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CENTRO STUDI OPERA OMNIA
LUIGI BOCCHERINI-ONLUS

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini publish the musicological series “Studies on Italian Music History” (Brepols publishers). As volume 8 of that series, I’m editing the multi-author book *VIVA VERDI: Music from the Risordimento to the Unification of Italy*, Turnhout, Brepols, forthcoming (September 2013), ISBN 978-1-909400-02-3.

With the present letter, I attest that the book includes a chapter by Raffaella Bianchi (Assistant Professor in Political Science, Suleyman Sah University, Istanbul), titled “La Scala’s Risorgimento: Conspiracy, ‘Arias da Belisario’ and Barricades”.

With my best wishes



Roberto Illiano, *General Secretary*

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The present book investigates the musical landscape of the Italian peninsula from the Risorgimento to the formation of the unitary State, focusing in particular on the relationship between music and national identity. The editor's aim has been to examine a number of significant aspects of the topic, including: great musical figures and popular music; Italian musical institutions of the mid-nineteenth century, and the relationship between artistic output and the historical, political and social dynamics which culminated in the unification of Italy. The authors featured are: Cristina Aguilar Hernández, Angela Bellia, Raffaella Bianchi, Maria Birbili, Carmela Bongiovanni, Pinuccia Carrer, Anna Cicatiello, Basil Considine, Mariateresa Dellaborra, Federico Gon, Philip Gossett, Jehoash Hirschberg, Olga Jesurum, Marina Mayrhofer, Joseph E. Morgan, Fiamma Nicolodi, Renato Ricco, Victor Sánchez Sánchez, Chloe Valenti.


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LA SCALA'S RISORGIMENTO: CONSPIRACY, 'ARIAS DA *BELISARIO*' AND BARRICADES¹

Raffaella Bianchi
(ISTANBUL)

THE STORY OF LA SCALA DURING THE RISORGIMENTO IS exciting and eventful. After the Napoleonic period, between 1814, when the Austrian regained control of Milan, and 1848, date of the street battles of the Five Days of Milan, La Scala becomes a world of secret gatherings and a place of expression of patriotic emotionality. The idea of the nation started to gain momentum among intellectuals in Milan since the time of Enlightenment; and the shift from intellectual to political action is described as happening because of an emotional shift. Franco Della Peruta defines this shift from the idea of the nation to the idea of fatherland (*patria*)². The French word *patrie* is highly emotive; it is used to denote a «subjectively defined region»³ for which the subject feels a sense of loyalty as well as love. This love for the nation could be spread more likely by the emotional language of novels, poems and operas, rather than by the rational language of political pamphlets.

In nineteenth century's Italian opera themes of love and loyalty are recurrent, and there is no doubt that operatic performances were deeply moving for the audiences at La Scala. The first violinist⁴, Alessandro Rolla, was such a skilled musician that he became legendary

¹. I would like to express my thanks to Philip Gossett for his invaluable comments. This paper could have not been written without the scholarship which was granted to me by the Department of Politics, History and International Relations of Loughborough University, and the support of Martha Wörsching, Robert Knight, Jeremy Leamen and Ruth Kinna. I also would like to thank the staff of the Biblioteca della Civica Raccolta delle Stampe 'Achille Bertarelli', in particular Giovanna Mori for agreeing on the publication of the images of this chapter, and Nora Camesasca for her useful help in accessing the sources of the archive.

². DELLA PERUTA, FRANCO. *Storia dell'Ottocento. Dalla Restaurazione alla "belle époque"*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1994, p. 16.

³. MUNCK, Thomas Munck. *The Enlightenment. A Comparative Social History, 1721-1794*, London, Arnold, 2000, p. 201.

⁴. In the early nineteenth century the orchestra did not have a conductor as today. It was the first violin who had the role of leading the other instruments.

for causing women to faint during his performances. According to Stendhal, the police asked Rolla not to play the viola as «Il donnait des attaques de nerf aux femmes»⁵. If the Police intervened on musical matters, the power of expression of opera performance must have been highly perceived by the audience. It is not surprising that opera was considered the best vehicle for spreading patriotic sentimentality from one of the most important theorists and organizers of the Italian Risorgimento, Giuseppe Mazzini. It is because of this emphasis on passion that the musical theatre was favoured by Mazzini among all the arts, as the performing arts speak especially to the emotions⁶. In addition, opera was possibly the best medium of patriotic emotionality because of opera's popularity in Milan⁷, as well as because of the low literacy of the population which made novels and feuilletons inaccessible to the masses. And, indeed, the most popular patriotic operas⁸ were performed at La Scala. We can also assume that an animated audience was expressing patriotic feelings publicly seeing as the rules for attendance at La Scala became increasingly strict⁹.

However, most scholars¹⁰ have seen La Scala as an instrument of control of the Habsburg's government. It is, indeed, true that La Scala became a control device for the Austrian government. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate that this control was put into place in relation, and often in response, to the political activity which took place at La Scala. As we will see below, during the Risorgimento La Scala had a central place. Firstly, La Scala was connected to the intellectual life of Milan's progressive aristocracy, as it was a meeting place for Romantic patriots and political conspirators in the 1820s. Then, from 1830s it became a stage to perform revolutionary feelings and public demonstrations until 1848, when the demonstrations passed from the opera house to the streets in the violent confrontations among the barricades of the Five Days of Milan.

⁵. «He provoked women into having attacks of nerves». STENDHAL. *Rome, Naples et Florence (1826)*, edited by Pierre Brunel, Paris, Gallimard, 1988 (Folio. Classique, 1845), p. 38. Unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

⁶. MAZZINI, Giuseppe. *I fratelli Bandiera; Dante; Filosofia della musica*, Milan, Sonzogno, 1901 (Biblioteca universale, 33).

⁷. BIANCHI, Raffaella. 'Was Opera in Italy the Nineteenth Century's Pop Music? Diverse Aspects of Opera in Milan before Italian Unification', in: *Musical Theatre as High Culture? The Cultural Discourse on Opera and Operetta in the 19th Century*, edited by Vjera Katalinić, Stanislav Tuksar and Harry White, Zagreb, Croatian Musicological Society, 2011 (Serija Muzikološki zbornici / Hrvatsko Muzikološko Društvo, 15), pp. 125-141.

⁸. See GOSSETT, Philip. 'Le "edizioni distrutte" e il significato dei cori operistici nel Risorgimento', in: *Il Saggiatore musicale*, xii/2 (2005), pp. 339-387. English translation, "Edizioni distrutte" and the Significance of Operatic Choruses during the Risorgimento', in: *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, edited by Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007 (Cambridge Studies in Opera), pp. 181-242.

⁹. BIANCHI, Raffaella. 'The Structure of Space and the Display of Hegemony at La Scala at its Origins, during Napoleonic period and Restoration', in: *The European Legacy*, xviii/4 (July 2013), forthcoming.

¹⁰. GATTI, Carlo. *Il Teatro alla Scala nella storia e nell'arte (1778-1963)*, 2 vols., Milan, Ricordi, 1964, vol. 1; SPAPAEN, Bruno. "Governare per mezzo della Scala": L'Austria e il teatro d'opera a Milano', in: *Contemporanea*, vi/4 (October 2003), pp. 593-620.

LA SCALA'S RISORGIMENTO: CONSPIRACY, 'ARIAS DA BELISARIO' AND BARRICADES

SECRET GATHERINGS AT LA SCALA OF THE ROMANTIC RISORGIMENTO

The start of a movement of opinion which supported the idea of an Italian nation can be traced back as early as 1789; its members were a minority consisting of intellectuals, most of whom came from the urban middle class, with some of them having an aristocratic background¹¹. When the Austrians returned to power in 1814, according to a report addressed to Metternich and written by Menz¹², liberal ideas spread among elements of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, while the Church, the military, and the conservative aristocrats could be considered loyal to Austria. Therefore, Milanese upper classes were split into a conservative aristocracy allied to the Austrian rulers and a block formed by a liberal aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie.

