give directions to the anonymous "boatman" depicted in the illustration. Here we end up with a soundscape problem, then, where meaning is stripped from Italian sound in favor of protecting a privileged listener's picturesque experience. The Italians are in all ways, then, pushed to the background—quite literally in the accompanying image, which features a darkened gondolier ferrying a young

[204] Roger Parker argues that Gilda's moment of "melodic generation" after the discovery of her body in the sack is a celebration of the character rather than a submission to the limits of the plot; Parker, "Lina Kneels; Gilda Sings," in *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 149-67.

Figure 4: Frontispiece for "La donna è mobile," *Musical Bouquet* (London: Musical Bouquet Office, 1854), © British Library Board, Music Collections H.2345./553.

couple across the lagoon, complete with an inaccurate but still recognizably Venetian landscape. Venice and its people are reduced to a picturesque background against which more personal dramas can play out.

That conclusion, of course, does not help solve the problem of what Venetians were doing during the military band concerts each night—or of whether they were silent or cheering through clenched teeth during Radetzky's triumphal entrance to the city. As the British Consul Dawkins was well aware, however, to take the question so literally is to miss the point, in part because we cannot rely on sources to be literal. Like opera, urban sound and everyday sound sometimes point toward the production of mythologies, indicating how those mythologies were experienced in the material world. The mishearing of "La donna è mobile" as a Venetian barcarolle explicitly ties operatic soundworld to city soundscape, suggesting that operatic listenings too could be material, experienced in the "real" world. And although it may misrepresent or silence Venetians, such a reading is imprinted with the new international attention paid to the ways Venetians listened, which developed simultaneously in concert with and fiercely opposed to Habsburg expectations.

Chapter 4: Decomposing Rossini

Viral Verdi

In his introduction to Léon and Marie Escudier's *Rossini: Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, published in 1854, Joseph Méry called Italy the "Conservatory of God." His Italy most closely resembled a luxuriating goddess, who rested her head on the lagoons of Venice and her feet on Sicily as she bathed in not one, but two seas. Peddling what are now familiar stereotypes, Méry imagined the biography of the typical young Italian composer: as a child in Naples, for instance, first learning to listen within this virgin environment, to the "caresses of the Gulf of Baiae, the shivers of the orange trees in Pausilypon, the wind that blows across the sea, the waves that die on the shores." Méry then imagines his composer moving north to Rome, where he finds that civilization thrives only once Heaven bestows upon the land the "dew" of melody (chant). Despite the fact that Rossini himself did not follow this exact path, as one of the blessed few to receive this centuries-old divine communion, Méry rhapsodized, Rossini made the virgin land sing in *Guillaume Tell* and made Heaven sing in *Moïse et Pharaon*.[205] It was through this communion that Rossini could depict the "celestial garden" of Heaven in the *Stabat Mater*, evoking for Méry the Campo Santo in Pisa, built around sacred earth retrieved from the site of the crucifixion.[206]

A cynical reader will be quick to point out that the Escudier brothers had published Rossini's much-hyped *Stabat Mater* a little more than a decade earlier and that Méry had translated Rossini's *Semiramide* into French. All this rhetoric, in other words, might be nothing more than a tired attempt at commercial propaganda. Even worse, perhaps, is Méry's appeal to the hackneyed trope tying melody to perfumed Italian winds, suggesting little modern progress on the peninsula and replicating the rhetoric of countless touristic narrative of the Grand tour that figured Italy as a timeless Eden. The mechanized whirl of the industrialized nineteenth century, Méry seems to suggest, could not contaminate Rossini's pure cantilena.

In overheated style, both Méry and the Escudier brothers make a grand effort to tie Rossini not only to fertile and sacred ground—Naples and the Campo Santo—but also to a long, storied history of Italian melody, leading back to the chants of the Catholic Church. The rhetoric may have been a response to Rossini's diminished status within an operatic world where Verdi was all that

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[205] Joseph Méry, introduction to *Rossini: Sa Vie et ses oeuvres*, by Léon and Marie Escudier (Paris: E. Dentu, 1854), xv-xvi.
[206] Méry, *Rossini*, xix-xx.

mattered. By the time the Escudier brothers's biography of Rossini was published in 1854, *Rigoletto* had been conquering stages throughout Europe for three years. This level of success prompted questions about Rossini's relevance—questions not easily suppressed given the public speculation on the composer's declining mental and physical health.[207] As depicted by Méry, Rossini was a timeless composer, whose work transcended local bodily conditions, the older man having longed since joined that pantheon of artistic gods who breathed in a higher, immortal ether.

Throughout the 1850s—as Verdi's international stature grew to rival Rossini's—the two composers were increasingly defined against each other, each described and celebrated in terms of whatever the other was not. In December 1853, the *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze* published a short column titled, "Rossini! Sempre Rossini!" in which an anonymous writer, going by the percussive penname Tam-Tam, adopted the hardline stance of the Verdi camp, satirically urging readers to leave Rossini to rest in peace so that the arts could progress as much the "physical and mechanical" sciences did. To make the absurdity of this position clear, Tam-Tam compared several classical works to their less impressive descendants. One comparison in particular entices us into Florence's most famous square, the Piazza della Signoria. Tam-Tam asked: "[Did not] Bandelli next to Michel-Angiolo's *David* gift us with his Hercules the most beautiful sack of melons ever sculpted?" He refers to Baccio Bandelli's 1534 sculpture *Ercole e Caco*, (Figure 5) still found to this day next to (what is now a replica of) Michelangelo's *David* (Figure 6). The writer invoked Benvenuto Cellini's much-repeated criticism of Hercules' exaggerated physique—a "sack of melons"—likely drawing attention to the fact that next to the clean lines and relaxed pose of the *David*, Bandelli's Hercules seemed ugly and exaggerated. The subtext was that Verdi's muscularity might be new, but that it was definitely not better.

