



MUSIC  
AND  
NATION

ESSAYS  
ON THE TIME OF  
GERMAN AND ITALIAN  
UNIFICATIONS

Sergio Durante

Department of Music  
Harvard University  
2019



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**COVER ART:**

Friedrich Overbeck, *Italia und Germania* (Italy and Germany), finished in 1828. Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/Friedrich\\_Overbeck\\_008.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/Friedrich_Overbeck_008.jpg)

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## *Preface*

**S**ergio Durante (Ph. D. Harvard University 1993) is Professor of Musicology at the Università degli Studi di Padova. In the fall of 2011 he served as Lauro De Bosis Visiting Professor at Harvard, and as part of his contribution to the intellectual life of the University he presented a series of Lauro De Bosis Lectures in the History of Italian Civilization.

Professor Durante here presents a revised and expanded version of these lectures, the result of careful consideration over a long period. The Department of Music is proud to make these essays available to a wider public.

Thomas Forrest Kelly  
Morton B. Knafel Professor of Music





## *I. Between Germany and Italy: Tropes of Nationality and Music*

A famous painting by Johann Friedrich Overbeck, *Italia und Germania*, portrays the female allegories of the two nations. Painted in 1828 during his residence in Rome, it offers an idealized vision of a symmetrical pair, as if representing two alternative expressions of one and the same principle—the character of a nation. The definition of each woman/nation lies in their evident, if subtle, differentiation.

In the realm of music there is, through different historical periods, a long history of mutual interest, whether positive or negative, between the Italian and German musical cultures. At times, in the words of their opinion leaders, the music of each of the two nations seems to have fascinated the other, while at other times it aroused conflicted feelings and negative aesthetic judgments. Rarely, if ever, was indifference the prevailing attitude.

Clearly the representation of “the Italian” vs. “the German” in music owes a lot to cultural or political circumstances of broader significance; or possibly, at least in part, to the personal and variously motivated idiosyncrasies of individual commentators who were, in turn, rarely independent from their sociocultural backgrounds.

Pietro Metastasio’s dislike for Gluck’s “barbaric” music was based on the theoretical tenet whereby the instrumental element needed to be restrained in order not to obscure the vocal melody, and thus the verbal/poetic text.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the enthusiasm expressed by an aging Gaetano Latilla for Mozart’s fugue in the String Quartet KV 387 was the consequence of his competent appreciation for the complexity and modernity of its musical language.<sup>2</sup>

On the German side and in more recent times, the aesthetic condemnation of the Italian musical theatre, and of Verdi in particular, by Otto Nicolai had a lot to do with its productive mechanism, which involved writing music quickly and massively rather than for art only.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Mann, however, found in the compelling energy of Verdi’s musical theater something of the German austerity.<sup>4</sup> The incongruities or contradictions

between such viewpoints might invite one to ignore them as insignificant fancy. Nonetheless, they are markers of cultural divides or identifications and as such relevant within a discourse on nation and music.

Nation and music: what do these terms share and why should we investigate their relationship? In the common understanding, both the experience of music and the sense of national belonging stir emotions. The value of music itself is often weighed in relation to its capacity to prompt or evoke emotions, while national ideals are a powerful tool in promoting social aggregation and political consensus. We need not recall the ties between music and politics in Western philosophical literature since Plato; they are ever before us, as we observe that all music, whether subliminally or otherwise, implies or supports a political vision or project.

Yet while music enjoys, within society, a positive reputation as essentially good (which is not necessarily always the case), the idea of nation is subject to a more balanced, if not suspicious, scrutiny. Even politically unaware citizens understand that the idea of nation may turn intoxicating and that, time and again, horrible deeds have been perpetrated in its name. While the world of music tends to exhibit a blend of pacifistic and socially oriented claims, other, more aggressive manifestations are just as effective (or even more so), as the recent case of Croatian pop singer/patriot Marko Perković, a.k.a. “Thompson,” demonstrates. This artist, not unlike art composers of previous generations, has become a symbol of the struggle for national independence, with all the ambiguities that attend the potentially explosive mix of aspirations, self-determination, localism, national pride, and religion.

Of course, there are different ways of understanding the idea of nationhood and translating it into political projects. According to Maurizio Viroli, who has investigated in depth the history and theoretical sources of notions such as fatherland and nation (and its legitimate child, nationalism),<sup>5</sup> there have been in Western history essentially two attitudes that correspond to individual and collective models of behavior. One is based on the affection for places, cultural structures (mainly language and religion, but also other less crucial ones such as food, clothing, etc.), and institutions; the other, nourished by one community’s feeling of superiority over others, is destined to result in open or concealed forms of oppression, or even aggression.

These phenomena, which affect social groups in general, have consequences in the realm of music as well. Carl Dahlhaus, who has examined the problem of conceiving music history in a national—as opposed to supranational—perspective, has pointed to the insurmountable methodological impasses involved, despite the fact that most music-history narrations are influenced by deeply rooted cultural structures. In fact, music history as a genre was born and flourished in Europe at the time of maximum circulation and social acceptance of the modern concept of nation-state, welcomed as a possible solution to political, economic, and social turmoil; a time when the building of nation-states, yet to be achieved in many European lands, could be envisioned as a wise project. A sweet dream, in retrospect, yet one that—precisely because it was yet unachieved—raised great expectations and inflamed passions. A thin line separates this fundamentally dynamic, vital, if largely utopian, attitude from its evil twin: nationalism in its authoritarian and intolerant form. It is a line that characterizes different historical periods and constantly reemerges in different guises and influences otherwise enlightened personalities. Even Giuseppe Mazzini, the republican champion of national self-determination, freedom, democracy, and emancipation of the lower classes, a figure of unwavering moral integrity and intellectual stature, was sometimes inclined to crypto-nationalistic chauvinism. Significantly, he revealed himself as such while speaking of music rather than politics.<sup>6</sup>

Richard Taruskin's essay on "Nationalism" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* describes, in a corrosive synthesis, the manipulations and plain falsifications that affected the relationship between the idea of nation and musical production in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It is no exaggeration to say that the main relevance of the national element within the history of modern music descends from its social reception rather than any other factor in play, be it its poetics, the individual composers' political views, or their creative choices in terms of content, form, and style. While not irrelevant, these elements were less crucial to the assessment of the national significance of a piece of music. A composer's personal participation in the ideals that society attributes to his music is possible, but not necessary. No matter how complicated and controversial its reception process, the attribution of national meaning to an aesthetic object often leads to a simplified interpretation of that object, as if national

thinking (national passion?) had the power to minimize, if not annihilate, any articulate intellectual process.<sup>7</sup>

It may then appear that a main task of music historians is to unmask the nationalistic or crypto-nationalistic ideologies that lie behind so many pseudo-aesthetic ideas. Or, conversely, to unmask the pretension of aesthetics to theoretical purity and ideological innocence.

In recent times, the themes of identity and of national belonging (a special case of identity) have enjoyed special attention within musical studies. These themes appear to be as fashionable today as the investigation of the creative process was in the 1980s and 1990s. As an all-but-neutral observer, I suspect that the fortune of identitarian themes descends from the fortune of ethnomusicology (or music anthropology), which, in recent decades, has placed its own urgencies at the forefront of the scholarly agenda. The reasons for this are various, and include globalization on a higher level and academic policies on a lower level. Music anthropology is often concerned with case studies that appeal to the public morals such as repertoires and communities in danger of survival, or in any case those not representing a threat to other, more powerful ones. The underlying political beliefs are mainly (and rightly) preservationist and pluralistic. But there was a time at the beginning of the modern phenomenon described by Eric Hobsbawm as “nationalism” (i.e. since 1780), when the investigation of popular repertoires, whether literary or musical, had a completely different purpose, namely to help build a national consciousness through the appropriation of popular culture—supposedly universal in character—by the rising bourgeois élites. Today’s researchers’ preeminent concern for non-invasive methodologies and equal consideration of any musical culture raises the suspicion that in reality this Western scholarly approach is itself a more refined form of appropriation (candid only as clean bombs can be).

It is a sign of the times that the 19th Congress of the International Musicological Society in Rome (2012) chose a theme, *Musics, Cultures, Identities*, that sounds like a paean to the achievements of music anthropology. Other reasons for the fortune of identitarian studies may be found in the present condition of technologically developed societies, which calls for a quick redefinition of groups, tribes, communities and, indeed, nations.

We should not overlook that today’s nationalisms represent a very different phenomenon—according to Hobsbawm’s persuasive argu-

ments—from the nationalisms of the 19th century. Opposite the relatively strong (yet not unquestioned) identity of the multicultural North American nation (i.e. the United States), the older countries of the European Union are witnessing the construction (again, not unquestioned) of a European nationhood, while at the same time localisms of various kinds invoke different identities, producing tensions that can, in the worst cases, lead to open warfare and, in milder ones, to the idle invention of novel, historically improbable nations (as in the case of the Padania of the Northern Italian separatists). Behind the scenes, economic and political interests pull the strings, torn between the opposite poles of political wisdom and cynical interest. Little wonder then that the themes of identity and nation surface in political discourse as often as in the smaller world of musical studies.

But while it is clear that at the level of general cultural processes the relationship between music and nation is a tight one, how should we investigate it at the more specific level of the musical language? In other words, why is it that a certain music represents and even instigates a certain national ethos? Does a certain style of music (or rather a genre?) represent specific political sympathies or is music a generic arouser of excitement that can be applied equally to pacifist protests and to bellicose vindications like the hard-rock language of Marko Perković of the band “Thompson”? And, coming to our present subject, what characterized the musical representation of political sympathies in Italy vis à vis Germany in the 19th century? In other words, how does the language of music represent not only a style of its own but also a political passion?

This is not, or not only, a subject for mass psychologists, but for music historians as well if we accept, as Sergio Moravia does, the essentially historical character of passions and the possibility of investigating them not generically as felt (according to an essentialist perspective), but rather as narrated in the moment when they are expressed in language. This prompts us to articulate a discourse on music and nation on the basis of historical evidence; in this perspective, music represents a type of evidence as fundamental and central as music was within 19th-century culture.<sup>8</sup> If passions assume an identity in the moment in which they are narrated, then musical narrations are the most eloquent sources, albeit elusive.<sup>9</sup>

Ascertaining the degree to which passions are socially shared or may be assumed to represent socially diffuse models is a viable, if narrow,

pathway towards understanding the emotional and sociocultural impact of individual pieces, or of larger aesthetic objects such as whole theatrical or symphonic works. Used as a method this makes it possible to isolate discourse levels that are relevant to our case such as plot structure, historical setting, constellation of characters, symbolic references, forms, styles, and so forth.

This approach might also be useful for a comparative investigation (i.e. Italy vs. Germany) of the tools through which passions are narrated: verbal, musical, dramatic, visual, and combinations thereof. The case of two European nations that, more or less in the same time period, achieved a longed-for political goal—unification—is rare if not unique, and gives us an opportunity to compare not just the political processes in play but their manifestation in the realm of music.

The political background is a matter for general historians, yet it is an inescapable passage for us as well on account of its implications. How did people perceive their national passion in relation to the military and political events of the time? How was that translated into music, if at all? It is relatively easy to assume that, between 1830 and 1860, the Italian citizenry's prevalent sentiment towards the Austrian Empire was one of resentment, if not hatred. And yet, recent research demonstrates that public opinion was both differently characterized and changed rapidly over time in the various peninsular states. A mature historiography should take account of comparative studies of public opinion in the German-speaking parts of the Austrian Empire (from 1867, Austro-Hungarian) and in Italy. Equally complex was the development and fortune of the concept of Germanness in different parts of the German-speaking world. While in the realm of 19th-century music (including musical theater) differences are generally minimized, as if German music were one relatively homogeneous entity,<sup>10</sup> the political scene appears more problematic because of the enduring debate between the projects of Klein- and Groß-Deutschland (the latter posing insuperable problems because of the clash between the multinational nature of the Austrian Empire and the national nature of the Prussian-led political unification project). Consider, for example, the event which represented the climax of the fight for supremacy within the German-speaking world: the Austro-Prussian War—known to Italians as the Third Italian War of Independence—which took place in the spring and summer of 1866, barely

five years after the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy. This war was the result of the combined *Realpolitik* of Otto von Bismarck and of the new Italian kingdom's project to annex all Italian-speaking territories belonging to the Austrian Empire. While in and of itself the war had marginal significance for the music world, it nevertheless opposed two states that had both been home to an unprecedented blooming of German music and musical culture. Is it possible that the long-lasting political conflict for supremacy had no consequences in the realm of music? Or should we rather reverse the question, arguing that music subliminally fulfilled the goal that was politically impracticable: the unity of the German nation? If it is true, as Dahlhaus repeatedly states, that in the German-speaking world confessional differences prevailed over ethnolinguistic ones until the end of the 18th century, then it becomes clear why music (and its social rites) assumed certain characters of religion as a sort of surrogate for it: social primacy, transcendental sacredness, and ineffable immortality. In this light, *Parsifal* as a *Bühnenweihfestspiel* (1882) may be seen not so much, as Nietzsche submitted, as Wagner's individual surrendering to Christianity, but rather as the ideal completion of a collective long-lasting cultural process having (also) a national significance in its broadest sense. More overt statements of national passion, from Mendelssohn's *Reformation* symphony (1830) to Schumann's *Rheinische* (1850) to Brahms' *Triumphlied* (1871-72) are, in a sense, less significant, as they are less subliminally implicated in processes of identification.

Yet, important as it is, the struggle for unity is only one among various possible readings of historical reality. We might in fact nurture the doubt that the all-encompassing notions of *Deutschtum* or *italianità* in music underestimate differences of infranational significance that have succumbed to nationally oriented historiography. To what extent do the ideologies prevalent in the German- and Italian-speaking worlds actually find correspondence in their music? How deeply do preconceptions of a nationalist nature still affect our vision of music history? Such a complex and intertwined picture should be examined in connection with certain more elusive kinds of evidence deriving from the observation (to the extent that it is possible) of social and cultural structures which, while not necessarily related to music, prove to be relevant.

A traditional approach mostly considers the great personalities.

While it is legitimate and indeed necessary to relate the ideals of Germanness to the work of a Richard Wagner, for instance, the case of a history of music (or of musical theater) held together by the principle of Germanness or of Italianness is more dubious.<sup>11</sup>

The language of the lyrics is the most obvious identifying trait, though not necessarily a crucial one, as shown by the intriguing case of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and its Germanization. In Italy, the impact of political events on Verdi's production and personal political commitment is still a matter of controversy; on the other hand, it seems legitimate to conceive of a history of opera as a history of Italian opera—two distinct problems for sure, yet both certainly affected by national thinking. In fact, the meaning of "Italian" in reference to opera changes significantly during the four centuries of its history. It is simply irrelevant in the 17th century; it refers to the language of the librettos in the cosmopolitan 18th century when it was used by composers of any ethnocultural origin; it refers mainly to the musical-stylistic level in the 19th and early 20th century (now used only by Italian composers); and turns into a generic cultural marker in the recent decades of globalization. From this perspective the *Storia dell'opera italiana*, published in the 1980s and translated into many languages on account of its innovative conception, harbors a relic of patriotism: its goal is to reshape the history of the genre as an alternative to the teleological vision promoted by Wagner and prevalent until the 1970s in both handbooks and general musical culture.

While modern scholarship has come to realize the flaws and mystifications of the national frame of thought, there is little doubt that individual and collective identifications will always play an important role in cultural processes and that music has been as much affected by them as any other artistic artifact. Like it or not, there are still now and there always will be reasons for group identities. In the first half of the 19th century, they took the form of the national ideals espoused by authoritarian nationalisms. More recently, they have experienced an unexpected resurgence through the adjustments to the world map following the collapse of the Communist states. The present reality compels us, even more urgently than the academic exercise of historiography, to distinguish between a positive process of group identification (an apparently inescapable need of social bodies) and a pathological one; except that it is hard, if not outright impossible,



to pinpoint the transition from one to the other. We might argue that the formation of a collective identity has a positive social effect only so long as it remains unfulfilled. Verdi's sad disillusionment in the aftermath of the Italian unification is a case in point. The achievement of the nation-state becomes synonymous with the birth of arrogance, hubris, and the oppression of others, which are so characteristic of the colonial policies of both unified Italy and Germany. But even the ascending phase of group identification, or nation-building, holds the seeds of future violence, as exemplified by the anti-Semitism of extreme nationalists (e.g. Achim von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, and Heinrich von Kleist)<sup>12</sup> or the Italians' blind anti-Austrian fanaticism, displayed not only in numerous bloodthirsty war hymns, but also in some of the works of Nobel prize-winner for literature Giosuè Carducci's.<sup>13</sup>

A philanthropist such as Mazzini envisioned the solution of Europe's political problems in a grand project of peaceful coexistence between independent nation-states; his underlying ideal of social justice provided the necessary balance between two principles:

[...] two terms [...] are found in opposition in every great question, [...] the progressive development of which throughout the course of ages, upon two gradually convergent lines, is the subject matter of all history. \*Man and mankind—individual thought and social thought. Between these two principles moves today, as always did, the science and theory of intellect, and art, which is a manifestation of it.\*

Of the two schools to which these two terms have given rise, the one makes the individual man its center and circles perpetually around that; the other cancels the individual by absorbing him in a complex conception of universal unity.<sup>14</sup>

Transferred to the field of music, the two principles were identified with the generative elements of melody and harmony, representing individual and social thought, respectively.

It is difficult to assess the value of these notions/ideas, which appear today as little more than old-fashioned idealistic fancy. Through his observation of the music, however, the politician-philosopher Mazzini might

have grasped a deep understanding of music's relationship with the Italian and German souls.<sup>15</sup> A serious limit of his theorization is the reduction of European reality to a dual scheme, which leads to a denial of autonomy to the French musical tradition, not to mention several other major expressions of the European musical civilization. Philosophical thought takes the lead over historiography and the grand theory is inevitably entangled with inconsistencies which are ignored rather than resolved by Mazzini. In 1835, when his text was completed, he believed he was living in a time of "transition," but while a new beginning appeared then imminent to him, the epilogue of his *Filosofia*, newly written for the 1867 English edition, still invoked a "transition" to a better future (for music and for society at large); he, however, no longer hoped to see the beginning of the new era. Meanwhile, his champion Gaetano Donizetti, praised in 1835, had been replaced in 1867 by the German italoophile Giacomo Meyerbeer. Indeed, an Istrian-Italian origin was invented by Mazzini for the Berlin-born composer, perhaps in good faith, thus supporting the idea of a quasi-genetic melding between Northern and Southern Europe, as if the stylistic synthesis achieved by Meyerbeer through his Italian apprenticeship and his Parisian experience had to be supplemented by a more deeply rooted identitarian mark: an obscure call of the blood was not, after all, alien to the egalitarian thinker.

Despite these contradictions, Mazzini's merit was to fly higher than the barren opposition of the two terms, melody and harmony, that were long sedimented in the European tradition, and foresee a future European music based on their synthesis, parallel to the balance necessary between individual and social demands. From this point of view, there are more than a few resonances between Mazzini's and Wagner's theoretical work. While no evidence suggests direct contact between the two, it is possible that Wagner came to know Mazzini's ideas during his first period in Paris,<sup>16</sup> or later through the republican Liszt, and that he was to some degree influenced by them. While the lack of evidence leaves us puzzled about the evident proximity of many of Wagner's and Mazzini's ideas, the latter's repeatedly stated dislike for Verdi's theater bears witness not only to a facet of personal taste but also to ideological coherence. In his longed-for synthesis between German and Italian, North and South, the politician sympathized with the most cosmopolitan of European composers, the Jewish Meyerbeer.

While Mazzini's schematicism may now seem naïve, his metaphors catch significant aspects of the mentality and anthropological structures of the two nations, and we may still read them today with a disenchanted interest:<sup>17</sup>

*Melody* and *Harmony* are [Music's] two primary generating elements. The first represents the individual idea; the second the social idea; and in the perfect union of these two fundamental terms of all Music, and the consecration of this union to a sublime intent, a holy mission, lies the true secret of the art, and the conception of that *European* school of Music which—consciously or unconsciously—we all invoke.

These two elements have given rise to two musical schools—I might say two distinct zones of Music—north and south—German and Italian. Of any other Music, self-existent and independent of the vital Conception ruling these two schools, I can find no trace, nor do I believe that any one, however deluded by national vanity, will assert the existence of such.

Italian music is in the highest degree *melodious*. It assumed that character in the days when Palestrina translated Christianity into Music, and it has ever since retained it. It is animated by and breathes the soul of the middle ages. *Individuality*, the element and the theme of the middle ages, which has found fuller and more vigorous expression in Italy than elsewhere, has almost always inspired, and still dominates, our Music. The *Ego* there is king; it reigns absolute and alone. Yielding to every dictate or caprice of an undisputed will, it follows the impulse of every desire. No rational or enduring law, no progressive unity of life, thoughtfully directed towards an aim, is there. There is in it strong feeling, rapidly and violently expressed. Italian Music surrounds itself with the objects and impulses of external life, revives their every impression, and gives them back to us beautified and idealised. Lyrical almost to delirium, passionate to intoxication, volcanic as the land of its birth, and brilliant as her sun;—it cares little in its rapid modulations for method or mode of

transition; it bounds from object to object, from affection to affection, from thought to thought; from the most ecstatic joy to the most hopeless grief; from laughter to tears, from love to rage, from heaven to hell; ever powerful, emotional, and concentrated. Endowed with an intensity of life double than other lives, its pulse is the pulse of fever. Its inspiration is the inspiration of the tripod; eminently artistic, not religious. Yet at times it utters a prayer, and when thus inspired by a ray of the spirit, a breath of the universe, or a vision of heaven, it prostrates itself and adores,—it is sublime; its prayer is that of the enraptured saint, but the prayer is short, and you feel that if the brow be lowered, it is but for an instant, to be raised a moment after in a thought of emancipation and independence; you feel that it is bent beneath the dominion of a passing enthusiasm, not a lasting and habitual religious sentiment.

Religious belief is sustained by a faith placed beyond the visible world, by an inspiration toward the infinite, toward a mission which is identified with and governs its whole life, and revealed in its lightest actions. And Italian Music has neither faith nor aim beyond itself. “*Art for art’s sake*” is its highest formula. Hence its want of unity, its fragmentary, unconnected, and interrupted character. There is in it the germ of a power which, were it directed to a great aim, would move the universe to attain it. But where is the aim? The fulcrum is wanted to the lever; a connecting-link is wanting to the myriad sensations its melodies embody and represent. Our music might say with Faust: *I have penetrated the entire universe, analyzed its every section and fragment; but the soul, the God of the Universe, where is he?*

While the rough characterization of Palestrina is a consequence of commonplace knowledge, the critique of the Italian musical mind appears penetrating, as do the technical comments (“it cares little... for method or mode of transition”) and the critique of its fundamentally non-religious nature, representing the most evident difference with respect to German music. The picture of the latter is also insightful and possibly the most sym-

pathetic characterization by any Italian contemporary commentator:

German Music proceeds by other paths. God is there, but without man, without His image upon earth, the active and progressive creature destined to develop the divine Thought of which the universe is the symbol. The temple, the religion, the altar, and the incense—all are there; only the worshipper is wanting, the priest of the faith. In the highest degree *harmonious*, it represents the social thought, the general conception, *the idea*; but without the individuality which translates the thought into action, which develops and variously applies the conception, which symbolizes the idea. The *Ego* has disappeared. The soul lives, but lives a life which is not of this earth. As in the life of dreams, when the senses are mute, and another and more ethereal world dawns upon the spirit, and our fancies lose themselves in infinity,—the Music of Germany silences the instincts and material faculties, to raise the soul on high and transport it over unknown regions to which faint memories seem to point, as though they had been before revealed to us by our mother's kiss in the first visions of infancy;—until at last the tumults, the joys, and the sorrows of the earth disappear.