In this climate, the Austrians were concerned about maintaining their hegemonic control over an empire made up of different nationalities struggling for independence. This is evident by the first measure enforced by the Habsburg government in Milan after their return in 1814. Immediately after taking control of Milan, on 26 August 1814, the new authorities, *Cesareo Governo Provvisorio*, ordered a ban on any corporations and organizations, e.g. freemasonry. An announcement was displayed at La Scala in September 1814; audiences, but also artists and employees of the theatre were clearly informed of prohibitions and sanctions (e.g. prison sentences of between two months and a year, and the confiscation of all property). The third paragraph of this announcement specifies a penalty of between 200 to 1000 lire for anyone supplying a house or a room for meetings, in addition to a prison sentence. This made it very dangerous for patriots to meet in their private houses; this is one of the reasons why La Scala became a meeting place for patriots.

Stendhal considers boxes at La Scala were like a salon: «[...] on fait la conversation dans les deux cents petits salons, avec une fenêtre garnie de rideaux donnant sur la sale, qu'on appelle loges»¹³. On another occasion Stendhal writes: «Je suis présenté dans sept ou huit [loges]. Je trouve cinq ou six personne dans chacune de ces loges, et la conversation établie comme dans un salon»¹⁴. In particular he is struck by one box:

¹¹. DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento: dall'età napoleonica alle Cinque Giornate*. Milan, Editrice La Storia, 1992 (Gli studi, 1).

¹². SPELLANZON, Cesare. 'Il Decennio 1820-1830. Dalla cospirazione liberale ai processi Pellico-Maroncelli e Confalonieri. La vita economica e culturale', in: *Storia di Milano*, 18 vols., Milan-Rome, Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la Storia di Milano-Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1953-1966, vol. XIV: *Sotto l'Austria: 1815-1859* (1960), II part, pp. 177-180.

¹³. «[...] one converses in more than two-hundred little salons called boxes, each with a window dressed with curtains which provide views of the auditorium». STENDHAL. *Op. cit.* (see note 5), p. 40.

¹⁴. «I am introduced in seven or eight boxes. I find five or six people each of in these boxes, and the conversation is established like on a salon»; *ibidem*, p. 30.

RAFFAELLA BIANCHI

A Paris, je ne connais rien de comparable à cette loge où, chaque soir, l'on voit aborder successivement quinze ou vingt homes distingués; et l'on écoute la musique quand la conversation cesse d'intéresser¹⁵.

This was the box which belonged to the patriot Lodovico di Breme, a friend of Count Porro Lambertenghi. The box was a meeting point for intellectuals from all over Europe, including Goethe and Lord Byron. In this box, Pietro Borsieri, Melchiorre Gioia and Silvio Pellico gathered every night and discussed their ideas¹⁶. When considering the social backgrounds of the patriots active in the Risorgimento movement, it is clear that they were aristocratic or bourgeois, according to the emphasis one gives to their origins or to their role in the economic order. One good example of these aristocratic-bourgeois men in Milan is Count Porro Lambertenghi, who introduced the steam engine for silk spinning in Lombardy. His house was also the first to use gas lighting based on the system used in Paris¹⁷. Along with Federico Confalonieri, Lambertenghi promoted a steamboat service on the river Po; the steamer *Eridanio* was built in Genoa and was equipped with an English engine¹⁸, and such entrepreneurial activities were typical of some aristocratic owners. Activism of these progressive entrepreneurs was not limited to enthusiasm for technical and industrial development.

They were also active intellectuals, engaging within the Romantic movement. Romanticism is a word that in the common understanding has little to do with politics. Nevertheless, Raymond Williams¹⁹ famously draws attention to the Romantic concept of the artist as a genius, who is commonly believed to be free from political judgments and engagements. As Williams shows for the English Romantic movement, creative writers and artists in general were well aware and engaged with the politics of their time, and art and society were far from being two separate realms²⁰. «In Italy Romanticism was the cultural arm of the Risorgimento»²¹ and the centre of the Romantic Movement was Milan. Paradoxically, the debate on Romanticism in Italy was started by the conservative voice of the journal *Biblioteca italiana*, which published an article written by one of the most influential intellectuals of the time, Germaine de Staël. Daughter of Jacques Necker and raised in the salon of her mother amidst

¹⁵. «In Paris I do not know anything like this box where every night one can meet successively fifteen or twenty men of value, and music is listened to when the conversation is no longer interesting»; *ibidem*, p. 78.

¹⁶. *Ibidem*.

¹⁷. SPELLANZON, Cesare. *Op. cit.* (see note 12).

¹⁸. *Ibidem*.

¹⁹. WILLIAMS, Raynold. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1963 (Pelican books, A590).

²⁰. *Ibidem*.

²¹. KIMBELL, David. 'Romantic Opera 1830-1850: Italy', in: *Romanticism (1830-1890)*, edited by Gerald Abraham, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1990 (*The New Oxford History of Music*, 9), p. 141.

the philosophers of the French enlightenment, Mme de Staël was a preeminent figure in literature and cultural life during the French revolution and Napoleonic period, opposing Napoleon but supporting the idea of the nation²².

Since Napoleon associated himself with classicism, *Biblioteca italiana* gave its consent to attacking classical aesthetics. It did so by publishing Madame de Staël's critique of the parochialism and conservatism of Italian writers, who did not translate modern works from other languages, and for their attachment to the imitation of classical poetry, which was seen as pompous²³. The journal was established and subsidized by the Austrian government with the aim of creating cultural consensus²⁴. Evidence that the journal was considered relevant can be seen in the measures taken by the Austrian government. *Biblioteca italiana* was subsidized to the amount of 6,000 lire²⁵. In addition, Count Sarau, the governor of Milan, was to decide on the materials for publication, on the distribution of works among contributors, and, in general, on the political and moral content of the journal²⁶. Moreover, the Austrian government pressured local councils to subscribe to the journal; this was rejected by some councils who doubted its value as a commercial investment, as it was difficult to read²⁷. Ugo Foscolo was first asked to edit the journal; as evidence, there is his pamphlet (*Parere sulla Istituzione di un Giornale Letterario*) reflecting his main ideas on the editorial role. However, he never actually worked as editor. When Napoleon fled from Elba in February 1815, the Austrian government called on all officers of the former Italian army to join the Austrian army. Foscolo refused and became a deserter, escaping to Switzerland and then to England, where he spent the last twelve years of his life²⁸. The travel writer Giuseppe Acerbi, a friend of Madame de Staël, was appointed as the editor²⁹.

According to Cranston, at first the Austrian government supported the publication of foreign authors in Italian, especially German, but after the discussion triggered by an article written in 1816 by Madame de Staël, the government realized the subversive power of Romanticism, as a movement which fostered Nationalism. Pietro Borsieri, in his *Avventure letterarie di un giorno (Literary Adventure of One Day)* of 1816, drew attention to the failure of *Biblioteca italiana* as a forum for the debate of new ideas³⁰. Thus, the project of a new

²². FAIRWEATHER, Maria. *Madame de Staël*, London Constable, 2005. NORRIS, Maria. *Life and Times of Madame De Staël*, London, David Bogue, 1853.

²³. CRANSTON, Maurice William. *The Romantic Movement*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, pp. 101-103.

²⁴. SPELLANZON, Cesare. *Op. cit.* (see note 12).

²⁵. *Ibidem.*

²⁶. *Ibidem.*

²⁷. *Ibidem.*

²⁸. CRANSTON, Maurice William. *Op. cit.* (see note 23), p. 100.

