MAZZINI’S *FILOSOFIA DELLA MUSICA*: AN EARLY
NINETEENTH-CENTURY VISION OF OPERATIC REFORM

A Thesis in
Musicology
by
Claire Thompson

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

May 2012
The thesis of Claire Thompson was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Charles Youmans  
Associate Professor of Musicology  
Thesis Adviser

Marie Sumner Lott  
Assistant Professor of Musicology

Sue Haug  
Director of the School of Music

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

Although he is better known for his political writings and for heading a series of failed revolutions in mid-nineteenth century Italy, Giuseppe Mazzini also delved into the realm of music aesthetics with his treatise Filosofia della Musica. Ignoring technical considerations, Mazzini concerned himself with the broader social implications of opera, calling for operatic reform to combat Italian opera’s materialism, its lack of unifying characteristics, and its privileging of melody over all other considerations. Mazzini frames his argument for the transformation of opera into a social art within the context of a larger Hegelian dialectic, which pits Italian music (which Mazzini associates with melody and the individual) against German music (which Mazzini associates with harmony and society). The resulting synthesis, according to Mazzini, would be a moral operatic drama, situating individuals within a greater society, and manifesting itself in a cosmopolitan or pan-European style of music. This thesis explores Mazzini’s treatise, including the context of its creation, the biases it demonstrates, the philosophical issues it raises about the nature and role of music, and the individual details of Mazzini’s vision of reform.

Mazzini held up Gaetano Donizetti as a model for his desired reforms, but made only vague allusions to moments that support his arguments. I have supplemented these with my own case studies drawn from Donizetti operas to illustrate Mazzini’s ideas more clearly. Finally, I have reconsidered the content and implications of the addendum made to Filosofia in 1867, in which Mazzini replaced Donizetti with Meyerbeer as the model for opera as a social art. The investigation of this treatise sheds light on nineteenth-
century operatic aesthetics, and presents a clearer picture of issues with which composers such as Verdi and Wagner wrestled when creating their masterworks.
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Introduction

“Music and music drama are in dear need of rescue,” declared the Italian social and political visionary Giuseppe Mazzini in 1835.⁠¹ Although he is better known for his political writings and for heading a series of failed revolutions in mid-nineteenth century Italy, Mazzini also delved into the realm of music aesthetics with his treatise *Filosofia della musica*. In this critical discourse, Mazzini concerned himself with the broader social implications of opera, calling for operatic reform by blending German and Italian styles. Remarkably, Mazzini expressed many of the same grievances aired years later in Richard Wagner’s lengthier operatic treatise *Oper und Drama* (1851), such as the materialism of Italian opera, the lack of unifying characteristics, and the privileging of melody over all other features. Mazzini championed a quite different manner of reform from Wagner, however, and considered Gaetano Donizetti the composer closest to implementing his ideas. This document is one of the few nineteenth-century writings on music that deals with the philosophical aspects of music in a non-metaphysical context, and as such has great historical significance. Various editions of the treatise have provided some background on the work, but it has yet to be investigated in a critical musicological way. The brevity of the work and generalities in the rhetoric offer particular challenges to the present-day reader. An examination of Mazzini’s broader worldview as expressed in his political actions and other writings, along with contemporary musical examples and criticism puts his argument in context, while a close reading of the document allows the specifics of Mazzini’s suggested reforms to be teased out.

The first chapter of this thesis examines the political and historical background of *Filosofía della Musica*. The chapter begins by presenting a brief biographical sketch of Mazzini in order to elucidate his character and overall political and social ideas. Because all of Mazzini’s writings on the arts fit into a broader politico-rhetorical project, awareness of his overarching ideas is necessary for comprehension of his individual works. The role of music in Mazzini’s worldview, and his own knowledge of music, are then examined in order to provide a more specific context for his operatic criticisms. His purposes in writing the treatise are addressed, including a solidification of his philosophy in order to relieve his personal depression, a wish to inspire a composer-genius capable of creating a new socially-conscious style of opera, to a determination to convince the public that socially-conscious opera is necessary to the development of music. Finally, his desired audience (primarily middle-class and socially and politically conscious) is identified. This context explains Mazzini’s frame of reference, along with his agenda and approach to Italian opera.

The second chapter delves into the broader aesthetic issues of the treatise. Mazzini considers Romanticism a cathartic movement, but one that was already spent by 1835. This claim was motivated by his dislike of excessive individualism, which also plays into his criticism of contemporary Italian opera. His epochal view of history explains both his intense love for Rossini, and his simultaneous desire for music to break away from Rossinian conventions. Mazzini frames his argument for the transformation of opera into a social art within the context of a larger Hegelian dialectic, which pits Italian music (which Mazzini associates with melody and the individual) against German music (which Mazzini associates with harmony and society). The resulting synthesis, according
to Mazzini, would be a moral operatic drama, situating individuals within a greater society, and manifesting itself in a cosmopolitan or pan-European style of music. An examination of his criticisms of Italian and German music helps explain what he meant by such broad categories, and what overall reforms he considered necessary in order to produce social art.

The third chapter outlines more specific concepts of reform that Mazzini felt would propel opera towards social art. He considered a deeper depiction of local color, distinct delineation of characters, expanded use of the chorus, and heightened emotional impact of recitative to be key reforms on the road to the rejuvenation of opera. Musical examples drawn from the operas given favorable mention in the treatise—Rossini’s *Otello* and *Guillaume Tell* and Donizetti’s *Anna Bolena* and *Marino Faliero*—clarify and illustrate his argument. Finally, his privileging of Donizetti over Bellini is discussed and explained, as is his later 1867 addendum that celebrates Meyerbeer.

Mazzini called for greater dramatic unity and the blending of national styles—advocating a more serious, moral, art form. Although many of his individual ideas can be found elsewhere in contemporary criticism, his unique method of framing his argument and of relating musical concepts to broader social and political issues make this treatise both fascinating and important. His treatise is full of enthusiasm and hope, despite the fact that his concepts of operatic reform never came to full fruition within his lifetime. Even in his 1867 addendum, after Mazzini became disillusioned with Donizetti, he never lost faith in the inevitability of his artistic vision. His final words on the subject proclaim, “the figure of Giacomo Meyerbeer appears before us as the first link between the two
worlds [of Italian and German music], the complete union of which will constitute the highest Music of the future.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{2} Mazzini, \textit{Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music’}, 65.
Chapter 1

The Context of *Filosofia della musica*

Giuseppe Mazzini wrote *Filosofia della musica* while he was still quite young, yet he was already deeply involved in political agitation and insurrection. He devoted his life to politics, but he was passionate enough about the current state of music to discuss his views at length. This chapter begins with a brief introduction to Mazzini’s life, character, and overall ideas, in order to present a larger context in which his musical ideas can be understood. After this biographical sketch, the chapter moves on to discuss why Mazzini wrote this treatise, who he intended to reach, and what he hoped it would accomplish.

**Giuseppe Mazzini: A Life Dedicated to Politics**

Both Mazzini and his beliefs remain remarkably difficult to categorize within nineteenth-century politics. He is often described as a liberal nationalist, because he advocated the unification of Italy yet he rejected both liberalism and nationalism. He felt that liberals concerned themselves too much with concepts of individual rights at the expense of societal cohesion, and that nationalists desired a form of nationhood that was too rigid to produce the appropriate kinds of international cooperation. Mazzini’s mission was the unification Italy as a single democratic republic—an idea political moderates deemed subversive because they preferred to work within existing monarchical structures, and that other democrats considered suspicious because they questioned the assumption that

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3 See Simpson and Jones, for example, which describe Mazzini as the “apostle of nationalism.” William Simpson and Martin Jones, *Europe 1783-1914*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2009), 149.

independence from foreign monarchies would lead automatically to unification. This political eclecticism indicates to a certain extent the uniqueness of Mazzini’s political beliefs. The best way to get a picture of the man is to examine his life, deeds, and writings, since he resists simple classification.

Mazzini’s interest in politics manifested at an early age, and stemmed from his personal experiences under foreign rule. A few weeks before his birth in Genoa on June 22, 1805, the region/city became part of Napoleon’s empire, making Mazzini originally a citizen of France. Although he was fluent in French, Mazzini always used Italian as his language of expression. In 1819 Mazzini became a student at the University of Genoa, and by the end of the school year (June 1820) he was already in trouble with the school authorities for leading student demonstrations. He was only fourteen. In the following year, 1821, local events galvanized him to wider political action. He did not participate in the 1821 Genoese rebellion, but he witnessed the aftermath, and felt inspired by the sacrifices made by the rebels. Recalling his impressions on seeing the plight of the rebels, Mazzini wrote, “that day was the first day in which I sensed confusedly in my soul, not a thought of Homeland and Liberty, but a thought that one could, and therefore one must fight for the liberty of the homeland.”

Mazzini originally approached politics through literature. This was not merely a means to an end—Mazzini loved literature, for he believed that it demolished political

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7 Ibid., 79.
8 Ibid.
9 Giuseppe Mazzini, Note Autobiografiche, 2nd edition, ed. Mario Menghini (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1994), 4. This translation is my own. Emphasis comes from the original Italian.
boundaries and fostered a common European consciousness.\textsuperscript{10} While Mazzini admired a huge range of literary figures, among them Goethe, Shakespeare, Dante, Sir Walter Scott, Byron, and Foscolo, he most enjoyed writing about those authors who concerned themselves with social and political messages.\textsuperscript{11} At that time, political writings received heavy censorship, when they were published at all. It was much more difficult, on the other hand, for the authorities to censor literature by important authors.\textsuperscript{12} Mazzini became a literary critic for \textit{L’indicatore Genovese} beginning in May 1828, for which he wrote many articles. By December of that year, the paper was dismantled and banned.\textsuperscript{13} In fact all three papers Mazzini wrote for were shut down between 1828-1830.\textsuperscript{14} With these closures, Mazzini longed for more direct action, and he joined the \textit{carbonari}.

Mazzini’s stint in the \textit{carbonari} did not last long. At that time, the \textit{carbonari} was a secret society agitating for government reform. They desired independence from foreign rule, and expansion of personal liberty.\textsuperscript{15} However, most \textit{carbonari} were content with achieving greater personal liberty through the monarchical system, aiming for constitutions and representation granted from the monarch.\textsuperscript{16} This did not go far enough to suit Mazzini, who in any case was betrayed to the Piedmontese authorities and imprisoned in 1830 for association with the \textit{carbonari}. Although they released him due to lack of evidence, he was given the choice of leaving the country or being confined to a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Denis Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Roland Sarti, \textit{Mazzini: A Life for the Religion of Politics} (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini}, 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 80.
\end{itemize}
remote part of the locality.\textsuperscript{17} Thus Mazzini left for France in February of 1831, marking the end of his association with the \textit{carbonari}.

Once in France, Mazzini founded his own organization, \textit{La Giovine Italia} (Young Italy), with a group of exiles in Marseilles. The goals of the group included the territorial unification of Italy, as well as democracy and social equality for all European peoples.\textsuperscript{18} Young Italy became, in essence, the first Italian political party—it had a platform, a membership, a courier service to keep various regions in touch with each other, and it even had its own newspaper, for which Mazzini provided most of the written material.\textsuperscript{19}

It was during this time that Mazzini’s personal charisma began to shine. One member described him as the “most beautiful being, male or female,” he had ever seen.\textsuperscript{20} Another proclaimed him “the heart and soul of the Italian movement.”\textsuperscript{21} Mazzini deliberately recruited membership from the population under the age of forty, in order to emphasize his distance from the French revolution, which was more concerned with personal liberties.\textsuperscript{22} While it is difficult to estimate the exact numbers of a clandestine organization, this group was spied on by many different countries, and by 1833 the membership was feared to be as high as 140,000. Some historians consider the number to be exaggerated and postulate 50-60,000 as a more reasonable estimate, but even with these numbers it was enough for Metternich to declare Mazzini one of the most

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini}, 6.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} L. Mariotti, \textit{Italy Past and Present} (London, 1848), 19; quoted in Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini}, 5.
\textsuperscript{21} Salvio Mastellone, \textit{Mazzini e la “Giovine Italia” (1831-1834)} (Pisa, 1960), 124-7; quoted in Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini}, 5.
\textsuperscript{22} Lucy Riall, \textit{Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State} (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.
dangerous men in Europe. Eventually, Young Italy infiltrated all professions and classes in Italy. In June of 1833 the organization attempted a military coup in the Piedmont army. The resulting crackdown eliminated Young Italy from Genoa and the army, and cost many conspirators their lives, including Mazzini’s best friend Jacopo Ruffini who committed suicide in jail. After this incident police pressure forced Mazzini to leave Marseilles for Geneva.

The failure of 1833 did not deter Mazzini. From Switzerland, he planned an invasion of Savoy by a volunteer army consisting of Italians, Poles, French, Swiss, and Germans, in order to trigger a revolution, in tandem with a mutiny in the Piedmontese navy, led by Giuseppe Garibaldi. This plan, too, failed miserably. Mazzini suffered a nervous breakdown, had to be carried off the battlefield, and Garibaldi fled to South America. Both were condemned to death in absentia. Mazzini ascribed the failure to the individuals involved, rather than a lack of popular support, but his image was tarnished in the aftermath.

At the same time, Mazzini founded a new organization, entitled Young Europe. Young Europe was Mazzini’s attempt to coordinate revolutionary movements throughout the Continent. The ultimate goal of Young Europe was the creation of free nations that would then be loosely linked in a federalist system with a representative body to regulate

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23 Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 84.
24 Mack Smith, Mazzini, 8.
26 Mack Smith, Mazzini, 10.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 86.
the common interests of Europe—essentially a version of the European Union.\textsuperscript{30} Young Europe jumpstarted movements in Germany, Greece, Spain, Russia, Poland, and Austria, among other places, though none was as successful or had the staying power of Young Italy.\textsuperscript{31} Around this time, pursued by Swiss authorities and in relatively poor health, Mazzini wrote his first treatise on religion, as well as \textit{Filosofia della musica}. In January of 1837, he was forced to flee Switzerland and go to England, where he spent most of the rest of his life.