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[207] The two letters by Fétis mentioned in Chapter 3 (*L'Italia musicale*, September 10 and October 9, 1850) provoked editor Geremia Vitali to write a series of articles on Italian music from an Italian perspective in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*. His derogatory remarks on Rossini (see especially November 10 and 17, 1850) prompted furious articles in turn, including several by Giovanni Pacini. See *L'Italia musicale*, November 29 and December 28, 1850; January 4, 1851. The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* reported on Rossini's health on October 22, 1854. A report that Rossini no longer knew his own name caused much consternation across Italy, but was vehemently denied by the *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze*, which due to proximity to the composer acted as something of Rossini's mouthpiece at the time.

Figure 5: Baccio Bandinelli, *Hercules and Cacus*, 1534, white marble sculpture, Piazza della Signoria, Florence, accessed July 15, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hercule_et_Cacus_Bandinelli_Flor Flor_Signoria.jpg.

Whereas David taking on Goliath represented the ideals of Republican Florence, the Medici family had appropriated this brutal Hercules as symbol of their successful reclamation of power. Now framing the entrance to the seat of Florence's municipal government at the Palazzo Vecchio, these two statues commemorate two strands of Florentine history, two strands of government, two relationships between a people and their state. Antagonists on the surface, they regardless continue to coexist in the same space. In briefly turning from Venice to Florence I want to draw attention to ways in which Verdi—like Bandelli's Hercules—was understood to threaten the body politic by instigating unhealthy conflict, a conflict that threatened to go unchecked throughout Italy unless soothed by Rossini's palliative properties.

Figure 6: Michelangelo, *David*, 1504, marble sculpture, Piazza della Signoria, Florence, accessed July 15, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo_David_Philpot.jpg. Photo by John Brampton Philpot, ca. 1865-1873, before it was moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia.

In briefly turning from Venice to Florence I hope to draw attention to ways in which Verdi—like Bandelli's Hercules—was understood to threaten the body politic by instigating unhealthy conflict, a conflict that threatened to go unchecked throughout Italy unless soothed by Rossini's palliative properties. As I will argue, however, the experience of Rossini-as-palliative arose in part to explain a marked lack of response to his aging music. In gauging Rossini's actual and mythological vitality, I consider several debates in the musical press that depict Verdi and Rossini as not simply juxtaposed but—like Hercules and David in the piazza—as formed in relation to one another.

To begin I situate Rossini within contemporary discourses of musical sensation and judgment, and specifically with concerns that the older composer's music had lost its life-giving virility. In Chapter 2 I traced some of the ways that

operatic music allowed Venetians to experience collective emotions, but here I explore some of the ramifications of *not* feeling together. The central section of this chapter considers Rossini's uncertain commitment to the 1848 revolutions and his deteriorating health, factors that combined to spur his move from his longtime home in Bologna to Florence. When Rossini retreated from Italian public life, his lack of vitality became a focus in reviews of his operas, bringing him into direct conflict with Verdi. When revivals of Rossini's last Italian opera, *Semiramide*, failed in several Italian opera houses in the first half of the 1850s, it was often replaced by more popular Verdi operas. This precipitated a crisis for champions of Rossini, necessitating a new rhetorical stance—one that accounted for the possibility of not experiencing Rossini's works with the same intensity as in the past. The chapter culminates in an historical account of the Venetian premiere of *Guillaume Tell* in 1856, performed during a special summer season at Teatro La Fenice when medical tourists descended on the city in order to take the waters. This performance sought to return Rossini to Italy once more, this time bringing together Italian fertility with Habsburg pomp and circumstance.

In arguing for a dialectical interdependence between Verdi and Rossini in the 1850s, I draw on Roberto Esposito's notion of "immunity" in relation to "community." Esposito argues that the survival of any community depends on the achievement of herd immunity, in which destructive external invaders (such as diseases) are necessarily incorporated into the internal organic system of the community in order for it to develop a robust social body. In that sense, the notion of a healthy community is also *dependent on* the presence of disease—the two are relational.[208] Earlier nineteenth-century discourses had expounded on Rossini's own infectious qualities—the potential of his orchestration to agitate the nerves and provoke revolutionary actions in a volatile populace.[209] By the 1850s, however, the threat had been neutralized and Rossini's music had come to represent—like the Renaissance *David*—classic Italian art, a fact that implies not simply a shift in aesthetic taste, but also in a political ideology about what it means to be Italian. Civilization and not revolution: this is represented not by Hercules in the brutal act of overpowering, but by the still and elegant figure of David. That Bandelli's Hercules stills stands may be due to its symbolic function as a reminder of an ever-present threat of tyranny and violence.

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[208] See Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

[209] See Melina Esse, "Rossini's Noisy Bodies," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 21, no. 1 (2009): 27-64, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586709990024; and Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sounds of Modern Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

By the 1850s, however, the institutions of opera required a Hercules to match David, and that match was made in the form of Giuseppe Verdi. Rossini had been living in Florence since 1848, although his bad health (both mental and physical) kept him out of the spotlight. (He spent a lot of time traveling about the Tuscan countryside seeking various cures in the spa towns.) In 1855 he would move to Paris for the last time. Verdi, in contrast, was in his early 40s and at the height of his career after *Rigoletto* (1851), *La traviata* (1853), and *Il trovatore* (1853). This was more than an artistic binary played out in the realm of aesthetics: through the Verdi-Rossini debate conducted in the public arena, critics defined how they experienced the world around them. I argue that the "Verdi" known to musicological literature could only have come in existence alongside the composer, the dramaturgical style, and the public myth known as "Rossini," and that the conflicting listening and political stances suggested by these two names were enmeshed with Italian daily life. In contrast with the deliberate cultivation and arousal of emotion that shaped the programs for fundraising academies of 1848-9, however, after 1848 there were factions—in the press, in the opera house, and beyond—that believed that a cultural climate characterized by a comparative lack of sensation was the best path forward.