²⁹. *Ibidem.*

³⁰. BORSIERI, Pietro. 'Avventure letterarie di un giorno o consigli di un galantuomo a vari scrittori', in: *I manifesti romantici del 1816 e gli scritti principali del «Conciliatore» sul Romanticismo*, edited by Carlo Calcaterra, Turin, UTET, 1964 (Classici italiani, 79).

journal in which progressive ideas could be expressed freely was started by a small group of patriots: Lodovico Di Breme, Pietro Borsieri, and Silvio Pellico. These intellectuals used to meet every night in Di Breme's box at La Scala³¹. Parallel to this group, there was another circle of Romantic intellectuals in Milan, who regularly met at *Contrada Morone*, in the house of the main Italian Romantic novelist, Alessandro Manzoni³². Among them were Berchet, Visconti, Torti and Grossi. These two groups became involved in editing the journal *Il conciliatore*. The title, meaning 'the one who conciliates', referred to the agreement found between the two groups.

The journal was known as the 'azure paper' because of the light-blue colour of its pages. There were about twenty contributors: Sismondi, Rasori, Pellico, Di Breme, Romagnosi, Berchet, De Cristoforis, Ressi, Pecchio, Montani, Ernes Visconti, Porro Lambertenghi, Confalonieri, Arrivabene, Primo, Serristori, Mossotti and Vantini³³. It was a periodical published and printed by Vincenzo Ferrario; however, financial support was given by Count Porro Lambertenghi and Count Federico Confalonieri³⁴. No doubt the journal contributed to the dissemination of modern ideas among the public in Milan. Conceived as a scientific journal, it published not only articles on literature, but on agriculture, free trade and protectionism, on the steam engine, on mechanical inventions and on commercial techniques. The articles were not written in strictly academic language, but in a style to popularise knowledge. The journal aimed to connect the intellectual and cultural life of Milan to that of Europe and also to other parts of Italy.

Il conciliatore was founded in 1818 and soon after became an important vehicle for debating liberal views. *Il conciliatore* was already confronting *Biblioteca italiana*, when another new journal, *Attaccabrighe (Troublemaker)*, started to engage in cultural battle, denouncing the contributors of *Il conciliatore* as enemies of the state³⁵. Interestingly, this attack had also a musical version. In 1819 the opera *Marsia*³⁶ composed by Giovanni Arcangelo Gambarana and written by three anonymous writers hidden behind the pseudonym X, Y and Z, also authors of the *Almanacco antiromantico* published a year earlier³⁷, was performed at the Teatro Re. *Marsia* was representing Porro Lambertenghi (D. Gengiovario Mostosi, Presidente, detto il Gongolatore), Silvio Pellico (Bartolomeo Strappacuori, Segretario, detto lo Sgangherato),

³¹. STENDHAL. *Op. cit.* (see note 5).

³². SPELLANZON, Cesare. *Op. cit.* (see note 12).

³³. *Il conciliatore: foglio scientifico-letterario. 1: Anno 1 (3 settembre 1818-31 dicembre 1818)*, edited by Vittore Branca, Florence, Felice Le Monnier, 1948.

³⁴. SPELLANZON, Cesare. *Op. cit.* (see note 12).

³⁵. *Il conciliatore: foglio scientifico-letterario, op. cit.* (see note 33).

³⁶. *Marsia. Melodramma degli Astronomi X, Y, Z, musica del Sig. maestro Gio. Arcangelo Gambarana, da rappresentarsi al Teatro Re l'autunno dell'anno 1819*, Milan, Tipografia Taraburini, [1819].

³⁷. MARINOTTI, Sergio. 'Gambarana, Giovanni Arcangelo', in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. LII, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1999, available at <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-arcangelo-gambarana_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/> [26 March 2012].

LA SCALA'S RISORGIMENTO: CONSPIRACY, 'ARIAS DA *BELISARIO*' AND BARRICADES

Lodovico di Breme (D. Marforio Romanticomano, detto il Gambetta), Giovanni Berchet (D. Ciccione della Mamma, detto l'Estatico), Pietro Borsieri (Simone Cotichino, Poeta, detto lo Sparutello) and other characters of the Romantic movement of the time³⁸. The opera parodied Romanticism, and Madame de Staël was portrayed as the «trembling woman»³⁹.

Il conciliatore not only engaged in intellectual confrontations, but also became an intellectual weapon against the conservative absolutism of Austria. This became evident to the censors who were increasingly aware of the danger represented by the journal, asking for more and more revisions and cuts to articles, until the journal was suppressed in 1819. The fight between *Il conciliatore* and the police was well-known to the public, and because of this, the term 'Romantic' became synonymous with patriot⁴⁰. The distribution of *Il conciliatore* also became difficult in other Italian regions because of censorship. The first issue was published on 3 September 1818; it was published twice a week for 119 issues, before the censors banned it.

THE CONSPIRACY OF 1821 AND PUBLIC MOURNING AT LA SCALA

The most active and progressive parts of the city's intellectuals were left without influence, and their actions were strictly controlled in an atmosphere of suspicion⁴¹. However, the writers of *Il conciliatore* were not easily intimidated by such government actions. As they were prevented from working in the cultural field by the censor, they actively started to organise themselves for political struggle. Activities of freemasons and the spread of liberal ideas had strengthened an aversion to absolutism among the progressive upper classes, and news of the Spanish revolution of 1820 inflamed public opinion⁴². Count Federico Confalonieri was in contact with freemasons and political activists in Italy and in Europe; in 1820 contacts between Lombardy and Piedmont freemasons intensified⁴³. There was a plan for an uprising in Milan combined with a Piedmontese invasion, to expel the Austrians, which was one of the strategies of the patriots of the moderate party to free and unify Italy under the crown of Savoy.

La Scala boxes were a perfect meeting place for conspiratorial activities. Under the gaze of everyone, it seemed one could secretly conspire without raising suspicion about one's behaviour. However, La Scala was full of spies and plain-clothes police watching

³⁸. 'Appendice Critico-letteraria Teatrale e di Varietà', in: *Gazzetta privilegiata di Milano*, 4 December 1819, p. 1. SPARACELLO, Giovanna. 'Il Teatro Romantico nel *Conciliatore* e nella *Biblioteca Italiana*', in: *Revue des Etudes Italiennes*, LII/3-4 (July-December 2006), pp. 163-180.

³⁹. *Il conciliatore: foglio scientifico-letterario*, *op. cit.* (see note 33), p. xxxii.

⁴⁰. See the letter by Silvio Pellico in RINIERI, Ilario. *Della vita e delle opere di Silvio Pellico*, 3 vols., Turin, Streglio, 1898-1901, vol. 1: *Da lettere e documenti inediti*, p. 318.

⁴¹. SPELLANZON, Cesare. *Op. cit.* (see note 12).

⁴². DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento [...]*, *op. cit.* (see note 11).

⁴³. ID. *Momenti di storia d'Italia fra '800 e '900*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1992 (Quaderni di storia, 86).

those who were involved in the Carboneria movement. The arrests started with Piero Maroncelli, an organiser of the Carboneria, who worked for the edition of librettos published by Ricordi⁴⁴. Maroncelli was a friend of Silvio Pellico, sharing with him the passion for theatre. The police arrested him on 3 October 1820⁴⁵. The musical entourage was also under surveillance and soon new arrests were made. In February 1821 two conspirators, Giuseppe Pecchio and Carlo Castiglia, met at La Scala. Pecchio told Castiglia in confidence of plans for the insurrection they were preparing, but Castiglia betrayed him to the police⁴⁶. Count Federico Confalonieri, Alexandre Philippe Adryane, Porro-Lambertenghi, Pallavicino, Borsieri and all the opera-goers who usually met in Ludovico di Breme's box, were immediately arrested.