From England, Mazzini still continued to fight for the unification of Italy. His primary weapon was the pen—he churned out articles and letters almost constantly. The complete writings of Mazzini consist of 106 volumes. His personal charisma gained him attention in England, and support from the English people.\textsuperscript{32} He even received donations towards the cause.\textsuperscript{33} He continued to form organizations to further his cause, among them a new version of Young Italy (aimed at the generation of the 1820s who were not disheartened by the earlier failures), the Society of the Friends of Italy, and the Italian National Committee.\textsuperscript{34} In the 1848 uprisings Mazzini went to help Milan, where the revolution was quickly put down, before heading to Rome, where Mazzini was elected to government in the Roman Republic. His performance in Rome elevated his stature considerably despite the short-lived nature of the government. At the same time, republicanism was demonstrably on the wane, and the unification of Italy under the

\textsuperscript{30} Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini}, 11.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{33} Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 89.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
Piedmont monarchy was becoming more and more popular.\(^{35}\) Mazzini’s involvement in a series of failed uprisings (Milan 1853, Massa 1854, Palermo 1856, and Sapra 1857) which triggered military and police crackdowns severely damaged his support.\(^{36}\) He was discredited even further with the ex-Mazzinian Felice Orsini’s failed assassination attempt on Napoleon III.\(^{37}\)

In the 1860s, Mazzini fought against both monarchy and socialism, due to the gradual unification of Italy under Piedmont and Victor Emanuel, and the rising popularity of the works of Karl Marx.\(^{38}\) 1860 saw the publication of his best-known work, *Dovrei dell’uomo* (Duties of Man), which addresses itself directly to workers and attempts to describe the unity of Mazzini’s social theories.\(^{39}\) However, his anti-monarchical and anti-socialist agenda left him with few friends. By the time of Italy’s unification in September 1870 when the army took Rome, Mazzini was in prison. He finally died on March 10, 1872, a free but poor and miserable man, missed by few.\(^{40}\)

While unification was achieved in Mazzini’s lifetime, democracy was not, much to his disappointment. Though he was out of favor by the time of his death, his contributions were significant, particularly in the realm of ideas. He is hailed today as the soul of modern Italy.\(^{41}\) He dedicated himself selflessly and whole-heartedly to the cause of revolution.\(^{42}\) People were drawn to him because of the moral authority he broadcast.\(^{43}\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 96.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., 29.
\(^{38}\) Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 106.
\(^{39}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 107.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 74.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
He popularized the idea of Italian unification, both in Italy and abroad. He continued to fight, despite his many failures and setbacks, and despite the constant surveillance and need to move to avoid authorities. He felt that Italian unity was part of a greater endeavor—emancipation of all the oppressed, from nationalists, to women, to serfs, to slaves.\textsuperscript{44}

Mazzini’s life reveals a strain proto-internationalism—as he advocated for the unification of Italy, he was already looking beyond that to the unification of Europe. He strongly disliked materialism and excessive individualism, which he felt had been encouraged by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and other aspects of the French Revolution. At the same time, he felt that socialist ideologies privileged society too much at the expense of the individual. His political beliefs hinge on finding a proper balance between the interests of the individual and the interests of society. He considered art to play an educational role in illustrating this balance. All of these larger ideas are important in \textit{Filosofia della musica}.

The Origins of \textit{Filosofia della musica}

Throughout his life, Mazzini remained uniquely focused on political issues. Already in 1835, Mazzini was known as a republican sympathizer and a general political troublemaker. By this point, he had been driven out of Italy and into France where he formed \textit{la Giovine Italia}, which led to his expulsion from France and flight to Switzerland in 1833.\textsuperscript{45} Mazzini’s political activities caused him a great deal of trouble, and forced him to spend most of his life exiled from his homeland, and yet the dangers

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
did not deter him. Why then would he write such a treatise on music, when he otherwise focused so singularly on politics?

The timing of the treatise’s creation offers a partial explanation. *Filosofia della musica* seems to have been written as a distraction from Mazzini’s political failures and as part of an effort to rebuild Mazzini’s faith in himself and his beliefs. The twin disasters of the 1833 Piedmont insurrection and the 1834 invasion of Savoy severely depressed Mazzini. Among the casualties of the Piedmont rebellion had been Mazzini’s best friend Jacopo Ruffini, who committed suicide after his imprisonment to prevent himself from betraying anyone under torture.\(^46\) Ruffini’s death weighed on Mazzini, and the failure of the Savoy invasion added to his depression.\(^47\) Mazzini later wrote of the time in Switzerland after the Savoy debacle, “I felt every source of life within me dry up.”\(^48\) He had begun to doubt whether Italians were ready for independence (since they had failed to rise up to support the invasion of Savoy), and whether his goals were right and practical.\(^49\) He even considered giving up politics altogether.\(^50\)

According to Mazzini, the height of his depression occurred in the later portion of 1836, after he wrote and published *Filosofia della musica*. “It was the tempest of Doubt [...] Perhaps I was wrong, and the world right? [...] I will not dwell upon the effect of these doubts upon my spirit. I will simply say that I suffered so much as to be driven to the confines of madness [...]”\(^51\) However, Mazzini’s narration describes a sudden cure of

\(^47\) Ibid.
\(^48\) Mazzini, *Note*, 224.
\(^50\) Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 16.
this suicidal depression, after which he “rebuilt [his] entire edifice of moral
philosophy.”

52 Because Mazzini suffered a nervous breakdown and was carried insensate
off the battlefield in Savoy in 1834, this bout of depression probably began earlier than
1836.53 In 1835-36 Mazzini published in the literary sphere, including a critique of
Marco Visconti and an introduction to Werner’s Der vierundzwanzigste Februar in
addition to his treatise on religion (the anchor of many of his political beliefs), and the
Filosofia della musica.54 Recalling that Mazzini began as a literary critic, these works in
combination with his religious treatise Fede e avvenire (Faith and the Future) could be
construed as a “rebuil[ding]” or at least solidification of Mazzini’s “edifice of moral
philosophy,” which Mazzini describes as assisting in relieving his depression.

The Role of Music in Mazzini’s Wider Philosophy

Although Filosofia della musica was likely written as part of Mazzini’s recovery from
the failure in Savoy, it remains an important work which cannot be distanced from the
rest of his beliefs and ideas. Mazzini explicitly linked his criticism of the arts with his
larger political theories.55 It was through literary criticism that Mazzini first engaged in
politics.56 In the Filosofia, Mazzini writes, “science, the arts and every form of human
knowledge await the coming of one who shall link and unite them in a single idea of
civilization, and concentrate them all in one sole aim.”57 However, the criticisms he

52 Trans. Silone, The Living Thoughts, 140. From Mazzini, Note, 224.
54 Martin Kaltenecker, afterword to Philosophie de la Musique: vers un opéra social (1835), by Giuseppe
55 Ibid.
56 Mack Smith, Mazzini, 3.
57 Mazzini, Giuseppe. Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music’ (1836): Envisioning a Social Opera,
presents in *Filosofia*—his desire for more focus on the “social” aspects of music, his aspiration for a unified European music, his dismissal of what he determines to be “individualism” in music—demonstrate that for him arts already belong in his “single idea of civilization.” One of the reasons Mazzini rejected nineteenth-century liberalism and deliberately distanced *Giovine Italia* from the French Revolution was that he felt both concerned themselves too much with the rights of individuals at the expense of the needs of society as a whole.\(^{58}\) Thus, his concerns about “individualism” in music, his desire for a more socially minded music, dovetail with his political ideas about individualism and society. Likewise, his desire for a unified European music resonates with his creation of Young Europe as an agency to coordinate revolutions across Europe and his eventual desire for a politically unified Europe.\(^{59}\)

Mazzini seemed to feel a special call or responsibility to write this music treatise. “So far as literature is concerned, these truths [i.e., the unity of human knowledge, the arts as an ‘exercise of a mission’] [...] may more truly said to be forgotten than unknown,” he observes in *Filosofia*.\(^{60}\) He continues,

> but among the many who have spoken or written of Music, who has ever said or imagined such things? [...] Who has noted the link that binds it to the sister Arts? Who has ever imagined that the fundamental idea of Music might be identical with the progressive conception of the terrestrial Universe itself, and that the secret of its development might have to be sought in the development of the general synthesis of the epoch?\(^{61}\)

Here, Mazzini implies that he noted a lack of broader conceptions about music, both in its role in human life and links to the world and ideas from other art forms. In fact, Mazzini

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\(^{58}\) Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 76.


\(^{60}\) Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 33.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
was one of the first during the Romantic era to address music aesthetically and philosophically in a non-metaphysical context.\(^{62}\)

Mazzini considered art, be it music or literature, an agent of change and communicant of the nation. In the autobiographical preface to the volume of his collected works containing his music treatise, Mazzini asserts, “the special mission of Art is to urge men to translate thought into action.”\(^{63}\) Thus a renewal of music would help Mazzini’s thoughts—from a unified Italy to a unified Europe—find realization. An improvement in music would lead to an improvement in the condition of human society.\(^{64}\) For Mazzini, music had uniquely powerful potential in this respect. “Music is the religion of an entire world of which Poetry is only the highest philosophy. And all great epochs are initiated through faith,” Mazzini claims.\(^{65}\) Despite Mazzini’s evident love of literature, he feels that music holds a higher position in the hierarchy. This belief is possibly due to the fact that music does not require translation to be understood between countries, unlike poetry and literature. Mazzini even engaged in some literary translation projects around the time of *Filosofia* in order to enrich Italian literature.\(^{66}\) Music does not require such translation, which would make it a particularly ideal vehicle for Mazzini’s ideas of a unified Europe.

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\(^{65}\) Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 39.

\(^{66}\) Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie,* 83.
Mazzini the amateur musician

All of this raises the question, how much did Mazzini actually know or understand about music? He was not, after all, a composer, and apparently did not receive extensive musical training, as he suggests in the introduction to the treatise. “This writer’s knowledge of music is confined to the dictates of his heart; or a little more. However, having been born in Italy, the birthplace of music, where nature is like a harmony that enters one’s soul with the first songs mothers hum at their children’s cradle, he feels that he is entitled to write from the heart, even without specific training, about things that seem to him just yet unexplored,” writes Mazzini to open *Filosofia della musica*. Mazzini’s “from the heart” approach in this treatise lines up with his treatment of other topics. *Filosofia* is not even the only work that opens in such a way. In the beginning of *Doveri dell’uomo* (Duties of Man, 1860), Mazzini opens by declaring, “I want to speak to you of your duties. I want to speak to you, as my heart dictates to me, of the most sacred things we know [...]” Writing from the heart is certainly not unique to *Filosofia*. His admission of his lack of formal musical training signals right away that a high level of musical knowledge is not necessary in order to understand the work.

Leaving aside this enthusiastic opening and the colorful insinuation that being born in Italy gives one an innate superior musicality, Mazzini’s claim of musical ignorance seems disingenuous. While there is no evidence that received a musical education, he did appear to have both knowledge and skill. Mazzini could read music, and his 1834 sketchbook contains a Swiss air that Mazzini transcribed by ear and then

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67 Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 28.
correctly harmonized. Mazzini played guitar, and owned at least two instruments, one of which he took with him in his exile. In both France and Switzerland Mazzini had to move frequently to keep ahead of the police; nonetheless he kept the guitar with him, which suggests how valuable the instrument was to him. Mazzini frequently wrote to his mother and to his friends requesting more music for the guitar. He particularly favored reductions of opera scores, which he would sing while accompanying himself. The Carulli arrangements of the overtures to La gazza ladra and Il barbiere di Siviglia which Mazzini requested his mother send in a May 1841 letter (since Carulli’s original compositions were too easy for him), require a certain amount of skill to play. While in London, Mazzini’s skill on the guitar served as one of his passports into London society. He also indicates in his letters that he attended the opera whenever he could, although it is not always clear what works he was able to see. So Mazzini, while not primarily a musician, was nevertheless more musically adept than a mere amateur. Martin Kaltenecker, a modern commentator, compares Mazzini’s level of ability to that of Schopenhauer: “like [Schopenhauer], [Mazzini] knew how to read music, he was more than an amateur; and that which the flute did for the philosopher, who played some Rossini transcription every midday before returning to metaphysics, the guitar did for the young Mazzini.” Mazzini may have been self-taught, and may not have had a solid

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69 Kaltenecker, afterword to Philosophie, 82.
70 Sciannameo, introduction to Giuseppe Mazzini's 'Philosophy of Music,' 2.
71 Kaltenecker, afterword to Philosophie, 81.
72 Sciannameo, introduction to Giuseppe Mazzini's 'Philosophy of Music,' 2.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Kaltenecker, afterword to Philosophie, 81. Translation mine.
background in music, but he played well, knew opera particularly well, and understood how music operated.

**Ignoto Numini: Audience and Purpose in Mazzini’s treatise**

Assessing Mazzini’s musical knowledge and ability and his personal reasons for writing the treatise is useful, but it is the treatise itself which explains his desired audience and what he hoped to accomplish by publishing this work. His goals in writing *Filosofia* were twofold-- to inspire a composer who could put his ideas into action, and to create a listenership prepared to comprehend said composer’s works. He clarified this intent by beginning his treatise with a dedication—“Ignoto Numini,” or “to an unknown god,” referring to a passage from the Bible where Paul tells the Athenians, “for as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” Mazzini dedicates his treatise to the future anonymous composer while casting himself in Paul’s role as he describes what he hopes will result from the composer’s appearance. This work directly addresses the unknown composer Mazzini believes will follow him.

While this dedication shows that Mazzini clearly intends to reach this unknown composer with his work, he has conflicting views of the role of his treatise. “These pages,” he writes, “may incite one to dare, offering, if nothing else, comfort to the long tribulations that accompany the lives of the few who are born to create [...] they need [...]”