The muscularity of progress marked by extreme physical sensations stood in contrast to the "naturalness" of the Italian climate that had, since the days of Rousseau, married Italianate landscapes with Italianate melody. As Joseph Méry's highly charged descriptions made clear, Rossini's music had a particular claim on Italian "fertility," at least in the European imagination. During the 1850s this concept of bodily and musical richness became central to the image of a model Habsburg citizenry, one formed by the marriage of Italian melody and Teutonic harmony. According to this worldview, those who preferred Rossini's music elevated mechanical progress over musical progress, and it was these citizens and listeners who possessed the superior taste and judgment that could guide Italian society to a better future. As Rossini's operas failed to please, the more enthusiastic responses to Verdi's operas were necessarily caricatured as the grotesque, implicitly equated with the "sack of melons" physique of Bandelli's Hercules.

Dancing Mummies

A statue of the writer Giacomo Leopardi in his hometown of Recanati—erected in 1898—depicts a contemplative soul, his form stooped slightly as his gaze falls down and to the side, clearly lost in deep thought. The monument glosses over the fact of Leopardi's persistent ill-health—including an abnormal curvature in his spine—to underline a picturesque Romantic melancholy. With Leopardi's state in

view, we might quote and dwell on his famous lamentation about the degradation of his country. While Leopardi saw the grand ruins left behind by ancestors, he could not find her glory. This absence of connection to the Italian past, as Silvana Patriarca has argued, shamed Italians into revolution, pushing them to feel *anything* again in order to claim their rightful heritage.[210] The name given to the Italian nationalist movement, the *Risorgimento*, describes such an emotional and political "resurgence," which, on one level, Leopardi's poem of the same name celebrates, in the hope that a heart still beats.

There is, though, another aspect of Leopardi's vision to consider, one that railed against the benchmarks of nineteenth-century progress:

> Universale amore,
> Ferrate vie, moltiplici commerci,
> Vapor, tipi e *choléra* i più divisi
> Popoli e climi stringeranno insieme…[211]
>
> [Universal love / railroads, expanded commerce, steam / typography and cholera the most far-flung / peoples and climates will embrace together…]

A single word, "cholera," focuses this dystopian aspect, in which universal love also means sharing deadly illnesses. Leopardi presents a prescient critique of what we might now call globalization, yet one that tends toward the apocalyptic. In another poem, he writes with admiration of the wild broom that flourishes around Mount Vesuvius, whose fate is inevitably to fall victim to lava but, unlike humanity, never aspires to immortality.[212]

Both this sense of alienation from the past and the frustration with the progress narrative find a form in Leopardi's "Dialogo di Federico Ruysch e delle sue mummie" (1827). The work begins when Leopardi's mummies are resurrected in Ruysch's laboratory at the cosmically ordained hour of midnight, waking the living with their song about the experience of death. They make the

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[210] Silvana Patriarca, "A Patriotic Emotion: Shame and the Risorgimento," in *Revisiting the Risorgimento: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 134-51.

[211] Giacomo Leopardi, *Canti*, trans. Jonathan Galassi (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2010), 262-63.

[212] See Joseph Luzzi, "Leopardi Local and Global: Italian Society, European Modernity, and Poetry's 'Natural Duty'," *Modern Language Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2018): 173-202.

curious claim that in their "naked" state they are "not happy but secure…"[213] This "nakedness" refers not to their lack of clothing, but rather to the lack of feeling that came with death. This assertion confuses the embalmer and scientist Ruysch, who expects death to be accompanied by pain as the soul is ripped from the body. A mummy responds by asking him which nerve, which membrane, which muscle attaches soul and body? The difference between life and death, he says, is not unlike the haziness of falling asleep, leaving the dead and the living alike with no clear recollection of the exact moment when they passed from one state to the next—and with no ability to comprehend their former state. As the mere absence of sensations, death might even be called pleasant.

Just as the living are unconscious of the state of death, so too do mummies forget what it was like to be alive. Their macabre song was incomprehensible to Ruysch, even though he himself was in business with death. I invoke these mummies and their ex-relationship to life—or relationship to ex-life—as representative of the alarm that attended the reception of Rossini's music. Rather than embalmed works discussed in hushed tones within the hallowed ground of a museum, in their "living dead" state, the mummies were grotesque. They provided no knowledge of or link to the past. In this sense they are also somewhat like Leopardi's Italian ruins without their glory: evidence of the past but missing a soul.

When discussing musical works from the past, musicologists have often used metaphors of monuments and museums, yet these mummies suggest a different affective relationship with the past, one preoccupied with a kind of necropolitics. With Rossini's already slippery status within the public imagination as an invalid—similarly suspended between life and death—the loss of collective sensation for his music was seen as alarming for the health of the Italian body politic, a sign of spiritual deficit or medical deformation. Rather than read the various cannon shots in the war between Verdi and Rossini as a frivolous melée among dilettantes, then, I want to take seriously the question of what it meant if Italians could no longer "feel" Rossini in the wake of increasing Verdian popularity.

The first séances took place in Milan in 1853—the year of Tam-Tam's screed against Verdian musical progress—and evidence suggests that the emerging spiritual and medical interest in music's seeming ability to bypass the rational mind fermented heightened anxieties about Rossini's music. The "moving

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[213] Giacomo Leopardi, "Dialogo di Federico Ruysch e delle sue mummie" in *Operette morali* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2014), 150-5. For a recent translation of the chorus see *Canti*, trans. Galassi, 352-5. On this dialogue, see also Antonio Negri, *Flower of the Desert: Giacomo Leopardi's Poetic Ontology*, trans. Timothy S. Murphy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 129-30.

tables" of the séances were met with amusement, skepticism, and a very Catholic concern about participating in such supernatural exercises—although some observers were quick to determine that the supernatural movement was dependent on the very natural collective vibration of muscles.[214] Italy's *Cronaca del Magnetismo animale*, first published in 1853, described an experiment conducted by a Doctor Mazzoni in January 1852, in which several doctors observed a magnetized [*magnetizzato*] man as he responded to music. According to the report, he cycled through various affects, at one point falling to his knees with tears in his eyes. Once the music changed to a polka, his facial expression immediately changed to one of merriment and he spun around the room as he moved in an approximation of the dance.[215]