The trials and appeals for pardon went on for years. In 1824 Silvio Pellico, Giuseppe Pecchi, Federico Count Confalonieri and Alexandre Philippe Adryane were sentenced to death, but the sentence was later changed to life imprisonment at the Spielberg Prison in Brno. Others were given shorter sentences. As the contemporary historian Romualdo Bonfadini wrote in his book *Mezzo secolo di patriottismo lombardo* in 1886; from that day there opened up a rift between the Austrian government and the Milanese aristocracy, one that would inevitably deepen. The news of these sentences shocked Milan, and at La Scala there was the first public demonstration of discontent against the Government. For three days after the sentences became public, box owners did not attend performances. Boxes were empty and their curtains were closed as a sign of mourning⁴⁷. Clearly La Scala no longer had the traditional function of being an instrument of consensus, but since then it became also an instrument for demonstrating dissent.

After this episode, control became stricter, and a central chandelier was put into place despite the resistance of the public in order to make it easier for the police to control what was going on among the audience⁴⁸. It was considered necessary to avoid any situation which could spark off a political demonstration. A few months after the conspirators were sentenced to life imprisonment, and as discontent spread among larger parts of the aristocracy, new rules for the attendance of performances were introduced⁴⁹. It seems that the audience started actively participating in performances by expressing their political views and asking for encores, while a law passed in 1826 made it illegal to applaud after specific passages or to ask for encores⁵⁰. This is clear evidence that the performances of the time were understood to have political significance by the audience.

⁴⁴. See BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *La Scala racconta*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1984.

⁴⁵. Cfr. PELLICO, Silvio. *Le mie prigioni: memorie*, Paris, Baudry, 1833.

⁴⁶. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

⁴⁷. *Ibidem*; BONFANDINI, Romualdo. *Mezzo secolo di patriottismo lombardo*, Milan, Treves, 1886.

⁴⁸. SPAPAEN, Bruno. *Op. cit.* (see note 10). BIANCHI, Raffaella. 'Lighting at La Scala during the Risorgimento: From the Politics of Display to Surveillance (1814-1848)', forthcoming.

⁴⁹. BIANCHI, Raffaella. 'The Structure of Space [...]', *op. cit.* (see note 9).

⁵⁰. CAMBIASI, Pompeo. *La Scala 1778-1906: note storiche e statistiche*, 5th revised edition, Milan, G. Ricordi & C., 1906, p. 81.

PATRIOTIC EMOTIONALITY AND POLITICAL DIVAS

Operatic performances became theatres of political struggle between opposing parties, where belonging to one side or to the other was a matter of political affiliation. In particular, the struggle between solo singers dominated public opinion during the 1830s, the years of the birth of Romantic melodrama in which Donizetti and Bellini created the central figure of the heroine. This struggle saw the public divided between the two most popular singers of the time on the operatic stages in Milan: Giuditta Pasta (ILL. 1) and Maria Malibran (ILL. 2). Giuditta Pasta⁵¹ was an internationally famous singer who was the first to perform the role of some of the most passionate heroines written in the 1830s: *Norma*⁵², *Anna Bolena*, *Amina*. In Milan, her first appearance was not at La Scala but at another venue, at the Carcano Theatre⁵³. The Carcano still exists today, in the central corso di Porta Romana. In the nineteenth century it was a theatre situated closer to the outskirts of Milan near the circle of the Navigli canals, near the gate of Porta Romana. The Carcano theatre was a meeting place for the part of the bourgeoisie who could not easily find a place at La Scala⁵⁴. This venue would acquire importance in the political climate of the Risorgimento as, later on, it became a meeting place for patriots who were annoyed by the massive presence of soldiers at La Scala and therefore looked for a venue where they could express themselves more freely. Arguably, the seasons of the 1830s, with Pasta as protagonist, in competition with La Scala⁵⁵, had contributed to this political characterisation of the theatre.

This may also have been emphasised by the fact that Pasta was born in Saronno, a town north of Milan, and so she may have been perceived by the audience as a patriotic 'local' icon. Her heroic attitude in her roles on stage convinced and inspired the audience. At that time solo singers were the most authoritative voices in determining how to act and interpret a role. In 1829 Pasta was called «la cantante delle passioni» (the singer of passions) by the critic Carlo Ritorti, because of her vocal and physical abilities in expressing intense passions heightened by her «histrionic gifts' of acting which she had learned in France»⁵⁶. Her representation of patriotism was indeed charged by her own convictions and commitment to patriotism: in 1842 Giuditta

⁵¹. APPOLONIA, Giorgio. *Giuditta Pasta: Gloria del belcanto*. Turin, EDA, 2000 (Realtà musicali).

⁵². There is a controversy in literature whether the audience of this performance asked for many encores and joined in the chorus 'Guerra, guerra' (War, war), as reported by MARTIN, George W. *Aspects of Verdi*, New York, Dodd-Mead, 1988; New York, Linelight Editions, 1993, and many other sources, or if this was not the case.

⁵³. GUTHRIES, Beniamino. *Il Teatro Carcano (1803-1914): Glorie artistiche e patriottiche decadenza e resurrezione*, Milan, Sonzogno, 1916; Bologna, A. Forni, 1984.

⁵⁴. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

⁵⁵. GATTI, Carlo. *Op. cit.* (see note 10).

⁵⁶. RUTHERFORD, Susan. "'La Cantante delle passioni': Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance', in: *Cambridge Opera Journal*, XIX/2 (2007), p. 112.

Pasta left Milan for Blevio on Lake Como, from where she took an active role in the Risorgimento; in 1848 after the uprising in Milan, her house in Via Montenapoleone 30 in Milan became the base for the Provisional Government; she put the Italian flag at the summit of Brunate's mountain; and after the return of the Austrian government she went into exile in Switzerland⁵⁷. There she planned to meet Mazzini, and there she gave a concert in honour of the exiled patriots⁵⁸.

Norma represented the apex of Pasta's career, and the character was written especially for her voice. According to Barigazzi, Duke Visconti di Modrone⁵⁹, Chamberlain of the Emperor and impresario at La Scala, actively disliked Giuditta Pasta, and this might be the reason why he invited Maria Malibran, a celebrated younger singer, to perform *Norma* twice at the end of the season in 1834⁶⁰. *Norma* had not been performed before by any other singer apart from Pasta. The five performances of Maria Malibran, a brilliant young singer, were a success; *Norma* was repeated for a third time, and other two performances of Rossini's *Otello* were staged. The Duke overtly supported Malibran: the singer was given lodging at Duke Visconti's palace in via Cerva. The Duke intended to celebrate the glory of Maria Malibran, overshadowing Pasta's celebrity. On the night before Malibran was to leave Milan, he publicly celebrated her fame by organising a special recital for her at his palace. The orchestra of La Scala serenaded her from the garden of the palace, and guests were invited to the recital; copies of a poem in her honour, written by Felice Romani, were distributed⁶¹. In the following season at La Scala, Malibran dominated the calendar with 85 performances of 15 different operas, while Pasta was only allowed to sing in 13 performances of 2 operas. Duke Visconti di Modrone wanted to sideline the older singer, famous for her patriotism, with the young talent of Maria Malibran, whom he put centre stage at La Scala.

In 1835 the struggle between Giuditta Pasta and Maria Malibran became a dominant topic of conversation. Opera-lovers were divided into two camps, and the rivalry between the two singers was publicly debated. This rivalry was polemically discussed not only in the *Gazzetta privilegiata di Milano*, but also in the Milanese

⁵⁷. OGLIARI, Francesco - INZAGHI, Luigi. *Milano all'Opera: I teatri, i personaggi, le rappresentazioni. Piccole e grandi storie nel segno del melodramma*, Milan, Edizioni Selecta, 2006; KENNETH, Stern. 'Pasta Diva: Bellini's first *Norma*, Celebrated across Europe, Settled into a Different Life at Her Villa on the Shores of lake Como', in: *Opera News*, XLVI/12 (1982), pp. 8-11.

⁵⁸. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

⁵⁹. Duke Carlo Visconti di Modrone was a member of one of the most important Milanese families and had an important political function as 'Chamberlain to the Emperor', he chaired the Direzione Teatrale and later became impresario until his death in 1836; see Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Raccolte Storiche Civiche, *Appalti, Spettacoli Pubblici* 79, 1776-1881.