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76 Acts 17: 23.
a voice to rise and protest with them.”77 Here he ascribes to his treatise an active role, suggesting that his writing will “incite” a composer to create the type of work Mazzini describes. In another section, however, he claims “that genius will arise [who will unite melody and harmony] [...] I do not presume to assert how and by what methods he will achieve his aim [...] But criticism is bound to foretell his coming; to study and to make known the wants of the age, to prepare a public for him, and to clear the path before him.”78 This passage casts Mazzini and his writing in a more passive role; the phrase “that genius will arise,” implies that Mazzini is not himself causing this to happen. The Messianic language here instead casts Mazzini in the role of prophet—he is merely anticipating this composer and helping to create a favorable audience for when the composer comes, by identifying the weaknesses of contemporary music and convincing the public of what must be done. Whether Mazzini is trying to influence the unknown composer directly or to make a space in which the composer can more easily exist, ultimately, Mazzini aimed to cause the birth of his Social Art by putting his ideas into words that would act as a catalyst for new musical works. The second role Mazzini gives himself, that of prophet, reveals that, in addition to this future composer, Mazzini is addressing a broader readership.

Mazzini deliberately excludes the musical establishment from his second, larger audience; instead, he appears to be addressing other amateurs like himself. On the whole Mazzini disdained the world of musical professionals.

Maestri and traffickers of notes should abstain from reading these pages. They are not addressed to them. They have been written for those few who view art as a mission [...] who sense music to be more than a mere combination of sounds without aim, without unity, without a moral concept.

77 Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 29.
78 Ibid., 49-50.
These pages are for the few minds [...] that have not repudiated thought for materialism, idea for form, and know that there is a philosophy for music.\textsuperscript{79}

Mazzini considers most composers (both academic and commercial) guilty of all these sins. These lines—viewing “art as a mission,” believing music to have “a moral concept,” and valuing thought and idea over form and materialism—suggest the nineteenth-century concept of Bildung, indicating that Mazzini is addressing the amateur performer. The audience to which Mazzini is reaching out, rather, is the middle-class public, people who “believe in [art’s] potentially immense influence on society, had pedantry and venality not reduced it to a servile mechanism, and to a pastime for the idle wealthy.”\textsuperscript{80}

Mazzini even indicates the temperament expected of his readers. He writes:

These pages address the virgin souls who hope and love, who approach the works of the great ones with veneration, who bemoan Weber’s L’ultimo pensiero and who throb while listening to the duet between Faliero and Israele Bertucci; these pages are for those who seek harmony as a refuge for their souls in mourning and comfort and faith when their spirit is overwhelmed with doubts.\textsuperscript{81}

Here Mazzini seems to be describing himself as a music-listener—someone who views music as having a spiritual aspect, reveres great works, and allows music to affect his emotions greatly (i.e. who listens to music with sensibility).

The first piece that Mazzini cites as an example of enthralling music is especially puzzling to modern musicians. L’ultimo pensiero is a short waltz by Carl Reissiger (once misattributed to C. M. von Weber).

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 28-29.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 29.
Example 1.1 (Carl Reissiger *Walzer* op. 26, no. 5)

The work rarely ventures from simple tonic-dominant harmonies, only briefly tonicizing the key of the subdominant (mm. 17-24). As a piano piece, this would be something more suited to the home than the concert stage; its simplicity suggests intimacy. It is also
playable by someone relatively unskilled. The waltz does contain an unusual number of appoggiaturas (ten in the first eight measures) and is sweetened by some light chromaticism (for example, the pick up to m. 9). The most likely reason for Mazzini to use a piece like this as a rubric is because of its simplicity. The work achieves its emotional effect by the appoggiaturas and light chromaticism rather than by virtuosity and technical effects—qualities that Mazzini feels have ruined music. “[...] The most powerful cause of [music’s] actual decline is the prevailing Materialism,” Mazzini asserts.82 Elsewhere he claims, “and Music meanwhile has been constantly more and more removed from all share in our actual human life; restricted to an executive and individual sphere, and accustomed to reject every nobler aim than that of affording momentary gratification or delight, ceasing with the sound itself.”83 An appreciation for this piece, which lacks fancy runs, trills, and other sorts of pyrotechnics, values music as something more than mere entertainment.

Mazzini’s private extra-musical associations with this piece may, which explain why he found it so compelling. He first heard it in Switzerland, his land of bittersweet exile.84 Writing in June of 1836—after completing the *Filosofia della musica* in late 1835—he described the events just prior to his recent arrest: “[...] on that occasion one of the young girls of the host family played Weber’s *L’ultimo pensiero* for me, with her eyes full of tears, just a couple of minutes before I was taken away by the gendarmes.”85 As Mazzini had stayed with his “host family” for two years, the daughter’s choice of piece

82 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 33.
83 Ibid., 34.
84 Sciannameo, introduction to *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 4.
indicates that he had expressed a particular fondness for that piece during his stay.\textsuperscript{86} Certainly he was moved by it and felt that his audience should be as well.

The second piece cited by Mazzini is Marino Faliero and Israele Bertucci’s duet from Donizetti’s \textit{Marino Faliero}. This is a more clear-cut choice, because later in the treatise Mazzini identifies Donizetti as the composer most compatible with his desired direction. In his nearly two pages on \textit{Marino Faliero} in the treatise— the most he spends on any one work— Mazzini describes this duet as:

\begin{quote}

a most profound, real representation first of the popular principle intolerant of the yoke, second of the aristocratic principle offended in the most vital part of his existence, honor. The irate, truncated convoluted alternation of melodic phrases that are not song (because the orchestra sings here), evokes an overwhelming sense of conspiracy, emanating from the ashes of Faliero and Israele.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

What Mazzini finds moving about this piece is both the subject and the way the drama is portrayed in the music. In this scene, Israele Bertucci is persuading Marino Faliero, the Doge, to join in the popular revolution against the rest of the nobility. This scene would appeal to Mazzini’s political sensibilities, and it is understandable that he would address himself to an audience that found this populism moving. After all, Mazzini described “the people” as divided into two basic groups— \textit{il popolo} (the people), who possess a national awareness (to which this duet’s subject would naturally appeal), and \textit{il gente} (ordinary folks) who do not possess a national awareness, and who are not to be hated, but also not to be paid attention.\textsuperscript{88} Mazzini would want to address himself to an audience of \textit{popolo} rather than \textit{gente}, such as an audience capable of appreciating the political content in \textit{Marino Faliero}.

\textsuperscript{86} Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini}, 11.
\textsuperscript{87} Mazzini, \textit{Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’} 61.
\textsuperscript{88} Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 83.
The musical setting of the duet is sparse and dramatic. While still using a standard duet form, containing both a *cantabile* and a *cabaletta*, these sections propel the drama of the scene. In the *tempo d’attacco* section, Israele begins to persuade Faliero to join in the conspiracy.

**Example 1.2** (*Marino Faliero* “Se pur giungi a trucidarlo,” mm. 40-59)

As Mazzini notes, they alternate short phrases, only singing together at crucial moments.

The orchestra is often more melodic than the vocal parts which, can be quite disjunct.
When Faliero begins to be convinced, as Israele lists the nobility’s wrongs, Israele sings in a *parlante* style on repeated notes which gradually rise chromatically (see Example 1.3). In general, the text is set syllabically with little room for “interrupting the sentiment or emotion excited by a series of trills, runs, and cadences, which distract the attention from the true meaning and effect of the music.” Over the course of the *cantabile*, Faliero strengthens his resolve to join the conspiracy, and at the end of the *tempo di mezzo*, Faliero declares himself persuaded. As soon as Faliero promises to join in the conspiracy the *cabaletta* begins. Donizetti thus uses the form and various other musical techniques to heighten the drama of the piece. This musical emphasis of the drama appealed to Mazzini, to the extent that he chose this opera as a symbol of the direction the future was heading. Naturally Mazzini wanted an audience who would appreciate this music, and what it stood for.

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Example 1.3 (*Marino Faliero* “Se pur giungi a trucidarlo,” mm. 117-128)
Beyond what these two pieces reveal about Mazzini’s intended audience (above all the presumption that listeners affected by these two pieces will also sympathize with the aims of this treatise), these choices reveal important details about Mazzini. Yes, he was looking for people with political awareness who also wanted more out of their music than a few minutes of virtuosity. One can make the argument, however, that Mazzini chose the Reissiger waltz as much for the personal extra-musical associations it had for him in Switzerland as because of any specific musical traits (although the general character of the piece is still revealing). Mazzini attempts a more detailed explanation of what he admires about the duet, but still falls short of identifying what, precisely, is so appealing and revelatory about the work. Moreover, his linking of the two works is odd. What traits, beside a lack of flamboyant virtuosity, do a simple German waltz and a long Italian conspiracy duet share? Perhaps these choices are supposed to be reflective of the two styles Mazzini wishes to be synthesized in this new Social Art. The waltz shows no particular interest harmonically (even though harmony is the primary trait of German music according to Mazzini), and probably can be considered more melodic than the Italian duet (melody being the defining trait of Italian music in Mazzini’s view). In fact, this blurring is the key. To Mazzini, these two examples represent expressive music that has begun to blend in traits from the other style—the waltz has absorbed some Italianate concepts of melody, while the duet, by absorbing some Germanic qualities, has become less focused on pure melody and more rooted in the surrounding harmony and texture. In other words, Mazzini desires listeners who are emotionally affected by music that is moving in the cultural direction he perceives as the future.
Chapter 2

The Rhetorical Framework of *Filosofia della musica*

Mazzini’s concept of operatic reform is presented within a very specific cultural and political framework. Many of the ideas he discussed show up in other contemporary operatic criticism, but he structures his overall argument in a unique way. This chapter considers the broader concepts that inform Mazzini’s views and complaints about opera, including his thoughts on Romanticism, history, and Italian and German music.

**Mazzini on Romanticism**

Mazzini had a complex and confused view of Romanticism. Mazzini disliked Romanticism because it focused so strongly on the individual, to the detriment of any social considerations.\(^1\) Because Mazzini desired a more social art, hoping that this would lead to a more socially conscious public (and thus a more politically-minded public), Romanticism and its cult of individuality held little appeal for him. “*Romanticism,*” he writes in *Filosofia della musica,* “though potent to destroy, was impotent to build up.”\(^2\) He argued that Romanticism lacked “any organic conception or idea,” being “essentially a theory of transition.”\(^3\) Mazzini was not alone in viewing Romanticism as a destructive force—the Italian poet Alessandro Manzoni felt that the essence of early Romanticism lay in its rejection of “mythology, the servile imitation of the classics, [and] rules based

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1 Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1992), 207.
3 Ibid.
on [...] the authority of the rhetoricians."

Mazzini agreed, although he used a more flowery description:

When *Romanticism* flung the apple of discord into the midst of their banquet, the assembled *literati* were not Europeans of the nineteenth century; they were bastard Greek and Romans. Antiquity reigned alone. The modern element was cancelled, and all free, Christian, human Art was buried beneath the rubbish of the pagan world. *Romanticism*, like the northern invaders at the decay of the Roman Empire, scattered the dusty relics to the winds, and laid bare the individuality crushed and overwhelmed beneath; then, by the utterance of a [word] forgotten in the sphere of art for nearly five centuries, it bade the human intellect Onward! Reconsecrating it to freedom by declaring to it *The Universe is thine own*. It did no more.5

Romanticism, according to Mazzini, freed art from Classicism, but offered nothing new to replace it. Thus, while he considered it in a negative light, he felt it had accomplished something positive by breaking down the conventions of the past and sweeping them away—preparing the way for a future, social art. This perspective on Romanticism may have been unique; other Italians who disliked Romanticism, like Felice Romani (librettist) and Saverio Mercadante (composer), advocated a return to Classicism.6 Mazzini, however, did not lament the loss of the past, but looked beyond Romanticism towards the future. Indeed, he felt that Romanticism was already spent by the time he wrote *Filosofia della musica*.

The irony in all of this, of course, is that Mazzini himself is generally regarded as a Romantic figure. He spent most of his life in exile from the country he loved. He inspired people all over Europe to organize in rebellions against what they viewed as foreign oppression. He believed that words and art could be powerful enough to effect change in people. Also, his rebellions failed, and he died disappointed because

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5 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 32. Sciannimeo’s translation uses “world” instead of word. However, the original Italian uses the phrase “una parola obliata quasi da cinque secoli,” hence my slight alteration in brackets.
democracy remained out-of-reach although Italy was now unified. His powerful personality and unique views make him one of the great individuals of Romanticism. Moreover, his prescriptions for improving operatic music in many ways anticipate both Wagner and what Carl Dahlhaus has described as Wagner’s “neo-Romantic” orientation.7

The Epoch of Individuality

Mazzini held a Hegelian view of history and progress, which helps to explain some of his attitudes towards the Romantic movement. In Mazzini’s worldview, history (and art) is progressive and divided into distinct epochs. He writes:

Art is immortal; but as it is the sympathetic expression of the Thought of God of which our world is the destined interpreter, it is, like it, progressive. It neither describes a circle, nor retraces paths already trod. It advances from epoch to epoch, continually enlarging its sphere and rising to a higher conception, so soon as the preceding conception has been completely evolved; rebaptized in the name of a new Principle, so soon as the consequences of the former have been reduced to practice.