As these examples may suggest, there was also medical interest in the physical reaction to music, including the *lack* of reaction. Starting in 1852 Verdi's physician and friend Cesare Vigna wrote several articles for the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, addressing general concerns about the physiology of musical judgment in particular. Vigna is credited today with providing medical guidance for the representation of Violetta Valéry's consumption in *La traviata*. He later developed music therapies for his patients in the women's asylum on the island of San Clemente.[216] In his articles for the *Gazzetta musicale*, Vigna countered the claim that numerous repetitions in music dulled the senses; nor did he think that younger nerves were more "elastic" and therefore more impressionable than those of older listeners.[217] Even as he acknowledged the different faculties through

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[214] Massimo Biondi, "Spiritualism in Italy: The Opposition of the Catholic Church," in *The Spiritualist Movement: Speaking with the Dead in America and around the World*, ed. Christopher M. Moreman (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013), 37-54. Jane Sylvester discusses the "theatrics" of spiritualism in her dissertation, "Spectacles of Sensational Science: Locating the 'Real' Bodies of Verismo Opera, 1880-1926" (PhD diss., Eastman School of Music, 2021), 38-46, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

[215] Gius Terzaghi, ed., *Cronaca del Magnetismo animale* (Milan: Pirotta, 1853) 1:117-8.

[216] Vigna would go on to work in a psychiatric hospital on San Servolo in Venice and then run a women's asylum on San Clemente. On Vigna's relationship with Verdi, see Giannetto Bongiovanni, ed., *Dal carteggio inedito Verdi-Vigna; con 27 lettere inedite, 10 autografi, e 7 illustrazioni fuori testo* (Rome: Edizioni del "Giornale d'Italia," 1941). On his role as a "pioneer in neurology," see Michele A. Riva, Lorenzo Lorusso, and Vittorio A. Sironi, "Cesare Vigna (1819-1892)," *Journal of Neurology* 261 (2014): 449-450, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00415-013-6988-x.

[217] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, September 19, 1852.

which one could appraise a musical work, he argued that the sense of the beautiful was instinctual. Drawing a line from Rossini to Bellini to Verdi, Vigna declared that even with the changes in music styles over time, one never lost the ability properly judge a masterwork. Music affected humans universally, so the lack of response to music was in most cases a pathological anomaly. Only a physical issue of the ear, a nervous condition, or a "predisposition" of the soul could limit the response to music. This latter condition was of the utmost importance to the health of the proto-Italian state: in a later installment Vigna defined a general audience—*popolo*—as those "[who] have a soul susceptible to being modified by music and feel its effects readily and immediately."[218]

While Vigna was a friend of Verdi's, his medical opinion was that the inability to derive feelings from Rossini's music was a pathological condition. According to Vigna's medical research (including what we would now call the pseudo-medicine of magnetism), healthy bodies *should* react to music instinctively; his diagnosis for the widespread deadened reaction of Italian bodies to Rossini's music was spiritual deformity.

In fuga

The first signs of Rossinian estrangement were quite literal: in spring 1848 Rossini fled Bologna for Florence. Many Italians throughout the peninsula read his retreat as reactionary. Some expected nothing less from a celebrated musician: on July 22, 1848, *Il Vaglio*, a moderate Venetian paper, published a deeply cynical article about musicians' dubious attempts at political engagement. Inspired by a shift in tone towards musicians at the *Rivista di Firenze*—a topic that the editor of *Il Vaglio* thought occupied the rival paper "perhaps a bit too often"—*Il Vaglio* accused singers like the famous baritone Luigi Lablache or composers like Rossini and Donizetti of "looking to acquire money and honors" rather than expressing any true political sentiment. In recent memory, the editor wrote, only Niccolò Zingarelli and Luigi Marchesi deserved accolades for, at different times, refusing to perform for Napoleon. Even then, their resistance stemmed less from revolutionary fervor from devotion to "their old patrons," identified as *codini*, or nobles and royalists attached to the values of an earlier era.

After Donizetti's untimely death in April 1848, Rossini was left alone at the pinnacle of Italian musical celebrity. His pre-eminence was something of a liability, and the composer's ties—or lack thereof—to the Italian revolutions came under particular scrutiny. As *Il Vaglio* noted, Rossini had done very little to support "the cause," merely making some trifling in-kind contributions:

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[218] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, September 19, 1852.

> One read in the defunct paper *Pio IX* that the prince of modern music, ceding to the repeated requests of the Bolognese, finally gave to the city two terrible horses and a few hundred francs in the form of a promissory note more or less impossible to collect. And this prince of music also has the fortune of a prince, and like a prince was honored, or rather adored, in his city. He promised then to write a hymn in order to thank his people, but will he do it? […] The music to desire is that of guns, of cannons [fired] against the hated foreigner.

It reads like a gossipy blind item, but the circumstances surrounding Rossini's departure from Bologna in late April 1848 are murky at best.[219] Months earlier the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* republished numerous articles in defense of Rossini, many of which pointed to nefarious plots looking to undermine the composer's image and personal safety.[220] Rossini's perceived insult was apparently so great that the most famous local patriot Ugo Bassi was prevailed upon to write the composer a letter on behalf of the Bolognese people. In his response, published alongside the description of the event, Rossini expressed his affection for Bologna, but explained that concerns for his own health and that of his wife he precluded making the strenuous journey back to his adopted city. As to the question of the hymn, Rossini did offer to set to music words by Bassi, apparently

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[219] Richard Osborne downplays the whole affair, simply noting that after a "disturbance outside his house on 27 April, [Rossini] deposited his will with a notary" and quickly left Bologna; Osborne, *Rossini: His Life and Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 140-1. Francis Toye provides a few more details, blaming the events of April 27 on rabble-rousers who accosted Rossini verbally as he came out onto his balcony to acknowledge a Sicilian military band; Toye, *Rossini: A Study in Tragic-Comedy* (London: William Heinemann, 1934), 197. In 1871, Filippo Mordani recounted Rossini's more dramatic version of the story, supposedly told when the two knew each other in Florence in the years immediately following 1848: a group of hitmen (improbably) tried to press Rossini into military service as head of all the musicians in Italy. Rossini, fearing that his name was on some shadowy list of those to be killed, fled. In that scenario, the 500 scudi were paid out of panic rather than any patriotic fervor. Either way, it seems that Rossini's gestures were read as half-hearted by many in Bologna and elsewhere. See Filippo Mordani, *Della vita private di Giovacchino Rossini: memorie inedite* (Imola: Ignazio Galeati and Son, 1871), 10-11.