German Music is eminently elegiac; it is the music of remembrance, of desire, of melancholy hopes, of sorrow which no human lip can console,—a Music as if the angels lost to heaven were hovering around. It aspires towards the Infinite, its country. Like the poetry of the North—where it has preserved its primitive character untouched by the influence of foreign schools—German Music moves lightly over the fields of earth, gliding over the creation with eyes raised to heaven. One would say it only set foot on earth to spring from it. One might liken it to a maiden born for smiles, but who has met no smiles responsive to her own; whose soul is full of love, but who has found nought worthy of love on earth, and dreams of another sky, another universe, wherein she shall see the form of the being that will return her love and answer her virgin smile—the being whom, unknown,

she adores.

This form, this type of ideal beauty, appears ever and anon in German Music, but it is only faintly sketched, fantastic and indefinite. Its melody is short, timidly and slightly designed; and while Italian melody defines, exhausts, and imposes an affection on the listener, German Music presents it to him veiled, mysterious, and only long enough seen to leave behind a memory and a desire to recreate the image for himself. The one (i.e. Italian) forcibly hurries you along with it to the extreme limits of the ocean of passion, the other leads you to its brink, there to leave you. German Music is the Music of *preparation*; it is profoundly religious, yet with a religion that has no symbol, and therefore no active faith translated in deeds, no martyrdom, no victory; it embraces you with a chain of gradations linked by a master's hand; surrounds you and cradles you upon a wave of chords, elevating and awakening the heart and the fancy, and arousing your every faculty—to what aim? You fall back again, when the music has ceased, into reality, into the prosaic life that hums around, with the consciousness of another world revealed afar off, not bestowed; with the sense of having approached the first mysteries of a great initiation, never begun;—but neither stronger in will nor safer from the assaults of misfortune.

Italian Music lacks the conception or ruling thought that sanctifies all effort, the moral aim that directs the mental powers, and the baptism of a mission: German Music wants the energy to fulfil it; it wants not the sentiment, but the formula of the mission. Italian Music is rendered barren by materialism: German Music consumes itself uselessly in mysticism.

Of course, the modern scholar feels the need to ascertain which Italian and which German music Mazzini was referring to. As for the first, it largely corresponded to Rossini's theatrical output and to part of Bellini's and Donizetti's.<sup>18</sup> The question is more difficult with regard to German music because only five composers and a handful of specific works are quoted: Haydn, Mozart, Weber, Beethoven, Meyerbeer.<sup>19</sup>

Is this the German in music that he had in mind or was there more,

in his experience, that does not appear in his text? We would like to think of the instrumental music praised by E. T. A. Hoffmann, but there is no firm evidence in this sense. Other names occur in Mazzini's correspondence from later years: Handel, Mendelssohn, Spohr, but his whole listening experience is difficult to assess and, after all, not crucial in the present context.

Aside from the assessment of Mazzini's reception, I find his characterization of the nations' collective mentalities shrewd, because, if music is a mirror of society, the history of Italian political unification and that of the (incomplete) German unification outline scenarios that perfectly fit the different social functions assumed by this art during the 19th century. In Italy, fragments of operas were adopted by the public and possibly (not necessarily) by composers as emblems or transparent metaphors of a political condition that had to be changed through a revolutionary project but that, once achieved, produced both disillusionment and idolization (hence, the image of Verdi as the bard of the Risorgimento). The case was different in the German-speaking world. The rise of Prussia in 1871 represented a unification from one standpoint, but from the other, a more dramatic division. Music was seen as the strongest cultural connector between two politically competing states, their unification a desired yet unachievable goal then and long thereafter.

While the Italian dream of unification came true unexpectedly in 1861 but soon dissolved into the mediocrity of a new order, the German one had to be postponed until it was realized in the sinister circumstances of the 1938 *Anschluss* under Hitler's rule.<sup>20</sup> On the Italian side, music assumed a concrete function, limited in time and practically oriented (fundamentally hymnodic in character), while, on the German side, the long-lasting social allegiance to the great repertory of the 19th century represented the only viable form of national identification. From this point of view, the Nazi exclusion of avant-garde expressions as *entartete Musik* was a necessity (albeit a pathological one) rather than a choice; and Richard Strauss's remark about the "end of German music" on the day of the first performance of his *Metamorphosen* is the symbol and symptom of a deeply felt yet painful relation between music and sense of nationhood.<sup>21</sup>

If this reading of historical facts bears some truth, it should not come as a surprise that a fundamental episode in modern German history such as the Leipzig *Battle of the Nations* against Napoleon (1813) was cel-

celebrated in music not by a German but by an Italian, Alberto Franchetti, in his *Germania*, premiered at La Scala in 1903 (on a libretto by Luigi Illica). Italian art music had paid its dues to the unification process a little earlier with Puccini's *Tosca* (1899, libretto by Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa), a love story interlaced with the commemoration of the lost Italian republican dream. Later on, the celebration of the heroic deeds of the so-called Fourth Italian War of Independence (i.e. World War I) was solely entrusted to military hymnody. Sadly, for the German-speaking population of South Tyrol, this final act of Italian unification meant the *Trennung* (separation from North and East Tyrol) and the loss of their own national independence. The principle of "cultural nationality" that had justified the first wars for independence had been replaced by the notion of natural geographic borders: lands south of the Alpine divide were part of Italy regardless of the nationality of the people.

While we recognize some truth in Mazzini's imaginative prose, we may also ask ourselves if it is of any use today, when scholars proceed beyond generalities and aim to assess their hypotheses through musical-linguistic analysis. Analysis makes sense when applied to individual artifacts, while a discourse on "Italianness" or "Germanness" involves much broader cultural phenomena and is difficult to circumscribe. This probably exceeds the limits of musicology and takes us to the realm of cultural studies where the national element no longer plays the role of ideological forgery or social self-glorification, but is simply considered as one of various concurrent historical conditions.

The sense of national belonging, an important element of identity, affects groups or individuals in different degrees and changes over time, sometimes dramatically evident, other times deeply concealed. The observation of some of these circumstances and the love for two European musical cultures prompted me to try and connect general history to micro-histories so that they would be understood not so much as learned delectations or case studies but rather as windows through which aspects of larger cultural processes might be glimpsed. The subsequent essays in this book represent as many attempts in that direction.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Metastasio's opinion of Gluck's music is synthesized in various letters between 1748 and 1756 and tends to change from severely negative to more balanced: in the letter of June 29th, 1748 from Vienna to Giovanni Claudio Pasquini in Dresden he writes: "la *Semiramide* va alle stelle, mercé l'eccellenza della compagnia e la magnificenza delle decorazioni, a dispetto d'una musica arcivandalica insopportabile [di Gluck]" ("*Semiramide* soars sky-high thanks to the excellent cast and the magnificence of its scenography, despite an arch-vandalic intolerable music [by Gluck]"); see Pietro Metastasio, *Tutte le opere di Pietro Metastasio*, Bruno Brunelli ed. (Milan: Mondadori 1951, vol. III, no. 284). See also the letters of October 27th, 1751 from Vienna to Carlo Broschi in Madrid (vol. III, no. 514); February 19th, 1756 from Vienna to Francesco d'Argenvilliers in Rome (vol. III, no. 924); and December 8th, 1756 to Carlo Broschi in Madrid (vol. III, no. 984).

<sup>2</sup> Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari, *Aneddoti piacevoli e interessanti* (Palermo: Sandron, 1930 [1st ed., London 1830]), 29: "This is the best and most wonderful piece of music that I heard in my whole life" (my translation from the Neapolitan original).

<sup>3</sup> Nicolai's harsh comments are found in his *Tagebuch* towards the end of 1844: "Wer jetzt in Italien Opern schreibt, ist Verdi. Er hat auch den von mir verworfenen Operntext 'Nabucodonosor' komponiert und damit großes Glück gemacht. Seine Opern sind aber wahrhaft scheußlich und bringen Italien völlig ganz herunter. Er instrumentiert wie ein Narr—ist kein Meister in technischer Hinsicht—muß ein Herz wie ein Esel haben und ist wirklich in meinen Augen ein erbärmlicher, verachtenswerter Kompositeur.—Ich denke, unter diese Leistungen kann Italien nicht mehr sinken,—und jetzt möchte ich dort keine Oper schreiben" ("The one who writes operas in Italy now is Verdi. He has also composed the opera text 'Nabucodonosor' that I have rejected and made a great fortune with it. His operas, however, are really dreadful and completely bring Italy down. He orchestrates like an idiot—is no master from the technical standpoint—must have a heart like a donkey and is really in my eyes a pathetic, despicable composer.—I believe that Italy cannot sink below this level,—and now I no longer wish to write opera there"). Ulrich Konrad, *Otto Nicolai (1810-1849). Studien zu Leben*

*un Werk* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1986), 275–76 fn.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, Peter de Mendelssohn ed., 347, 375, 380, and *Tagebücher 1953-55*, Inge Jens ed., 190 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979). This aspect is discussed in Valentina Savietto, “Thomas Mann e Adrian Leverkühn. L’ideazione del romanzo *Doktor Faustus* tra Wagner, Adorno e Schönberg,” tesi di laurea, University of Padua, academic year 2010–2011, 22–23 and fn. 30, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Maurizio Viroli, *For love of Country. An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Also in Italian as *Per amore della patria. Patriotismo e nazionalismo nella storia* (Bari: Laterza, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Mazzini authored an important essay, “Filosofia della musica” in *L’italiano, foglio letterario* (Paris, 1836), which will be discussed below and in Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> The Germanization of Mozart’s production in general or the interpretation of early Verdi as the bard of the Risorgimento are notable examples of this phenomenon. Mozart’s case is examined in Chapter 2 for *Don Giovanni*; a similar and politically more intriguing case is discussed in my essay “Mozarts *La clemenza di Tito* und der deutsche Nationalgedanke. Ein Beitrag zur *Titus*-Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Musikforschung* 53, 389–400. Verdi’s case is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> Sergio Moravia, *Esistenza e passione*, in *Storia delle passioni*, Silvia Vegetti Finzi ed. (Bari: Laterza, 2000), 3–38.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent reflection on this subject, see Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), chapter 6, “History.”

<sup>10</sup> On this aspect see Carl Dahlhaus, “Die Musikgeschichte Österreichs und die Idee der Deutschen Musik” in *Deutschland und Österreich, ein bilaterales Geschichtsbuch*, Robert A. Kann and Friedrich E. Prinz eds. (Wien-München: Jugend und Volk, 1980), 322–49.

<sup>11</sup> Not that recent contributions to research are unworthy of attention; I am thinking in particular of the valuable works—different in approach—by Quirino Principe and John Warrack (respectively *Il teatro d’opera tedesco 1830-1918* [Palermo: L’Epos, 2002] and *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001]); however, even in the best of cases, the narration, willy-nilly modeled on the “biographical” mold, is centrifugal and the selection of information does not hold together in a convincingly compact historical object. The influential *Storia dell’opera italiana* edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli has appeared in print only in its three-volume “systematic” section, while three more planned volumes of historical narrative are still, and pos-

sibly forever, in the works.

<sup>12</sup> On this point, see John Warrack, *German Opera*, quoted, 270, who cites the activity of the *Christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft* (ca. 1811–13).

<sup>13</sup> An eloquent visual document is Alois Reisacher's painting representing the battle of Caffaro and Lodrone of May 22nd, 1848, now at the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, in Innsbruck. According to Meinrad Pizzinini, the painting, commissioned by Emperor Franz Joseph and completed in 1852, "characterizes the faces of Italians with expressions of hatred and fanaticism, in opposition to the firm determination of Tyrolians, which has to convey their heroism" (*Eroi romantici. La storia tirolese nei dipinti del XIX secolo da Koch a Defregger: Tiroler Landeskundliches Museum im Zeughaus Kaiser Maximilians I., Innsbruck, 23 aprile-7 luglio, 1996, Museo provinciale di Castel Tirolo, Tirolo, 26 luglio-20 ottobre 1996*, Ellen Hastaba-Carl Kraus eds. (Innsbruck: Tiroler Landeskundliches Museum, 1996), 148–49, with a color photograph of the painting).

<sup>14</sup> This and the following sections from *Filosofia* are quoted from the 1867 edition of the text, translated into English under Mazzini's supervision by Emily Ashurst Venturi and available in the excellent edition, *Giuseppe Mazzini's Philosophy of Music (1836). Envisioning a Social Opera. English Translation by Emily Ashurst Venturi (1867)*, edited and annotated by Franco Sciannameo (Lewiston, NY, Edwin Mellen, 2004), 40. The sentence between asterisks was excluded from Ashurst Venturi's 1867 translation. Also, in the following sentence, Ashurst Venturi's word "schools" replaced the original "tendenze" (i.e. "trends") of the 1836 text. While a study of the numerous textual variants is beyond the scope of the present writing, my impression is that the 1867 edition depoliticized Mazzini's 1836 version. It is perhaps not far-fetched to imagine that the fortune of the Marx-Engels thought in the intervening years, and Mazzini's opposition to it, might have inspired the reduced frequency of terms associated to so-called "scientific socialism."

<sup>15</sup> A wise approach to the problem is found in Bernd Sponhauer, "Reconstructing Ideal Types of the 'German' in Music," in *Music and German National Identity*, Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 36–57, in which, after having investigated the inner contradictions of the "exclusive" definition of Germanness in music and raised sensible doubts on the existence of any pure identity of German music, he writes: "It would

be rash, however, to conclude that there is therefore no German identity in music.” Referring to the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (and specifically to his article “Lob der Vermischung,” *Lettre Internationale*, 21, 1993, 4–7), Sponhauer outlines a distinction between an essentialist and historically untenable identitarian *noumenon*, and a different, more problematic concept based on a notion of culture that reconciles multiplicity and internal diversity with a degree of cohesion and identity. In a sense, Sponhauer stops at the point where Mazzini had started his argument, or vice versa.

<sup>16</sup> On this, see the introduction to Giuseppe Mazzini, *Philosophie de la Musique. Vers un opéra social (1835)*, traduit de l’italien et présenté par Martin Kaltenecker (Paris: Van Dieren, 2001). A contact with the milieu of the Italian political exiles is indeed reported in Wagner’s autobiography in connection with his meeting with Luigi Lablache and his composition of the extra piece “Norma il predisse, o Druidi” for Bellini’s *Norma*, composed in Paris in September/October 1839; the text was reportedly written by an Italian exile contacted through Samuel Lehrs. On the connections between Mazzini, the opera milieu in Paris, and Agostino Ruffini (the exile who revised Donizetti’s libretto for *Marino Faliero*), see Chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Giuseppe Mazzini’s Philosophy of Music*, quoted, 41–43.

<sup>18</sup> As we shall see in the chapter devoted to Mazzini’s *Filosofia*, part of Mazzini’s text was actually not of his pen in that he shared—at the time of publication in 1836—the ideas of his collaborator.

<sup>19</sup> All pose questions in different ways: of Mozart he quotes an opera in Italian (*Don Giovanni*), of Haydn an oratorio (*The Creation*), of Weber the apocryphal piece *Le dernier pensée de Weber* (actually by Carl Gottlieb Reissiger, no. 5 of the *Danses brillantes*, op. 26, 1822, often misattributed at the time), of Meyerbeer *Robert le diable*; rather than as a German composer, the latter is however viewed as the achiever of the German-Italian synthesis.

<sup>20</sup> The landslide political consensus obtained by the popular referendum (more than 99 percent) is understandable not only on account of the authoritarian pressure and propaganda, but also because it was more deeply rooted culturally than the consensus towards the Nazi regime.

<sup>21</sup> I am referring to an episode reported by the tenor Julius Patzak, who, after the performance at the Zürich Tonhalle on January 25th, 1946, addressed Strauss saying: “The *Metamorphoses* have moved me deeply but they also made me very sad.” Strauss’s answer was: “Do you think it is possible to compose something happy

when German music is dead?” (my translation from Alexander Witeschnik, *Geht all's recht am Schnürl oder Richard Strauss in Geschichten und Anekdoten* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1990), 182.



## II. Don Giovanni vs. Don Juan *and Back*

**D***on Giovanni*, a work of art so central for Western culture, offers the opportunity not only to investigate the relation between different cultural traditions but also to combine textual criticism and performance studies. Or, as I prefer to say, textual investigations *sensu lato*, including that particular text that we call “performance.”

Before getting into the specific matter, I feel that one premise has to be justified: in what sense is *Don Giovanni* by Lorenzo Da Ponte and Wolfgang Mozart Italian? Is the fact that it was written in Italian by an Italian playwright enough to disregard the fact that it was set to music by a German composer for northern European theaters? And that the specific characteristics of Mozart’s music exceed what would have been customary in an Italian opera by an Italian composer?

I will try to answer these questions by resorting to a rhetorical twist which contains a basic truth. The Italian element at the time of the composition of *Don Giovanni* should be understood differently from the Italian, as it arises in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, let’s say, from the literary work of Ugo Foscolo on. It is the Italian before the rise of Italian patriotism, a rather cosmopolitan culture associated socially with the pan-European import of artists from the peninsula (be they composers, singers, or other) and with the century-old acceptance of Italian as the *lingua franca* of musical theater. If it is to be considered national, it should be so in the broader cultural sense that can be traced back to Dante and Petrarch and that was more recently articulated by Gian Rinaldo Carli right after the middle of the 18th century.<sup>1</sup>

This dimension has more to do with the contribution of Da Ponte, and of the Italian singers-actors that created the roles (as the French would put it), than with the setting by Mozart; however, we should not overlook the fact that even within the realm of music the work of classical composers such as Mozart or Haydn could be thought of by the authorita-

tive Lutheran commentator Friedrich Reichardt as too Italianate, or not German enough.<sup>2</sup> As Carl Dahlhaus reminds us, confessional identities still prevailed over national ones at the time.

In the last decades of the 20th century, the musicological interpretations of *Don Giovanni* have often taken into consideration the question of the tragic vs. the *buffo* finale as a sort of aesthetic divide. As is well known, the variant finale (without the moralizing *quintetto*) was first staged under the authors' direction in the second production of the opera (Vienna 1788). The so-called Vienna version has been considered by some as an indication or proof of the more mature dramaturgical intentions of Mozart (and, why not, of Da Ponte), consequently understanding the opera as leaning towards (proto-)Romantic tragedy rather than late-Enlightenment *opera buffa*. It is also clear, albeit not necessarily spelled out by scholars, that the two different readings bear on matters of national taste.

Be that as it may, it is clear that while focusing on the equally authorial versions of 1787 and 1788, critics have neglected those late and allegedly corrupt sources that seemed irrelevant to establishing Mozart's poetics. This is an understandable approach from a philological standpoint, yet one that overlooks the history of reception. Those corrupt texts, translations, or adaptations of the Italian original are precious witnesses to the formation of a new taste, and of aesthetic stances that provided the basis for the 19th- and early 20th-century criticism of *Don Giovanni* (including the late 20th-century exaggeration of the relevance of the tragic finale for the genre-definition of the whole opera). Conversely, an understanding of the variant versions helps to better define "the Italian" in the original *Don Giovanni*.

The innumerable productions of this capital work have offered a very broad range of renderings. And yet, within the rich, complicated and not entirely investigated reception history of *Don Giovanni*, it is legitimate to distinguish two main performing traditions. The first one—relative to the authorial text—is substantially faithful to the musico-dramatic text as defined by Da Ponte and Mozart (in the two versions). The second one, that we shall name the romantic *Don Giovanni* or more precisely, *Don Juan*, according to the German title, is based—largely but not only—on the poetic interpretation of E.T.A. Hoffmann (1813) and offers a radically different image of the title role and of the entire set of relations established



between the leading characters.<sup>3</sup>

In the last analysis, the first Don Giovanni (as a character) is plainly a cynical rascal and his story is one of crime and punishment, an expression of popular theater (as Julian Rushton points out)<sup>4</sup> that was admired as much for its musical beauties as for the actorial performance (it is well known that the first protagonist, a young Luigi Bassi, enthralled the audience with his acting as much as with his singing).<sup>5</sup>

Don Giovanni attracts the sympathy of the spectator, but the main point of the plot is to exhibit the progression of his recklessness, leading to the final, fully deserved and spectacular death. Giovanni is in some sense a hero but, if so, reveals himself as such only in his final refusal to repent and change his life. Within this general characterization, the opera is a relatively simple story set within a well-established theatrical genre, *opera buffa*, the conventions of which are relevant for a sound understanding of the subject.

There is no doubt, for instance, that the stock noble couple of the genre is portrayed by Donna Anna and Don Ottavio and that both characters share a common general characterization. This suggests a straightforward interpretation of the opera within the reception conditions of both Prague and Vienna, a theatrical venue that, in Mary Hunter's words, privileged the quest for sheer pleasure.<sup>6</sup>

This type of Italianate musical theater, a well-acted comedy with good music devised for the aristocracy, was soon brought to the bourgeois German audiences in 1789 through the translations and transformation in *Singspiel* format by Neefe and Schmieder.<sup>7</sup> However, only a few years later this appeared too simple for the intellectually aristocratic Hoffmann. The declared purpose of his *Phantasiestück*, published in 1813, was to transcend the understanding of commoners; he commented that "nobody [has] yet foreseen the more profound meaning of this opera of all operas."<sup>8</sup>

I am conscious that a dual representation of the multifaceted *Don Giovanni* tradition is a simplification of historical reality, but I also sense that it holds true, at least insofar as the perception of the public of the early 21st century goes; therefore I shall try to build a line of thought upon this provisional dichotomy.<sup>9</sup>

This first Italianate tradition is characteristic of the very beginning of the work's performance history and never entirely disappeared dur-

ing the following decades. At that time the opera, although circulating throughout Europe, would be performed far more frequently in German-speaking countries and in German, using one of various available translations. The most frequently used of these was, until the end of the 19th century, that published by Friedrich Rochlitz in 1801 and appended to the Breitkopf & Härtel first edition of the score.<sup>10</sup>

It should be pointed out that the early German translations departed from Da Ponte in significant details but without necessarily distorting the image of the main character. One of these details is exemplified by Johann Gottlob Neefe's version for the Mannheim production of September 1789 (two years after the premiere). In the cast of characters, Don Ottavio was given the new name 'Herr Fischblut' (Mr. Fish-blood), an eloquent indication that the nature of this character had undergone alteration (from noble and dignified to farcically wimpish) well before the characterization provided by Hoffmann.<sup>11</sup>

To what extent the change was received and internalized by the audiences is impossible to say, but evidently the noble pair of the *opera buffa* was no longer a relevant entity to the theatrical producers of the German lands. And in any case, the translation itself meant that the genre being referenced was no longer that of *opera buffa* but *Singspiel*, with spoken dialogues performed by German actors/singers for their native audiences. If the alteration of Don Ottavio's character dates back to 1789, it is only with Hoffmann's interpretation that the demonic element so dear to the Romantic spirit is developed to the extent of reshaping the plot. He envisioned the relationship between Don Giovanni and Donna Anna "through music alone and without consideration of the literary text."<sup>12</sup> Hoffmann would hardly believe how influential his fictional tale was for the later understanding of this opera. Yet for all the longlasting success of his interpretation, it is difficult to accept that it was solely the consequence of an intervention by one uniquely shameless visionary.