Such, in fact, is the Law of destiny in all things: one epoch extinct, another commences; and it is the office of Genius to penetrate and reveal its secret.8

Each epoch is dominated by a thought, or theme, which is explored by art into exhaustion and then synthesized into something new, at which point a new epoch begins. Mazzini’s epochs do not appear to be of short duration—his remarks about Romanticism cited above say that after clearing up the clutter of Classicism, Romanticism “by the utterance of a [word] forgotten in the sphere of art for nearly five centuries [...] bade the human intellect Onward!”9 By implication then, Romanticism regenerates a momentum not seen in five centuries, finishing off an epoch and clearing the way for the beginning of a new

8 Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 30.
9 Ibid., 32.
epoch. Mazzini spells this out more clearly in his essay on Byron and Goethe from 1839, where he writes,

they [i.e. Byron and Goethe] were the poetic expression of that principle [...] the last formula, effort, and result of a society founded upon the principle of Individuality. That epoch, the mission of which had been, first through the labours of the Greek philosophy, and afterwards Christianity, to rehabilitate, emancipate, and develop individual man—appears to have concentrated in them, in Fichte, in Adam Smith, and in the French school des droits de l’homme, its whole energy and power, in order to fully represent and express all that it had achieved for mankind.10

The epoch that had just concluded was the epoch of Individuality, culminating in Romanticism. Byron and Goethe “summed up” this epoch in the literary realm.11 Mazzini holds the opinion that Rossini summarized and concluded the epoch of Individuality in the musical sphere.12

Thus, unlike other disparagers of Romanticism, Mazzini did not long for the art that Romanticism had displaced; rather he looked forward to the new epoch he had predicted and desired to bring about. He cites what he considered to be the “prevailing Materialism” of current music as evidence that the previous epoch had concluded.13 “Music had reached this point at the present day. The conception which formerly gave it life is exhausted; the conception by which it is destined to be informed in the future, is as yet unrevealed,” he states unequivocally.14 This fundamental faith, that the epoch of individuality has concluded and the epoch of social humanity is approaching, underlies all of Mazzini’s writings, from this musical treatise, to his works on literature, to his

11 Ibid., 86.
12 Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 41.
13 Ibid., 33.
14 Ibid., 30.
religious and political texts.\textsuperscript{15} The fact that this idea was an article of faith to Mazzini, rather than a conclusion drawn from extensive evidence, is important. Besides the occasional glimpses of something new that Mazzini saw in Donizetti, there was little he could point to as proof that a new epoch was approaching. His predictions for the future of music were a reaction to its current state (as he knew it), which he considered to be dominated by the linked sins of excessive individuality and materialism, rather than based on signs of an emerging new style.

**Individually and Mazzini**

Mazzini claimed that the last five centuries (1300-1800) at least had been dominated by the idea of individuality, but he found it distasteful, at least on its own. One motivating force here is his association between social consciousness and political activism. The term “social art” is not unique to Mazzini. While in France, Mazzini had become acquainted with and influenced by the works of the utopian socialist Claude-Henri, the Comte de Saint-Simon.\textsuperscript{16} Saint-Simonians advocated art in a social role to positively influence audience behavior and create enthusiasm for works necessary for societal progress.\textsuperscript{17} They championed a form of social collectivism, and they despised individualism. In their view, rampant individualism was the result of Enlightenment ideas, particularly the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man.\textsuperscript{18}


Mazzini himself was not a Saint-Simonian, nor a socialist, but clear echoes of these ideas are present in his work. He refused to consider himself a liberal precisely because he felt that liberalism was too concerned with the pursuit of individual rights to the detriment of societal needs.\textsuperscript{19} He excluded people over forty from his first incarnation of Young Italy in order to make a clear break from the French Revolution.\textsuperscript{20}

Mazzini did not object to the protection of individual rights, but he did believe that focusing on individual rights was detrimental to the creation of a free Italian state. The French revolution, after all, did not culminate in a stable democracy, but in Napoleon’s conquest of Europe. He blamed the failures of his various insurrections on individualism—which in Mazzini’s usage connoted isolationism and apathy for broader political issues, attitudes that explained why, for example, the invasion of Savoy failed to trigger a popular rebellion.\textsuperscript{21} As he wrote in \textit{Fede e avvenire} (Faith and the Future, 1835), “yes, the peoples lack faith: not that individual faith which creates martyrs, but that social faith which is the parent of victory.”\textsuperscript{22} Degree is an important consideration here; what Mazzini objected to in individualism was not its mere existence, but rather excessive attention to it. By the same token, he disagreed with socialists and did not support socialism because he felt they focused too much on the collective society to the detriment of the individual and individual liberty.\textsuperscript{23} Mazzini sought a balance between the individual and society. This search for political balance is reflected in his musical ideas,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini,” 76.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Lucy Riall, \textit{Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State} (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 26.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Swart, “Individualism,” 80.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Denis Mack Smith, \textit{Mazzini} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 87.
\end{itemize}
where he associates excessive individualism with “the exclusive predominance of melody.”

**Mazzini’s History of Music**

In *Filosofia della musica*, Mazzini provides a brief, highly tendentious narration of the history of music up to the present time. He considers music to have been “born in Italy, in the sixteenth century, with Palestrina,” who “translated Christianity into Music” and whose music is “animated by [...] Individuality, the element and theme of the middle ages.”

This rather garbled account of Palestrina serves the purpose of confirming the archaic nature of the Epoch of Individuality, which according to Mazzini had just come to a close. The Palestrina revival had only just begun, with Baini’s biography of him published in 1828, and Winterfeld’s in 1832. At the time of the treatise Palestrina’s name was famous, but not his music. Romantic writers viewed Palestrina as a kind of seraphic master, and it is this image to which Mazzini would have been exposed, which explains Mazzini’s view of him as a champion of individualism.

After Palestrina, Mazzini lists a few other names that are important to the history of music—Porpora, Pergolesi, Guglielmi, Martini, Tartini, and Piccinni—without any extended discussion. After a long passage praising Italian music, Mazzini writes, “like every doctrine, people, or period, representing and worshipping individuality, this school of Music necessarily produced a man capable of summing up in himself and exhausting and concluding the musical epoch of which he was the representative: Rossini

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25 Ibid., 38; 41.
Despite Mazzini’s vagueness and brevity, this does read as a miniature history of Italian music. This vagueness was characteristic of the early nineteenth century, which was only just beginning to recover the musical past. Even fairly recent operas were only mentioned in exceptional cases; the Harmonicon correspondent in 1823 noted that Cimarosa and Paisello were “already old.” That Mazzini invokes these composers and theorists at all is therefore somewhat unusual. He mentions them to extend his Epoch of Individuality backwards through time and give it solidity as a concept.

**Rossini**

Mazzini admired Rossini, and considered him to be the genius who summed up and completed the Epoch of Individuality.

Rossini was a Titan in power and daring: the Napoleon of a musical epoch. A careful study of Rossini will convince us that the mission he fulfilled, with regard to Music, was identical with that fulfilled by Romanticism with regard to literature. He came to sanctify and establish musical independence; to destroy the worn-out authority which the mass of incapables sought to impose upon creative power [...] When Rossini appeared, a weight of antiquated rules and canons oppressed the brain of the artist [...] He asserted the rights of all who were groaning beneath that tyranny [...] He raised the cry of rebellion and dared to rebel. And the merit of that is immense [...] Thanks to him Music was saved.

Rossini single-handedly rescued music, freeing it from the previous established conventions that weighed it down. He was a genius, a Titan, a Napoleon—words that invoke his power and larger-than-life aspects. Mazzini grants Rossini sole credit for creating the possibility of social art: “Thanks to [Rossini], we may now speak of an European music to come: and, thanks to him, we may without presumption believe that

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28 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 43.
30 Quoted in Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie,* 92.
31 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 43.
the initiative will be taken by Italy.”  

Similar to his claims about Byron and Goethe, Mazzini considers Rossini to have summed up the previous epoch rather than to have created anything new, and that constitutes his greatest criticism of Rossini. “[Rossini] did not overstep the boundaries of the epoch now in course of conclusion. The mission of his genius was to comprehend and sum up; not initiate […] He introduced no new element to cancel or even greatly modify the old; he brought it to its highest possible degree of development […] he did not go beyond [the Thought of the epoch],” Mazzini writes.  Although he acknowledges that Rossini produced many innovations, he dismisses them as being “in form rather than idea.”  Essentially, Rossini introduced many operatic changes and innovations, but his music still falls under the sphere of Individuality. Rossini disappointed Mazzini slightly, by not pushing forward into the future, based on the numerous times he repeats the fact that Rossini summed up the epoch but went no further. “More powerful in fancy and imagination than profound in thought or sentiment, his genius was rather of liberty and independence than of synthesis, and though he may possibly have foreseen, he certainly did not comprehend the future,” Mazzini reprimands.  Because Rossini failed to push past the closing epoch into the new epoch, music has fallen into its present state, that of materialism, according to Mazzini. Mazzini does not appear to blame Rossini for this—he still considers him a genius. Nevertheless, because Rossini summed up the previous epoch, and the new genius has not yet arrived to start the next epoch, Mazzini considers

32 Ibid.  
33 Ibid., 44.  
34 Ibid.  
35 Ibid.
music to have sunk into stagnation. The blame lies with those who think Rossini started something new, and that “servile crowd of imitators” imitating Rossini.\(^{36}\)

At some level, Mazzini seems to realize that his view of Rossini as a consolidator rather than an innovator is incorrect. The principle inaccuracy with this argument is that it portrays Rossini as a static figure, implying that all his music is genius, but that it did not change or progress over time. This claim is patently untrue. Rossini’s Neapolitan operas (beginning with *Elisabetta, regina d’Inghilterra* in 1815) were considered stylistically different and much more German than his previous operas.\(^{37}\) He experimented with different styles of overtures in *Mosè in Egitto*, *Maometto II*, and *Ermione*.\(^ {38}\) *Guillaume Tell* is of course composed in a very different style from previous operas as well. In a footnote, Mazzini acknowledges that, “at times [Rossini] did go beyond [the epoch] […] undoubtedly in the third act of *Otello*, which by the powerful dramatic expression, the sense of fatality that pervades it, and the unity of inspiration that characterizes it, does belong to the new epoch.”\(^ {39}\) However, he insists that when taken as a whole, Rossini’s works do not overstep the concluding epoch. Thus, the first thing he advises composers to do in order to greet the new epoch and the new synthesis that will produce social art is to liberate themselves from Rossini.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 58.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 459.

\(^{39}\) Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 68.
The New Synthesis

The political balance Mazzini sought between the individual and society applies also to the musical realm. Mazzini links excessive individualism with what he calls “the exclusive predominance of melody,” in Italian music, and the absorption of the individual with the intrinsically “harmonious” nature of German music. Only the synthesis of these two elements can yield a pan-European social art that perfectly reflects the individual’s place in a larger society. “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 [...] we all invoke,” Mazzini writes. This dichotomy between melody and harmony, Italian music and German music, and the individual and society, is what Mazzini identifies as the synthesis of the new epoch.

Presenting Italian and German music as the two major schools of the early nineteenth century was a common trope in writings about music from this time. French Grand Opera was only beginning to become influential (the first French Grand opera is commonly considered to be Auber’s La muette de Portici from 1828), and Berlioz, while active, had yet to become widely known or respected in 1835. Mazzini excuses himself from adding other national musics to his discussion by making this observation on French music: “There is Music in France, as there is in all countries [...] but [...] French Music is

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40 Ibid., 50; 46.
limited to a few national or warlike songs, and some romances [...] and gives no promise of immediate development.” He further argues that the elements of melody and harmony have created two schools, or “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 anyone, no matter how deluded by national vanity, will assert the existence of such.”

Although this definitely shortchanges the rich musical traditions of other European countries, the dominance of these two kinds of music—German and Italian—is represented in other writings of the time as well. In Raphael Georg Kiesewetter’s seminal musicological work, *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik* (1834), he titles the chapter on music of the present day and recent past, “The Age of Beethoven and Rossini (1800-1832),” invoking two representatives, one of the German school and one of the Italian. Carl Dahlhaus also discusses these two kinds of music in his discussion on “the twin styles.” In Stendhal’s *Life of Rossini* (1832), he also invokes the contrast between German and Italian music, even entitling one chapter “The War Between Melody and Harmony,” where he draws the same parallels between melody and Italian music and harmony and German music that Mazzini does.

The prediction that German and Italian music will eventually merge into one music cannot be solely attributed to Mazzini. Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle, 1783-1842), for example, writes that:

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43 Ibid., 41.
Two majestic rivers may have their sources in lands widely separated; each may flow through regions of completely varying character, and yet, in the end, the waters of both may come to mingle in the same stream [...] This description exactly befits the history of the two greatest schools of music, the German and the Italian [...] These two great streams of divergent opinions and distinctive pleasures, which in our own time are represented by Rossini and Weber respectively, seem now to be on the point of mingling, to form eventually one single school.\textsuperscript{47}

Stendhal awaits the imminent blending of these two musical styles, a process that can already be seen as already underway in some respects. The Italian public nicknamed Rossini “il Tedeschino” because of his interest in Haydn and Mozart, and his incorporation of Germanic elements in his later operas.\textsuperscript{48} Simon Mayr (another operatic composer, and teacher of Donizetti) received similar comments due to his expanded use of the orchestra, Germanic training, and promotion of German music in Italy.\textsuperscript{49} Donizetti once described Mercadante’s music as a “happy fusion of Italian song and German accompaniment.”\textsuperscript{50} Early nineteenth-century Italian composers had already begun to study German music and absorb some of its style and influence.

What is unique about the dichotomy Mazzini presents is the way he connects the musical elements and school with his broader philosophical ideas and political agenda—his linking of Italian music/melody with individuality and German music/harmony with social collectivism. Contemporaneous discussions of music do not address it in these philosophical terms. The absence of this discussion concerned Mazzini. “Who has understood that the most powerful cause of [Music’s] decline is the prevailing Materialism—the absence of social faith, even as the mode of its resurrection will be, through the revival of faith, and the association of the destinies of Music and those of

\textsuperscript{48} Kimbell, \textit{Italian Opera}, 440.
\textsuperscript{50} MS “Scritti e pensieri” (Museo Donizettiano, Bergamo); quoted in Kimbell, \textit{Italian Opera}, 443.
Philosophy and Literature?” he demands.\textsuperscript{51} The philosophical link Mazzini makes between the present state of music and broader socio-political issues affords him an unusual perspective and shapes his argument.

These connections to larger concepts cause Mazzini to have a different perspective on music, but also lead to some sweeping generalizations that obscure his specific complaints, knowledge base, and the problems to which he is responding. German music can contain beautiful melodies, and Italian music can possess wonderful harmonic progressions. The best way to isolate these details is to break his arguments down by exploring his knowledge, and his objections to each school of music.