[220] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 10 May 1848.

refusing any payment.[221] One last exchange between Rossini and Bolognese officials was published on 28 June, in which officials urged Rossini once again to return to Bologna.

This rupture with public opinion during the height of revolutionary activities did not necessarily dampen enthusiasm for the composer or his works. But in the years after 1848 several of Rossini's operas failed at theaters across the peninsula, and Rossini's last Italian work (and the last opera he would premiere in Italy) *Semiramide* (1823) was especially ill-fated during this period. *Semiramide* holds a strange currency in Rossini biographies, not least because the premiere was, according to the contemporary mythology, such a fantastic flop that it led Rossini to abandon Italy for Paris. In their life-and-works study, the Escudier brothers described the underwhelmed Venetian reaction to the first performance in 1823 as akin to a drugged stupor ("Sacrilège!"), while Arthur Pougin only noted that it "left [them] absolutely cold."[222] While all accounts took great care to describe the inevitability of the opera's success—Antonio Zanolini wrote that Rossini was not at all bothered by the work's failure since he knew it would take time to understand.[223] The question of whether Rossini's departure for Paris was motivated by critical rejection or was simply next step in his career (one that many Italian composers had taken or would later take) had faded in significance since his return. Yet his biography remained a cautionary tale about the capriciousness of operatic audiences and the ultimate triumph of good taste.

In the early 1850s Italians once again questioned their relationship to Rossini through *Semiramide*, following a series of performances both intentionally and unintentionally juxtaposed with Verdi's *Rigoletto*.[224] These

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[221] On May 31, 1848 the *Gazetta musicale di Milano* published a report from the *Gazzetta di Bologna* stating that as a result of Bassi's battlefield injuries, Rossini would set instead the "elegant and appropriate verses" by "poet lawyer professor" Filippo Martinelli. Contrary to *Il Vaglio*'s accusations, Rossini did indeed write the hymn, but, as Richard Osborne points out, left the orchestration to a friend, Domenico Liverani. During this period he also wrote a "Hymn to Peace," which was intended as a gift to a friend and remained unpublished; Osborne, 140-1.

[222] Escudier and Escudier, *Rossini*, 164; and Arthur Pougin, *Rossini. Notes, Impressions, Souvenirs, Commentaires* (Paris: A. Claudin, 1871), 64.

[223] Antonio Zanolini, *Biografia di Gioachino Rossini* (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1875), 22-3, n3.

[224] In many cases these juxtapositions were due to performances of the two operas: in addition to the performances in Rome discussed below, *Rigoletto* replaced the failing *Semiramide* in Venice in early 1852, and then the two were performed back-to-back in Trieste in July 1853. Although in the latter case *Semiramide* received good reviews, so too did *Rigoletto*; see *L'Italia musicale*,

revivals allowed Italians to replay the narrative of embrace and estrangement, alienation and reconciliation, in the process reaffirming the tradition of Italian music and taste.

Rigoletto premiered at Venice's Teatro La Fenice nearly thirty years after *Semiramide*'s initial frigid reception there, but its reception could hardly have been more different. When La Fenice revived *Semiramide* for the start of a new opera season in December 1851—nearly nine months after *Rigoletto* closed out the previous season with a celebratory performance attended by the Emperor Franz Joseph—the critic of the *Gazzetta di Venezia* puzzled over his transformed experience of the work. The sublime melodies, he wrote, which once recalled many dear memories of youth and were impressed on the hearts of all, were now unrecognizable. The fire of imagination was spent.[225]

Two months earlier, the two works had been performed in close succession at Rome's Teatro Argentina. Although never explicit, reviews of the Roman performances centered on a divide between reactionaries and revolutionaries, or between more regular (and younger) audience members attuned to the style of recent works and a nostalgic audience who returned to the theater after many years to hear a once-favorite piece. "*Semiramide* has followed the deformed [censored] *Rigoletto*," the correspondent to *L'Italia musicale* wrote in one of the more positive reviews, noting that the audience—most of which seemed to have heard the Rossini work for the first time that evening—did not quite know how to respond to the "great and truly Italian melodies, to the torrent of masterful sounds" that "touched the heart, provoked terror, and inflamed the soul."[226] A correspondent to the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* took the opposite perspective, observing that while the premiere drew a crowd that no longer regularly attended the opera, this audience seemed also to have forgotten how to respond. They all decided to "celebrate the dear remembrances of the past in a most thorough fashion" by applauding—without much discernment—every piece from start to finish, drawing some consternation from the younger audience members, who were apparently less moved by the performance. The second evening's performance, for which the audience contained fewer of the "great maestro's old friends," was met with greater calm and "to tell the truth, better judgment."[227]

July 20, 1853. In other cases, the juxtapositions are accidental but still provocative, as in the January 4, 1852 edition of the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, which follows a report of *Semiramide*'s failure in Venice with a report of *Rigoletto*'s triumph in Verona.

[225] Republished in *L'Italia musicale*, December 31, 1851.

[226] *L'Italia musicale*, October 22, 1851.

[227] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, October 26, 1851.

As the number of failed productions increased, critics grew more insistent on fidelity to the score, of which, as Rossini's last Italian artifact, Italians were jealous keepers. Some problems were minor: in January 1854, for instance, Rosine Stoltz drew some consternation when she was accused of having "Meyerbeer-ized" [*Meyerbeerizzato*] Rossini at the Teatro Regio in Turin. For one disillusioned correspondent to *L'Italia musicale*, her peccadilloes included numerous expressive betrayals of the score, which he argued misrepresented the great maestro's vision—more specifically rendered it less Italian.[228] One abnormally long article in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* analyzed the overwhelming problems of La Scala's mounting of *Semiramide* in March of the same year, down to the amount of rehearsal time allowed. ("[The piano rehearsals] began at a quarter past twelve and before one were well and done.")[229] The writer expressed concern that the soprano Clara Novello could (with good reason) return to her native England with tales of Italians disinterested in listening to Rossini, thereby affirming the purported bad taste about which foreign newspapers constantly obsessed.