In the romantic *Don Juan*, Donna Anna (secretly) loves the title-character and not her would-be rapist—and in fact there has been no proper rape because:

The fire of a superhuman sensuality, glowing from Hell, flowed through her innermost being and made her impotent to resist.

Only he, only Don Giovanni could arouse in her the lustful abandon with which she embraced him [...] <sup>13</sup>

This constitutes a major change and one that also implies a side-characterization of Don Ottavio, who turns from affectionate lover and noble defender of Anna's honor into a mediocre fop: "cold, common, effeminate."<sup>14</sup> If "Herr Fischblut" was the precedent, Hoffmann fully developed the consequences.

But this is not the only hint that Hoffmann's reading was prepared—so to speak—by details of the German translations circulating at the time. In the first translation by Neefe, which is altogether close to Da Ponte, some new key words seem to moderate the profile of Don Giovanni or, rather, to justify his conduct on the basis of a code of honor. For instance, while in Da Ponte he is addressed by the Commendatore before the duel as "vile" (on account of the violence he inflicts on a woman), in Neefe it is "Verwegener" (reckless) and immediately afterwards, a climaxing "Feiger" (coward) which sounds like a provocation. The key word "Feiger" is further emphasized in the *frei bearbeitet* version by Friedrich Rochlitz, where Don Juan reacts as the offended one:

Commendatore: Coward, criminal /

D.J.: Coward? Me?

Comm.: Coward!

D.J.: Tremble, you will soon regret your arrogance.<sup>15</sup>

It has been suggested that Hoffmann's tale was written in reaction to the version by Rochlitz, whose moralizing attitude it reverses. I do not deny this; as far as the general characterization of the plot is concerned, the thesis advanced by Ricarda Schmidt is reasonable.<sup>16</sup> It is significant, however, that seeds of the heroic Don Juan can be traced back to the very beginning of its diffusion in Germany. What this seems to imply is that the quest for a hero (as opposed to the appealing rascal) was a collective necessity rather than an individual fantasy.

We might pose the question whether the Italian version by Da Ponte and Mozart would not support, textually speaking, a heroic interpretation of Don Giovanni and the respective characterization of Don

Ottavio as a weakling. As a matter of fact, time and again we have seen this happen in the theater, without any need of an altered German text. The characterization can be entrusted solely to costume and/or body language of the singer-actor, as is the case in the film by Joseph Losey.<sup>17</sup>

But do we have any clue as to the author's idea about Don Ottavio's profile? I would like to point to a small but revealing philological detail concerning the verbal text. Right after Donna Anna's aria, "Or sai chi l'onore," Don Ottavio, alone on stage, delivers a short monologue reflecting on the course of action to take. Donna Anna has just recognized Don Giovanni's voice but there is not yet solid proof of his guilt. Ottavio intends to discover the truth but is divided between his duty as husband-to-be and as friend of Don Giovanni:

Act I, sc. 14 (after Anna's exit aria "Or sai chi l'onore"):

*Don Ottavio solo*

How will I ever believe a knight capable of such dreadful crime?

Ah, let us try and unveil the truth in any possible way; I feel the duty of a husband and of a friend both speaking in my heart. I want to undeceive and/or to avenge her.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting that the last crucial line has two readings in the authorial sources and that they carry entirely different meanings: the 1787 Prague libretto has "e" (and) but Mozart corrects it to "o" (or) in the autograph score, and the same reading is found in the Vienna 1788 libretto, as if Da Ponte had accepted the correction (whether as correction of a misprint or of an incoherence of the dramatic exposition is impossible to say). So the final version, authorized both by composer and librettist, is "or."<sup>19</sup>

Why is this so important? Because it defines Don Ottavio's epistemic system (what the character knows and believes at this point). In other words, if the reading is "and," this means that Ottavio wants to pursue two contradictory actions at the same time: undeceive Anna (his duty as Giovanni's friend) *and* avenge her (his duty as Anna's husband-to-be). The result is a character in confusion, whose action is prevented by his own hesitations. However, if the reading is "or," this points to a clear course of action: Ottavio will act in such a way as to *either* undeceive Anna *or* avenge her.

That Mozart's correction reinforces the male attitude of Ottavio is quite interesting, especially bearing in mind the negative image of this character as fixed by the romantic tradition. No doubt in performance, the "e" vs. "o" gets lost, but the detail is a strong interpretive index for whoever cares to take note of it.

More perceptible differences are found in the text by Rochlitz, including new tirades such as the circuitous seduction of Zerlina, that appears a pretext for bourgeois criticism of the aristocracy.<sup>20</sup> Differently from Don Giovanni, Don Juan explains to Zerlina in great detail why he wants to marry her:<sup>21</sup>

DON JUAN

I will immediately give you all the explanations. Look: I am a rich man who for a number of years has associated with respectable people and I really have had enough of that!

That eternal affectation! They praise without acclaiming, they laugh without being happy, they eat without being hungry.

ZERLINA

Yes, yes, I heard about that!

DON JUAN

It makes me feel sick. I want to retire to my castle and live in peace and in the beautiful nature....however, also a beautiful girl is part of nature. Therefore, I am looking for a spouse from whom I wish for myself that she will let me love her, and that she loves me, and that she be devoid of all the affectations of the ladies from the city. You are such an innocent, spontaneous, natural soul. I can—I must love you. Love me in turn and in a few days you will be my bride, you will have your chamber maid, your wardrobe full of lavish dresses, your luxurious coach; you will rule the entire castle! Are you quivering? You say nothing? My child, you insult and offend my honor...

Symmetrically opposed is the ironic disdain for the lower social class revealed in the new cemetery scene.<sup>22</sup> More important than the additions in this case is the omission of a dramatic motif, which can be seen as essential to the Italian version. I am referring to Don Giovanni's narration of his adventure with Leporello's girlfriend. In Da Ponte this occurs right

before the manifestation of the Commendatore's voice and clearly prepares that dramatic climax with Leporello's curse on Don Giovanni (*maledetto!*). Therefore, an extreme stage of Don Giovanni's progress—the hideous betrayal of his last supporter—is omitted in the German version.

The visual aspect of the opera is also relevant with respect to a shift in sensibility. In Rochlitz, the finale of Act I is transformed into a *locus classicus* of romantic sensibility, turning a metaphor by Da Ponte (D.G.: "My head is confused / I do not know what I am doing / and a horrible storm / my God, threatens me"<sup>23</sup>) into an actual thunderstorm scene which remained in the performing tradition for a long time.

Also the suspension of the action at the end of Act I, characteristic of *opera buffa*, appears to have been seen as a problem for the modern German public. Hoffmann himself, who claims (but only fictionally) to be attending a performance in the Italian original, reports a duel scene that in reality belonged to the German staging practice, and significantly alters the style of the original first finale anticipating Don Juan's social downfall.<sup>24</sup> We shall come back to this at a later point.

Don Giovanni's predatory drive, his acquisitive anxiety, is replaced in Hoffmann by an idealistic search for perfection. Already Rochlitz before him had omitted one key line by Da Ponte that precluded any such interpretation: "He conquers old ladies / for the sake of adding to the list," a statement that has nothing to do with idealization.<sup>25</sup> Don Juan becomes, for Hoffmann, the representation of the innermost spirit of life as iconized in carnal pleasure and his conduct is justified as the outcome of an irresistible desire for absolute liberty. He is the epitome of freedom, with clear Faustian resonances, devoid of social obligations and moral constraints.

It is clear that the *Don Juan* by Hoffmann (for which a new *Zeitgeist* had paved the way) represents a strong twist of the Da Ponte-Mozart version. However, long before the most recent scholarly literature stressed this problem, *Don Juan* had been harshly rejected as fancy in Otto Jahn's seminal biography of 1856-59. Kicked out of the door, he kept coming back in through the window. For instance, when Hermann Abert revised Jahn's book in his biography of 1919-21, he refuted some points of the anti-romantic approach of his predecessor. The original *buffo* element residing in the recurrent erotic failures of Don Giovanni was re-interpreted as follows:

[...] it is hardly, as Jahn would want us to believe, the cause of the “gaiety which permeates the whole opera.” It should rather be regarded as a very effective element in the characterization of a hero. A character such as his has to be strengthened by continual opposition; his energy is kept in a state of constant tension, driving him to his fate. Besides, the main point of Don Giovanni’s nature is not his ability to seduce this or that woman who happens to cross his path, even if there were ‘a thousand and three,’ but the elemental, sensual urge to live and love which he has uncontrolled energy to satisfy. The more he reveals himself, the more dangerous, but also the greater, he becomes.

Not only the Hoffmannesque interpretation, intentionally fantastic, but also the scholarly one by Abert go awry under the spell of an established paradigm.

Deviations from a text, of course, occur all the more easily when translation is involved, but that is not the only communication medium; acting is just as important, or even more so. The very same musico-dramatic text might be realized and consequently understood in different ways through performative acts. No doubt Mozart’s score adds an expressive depth well beyond the words of Da Ponte;<sup>26</sup> however, because of music’s inherent ambiguity, it does not have the capacity on its own to build a substantially different story or constellation of characters. Where the level of ambiguity is high, our interpretation should be cautious; but quite on the contrary, controversial issues are sometimes overcome (or else exploited as interpretive tools) through their reduction to apodictic statements. For instance, Andrew Steptoe on Elvira:<sup>27</sup>

The enigmatic Elvira occupies the ambivalent middle ground in temperament [i.e. between *seria* and *buffa* characterization], just as she does in purely musical terms. But when she adopts the graver tones of Anna and Ottavio, the ironic intention is again clear as in the aria “Ah fuggi il traditor.” Here is a woman who has already succumbed to temptation [...] denying the same pleasure to another, and she does so with formal archaic severity. The words show an exaggerated, histrionic hostility, quite inappropriate for the simple task of cautioning a peasant maid.<sup>28</sup>

But is the “ironic intention” of the aria obvious beyond any doubt? In a passage on the same musical number, Stephan Kunze presents a different opinion, pointing instead to the “noble and archaic deportment”<sup>29</sup> of Elvira, one that will be immediately grasped by Ottavio and Anna later in the Quartet, “Non ti fidar, o misera.” Rather than focusing on the communicative function (“the simple task of cautioning a peasant maid”), Kunze digs into the expressive potential.<sup>30</sup>

The opposing forces of desperate agitation and of restraint produce a barely tolerable tension. What will the effect be on the already dominated Zerlina of this epic, mythic-archaic exit of the noble figure of Elvira, marked as it is by an infinite grief? It is the clash of two worlds.

Who is right? My preference is for Kunze but let me suggest that Steptoe’s reading is possible *in that particular scene* (albeit wrong with respect to the text as a whole). We might say that it is performable: the twist from serious to ironic is in the hands (and body) of the actress/singer (or whoever instructs her towards such effect). More precisely it is performable within the momentary situation of Act I, sc. 10, in that it does not contradict the verbal text, and the music is flexible or ambiguous enough to allow for it.

However, the contradiction is clear with respect to other points in the plot (namely sc. 5 and 6, the aforementioned *quartetto* and the masked *terzetto* where the musical characterization is particularly unambiguous). The hoax of Act II, when Don Giovanni deceives Elvira again, only to leave her with Leporello in disguise, is pure cruelty, one of the many variations on the theme of Don Giovanni’s cynicism. It could be cited as a proof of Elvira’s weakness or foolishness (she is referred to as “la pazza” by Leporello) but not, retrospectively, of a rhetorical exaggeration in the earlier aria “Ah fuggi il traditor.” And her later behavior in the opera strengthens her nobility, both as would-be savior of Don Giovanni’s soul and in her final choice of atonement and renunciation of the mundane world.

The reverberations of the Don Giovanni character, in literature and in the realm of the newly founded discipline “history of opera,” during the 19th century, are numerous and culturally relevant. Two recent



publications contribute fresh investigations on this theme, making it clear among other things that Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and the literary or philosophical one are different things. I refer to *The Don Giovanni moment. Essays on the Legacy of an Opera* (2007) and especially to *Mozarts Oper als literarisches Ereignis: E.T.A. Hoffmann Don Juan-Novelle und ihre Folgen* within the *Mozarts Opern Handbuch* (2007).<sup>31</sup> If, then, a degree of order in the understanding of the Italian text is restored (or is under restoration), the long-lasting effects of the romantic image are still with us. As late as the second centennial of *Don Giovanni* in 1987 Ludwig Finscher stated:<sup>32</sup>

The history of the work is the extreme case of a reception history, that became estranged almost entirely from the work itself, from what is represented and meant by the text and the score; a reception history [...] which tells us less about the work than about its recipients.

Most recently, the quest for a faithful approach to *Don Giovanni* has been reflected in the title of a book chapter by Dieter Borchmeyer: *Um eine Don Giovanni ohne 19. Jahrhundert bittend* (For a Don Giovanni without 19th Century).<sup>33</sup>

These characterizations call for comment. The romantic interpretation of *Don Giovanni* was certainly not the only one to reach the stage during the 19th and 20th centuries; it would be interesting to ascertain how many of the productions conformed (deliberately or inadvertently) to the romantic mold, how many were more or less faithful to the original, and finally, how many followed yet other—underinvestigated and less influential—courses. Such a study was undertaken by Christof Bitter in his *Wandlungen in den Inszenierungsformen des 'Don Giovanni'* of 1961,<sup>34</sup> a rich if not always satisfactory study by current scholarly standards. Even if Bitter's investigation had been more accurate and complete, and had it considered in detail the fifty-odd translations and/or adaptations of this work, it still could not have entirely explained the success of the romantic *Don Juan*, simply because this is based on a rather inextricable combination of theatrical, literary, and philosophical factors.

Whatever the outcome of statistics, the prevailing concept applied to *Don Giovanni* has been for decades (and still is in most quarters) the ro-

romantic one, much to the impatience of learned music historians. This image is not only perpetuated by individual theatrical productions, but also represents a cultural tradition of which the theatrical one is but a branch.

It is puzzling that an interpretation that is clearly fantastical in nature and refuted by authoritative critics and historians should have such long-lasting effects. Why this should be so, and how it became possible, is a matter for reflection. Was it the merit of a fashionable German writer, the intuition of a genius, an oversight of academia, or a collective illusion? As I have tried to demonstrate, if Hoffmann represents the catalyst, his success is probably the result of a combination of processes.

Of course, a romantic *Don Juan* was vital for the survival of the opera in the age of Romanticism. The focus on one character is typical in this sense, as opposed to the rationalistic geometries of the couples. Also romantic in character is the sympathy for those aspects, originally meant as *buffi*, and soon reinterpreted in the ennobled key of romantic irony. Such a reinterpretation appears to inform, for instance, the new relationship between Don Juan and Leporello in the version by Rochlitz.<sup>35</sup> Romantic, too, is the elevation of the title role to a transcendental dimension, so that the relevant philosophical elements subsist beyond the verbal text and in the realm of hermeneutics, where commentators may discuss, for instance, the real feelings of Donna Anna towards Don Giovanni, invoking a reality beyond her actual words, beyond the musico-dramatic text. From a critical perspective, this is a crucial point in the history of reception in that it becomes unavailing to refute on a philological basis these aspects of hyper-interpretation—all the more so because such exercises are, generally speaking, in good intellectual standing and tend to be self-generating.

Like it or not, this has been the destiny of *Don Giovanni*. It goes against the grain of a historical-philological sensibility, but the question is whether we should moralistically choose between one approach or the other, between the cosmopolitan Italian or the romantic German, or, rather and finally, accept them both as legitimate offspring of the European culture while realizing that they are essentially different. An important step towards acceptance is realizing that some elements of Hoffmann's interpretation were in the air, not in an abstract sense, but due to concrete factors such as the obliteration of the *opera buffa* conventions within the practices of the German stage (parallel to the downfall of Italian opera companies

in Northern Europe); the consequent transformation of pivotal characters like Don Giovanni and Don Ottavio; and, more importantly, the modern notion that music is a language independent of words and thereby superior to verbal language in its capacity to communicate. Only upon such a theoretical basis (belief, one might say), presented by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder only a few years after Mozart's death and developed by Hoffmann himself in his writings on instrumental music, was it possible to build the new *Don Giovanni* and—more importantly—conceive it as more authentic than the original one. The Wackenroder premise justified, and even called for, unconstrained alterations of the verbal text. Rochlitz explained in the *Vorerinnerung* to his *Frei Bearbeitung* that:<sup>36</sup>

I am solely responsible for the choice to maintain a distance some times not only from the words but also the meaning of the Italian text. I did that because convinced that it was better to elicit the text from the wonderful music and not from the rhymes, some times muddled, of the libretto.

That this was not an isolated episode, but rather a pervasive cultural attitude through the 19th century and later, is proven by the complicated history of the German translations of *Don Giovanni* yet to be written in full but outlined already in 1887 by Rudolf von Freisauß.<sup>37</sup> It is the fascinating and paradoxical story of the quest for one definitive, authentic *Don Juan* text worthy to become the standard in German theaters and replace the many translations in circulation. The project was entrusted in 1883 to a commission chaired by Baron Perfall, *Intendant* of the Munich Hof- und Nationaltheater. It quickly came to nought, as the commission could not negotiate between the new text and the collective memory of the by then standard lines by Rochlitz. Despite the predictable failure, the project and its context tell us a lot about the cultural relevance of the Germanization of *Don Giovanni*.<sup>38</sup> It might appear surprising that a culture such as the German one, which cultivated philology at an unprecedented level during the 19th century—the basic notion that a musico-dramatic text had to be established by the same criteria of intergrity as a classic one—was alien even to sophisticated scholars. Evidently, passion prevailed over reason.<sup>39</sup>

A few years after the aborted Perfall *Kommission* (vaguely antici-

pating the parallel action of Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*) a new edition of the libretto was published with an introduction by Carl Friedrich Wittmann. This was based once more on the text by Rochlitz (with spoken dialogues) side by side with the text for the recitatives published by Johann Philipp Samuel Schmidt in 1845. A learned introduction outlined the history of the German translations and yet returned to the popular Rochlitz-Schmidt text rather than claiming to be any kind of utopian authentic and definitive version like the one longed for by Freisauß. An interesting point about this source is that it carries important evidence of theatrical traditions involving the stage action and prescribed by the paratext. These reveal the long-lasting influence of Hoffman: Donna Anna's infatuation with Don Juan is most clearly performed on stage at the end of Act I, in the scene that Da Ponte had characterized (according to *buffa* tradition) as frozen action and that Hoffmann had described (and certainly seen in the theater) in the form of a heroic duel in a thunderstorm. Unsurprisingly at this point of our story, there is also a great deal of evocative action by Anna in the caption reported by Wittman:<sup>40</sup>

Scene 28 (Don Juan and Leporello on the right forward. Don Octavio, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira in the middle. Masetto and Zerlina left forward) [...]

[End of the finale:]

The farmers (try to catch Don Juan)

The servants (hold them back)

Don Juan (takes advantage of the confusion to escape in the middle with drawn sword)

Leporello (follows at his heels, protecting him with his body)

Octavio (draws his sword to pursue Don Juan)

Anna (holds him back)

The gesture of Donna Anna as reported by the apocryphal caption clearly shows that her characterization follows the romantic paradigm. It is possible that the perpetuation of this interpretation of Anna, and consequently of the whole constellation of characters, has to do with the persistence of certain concomitant cultural conditions affecting the taste of

audiences: the cultural persistence of a transcendental idea of love as the legitimate father of desire and lust (only Anna's love justifies Juan's violence); the social acceptance of liberalism (legitimate son of libertinism in the realm of economics) as the righteous fruit of superior individual gifts; and the bourgeois understanding of sexual relations based upon an officially rigid code of behavior but counterbalanced by the unstated permissiveness of the brothel. In other words, in order to become acceptable to 19th-century audiences, Don Juan's libertinism had to be modernized, its representation no longer based on the birth privilege of aristocracy but on spiritual superiority, be it an evil one if necessary. One is left to wonder if the decline of Hoffmann's paradigm is related to the downfall of such categories rather than to any scholarly effort.<sup>41</sup>

Having examined the fortune of *Don Giovanni/Don Juan* from the point of view of its own future in the 19th century, let us now try to reverse the perspective. It has been observed by Nino Pirrotta that the character of Don Giovanni, as circulating in European literature and in teatro dell'arte (probably the main vehicle for its diffusion), did not originally focus on eroticism per se, but rather on the character's inclination towards deception and, most of all, on his atheism.<sup>42</sup> Atheism represents the origin of all other sins, in that God and the final righteous reward or punishment is the only basis of social and spiritual order. The deception of women, then, was but one of Giovanni's misdeeds (albeit one offering a major vehicle for popular entertainment). While it is true that the 18th century and Da Ponte, as well his immediate model, the Don Giovanni by Bertati, transfer the main accent onto sexual libertinism, this is strongly oriented in a quantitative sense (how many women will Don Giovanni add to the list?) and does not correspond to a romantic transcendental eroticism. In the first case, we are discussing a prerogative of the *Ancien régime* aristocrat; in the other, a dream of the 19th-century bourgeois. If the latter can be considered *Don Giovanni's* future, where did it come from? What was its past?

Let us examine for a moment the hypothesis that Da Ponte's Italian version represents an intermediate state between the 17th-century Don Giovanni—the atheist—and the romantic Don Juan; in other words a historical moment in which this subject lay in the balance between the old and the new worlds. From this perspective, while the characterization leans clearly towards a new sexual libertinism (rather than focusing on atheism),

the plot carries in its episodic, accumulative, and climactic structure the fruit of the old seeds. The sins of Don Giovanni are not, in fact, limited to the list of women in Leporello's catalog, but can also be traced back to the work of literature that inspired Da Ponte, that is, Dante's *Inferno*.<sup>43</sup> *Il catalogo è questo*:

Villainy (Canto III= e.g.: Act I,1 and 8 as violence against the weak)  
Lust (Canto V = e.g.: throughout),  
Lavishness (Canto VI = e.g.: Act I and II, finale I and II)  
Pride (Canto VIII = e.g.: Act I, sc. 9)  
Violence against God (Canto XIV = e.g.: finale II)  
Violence against fellow-men (Canto XII = e.g.: throughout)  
Violence against oneself (Canto XIII = e.g.: finale II)  
Women cheating (Canto XVIII = e.g.: throughout)  
Flattery (Canto XVIII = e.g.: Act I, 9, 11, 12)  
Hypocrisy (Canto XXIII = e.g.: Act I, 12)  
Fraudulent advisorship (Canto XXVI = e.g.: Act I, 9)  
Counterfeiting of persons (Canto XXX = e.g.: Act II, sc. I ff. )

These represent an incomplete but abundant list of the Christian sins as described by Dante. The extent to which they become relevant for the dramatic progress largely depends on the stress that singers-actors are willing to put on them in performance.