**Italian music, melody, the individual, and materialism**

Mazzini’s knowledge of opera is difficult to assess in its entirety. For example, he never states outright in his letters that he attended *Anna Bolena*, which premiered in 1830, but in *Filosofia della musica* he specifically mentions Luigi Lablache as Henry VIII.\textsuperscript{52} Lablache played Henry VIII in the Paris production in 1831, the London production in 1831, and the Naples production in 1832, so it seems likely that Mazzini attended one of these (probably Paris, because he was in France at the time).\textsuperscript{53} Mazzini describes *Marino Faliero*, which had only premiered in March of 1835, in great detail, and played only in Paris and London that year. Mazzini had been chased out of France by then and was ostensibly in Switzerland at the time—however, he again mentions singers by name and describes the work so thoroughly that the only explanation seems to be that he attended

\textsuperscript{51} Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 33.
\textsuperscript{52} Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie*, 114; Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 60.
\textsuperscript{53} Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie*, 114.
the performance in disguise, especially as no version of the score was published that year. It is probable that Mazzini attended the opera frequently as a student in Genoa either at the Teatro Sant’Agostino, the Teatro del Falcone, or the Teatro Carlo Felice which at that time performed works by Rossini, Mayr, Guglielmi, Donizetti, Bellini and Meyerbeer. Mazzini acknowledges in an 1847 letter that one of the works he saw in Genoa was Rossini’s *Semiramide.* When Mazzini was in Marseilles, the Grand Théâtre performed works by Rossini, Adam, and Meyerbeer. Although Mazzini does not make a specific note of every opera he saw, it seems reasonable to assume he was familiar with the work of major composers like Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini, especially since he played Rossini on his guitar, and discusses Donizetti so fervently in the treatise.

Mazzini has two major objections to contemporary Italian opera—its predominant focus on singers and ornamentation, and its lack of dramatic coherence. Contemporary commentators had made both these observations already. Complaints about ornamentation and singers came from sources like Hector Berlioz and Georges Sand, among others. The poet, Giuseppe Carpani, noted that over-ornamentation turned Italian opera into “a succession of effects without apparent causes.” Mazzini appeared to be particularly virulent in his dislike of excessive ornamentation:

> An idle, sensual, and corrupt generation, regarding the *artist* as mere improvisatore, bids him: *save us from ennui,* and the artist obeys [...] drowning the melody beneath an inextricable confusion of instrumentation; passing from one musical *motive* to another, without developing any; interrupting

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54 Sciannameo, introduction to Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 17.
55 Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie,* 82-3.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 99.
the sentiment or emotion excited by a series of trills, runs, and cadences, which distract the attention from the true meaning and effect of the music [...].

This ornamentation in his opinion obscured the melody and intent of the music. Mazzini appears to be biased in this instance—his letters indicate a general dislike of virtuosity. “Oh, Italy is certainly the greatest among nations, since Paganini plays the violin so well,” he commented ironically upon viewing a bust of Paganini in Genoa. This attitude is unsurprising considering Mazzini’s general dislike of individuality—ornamentation and virtuosity draws attention to the performer rather than the composer. As Mazzini grumbles in *Filosofia*, “[the] first inquiry is, *Who are the singers?* Not *What is the piece?*” This extreme ornamentation privileges the singer (the individual) over the whole of the work, a concern that leads to Mazzini’s other objection to Italian opera—its lack of dramatic coherence.

Again, Mazzini was far from the only one to remark upon the manner in which Italian operas were put together. At this time, opera was considered more of an event than a work; the emphasis was placed on the performance. Opera in Italy was an industry, and the public constantly demanded new operas. Most of the greatest operatic composers wrote operas at a considerable pace—Rossini composed thirty-nine operas in fifteen years, Pacini fifty in twenty-two years, Mercadante sixty in fifteen years, and Donizetti fifty in nineteen years. This practice had already begun to be called into question—Bellini became the first composer to write opera at a slower pace, only writing one per

60 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 34.
63 Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie,* 99.
64 Ibid.
year. The Italian correspondent to the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* noted that between 1838 and 1845 alone, 342 new operas had been staged in Italy. This mass-production, along with the focus on performance led to the creation of operas that were not dramatically unified. An opera performed in a different location with a different cast from the original performance would often be modified to suit the singers by transposing pieces, recomposing melody lines, or even substituting pieces from other operas. Pastiche performances, in which arias or even acts of different operas were performed together, also were common. The coherence of the opera was often secondary to the performance of individual numbers. Critic Carlo Ritorni complained that:

> instead of opera being a work made up of harmonically contrasting sections, so that the chiaroscuro of the relationship between them shows more clearly the unity, identity, and solidity of a single corpus, its so-called numbers are set out as delicacies to lure greedy palates, being presented at random in a bit of tasteless broth to keep them moist and separate, not a dry dish, but with the intention that others can pluck them out from their liquid at will.

His observations highlight the isolation of various numbers from the opera from the whole. This lack of unity, privileging singers and numbers over dramatic effect infuriated Mazzini. As he described it:

> An opera is truly [...] a thing which is impossible to define as a whole, and only described by its separate parts. It is a series of cavatine, choruses, duets, terzetti, and finali; all of which are rather interrupted than linked by some sort of a recitative to which no one listens; it is a collection, a mosaic, more often a jumble of separate unconnected thoughts [...] What unity is there in all this?

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65 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 445.
68 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 37.
70 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 36.
This description is an exaggeration, as even Mazzini admits, and is rather unfair to some fine operas by Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini. Nonetheless, his general complaint about the disunity and dramatic incoherence rings true.

Mazzini reads the excessive ornamentation and lack of clear dramatic intent as symptoms of a larger problem in music. “Music meanwhile has been [...] restricted to an executive and individual sphere, and accustomed to reject every nobler aim than that of affording momentary gratification or delight, ceasing with the sound itself.” The lack of a new compositional genius to synthesize German elements with Italian music after the completion of the last epoch has led to a musical stagnation focused on individuality. Mazzini insists that, “[Italian music], recognizing no general aim or purpose toward which to direct individual effort, sinks of necessity into materialism.” By socializing Italian music, by giving it direction, he argues that music will rise from its stagnation and become more coherent and unified, leaving more than a momentary impact. Mazzini insists that the way to achieve this goal is to fuse Italian opera with German music.

German music, harmony, society, and mysticism

Mazzini’s argument becomes less clear on the subject of German music. His exposure to and knowledge of German music is much harder to gauge, so it is harder to determine what elements of German music Mazzini reacted to or admired. Generally, comparisons of Italian versus German music were made solely between Italian vocal music and German instrumental music. Kiesewetter wrote in his chapter on contemporary

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71 “I may perhaps be told that this description is exaggerated [...].” Ibid., 37.
72 Ibid., 34.
73 Ibid., 41.
music, “as the one former pupil of the Viennese school triumphs over all rivals in his instrumental compositions, so have the lively and expressive operas of the other, with their irresistible and compelling use of all the means of instrumental and vocal art, gained unanimous acclaim,” drawing a comparison between Beethoven’s instrumental works and Rossini’s operas. When Carl Dahlhaus discusses the “Twin Styles” of the early nineteenth century, he too, is writing about Beethoven’s instrumental music versus Rossini’s operatic output. Stendhal, in the beginning of his Life of Rossini, wrote that, “no man, alone in his chamber late at night and equipped with nothing but his own voice can rehearse orchestral harmony. Fundamentally, this is the real difference between German and Italian music [...] I have met with a score of young Neapolitans who could compose a song as unconcernedly as young men in London write Letters, or young men in Paris pen sets of verses.” Here too, Stendhal refers to German music by mentioning “orchestral harmony,” while referring to Italian music by mentioning song. Later, Stendhal also acknowledges that while the Italian is naturally melodious and prone to song, the German “will automatically turn to instrumental music to satisfy his urge for emotional fulfillment.”

Whether Mazzini intended to suggest instrumental music when he wrote about German music is less clear. Mazzini cites Carl Maria von Weber, the representative of German opera at this time, but he points not to Der Freischütz (1821), Euryanthe (1823), or Oberon (1826), but to the Reissiger waltz once misattributed to Weber. Yet the second

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75 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 8.
76 Stendhal, Life of Rossini, 8-9.
77 Ibid., 460.
time Mazzini brings up Weber it is by briefly mentioning the “heaven beheld in vision by Weber, Beethoven, and Mozart.” By placing Weber’s name in the company of Beethoven and Mozart, Mazzini indicates at least an awareness of Weber’s work outside of the waltz, although not necessarily any specific familiarity. In a letter, Mazzini asked a friend to send him a biography of Weber, but this was in 1836, after he wrote the Filosofia della musica. Mazzini does offer Mozart’s Don Giovanni at one point as an example of an opera that distinguishes the characters with different musical styles. He had the opportunity to see Don Giovanni when it was performed in Genoa at the Teatro Sant’Agostino in 1824. Mazzini also alludes briefly to Haydn’s Creation. Mazzini spends a little more time on Beethoven, mentioning him once with Weber and Mozart, and another time to acknowledge that “in German music, and especially in the works of Beethoven, melody occasionally rises with divine power of expression above harmony which is the characteristic of his school.” Mazzini probably had some exposure to Beethoven’s music. The piano works had been published in Milan and Florence, and the Septet and Sonate à Kreutzer were performed frequently. Whether Mazzini heard a Beethoven symphony is less certain. In any case, what particular pieces Mazzini may

78 Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music, ’ 58.
79 Sciannameo, introduction to Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 4.
80 “Two great writers have pointed out the way in which these things may be done, and have created two individualities so powerfully marked as to merit a place among the greatest sketched by genius in the highest form of dramatic poetry. The Don Giovanni of Mozart, and the Bertram of Meyerbeer, will remain two types of individuality profoundly studied, and developed with a complete and unfailing mastery, never diminished or interrupted from the first note to the last. To the first I know no equal...” Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 54.
81 Sciannameo, introduction to Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 6.
82 “Why should Genius be unable to give musical expression to...represent the gradual coming of the moral consent and concord achieved by...the gradual harmonizing of, at first, two, three, or more voices, amplified and extended through a musical artifice something similar to that adopted, if I mistake not, by Hadyn, to describe the moment when light shed from the eye of Deity upon all created things?” Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 55.
83 Ibid., 68
84 Kaltenecker, afterword to Philosophie, 93.
have known is less interesting than the fact that these few references comprise the entire specific discussion of German music in Mazzini’s *Filosofia della musica*. Mazzini spends no time discussing any particular work or composer (by comparison, he spends at least three pages on Rossini). Mazzini seems to have been less familiar with German music, despite his identification of it as on equal footing with Italian music. With this spotty knowledge, what particular qualities did Mazzini see German music bringing to this new synthesis?

An answer may be found in Mazzini’s more general discussions of German music. Unlike in Italian music, in German music according to Mazzini, “God is there, but without man, without His image upon earth [...] The temple, the religion, the altar, and the incense—all are there; only the worshipper is wanting.”⁸⁵ Although this is a somewhat obscure metaphor, Mazzini seems to be alluding to the “atmosphere” of German music. Lacking perhaps the ability to represent individuals and create beautiful melodies, German music can create setting, local color, and powerful emotions. He describes it as “ethereal” and “mysterious,” and notes that “German music is eminently elegiac; it is the music of remembrance, of desire, of melancholy hopes, of sorrow which no human lip can console [...] It aspires toward the Infinite.”⁸⁶ He sees in German music a power of expression and musical depth that he considers Italian music to lack. For instance, he claims of Rossini that “one might describe his melodies as sculptured in *alto relievo*, and fancy that they arose in the imagination of the author beneath the sun of a Neapolitan summer at noonday, when all things are inundated by the vertical light, and the object around one cast no shadow. For his music is without shadow, twilight, or

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⁸⁵ Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music’*, 46.
⁸⁶ Ibid., 46-7.
mystery [...]”87 Thus, he thinks that German music accesses a wider variety of emotional shading than Italian music. It creates the broader trappings of musico-dramatic content—both the setting and atmosphere of the story. When put in these terms, the traits Mazzini wants from German music become clearer; the motivic unity of a Beethoven composition, the atmospheric qualities of a Weber opera, and German composers’s striving for music as an expression of deeper truths à la Schopenhauer. Mazzini’s familiarity with specific German compositions is less important in this context. He read voraciously—when in exile and on the run from the police he had little to do but read and write—so what he may not have heard himself, he definitely could have read about from others.

Harmony, as the main characteristic of German music, is given a broader definition in this context. Just as Melody comes to stand for individualism and the privileging of smaller parts over the unity of the whole, Harmony comes to stand for the complete absence of individualism and the privileging of the larger whole over smaller parts. As Mazzini writes, in German music, “the Ego has disappeared.”88 Mazzini feels that German music has sunk into stagnation due to the close of the Epoch of Individuality, just as Italian music had done. Whereas in Italian music, stagnation has created excessive materialism, German music “consumes itself uselessly in mysticism.”89 It is only when the composer comes to synthesize these two styles that music will be lifted out of the sterile imitation into which Mazzini believes it has fallen.

87 Ibid., 45.
88 Ibid., 46.
89 Ibid., 47.
Chapter 3

Operatic Reform in *Filosofia della musica*

Mazzini offers both general and specific suggestions on ways to reform opera in order to create a more socially conscious opera. Most of these ideas hinge on a shift in the priorities of operatic dramaturgy. This chapter considers his myriad suggestions, from composing music more distinctive to the setting of the opera and personality of each character, to expanding the role of the chorus and altering the formal musical construction of the opera. When possible, his ideas are fleshed out with musical examples drawn from the operas he admired and felt were heading in the right direction. Then his ideas are used to discuss two case studies—Act III of Rossini’s *Otello* and Donizetti’s *Marino Faliero*—operas that heralded the new epoch. These studies help explain his admiration of Donizetti and Meyerbeer, his disdain for Bellini, and his later indifference to Verdi.