When *Semiramide* failed in Florence in early 1855, however, the search for blame focused on the Italian side of the Alps, on what were increasingly depicted as unreasonable—even insane—demands for progress under the Verdian standard. In an article published in the *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze* titled "A Venting of Bile," an anonymous writer distinguished between timeless art and ephemeral fashion in response to the fiasco at the Teatro della Pergola. He was incensed that untrained—"fashionable"—listeners were taking a single poor performance as evidence of anything at all. This writer worried that people could not tell the difference between a bad score and a bad performance. From there his language escalated: "The best advice a musical artist could give these quacks would be to spend two or three hours a day with their bare head under running water—a method often practiced with success on asylum inmates in order to refresh the mind."[230] The author characterized these fashionable listeners as mad partly because of their very inconstancy of these fashionable listeners was part of what made them mad; another factor was their unhealthy battle against Rossini conducted on behalf of "General Verdi," which exhausted and demoralized the combatants in both body and mind. The author deemed this battle, too, both unnecessary and futile: "As music [*Semiramide*] is always on the right track and it will stay there as long as they do not invent [a] music powered by steam engine."

While similarly complaining about how the beautiful was taking a backseat to fashion, a Florentine correspondent to *L'Italia musicale* instead

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[228] *L'Italia musicale*, January 11, 1854.
[229] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, March 19, 1854.
[230] *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze*, January 4, 1855.

compared the rhetoric to that of political parties, where anyone not immediately *for* Verdi was labeled as *against* him and therefore a reactionary to boot. "I will never forget for the rest of my life… that I lost the friendship and esteem of a very dear person simply because in a quarter hour of *Spleen* I had the vain desire to support [the position that] Rossini's *Mosè* was worth somewhat more than Verdi's *Nabucco*. – Who was wrong? …me!"[231] We have to assume based on this incredulity that when it came to art, there was no right or wrong, but that the *verdisti* were drawing lines in the sand by arguing these partisan positions, and therefore threatening the very concept of musical community. Relationships such as these were broken not by aesthetic discourse but by broken minds. This writer makes a somewhat offhand comment comparing the *verdisti*'s single-mindedness to an industrial monopoly, both of which threatened the fertility and development of the not-yet nation. From these writers' points of view, the *verdisti* were reconstituting not only their listening experiences but their entire environment (and therefore the environment of everyone else around them.) Their drive was so single-minded, in other words, as to be mindless—in an extreme configuration we could even call them zombie listeners: living (but diseased) bodies, dead minds. Or perhaps these were Leopardi's dancing mummies, unable to understand the state of living even as they celebrated the night.

It is therefore difficult to untangle Verdi from Rossini or Rossini from Verdi in the years following the 1848 revolutions. Writers from each camp saw the other as dancing mummies, thereby defining musical vitality in what seemed to be opposite terms. Such clashes divorce the act of listening from the body by equating support for Italy's reigning composer with a kind of infectious disease—and not just a disease of the body, but of the mind or (even more dire) of the soul, which required an extreme response in order to contain it. Once they released their excess bile the more reasonable correspondents were cured, but the *verdisti* were fed by this bitter excess. These imbalances of bilious humours depict both *verdisti* and the Rossinian *classicisti* in a grotesque form, their faces contorted with anger and madness. The question was how to once again restore balance, since the lost access to a universal *Semiramide* demanded a new pathway through which to finish the old narrative of Rossinian reconciliation.

Exaggerating in all directions the effects of music both splits and circulates different Italian identities, effectively creating an excess to be channeled into—or perhaps mapped onto—new institutions. Still somewhat untouched by these contemporary listenings, the *classicisti* knew better than to depend on a single hearing of a work. Suggestive evidence of the ways in which Rossini's music was institutionalized by the *classicisti* exists in the form of the renewed and occasionally heated focus on conservatory training in the first half of

[231] *L'Italia musicale*, February 10, 1855.

the 1850s.[232] The project to institutionalize Rossini played out within a field of discursive debate that concerned not merely the narrow question of Rossini's own ill-health and the preservation of his music, but the general question of the health of the entire social body, constituted in part by the relationship of that body to its very recent past.

The Specter of Imperial Citizenship

The one Rossini opera that truly struggled to come "home" was the all-too-French *Guillaume Tell* (1829). In the summer of 1856 an overwhelming number of *forestieri*—foreigners in the sense of anyone from outside of the city—descended upon Venice to take advantage of the bathing season. More than pure pleasure-seeking, these visitors were engaging in a kind of medical tourism, to which the city responded with a largely hospitable enthusiasm born of rising prices. As one Venetian correspondent wrote to *L'Italia musicale*, "The world is little by little turning into a giant hospital of invalids."[233]

With this invasion came glorious spectacle. Bathing occupied the days, whilst the evenings were free for entertainments, many of which made rather fantastic use of city spaces. On occasion the city would illuminate La Fenice for a masquerade or the piazza for games of tombola. This period also coincided with the annual Feast of the Redentore, named for the sixteenth-century church built to commemorate the end of a plague. The fireworks display the night before the Feast invited these foreigners to reenact an old Venetian tradition, taking boats decorated with flags and greenery to the Giudecca Canal in order to watch the colors explode against the open sky. The juxtaposition of medical treatment with extravagant diversion elicited some skepticism: "You see, with such amazing amusements," our correspondent wrote, "the bathing cures here are much sought after by foreigners; and [you'll see] how many hygienic miracles occur once it comes time to return home!"