While the well-known reference in Da Ponte's *Mémoires* is usually understood on account of the generic color of the Overture and second finale, it is possible that more specific memories guided the poet's hand, more or less consciously.<sup>44</sup>

The drama can thus be understood not only from the point of view of modernity, but also from that of its past as backwards-looking and carrying the heritage of an archaic vision of the world, transported within the rationalistic mechanism of opera buffa. That Da Ponte's intention might have been conscious is certainly impossible to prove but this is not of vital importance. It is clear that, consciously or not, Dante contributed to shaping the librettist's theatrical imagination.<sup>45</sup> This might point to a change in perspective and to the possibility of considering the opera

not only on account of its progressive potential but also of its subliminal sources and narrative structures.

What might appear a paradox is that in the first half of the 19th century—a time of intense national identification in Europe—an opera that was Italian at the time of its first production, and shortly afterwards so Italian that it had to be reshaped into a romantic *Singspiel*, became banned for decades from the Italian theaters<sup>46</sup> because it was felt too German, on account of music that the German Reichardt felt was too Italian.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I refer to the famous article “La patria degli Italiani” published in 1765 in the second issue of the journal *Il Caffè*.

<sup>2</sup> On Reichardt’s criticism against Mozart and Haydn, see my essay *Mozarts “La clemenza di Tito” und der deutsche Nationalgedanke*, 389–400.

<sup>3</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Don Juan. Eine fabelhafte Begebenheit, die sich mit einem reisenden Enthusiasten zugetragen*, first published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 15, 1813, 213–25.

<sup>4</sup> J. Rushton, *W.A. Mozart. Don Giovanni* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> On the figure and career of Luigi Bassi see M. Tessing Schneider, “The Charmer and the Monument. Mozart’s Don Giovanni in the Light of its Original Production,” PhD dissertation, University of Aarhus, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> M. Hunter, *The Culture of opera buffa in Mozart’s Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> See F. Dickmann, *Don Giovanni deutsch. Mozarts “Don Giovanni” in der deutschen Fassung von Neefe und Schmeder, Frankfurt 1789* (Sankt: Augustin, Academia, 1993) as well as the methodologically outdated K. Werner-Jensen, *Studien zur “Don Giovanni” Rezeption in 19. Jahrhundert* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1980). What I find unsatisfactory and also characteristic of more recent research on *Tito* (B. Hiltner, *La clemenza di Tito von Wolfgang Amadé Mozart im Spiegel der musikalischen Fachpresse zwischen 1800 und 1850* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994) is that they explore “reception” through journalistic reports without taking into consideration the actual musico-dramatic texts on which the reports were based; consequently, they inadvertently delineate the reception of *Don Juan* and *Titus* (the German versions) rather than *Don Giovanni* and *Tito*. The investigation by V. Confuorto devoted to the main German version goes deeper into the dramaturgical substance: *Il Don Giovanni di Mozart in Germania. Rochlitz traduce Da Ponte* (Turin: Albisani, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> “[...] wohl keiner die tiefere Bedeutung der Oper aller Opern auch nur ahnete” in *Don Juan*, quoted here from *Fantasiestücke in Callot’s Manier. Werke 1814*, H.



Steinecke ed. in collaboration with G. Allroggen and W. Segebrecht (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), 90.

<sup>9</sup> Among the recent valuable works on the transmission and reception of Don Giovanni in France, Italy, and England, see S. Arianta, *Don Giovanni. Le manipolazioni di un testo nell'Europa della Restaurazione* (Milano: Ricordi, 1994); this work is, however, less concerned with the reception of the opera in the German speaking world. It was in that cultural environment, rather than anywhere else in Europe, that the basis of modern criticism and interpretations were laid.

<sup>10</sup> *Don Juan. Oper in zwei Akten. Nach dem Italienischen des Abb. Da Ponte frei bearbeitet von Friedrich Rochlitz* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1801).

<sup>11</sup> In Rochlitz, the omission of lines portraying the manly commitment of Ottavio such as (in Da Ponte I, 3) "I am ready to shed all my blood if needed, but where is the scum?" ("tutto il mio sangue / verserò se bisogna / ma dov'è il scellerato?") is noteworthy.

<sup>12</sup> "[...] in der Musik, ohne alle Rücksicht auf den Text das ganze Verhältnis der beiden [...] erscheint" (*Don Juan*, 95).

<sup>13</sup> "Das Feuer eine übermenschlichen Sinnlichkeit, Glut aus der Hölle durchströmte ihr Innersten und machte jeden Widerstand vergeblich. Nur Er, nur Don Juan, konnte der wohlüstigen Wahnsinn in ihr entzünden, mit dem sie ihn umfing [...]" (*Don Juan*, 95), translation from B. Williams "Don Juan as an Idea," in *The Don Giovanni Moment. Essays on the Legacy of an Opera*, L. Goehr and D. Herwitz eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 107–17: 110.

<sup>14</sup> "[...] kalten, unmännlichen, ordinären" (ibid.).

<sup>15</sup> Governor: Feiger, Verbrecher / Don Juan: Feiger? Ich? / Governor: Feiger! / Don Juan: Zittre! Bald soll dir dein Trotz vergehn!

<sup>16</sup> R. Schmidt, *Wenn mehrere Künste im Spiel sind. Intermedialität bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> The film casting in the first place descends from the Romantic tradition as to the age of Don Giovanni (mature rather than young) or the aspect of Don Ottavio (fat old fogey rather than dignified aristocrat).

<sup>18</sup> "Come mai creder deggio / di sì nero delitto / capace un cavaliere! / Ah, di scoprire il vero / ogni mezzo si cerchi, io sento in petto / e di sposo e d'amico / il dover che mi parla: / disingannar la voglio, e <o> vendarla."

<sup>19</sup> See the critical edition L. Da Ponte, *Il Don Giovanni*, G. Gronda ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> The opposition between upper class and bourgeoisie, parallel to that between

city and countryside, nature and culture, was a central theme in E. Schikaneder's *Der Tyroler Wastel* (1796, music by J.P. Haibel), discussed by J. Warrack in his *German Opera from the Beginnings to Wagner*, 175.

<sup>21</sup> F. Rochlitz, *Don Juan*, quoted from V. Confuorto, *Il Don Giovanni*, 136.

<sup>22</sup> See Confuorto, *Il Don Giovanni*, 178–80.

<sup>23</sup> 'E' confusa la mia testa / non so più quello ch'io mi faccia / e un'orribile tempesta minacciando / oddio mi va!'

<sup>24</sup> A reverse interpretation could be that Hoffmann's tale was the source of the staging tradition, but I have no clue as to which came first.

<sup>25</sup> Leporello (catalog aria): "Delle vecchie fa conquista / pel piacer di porle in lista"; Rochlitz replaced it with generic remarks on cynicism.

<sup>26</sup> Even against them, in rare cases, such as "Batti batti bel Masetto" or "S'altro che lagrime," No. 21 in Tito. On this piece see my "L'ultima aria di Mozart su testo di Metastasio" in *Studi su Mozart e il Settecento / Studies on Mozart and the 18th Century* (Lucca: L.I.M., 2007), 3–16.

<sup>27</sup> A. Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas. The Cultural and Musical Background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 201.

<sup>28</sup> One must point out that when Steptoe evokes irony, he is referring to a supposed ironic intention of the composer, the recipient of which is the spectator, and not to irony as played among the characters on stage. Irony is a rhetorical figure often implied or actually prescribed by Da Ponte (e.g. in Act I, sc. 20: "Masetto will pronounce this line ironically"), but that is not the one to which the British scholar alludes.

<sup>29</sup> S. Kunze, *Il teatro di Mozart. Dalla Finta semplice al Flauto magico* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1990), 512.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 513.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 7.

<sup>32</sup> L. Finscher, *Don Giovanni 1987*, in *Mozart Jahrbuch 1987/88*, 19–27: 27.

<sup>33</sup> Dieter Borchmeyer, *Mozart oder Die Entdeckung der Liebe* (Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig: Insel, 2005), 142.

<sup>34</sup> Christof H. Bitter, *Wandlungen in den Inszenierungsformen des 'Don Giovanni'* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1961).

<sup>35</sup> I refer in particular to the long original dialogue added in Act I, sc. 4 in which the arguments of traditional morals (Leporello) and those of Juan are juxtaposed; equally important in this new scene are the indications of the para-text which

delineate a new style of stage presentation.

<sup>36</sup> “[...] Allein zu tragen habe ich aber, dass ich zuweilen von dem Italiener ganz— nicht nur in den Worten, sondern auch in Sinn—abgegangen bin. Es geschahe in die Überzeugung, es sei besser getan, den Text aus den herrlichen Musik, als aus den zuweilen doch etwas ungereimten Reimen des Gedichts zu ziehen.” (Confurto, *Il Don Giovanni*, 115).

<sup>37</sup> R. von Freisauff, *Mozart's Don Juan 1787-1887, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte dieser Oper*, herausgegeben anlässlich der 100jährigen Jubelfeier der Oper “Don Juan” von der “Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg” (Salzburg: Kerber, 1887), 71.

<sup>38</sup> This is at least until the publication of the so-called *Alte Mozart-Gesamtausgabe* of 1872, which included a translation by Karl Niese. Even after that, the habits of singers and public alike seem to have ensured the survival of the old text, which had become widely known. According to Freisauff, “since a long time the translation by Rochlitz which appeared in 1801 has been until now the principal one; this, despite its shortcomings, is due uniquely to the circumstance that up to the present time various unsatisfactory attempts did not succeed to reach consensus among the directors of the German stages to accept finally one and the same text for all the German theatres” (“Am längsten behauptet hat sich seither die Übersetzung von Rochlitz, welche 1801 erschienen ist; sie verdankt dies trotz ihrer Mangel einzig und allein dem Umstande, dass es bisher ungeachte mancher Versuche noch immer nicht gelungen ist, unter den Directoren der deutschen Bühnen eine Einigung darüber zu erzielen, endlich einen und denselben Text für sämtliche deutsche Theater zu acceptieren”; von Feisauff, *Mozart's Don Juan*, 71–72).

<sup>39</sup> On this specific aspect see S. Durante, “La *Clemenza di Jahn* ovvero le nozze perturbate di Musica e Filologia” in *L'edizione critica tra testo musicale e testo letterario*, R. Borghi and P. Zappalà eds. (Lucca: L.I.M., 1995), 341–50.

<sup>40</sup> The undated edition must have been published around the last decade of the 19th or the first of the 20th century, as the translation by Max Kalbeck (first published 1886) is quoted in the introduction: “Die Vorigen. Don Juan, Leporello, Zerline. Don Juan und Leporello rechts vorn. Don Octavio, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira in der Mitte. Masetto und Zerline links vorn. [...] Juan (benützt die dadurch entstandene Verwirrung, um mit dem entbloßten Degen in der Hand nach der Mitte hin zu entfließen). Leporello (folgt ihm auf den Fersen, ihn mit seinem Körper schützend). Octavio (zieht seinen Degen, um Juan zu verfolgen). Anna

(hält ihn zurück).” *Don Juan. Oper in zwei Aufzügen von W.A. Mozart. Dichtung von Lorenzo da Ponte* (Rochlitz-Schmidt), C. F. Wittman ed. (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam), 13.

<sup>41</sup> Also relevant in this context is the rise of feminist reflection as in K.A. Brown, “A Critical Study of the Female Characters in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*,” Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> N. Pirrotta, *Don Giovanni in musica. Dall’«Empio punito» a Mozart* (Venezia, Marsilio 1991), 15 ff. For an excellent synthesis on the history of the subject in European literature see H. J. Kreutzer, *Don Juan – From Play to Opera, in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni. Facsimile of the Autograph Score* (Los Altos, Cal.: The Packard Humanities Institute, 2009), 1–11.

<sup>43</sup> “Having found the three subjects [one of which was *Don Giovanni*], I went to the Emperor [...] and informed him of my project to write these three works at the same time [...] I will write by night for Mozart and I will do as if I were reading Dante’s *Inferno*” (L. Da Ponte, *Memorie*, C. Pagnini ed. (Milano: Rizzoli, 1960), 128 (my translation).

<sup>44</sup> On a different but equally interesting line see F. Baker, “The Figures of Hell in the *Don Giovanni* Libretto,” in *Words about Mozart. Essays in Honour of Stanley Sadie*, Dorothea Link ed. with Judith Nagley (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), 77–106.

<sup>45</sup> For a recent study on the Classical sources of Da Ponte, see E. Malaspina, *Lorenzo Da Ponte e il latino. In margine alle Memorie*, in *Amicitiae templa serena. Studi in onore di Giuseppe Aricò*, L. Castagna and C. Ribaldi eds. (Turin: V&P, 2008), 951–67.

<sup>46</sup> On this aspect see the study by S. Arienta, *Don Giovanni*, 3–42.

### *III. Mazzini as Music Critic*

A synthetic and yet comprehensive cultural profile of Giuseppe Mazzini is offered in the influential biography by historian Denis Mack Smith: “[Besides] propagating political revolution and creating the first Italian political party, [Mazzini] was a pioneer in campaigning for social security, suffrage reform and women’s liberation. He was an early opponent of Karl Marx and an effective critic of communism. He was also someone of deep religious conviction who questioned the dogmas of all established Churches. Above all he was a great educator who did more than anyone to formulate the idea of Italian patriotism and stimulate a growing number of people to bring a new nation into being.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Filosofia delle musica*, an essay written by Mazzini in 1835 when he was 30, was well integrated into his educational and political scheme, as demonstrated by a side-by-side reading of Mazzini’s letters and literary and political writings from the same time.<sup>2</sup> In the period immediately preceding the preparation of his *Filosofia*, he and his closer friends were committed to literary criticism rather than political writings. Certain eloquent letters indicate, specifically, that this literary swing, taking place after the failure of the revolutionary invasion of Savoy in 1834, was largely due to the deliberate effort to replace political writings with materials that, while promoting the same essential values, might be found acceptable to Italian authorities and be published locally.<sup>3</sup> Mazzini’s only work on music should be seen in the context of this general choice.

The earliest evidence of an interest in music criticism in the literary periodicals in which Mazzini was directly involved is found in a letter of November 23, 1835 presenting, among other things, the editorial plan of the first issue of a *Rivista della letteratura europea*, slated for publication in Lugano. The table of contents listed 11 essays distributed over four sections:

- a) Literary section: “On the literature of the XIX century,” “On literary materialism in France,” “Byron and Goethe,” “German dramatists: Werner (first part)”

- b) Ethical section: “On the social condition of women”
- c) Scientific section: “Political economy,” “Philosophical anatomy”
- d) Arts: “The Strasburg cathedral, impressions of an artist,”  
“Parisian nights, *Robert le diable*, *I Puritani*, *Chatterton*”

Little more than 20 days separate this letter from another one in which Mazzini declares the *Filosofia* completed.<sup>4</sup> While the journal might have been planned to host materials of musical interest, the two projects appear different.

The formulation of the report “Parisian nights” suggests it was a chronicle from somebody attending performances; however, Mazzini was at the time confined at Grenchen in Switzerland. As we shall see, important parts of the *Filosofia della musica* must have been the fruit of cooperation between Mazzini and a collaborator in Paris. That is to say, a significant part of the text may not have been written by Mazzini at all. According to the same letter, the essay was to be published anonymously and had been commissioned (or at least prompted) by a person whose name is not found in the sources. The project to publish in Italy was aborted because the Piedmontese minister of home affairs was informed that Mazzini was one of the journal’s collaborators; the text of the essay soon found its way into a short-lived periodical, *l’italiano*, published in Paris for six months during the following year (in three installments between June and August of 1836).<sup>5</sup> The journal was then circulated—apparently rather broadly—in various Italian cities.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting that while most literary efforts by Mazzini were independent undertakings, in this case he had an external incentive. Mazzini recognized the romantic hierarchy of the arts that placed music in the crowning position,<sup>7</sup> and one might ask if he thought himself not qualified for the task, or if he found it too difficult to attend performances at that time. Even if Mazzini did not start the project independently, he appreciated the potential of opera as a vehicle for moral upbringing and consequently, in line with his philosophical stances, for political and moral action. Only one year earlier he had stated that “each and every artistic matter comes down in the final analysis to a matter of religion.”<sup>8</sup> And it is in the same line of thought that in his essay *Della fatalità considerata come elemento drammatico*, published in the same journal, he envisioned and

theorized a “Dramma della Provvidenza” (Drama of Providence) that—after the Aeschylean “Drama of fate” and the Shakespearean “Drama of the individual”—had found its prophet and forerunner in Friedrich Schiller. As Mazzini put it: “The great social idea, which is the secret of our times, is the soul of his dramas.”<sup>9</sup>

Turning back from the general to the particular, Mazzini’s competence in matters of music was comparatively strong. Although we do not have much detail about his formal musical education, it is well documented that he was a rather expert guitar player and loved to sing to his own accompaniment; his music handwriting reveals confidence and frequency; and he collected music for piano and voice that he might have read silently or performed at the piano. His letters testify to an interest in music—both vocal and instrumental—throughout his life (even if overshadowed by the intensity of his political commitment).

A general idea of his current musical opinions just before he started writing the *Filosofia* might be gleaned from a letter addressed to the young pianist Andrea Gambini (who had sent him a piece of his own composition) in the summer of 1835:<sup>10</sup>

Dear Andrea,

I have received and not yet played your music, because I have not a guitar with me at this time. I will in a few days, and I will play it. At a glance it appears nice, but this is not what I want to tell you now [...] you sure have a brilliant career ahead of you. I wish [...] for your name to ascend to a sphere which might give you much glory and little grief. The school of Rossini is now practically at an end. And there is need for someone able to combine the liveliness and fertility of his genius with the profundity and science of German music. Give yourself entirely to composition—ponder and feel deeply—study the great masters—then write as genius and heart will command, without sterility of precepts. Remember me sometimes [...]

The passage is especially interesting because it reveals, on Mazzini’s part and in the context of a private communication, a particular attention to the German musical tradition that might have been stated in more restrictive terms and with a shade of Italian chauvinism.<sup>11</sup>

With his prophetic attitude, Mazzini predicted the fulfillment of a democratic, republican society in which music would acquire, thanks to the work of a superior artist, a more dignified and socially oriented role. Appropriately, the *Filosofia della musica* is dedicated “Ignoto numini” or “to an unknown god” (or rather “hero”) to whom the realization of the music of the future would be entrusted:<sup>12</sup>

That genius will rise. Once the times are ripe and the believers who shall worship his creations: he will rise without fail. I will not presume here to say how, or in what way, he will reach his goal. The ways of genius are hidden, like those of God, who inspires him.

While the essay has been described (by Monterosso in 1947) as the “theoretic manifesto” of Risorgimento music,<sup>13</sup> in reality it is better regarded as either more, or less, than that. It is more, in the sense that Mazzini imagined the music of the future on a grand multinational scale, according to his visionary (and prophetic) project for a federation of European nations. The music he was dreaming of had to represent a “European” synthesis; he thought of it as proceeding from the fusion between Italian and German music. According to an established tradition, he summarized its two essential characters as “melody” and “harmony.” Geographically, these terms referred to the south and the north (of Europe); philosophically, to the “individual” element (melody) and the “social” element (harmony). Clearly this is a very abstract, generalist approach to music criticism. In this respect, the *Filosofia* was much more than a manifesto for Risorgimento music.

Historically speaking, however, the essay was less than that because, while the music of Risorgimento soon came to be identified—for better or for worse—with Giuseppe Verdi’s early production (or part of it), Mazzini, faithful until the end to his own vision, never recognized Verdi as the “unknown god” of his dedication—his preference, as we shall see, wavered between Gaetano Donizetti and Giacomo Meyerbeer.

This is quite interesting, as it raises the question not so much of Mazzini’s musical competence, but of his intellectual profile and, more conspicuously, of his relationship with the “music of Risorgimento.” In



an article which is possibly the most authoritative recent musicological reflection on this subject, Gary Tomlinson has described the relationship between Mazzini the theoretician and the “musical Risorgimento” as essentially a specular one. Mazzini represented a source of inspiration and/or a cultural resource for composers who—notably Verdi—achieved and realized his ideological plan.

This interpretation, placed in the context of a discourse on Italian Romantic opera, is affected by a preference for those unanimistic representations of Risorgimento (those that prevailed in the serendipitous invention of the centralized Italian Kingdom in 1861). By and large, this image is not different from the traditional heroic representations of the Italian unification process.<sup>14</sup> It necessarily tends to minimize those conflicting elements that—then and afterwards—engendered endless polemics between Italian monarchists and republicans, federalists and centralists, bourgeois liberals, radicals and conservatives.

Although these political differences are not necessarily reflected as such in music criticism, we need to ask if the idea of a substantial parallelism between Mazzini’s musical ideals and the “music of Risorgimento”—a problematic notion in its own right—is indeed persuasive. In my opinion, the evidence must be interpreted in a different way, perhaps less appealing and goal-oriented, but more fitting with historical reality.