Mazzini on Dramaturgy Reform

Mazzini mostly speaks in generalities when discussing his preferred reforms for the genre of opera. He desires what he calls a “unity of concept,” in which music furthers the dramatic action by following the contours of the plot over the requirements of rigid forms, enhancing the meaning of the libretto, and creating a unique sonic landscape for the opera.¹ These changes would help strengthen the educational messages of a socially minded libretto. Mazzini describes it thus:

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I am speaking now of a time [...] when the Musical Drama [...] will possess a high educational mission, while the beneficent power of Music over the mind will be aided and increased by the combination of every other form of dramatic effect. I am speaking of a time when Poetry, no longer the servant, but once again the sister of Music [...] when poet and musician, instead of mutually twisting, torturing, and degrading each other’s work, will faithfully labor together, regarding their art as a sanctuary, and directing their ministry towards a social aim.²

He does not go so far as to demand that music serve the poetry; he rather desires them to exert a more mutually beneficial relationship in which each enhances the meaning and effect of the other. Mazzini has already indicated that he considers the primary ruling principle of contemporary Italian opera to be melody, to which all other considerations are secondary. The construction of these operas generally consists of a series of static tableaux, in which a situation is created or described in recitative sections and then reacted to in an aria or ensemble. These situations (situzioni) are the numbers, which make up the opera.³ Mazzini considers this method of construction additive—a series of dramatic situations are presented to provoke musical reactions. An example would be Figaro and Rosina’s duet, “Dunque io sono,” from Act I of Rossini’s Il Barbiere di Siviglia. Figaro tells Rosina of Lindoro’s interest in her during the recitative. During the duet, Rosina admits that she had already known of Lindoro’s interest and awaits his visit, while Figaro marvels at her cleverness. The closed nature of these tableaux is part of what made the substitutions and pastiches Mazzini abhorred so common. Mazzini desired a different mode of construction, in which the music contributes to or enhances the dramatic situation, taking a more active and less contained role in the proceedings. He does not intend this to be a value judgment on Rossini—Rossini embodied the spirit of the old epoch, and a new epoch requires a different method of dramaturgy.

² Ibid., 57.
Specific Reform: Historical Individuality

In addition to his broad desire to provoke a new method of operatic dramaturgy, Mazzini offers specific suggestions for improvement, which he felt would contribute to his overall ideas of reform. The first frustration he expresses is Italian opera’s failure to present music distinctive to the time and place of the opera’s setting.

What representation is there of the historic element? [...] Of the local colouring of the period in which the events are supposed to take place in the middle ages? Between the melodies supposed to take place, of the character of the spot in which the scene is laid? Who can point out any difference in the character of the music of a Roman drama and one in which the action takes place in the middle ages?^4

Mazzini wants the entirety of the opera to be saturated in this kind of atmospheric writing, in which the setting, mood, and time period are represented with the music. He even suggests that composers dig up source material from the locale and time period to use in their works.\(^5\) He felt the first step towards this kind of local color involved creating an atmospheric overture.

Once the Thought of the epoch, the concept of the time is grasped, why not translate it into notes, pouring it out like a wave, like an aura of music, and once having given it a broader and more formal expression in the overture (which should always act as a prologue or exposition of the drama), why not have it be present in the rest of the work?^6

In his view, the overture should be a prologue to the action of the opera, setting the stage both literally (by conjuring up a setting) and figuratively (by hinting at actions or themes from the drama). This concept of the overture’s important role was not new—Mozart’s overture to *Don Giovanni* brilliantly sets the mood with the opening D minor section.

However, overtures (or rather, *sinfonia*) that used material from the opera or held much

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^4 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 51.

^5 “Yet as there is an architectural, pictorial, and poetic art expressive of every epoch and every land, so might there be a musical expression of them. Why not study it? Why not disinter such fragments of it as exist hidden among archives and libraries [...]?” Ibid., 52.

^6 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 117. “E perché, afferrato una volta il pensiero dell'epoca, il concetto de'tempi, non tradurlo in note, e versarlo come un'onda, come un'aura musicale, e dopo avergli dato piú larga e formale espressione nella sinfonia, che avrebbe sempre a far vece di prologo, d'esposizione nel dramma, per tutto quanto il lavoro?” Translation mine.
relation to the opera were the exception rather than the rule. The excellent sinfonia for Il Barbiere di Siviglia began as a sinfonia composed by Rossini for an earlier opera, Aureliano in Palmira (1813), which he then expanded and used as a sinfonia to Elisabetta, regina d’Inghilterra (1815) before using it in Barbiere. Yet by the time the treatise was written, atmospheric overtures were becoming more popular, present in late Rossini works, Meyerbeer, Donizetti, and Bellini. Mazzini cites the overture to Guillaume Tell as being “exquisite in local truth,” and an example of the style of local color he desired in future works. The timpani rolls in the first section, storm music in the second, and ranz des vaches melody in the English horn and flute in the third section present the Swiss pastoral setting, while the final section promotes the heroic nature of the story and Guillaume Tell himself in the brass fanfares and galloping strings. Mazzini felt that representing the spirit and setting of the opera heightened the drama of the work. “It is unquestionable that the historic element must be made the essential basis of every attempt at the reconstruction of the music drama, and if that drama is to be put in harmony with the progress of civilization [...] so as to exercise a social ministry and function, it must truly reflect and express the historical epoch it assumes to describe.”

The weight Mazzini places on the musical setting of the opera relates back to his epochal understanding of history. In order for the listener to be oriented in the drama, the thought of the epoch must be represented to them, not just a superficial understanding of the historical context. The setting must be heard and felt by the listener, since setting to Mazzini meant not only simple describable things like the location and time period, but

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7 Richard Osborne, Rossini: His Life and Works, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 188.
8 Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’ 69.
9 Ibid., 52.
also the dominant themes and ideas of the age. Music would be the most effective agent in representing the philosophical and social setting of the work. This explains why Mazzini feels that in the field of historical individuality “nothing has yet been attempted,” by composers, despite having mentioned both *Semiramide* and *Guillaume Tell* as having good examples of local color.\(^\text{10}\) Local color, while a step in the right direction for Mazzini, does not fully represent his concept of setting.

**Specific Reform: Human Individuality**

Mazzini’s second specific suggestion for operatic reform continues in a similar vein: he wants composers to create greater musical distinctions between the characters in the drama. He notes:

> [...] The *human* is the sole form of individuality which is inviolable, and that when they cancel *this* under arbitrarily-constructed melodies, representing isolated *sentiments*, and not men, they violate every law of existence, and by destroying all unity in their characters, do away with one of the noblest sources of poetic impression?\(^\text{11}\)

In his view, Italian opera has focused on the portrayal of emotion instead of the portrayal of individual people. He finds there to be more distinction between sentiments—expressions of rage versus sorrow or love—than between different kinds of people. Whether this conception of early nineteenth-century Italian opera is entirely true is less important than the fact that Mazzini believed it so. He acknowledged some exceptions to this view by commenting on the brilliant characterizations of Don Giovanni from Mozart’s opera and Bertram from Meyerbeer’s *Robert le Diable*.\(^\text{12}\) At the same, Mozart

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\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 53.

\(^{12}\) “Two great writers have pointed out the way in which these [things] may be done, and have created two individualities so powerfully marked as to merit a place among the greatest sketched by genius in the highest form of dramatic poetry. The *Don Giovanni* of Mozart and the *Bertram* of Meyerbeer, will remain two types of individuality profoundly studied, and developed with a complete and unfailing mastery, never
was a German composer, even if the opera was in Italian, and Meyerbeer was writing
opera in Paris for the French, so neither of these examples came from a strictly Italian
repertoire. The very way in which Italian opera was structured at this time, the series of
situazioni, does not indicate a lack of distinction was drawn between characters and types
of people, but it does affirm that portrayal of emotion was valued over portrayal of
character. Mazzini wished to reverse this system and have the music play a larger role in
distinguishing between the characters in the drama:

Every man, but more especially one worthy to be selected for representation in a drama and a
certain character, style, and bearing belonging to him alone; such a man was in fact a purpose or
an idea, of which his whole life was the pursuit or development. Why not endeavour to render that
idea in a form of musical expression, special and peculiar to him? Why give a certain character
and style of speech to a man, and not a certain character and style of song? [...] Why not vary the
nature and character of the melodies and accompaniments according to the nature and character of
the personages on the stage?13

His conception of drama boils each character down to an essential idea or purpose, which
stems from his epochal view of history. If each time-period has an overarching theme or
purpose, it follows that each person represents this on a smaller-scale. Mazzini presents
the opera Anna Bolena as one in which the composer, Donizetti, had done a decent job of
representing the different characters in music. “For certain [...] the individuality of the
characters, so barbarously neglected, by the servile imitators of Rossini, is manifested in
many of Donizetti’s works through rare energy, and religious sense of preservation. Who
has not felt in the musical expression of Henry VIII, the severe, tyrannical and artificial
language given to monarch by history?”14 Upon an examination of the score of Anna
Bolena, the musical depiction of the various characters is not always deeply distinct, but

diminished or interrupted from the first note to the last.” Mazzini, Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of
Music,’ 54. Sciannameo uses the word “thinks” instead of “things.” The original Italian uses the phrase,
“Due Grandi nell’Arte han segnata la via,” hence my bracketed alteration.

13 Ibid., 53-4.
14 Ibid., 60.
each character does have a different style of singing. Enrico, as the King, is represented in a martial, simple style, using dotted and double-dotted figures, accents, and triadic motion (see Appendix A.1-3). Giovanna’s mixed feelings about her role in Anna’s demise are represented in the frequent trembling string figures that underscore her part, and repeated appoggiatura sigh-figures (see Appendix A.4-7). Anna’s sorrow and nobility of character is shown through the chromaticism in her lines and greater written-out ornamentation (see Appendix A.8-11). Percy is contrasted with Enrico by music that is less severe and more lyrical (see Appendix A.12-13).

Although Donizetti does characterize the different roles in the drama musically, he does not go far enough for Mazzini. Mazzini merely provides this opera as an example of the direction he wishes composers to pursue generally, just as in the local color example; the same appears to hold true for most of the models he cites. Mazzini makes it clear that he wishes composers to go further:

> Why not study more carefully how to avail yourselves of the power of instrumentation to symbolize, through the medium of the accompaniment that surrounds each of the personages, that tumult of affections, habits, instincts and moral or material tendencies most commonly influencing their minds, and playing so large a part in the formation of their destiny; or those final deliberations or resolves which bring about the special fact to be represented? [...] Why not, through the well-timed repetition of a special musical phrase, or of certain fundamental and striking chords, suggest the disposition of each, or the influence of the circumstances or natural tendencies that urge him along?\(^\text{15}\)

Here he is suggesting that composers not only draw clear distinctions between the characters, but use music to represent the mix of emotions and drives that make up each person’s subconscious, and even devise reminiscence motives or leitmotives associated with characters, situations, or emotions. Mazzini here anticipates what will become Wagner’s operatic compositional technique. In this context, it is clear how far Donizetti’s opera is from the desired end result.

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\(^\text{15}\) Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 53-4.
Specific Reform: the Chorus

Mazzini considers the chorus to be another area in which specific improvement will contribute to his overall vision of reform. Ultimately, he desires a larger and more complex role for the chorus.

At present the part assigned to the Chorus is [...] confined to the expression of a single sentiment or idea, in a single melody (often even sung in unison) by ten or twenty voices. It is introduced from time to time, rather for the purpose of resting the solo singer, than of presenting to us an element musically and philosophically distinct; and it merely prepares the way for or strengthens the manifestation of the sentiment which one or the other of the important personages has to express, no more.16

Rather than using the chorus to reinforce concepts presented by the characters in the drama, Mazzini wishes the chorus to become a character itself, and thus to play an active part in the dramatic proceedings. This principle relates back to the fundamental dichotomy underlying all of Mazzini’s ideas: the individual versus society. Musically illustrating this dichotomy requires that the chorus do more than back up a main character or provide characteristic music, such as a hunting song. “Ought not [...] the Chorus—a collective individuality—to be allowed an independent and spontaneous life of its own, as surely as the People, whose natural representative it is?” Mazzini demands.17 A more active chorus is one of the ways opera can be socialized, because the drama will be able to represent individual characters interacting with, and reacting to a larger societal group.

Mazzini also wishes to move away from the uniformity of the early nineteenth-century Italian chorus. “The People” do not hold one monolithic opinion all the time, so why should a chorus? As he puts it:

And with relation to the collective element it is especially intended to embody, should not concerted Music be more frequently employed in the Chorus [...] to represent the multiple variety of sensations, opinions, affections, and desires, which ordinarily agitate the masses? Why should Genius be unable to give musical expression to this inherent variety, and the not less inherent

16 Ibid., 55.
17 Ibid.
unity wisely ordained as the inevitable result of such conflict of inclination and opinion, and to represent the gradual coming of the moral consent and concord achieved by experience or persuasion [...]?

His desire to have the chorus “represent the gradual coming of the moral consent” is rooted in his wish for socialized art to be educational for the people. If a chorus onstage can be gradually persuaded into a right course of action (especially an action with political implications) then this representation itself may motivate a more social faith in the audience.

In contrast to his remarks on historical individuality or human individuality, Mazzini does not provide any operatic examples that have taken a step towards his desired goal. He does suggest that the “gradual coming of the moral consent” could be modeled on a chorus from Haydn, “through the gradual harmonizing of, at first, two, three, or more voices, amplified and extended through a musical artifice something similar to that adopted, if I mistake not, by Haydn, to describe the moment when light shed from the eye of Deity upon all created things?” The passage Mazzini recalls, from part I of Die Schöpfung is not nearly as gradual as Mazzini remembers (see Example 3.1).

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18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
However, what he seems to be latching on to in this passage is the *sotto voce* entrances of the voices that then swell to a *forte* on the word “Licht.” Thus, he has in mind successive quiet entrances that swell to a climax when a consensus among the collective has been reached—longer and more drawn out, but achieving a similar effect to the Haydn.

Mazzini favorably mentions two other choruses: the women’s chorus “Oh! Dove mai ne andarono” from *Anna Bolena* and the men’s chorus from the *introduzione* to *Marino Faliero*. However, they are only raised in passing, and not in the section on choruses, which suggests that he liked them but did not consider them revolutionary in any way.
One cannot help but wonder what Mazzini thought of the finale of Act II of *Guillaume Tell*, in which three different Swiss cantons are differentiated musically, then sing together of their resolve to fight and support Guillaume. Disparate groups are brought to a consensus. However, there is already consensus within the ranks, and the choruses, while not in unison, are mostly homorhythmic. Diversity of opinion is not musically represented, which is what Mazzini appears to want.