In 1856 these bathers were treated to a novelty still unknown to the city: Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Although the piece had premiered in Paris twenty-seven years earlier, censorship had kept it from Venetian stages—with the notable

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[232] As only one example, see the exchanges between Lauro Rossi (the head of the Conservatory in Milan) and Geremia Vitali in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* in September 1851. In his article of September 21, Vitali notes that two years earlier Rossini's music had been excluded from conservatory training in Milan, suggesting that his enshrinement in conservatories in the 1850s was something of a conscious decision.

[233] *L'Italia musicale*, July 30, 1856.

exception of the excerpts heard during the benefit concert in November 1848 (see Chapter 2). The obvious difference was that in November 1848 Venice had been operating as an independent state during a seventeen-month break from Habsburg rule, prompted by an uprising; in 1856, the Austrians were again in power and celebrating the empire's liberal progress. The performance of *Tell* could be understood as the official acknowledgment of an overdue homecoming, in which, after the economic and political growth of the seven years since the Austrian reconquest, the greatest Italian composer's greatest work could finally be heard in one of the greatest Italian theaters.

In other words, through this shadow opera season Venice, Rossini, and the tourists all celebrated the convalescence of their imperial citizenship.[234] This was not a citizenship that simply reclaimed its pre-revolutionary guise, but rather one that married Habsburg modernity to an Italian genealogy. This made for something more akin to Frankenstein's monster: something "live" created from materials from the past. In contrast with *Semiramide*'s mummification, in other words, this Habsburg *Tell* attempts to underscore the *potential* for life within Rossini's work—although it is not quite a reanimation of its deadened Italianness, rather it plants the seeds of a new Habsburg life.

It could take some rhetorical twisting to hear *Guillaume Tell* as Italian since it had premiered in Paris, in French, using French musical forms. Luckily the Italians had spent a great deal of time since the premiere doing just that, so when the work premiered in Venice critics had a choice of historical narratives, all of which in various ways cast Rossini as overcoming the cosmopolitan demands of French *grand opéra*. "Rossini must have had much faith in his own genius when he accepted this indigestible *pasticcio*" of a libretto," grumbled the correspondent for the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*.[235] Indulging liberally in gastronomic metaphors, the writer expressed appreciation for the conventional French five-act structure—anachronistically attributed by this writer to Meyerbeer's Italian sojourn—since it allowed for numerous changes of scene, which meant Rossini, much like a great chef, could tease the palate as though guiding the audience through a long dinner. Contrast, the correspondent declared, was the only way one could sit through five hours of either dinner or opera. Of the bland characters, he wrote: "That Arnoldo, for example, is a *buona pasta* of a young man [a good guy], an Arcadian shepherd sighing for Matilde; he searches for her and finds her everywhere, in woods, meadows, lakeshores, forests, in the

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[234] Barbara Spackman, "The Scene of Convalescence," in *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 33-104.
[235] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, July 27, 1856.

middle of glaciers, and even in the piazza, but never in her room!"[236] The sensual French culinary appetite, in other words, could not satisfy a more voracious Italian appetite. In a review for the *Gazzetta Uffiziale di Venezia* republished in *L'Italia musicale* on July 23, the critic Tommaso Locatelli positioned the work as Rossini's defiant response to French critics, which united an intelligent French and German handling of the dramatic action with the fiery elegance of Italian music. With *Tell*, Locatelli enthused, Rossini surpassed all who came before him, producing a work that was not only the pinnacle of Italian opera, but of all opera.

These are perhaps impossible expectations for any one performance—the greatest of the greatest—but the piece was also 27 years old, comparatively ancient in terms of the regular operatic fare at Fenice. The only pieces performed in the 1850s that were older than *Tell* were other operas by Rossini, such as *Otello*, *Semiramide* or, more successfully, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Critics were not oblivious to the opera's venerable age, but they tended to approach the issue of age with caution and delicacy. Conceding that the musical forms might be found a touch antiquated, the Florentine paper *L'Armonia* nevertheless concluded: "Let's see which operas of today would not rot after such a period of time."[237] This defensive stance, repeated in numerous other reviews, makes the "actual reception" of the production difficult to judge. Most reviews praise the singers, orchestra, and designers and note which numbers were applauded. And while the mention of applause might seem to indicate that audiences enjoyed the opera, the reviews report that audience response in general leaned toward the apathetic, if not outright negative. One critic wrote that the concerted pieces were "more or less" applauded. Our original correspondent for *L'Italia musicale* judged that at the interval the audience temperature hovered just above zero, matching the tepid nature of the material. For this critic, the disaffection of the audience only intensified his desire to see *Tell* embraced in Venice: "Even if it carries a French label," he concluded, "this is a sublime and Italian production; let us venerate it and not give to the world the scandal of a mother who cruelly disowns and does not love her own child."[238] The production purportedly met all expectations, displaying the best of what modern Italian opera had to offer in terms of singers, orchestral playing, design, and construction. Venice itself was even putting on a show. Yet the opera failed to please.

Stymied by this journalist's reluctance to say anything overtly negative about *Tell*, we might look for hints in the public reception of Rossini's *Otello*, which ran at La Fenice for a single performance during the 1853-4 season before being replaced by Verdi's *Il trovatore*. Reporters complained of terrible execution

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[236] *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, July 27, 1856.
[237] *L'Armonia*, July 29, 1856.
[238] *L'Italia musicale*, July 30, 1856.

all round. “The progressives are besides themselves with joy,” wrote another correspondent to *L’Italia musicale*; “as with many other Rossini operas, they did not like nor will they ever like *Otello* because it is *dead music*, by which they mean without vivacity [*brio*] and without expression.”[239] In Venice the progressives may have been in the majority: when Rossini’s *Semiramide* failed at La Fenice in 1852, *Rigoletto* replaced it; *Trovatore* replaced *Otello* in early 1854, and in 1856 *Ernani* rounded out the summer season.