⁶⁰. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

⁶¹. *Ibidem*, pp. 138-139.



ILL. 1: A. E. Chalon R. A., drawing; *Giuditta Pasta*, 1857, R. J. Lane A. R. A. lithography; J. Mitchell printer; Milan, Civiche Raccolte Achille Bertarelli, Collection 'Ritratti d'Artisti'.

periodicals *Il Figaro*, supporting Pasta, and *Il corriere delle dame*, supporting Malibran⁶². In describing this debate, Susan Rutherford talks about the different qualities of the two singers — Pasta's performance of *Norma* being depicted as more theatrical, while Malibran's was seen as more naturalistic. However, in my opinion these aesthetic

⁶² RUTHERFORD, Susan. *Op. cit.* (see note 56), pp. 107-138.



ILL. 2: Focosi, drawing *Sanspareille. Valses... composées et dédiés à Madame M. Malibran Garcia* par G. Tutsch. Milan chez Jean Ricordi, lithography, Milan, Civiche Raccolte Achille Bertarelli, Collection 'Ritratti d'Artisti'.

features have to be understood in the historical context of the political confrontations of the Risorgimento. Pasta embodied the Italian nation, therefore her acting and figure appeared solemn, like the classic effigies of Roman coins, while Maria Malibran, who did not embody patriotic intentionality, was represent merely in her youthful feminine beauty. Evidence of the political characterization of this polemical confrontation between the party of supporters of Pasta, and the party of her younger rival Malibran, can be found in the memoirs of one of the most famous patriots, Massimo D'Azeglio. He admitted that he was fascinated by Malibran, but also disliked her, as he resented the enthusiasm that her performances provoked; he suggested that Malibran's role was to support Austrian rule⁶³.

⁶³ D'AZEGLIO, Massimo. *I miei ricordi*, edited by Ferdinando Carlesi, Rome, Cremonese, 1955 (I classici azzurri, 19).

LA SCALA'S RISORGIMENTO: CONSPIRACY, 'ARIAS DA *BELISARIO*' AND BARRICADES

STAGING PATRIOTIC FIGHTS AT LA SCALA

Sul campo della gloria
Noi pugneremo a lato;
Frema o sorrida il fato,
Vicino a te sarò...
La morte o la vittoria
Con te dividerò

On the battlefield of glory/ We will fight next to each other/ In good or bad
fate/ I will be next to you/ Death or victory/ I will share with you. (*Belisario*,
Act 1).

In this famous duet there is a direct reference to military struggle against the enemy, a fight until victory or death. This was sung in a particular moment of the history of Milan. The confrontation between the two singers who embodied different political ideals agitated the atmosphere in Milan, where at the same time there was a cholera epidemic. La Scala was closed for quarantine from March to August 1836, and it was only then that the first open political demonstration took place. On the night of re-opening, La Scala staged *Belisario* by Donizetti, based on a libretto by Salvatore Cammarano, inspired by a version of the drama *Belisarius* by Eduard von Schenk, and in a shorter version by Luigi Marchionni⁶⁴. *Belisario* was set in Byzantium in the 5th century BC, but it had a contemporary meaning because of its patriotic happy-end: the blind Belisario is able to save the fatherland from barbaric occupiers. In the libretto there are references to the «northern kingdoms» (*regni nordici*, Act 1) against which the hero Belisario is fighting. Although the scene was set in Byzantium, the audience could easily read between the lines, perceiving the analogy with the struggle of Italians against 'the northern' Austrian rule.

Another reference to the contemporary political situation was the mention of Greece. At the beginning of the opera, Belisario has just returned from Greece where he was «a military leader («cesare», «duce») of courageous men» («valenti») (Act 1). Only a few years before the creation of the opera, in 1829, Greek independence was obtained after the battles against the Ottoman Empire, and patriots from other countries participated in these battles. The Ottoman Empire ruled over different nationalities, and the parallel between the two situations must have been obvious to contemporaries, who imagined themselves involved in a similar struggle. In addition, there are countless references to 'unity'. Despite the strict rules of behaviour for the audience enforced in the late 1820s, the performance of this opera was an openly patriotic demonstration at La Scala. Some arias, like the above-mentioned duet between Belisario and his companion Alamiro, were

⁶⁴. GELLI, Piero - MATTAROZZI, Marco - PORZIO, Michele. *Dizionario dell'opera*, edited by Piero Gelli, Milan, Baldini & Castoldi, 1996 (Le boc, 13).

so overtly provocative that the phrase 'aria da *Belisario*' became the common term for any song with an explicit counter-hegemonic motif⁶⁵.

Due to the growth of patriotic feelings, which were stirred into action by some ill-conceived uprisings organised by Mazzini's Young Italy, Metternich became convinced that it was necessary to encourage consensus about Austrian rule among the people in the Lombardy-Veneto. Thus, in 1838 the coronation of the new Emperor Ferdinand was staged in Milan. In Metternich's view the coronation was an ideal way of showing to the Italians that the Austrian empire was the legitimate successor to the Holy Roman Empire⁶⁶. Thus, the impresario Bartolomeo Merelli opened the season of La Scala with a special gala performance on this occasion on 2 September 1838, consisting of four operas by Rossini, one by Pier Antonio Coppola, and four ballets, among which the most successful was *Nabucodonosor*⁶⁷. On 6 September 1838, Ferdinand was crowned in the Duomo, the main cathedral which was decorated for the occasion by Sanquirico, the stage designer of La Scala⁶⁸. Three days later, after a grand ball, Ferdinand left for Venice, and he was never to come back to Milan.

However, while in Milan, Ferdinand promised a general amnesty for political prisoners. The poet Temistocle Solera, whose father had spent a sentence in the Spielberg prison in Brno when he himself was still a boy, published a poem dedicated to Ferdinand entitled *The Amnesty*⁶⁹. The poem to Ferdinand was not remembered by posterity; however, Temistocle Solera is remembered for giving the words to the most famous patriotic operas by Giuseppe Verdi (*Nabucco*, *I lombardi alla prima crociata*). Verdi was the director of music at Busseto, and he came to Milan to try his fortune as operatic composer arriving just during the days of the coronation. It is well known that Verdi's start in Milan was ill fated, as his wife Margherita and his two children died within three years, and his opera *Un giorno di regno* was a fiasco. Verdi was still bound by a contract with Merelli, but he did not want to compose anymore until 1841 when Merelli gave him Solera's libretto of *Nabucco*. The biblical subject, the exodus of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, became the most famous patriotic opera, particularly with the line: 'Oh mia patria sì bella e perduta' (Oh my fatherland so beautiful and lost). Merelli presented it as the fourth and last new

⁶⁵. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44). For a cultural analysis of patriotic images and symbols in the sentimental education of patriots, see BANTI, Alberto Mario. *La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Turin, Einaudi, 2006 (Biblioteca Einaudi, 212); for the relevance of opera buffa in patriotism, see IZZO, Francesco. 'Comedy between Two Revolutions: *Opera Buffa* and the Risorgimento, 1831-1848', in: *The Journal of Musicology*, XXI/1 (January 2004), pp. 121-174; for a gendered analysis of opera and patriotism in Italy, see CHIAPPINI, Simonetta. 'O patria mia': *passione e identità nazionale nel melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento*, Florence, Le Lettere, 2011 (Saggi, 105).

⁶⁶. MARTIN, George W. *Aspects of Verdi*, *op. cit.* (see note 52).

⁶⁷. *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸. *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹. *Ibidem*.

opera of the carnival season in the spring of 1842. When La Scala reopened after the vacation, between 13 August and 4 December, this opera had fifty-seven performances⁷⁰.