In the realm of musical theater that he was discussing, certainly an important part of “Risorgimento music” but by no means the only one—popular hymns representing perhaps the most important “aural” experience of the time—Tomlinson’s parallelism is built on the following assumptions:

\* that Mazzini recognized in Donizetti (most notably in his recent *Marino Faliero*) the music of the future, a fact that was partially true in 1835, as attested by the text of the *Filosofia*, but about which Mazzini (a) changed his mind in due time (before 1862) and (b) was only partly responsible, as the relevant section of the *Filosofia* was not written by him, but by Agostino Ruffini, the reviser of *Marino Faliero*’s libretto for Paris;<sup>15</sup> Mazzini had no direct experience of the opera, being confined in Switzerland at the time, and his personal point of view is best represented by his revised text for the 1862 edition of his collected works, in which that section was entirely omitted;

\* that Verdi stylistically represented an upgrading of tendencies, and of musico-dramatic tools and gestures already present in Donizetti. Personally, I find this quite convincing, but since Mazzini turned away from Donizetti as a model, the same can be presumed with regard to Verdi, insofar as he was following Donizetti's model; and indeed the evidence shows that Verdi was not Mazzini's man for the theater;

\* finally, and perhaps as a grounding aesthetic premise, that in his *Filosofia* Mazzini had conceived a "second incarnation" of Romanticism, which was then achieved in opera by the aforementioned composers.<sup>16</sup>

The most outspoken statement on the subject was made by William Ashbrook (and shared by Tomlinson) when he said that Donizetti "had created [in *Lucrezia Borgia* and in *Maria Stuarda*] quite literally, Mazzini's "music-drama of the future."<sup>17</sup> Taken to its extreme such "second Romanticism" leads us directly to *Rigoletto*: "This convergence in Verdi's *Rigoletto* of [Victor] Hugo's dramatic and Donizetti's melodramatic ideals marks the opera as the artistic consummation of the second phase of Italian Romanticism, the phase initiated by Mazzini and others around 1830."<sup>18</sup>

While I find it legitimate to recognize stylistic and cultural roots of *Rigoletto* in Donizetti, attributing them to Mazzini represents a misunderstanding of the latter's poetics, both explicit and implicit. It is not so much a problem of terminology (Mazzini would never have accepted for himself the qualification of Romantic—in fact, he articulated a well-developed anti-Romantic criticism) as of substance. What Mazzini considered Romanticism is quite different from that of both Ashbrook and Tomlinson, and is more in tune with the Romantic theory exposed by August Schlegel and Madame de Staël; it is relative to the character of the subject and especially to the presence of the irrational element. Mazzini appreciated the anti-classicist function that Romanticism had had in the generation before his, but he opposed it from a political standpoint, and believed that it had exhausted its function within European culture.<sup>19</sup>

For Mazzini, there was a fundamental difference between an opera subject derived from Walter Scott and one from Friedrich Schiller, just as there was between "Romantic art" and "Social art." The misunderstanding about the use of the label "Romantic" in the realm of music theater derives probably from the relative continuity that both Ashbrook and Tomlinson (or, more generally, contemporary listeners) recognize in the musical lan-

guage of the time. Hence under the label “Romanticism, second incarnation of” are works Mazzini perceived as substantially different; *Marino Faliero*—as well as *I Puritani*—represented social art, not Romantic opera.<sup>20</sup>

The desire to connect Mazzini to the roots of Italian Romantic opera (in its so-called second incarnation) requires one to overlook what Mazzini actually said. Tomlinson, for instance, connects Mazzini’s discussion of the use of the chorus to Verdi: “the moving and unequivocal characterization of the chorus in his operas, for example, may realize more powerfully than before one of Mazzini’s prerequisites for the new style [...]”<sup>21</sup>

Mazzini did indeed call for more space for the chorus—not surprisingly, as they represented popular presence and historical agency—but he rejected the monodic chorus as follows:<sup>22</sup>

At present the part assigned to the chorus is, generally speaking, like that assigned to the people in Alfieri’s tragedies, confined to the expression of one single sentiment or idea, in a single melody sung in unison by ten or twenty voices [...] Ought not, however, the chorus—a collective individuality—be allowed an independent and spontaneous life of its own, as surely as the people, whose natural representative it is? [...] through the concertato, the alternation, the co-mingling of a variety of melodies, of multiple musical phrases, intersected, combined, harmonized one to the other with questions and answers, to represent the multiple variety of sensations, opinions, affections and desires that ordinarily agitate the masses?

Mazzini is elaborating a compositional fantasy that involves a polyphonic, broken, intertwined choral writing, something that simulates the many-sided reality of a group, of “the people.” What he rejects is precisely the symbolic, unrealistic unanimity of the monophonic chorus (already in existence before Verdi). While there is little question that many monophonic opera choruses became emblems of the revolutionary process, these were not the ones that Mazzini had in mind.

If there is a gap between Mazzini’s imagination and the reality of

Italian opera, perhaps we should look closer at the tastes and consumption habits of this most exceptional and exceptionally stubborn man. A man who, with all that he listened to and watched of Donizetti and Verdi, never really came to accept them as the achievers of the opera “of Providence” that he was dreaming of.<sup>23</sup> The question could be stated even more directly as follows: what did Mazzini care about when listening to music, and to musical theater in particular?

Before we proceed further, one philological remark about the text is in order. The original 1836 version of the essay was modified in two significant sections by Mazzini himself both on the occasion of the 1862 edition of his writings and of the 1867 English translation by Emilie Ashurst Venturi.

Early editions of Mazzini’s *Filosofia della musica*:

- \* 1836 (June, July, August) in *L’Italiano, foglio letterario*, Paris
- \* 1847 in *Scritti letterari di un Italiano vivente*, Lugano
- \* 1862 *Scritti editi ed inediti di Giuseppe Mazzini, edizione diretta dall’autore*, vol. IV (vol. II, *Letteratura*), Milano
- \* 1867 *Philosophy of Music*, authorized revised ed. and transl. by Emilie Ashurst Venturi

Modern editions:

- \* 1911 *Filosofia della musica* in *Edizione nazionale degli scritti*, vol. VIII (restores the 1836 text)
- \* 1943 *Filosofia della musica*, introduzione di Adriano Lualdi, Milano, Bocca (1836 text)
- \* 1977 *Filosofia della musica e estetica musicale del primo Ottocento. Testi scelti di Andrea Majer, Marco Santucci, Lorenzo Neri, Abramo Basevi, Giovanni Battista Rinuccini*, Marcello De Angelis ed., Rimini-Firenze, Guaraldi (1836 text)
- \* 2001 *Philosophie de la Musique. Vers un opéra social (1835)*, traduit de l’italien et présenté par Martin Kaltenecker, Paris, Van Dieren (1836 text)
- \* 2004 *Giuseppe Mazzini’s Philosophy of Music (1836). Envisioning a Social Opera. English Translation by E.A.V. (1867)*, edited and annotated by Franco Sciannameo [with a Foreword by Lawrence Kramer], Lewiston, Edwin Mellen (both 1836 and 1867 versions of the text included).

It is quite significant that *all* Italian modern editions present the 1836 text and ignore Mazzini's definitive 1867 text. Evidently the 1867 text was a less patriotic version because it eliminated the laudatory section on Donizetti and was much more Europe-oriented in its modelization of Meyerbeer's music theater. Patriotism still wins out over philology in the Italian transmission of the text.

It is noteworthy that Mazzini at age 57 (26 years after his original 1836 version) removed the section discussing in some detail works by Donizetti, a composer that he had hailed as a possible "musician of the future." What remained in the text about Donizetti was a reference to the Faliero-Bertucci duet at the very beginning of the essay and a wish for the future at its end (Donizetti, however, had died in 1848).

The removed section (as well as much of the criticism of Rossini that was not removed) is the work of Agostino Ruffini. To a careful reader this might have been revealed by internal evidence: Mazzini could not have attended the Parisian performances described in the essay: *Marino Faliero*<sup>24</sup> was premiered there in the spring of 1835 while he was in Grenchen.<sup>25</sup> The authorship of this section of *Filosofia* is patently revealed by a letter from Agostino Ruffini to his mother of March 26, 1835, published many years ago but long ignored by music historians:

[...] As I told you in my last one, Donizzetti (sic) gave his *Marino Faliero* in Paris. I have hardly heard any more beautiful and grandiose music. It is no longer the sensation of Rossinism: it is the *idea* which dominates this score. There is a duet between the Doge, insulted by the patrician Steno, and Bertucci the plebeian conspirator, which is a masterpiece of art and logic. Your soul, time and again, is moved, shivers, tightens up. I wrote a long article under the inspiration of that powerful music. I developed some of my cherished ideas; I said something negative about Rossini, admitting however that he is the great master, the Napoleon of music. I went to some journalists. I cannot tell you all the compliments that they piled on me.—I write French better than the French themselves: my ideas are all that there is of most true,

of the newest. Nonetheless, you see, Monsieur, we would not dare print your article in our journal because of your comments on Rossini... they are correct, but Rossini is a big name.—Such base-ness disgusted me. So, they do not dare tell the truth in France, not even when discussing art? I was tempted to rip up my article. One of my friends took it from me, saying that he would try to find a journal which dared tell the truth. We shall see. Here's what French journalists are.<sup>26</sup>

What happened then is that an article refused by the French press became part of an essay on music conceived with a more ambitious outlook by a prominent personality. Mazzini eliminated the sections with which he no longer identified years later.

Mazzini could have had no part in the appreciation of the Paris performance of *Marino Faliero*, but it is certainly possible he treasured the opera's subject, which came from Byron (albeit through Delavigne) and told the story of a failed conspiracy (much like the ones he had recently lived through), and included topical moments such as the conspirators' "oath."<sup>27</sup> In the opening section of the *Filosofia*, this is what Mazzini had to say about Byron:

That true, intense, Byronian art which dwells upon and deepens the conception with progressive increase of power, until it is incarnated in your heart and becomes a portion of your very self—that art is neglected and lost. Today we no longer penetrate the soul, we skim the surface of feeling; the emotion is not fully exhausted, it is simply hinted at. Composers study to produce *effects*; but *the effect*, the one, general, dominant effect that should be irresistibly produced by the whole of the work, and reinforced by the thousand secondary impressions scattered throughout the piece, who thinks of that? Who ever looks for *one* main idea in a musical drama? Who goes beyond the restricted circle of the separate scenes of which *an opera* is made, to grasp their connection, their common centre?<sup>28</sup>

Mazzini evidently deplored the fragmentation of a work of art

into parts that did not functionally reinforce a single idea (a moral idea, unsurprisingly) that also had to support dramatic exposition. He despised the search for “effect”<sup>29</sup> and the understanding (and social consumption) of opera as a sequence of entertaining “moments.”

It is likely that his friend Ruffini—like many others who were under Mazzini’s spell—shared Mazzini’s views and considered the above-mentioned duet (in Act I) a particularly cogent moment of the musical drama, “a masterpiece of art and logic,” as Ruffini wrote. Certainly Mazzini accepted his friend’s opinion on a recently premiered opera, judged by Parisian audiences alongside Bellini’s *I Puritani* (in which another duet for two basses, the famous “Suoni la tromba,” had made a *furore* in the same season).<sup>30</sup> It is also possible that the two republicans were, more or less consciously, sympathizing with Donizetti in part because he let them use his address for their secret political activities.

The cooperation on the text of *Filosofia* might have been the result of an inextricable mix of these elements. It is significant that Mazzini and Ruffini’s friendship came to an end at about this time as a consequence of conflicts between the uncompromising republican (faithful to his ideals until the end) and the high bourgeois revolutionary who later became a member of Parliament for the same king who had signed his (and Mazzini’s) death sentence.<sup>31</sup>

Whatever occasioned the cooperation between the two writers, Mazzini omitted the praise of Donizetti in the 1862 edition. He might have excluded the parts written by Ruffini on account of authorial considerations, which is possible but not entirely convincing because in that case he should also have trimmed the criticism of Rossini that was also, in part or in whole, Ruffini’s contribution. More likely, he had simply changed his mind, as the addition on Meyerbeer in the 1867 English language edition clearly shows. He kept, however—or perhaps did not care to omit—the reference to the Faliero-Bertucci duet, but removed the relatively detailed dramaturgical analysis. A reading of this piece (“nuovo, sublime e veramente ispirato”) is interesting both on account of traits that mesh with the theorizing of *Filosofia*, and of others that do not.

At the level of subject and character definition, Israele Bertucci and Marino Faliero are perfectly in sync and more importantly, refer symbolically to two principles: the popular principle, “intolerant of the yoke,”

and the aristocratic principle, “offended in the most vital part of its essence, i.e. honor.”<sup>32</sup>

At the level of musico-dramatic progression the piece presents a cyclic heightening of the tension, achieved with different musical gestures and styles, culminating in Faliero’s resolution to be part of the conspiracy, and in the triumphant, forward-projecting cabaletta ending.

The decisive turning point is the accompanied recitative—a sort of expressive close-up—in which Bertucci, abandoning all political considerations, drives Faliero into the conspiracy by recalling the wounds to his honor inflicted by Steno, the aristocrat who publicly exposed the presumed infidelity of the elderly Doge’s young wife. This progression, based on a simple and effective musical strategy encompassing changes of phraseology, tempo, rhythm, style, tessitura, orchestration, and key, is well described in metaphorical terms by Ruffini:

What an admirable mastery of musical doctrine and of physiological human science at once, mastery of progressive urgency in Israele and of progressive excitement in Faliero; you would imagine a blade penetrating more and more the Doge’s chest at Israele’s hand. Then, when the cry of the violated people is not enough, and Israele throws on the scale *l’onta del doge*, it has the effect of a stroke to the heart; Faliero’s rapid announcement of the future victories to Bertucci: *Venezia avrà il brando di Falier* that rises to the stars and frees the souls from the weight of anguishing uncertainty that oppressed it [...]<sup>33</sup>

This echoes Byron’s art “of insisting on one concept, with a progressive increase of power, until it enters, it becomes embodied in you, it gets to your heart.”<sup>34</sup>

Not all the features in the duet correspond to Mazzini’s theoretical views. For instance, most melodic material is shared by the two characters, whereas Mazzini called for a “musical expression belonging to that [particular] character, and not to others.”<sup>35</sup> I doubt that such incongruities, relevant to the modern scholar probably more than to the 19th-century listener, motivated Mazzini’s exclusion of the duet analysis. Much more important was the new orientation of Mazzini’s thought as demonstrated



not only by the removal of that section of the text, but also and especially by the 1867 addition on Meyerbeer placed climactically at the end of the essay.<sup>36</sup> While his favorite composer had changed, the fundamental theoretical elements persisted: the guiding principle of a “Drama of Providence,” “duty” as a key-element, the polarization between characters symbolizing good and evil, the fusion of German and Italian music, the interest for historical and local color, and—I believe—a degree of personal identification. The description of Marcel’s character in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* appears to be almost a double of Mazzini himself:

[The] human expression [within the opera is found] in the austere, insistent, severe yet loving musical individuality of Marcel, in whom the rugged invincible earnestness of the believer ever rises above and dominates alike the lightest and most brilliant or gloomiest and most bigoted scene of the Catholic world by which he is surrounded; so that his very presence on the stage arouses in the heart of the spectator the sense of a providential influence at work to bring about the triumph of good through human suffering, sacrifice, and love.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, Meyerbeer is not viewed as the Messiah of the new music but rather as a John the Baptist of sorts, and the advent of the new music, which appeared imminent in 1835, is now deferred to an indefinite future:

In a period of transition like our own, we may not expect the High Priest of the Music of the future to appear amongst us; but Meyerbeer is the precursor spirit, sent to announce his coming.<sup>38</sup>

But what about Italy, the country to which Mazzini had entrusted the historical mission of developing a European music? Mazzini elaborates on some misinformation in order to assess a degree of *italianità* for his hero:

Of German descent, though born in Italian Istria, one might almost fancy this combination of the two elements in his own person, significant, symbolic, and prophetic. The figure of Giacomo Meyerbeer appears before us as the first link between the

two worlds, the complete union of which will constitute the highest Music of the future.<sup>39</sup>

And, what about Verdi, who had been seen by many—though certainly not by Mazzini—as the achiever of his musical ideals? A letter to the translator of the *Filosofia*, Emilie Ashurst Venturi, highlights the distance between Mazzini the theoretician of opera and Mazzini the listener, emphasizing the divide between a well-organized rational mind and a passionate sensibility. Only eleven days after sending his final praise of Meyerbeer, Mazzini writes:<sup>40</sup>

Again and again, I found the *Trovatore* not to my taste: [and yet] the scene of the Miserere, etc. being an astonishing-wonderful perfect inspiration descended there, I don't know how.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> D. Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. Smith surmises that, besides the 10,000 published letters, hundreds of thousands must have been destroyed.

<sup>3</sup> See the letter written by Agostino Ruffini (jointly with Mazzini) to Gaspare Ordoño de Rosales on November 23, 1835 (in G. Mazzini, *Edizione nazionale degli scritti*, hereafter *ENS*), vol. 11, 133 ff. The project to publish in Lugano with Rosales was makeshift, having proved impossible to obtain permission to publish the journal in Genova as originally planned.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Grenchen to Gaspare Ordoño de Rosales in Lugano on Dec. 15, 1835: “I will try and send something [referring to literary materials for Lugano] and I would have done it already if I had time. But the French article first, then the Young Switzerland, an essay on Italian music, which I have finished the day before yesterday, and other works, take my time” (“Vedrò anch’io poi di mandare qualche cosa: e l’avrei già fatto se avessi avuto tempo. Ma lo scritto francese prima, poi la *Giovine Svizzera*, uno scritto sulla musica italiana, che ho finito l’altro ieri, ed altri lavori, mi pigliano il tempo”), *ENS*, vol. 9, 158. He wrote on the next day to his mother in Genova, “Then, I have a lot to do to finish a certain pamphlet on Italian music—imagine—which was commissioned to me and that I had to do. Perhaps it will be published in Italy, therefore, it is understood, anonymous” (“Poi, ho a far molto, per finire certo opuscolo sulla musica italiana – figuratevi – che m’è stato commesso, e ch’io dovea fare. Forse, verrà stampato in Italia, quindi, ben inteso, senza nome”), *ENS*, vol. 9, 154.

<sup>5</sup> On the history of this journal for which Mazzini wrote a rather lengthy Programme, see A. Linaker, *La vita ed i tempi di Enrico Mayer*, vol. I (Firenze: Barbera 1898), 365 ff. *L’Italiano* was published between May and October 1836. On the illegal import of the journal in Italy, see Mazzini’s letter to his mother of July 10, 1836 from Soleure, “[...] however I know for sure that *l’Italiano* has arrived illegally in Turin, and did not meet with obstacles – Apparently, as you say, somebody must have seen it because they talked about it to [my] uncle” (“bench’io sappia di certo che *l’Italiano* è entrato *sous-bande* a Torino, e non ha

patito ostacoli – Pare, a quanto mi dite, che qualcuno l’abbia veduto, poiché ne hanno parlato allo zio”), *ENS*, vol. 11, 419–22: 421.

<sup>6</sup> A. Linaker discusses the diffusion strategies for *l’Italiano* at a time when many journals had been suppressed: “Being suppressed *l’Indicatore genovese*, *l’Indicatore livornese*, *l’Antologia*, a national press was no longer possible in Italy. Lambruschini and Viessesux were busy with the *Guida dell’Educatore*; but that too would have to be submitted to the censor and no article even remotely alluding to political matters could be published. Being equally suppressed the *Young Switzerland*, Italian exiles were thinking to a different journal which was in fact initiated” (“Soppresso *l’Indicatore genovese*, *l’Indicatore livornese*, *l’Antologia*, non era più possibile una stampa nazionale in Italia. Il Lambruschini ed il Viessesux attendevano alla *Guida dell’Educatore*; ma anch’essa avrebbe dovuto esser sempre sottoposta ad una censura e non vi si potevano pubblicare articoli che accennassero anche di lontano a soggetti politici. Soppressa anche la *Giovine Svizzera*, gli esuli italiani pensavano ad un altro giornale e il giornale sorse”), *La vita e i tempi di Carlo Mayer*, 365 ff.

<sup>7</sup> On this see his essay *La peinture moderne en Italie* (1840), in *ENS*, vol. XXI, 245332: 250 ff.: “[About Painting] il faut bien le dire, sur l’échelle del l’Art, au dessous de la Poésie, comme celle-ci au dessous de la Musique. Plus emprisonnée dans la forme, elle ne monte jamais si haut que se deux soeurs ainée, dans son élan vers l’Infini; pourtant elle les aide elles-mêmes à monter, et monte toujours avec elles.” He proceeds with the example of J.S. Bach “quand il se plaçait pour écrire son Oratoire de la Passion devant un tableau de Dürer,” 251.

<sup>8</sup> “Ogni questione d’arte si riduce in ultimo ad una questione religiosa” (see *Potenze intellettuali contemporanee*, *Victor Hugo*, first published in 1835, quoted from I. Grieco, *La concezione estetica mazziniana e la filosofia della musica* (Napoli: Lofredo 1970), 28.

<sup>9</sup> (“La grande idea sociale ch’è il segreto dell’epoca nostra, è l’anima de’ suoi drammi”); specifically he quotes *Masnadiari* (*Die Räuber*) and *Amore e raggio* (*Kabale und Liebe*) as works in which Schiller was still reflecting the prevalent spirit of his times, stating however that he went far beyond that: “In Schiller man is free: free and empowered of a power that neither the classic authors nor Shakespeare could even suspect” (“L’uomo è libero in Schiller: libero e potente di una potenza che gli antichi e Shakespeare neppur sospettavano”), *ENS*, vol. 8, 169–200: 197.

<sup>10</sup> From Grenchen, July 13, 1835, to Andrea Gambini Jr. in Genova (“Caro Andrea, ho ricevuto e non ancora sonata la vostra musica, perché non ho in questo

momento chitarra presso di me. L'avrò fra pochi giorni e l'eseguirò. Guardandola ad occhio mi par bella, ma non è questo che io voglio dirvi in questo momento [...] certo, avete una bella carriera davati a voi. Desidero [...] che il vostro nome s'innalzi in una sfera che può darvi molta gloria e pochi dolori. La scuola di Rossini è ora pressoché esaurita. E v'è bisogno di qualcheduno che alla vivacità e fecondità del suo genio riunisca la profondità e la scienza della musica tedesca. Consacratevi tutto alla composizione – meditate e sentite fortemente – studiate i grandi maestri – poi scrivete come il genio e il cuore vi diranno senza sterilità di precetti. Ricordatevi talvolta di me [...]”; *ENS, Appendix I*, 316–17). Precise consideration of chronology prevents us from accepting the idea, submitted by Monterosso (*La musica nel Risorgimento*, Milano, Vallardi 1948, 10) and Grieco (*La concezione estetica*, 47), according to whom the *Filosofia* was an outcome of the psychological crisis that affected Mazzini at the time of his expulsion from Switzerland, the so-called “tempesta del dubbio.” In reality, the essay was completed before and appears to have no significant connection with that phase, which Mazzini dramatically described in his autobiography.

<sup>11</sup> The following sentence, significantly, was omitted from the 1867 English translation: “Then, whatever people may say, and whatever Italians, many of them at least, might refuse nowadays, it is written that all, or almost all, the principles of great things, have to come out of Italy” (“Poi, checché si dica, e checché gli Italiani, molti almeno, anche oggi rinneghino, è scritto che tutti, o quasi, i principii delle grandi cose, abbiano ad escir d’Italia”); from now on I will quote the Italian text from the most readily available despite unsatisfactory edition: G. Mazzini, *Filosofia della musica e estetica musicale del primo Ottocento*, Marcello De Angelis ed. (Rimini: Guaraldi 1977), 49.

<sup>12</sup> *Giuseppe Mazzini’s Philosophy of Music*, 49. Italian text in *Filosofia* (1977), 60: “Quel genio sorgerà. Maturi i tempi e i credenti che dovranno venerarne le creazioni: sorgerà senza fallo. Né io qui m’assumo dire il come, o per che vie verrà da lui raggiunto l’intento. Le vie del genio sono segrete, come quelle di Dio, che lo spira.”

<sup>13</sup> R. Monterosso, *La musica nel Risorgimento*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> For a synthetic account see D. Beales – E.F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (Longman, Pearson, 2002, Italian transl. Il Mulino, Bologna 2005).