**Specific Reform: Greater Formal Fluidity**

The previous reforms Mazzini suggests all deal with external changes to opera that will enhance the dramatic intent of the work. His final operatic reform deals instead with internal structural changes that will alter the way in which opera portrays drama. He begins by proposing a greater use of *recitativo accompagnato* in opera. "Wh[y] should not the *recitativo accompagnato*, now so rare [...] be restored to the importance and efficiency of which it is capable? Why should a method of musical development, susceptible [...] of producing the highest dramatic effects, play so insignificant a part in our musical drama?" Mazzini demands. His preference for *recitativo accompagnato* over *recitativo semplice* was part of a growing trend of both listeners and composers alike. Simon Mayr’s *Medea in Corinto* (1813) was one of the first operas to use only *recitativo accompagnato* for its recitative sections. Rossini followed suit in 1815 with *Elisabetta, regina d’Inghilterra*, after which point *recitativo semplice* disappears from Rossini’s serious operas. In Stendhal’s *Life of Rossini* (1832), he criticizes Ferdinando

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22 Ibid.
Paër’s *Camilla* (1798) for the “interminable passages of recitativo secco, which is harsh, and the dreariest thing in the world.” Bellini and Donizetti also preferred *recitativo accompagnato* to *recitativo secco.* Mazzini desires this style shift because he believes it will lead to a fundamental change in the way opera is constructed.

By the *recitativo accompagnato* the listener may be carried along at the will of the composer through an endless variety of emotions, sentiments, and affections, revealing without violating the inmost secrets of the heart, and displaying all the hidden elements of passion: it enables the composer to, as it were, anatomize every conflict of the feelings (while the *aria* itself can do little more than define and express their result), and as it does not distract the attention of the listener from the meaning of the music to the mechanism of its execution, leaves its power over the soul undivided. Might it not be amplified and enlarged even at the expense of the unnecessary cavatina and inevitable *da capo?*

Mazzini considers the use of *recitativo accompagnato* to be a way to circumvent rigid formal conventions. Instead of an aria in which a character stops time to reflect on her emotional reaction to a particular event, Mazzini suggests an accompanied recitative that explores the character’s emotions in real time as they shift and react to what is occurring. In effect, he is advocating a dynamic alternative to the more static *situazioni* construction of contemporary opera. Implicit in his proposal to use *recitativo accompagnato* is the idea that the shift will lead to recitative sections carrying more dramatic weight.

Mazzini does not discuss it, but to a certain extent this change was already in progress. Both Bellini and Donizetti use *recitativo accompagnato* and arioso passages to reorient some of the dramatic weight away from arias and create a more fluid structure. Critic Carlo Ritorni praised Bellini’s *Il Pirata* (1827), noting, “what pleased above all in *Il Pirata* was the extending of musical significance to the recitatives, which were elevated to the richness of arias, while the latter were humbled somewhat, contrary to the common

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practice so that the transition should be natural.”

However, despite the greater preponderance of arioso, and greater continuity between sections, Donizetti’s and Bellini’a operas are still number operas. Mazzini wished to go further—even replacing portions or all of a conventional aria with recitative. His feeling in particular that arias “distract the attention of the listener from the meaning of the music to the mechanism of its execution,” demonstrates an anti-form attitude on par with Wagner’s later ideas of endless melody.

**Rossini’s Otello, Act III**

In addition to his suggested list of changes to opera, Mazzini acknowledges a few operas in which he has seen the seeds of reform that could lead to his desired social art. Rossini’s *Otello* is the earliest of these operas he mentions in this regard. Although he primarily considers Rossini a composer of the old epoch, he admitted that Rossini on occasions revealed flashes of the new epoch in his composition. The strongest example of this, he states, is in Act III of *Otello*: “At times he did go beyond [the old epoch]. Perhaps in *Mosé in Egitto*, undoubtedly in the third act of *Otello*, which by the powerful dramatic expression, the sense of fatality that pervades it, and the unity of inspiration that characterizes it, *does* belong to the new epoch.”

The third act of *Otello* is unusual in many respects. For one thing, Rossini’s operas only had two acts up until this point. That Rossini alters his normal dramatic templates for this opera suggests deliberateness in the way it was composed—a third act

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27 Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music’*, 56.

28 Ibid., 68.

did not appear by accident if Rossini did not generally write third acts. A glance at
Otello’s list of numbers reveals that the entire third act is a single number, even though it
contains several recitative passages, a gondolier song, the Willow song, Desdemona’s
prayer, a duet between Otello and Desdemona, and Desdemona and Otello’s deaths.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Section of <em>Otello</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act 1</td>
<td>N. 1</td>
<td>Introduzione: &quot;Viva Otello, viva il prode&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recitativo dopo l'introduzione: &quot;Vincemmo, o prodi&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N. 2</td>
<td>Cavatina di Otello: &quot;Ah sì, per voi già sento&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recitativo dopo la cavatina di Otello: &quot;Rodrigo!…Elmiro!…Ah padre mio&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N. 3</td>
<td>Duetto Rodrigo--Iago: &quot;No, non temor&quot;</td>
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<td>N. 4</td>
<td>Scena: &quot;Inutile è quel pianto&quot;</td>
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<td>Duettino Desdemona--Emilia: &quot;Vorrei, che il tuo pensiero&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Recitativo dopo il duettino: &quot;Ma che miro!&quot;</td>
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<td>N. 5</td>
<td>Coro, e finale dell'atto primo: &quot;Santo Imen! Te guidi Amore&quot;</td>
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<td>Act 2</td>
<td>N. 6</td>
<td>Recitativo: &quot;Lasciami. È dunque vano&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aria Rodrigo: &quot;Che ascolto! Ahimè! Che dice!&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recitativo dopo l'aria: &quot;M'abbandonò!…disparve!…&quot;</td>
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<td>N. 7</td>
<td>Scena: &quot;Che feci!…ove mi trasse&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Duetto Otello--Iago: &quot;Non m'inganno; al mio rivale&quot;</td>
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<td>Recitativo dopo il duetto: &quot;E a tanto giunger puote&quot;</td>
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<td>N. 8</td>
<td>Terzetto: &quot;Ah vieni, nel tuo sangue&quot;</td>
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<td>Recitativo dopo il terzetto: &quot;Desdemona! Che veggo!&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N. 9</td>
<td>Finale Secondo: &quot;Che smania? Ahimè! Che affanno?&quot;</td>
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<td>Act 3</td>
<td>N. 10</td>
<td>Recitativo: &quot;Ah! Dagli affanni oppressa&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Canzona del Gondoliero: &quot;Nessun maggior dolore&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recitativo: &quot;Oh come infino al core&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Canzona del Salice: &quot;Assisa appiè d'un salice&quot;</td>
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<td>Preghiera: &quot;Deh calma, o ciel, nel sonno&quot;</td>
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<td>Scena: &quot;Ecconi giunto inosservato&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Duetto Desdemona--Otello: 'Non arrestar il colpo…&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scena Ultima: &quot;Che sento? Chi batte?&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The entire act was conceived as one musically continuous movement. For example, the gondolier song ("Nessun maggior dolore") only lasts twenty-six measures before dying away, and only presents a single verse (see Appendix B.1). The song’s lyrics are taken from Dante’s *Inferno* Canto V, and do not even contain a full stanza—and thus do not complete the *terza rima* rhyme scheme of the poetry.

**Table 2** (Comparison between the original Dante text and the lyrics from the *Othello* gondolier song)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dante original</th>
<th>Gondolier song</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>E quella a me: «Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore.</em></td>
<td>&quot;Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice ne la miseria.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quotation is from Francesca da Rimini’s lament in the first circle of hell, and only an incomplete version of the first of the six stanzas that make up the speech is used. All of this gives the impression that Desdemona hears only part of the song. Thus, the gondolier’s song is an example of a loosening of formal conventions to create a more continuous narrative. Instead of time stopping so that the whole song can be heard, only a portion is presented as the gondolier gradually drifts out of earshot. The song does end on a perfect authentic cadence (so it is separable from the surrounding texture), but it segues directly into the next recitative. The Willow song ("Assisa appiè d’un salice"), like the gondolier song, is not a closed piece of music. After the third full verse, Desdemona abruptly interrupts herself with recitative following a V-vi⁷ half cadence (see Appendix

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B.2). She picks up the fourth verse, grows agitated, and ends abruptly without a conclusive cadence or finishing the song, moving straight into recitative again (see Appendix B.3). These sections may not be so blended into the fabric of the opera as to be undetachable, but they are not formally closed sections. The music has become more flexible to suit the needs of the drama, which is what Mazzini was looking for. When he describes the third act of *Otello* as having “unity of inspiration,” this is what he means.\(^{31}\)

*Otello*’s Act III also contains moments of local color heading in the direction of Mazzini’s concept of historical individuality. The gondolier song is one example of this concept, because the opera is set in Venice. As Mazzini wanted, the song serves as more than a superficial gesture of setting; it introduces the first stretch of minor music in the act, and influences Desdemona’s behavior. Hearing it reminds her of her own pain and that of Isaura, which causes her to sing the Willow song. The Willow song is linked by key to the gondolier song (G minor) even though they are separated by recitative mostly in D major. Rossini deliberately chose the Dante quotation for the gondolier song over his librettist’s objections that gondoliers allegedly quote Tasso, not Dante.\(^{32}\) The quotation from Francesca da Rimini’s speech alludes to Desdemona’s situation, by proxy (“There is no greater sorrow than to recall happy times in the midst of misery”) and thus enriches the melancholy atmosphere and dramatic tension of the scene.\(^{33}\)

The Willow song itself is in the style of an old romance, which was a recognizably archaic form in 1816, and would help place the setting in the past.\(^{34}\) Like the gondolier song, the Willow song serves a dramatic purpose in the act. Desdemona

\(^{31}\) Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 68.

\(^{32}\) Osborne, *Rossini,* 240.


\(^{34}\) Kimbell, *Italian Opera,* 458.
becomes increasingly agitated while singing this song. Each of the first three verses contains a higher level of ornamentation than the last. She interrupts herself, worried, and a brief storm distracts her (adding to the troubled atmosphere). The fourth verse is bare of ornamentation, showing her scared and uneasy, before she grows agitated about Isaura’s death and stops the song entirely.

Example 3.2 (*Otello* Act III “Assisa appiè un salice” Desdemona’s vocal line, beginning of verse one)

![Example 3.2](image)

Example 3.3 (*Otello* Act III “Assisa appiè un salice” Desdemona’s vocal line, beginning of verse two)

![Example 3.3](image)

Example 3.4 (*Otello* Act III “Assisa appiè un salice” Desdemona’s vocal line, beginning of verse three)

![Example 3.4](image)

Example 3.5 (*Otello* Act III “Assisa appiè un salice” Desdemona’s vocal line, beginning of verse four)

![Example 3.5](image)

The gradual addition of ornamentation ends in the ornament-free last verse, creating a dynamic rendition of Desdemona’s mental state. Thus, *Otello* Act III uses instances of
local color not only to orient the listener into time and place, but also to create an atmosphere, further the drama, and even directly affect the characters.

Mazzini certainly was not the only person to hit upon Rossini’s *Otello* Act III as something new and dramatically interesting. Stendhal describes it as “unquestionably [Rossini’s] finest achievement in the heavy Germanic style.”\(^{35}\) Mazzini undoubtedly felt there were Germanic aspects to the act as well, because it excelled at projecting a melancholy atmosphere. Franz Schubert referred to the act as a work of “extraordinary genius.”\(^{36}\) Meyerbeer wrote that “the third act is really godlike, and what is so extraordinary is that its beauties are quite unlike Rossini. First-rate declamation, continuously impassioned recitative, mysterious accompaniments full of local colour and, in particular, the style of the old romances brought to the highest perfection.”\(^{37}\) Meyerbeer appears to be attracted to the same things as Mazzini. The third act uses *recitativo accompagnato* (no *semplice*), contains instances of local color that also serve a larger dramatic and atmospheric purpose, and is musically continuous. It implements many of the reforms Mazzini suggests twenty years before the treatise was written—a demonstration of how his ideas can be applied, making them seem all the less threatening because the successful Rossini pulled it off, at least for the course of one act.

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\(^{35}\) Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, 221.

\(^{36}\) Quoted in Gaia Servadio, *Rossini* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003), 63.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Marino Faliero (1835)

The opera for which Mazzini demonstrates the most enthusiasm is none other than Gaetano Donizetti’s *Marino Faliero*. This opera may seem like a strange choice, but there are many reasons it attracted Mazzini. Firstly, the plot is drawn from Byron. Marino Faliero, the Doge of Venice, joins in the conspiracy of a popular rebellion against the oppressive upper classes, and loses his life in his fight for justice. Not only did the plot appeal to Mazzini’s political sensibilities (he himself having attempted to trigger local popular rebellions), but it also moves in the direction of representing the individual in a larger social context. Marino Faliero, an individual with mixed loyalties and conflicting desires (he is the Doge, so he should be ensuring the safety of Venice, but he too has been wronged by the aristocrats and recognizes the oppression of the lower classes), becomes part of a powerful social movement. Mazzini most likely would have considered the onstage drama as one that would spark inspiration and social consciousness in the audience. As he saw it, “the special mission of Art is to urge men to translate thought into action,” and *Marino Faliero* has a plot promoting the necessity of fighting against oppression.  