According to Roger Parker⁷¹, who bases his arguments on reception analysing contemporary gazettes, the importance of Verdi for patriotism is a post-Unitarian myth. This is because Parker found no evidence in the press or in documents of the time of a particular attention of the contemporary audience for this chorus. A reception analysis of gazettes of the time might be questionable. As we have seen with the case of *Il conciliatore* the press during this time was dominated by censorship. In addition, gazettes were written by journalists supporting the current government, this is because opponent intellectuals were considered enemies of the state and they were isolated. As Philip Gossett reminds us, other authors such as Frank Walker and John Rosselli have already questioned the reliability of sources referring to patriotic demonstrations during the performances of this chorus⁷². However, the importance of Verdi and his commitment to the cause of the unity of Italy — well highlighted by Gossett who refers to Verdi's correspondence —, should not be underestimated. It is true that Verdi's letters do not prove his influence on the wide Milanese public in spreading patriotic values, but they definitely prove the intentions of the composers and Verdi's political support for the Risorgimento. Judging from Verdi's acquaintances in Milan, one would think that the composers' political views were not a secret. After his success with *Nabucco*, the provincial composer Giuseppe Verdi met some of the most active patriots in Milan when he was admitted to the salon of Countess Clarina Maffei⁷³. Therefore, we can say that *Nabucco* must have grabbed the attention of the Milanese patriots of the time.

Verdi and Solera contributed further to Milanese patriotism with the opera *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (Lombards at the first crusade), based on Tommaso Grossi's poem which first appeared in 1826⁷⁴. It was first performed at La Scala on 11 February 1843. The audience identified with the Lombard crusaders and saw the Saracen enemy as the Austrians; we can say with Gossett that his author considered *I Lombardi* a patriotic

⁷⁰. *Ibidem*, p. 91.

⁷¹. PARKER, Roger. 'Arpa d'Or dei Fatidici Vati': *The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s*, Parma, Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, 1997. The scholar discussion is synthetised in MARTIN, George W. 'Verdi, Politics, and "Va, Pensiero": The Scholars Squabble', in: *The Opera Quarterly*, XXI/1 (Winter 2005), pp. 109-132.

⁷². GOSSETT, Philip. 'Le "edizioni distrutte" [...], *op. cit.* (see note 8). For the relevance of the chorus in Italian opera see ID. 'Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in *Risorgimento* Opera', in: *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 11/1 (March 1990), pp. 41-64; TOSCANI, Claudio. 'Melodramma e Risorgimento: Per una fenomenologia del patriottismo in musica', in: *Per una fenomenologia del melodramma*, edited by Pietro D'Oriano, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2006 (Quodlibet studio. Estetica e critica), pp. 189-209.

⁷³. PIZZAGALLI, Daniela. *L'amica: Clara Maffei e il suo salotto nel Risorgimento*, Milan, BUR, 2004 (Saggi).

⁷⁴. MARTIN, George W. *Aspects of Verdi*, *op. cit.* (see note 52); GATTI, Carlo. *Op. cit.* (see note 10), p. 97; GOSSETT, Philip. 'Le "edizioni distrutte" [...], *op. cit.* (see note 8).

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work. Verdi was about to leave Milan, but his *Giovanna D'Arco*, an heroic patriotic virgin⁷⁵ who acted to free her country from foreign occupation, was staged at La Scala in 1845. When Verdi left Milan in 1843, first to go to Parma and then to Venice, ballet-mania had spread in the city.

RISORGIMENTO AND BALLET

The first celebrated ballerina was Fanny Cerrito, a young Neapolitan who was then challenged by Maria Taglioni; Taglioni was from Milan and hardly known in Italy, but she had danced as a rival to Cerrito in London⁷⁶. In 1841 these two ballerinas performed at La Scala and competed for the admiration of the Milanese. Two rival parties were formed, the party of 'cerritisti' and the party of 'taglionisti'. A competition between the two dancers took place on 20 March 1843 when *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* was also performed. The two ballerinas were feted and presented with flowers and jewellery. There were serenades below their window by admirers; the chorus of La Scala was among the singers⁷⁷. This was the last night at La Scala for both ballerinas, who were otherwise engaged; however, the great popularity of ballet meant that Fanny Elssler, a famous ballerina from Vienna, came to Milan. Her first performance at La Scala was in *Armida* in 1844, and then she appeared at La Scala regularly three times a week⁷⁸. Elssler was compared to Maria Taglioni, the most famous ballerina at that time; Theophile Gautier, French poet and art critic, described Taglioni as a Christian dancer and Elssler as pagan dancer⁷⁹. Ballet-mania spread and reached some excesses: for instance some supporters, members of the party supporting Elssler, replaced the horses of Elssler's coach, and an Austrian brass-band played below her window⁸⁰. In the fervent political climate of the Risorgimento, the extreme popularity of this performing art was, indeed, used for political aims.

Elssler was one of the most popular ballerinas, but despite her charm and her celebrity she was not able to influence the political opinion of La Scala audiences. This

⁷⁵. For an exploration on opera and virginity see SINICI, Emanuele. *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: The Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005 (Cambridge Studies in Opera). For an analysis of Jean d'Arc, see IZZO, Francesco. 'Verdi, the Virgin and the Censor: the Politics of the Cult of Mary in *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* and *Giovanna d'Arco*', in: *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, LX/3 (Fall 2007), pp. 557-597.

⁷⁶. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

⁷⁷. *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸. CAMBIASI, Pompeo. *Op. cit.* (see note 50).

⁷⁹. In ROSSI, Luigi. *Il ballo alla Scala 1778-1970*, Milan, Edizioni della Scala, 1972.

⁸⁰. BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

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was the reason why she had been invited to perform at La Scala by a new official of the government, Count Filquemont, who had been appointed by Metternich to support the work of Viceroy Ranieri in a political situation more and more delicate⁸¹. Metternich no longer trusted the aging Viceroy Ranieri, and so he sent Count Filquemont to Milan in August 1847, to provide him with directions. Although the power was still officially in the hands of Ranieri, and Filquemont was only supposed to represent the political-diplomatic element missing in Ranieri's office, in fact Filquemont was the new leader⁸². Filquemont decided to use La Scala as a means to divert the attention of the Milanese from politics, without realising that La Scala was itself an expression of politics. Thus, he invited the famous Austrian ballerina Fanny Elssler with the precise intention to bring diversion to Milan.

Yet this was resisted to the extent and handwritten leaflets circulated among the Milanese encouraging them to boycott her first appearance at La Scala, because none should be able to say that «[...] i milanesi furono vinti da una ballerina»⁸³. ILL. 3 is a cartoon of the time showing Count Filquemont on the stage of La Scala introducing the ballerina to the audience, while the audience shouts that they what they wanted were 'reforms', with Filquemont answering that Fanny Elssler would reform their corps de ballet. This cartoon is again evidence that the contemporary public was aware of the cultural politics of entertainment at La Scala intended to divert the attention of the Milanese from politics. Even though Fanny Elssler was a celebrated dancer and her dancing was appreciated at Milan too, this did not eradicate resentment against Austrian rule. In addition, Elssler had to leave Milan precisely about political reasons after the performance of February 12th 1848 when she refused to dance among a corps of ballet wearing medals of Pius IX who was seen by some as the possible future head of state of a unified Italy⁸⁴. Indeed, in 1848, patriotic passions inflamed the hearts of the audience attending performances at La Scala. According to the memoirs of Visconti Venosta, the historical ballet *Gli Afgani* by Piora had a scene with a reference to a political conspiracy which was enthusiastically welcomed by the audience, and on November 30th, when the ballet was performed again, some members of the audience threw bunches of flowers tied with white, red and green rosettes, the colours of the Italian flag⁸⁵. Patriotic values passed from the stage to the audience, which started to publically demonstrate their support for the Italian cause against the Austrian rule in a theatrical way.

⁸¹. BOSISIO, Alfredo. *Storia di Milano*, Milan, Giunti Martello, 1984.

⁸². BERTOLINI, Francesco. *Storia del Risorgimento italiano: illustrata da 103 quadri di Edoardo Matania*, Milan, E.lli Treves, 1899, p. 261.