<sup>15</sup> A. Ruffini, close friend and political supporter of Mazzini, was personally involved in the production of the opera in Paris, (the original version of the libretto

had been written for Naples by Giovanni Emanuele Bidera).

<sup>16</sup> G. Tomlinson, "Italian Romanticism and Italian Opera: an Essay in Their Affinities," *19th Century Music*, 10, 1986, 50: "Opera played a prominent role in Mazzini's program for political and cultural revival. In this he differed from the earlier Romantics." Ibid., 55: "The Romanticism of Italian opera came of age in these works [i.e., Donizetti's production 1830–1835], Romanticism in its second, Mazzinian incarnation."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 58 and W. Ashbrook, *Donizetti* (Turin, 1987), 349, 686.

<sup>18</sup> See Tomlinson, "Italian Romanticism," 59.

<sup>19</sup> *Giuseppe Mazzini's Philosophy of Music*, 31: "Romanticism, as I have elsewhere said, though potent to destroy, was impotent to build up; essentially a theory of transition, it was impossible it should not contain any organic conception or idea. But before the human mind could enter the new path, the path of Social Art, Romanticism was required to liberate it from the tyranny of schools and precisionists" (*Filosofia*, 38: "Il Romanticismo, come altrove si è detto, ha potuto distruggere, non edificare; fu teorica essenzialmente di transizione: concetto organico non ebbe; né lo potea. Ad avviar l'intelletto sulle vie dell'arte bisognava liberarlo da tutte le tirannidi di precettisti e di scuole").

<sup>20</sup> It should be added that these two operas in particular assumed specific and transparent political overtones within the milieu of Italian political expatriates in Paris: *I Puritani* portrayed a revolution led by aristocrats (as had been the case with the first wave of Italian exiles from 1820–21), while in *Faliero* the revolutionary action is prompted by "the people" against aristocratic privilege. Of course "the people" as a term contains all the ambiguity of pre-Marxist and essentially bourgeois political theory.

<sup>21</sup> Tomlinson, "Italian Romanticism," 59.

<sup>22</sup> "Oggi il coro, generalmente parlando, è, come il coro nelle tragedie alferiane, condannato all'espressione d'un'unica idea, d'un unico sentimento, in un'unica melodia che suona concordemente su dieci, su venti bocche [...] Or perché il coro, individualità collettiva, non otterrebbe come il popolo di ch'esso è interpretato, vita propria, indipendente, spontanea? [...] col concertato, coll'avvicinarsi, coll'intrecciarsi di più melodie, di più frasi musicali, intersecate, combinate, armonizzate l'una coll'altra a interrogazioni, a risposte, della varietà molteplice di sensazioni, di pareri, di affetti, e di desideri che freme d'ordinario nelle moltitudini?" (*Filosofia*, 65–66). For different views on the use and abuse of the chorus in

Opera see the notes appended by Gherardini to his commented Italian translation of A.W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen (Corso di letteratura drammatica*, transl. by G. Gherardini, new ed. [Genova: M. Puppo, 1977]).

<sup>23</sup> By trying to answer this question we might also gain some insight about the “tepid” reception of the *Filosofia della musica*, a text that has been equally ignored in the *Mazzini* entry of the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* and in the *Philosophy of music* entry of the *New Grove Dictionary* as if the work was standing, as Germans would say, “between two chairs” (*zwischen zwei Stühle*). The essay has received scholarly attention confined, with few exceptions, to Risorgimento studies rather than to historical musicology. This is not without reason, because perhaps Mazzini—being far ahead of his time in many ways—ended up having only a minor impact on the music scene of his time, and/or because he was promoting an ideal of synthesis that contradicted the rising nationalism.

<sup>24</sup> Libretto by Giovanni Emanuele Bidera, with revisions by Agostino Ruffini, after Casimir Delavigne's tragedy. Cfr. *New Grove Opera* entry *Marino Faliero*.

<sup>25</sup> In his excellent edition of the *Filosofia*, Franco Sciannameo has noticed the chronological incongruence and questioned the possibility that Mazzini attended the performance: “His description of the opera's various choruses, arias, and duets are so passionately accurate that one becomes convinced that he attended the opera parisian première somewhat *incognito*,” 15; the reality is that Ruffini, and not Mazzini wrote the report on the *Faliero*.

<sup>26</sup> “[...] Comme je vous le disais dans ma dernière, Donizzetti (*sic*) a donné à Paris son *Marino Faliero*. J'ai entendu peu de musiques plus belles et plus grandioses. Ce n'est plus la *sensation* du Rossinisme : c'est *l'idée* qui domine cette partition. Il y a un duo entre le Doge outragé par le patricien Steno et Bertucci le conjuré plebeïen, qui est un chef d'oeuvre d'art et de logique. Votre âme tour a tour s'émeut, frissonne, se serre. J'avait écrit un long article sous l'inspiration de cette musique puissante. J'avais développée quelques-unes des mes idées chéries ; j'avais dit un peu de mal de Rossini, tout en convenant que c'était le grand-maître, le Napoléon de la musique. J'allais chez quelques journalistes. Je ne saurais vous dire toutes les louanges, dont on m'assomma. J'écrivis mieux le français que les français eux-mêmes : mes idées sont tout ce qu'il y a de plus vrai, de plus neuf. Cependant, voyez-vous, monsieur, nous n'oserions pas imprimer dans notre journal votre article à cause de vos remarques sur Rossini... elles sont justes, mais Rossini est un grand nom. Tant de bassesse me dégoûta. On n'ose donc en France dire la vérité, pas même lorsqu'il s'agit d'art ? J'étais tenté de déchirer mon article. Un de mes

amis s'en empara, disant qu'il essayerait de trouver un journal, qu'osât dire la vérité. Nous verrons. Voilà ce que sont les journalistes français. [...]" (Agostino Ruffini to his mother, originally in French, published in A. Codignola, *I fratelli Ruffini* Genova: Marsano, 1925, 248).

<sup>27</sup> On this subject and more generally on the imagery of Risorgimento see Banti A. M., *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> "L'arte sovrana byroniana, profonda, l'arte che solca e scava, l'arte d'insistere sul concetto, con incremento progressivo di forza, finché s'addentri, s'incarni, s'invisceri in voi, è negletta e perduta. Oggi non si solca, si sfiora, non s'esaurisce la sensazione, s'accenna. Si studian *gli effetti; all'effetto*, all'effetto unico, generale, predominante che avrebbe ad emergere irresistibilmente da tutto quanto il lavoro, ad alimentarsi delle mille impressioni secondarie, disseminate per entro a quello, chi bada? Chi cerca al dramma musicale una idea? Chi varca oltre il cerchio particolare delle varie scene che compongono un'opera, per afferrare un nesso, un centro comune?" (*Filosofia*, De Angelis' edition, 42).

<sup>29</sup> Wagner comes to mind and the "effects without a cause" that he stigmatized.

<sup>30</sup> See *Filosofia*, 70n and 71n.

<sup>31</sup> On the personal relationship between Mazzini and the Ruffini brothers at this time, see Emilia Morelli, *L'esilio di Mazzini e dei fratelli Ruffini* (Rome, Alpha, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> "Offeso nella parte più vitale della sua essenza, l'onore" (*Filosofia*, 74).

<sup>33</sup> "[...] maestria mirabile di scienza musicale e di scienza fisiologica umana ad un tempo, maestria d'insistenza progressiva in Israele, di progressivo incalorimento in Faliero: diresti una lama messa da Israele nel petto del Doge, che penetra, penetra, poi quando il grido d'un popolo conculcato non basta, e Israele gitta a un tratto sulla bilancia l'onta del Doge, gli si pianta nel cuore. E quel rapido annunzio delle sue vittorie a Bertucci: "Venezia avrà il brando di Faliero" che sale alle stelle, e ti svincola l'anima da quel peso d'incertezza angosciosa che la premeva [...]" (*Filosofia*, 74–75; Ashurst Venturi English transl. in Sciannameo ed., 61).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–22. The role of Meyerbeer within European musical culture has been also touched upon in recent times by Carl Dahlhaus within the context of national vs. super-national stylistic synthesis. While apparently unaware of Mazzini's *Fi-*



*losofia*, this author points out that “[...] wenn Mozart der den “vermischten goût” praktizierte, nach den Kriterien seiner Zeit eine Stilsynthese erreichte, die man als musikalische Klassik empfand, so fiel Meyerbeer, der Repräsentant eines musikalischen “juste milieu” unter den Verdikt, ein Komponist ohne seelish-ethnische Originalität zu sein.” Carl Dahlhaus, “Nationale und übernationale Musikgeschichtsschreibung,” in *Europäische Musik zwischen Nationalismus und Exotismus*, Forum musicologicum 4, ed. Pierre Boulez (Winterthur: Amadeus, 1984), 9–32: 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Filosofia*, Ashurst Venturi ed., in *Sciannameo*, 64.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* (The text is also published in the form of a letter in *ENS*, vol. LXXXV, 44–47).

<sup>40</sup> *ENS*, vol. LXXXV, 60, letter of May 31st, 1867.



#### *IV. Visions and Revisions of Risorgimento Music*

The still-prevalent image of the Italian Risorgimento was fashioned in the decades following the unification of Italy (1860–1870) and was influenced, not surprisingly, by the need to provide a foundational mythography no different in intent (albeit very different in style and media) from other foundation myths—consigned either to epic poetry, as in the case of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, or to lyric narrative poetry such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Paul Revere’s Ride* (1860). The fact that it is difficult to locate one single literary artifact that symbolically represents the “foundation” in the case of the Italian Risorgimento is quite interesting, and tells us something about the ever-lamented lack of completeness or questionable character of the Italian national unification. This may be the consequence of various interacting factors: the complexity of the political process, which took place through military actions by regular armies belonging to legitimate governments, but also through irregular expeditions of volunteers; the participation of diverse political forces from conservative monarchists to republican radicals; and the final imposition of a centralized state as opposed to a federal one.

Even the chronology creates an insurmountable problem, in that it is impossible to pinpoint a single date. March 27, 2011 was recently declared a national holiday, but few Italian citizens knew that on that day 150 years earlier the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed. Italians from the Veneto, Lazio, and Trentino regions protested that they would not join in the celebration because their lands had become part of Italy only later (in 1866, 1870, and 1918, respectively). Not to mention the case of a distinguished Italian old lady from Trieste—whom I personally met—who referred to 1918 as “the year we *lost* the war.” Behind the historical “unification” of the country, a reality of historical divisions and everlasting polemics seems to be, quite paradoxically, the unifying element of modern Italian history.

Even before the specific circumstances of the political unification came into play, the country’s cultural background had played a role. The

roots of national identity were placed—most notably by Foscolo and in any case well before the fieriest revolutionary years—in the late Middle Ages of Petrarch and especially of Dante. In this sense, mythographical objects were already and largely available.

While it is difficult to identify a single symbol of foundation for the new nation, in the realm of music at least, there are two venerable relics that may approach it: the universally known chorus *Va pensiero* from Verdi's opera *Nabucodonosor* (1842) and the so-called “Mameli's Hymn” or *Fratelli d'Italia* (1847), established by law in 2005 as the national anthem. As we shall see, both pieces have been the object of controversy as to whether they are truly representative of “Risorgimento music.”

How is the notion of “Risorgimento music” defined? In the broadest sense, it is all the music heard (or discussed) during the Risorgimento period. In a stricter sense, it is the music that played a specific role in the elaboration of the Risorgimento political ideals and imagery, be they literary, visual, or aural.

In the first case, an investigation of the music of the Risorgimento years should account for a “soundscape” (a word which did not exist at the time but conveys very well the universal character of the object of study). As part of this investigation, we should consider the experience of music not only in the opera theater or in open-air political demonstrations (as exemplified by the above-mentioned pieces), but also those “gray” and less prominent areas of musical experience such as salon music or authentically popular music. We might also consider sacred or devotional music, some of which may be relevant because it “took note” of the changing times, while other because in its most traditional function it represented an inertial element of the old world during the revolutionary years.<sup>1</sup>

The second, less inclusive course of investigation accounts only for those musical “objects” which demonstrably had an active role during the Risorgimento; e.g., music especially devised to accompany and/or promote political or military activities, be they revolutionary or counter-revolutionary; works from the opera repertoire, in their proper theatrical context or adapted to different occasional circumstances; and salon music, as long as it carried a direct or indirect political message.

There is little doubt that music, like any other cultural activity, played an important role during the Risorgimento. The first generation

of historians or memorialists collected texts of hymns or “popular” songs as glorious relics of epic patriotic deeds, or referred to the use of theatrical music (or of entire operas) as powerful passion-stirrers. This preservationist/accumulative (and rarely critical) approach is characteristic not only of early musical historiography but of early Risorgimento historiography *tout court* (in fact, the early collectors of documents were not at all “musicologists” in the modern sense). It was only with Raffaello Monterosso’s comprehensive book, published in 1947,<sup>2</sup> that a historian of music became systematically interested in the subject, and pursued a critical approach to the matter, albeit perhaps unduly affected by the post-idealistic aesthetic preoccupations prevalent at the time. No wonder that Monterosso found little “interesting” music within the corpus of Risorgimento hymns from an aesthetic point of view. The case was different with music of higher quality that, not surprisingly, came from the “art” repertoire of the opera theater.

In reality, the music of Risorgimento has not been a frequent subject of musicological investigation until recent years, when there was a renewal of interest, particularly concerning the role played by Giuseppe Verdi, the composer traditionally considered the “bard of Risorgimento.”<sup>3</sup> A detached and careful investigation of the sources has devolved into discussions and polemics described in a recent essay as “the scholars’ squabble.”<sup>4</sup> Such differences of opinion descend in part from recent trends in Risorgimento historiography that have been characterized by the term “revisionistic.”

Historian Derek Beales, who has described the changing attitudes of Risorgimento historiography from the post-unitarian period through the Fascist period to the present day (marking off the formative contributions by idealist, socialist, and Marxist scholars) says:<sup>5</sup>

[...] at the beginning of the XXI Century historians, be they Italian or foreigners—no longer share the nationalist fervour of earlier generations. In the past two decades many Italians, historians included, went as far as discussing not only the inevitability, but also the desirability of Italian unification.

In a cultural climate affected both by a reconsideration of the his-

torical phenomenon of the “Risorgimento” and of historiographical methodologies in general, a closer look at the evidence was in order.

The meticulous research that Roger Parker undertook in preparation of his critical edition of Verdi’s *Nabucco* led him to realize, among other things, that historical evidence did not support the traditional coupling of *Va pensiero* with the revolutionary *ethos* of the 1840s. He found evidence that such parallelism had been the fruit of forgery by Verdi’s biographer Franco Abbiati (1959) in what might be considered—at best—a late manifestation of Risorgimento mythography.<sup>6</sup> Such misinformation had been repeated so frequently that it gained an appearance of truth. Summing up Parker’s arguments, *Va pensiero* appears to have been a rather late addition to the “Risorgimento canon,” dating perhaps from the time after the completion of national unification in 1870.

Besides the lack of documentary evidence, a number of stylistic and formal considerations were brought to bear by Parker that may or may not be considered relevant. The strong formal connections between the chorus *Va pensiero* and the immediately following *Profezia* (connections of prosodic, melodic and tonal nature), for instance, discourage consideration of the chorus as an independent unit. This argument is, in my opinion, rather weak in that however strong the links between the chorus and the ensuing *Profezia*, there is little doubt that *Va pensiero* can be performed and be thought of as an independent unit.

More intriguing is the discussion of the *ethos* of the piece, which is inclined to melancholic longing rather than warlike excitement—though not alien to energetic climaxes (“Arpa d’or dei fatidici vati”/ “Le memorie nel petto raccendi”). In Parker’s words: “Its power was not as a piece ‘of the times, but as a vehicle for nostalgia: an evocation not so much of a lost homeland as of lost times.”<sup>7</sup> Compared to other Verdi choruses of the early 1840s (in *Ernani*, for instance) and, even more clearly, to Risorgimento political hymns of the time, *Va pensiero* indeed moves in a rather distant sphere.

The main—and admittedly tentative—conclusions by Parker touch on three points, which have been somewhat neglected by later commentators of his work: 1) that in order to assess the real position of this emblematic piece within Risorgimento music we need a more thorough investigation of contemporary sources than we can currently rely upon;

2) that in the early 1840s Verdi was probably not yet known as the bard of Risorgimento; and 3) that the evidence represented by the expressive power of music can lead us to false conclusions. In Parker's words: "We can [...] recognize the insidious mastery of song, the fact that music's power to evoke is sometimes so intense that it can betray us into believing too uncritically what we hear coming out of history, give a false sense of immediacy to the associations we make."<sup>8</sup> Let us postpone for the time being the question of Verdi's centrality as bard of Risorgimento and examine Parker's third conclusion.

This is a relevant point of historical musicology methodology. Although it is not openly stated, it implies a connection with the so-called "linguistic turn" that has influenced philosophical and historiographical thinking in the past few decades. It is the musicologist's task to assess the meaning of statements carried out through music (including of course the case of text + music) in the attempt to define their actual position within the "linguistic turn" of any given historical period.<sup>9</sup> According to Parker, at the time of *Nabucco's* premiere in 1842 (and for decades afterwards), the musical language of *Va pensiero*—no matter how successful and well-received it was as a piece of music—was *not* attuned to the revolutionary impetus under way.

This is as valuable a statement as it is problematic. It tentatively identifies a highly elusive trait of the social body: its taste and—even more elusive—its capacity to produce associations or metaphors. And it does so by addressing not only the relatively more manageable text material (the lyrics), but also the non-semantic substance of music.

Parker's work has met with two kinds of reactions. Scholars who sympathize with his hypothesis have transformed it into historical "fact," perhaps beyond the author's intent<sup>10</sup> (this position has deeper implications of aesthetic nature, which we shall come back to later). Dissenting scholars have fiercely criticized it, feeling that Parker misrepresented Verdi's position within Risorgimento music in the 1840s.

Conspicuous among the critics is Philip Gossett, who contributed numerous essays to the history of Italian opera and had published, in 1990, an article on the chorus in the operas of the Risorgimento with the incipit of "Becoming a citizen."<sup>11</sup> This and subsequent works have provided a wealth of documentary evidence, in part fresh, about the connec-

tions between the national movement, the realm of musical culture, and Verdi in particular.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the methodological approach of the “linguistic turn” has been invoked in support of this position, in that the fundamental aspects of Risorgimento imagery “configurations”—as identified by historian Alberto Banti—were all found in Verdi’s works:

- a) the oppression of the Italian nation by foreign peoples or tyrants;
- b) the internal divisions among Italians, which favored this oppression;
- c) the threat to the deepest core of national honor, which this oppression allows, directly or indirectly; and
- d) the heroic efforts—even if unsuccessful—for redemption.

The evidence—much of which was already available to scholars if not always scrutinized in detail—includes the following:

- a) the documented activity of censors, meant to monitor not only the possible political resonance of plots or of individual lines, but also—and more conspicuously—the social acceptability and the magnificence of opera as a mirror of the bourgeois/aristocratic society at large;
- b) documents of various nature from journals to police reports to private communications describing the political response of audiences to individual operas (or parts thereof) and accounting for authorities’ intention to contain them;
- c) documents assessing the association of theatrical personnel (musicians, singers, etc.) with political initiatives; and
- d) documents concerning the production and sale of music specifically designed for political demonstrations, ranging from celebratory pieces for professional performers to, more often, rally hymns and war songs.

On the whole, this evidence describes a country in which music—not differently from the other arts—played a role in the induction of shared values promoting the national cause. And one can never overly stress the



fact that music as a social object (to be performed or consumed socially) is more powerful than any other art in stirring collective passions. If it is true that Italy was brewing with patriotism and that Verdi shared that passion,<sup>13</sup>—as shown, among other things, by his composing the hymn to the 1848 revolution, “*Suoni la tromba*” (lyrics by Goffredo Mameli) to the 1848 revolution—the pending questions are really two: that concerning the inclusion of *Va pensiero* within the “Risorgimento canon” of the 1840s, and that of the chronology of Verdi’s identification as the bard of Risorgimento.

A review of a few selected documents will bring us closer to the circumstances and possibly lead us to concrete answers. 1846 was a key year in the realm of political hymns, and also for Verdi; in both cases, the association of music and politics was prompted by the same political event—the granting of an amnesty to political prisoners by pope Pius IX. At least 33 hymns, or occasional pieces of various types related to the amnesty have come down to us.<sup>14</sup> The following title page is representative of the circumstances in which such “instant” pieces were written:

Chorus accompanied by a band, extempore composed on July 18, 1846 [the amnesty had been announced on the 16th] by maestro Giovanni De Paolis on improvised lyrics by Pietro Paolo Sgambati to be performed on the same evening at Quirinale square on occasion of the amnesty granted by our Holy lord Pope Pius IX to the political prisoners. By the same composer arranged for piano accompaniment, Rome, Martelli [1846]

Less than a month later Emanuele Muzio wrote to Verdi’s mentor Antonio Barezzi that the lyrics of the finale of *Ernani*, then being performed in Bologna, had been changed from “O sommo Carlo” to “O sommo Pio” and there was such a *furore* that the piece had to be repeated three times. The act of grace portrayed in the opera was associated by performers and audience alike with the papal amnesty, and from that moment on, according to Verdi’s biographer Phillips-Matz, “[t]he identification of Verdi with Italian nationalist aspirations became firm.”<sup>15</sup> The conclusion is premature, however. I would say that the audience of a major theater within the Papal States used a piece by Verdi to acclaim its sovereign. In what way this may

relate to Italian nationalist aspirations and what this really meant is a more convoluted question.

Many other hymns were dedicated in 1847 to Italian sovereigns on account of recent reform bills of different kinds and were eloquent signs of both appreciation and encouragement from the population. Eighty-six pieces of poetry (many of which were set to music) were written for Carlo Alberto of Savoy and his “wise reforms.”<sup>16</sup> More hymns were produced and published on the occasion of the introduction of the “Guardia civica toscana,” on September 4, 1847 by Grand Duke Leopold II. According to Rinaldo Caddeo,<sup>17</sup> one of these (“Cittadini la patria vi affida / la difesa di queste contrade / Cittadini, cingete le spade / se la patria v’invita a pagnar”) used the adapted melody of Verdi’s “O signore dal tetto natio” from *I lombardi alla prima crociata*. This does not prove anything about *Va pensiero* but shows only that a nostalgic melody such as “O signore dal tetto nation” could be associated with the institution of a civic militia entrusted with territorial (i.e. Tuscan) defense.

While these pieces measure the relevance of music in public life, they are not related to one and the same political project, nor do they proclaim national unification, but rather reforms within different Italian states. The only unifying element among them is probably the struggle for independence in each individual state, insofar as any constitutional reform, or even an administrative initiative of public works (as in the case of the Piedmontese railways), became a statement against Austria, who was the ultimate authority enforcing the 1815 treaties in Italy. Unification, on the other hand, was not yet a publicly utterable word.