Along more musical lines, *Marino Faliero*, like the third act of *Otello*, contains instances of local color that help create an atmosphere for the work. According to Mazzini: “A shadow of ancient Venice [...] spreads itself mysteriously, solemnly over the entire drama.” He cites “the gondolier’s romance, pre-announced in the overture and sung suavely by Ivanoff” and “a ball very much with the time at the end of Act One, in which the declaimed dialogue between Faliero and Bertucci is intertwined with much

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musical doctrine,” as examples of this historic representation. The gondolier song carries less dramatic weight in this opera than the one from *Otello*, but it does help characterize the Venetian nature of the opera. As Mazzini states, the gondolier’s song is the basis for the orchestral prelude, which announces the opera’s setting from the first measures of the work. Deeper premonitions of the tragic nature of the plot are not presented in the prelude’s rendition of this gondolier song, a simple major barcarole (see Appendix C.1). It does slip briefly into minor for four measures in the middle (m. 9-12), but returns immediately to the major mode. This barcarole, however, gives way to a series of dramatic G minor chords, which introduces the noble yet tragic atmosphere of the opera. Thus the prelude successively establishes setting and the ensuing tragedy. The gondolier song itself, “Or che in cielo alta è la notte,” interrupts the chorus from the opening of Act II. The chorus of conspirators sings in minor as they gather for a meeting, calling themselves “sons of the night.” The major strains of the barcarole are heard, and the chorus quiets, afraid of being overheard or discovered. After one verse, the gondolier drifts off, and the chorus resumes their song (see Appendix C.2). Dramatically, the song does little aside from emphasizing the Venetian setting and providing musical contrast to the surrounding chorus. It does highlight the conspirators’s worry about being found out, which could be said to foreshadow their eventual betrayal. It also demonstrates a bending of musical conventions, with a piece of diegetic music that interrupts the chorus, but does not stand alone as its own number. However, it does not make as profound an impact on the action as the gondolier’s song from *Otello*. The dance Mazzini refers to takes place at the party at the end of Act I. The orchestra performs an archaic dance, pointing to the

40 Ibid.
historical setting of the opera, over which Faliero and Bertucci exchange information in recitative about the conspiracy (see Appendix C.3). The dance music not only refers to the setting, but creates an ironic contrast with Bertucci’s terse outline of the conspiracy, which elevates the tension. These passages help establish the setting of the opera, but do not go as far as Mazzini ultimately desires when he discusses his concept of historical individuality.

*Marino Faliero* conforms to some of Mazzini’s other suggested initial reforms. It uses *recitativo accompagnato* rather than *recitativo semplice* (although by this point that was very common, at least for both Donizetti and Bellini). *Marino Faliero* also includes quite a lot of material for the chorus, which plays a prominent role in the first scene of the opera (containing a conversation between two male choruses, a hymn to Faliero, and a conversation between Bertucci, Steno, and the chorus which results in Bertucci and the chorus’s denunciation of Steno), and opens the second act of the opera (and is involved in all of the numbers of that act save Fernando’s aria). In addition, a female chorus opens Act III, and the opera ends with a chorus announcing Faliero’s execution. The chorus is involved enough in the action that it is a character in this opera, existing for more than just providing passive commentary. The chorus does not go as far as representing a diversity of opinions, but it plays a role in the plot, which Mazzini wanted. Also, *Marino Faliero* demonstrates ways in which Donizetti was willing to bend conventions in order to serve the dramatic needs of the opera. An example of this is the character of Elena. Though she is the *prima donna* in the opera, she does not receive a lot of music. She sings a duet in act one, participates in the act one finale, does not appear at all in act two,

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42 Ashbrook, *Donizetti: His Life and Works*, 373.
and sings an aria and a duet in Act III. This represents a highly reduced soprano role from average opera. Donizetti takes this step in order to focus more on the main character, Faliero. The finale of Act III ends with Elena praying onstage as an offstage chorus comments on Faliero’s execution. This scene breaks with the convention of the aria-finale, where the soprano finishes the opera with a dramatic cabaletta in order to present a more moving and realistic depiction of the drama.\textsuperscript{43} When Donizetti does use conventional forms, he makes sure they continue to propel the drama, such as the Bertucci-Faliero duet in Act I discussed in Chapter One.

Mazzini’s fixation with \textit{Marino Faliero} is a bit difficult to understand. While undoubtedly a great opera, it in many ways seems more conservative than the Act III of Rossini’s \textit{Otello}. On the other hand, Donizetti maintains a consistent focus on drama throughout all three acts, even if the work is less musically continuous than the third act of \textit{Otello}. The ways in which Donizetti bent or even broke with convention for the purposes of the drama prove that he was moving towards a conception of dramaturgy at least similar to Mazzini’s. These items, along with a plot seemingly calculated to appeal directly to Mazzini, explain why it aroused his enthusiasm to such a degree.

\textbf{Donizetti, Bellini, Meyerbeer, Verdi, and Mazzini}

Though he praised Donizetti, Mazzini did not consider him to be “the genius” who would create the new social art. What he recognized in Donizetti was potential. He acknowledges Donizetti’s early reliance on Rossinian models, and notes that the speed

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
with which he composed “is often times at the borderline of carelessness.”\(^4^4\) He cites *Anna Bolena* and *Marino Faliero* as “powerful indications of a genius who has not thus far completely developed, who foresees eagerly a new musical world to run unobstructed by it.”\(^4^5\) He saw in Donizetti a gradual but relentless reformer.

Why did Mazzini value Donizetti above Bellini? After all, their operas contained similar reforms, from their plot choices, to their use of *recitativo accompagnato* and *arioso*, to their occasionally bending of operatic convention. However, Bellini’s operas do not contain the unabating innovations of Donizetti. Mazzini says of Bellini:

> Bellini [...] was not, as it seems to me, of a progressive intellect; nor would he, had he lived, have ever overpassed the limits by which his music is bounded. [...] Though far superior to all the other imitators, his is nevertheless a genius of *transition*, a link between the present and the future Italian School, and his music is like a mournful voice sounding between two worlds, and speaking of mingled memory and desire. [...] Sweet, tender, and pathetic, but submissive and resigned, its character is languid and emasculate, rather than vigorous and fertile.\(^4^6\)

He does not elaborate on his reasoning. Mazzini does acknowledge *Il Pirata* and *Norma* as being “beautiful inspirations,” but considers them to sum up all of Bellini’s music.\(^4^7\) Bellini’s earlier operas like *Il Pirata* (1827) and *La straniera* (1829) contain considerable innovations that break from earlier traditions—most notably in the fluidity among forms, and the elevation of recitative.\(^4^8\) However, by the time of *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* (1830), Bellini had begun to back away from these innovations, particularly his use of *canto declamato* (recitative-like aria sections).\(^4^9\) Around the time innovations were becoming more prominent in Donizetti’s music (from *Anna Bolena* on), Bellini was retreating from his own. Bellini also drew less inspiration from German instrumental music, which

\(^4^4\) Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 59.
\(^4^5\) Ibid., 62.
\(^4^6\) Ibid., 69-70.
\(^4^7\) Ibid., 69.
\(^4^9\) Ibid.
caused his orchestration to be simpler and less symphonic than Donizetti’s.\textsuperscript{50} Mazzini’s description of Bellini’s music as “languid and emasculate” perhaps refers to Bellini’s long, sensuous melodies.\textsuperscript{51} As Mazzini equated too much emphasis on melody with excessive individuality, Bellini’s reveling in melody would place him squarely in the old epoch—thus Mazzini’s labelling of Bellini as “a genius of \emph{transition}.”\textsuperscript{52} At the time Mazzini wrote the treatise, Bellini had passed away, and Donizetti was at the height of his career. Nothing more could come from Bellini, but Donizetti was still pushing forward. That, above all, was what Mazzini valued in Donizetti.

This explanation reveals why Mazzini retracted his enthusiastic descriptions of Donizetti in the 1860s. His writings were being collected for a complete works edition, and when the volume containing \emph{Filosofia della musica} came out, the ending section about Donizetti was missing.\textsuperscript{53} Donizetti had died in 1848, and his operas had not gone far enough for Mazzini. Instead, Mazzini picks a new hero, Meyerbeer, although his addendum did not get published in the complete works edition. His choice of Meyerbeer may have been influenced by Mazzini’s correspondence with Heinrich Heine and George Sand, who both praised the social values of Meyerbeer’s music.\textsuperscript{54} Mazzini already indicates a fondness for Meyerbeer in his passing mentions in the body of the treatise (where he speaks of Meyerbeer’s characterization of Bertram and the representation of larger forces outside the individual in \emph{Robert le Diable}). It is easy to see how the grand scale of Meyerbeer operas (works that often portray individuals caught up in a larger

\textsuperscript{50} Kimbell, \textit{Italian Opera}, 475.
\textsuperscript{51} Mazzini, \textit{Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’} 70.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 20.
conflict as in *Les Huguenots*), along with the frequent political nature appealed to Mazzini. Meyerbeer’s multi-cultural background from a musical standpoint also appealed to Mazzini’s desires for a European synthesis. As he notes in the addendum:

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.55

Mazzini considers Meyerbeer a link between German and Italian music, but still not the unknown composer to which the treatise is dedicated.

Two things are notable about this addendum. Mazzini’s enthusiasm for Meyerbeer notwithstanding, Meyerbeer had already been dead for three years by the time it was written in 1867. Mazzini deliberately chose a composer who had no potential for future innovation over a living, breathing composer. Secondly, he makes no mention of Verdi, which seems odd, especially since Mazzini had been so convinced that the Genius of the new epoch would come from Italy.

There are any number of reasons Mazzini did not talk about Verdi. Mazzini and Verdi had met each other in London in 1847, so they definitely knew about each other.56 During the revolutions of 1848, Mazzini had asked Verdi to write an anthem on Goffredo Mameli’s “Suona la tromba,” and found Verdi’s resulting work disappointing.57 Mazzini mentions Verdi in his letters frequently, but had mixed opinions of his works. For example, he liked *Don Carlos*, but disliked *Rigoletto*.58 Perhaps Mazzini considered Verdi’s works to be too focused on the individual without the larger social context. He may have felt that the presence of Verdi and Wagner demonstrated that the Italian and

56 Sciannameo, introduction to *Giuseppe Mazzini’s ‘Philosophy of Music,’* 25.
57 Ibid., 25.
58 Ibid., 26.
German styles were in opposition rather than in synthesis more than ever. It is even possible that Mazzini held a grudge against Verdi because he participated in the parliament of the monarchical government of the newly unified Italy—since Mazzini himself had hoped for a democracy. Whatever the precise reason, Mazzini did not see in Verdi the genius that would bring about the social art.

**Impact of *Filosofia della musica***

The impact of Mazzini’s treatise is hard to gauge. After the initial publication in 1836, fragments of the treatise were published in May 1840 in the *Rivista musicale di Firenze*. A year later, Mazzini’s ideas were summarized in an article by Lorenzo Guidi Rontani, an Italian poet and librettist.\(^5^9\) This indicates that Mazzini’s treatise was in circulation and was being read. It is possible, even likely, that Wagner read the work, although there is no direct evidence. However, he was reading many works by republican and socialists writers in the 1830s, so there is every possibility he would have encountered Mazzini’s work.\(^6^0\) Mazzini’s description of opera as a musical drama (“dramma musicale”), repeated discussion of the future of music, and his ideas about characterizing individuals through the use of symbolic motives, breaking down formal conventions to provide a more fluid musical experience, and the desired equality between drama, poetry, and music in an operatic work, all suggest that Mazzini’s treatise had an influence on Wagner. As I have shown, Mazzini’s treatise contains very few original observations about contemporary opera. However, the way he frames his discussion by linking musical issues to the broader social and political context appears to be unique. His own cultural

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59 Kaltenecker, afterword to *Philosophie*, 117.
60 Ibid., 119.
and political biases sometimes muddy his judgment or confuse his argument, but the broad picture he presents is interesting, insightful, and delightfully idiosyncratic. His attempt to discuss seriously the role of music in society without resorting to metaphysics is unusual in the nineteenth century, and refreshing. For these reasons *Filosofia della musica* is an interesting and important document on music in the nineteenth century.
Appendix A

Anna Bolena Musical Examples

A.1 Anna Bolena Act I “Fama! Si: l’avrete” mm. 140-7, Excerpt demonstrating Enrico’s vocal style. Note the prevalence of dotted rhythms and accents, and the simple melodic style.
A.2 *Anna Bolena* Act I “Fama! Si: l’avrete” mm. 240-7, Excerpt demonstrating Enrico’s vocal style.

A.3 *Anna Bolena* Act II “Ambo, morrete, o perfidi” mm. 392-401
A.4 *Anna Bolena* Act I “Ella di me, sollecita” mm. 1-4, Excerpt demonstrating Giovanna’s vocal style. Note the prevalence of trembling string figures and appoggiaturas in these Giovanna excerpts.

A.5 *Anna Bolena* Act I “Fama! Sì: l’avrete” mm.60-7, Excerpt demonstrating Giovanna’s vocal style.

A.7 Anna Bolena Act II “Sul suo capo aggravi un Dio” mm. 222-28, Excerpt demonstrating Giovanna’s vocal style. Giovanna is the lower voice in this excerpt.
A.8 *Anna Bolena* Act I “Come innocente giovane” mm.175-183, Excerpt demonstrating Anna’s vocal style. Note the greater prevalence of ornamentation and chromaticism.
A.9 Anna Bolena Act I “Come innocente giovane” mm. 209-214, Excerpt demonstrating Anna’s vocal style.
A.10 *Anna Bolena* Act II “Sul suo capo aggravi un Dio” mm. 171-9, Excerpt demonstrating Anna’s vocal style.
A.11 Anna Bolena Act II “Al dolce guidami castel natio” mm. 126-137, Excerpt demonstrating Anna’s vocal style.

A.12 Anna Bolena Act I “Da quel di che lei perduta” mm. 192-201, Excerpt demonstrating Percy’s vocal style. Note the greater lyricism of Percy’s music in comparison to Enrico’s.
A.13 *Anna Bolena* Act I “Voi Regina! E fia pur vero,” mm. 100-6, Excerpt demonstrating Percy’s vocal style.
Appendix B
Rossini’s Otello Musical Examples

B.1 Otello Act III “Nessun maggior dolore”
- dar-si del tem-po fel-i-ce nel-la mi-se-rìa,

che ri-cur dar-sì del tem-po fel-i-ce nel-la mi-se-
Recitativo
(Desdemona a quel canto si scuote)

Oh come in fine al core giungan quei dolci concetti!

Chi
B.2 *Otello* Act III “Assisa appiè d’un salice” end of verse three
suon. Che dis-si... Ah 'm'gann-a-il... Non è del can-te
B.3 Otello Act III “Assisa appiè d’un salice” end of verse four
Abi-mē! che il pian-to pro-se-guir non mi
Appendix C

Marino Faliero Musical Examples

C.1 Marino Faliero “Preludio”
C.2 Marino Faliero Act II “Siamo figli della notte”
C.3 Marino Faliero Act I Finale
Con altri occhi
See also in the present
Un giorno, mi risponde?
Un giorno, mi risponde?

Hiro.
Hiro.

Ed a P. A.

Ché succede?
Nessun fine la elimina.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