⁸³. «[...] the Milanese were won by charm of a ballerina». *Il Risorgimento italiano in un carteggio di patrioti lombardi (1821-1860)*, edited by Aldobrandino Malvezzi, Milan, Hoepli, 1924, pp. 209-210.

⁸⁴. BIANCHI, Raffaella. 'The Structure of Space [...]', *op. cit.* (see note 9).

⁸⁵. VISCONTI VENOSTA, Giovanni. *Ricordi di gioventù: Cose sapute vedute 1847-1860*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1959 (Biblioteca universale Rizzoli, 1479-1483).

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ILL. 3: *Teatro alla Scala, Filquimont presentando la Essler ai milanesi*, Caricature, Milano presso Andrea Ubicini, 1848; Civiche Raccolte Achille Bertarelli, Milan.

SPREADING PATRIOTIC VALUES

The discourse of opera went far beyond the elitist walls of the opera house. The appreciation of opera was not limited to those who had the privilege of regularly attending opera houses. During the Risorgimento,

[...] opera remained a popular art form loved by Italians of all classes and conditions [...] outside theatres operatic music was a mainstay in the repertoire of town and military bands, of church organist and of town and of barrel-organ grinders. That coachman who drove Dickens into Italy in 1846, and who had «a word and a smile, and a flick of his whip, for all peasant girls, and odds and ends of the *Sonnambula* for all the echoes» was a quintessential figure of the period⁶⁵.

⁶⁵. KIMBELL, David. *Op. cit.* (see note 21), p. 141.

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There is no comprehensive study to prove the widespread popularity of the genre outside the opera house, but Leydi's work shows how street musicians in the civic context contributed to popularizing opera in the mid-nineteenth century⁸⁷. From a musicological perspective, Leydi demonstrates the penetration of opera codes in Italian popular songs through the diffusion of tonality, the tempered scale, harmonic sensibility and through certain practices, such as the *incatenatura*⁸⁸, a repetitive rhyme scheme using terza rima. Moreover, opera was also a popular subject of conversation, a topic under the spotlight of public attention. Carlotta Sorba talks about a «public discourse»⁸⁹ concerning performances that were taking place outside the opera house which monopolized the attention of public opinion in Milan. Composers and impresarios were also exploiting this in order to promote new singers by presenting them «in the cafés, in the piazzas, in the homes, in the hovels, etc.»⁹⁰.

This discourse was also evident in the press. The fact that opera was considered the most important genre of art and of entertainment in nineteenth-century Milan is shown by the centrality that the topic of opera had in the local gazettes. *La gazzetta privilegiata di Milano* had a regular column at the bottom of its first page entitled: 'Appendice Critico-letteraria Teatrale e di Varietà' (Appendix of literary criticism, theatre and of variety shows). Although the column was supposed to deal with literature and performances, nearly all the articles in a sample studied for the years 1831 and 1834 were completely devoted to operatic performances. The public discourse on opera performances monopolized the attention of the people. And the people of Milan were the protagonist of the first public mobilization, which turned into a 'legendary' street battle of five days starting the so-called First Italian War of Independence.

KEYS AND BARRICADES

While the political situation was becoming more tense, it became a necessity for the authorities to vet the people who entered the opera house. This need became increasingly present as the authorities wanted to prevent disorder. Subsequent norms regulated all access and gradually restricted it. On 27 August 1824, Camillo Renati, Director of the Royal Theatres, established rules dividing the audience from the performers⁹¹. According

⁸⁷. LEYDI, Roberto. 'Diffusione e Volgarizzazione', in: *Storia dell'Opera Italiana. 6: Teorie e tecniche, immagini e fantasmi*, edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, Turin, EdT, 1998, pp. 301-392.

⁸⁸. *Ibidem*.

⁸⁹. SORBA, Carlotta. "'To Please the Public": Composers and Audiences in Nineteenth-Century Italy', in: *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxxvi/4 (Spring 2006), pp. 595-614.

⁹⁰. Here, I use the translation of the letter of Donizetti published in *ibidem*, p. 600.

⁹¹. Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Raccolte Storiche Civiche, *Atti della Direzione Teatrale 1824-1825, Spettacoli Pubblici 1, 1776-1881*.

to the new rules, artists and employees of La Scala were to enter the building from a lateral door in Contrada San Giuseppe (now via Verdi) instead of using the main entrance where the audience was situated at the front of the building. A door was built to divide the corridor from the stage, and a doorman was to be instructed by the impresario on who should or should not be allowed access to the opera house⁹². Indeed, the doorkeeper at the stage entrance was not there because the aristocracy had asked for this, but because the authorities wished to regulate all access to La Scala.

In addition, the new regulations for the «service for order on stage» («servizio d'ordine sul palcoscenico») of 1831 provide good evidence of this increasing interest «in regulating access to the stage»⁹³. The director of the Direzione Teatrale, Duke Carlo Visconti di Modrone demanded that the impresario Giuseppe Crivelli should provide him with a list of names of all the employees who had access to the stage⁹⁴. Also, Crivelli was supposed to have asked the scene painter Sanquirico to provide Visconti with the names of the artists he employed, «[...] affinché non s'introducano clandestinamente, e sotto pretesto di tale servizio individui che non vi siano appositamente designati dal loro capo»⁹⁵. This was done to stop «the past misuses» («gli abusi fin ad ora invalidi») and to prevent future possible «inconveniences» («inconvenienti») ⁹⁶. As one can see, this stricter regulation of the stage was not the consequence of some accident, but was put in place in order to regulate access to the core of the opera house, a focal point visible to everybody, which had become a 'resonance chamber' for political messages.

At the same time, regulating access at the doors allowed the police to always know who was in the opera house. As a result it became considerably more difficult to use the theatre as a place for public demonstrations and secret conspiracies. This desire to regulate access to La Scala intensified, leading to the attempt, during the years 1843-1845, to control all access through the main door. The key to the main door became a matter of a long controversy for the impresario Merelli⁹⁷, wherein even the Municipality of Milan intervened. However, these measures did not stop patriots from entering into the opera house when the situation of the city became tense in 1848. The subversion against the regime had started among the intellectual elites; channeled through operatic culture it had fostered a national consciousness, to finally take on the form of mass resistance.

⁹². *Ibidem*.

⁹³. Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Raccolte Storiche Civiche, *Atti della Direzione Teatrale (1830-1831)*, Folder 2, *1831 regolamenti per servizio d'ordine sul palcoscenico*, *Spettacoli Pubblici* 5, 1776-1881.

⁹⁴. *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵. «[...] in order to prevent those who were not officially approved (or specifically appointed for that purpose) sneaking in under false pretenses»; *ibidem*.

⁹⁶. *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷. Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Raccolte Storiche Civiche, *Illuminazioni 1844-1848*, *Spettacoli Pubblici* 95, 1776-1881.

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Public demonstrations in support of Pius IX took place in Milan and turned into conflicts with the Police. While groups of democratic patriots who would not have welcomed the Pope as the king of Italy, launched a new way of demonstrating their opposition to the regime; they boycotted tax on lotto (worth 15 millions lire per year)⁹⁸, and tax on cigars by abstaining from smoking. These measures were presented as pre-revolutionary forms of protest, like the boycott of English goods in the colonies of North America⁹⁹. The beginning of the year 1848 saw a non-smoking Milan. Then, on 3 January, the streets of Milan were invaded by hundreds of soldiers: 30,000 cigars were distributed in barracks, against the previous order by General Radetsky which had forbidden soldiers to smoke in public¹⁰⁰. Austrian soldiers provocatively smoked on the streets and near La Scala; outside café Cova, a meeting place for patriots near La Scala, the captain of the engineering army Count Gustav Neipperg, was hit by a patriot, and the cigar he was smoking was thrown to the ground¹⁰¹. This was just one of the events that escalated during the day. The police started to intervene at nighttime; new confrontations between the police and patriots resulted in six deaths and about sixty people were seriously injured.

