

The English Trade in Nightingales

Italian Opera in Nineteenth-Century London

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Translated from the German by Rosie Ward

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Contents

Acknowledgements

1 Introduction	1
2 The Landscape of Italian Opera in Nineteenth-Century London	11
3 London Audiences.....	23
4 The Singers.....	46
4.1 British and Irish singers and Italian opera: A search for identity.....	49
5 Singers' Contracts in London.....	67
5.1 Exceptional contracts from early nineteenth-century London	67
5.2 Pierre François Laporte's 1834 and 1835 contracts with Giulia Grisi and Antonio Tamburini	91
5.3 Court proceedings in London's opera industry in the mid-nineteenth century.....	109
5.4 Pauline Viardot-García's contracts with the Royal Italian Opera, 1847–1855.....	129
5.5 Contracts in the 1860s: Frederick Gye and Mario	157
6 Italian Operas for London	173
6.1 Adaptations.....	175
6.2 Aria insertion.....	197
7 Concluding Remarks	231
8 Appendices	235
8.1 Transcriptions of singers' contracts	235
8.2 Sample season programme overviews	256
9 List of Abbreviations.....	261
10 Bibliography.....	262
Index of Names	273

1 Introduction

Der Frühling ist zwar hier noch nicht in voller Blüte, aber die Nachtigallen sind trotzdem schon wieder da, und die meisten haben wieder aus Deutschland und Italien ihren Flug über's Meer genommen, um in den goldenen Hainen der britischen Insel zu flöten und zu trillern. Die Unternehmer der beiden italienischen Opern [...] machen ihre jährlichen Reisen nach dem Continente und suchen [...] die besten Vögel einzufangen.¹

In the nineteenth century, London's Italian opera stages were the international opera world's most prominent and most important marketplace. The international star singers engaged by the London opera managers at their respective houses formed the cornerstones of the system. The incentive for singers to take on an engagement in London was considerable: because of the star-centred nature of the city's Italian operatic culture, leading singers of the time could often attract exorbitant fees, and so frequently used the London season as a lucrative source of income. The prospect of drawing financial gain from London's opera industry also attracted the hopes of composers, such as Giuseppe Verdi, whose 1847 *I masnadieri* was a commission for Her Majesty's Theatre – although the work did not appeal to the conservative tastes of London audiences. But from a financial point of view, *I masnadieri* cannot be considered a complete failure, even if one voice in the English press characterised it as 'one of the worst operas ever written'.² Her Majesty's Theatre was completely sold out; even the Queen and Prince Albert made sure not to miss the event. The reason for the rush on tickets was in fact not Verdi's new opera, but the 'Swedish Nightingale' Jenny Lind, who created the part of Amalia: 'It was, however, the fifth part essayed by Jenny Lind in this country – a fact which brought many persons to hear it, who would otherwise have been scared away by the mere name of Verdi'.³

The star singers on London's stages clearly held stronger powers of attraction than did the works they performed. This was all the more true because of the lack of state subsidy for London theatres and opera houses: a financial situation which meant that the city's Italian opera houses were more closely aligned with the market economy than were their continental European counterparts. Competition in the London opera market intensified still further in 1847, when a second Italian opera house opened in the city, significantly reconfiguring the

¹ *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 14 (1866), p. 133.

² *Musical World* 22 (1847), p. 566.

³ *Ibid.*

structure of operatic life. It was this atmosphere of intense competition that international observers found most extraordinary about London's opera scene. 'Eine so unerhörte Ausdehnung italienischer Opernmusik in fremdem Land muß heutzutage nicht wenig auffallen', declared Eduard Hanslick, describing Italian opera's prestigious status, far above any other forms of opera, in the English capital.⁴ Strikingly in this context, at no point during the nineteenth century – despite intensive efforts by English composers – did a native English tradition of opera composition develop. Italian opera – always closely associated with the epithet 'fashionable' – certainly played a decisive role in this: the lack of English works reinforced the position of Italian opera as the market leader; this state of affairs, in turn, left little space for non-Italian operatic ventures to find a foothold in the fiercely competitive market.⁵ It can therefore be argued that Italian opera specifically was fundamental to nineteenth-century English audiences' aesthetic ideals surrounding opera more generally. This primacy of the Italian was reflected in all aspects of operatic life, and ultimately led to a process of globalisation of Italian opera, through American tours by Italian opera companies departing from England. Opera in this context was less a pure artistic ideal than a means to fulfilling economic objectives; in this respect, the development's roots lay in London's opera industry.

This financial orientation of London's theatre and opera industry is especially pronounced from the middle of the nineteenth century, because of the increased degree of competition at that time. The Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 ended a monopoly dating from the eighteenth century, which had restricted the right to perform spoken drama to the two 'patent houses' (Drury Lane and Covent Garden), and the right to perform Italian opera to the King's Theatre (renamed Her Majesty's Theatre in 1837). To some extent, of course, there had been theatre performances beyond these legal restrictions before 1843. But official direct competition could only be established after the monopoly was abolished, enabling, for example, the reopening of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, as an Italian opera house in 1847.⁶ The extreme density of theatres offered London audiences a wide variety of theatrical genres, ranging from classical drama to burlesques. But the spoken theatre of the time – compared to the Italian opera – can be characterised as much more straightforwardly national. This is

⁴ Eduard Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: IV. Die Oper', in *Eduard Hanslick: Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Dietmar Strauss, vol. I/6 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2008) p. 116.