On account of the centrality that the House of Savoy would soon acquire in Italian politics, the following chronicle of public celebrations planned in Turin for May 1747 (which the conservative members of the cabinet were able to prevent) is of special interest:<sup>18</sup>

[As a consequence of the king’s recent stand against Austrian impositions] the people’s demonstrations, the hymns in his favour, the military songs imbued with patriotic sentiments that circulated among population and army in slightly kept secrecy, and that he himself sometimes read to his more trusted aides in self-satisfaction, gave extraordinary strength to his spirit in the hardest

of resolutions. Those were days of real popular enthusiasm, which were going to result in a solemn and clamorous political demonstration, were it not for the always cunning and alert ploys of the reactionaries who succeeded in opposing it by overpowering the always frail will of the king. It was May 4th, a day established by the king for the usual martial exercises of the army; an immense crowd welcomed him with applause and ovations at his passage; a multitude of fervent youth together with the university students had prepared an even more explicit political demonstration by crying out not only *Viva il re* but also *Viva il re d'Italia*; the students would have started singing an analogous hymn, in which the whole population would have joined in a resounding unison, from the royal palace down to the martial field.

The report vividly portrays a turning point in political imagery (if not yet in Piedmontese policy): the moment when the people began screaming and singing “Viva il re d’Italia” rather than “Viva il re.” It was something that happened in Turin at that particular time and is not necessarily representative of the whole of Italy.

Modern sociologists teach us that the manipulation of consensus by political activists depends largely on the social acceptability of their actions; in other words, on the style used to bait bystanders into mass action. A Roman chronicle from 1849 is especially eloquent in this respect, and relates to the only opera by Verdi deliberately connected to the Risorgimento, *La battaglia di Legnano* (libretto by Salvatore Cammarano).

The political situation is essential for an appreciation of the document. The Pope had left Rome and was in Gaeta under the protection of the king of Naples, but the traditional Roman political institutions had not yet been altered because that had to be the outcome of a democratic process. A Congress of representatives or *Assemblea costituente* had been established and entrusted with writing a new constitution; both regular army units and volunteers were collecting in Rome from various parts of Italy; Garibaldi was on the scene; and up north, Venice was resisting Austrian pressure and siege. Marquis Lancellotti reported:<sup>19</sup>

[January 8, 1849] Yesterday, Sunday, the military exercises

took place in order to celebrate the gift of the Venetian flag [sent by the Venetian authorities]. The celebration was brilliant and 1500 civic guards from Piombino [in Tuscany] took part in it together with the troops. Last came the flag, followed by a crowd of amateurs who sang a hymn set by Magazzari on words by Dall'Ongaro.<sup>20</sup> From Piazza del popolo the rally proceeded to the Capitol through via del Corso, which was all decorated with tapestries, and once there it was formally delivered to senator Corsini by the usual abbot Rambaldi, with appropriate speech and reply.

[January 13, 1849] The master of popular hymns, Magazzari from Bologna, was nominated director of all the military bands, with the rank of Captain and monthly stipend of 35 scudi.

[January 17, 1849] Yesterday night at *Teatro Valle Alfieri's La Congiura dei Pazzi* was performed and there was an immense applauding crowd.

[January 27, 1849] At *Teatro Argentina* [...] Verdi's score *La Battaglia di Legnano* was performed. The music was appreciated and there are scenes with ecclesiastical attire, and a *Te Deum* was sung with the organ.

[February 5, 1849] Yesterday evening there was the usual *Battaglia di Legnano* at *Teatro Argentina*; instead of the *Te Deum*, there was a hymn sung on the organ and the stage set, representing the facade of Milan's cathedral, also had the figure of the Saviour between St. Peter and St. Paul. On the same evening, at the last scene, the audience requested the encore of the man who dies for fatherland embracing the Italian flag; some in the audience imposed silence to those who cried for the *bis*; immediately, from the upper row of the boxes a piedmontese petty officer of the corps of engineers named Iourdan cried, right when the hall was finally silent, "Out the Italian flag", and because the audience was opposing he, crying out loud and not being supported, first threw to the stage his sword, that plunged into the boards, then his sheath, then another dagger of a friend of his, then his epaulettes and finally the chairs in his box: the murmur was extreme, some escaped, some cried at the madman, while nobody of the troops

moved; instead, the Carabinieri officer of the guard, the famous Canori, watched and laughed while the Police prefect Mariani, pale and with twisted eyes, was trying to guess what people wanted. In the end the madman was arrested and some said he was drunk: others said it was the signal of a movement that did not succeed. As the turmoil ended, with difficulty and in a half empty theater, the ball begun.

There are several aspects of this that are meaningful. The comment on the premiere is laconic but catches the essentials: the music was appreciated and accompanied by the unusual freedom to represent religious rituals on stage (the *Te Deum* and the use of ecclesiastical garb, normally forbidden), but on the other hand, there was no comment on the national nature of the subject, which portrayed a war between Italians and Germans. Only a few days later the opera was qualified as “the usual” *Battaglia di Legnano*, as if the city was by now accustomed to the show. Finally, on February 5, some real patriotic action occurred together with modifications of the operatic text: rather than the *Te Deum*, a hymn was sung (certainly with political content) to the accompaniment of the organ. Furthermore, the scenography was adapted to the Roman circumstances.

More interestingly, the majority of the audience rejected the encore of the final scene with the anti-historical but timely introduction of the Italian flag (as opposed to the Papal one). Furthermore, the violent protest of the Piedmontese Iourdan encountered opposition and was finally dismissed as the action of a drunk (some believed that it was a signal for a movement, which did not meet with consensus). Roman localism evidently prevailed within the audience.

Only a few days later, even the great Garibaldi had to face a parliamentary flop at the opening of the Constitutional Assembly. Lancellotti again reports:<sup>21</sup>

Armellini opened the session reading a speech [...] and he was applauded. Garibaldi proposed to establish instantly the form of government to be adopted, he said that the best was the republican and shouted “Viva la Repubblica”: little applause from the gallery. Canino supported Garibaldi, and proposed that the Assembly

should not end until this point was determined and there was cold-heartedness from the audience. Sterbini spoke against this proposal, reproached Garibaldi about his limited parliamentary experience and pointed out that such resolution was momentous and deserved study and reflection, not just a few hours. Both the Assembly and the people approved and the gathering was released.

These episodes—representative of public behavior—suggest a few inferences, some obvious, others less so:

- a) the use of music within political demonstrations was functionally effective—as well as rooted in a tradition that dated back to the Jacobine years—as the act of singing together had the power to transform a noisy mob into a qualified political agent;
- b) this effectiveness was the result of advance planning by political activists (those who chose to apply new words to a pre-existing melody and distribute them) rather than an intrinsic potential of the chosen piece;
- c) it assumed different meanings in different circumstances;
- d) the reaction of the public should not be taken for granted as it was quite unpredictable; sometimes favorable, sometimes not.

The association of one musician with Italian nationalist aspirations, rather than being determined by individual events (and in terms of yes vs. no), was probably the result of gradual processes of identification that took place only after 1846.

As far as Verdi is concerned, his position as the central figure of Risorgimento music was the combined result of various circumstances. His enormous and ever-increasing popularity in Italy and the rest of Europe beginning with *Nabucco's* success in 1842 was a factor. So was his personal political commitment as a liberal republican (at least until 1849), a fact publicized by his physical appearance (his style of beard was a statement of republicanism in contemporary Italy, although beyond that, it is difficult to determine to what extent his participation in the liberal Milanese milieu was publicly known). Last but not least, no matter how

obvious the references to political circumstances, the generally energetic, forceful, and assertive style of Verdi's theatrical music drove sympathetic Italian audiences towards action they yearned for, independently of the composer's political intent. In this sense, even pieces that have no specific connection to politics are effective (e.g., *Ernani*, "Allor che un brando vindice").

It is clear that by 1859 when the acrostic "Viva Verdi" (for "Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia") was being scrawled on walls in the streets, the identification with a specific political project—like it or not—had been imposed on him. Updating this historical framework should not necessarily mean reversing it, but rather investigating its inner contradictions.

The question to ask, then, is how and when did Verdi turn from republican to monarchist? The sources do not help us pinpoint a precise time; he probably evolved into a monarchist as many other republicans did—Mazzini himself was one—when they came to realize that the price to pay for unification was the acceptance of the Piedmontese king as king of Italy.

It is well known that when the first Italian parliamentary elections were held in 1861, Count Cavour himself asked Verdi to run as a candidate. His acceptance is generally viewed as a sign of Verdi's patriotism, and it certainly was. But should we not consider it also a cunning move by Cavour, a move that brought into his party one of the most highly respected Italians, an old-time republican, and a very naive congressman at the same time? From Verdi's correspondence we know that he passively followed Cavour's voting recommendations as long as the latter was alive.

Though the theme of this essay is Risorgimento music, we have been almost inevitably driven towards the biography of an individual character, albeit a heroic one like Verdi. This is in tune with the spirit of those times. However, recent research has also investigated regions of music which are less evidently related to the Risorgimento and, as such, were not traditionally included in the Risorgimento canon. Francesco Izzo has shown that *opera buffa*—not only tragedy—was a vehicle for the transmission of political ideals and/or social criticism. Mary Ann Smart has subtly investigated the ways in which salon music expressed the values, feelings, and sorrows of that most active part of Italian society—political exiles. All of this is important to show how music was politically effective beyond

the contribution of one individual composer, however important he was. Opera *seria* and *buffa*, hymns, war songs, parlor music: these all belonged to members of the society who participated, more or less directly, in the political struggle. But in order to complete Italy's soundscape during the Risorgimento we should account for the music of those excluded from the process, possibly the silent majority. I am alluding here to the authentic popular music.<sup>22</sup> Although much of this music has been lost (and of some, only the lyrics survive), at least 21 pieces have been transmitted in score in a rare and underinvestigated 1842 print by Antonio Berti and Teodoro Zacco. Not surprisingly, there is not the slightest allusion to Italian contemporary politics in these pieces. Their subjects are stock personal experiences, more often than not rather gloomy in character, that reflect the life of the lower classes. Titles like "The vow," "The little orphans," "The invalid," "The beggar," etc. are typical. Fortunately there is space for cheerful images, for example in "The Sunday song" or "The name day." The relationship with governing institutions is touched upon in songs like "The smuggler" or—conspicuous for its connection with the much-hated general conscription—"The deserter." The latter tells the sad story of a three-time deserter who is trying to reach the unwed mother of his child, is caught and brought back to the regiment twice, and the third time, finally hanged.

While a detailed study of this source is beyond the present scope, it is relevant to comment on the purpose of the author, Antonio Berti, a physician active in the countryside of northeastern Italy and a republican patriot who actively participated in the Venetian uprising of 1848–49. He might have followed the advice provided by Mazzini in his *Filosofia della musica* to collect and preserve popular music, or he may have acted independently.<sup>23</sup> In any case, his purpose was not philological but part documentary, and part educational:<sup>24</sup>

With this work I meant to depict our people in its diverse social conditions; to lend a voice to its few joys and many griefs, to its religious hopes and even to its superstitions, which often enclose a high moral meaning; to study it in its childhood games, adult in its affections, old and mendicant in its memories and its distress.



The sincere yet abstract affection manifested towards the dedicatee, “the good people, eternal guardian of the poetic flame,”<sup>25</sup> is joined by a corrective intent. Of the original dialect words only the incipit is quoted, while new and ennobled Italian lines by Berti are substituted for the original ones. This is intended to provide moral edification because “this Italian people to whom song is as necessary as air and light, kept to its filthy dull songs, when it could have educated its heart and instructed its mind, modulating songs which reminded it of the glories of the fatherland, religious beliefs, and its own proper affections.”<sup>26</sup> Another form of popular misbehavior that endangers the very survival of original popular music is denounced by Berti, namely the “bad practice of incorrectly aping the opera melodies.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, “the people” may well be the “eternal guardians of the poetic flame,” but only as long as they behave decently and keep to their place.

I would like to summarize the conclusions of this rhapsodic investigation. The heroic representation of Risorgimento music as the soundtrack of national foundation must certainly be revised, but the exclusion of *Va pensiero* from the national canon is not sufficiently supported by the lack of explicit historical evidence (the implicit one being equally significant). The taste of the nation, as both reflected in—and molded by—Verdi’s early operas is itself evidence. The fact that Verdi was a patriot and that his theatrical work was affected by (and affected in turn) current political developments is certain; it is however the task of music historians to investigate the significance of his work beyond its political implications, while exposing not only his mythified role, but more importantly the problematic character and limits of his political commitment during his musical career. We come to realize that the music of Italy during the Risorgimento, and its use as political paraphernalia, represents only a portion of a continent of which we know important but restricted regions. The quest for historical truth faces the need to redefine its boundaries while questioning any idealized and comfortable image of the fathers of the Nation.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Although this perspective is underinvestigated, it is rather safe to assume that the Risorgimento did affect, directly or indirectly, sacred and devotional music as well.

<sup>2</sup>Raffaello Monterosso, *La musica del Risorgimento* (Milan: Vallardi, 1947). Second edition ed. by Maria Adelaide Bartoli Bacherini, (Florence: LoGisma 2011)

<sup>3</sup>The common understanding is reflected in the work of a sociologist working on opera, John Bokina: “I have had to exclude [from his choice of works, discussed in the book] such notably political operas as Wagner’s *Ring* and the works of Giuseppe Verdi, who has been aptly characterized as the most political composer; alas, I found that I had nothing new to say about these subjects.” *Opera and Politics: from Monteverdi to Henze* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 3

<sup>4</sup>George Martin, Verdi, Politics and ‘Va pensiero’: the Scholars’ Squabble, *The Opera Quarterly*, 21 (2005), 109–32.

<sup>5</sup>Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *Il Risorgimento e l’unificazione dell’Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 9: “[...] agli inizi del XXI secolo, gli storici—siano essi italiani o stranieri—non condividono più il fervore nazionalista delle precedenti generazioni. Negli ultimi due decenni molti italiani, storici inclusi, sono giunti a mettere in discussione non solo l’inevitabilità dell’unificazione ma perfino la sua desiderabilità”. (Original edition: *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*, Harlow, Longman 2002).

<sup>6</sup>Roger Parker, “*Arpa d’or dei fatidici vati*” *The Verdian patriotic chorus in the 1840s* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 1997), 23, quoting Abbiati, vol. I, 415. The story was repeated later by more influential scholars such as Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, vol. I (London: Cassell, 1978, 1981), 93.

<sup>7</sup>Parker, *Arpa d’or dei fatidici vati*, 100. However, Parker might have considered the text of a letter to Verdi by Giuseppe Giusti of March 18, 1847, where the present condition of Italy is associated with the composer’s ability to express “the sweet sadness in which you have shown you can achieve so much” (published in Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi. A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 207. The letter, unpublished in the original Italian to my knowledge, is preserved in the Verdi Archive in Sant’Agata.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>For a methodological application of this perspective to the Italian Risorgimento, see Alberto M. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> See for instance Mary Ann Smart, "The Myth of 'Va pensiero'," in *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi*, Scott L. Balthazar ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33: "[...] recent research has revealed that Verdi's patriotic reputation originated much later, that it was in fact constructed retrospectively."

<sup>11</sup> Philip Gossett, "Becoming a Citizen: the chorus in 'Risorgimento' Operas," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 1990, 2, 41–64.

<sup>12</sup> "Edizioni distrutte' and the Significance of Operatic Choruses during the Risorgimento," in *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher, Thomas Ertman eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181–242.

<sup>13</sup> On this theme and on the circle of Verdi's friends in Milan, see the chapter "Society in Milan" in M. J. Phillips-Matz *Verdi. A Biography*, 131 ff. A fundamental step towards the comprehension of Verdi's social ambitions and resentments is represented by A. Gerhard, "Cortigiani, vil razza bramata – Reti aristocratiche e fervori risorgimentali nella biografia del giovane Verdi," *Acta musicologica*, 2012, fasc. 1–2, 37–64 and 199–224.

<sup>14</sup> See *Spartiti musicali dal Risorgimento alla prima guerra mondiale 1846–1919* (Rome: Palombi, 1978, 8 for the title page quoted below): "Coro a banda estemporaneamente composto nel dì 18 luglio 1846 dal maestro Giovanni De Paolis sopra poesia improvvisata da Pietro Paolo Sgambati per eseguirsi nella stessa sera sulla piazza del Quirinale in occasione del perdono concesso dalla Santità di N. S. Papa Pio IX ai politici. Ridotto dallo stesso autore con accompagnamento di pianoforte, Roma, Martelli [1846]."

<sup>15</sup> M. J. Phillips-Matz, *Verdi. A Biography*, 188, quoting a letter by E. Muzio to A. Barezzi published in Garibaldi, Luigi Agostino, *Giuseppe Verdi nelle lettere di Emanuele Muzio ad Antonio Barezzi* (Milan, 1931), 258–59. According to Monterosso (*La musica del Risorgimento*, 2d ed., 217), a similar use of *Ermani* was made in the same month in the recently inaugurated municipal theater in Cesena. Of particular interest is the following detail reported about the papal flag (N.B. not the Italian flag): "It was requested that the extras bring on stage the papal flags and that the band, placed on stage, played the recent hymns composed for Pius IX. Moreover a delegation of citizens requested to the authorities responsible for

the public entertainment to substitute the whole final stanza in the third act with a different one, expressly composed by attorney Bassi in honor of the Pope” (“Si volle persino che le comparse recassero sul palcoscenico le bandiere pontificie e che la banda, portatasi lassù suonasse i recenti inni composti per Pio IX. Inoltre, una rappresentanza di cittadini si presentò ai delegati dei pubblici spettacoli per ottenere il permesso di sostituire l’intera strofa finale del terzo atto con un’altra, appositamente composta dall’avvocato Bassi in onore del Papa”).

<sup>16</sup>*Spartiti musicali*, no. 61, *A Carlo Alberto per le generose riforme annunziate il 30 ottobre 1847* (lyrics by B. Muzzone, music by Bodojra); no. 66, anonymous hymn *Della risorta Italia*. A collection of such hymns is *Raccolta delle varie poesie pubblicate nei Regi stati nell’occasione delle nuove riforme giudiziarie ed amministrative accordate da S. M. il Re Carlo Alberto* (Torino: Botta, 1847).

<sup>17</sup> Rinaldo Caddeo, *Inni di guerra e canti patriottici del Popolo italiano* (Milano: Risorgimento, 1915), 27; but see also Pietro Gori, *Il canzoniere nazionale 1814-1870* (Firenze: Salani, 1882) and Alessandro D’Ancona, “Poesia a musica popolare italiana” in *Ricordi ed affetti* (Milano: Treves, 1902).

<sup>18</sup> Francesco Predari, *I primi vagiti della libertà italiana in Piemonte* (Milano: Vallardi, 1861), 104–5: “[in conseguenza delle recenti prese di posizione del re contro le imposizioni austriache] le popolari dimostrazioni, gli inni a lui, le militari canzoni di guerra tutte accese di affetti patriottici, circolanti fra il popolo e l’armata con mal serbata segretezza, e che egli stesso tutto compiaciuto andava talvolta leggendo a’ suoi fidati, avvaloravano mirabilmente il suo spirito nei forti propositi. Giorni vi furono allora di vero entusiasmo popolare, il quale già stava per tradursi in una solenne e clamorosa dimostrazione politica, se le arti sempre vigili ed operose dei retrogradi non avessero riuscito ad impedirla col nuovamente sopraffare il sempre infermo animo del re. Era il giorno 4 maggio dal re designato per assistere in piazza d’armi alle consuete manovre dell’esercito; immenso il concorso del popolo per accoglierlo con plausi e ovazioni sul suo passaggio; numeroso stuolo di ardente gioventù congiunto agli studenti dell’Università, avea apparecchiata una dimostrazione ancor più esplicitamente politica gridando non solo *Viva il re*, ma *Viva il re d’Italia*; un inno analogo doveva essere dagli studenti intonato e a cui doveva prender parte tutta la popolazione in clamoroso unisono dalla reggia alla piazza d’armi.”

<sup>19</sup> Luigi Lancellotti, *Diario della rivoluzione di Roma* (Napoli: Guerrera, 1862), 60, 64, 65, 73, 77–78, respectively: “[January 8, 1849] Ieri domenica ebbe poi luogo la dimostrazione militare per festeggiare il dono della bandiera veneta [sent

from the Venetian authorities]. La festa riuscì brillante, e vi presero parte un 1500 civici comandati da Piombino, oltre la truppa. Chiudeva la marcia la bandiera seguita da una turba di dilettanti, che cantavano un inno popolare posto in musica dal Magazzari, con parole di Dall'Ongaro. Dalla piazza del popolo si diresse al Campidoglio, tenendo la via del Corso ornato di arazzi, e colà dal solito abate Rambaldi, ne fu fatta formale consegna al Senatore Corsini con analogo discorso e risposta. [January 13, 1849] Il Maestro dei Cori popolari, Magazzari bolognese, fu fatto Direttore di tutte le bande militari, col grado di Capitano, e 35 scudi al mese. [January 17, 1849] La sera di jeri al *Teatro Valle* fu recitata la tragedia di Alfieri *La Congiura dei Pazzi*, e vi fu immensa folla plaudente. [January 27, 1849] Al Teatro Argentina la sera del 27 è andato in iscena lo spartito di Verdi *La Battaglia di Legnano*. La musica piacque, e vi sono scene con abiti ecclesiastici, e si canta il *Te Deum* con organo. [February 5, 1849] La sera di ieri vi fu la solita *battaglia di Legnano* al Teatro Argentina; non fu il *Te Deum*, ma un inno che si cantò accompagnato dall'organo, e la scena, che rappresenta la facciata del Duomo di Milano, portava dipinta la figura del Salvatore fra S. Pietro e S. Paolo. La stessa sera, all'ultima Scena, si voleva la replica di colui che muore per la patria abbracciando la bandiera italiana; alcuni imposero silenzio ai gridatori del *bis*; di botto dall'ultima fila di palchi, un sottuffiziale dei Pontonieri, piemontese, di cognome Jourdan, gridò, quando tutti si erano acchetati, *Fuori la bandiera italiana*, e la platea opponendosi, egli gridando sempre a tutta gola, e vedendosi non secondato, slanciò sul palco scenico prima la sua spada che rimase conficcata fralle tavole, poi il fodero, poi altra daga di un suo amico, poi gli spallini, e poi le sedie del palchetto: il sussurro era estremo, chi fuggiva, chi imprecava al matto, e niuno della truppa si muovea, anzi l'uffiziale dei Carabinieri di guardia, il famoso Canori, ajutante di campo del più famoso Galletti, guardava e rideva, mentre dal suo palco il Prefetto di Polizia, il Mariani, con occhi stravolti e pallido cercava indovinare che cosa si voleva. Infine il matto fu arrestato, e si disse ubbriaco: altri lo vollero segnale di un movimento non favorito. Cessata l'agitazione, a stenti e col teatro per metà vuoto si principiò il Ballo.” On the reception of *La battaglia di Legnano* in Rome, L.A. Garibaldi, *Giuseppe Verdi nelle lettere di Emanuele Muzio ad Antonio Barezzi* (Milano: Treves, 1941), 127, quotes a report from the periodical *Pallade* that described the music by Verdi as “severa e robusta [...] emanava quell'ardente scintilla, che valeva a ridestare e spandere il nazionale ardimento.”