These events resulted in democrats and moderates working together to prepare an insurrection by organizing into committees with different responsibilities, namely political, financial, military, and policing¹⁰². The spark was the news of the insurrection in Vienna, which reached Milan on 17 March 1848. The next day the streets of Milan were invaded by people attacking the government palace. This spread into a military confrontation lasting five days, when the Austrian army was defeated¹⁰³. The patriots were not well armed, and the real power of this battle was based on the participation of the mass of the people who established and maintained the barricades spontaneously erected around the city, supervised by Luigi Torelli¹⁰⁴.

In a famous letter of 21 May 1848 Giuseppe Verdi wrote to his librettist Francesco Maria Piave:

⁹⁸. BERTOLINI, Francesco. *Op. cit.* (see note 82).

⁹⁹. DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento* [...], *op. cit.* (see note 11).

¹⁰⁰. VILLARI, Lucio. *Bella e perduta. L'Italia del Risorgimento*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 12009 (I Robinson. Letture).

¹⁰¹. DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento* [...], *op. cit.* (see note 11).

¹⁰². *Ibidem.*

¹⁰³. This was, however, just a temporary victory, as the Austrian army returned on 7 August and regained control of the city. Nevertheless, the battles of Five Days can be considered to mark the beginning of the first of two series of military confrontation which led to Italian unification, referred to as 'the first and the second war of independence'. For memoirs of the battles, see CATTANEO, Carlo. *Dell'Insurrezione di Milano nel 1848 e della successiva guerra: memorie*, Lugano, Tipografia della Svizzera Italiana, 1849; VENOSTA, Felice. *Le Cinque Giornate di Milano (18-22 Marzo 1848): memorie storiche*, Milan, Barbini, 1876.

¹⁰⁴. DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento* [...], *op. cit.* (see note 11).

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You can imagine whether I wanted to remain in Paris after hearing there was a Revolution in Milan. I left the moment I heard the news; but I could see nothing else but the stupendous barricades¹⁰⁵.

According to a report written by an engineer to the Provisional Government at the end of the battle the fighters had erected 1,650 barricades¹⁰⁶. The barricades were constructed with anything that came to hand. According to a contemporary, the doctor Paolo Giani¹⁰⁷, the whole of Milan was full of barricades. Another contemporary, Vittore Ottolini, reported that each barricade had its own characteristics which «portray the different ways of living of citizens, professions, customs of a particular street»¹⁰⁸, and they were made out of «tables, wardrobes, mattresses, benches, cupboards, confessionals, barrows, carts, even ceremonial carriages taken from the depot of S. Giovanni in Conca»¹⁰⁹. As Paolo Giani notes, they were often built out of carriages, piles of furniture, timber, cobblestones, or just reams of stamped paper and stamped books. Some barricades were made of hay, others out of organ pipes from the Church of San Francesco di Paola, others out of music stands¹¹⁰. Count Emanuele Odazio, an engineer, conceived the 'mobile barricades' of Porta Tosa (now Porta Vittoria) out of bundles of twigs and sticks which could be easily moved back and forth by the people fighting behind them, and they were used in a strategic way in the decisive battle at this gate of the city¹¹¹.

Everything was used for the barricades, including scenery tools from La Scala and post-coaches from the nearby post-office¹¹² to build the barricade in Contrada San Giuseppe (now Via Verdi), a small but strategic street next to La Scala, opposite the Casino. Along this street was (and still is) the Church of San Giuseppe, where two more barricades were erected. ILL. 4 shows that the first two barricades were mainly made up out of seats taken from the parterre of La Scala, operatic scenery and coaches with broken wheels. There were barricades near La Scala because the theatre was very close to a strategic target for the patriots, the Palace of Military and Civil Engineering (*Palazzo del Genio*), which has been attacked and taken over by rebels. This was a very important victory on the second day of the battle, as it is thought that in the palace there were weapons and tools that could be used by the rebels who were short of weapons.

¹⁰⁵. Verdi's letter was first published in *Una lettera di Giuseppe Verdi finora non pubblicata: Milano, 21 aprile 1848*, Introduction by Arnaldo Bonaventura, Florence, Gonnelli, 1948. Here, I use the translation by William Weaver, *Verdi, A Documentary Study*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1977, p. 174.

¹⁰⁶. DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento* [...], *op. cit.* (see note 11).

¹⁰⁷. GIANI, Paolo. *Le Cinque gloriose giornate della rivoluzione milanese: descritte da un medico che vi fu testimone e parte. Con un'appendice relativa al 23 e 24 marzo*, Milan, F. Colombo, 1860.

¹⁰⁸. OTTOLINI, Vittore. *Ricordi ed episodi delle Cinque Giornate*, Milan, F.lli Riccioni Tipografi Editori, 1848, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹. *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁰. DELLA PERUTA, Franco. *Milano nel Risorgimento* [...], *op. cit.* (see note 11).

¹¹¹. PAGANI, Carlo. *Uomini e cose in Milano: dal marzo all'agosto 1848*, Milan, L. F. Cogliati, 1906.

¹¹². BARIGAZZI, Giuseppe. *Op. cit.* (see note 44).

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ILL. 4: Felice Albo Donghi, *Barricate nella contrada di S. Giuseppe*, in: *Le barricate di Milano: disegnate da valenti artisti che impavidi e coraggiosi le copiarono nel momento in cui appunto ferveva il combattimento intorno a esse, tante volte alternando il fucile alla matita*, Milan, Gaetano Bonatti, 1848 (Milan, Civiche Raccolte Achille Bertarelli).

La Scala was indeed in a very strategic position in the centre of the city, but this does not fully explain the fervor with which patriots attacked its building. La Scala was seen as a central venue for the cultural struggle of the Risorgimento in Milan. The political centrality of La Scala in the Risorgimento's process was obvious for a number of reasons. Firstly, because of the importance of Milan as a place where Risorgimento's ideas developed and spread into an organized movement financially supported by the progressive upper classes.

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Secondly, this was because of La Scala's unique centrality in the social life of the Milanese. In a report written by the Government of Milan to the Austrian chancellery meeting in Vienna on 13 December 1818, one can find evidence of this relevance of La Scala in the civic society of Milan:

La città di Milano, avvegnaché grande e popolosa ha, si può dire, fissato il centro di tutte le relazioni sociali nel Teatro La Scala¹¹³.

The relevance of La Scala is shown by another important primary source, the book *Le barricate a Milano* with a collection of etchings, printed in 1848 after the end of the battle¹¹⁴. The first picture in the book shows the barricades at La Scala. Although the battle outside La Scala was not the most important or the most spectacular among those of the Battle of the Five Days, it was still seen as symbolic. This is explained in the introduction accompanying the picture, which refers to Count Filquemont who aimed to keep people quiet by using La Scala as an instrument of entertainment, to divert them from politics. The commentary ironically suggests that the impresario of La Scala should be reminded of this as the opera house was sacked and all its contents thrown into the streets¹¹⁵. This is evidence that there was common awareness among contemporaries of the relevance of the cultural politics of La Scala as part of the political struggle of the Risorgimento. From the stage, the struggle of the Risorgimento reached the street, and La Scala was seen as a symbol of this process, a struggle from cultural to military confrontation.

¹¹³. «The city of Milan, however big and populous, has, one can say, firmly established the main centre of all social relations at La Scala opera house». Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Raccolte Storiche Civiche, *Atti della Direzione Teatrale 1824-1825, Spettacoli Pubblici 1, 1776-1881*.

¹¹⁴. DONGHI, Felice. *Le barricate di Milano: disegnate da valenti artisti che impavidi e coraggiosi le copiarono nel momento in cui appunto ferveva il combattimento intorno a esse, tante volte alternando il fucile alla matita*, Milan, Gaetano Bonatti, 1848.

¹¹⁵. *Ibidem*.