As for who gained the most from staging this 27-year-old work, the chief beneficiary must certainly have been the Austrians—not least because the Habsburg administration’s decision to allow the performance was a goodwill gesture after years of censorship had kept the piece from being performed anywhere in northern Italy. From the Habsburg point of view the busy summer of 1856 was a triumph of effective bureaucracy, a complete turnaround from the waning days of the revolutionary republic. That was the past, and the Empire preferred to look forward by emphasizing progress. Performing *Tell* was a symbolic gesture, one that conveyed the security of the regime, as the likelihood of Italian revolution waned in light of quantifiable gains. Here, then, is again the contradiction first made obvious by Franz Joseph’s attendance at multiple performances of *Rigoletto* in 1851: “progress” was a rallying call for both nationalist Verdians and Austrian imperialists, and the two groups could find some common ground in their pursuit of aesthetic novelty and modernization. But while the Verdian-progressive camp may have been resistant to *Tell* because of its outdated style and antiquated effects, the Austrians’ championship of the work had little to do with sound and more to do with material conditions.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the modernization of Venice was a Habsburg project. One city amongst many in the Habsburg Empire, Venice bewitched the Austrian imagination—so much so that it would be the last territory ceded to the Italians. Most of the expansive public works projects we associate with the nineteenth-century—Haussmannization in Paris or Franz Joseph’s plans for the Ringstraße in Vienna—were impossible in Venice for obvious (aquatic) reasons. However, the Austrians still made keen investments in Venetian public spaces, not least in La Fenice. When the theater burned down in 1836, the Austrians had it rebuilt. They built the infrastructure for gaslight throughout the city, which allowed the first gaslit performance in 1844. They also helped fund the redecoration of the entire theater in 1854, a dramatic reimaging that was meant in part to integrate the various spaces of the theater into more seamless unity.[240]

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[239] *L’Italia musicale*, February 4, 1854.

[240] See Anna Laura Bellina and Michele Girardi, *La Fenice, 1792-1996. Il teatro, la musica, il pubblico, l’impresa* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003); Elisabetta Fabbri, ed., *La Fenice: splendidezza di ornamenti e dorature* (Rome: De Luca, 2004); Mario

The 1854 redecoration was in many ways not a modernization, but backwards-looking. It sought a hybrid style that juxtaposed the classical lines of an Arcadian Italian with the opulence of Habsburg prosperity. The builders erected busts of ancient poets surrounded by putti and songbirds, medallions of the great Italian masters and their most famous works written for the theater, and an abundance of flowers, all decorated in gold and silver. Considered in the context of urbanization, this redecoration was anachronistic, even anti-modern. Considered as a theater, however, the question may be how the redecoration succeeded as a theatrical aesthetic, in helping to creating a unified experience. Locatelli compared the experience of listening to *Tell* at this venue to drowning in a sea of musical riches: "[O]ne wants to allow time to find one's bearings again in order to not lose sight of the shore; to be at enough ease to gather and reorder the ideas, which were overwhelmed by the new experience."[241] The point, perhaps, is that such complete immersion in the audiovisual experience, extending from the décor of the theater through the stage spectacle and the orchestral richness of the score, may have felt somewhat outdated to listeners by 1856, even if not unpleasant. Emotions were still plentiful in opera, but provoked with more clarity, and with more aural focus. The decorations at La Fenice were performing an older, Rossinian aesthetic, overwhelming the eye as much as the music overwhelmed the ear.

What is more, the excess of redecoration at La Fenice both performed and displayed wealth—material wealth as well as the fertility of Italian art. Given the larger political context—not simply that in Venice, but in Europe more broadly—tying the two together was somewhat problematic, since it brought opera together with a specific kind of reactionary politics. In Italy, the concern with material wealth was reactionary—indeed anti-revolutionary—in the most obvious sense. Back in August 1852, Karl Marx had relayed a report on the Italian bourgeoisie to Friedrich Engels, a report first given by an undercover agent engaged in a reconnaissance mission on revolutionary sentiments in Italy at the behest of Giuseppe Mazzini. The agent posed as a painter and companion to a singer, which gave him access to the upper classes. His report concluded, "Italy has grown wholly materialist. The sole topics of conversation there are commerce, business, silks, oils, and other wretchedly mundane things."[242]

Nani-Mocenigo, *Il teatro la Fenice, note storiche e artistiche* (Venice: Industrie poligrafiche Venete, 1926).

[241] *L'Italia musicale*, July 23, 1856.

[242] *Karl Marx-Frederick Engels: Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), 39:171. The report was originally given in French: "L'Italie s'est tout à fait matérialisée. On n'y parle que commerce, affaires, soies, huiles et autres misères mondaines."

Although fully three years had passed since the Venetian surrender to Radetzky, the Habsburg fear of revolution had not fully died out. Marx's read of the situation between Italians and Austrians makes a great deal of sense: even when the threat of Italian revolution was negligible, the Habsburg administration never quite mastered the art of the measured response. The over-the-top visual celebration of Italian success at La Fenice was overcompensating on all sides in order to correspond to a very particular model of imperial citizenship. And in this sense La Fenice's 1856 *Guillaume Tell* was more a performance of a civilizing process than a sign of progress. In his discussion of *Tell* Locatelli declared that while *forestieri* might could malign or be envious of the Italian use of melody, they could never steal it away.[243] Yet this *Tell* is, in a way, an example exactly of that.

The political leanings—reactionary as well as Habsburg—that drove the continuing investment in Rossini's music were institutionalized in Italian conservatories as well as in the "richness" of theater interiors. In the lead-up to Italian unification, Rossini inspired a not-insignificant percentage of the Italian musical collective, as a rival to Verdi's throne and in his 1850s form a challenger of long-held beliefs about the emotionality of both Italians and Italian opera. This conclusion has ramifications for the history of Verdi reception, which now seems incomplete. Both the "Rossini" and "Verdi" strands of history—like David and Hercules—coexisted in the opera house as well as other public spaces in Italian cities, and much is lost if we study one without the other. Considering the two figures and their style as counterparts reveals much about how music was construed as a fight for the soul and about how it participated in the emerging necropolitics of the Italian state, dividing the living from the dead.

[243] *L'Italia musicale*, July 23, 1856.