<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps to be identified with No. 107 in *Spartiti musicali*, 25.

<sup>21</sup> Lancellotti, *Diario della rivoluzione di Roma*, 77: “Armellini aprì la seduta,

leggendo un discorso [...] e fu applaudito. Garibaldi progettò stabilire all'istante la forma di governo da abbracciarsi, meglio di tutte convenire la repubblicana, e gridò *Viva la Repubblica*: pochi applausi dalle tribune. Canino appoggiò Garibaldi, e propose che non si sciogliesse l'Assemblea, se prima non si stabiliva questo punto, e vi fu freddezza nel pubblico. Sterbini parlò contro, rimproverò Garibaldi di sua poca esperienza parlamentare, e disse esser quella una proposizione grave, e meritar riflessione studio e discussione, e non poche ore. L'assemblea ed il popolo approvarono, e si sciolse l'adunanza.”

<sup>22</sup> Many of the hymns composed for political rallies use the adjective “popular” in their title pages; they were no doubt popular in some sense; but here I refer to the music from the oral tradition, for which no author can be identified.

<sup>23</sup> While the evidence suggests Berti's republican inclinations, there is no trace of him in Mazzini's published correspondence. The little that is known about Berti comes from the introduction to A. Berti and T. Zacco, *Le voci del popolo* (Padua: Crescini) and from A. Berti, *Considerazioni sul voto per la fusione delle provincie lombarde-venete col Piemonte* (Padua: Crescini, 1848).

<sup>24</sup> A. Berti, *Voci del popolo*, 12: “Io intesi con essa [opera] di dipingere il nostro popolo nelle sue diverse condizioni sociali; di prestare voce alle poche sue gioie, ai molti dolori, alle sue speranze religiose, perfino alle sue superstizioni, che spesso racchiudono un alto senso morale; di studiarlo fanciullo ne' suoi giuochi, adulto ne' suoi affetti, vecchio e mendico nelle sue memorie e nelle sue angosce.”

<sup>25</sup> “Al buon popolo, della fiamma poetica eterno conservatore.”

<sup>26</sup> “[...] questo popolo italiano cui il canto è necessario, come l'aria e la luce, continuava nelle sue sozze e scipite canzonacce, quando avrebbe potuto educare il cuore ed erudire la mente modulando canti che gli ricordassero patrie glorie, religiose credenze e affetti propri di esso” (A. Berti, *Voci del popolo*, 11).

<sup>27</sup> “Il popolo scimmieggiando prese il mal vezzo di ripetere malconcio l'arie teatrali, e la musica originale non esiste quasi più che nella memoria di pochi” (Ibid., *Voci del popolo*, 15).

## V. *A Taste of Italy or Wagner Before Wagner*

There is no doubt that the major contribution of Richard Wagner to the music culture of the West is tightly connected with his sense of nationality. The identification of true art—in the view of the artist and in terms of content—with national cultural roots had been firmly, almost normatively established by August Schlegel at the beginning of the century, and at the time of Wagner’s intellectual upbringing was largely accepted throughout Europe. His most ambitious project, the Ring, represented an extreme development of an accepted aesthetic principle.

This principle was not guiding Wagner’s action from the very beginning of his career, as the subjects of his early operas suggest. In the “Große romantische oper” *Die Feen* (never performed in his lifetime) the Romantic is found in the irrational and the magical (also dear to Romantic theory but unrelated to the national element in this case). *Das Liebesverbot* (performed only once in Wagner’s lifetime) is a rather plain comedy located in a city—the southernmost European capital, Palermo—that represents borderline exoticism. *Rienzi* has a historical subject in which Rome represents, more than an Italian location, the ideal stage for the eternal fight between power and justice. It is only with the *Fliegende Holländer* that the connection between magic and Germanic literary material is first achieved. Looking at the early production from the point of view of 19th-century criticism, it is clear why this opera had to be considered the first masterpiece by Wagner and a turning point in his career. The real Wagner, in other words, begins with this work.

In reality, the earlier operas have been considered from different standpoints. According to Sergio Sablich, Wagner’s career plans were clear and orderly from the very beginning in that the three early operas represented extreme steps into the main genres available at the time: Romantic-magic opera, comedy, and *Grand Opéra*; it was only natural that a great personality would press his skills into magnifying what existed before trying to invent it anew.<sup>1</sup>

This scenario invites one to pose the question about Wagner's aesthetic thought before he became the champion of the German element in musical theater. In this light, *Liebesverbot* and *Rienzi* may both be seen as the first creative contact with an imaginary "otherness" in an opera location: Italy. It is a bookish reference based on imagination rather than direct experience of a land that he would not visit until many years later, and yet it is a first taste of it.

A more direct, aural, and concrete experience came through listening to Italian singers. We do not know much about Wagner's early contacts with Italian professionals of high standing, but an essay written in Königsberg at the beginning of 1837, *Der dramatische Gesang*, demonstrates his keen attention to this side of theatrical performance as well as a polemic against the prevailing ideas circulating in provincial Germany. At this time and in the realm of vocal performance, Wagner speaks like an Italianate chauvinist:<sup>2</sup>

Among us Germans, there is so much chatting and trifle about singing that one understands how little has been granted us, generally speaking, of that divine gift. Usually we like to speak more of what we are missing and instead of recognizing and learning what has not been given to us, we try with a chatty philosophy to convince ourselves of absurdities that in the end we ourselves—victims of ignorance and self-deceit—take for plain truth. But this is for us Germans a disgrace. Why don't we finally accept that we do not have it all, why can't we freely admit that the Italian has an advantage over the German in singing, and the French in a lighter and livelier treatment of operatic music?

[...]

We Germans do not have the happy disposition of Italians and must substitute it with study. This study should be completed if possible by a singer before he steps on stage because in the theatre, where the preeminence of the affection begins, there is no study to win back (and rightly so); at that point, what one has learned must have become a second nature. As to what an opera singer must learn, there is not the least difference with respect to a concert singer. The greatest purity of sound, the highest precision



and rotundity, the maximum smoothness of passages and the most precise articulation of periods, as well as—one might add—the maximum correctness of pronunciation, form the foundation of vocal performance and this is true for the concert hall as much as for the stage. If a singer is certain about this all, then he will achieve the result that Demosthenes expected from oration.

But what will the affection lead to, if it reaches beyond one's organic ability? The greatest German opera singer, Schröder-Devrient, was on the verge of losing her voice—which had no limits whatsoever—in the years of her juvenile glory [...] she was going to give up opera when her life had a turn which brought her to Paris. There she could listen to Pasta and Malibran, the recognized standard bearers of the great Italian opera. She was hired there, began a new way to study and learned the real way of singing, which she appropriated and which allows her to remain, still today, at her full power. Do not think however that her interpretations gained a cold perfection. One could instead think that she achieved not only artistic balance but also force and warmth of affection. See for instance her *Fidelio*, *Euryanthe*, *Norma*. One would think that after performance of such works she should be mortally exhausted, and she herself will confess that she felt weary each and every time in her first period, while now she could encore such role in the same evening; she will confess in total earnestness that such a feat would not be possible had she not reached the top triumph of artistic performance, that is, to play a grievous dramatic situation in such way that she seems to be breathing her last breath, while she is instead solely presenting a figure of art.

In this consists more or less that perfection of the dramatic-vocal play, that the opera singer must struggle to reach, and the first basis from which to start is precisely in overcoming and assimilating all technical obstacles. None is so negligible as to be overlooked, and this is especially true, as I said, for our German singers, to whom nature did not grant what in the Italian is innate (so that a 'natural' Italian singer may be worth a little more than a German one). We can see by ourselves, in the case of Malibran for instance, how much the severe exercises imposed by her father

contributed to her perfection. It pains us to hear so many discourses—often out of ignorance—imbued with spite and condescension, about the technical side of the art, so important for any excellent vocal talent (these are unfortunately heard throughout Germany from the mouth of so many connoisseurs and critics). In that way, the talented person is misled as to what one should do to reach the peak of perfection. Thence all our mediocrities also arise [...]

It is legitimate to doubt the competence of the 24-year-old Richard when he pontificates about singing: perhaps the argument was little more than a commonplace used as a polemic tool against the mediocrity of provincial theatre life. On the other hand, it is true that the Mecca of Italian singing at the time was not Italy, but Paris. Within the Parisian circle of revolutionary expatriates who published in the short-lived periodical *L'italiano* (1836), the interest in opera theater was conspicuous. It led not only to the publication of Mazzini's *Filosofia della musica* but also of minor contributions of great interest to our present case. An anonymous author commented on the particular demands of the Parisian stage, a theme that would not escape Wagner's attention three years later:<sup>3</sup>

French opera, even after Rossini, Meyerbeer, Cinti and others humanized it, remains a real hothouse. But not of the throats of our singers: passing from hot to cold, from dry to humid, they are tempered like steel. I gaze at and crown the Italian theatre in Paris (as far as throats are concerned) as king of the Italian theatres, the fairy garden, the Eden of Italian music. Rubini sings as they sing in heaven (this is what is usually said when Parisians praise him), and in fact his voice has in itself a secret oscillation which evokes the idea of those heavenly and religious songs, all ideal, of which today's writers, who revived the Middle Ages, speak so often. Rubini translated into a solid fact Bellini's idea of song: and perhaps without Rubini and Tamburini, Bellini might have lived without knowing his own soul. But the great tenor was not in Italy the one he is now in Paris: he is by a hundred cubits bigger: his voice has

acquired an extraordinary vibration, of which he had given just a flash, singing *La straniera* at La Scala. What this voice, this vibration, is, cannot be explained with written words: it is something all of his own, a mixed quality of suavity and appalling power that overwhelms both the senses and the reason of his listeners [...].

Different contacts with the “land of song” took place during Wagner’s first unlucky stay in Paris. Here the direct experience of Italian written music was devastating; one of the most frustrating experiences of his life was writing piano reductions of Donizetti’s *Favorita* (a music that he found miserable). Only rarely could he afford an evening at the Opéra, where the staging and the orchestra impressed him more than the local singing style:<sup>4</sup>

The production of *Les Huguenots*, which I heard here for the first time, had dazzled me very much indeed ; the beautiful orchestra playing and the extremely meticulous and effective staging gave me an enticing foretaste of the great resources inherent in such well-trained artistic means. But curiously enough, I was not impelled to attend repeat performances of such work; I soon found the singing style a caricature of itself and developed the knack of mimicking the latest Parisian singing techniques and their tasteless excesses, thereby delighting and entertaining my friends exceedingly.

These exaggerations were probably a consequence of the vast space of the hall, larger still than the Théâtre Italien that already required from singers a substantial upgrade of their vocal projection.

How are these reports to be interpreted? Are they simply an echo of the small-talk of theatre foyers or do they bear witness to relevant elements of Wagner’s mature aesthetics? The fact that important collections of Wagner’s writings omit the 1837 article suggests the first case; evidently that juvenile essay has not been considered part of his important literary output.<sup>5</sup> I am inclined, on the contrary, to recognize (and/or hypothesize) two seminal elements that indicate a continuity in Wagner’s theoretical development. First, his demand for a thorough technical training of

singers—well beyond the “natural gifts” approach he criticizes in his nation—announces Wagner’s ambition with regard to an organic reconstruction of the theatrical mechanism starting from the singers up (in fact, it is not so much the style of the best Italian singers that appeals to him but the laborious training on which that style is based). The second is provided by his contacts with the Italian refugees’ milieu on the occasion of procuring a text for Orovoso’s substitute “aria and chorus” in Bellini’s *Norma*, composed for Luigi Lablache 1839.<sup>6</sup>

The episode and the score are well known: we do not know, however, who the person was that Karl Lehrs introduced to Wagner for this purpose. It would be fascinating to argue that it could have been the same Agostino Ruffini who had reworked *Marino Faliero* for Donizetti three years before, who was responsible for parts of Mazzini’s *Filosofia della musica*, and who was probably the author of the above-mentioned article in *L’italiano*.<sup>7</sup> Lacking any firm evidence, we are confined to the realm of speculation. But beyond the specific episode, it is the ideas of the Italian expatriates about opera’s political function that resonates unquoted in Wagner’s pleas for a new music theatre: one that is aesthetic, moral and political.<sup>8</sup> In this case, Wagner’s 1837 essay reveals a continuity of intention similar to the one hypothesized at the beginning of this chapter. Perhaps it is at this unapparent and yet significant level that the differences between Italian and German musical cultures find a reconciliation within the deepest layer of European culture.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sergio Sablich, “Alle origini del linguaggio wagneriano: le opere giovanili fra tradizione e rinnovamento,” in *Wagner, la lingua, la musica*, Ferruccio Masini and Luigi Pestalozza eds. (Milan: Unicopli, 1983), 26-48.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Wagner, “Der dramatische Gesang,” from a manuscript of the Königsberg period [ca. 1837] first published in *Allgemeinen Deutschen Musik-Zeitung*, 1888, 97 ff., then in R. Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen. Volks-Ausgabe* (Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, n.d.) vol. 12, 15–18: “Es wird von uns Deutschen so viel Ungereimtes und Abgeschmactes über Gesang gefaselt, daß sich schon daraus recht deutlich herausstellt, wie wenig uns in allgemeinen die echte Göttergabe des Gesanges verliehen ist. Was man nicht hat, davon spricht man am meisten, und anstatt das, was uns fehlt, erkennen und erlernen zu wollen, suchen wir durch eine geschwätzigte Philosophie uns ein nonsens vorzulügen, das wir, in Unkenntnis oder Selbsttäuschung befangen, endlich gar für das eigentliche Wahre ansehen. Das is aber ein Unglück für uns. Warum wollen wir Deutsche denn nun durchaus nicht einsehen, daß wir nicht alles besitzen; warum wollen wir denn nicht offen und frei an erkennen, daß der Italiener im Gesang, der Franzose in einer leicheteren und lebhafteren Behandlung der Opernmusik einen vortzug vor dem Deutschen habe[...] Wir Deutschen haben nun einmal nicht das glückliche Naturell des Italieners und müssen dies demnach durch Studium erst zu ersetzen suchen. Dies Studium muß von einem Sänger aber womöcglich schon abgemacht sein, ehe er di Bühne betritt, denn auf der Bühne, wo die Herrlich des Affektes beginnt, ist allerdings (sehr richtig!) kein Studium nachzuholen; das durch dasselbe Erlente muß schon zur andern Natur geworden sein. In dem, was nun der dramatische Sänger erlernen muß, ist nicht der geringste Unterschied mit dem, was dem Konzertsänger zu eigen sein muß. Die höchste Reinheit des Tones, die höchste Präzision und Rundung, die höchste Glätte der Passagen und die genaueste Gliederung der Perioden, wie (was man auch noch hinzufügen könnte) die höchste Reinheit der Aussprache bilden das Fundament für den Gasangsvortrag, er möge im Konzertsaaale oder auf der Bühne wirken sollen. Hat sich der Sänger dies alles vollkommen zu eigen gemacht, so vermag er erst mit dem, was Demosthenes un-

ter dem Vortrag verstand, zu wirken. Was kann der Affekt hervorbringen, wenn er die organischen Fähigkeiten überschreitet? Die größte jetzt lebende deutsche dramatische Sängerin, die Schröder-Devrient, stand in den Jahren ihrer Jugendblüte im Begriff, ihre Stimme, die ihr keineswegs nur wenige Kunstmittel zu Gebote stellte, total zu verlieren [...] sie war schon im Begriffe, der Oper ganz zu entsagen, als ihr Leben eine neue Wendung bekam und sie denn auch nach Paris führte. Dort hörte sie die Pasta, die Malibran und wie sich sonst die Koriphäen der großen italienischen Oper nennen; sie ließ sich an derselben engagieren, nahm einen neuen Unterricht und lernte denn nun den eigentlichen Gesang kennen, den sie sich zu eigen machte und vermöge dessen sie jetzt noch in der Blüte ihrer Kraft steht. Man glaube aber nun ja nicht, daß ihre Darstellungen dadurch eine kalte Glätte erhalten hätten, vielmehr könnte es einem bedünken, daß diese nicht nur an künstlerischem Ebenmaß, sondern auch noch an Kraft und Wärme des Affektes gewonnen hätten; man sehe jetzt ihren Fidelio, ihre Euryanthe, Norma, ihren Romeo; man glaubt, sie müsse nach der Vorstellung einer solchen Oper bis zum Tode erschöpft sein, - und im Ernst gesteht sie selbst, daß in ihrer früheren Periode sie eine solche Ermattung jedesmal befallen habe, während sie jetzt leicht eine solche Partie am demselben Abend wiederholen könnte; da ihr dies aber nicht möglich sein würde, wenn sie nicht diesen höchsten Triumph des künstlerischen Vortrages erreicht hatte, nämlich eine leidenschaftliche Situation so darzustellen, daß sie ihr letztes Herzblut einströmen zu lassen scheint, während sie doch nur ein Kunstgebilde einstellt. Hierin liegt ungefähr diejenige Vollkommenheit des dramatischen Gesangsvortrages angedeutet, die der Bühnensänger zu erreichen streben muß, und der erste Grund, von dem er dazu ausgehen muß, ist eben die vollkommene Beseitigung und Erlernung aller technischen Schwierigkeiten. Keine derselben ist so unbedeutend, daß sie nicht als ein wichtiges Problem gelöst werden müßte, und dies gilt, wie schon gesagt, zumal unsren deutschen Sängern, weil ihnen eben vieles von der Natur versagt ist, was dem Italiäner angeboren, so daß ein italienischer Naturalist schon weit eher für etwas gelten kann, als ein deutscher; wiewohl wir z.B. selbst an der Malibran sehen, wieviel zu ihrer Vollendung die gestrengen Gesangsübungen, in denen sie ihr Vater auferzog, beitrugen. Es ist deshalb nicht genug zu tadeln, wenn von Leuten, oft aus Mangel an Kenntnis in der Sache, von der für ein vorzügliches Gesangstalent so wichtigen Ausbildung im technischen Teile der Kunst mit Geringschätzung und Verachtung gesprochen wird was man leider durch ganz Deutschland von o vielen Kunstkennern und Richtern so oft hört; das Talent wird dadurch irre geführt und in Zweifel

gesetzt, was es angreifen soll, um seine Kräfte zur größmögliche Vollendung zu bringen. Daher kommen denn auch alle unsre Halbheiten [...]”.

<sup>3</sup> [Anonymous but possibly Agostino Ruffini], “Teatro italiano in Parigi,” in *L’italiano* (Paris, no publisher, 1836), 290–293: 290: “L’opera francese, anche dopo che Rossini, Meyerbeer, la Cinti, ed altri la umanizzarono, resta sempre una vera *serre-chaude*. Non però così delle gole dei nostri cantanti: passando dal caldo al freddo, dal secco all’umido prendono la temprà dell’acciajo. Il teatro italiano di Parigi io lo coronò e ammirò (per quanto è delle gole) il re dei teatri italiani, il giardino fatato, l’Eden della musica italiana. Rubini canta come si canta in cielo (è la frase comune dei parigini quando lodano lui) ed in fatti il suo canto ha in sè una secreta oscillazione che risveglia l’idea di quei canti celesti, e religiosi, tutti ideali, di cui gli scrittori d’oggi, che hanno strugginito il medio evo, parlano tanto spesso. Rubini tradusse in fatto l’idea del canto di Bellini: e forse senza Rubini e Tamburini, Bellini passava sconosciuto a sé stesso sulla terra. Ma il gran tenore non era in Italia quel che è oggi a Parigi: è ingrandito di cento cubiti: la sua voce ha acquistata una vibrazione portentosa, di cui appena aveva dato lampo cantando *La straniera* nel teatro della Scala. Quel che sia codesta voce, codesta vibrazione, parole scritte non lo dicono: è un certo ché tutto suo, un privilegio, una qualità mista di soavità e di forza spaventosa, che travolge i sensi ed il senno in fascio a quei che l’ascoltano [...]”.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben*, Martin Gregor-Dellin ed., quoted 234, “Noch die Aufführung der ‘Hugenotten,’ welche ich hier zum erstenmal erlebte, hatte mich zwar sehr geblendet; das schöne Orchester, die außerordentlich sorgsame und wirkungsreiche Szenierung gaben mir einen berausenden Vorgeschmack der bedeutenden Möglichkeiten, zu denen so sicherausgebildete Kunstmittel verwendet werden könnten. Sonderbarerweise zog es mich aber nicht an, öfterer Wiederholungen solcher Aufführungen beizuwohnen; in der Manier der Sänger fand ich bald die Karikatur heraus und vermochte es, meine Freunde durch Nachahmung der neuesten Pariser Gesangsmoden und ihrer geschmackslosen Übertreibungen in ergötzlicher Weise zu unterhalten.” English translation from R. Wagner, *My Life*, transl. by Andrew Gray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983), 197.

<sup>5</sup> It is not included, for instance, in following editions: *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen von Richard Wagner*, Leipzig, Frißsch, 1871-1880; R. Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*. Jubiläumsausgabe in zehn Banden, D. Borchmeyer

ed., Frankfurt am Main, Insel 1983; Richard Wagner's Prose Works, transl. by William Ashton Ellis, New York, Broude Brothers 1966.

<sup>6</sup> R. Wagner, *Mein Leben, Erste authentische Veröffentlichung*, Martin Gregor-Dellin ed. (Munich, List 1963), 207: "Lehrs mußte einen italienischen politischen Flüchtling aufreiben, um von ihm den Text zu einer solchen Arie zu erlangen [...]" ("Lehrs had to find an Italian political refugee in order to get from him the text for such aria").

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 3 above.

<sup>8</sup> This ideological connection has been investigated by Martin Kaltenecker in his commentary to G. Mazzini, *Philosophie de la Musique. Vers un opéra social* (1835) (Paris: van Dieren 2001).



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SERGIO DURANTE (Padua, 1954), is Professor of Musicology at the University of Padua “Il Bo”. Trained as flutist and musicologist at the Conservatory and Bologna University, he then pursued graduate studies at Harvard University under the advisorship of Christoph Wolff. Most relevant and lasting influences have been the new French historiography (through the lesson of F.A. Gallo) and musicology according to the German and North American traditions. After years of research devoted to the collective history of singers, his Harvard experience generated an interest in Mozart studies that lead to numerous publications on *La clemenza di Tito* (including the first facsimile edition of the autograph), *Don Giovanni* and *Betulia liberata*, as well as studies of theoretical-analytical nature. He is member of the Mozart Academy in Salzburg since 2000 and of the Accademia galileiana in Padua since 2017. In recent years Durante has promoted research on Giuseppe Tartini and the complete edition of his works is now under way. His scholarship looks to connect broader cultural processes to the factual investigation of selected works considered as prisms that reflect in form and content the artist and societies that generated and transmitted them.

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