⁵ Félix Remo believed that composers such as Michael William Balfe were unable to achieve real success because they failed to develop an independent style, devoting themselves instead to imitating fashionable Italian opera, but failing to reach the standards of Italian works. See Remo's *Music in the Land of Fogs*, trans. A. J. Robertson (London: Kent & Co., 1887) pp. 130–131.

⁶ See Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanov, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing 1840–1880*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), p. x.

manifest above all in the origins of the star actors, most of whom came from renowned English acting families (the Kemble family being just one prominent example). By contrast, the London Italian opera market had primarily looked abroad for its protagonists since the eighteenth century. Like their operatic counterparts, star actors like William Charles Macready, Charles Kean, Sarah Siddons or Fanny Kemble were represented in the media of the time through images and biographies, but stardom in the theatre world was not comparable with that of the Italian opera – and the fees paid in spoken theatre were many times less than those in opera.⁷ Moreover, in the spoken theatre the ensemble played a far more significant role; the desire to identify with individual stars was certainly present there, but not to the same extent as in Italian opera, where the name of a famous prima donna – such as Jenny Lind – was usually all that was needed to attract audiences.⁸ Also, in contrast to opera in Italian, spoken theatre in English posed no language barrier, and this allowed a different mode of aesthetic reception, focused more on content than on personal identification with stars.

The concentration on individual opera stars, and their promotion in the media, dates back as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century in England. From this time, an abundance of satirical pamphlets and reports survive, detailing, for example, the physical peculiarity of castrati, or deliberately staged rivalries between female opera singers. Many such documents employed obvious innuendo that was morally objectionable to Victorian society.⁹ But it was not only in these reports that opera transgressed moral limits. It is clear that constant transgression of those limits was essential to performances of both opera and spoken theatre, and was perhaps even the very reason for their allure in supposedly prudish English society. The breaking of social taboos, such as cross-dressing or lowering protagonists' social status, was the lifeblood of the popular burlesque genre.¹⁰ And cross-dressing was by no means confined to comic genres, but was also important to serious Italian opera, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century: a prominent example is that of Giuditta Pasta, who often performed in trouser roles.¹¹

⁷ See, for example, William Clark Russell, *Representative Actors: A Collection of Criticisms, Anecdotes, Personal Descriptions, etc., etc.* (London: Warne, 1869); Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 117–119.

⁸ On the importance of the ensemble in spoken theatre, see George Taylor, *Players and Performers in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 62–63.

⁹ See, for example, Saskia Woyke, *Faustina Bordoni: Biographie-Vokalprofil-Rezeption* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2010), pp. 31–49, and Patricia Howard, *The Modern Castrato: Gaetano Guadagni and the Coming of a New Operatic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 34–35.

¹⁰ In the early 1830s, Charles Kemble actually criticised emerging arguments about the theatre industry that were religiously influenced (see Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p. 22).

¹¹ See, for example, Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 'Verdian Opera Burlesqued. A Glimpse into Mid-Victorian Theatrical Culture', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15 (2003), pp. 33–66, here pp. 46–47; Rachel Cowgill, 'Re-

The fact that these transgressions of moral norms served to promote theatres and opera houses, and thus to support their financial success, of course sat uneasily with the high moral standards of Victorian society, in which many advocated Christian-influenced, utilitarian economic principles, and idealised altruism as the highest social goal.¹² These theoretical concepts were also increasingly challenged by the flourishing state of the English economy and the rapid rate of technological progress during the nineteenth century. A particularly tense period for such moral and social dilemmas surrounded the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846: this change meant a hugely significant move towards free trade, and therefore an intensification in competition in the British economy – a development that was not straightforwardly compatible with altruistic ideals. Similarly to other areas of the economy, there was legal competition among London’s theatres from 1843, and between its Italian opera houses from 1847.¹³ This situation presented a moral dilemma: charges of ‘immorality’ could relate both to what was shown on stage, and to theatres’ methods for surviving in a competitive market and forcing rivals out of that market. As a potential solution, an ideology was established that united economic thinking with contemporary social ideals, and which was even taught in schools: an altruistic adaptation of the concept of political economy into one of social economy with a strong religious dimension.¹⁴ The problem of increased competition that a free market economy presented was solved by integrating it into the morals of the time. A society’s moral basis, so the argument went, was not endangered by the free market – both the market itself and the moral assumptions under which it operated were self-regulating; what was really dangerous was financial monopoly, which was a breeding ground for real corruption. In practice, however, this argument proved to be a fallacy – it *was* necessary to establish rules for the free market, for example to guard against fraud and speculative trading, which were widespread.¹⁵

Victorian society’s flexibility with regard to economic ideologies and moral boundaries is also evident in the position of London’s opera industry within this multivalent economic system. The prevailing moral codes were strict, but had to be adapted to the economic situation, which significantly affected society on every level – particularly around the middle of the century. Moreover, in light of the huge popularity of theatre and opera across different

Gendering the Libertine; Or, the Taming of the Rake: Lucy Vestris as Don Giovanni on the Early Nineteenth-Century London Stage’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10 (1998), pp. 45–66. Cross-dressing was also popular in spoken theatre (see Taylor, *Players and Performers*, p. 225).

¹² See Geoffrey Russell Searle, *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 5–7.

¹³ Even before the Theatre Regulation Act, London’s theatre market was highly competitive. See Taylor, *Players and Performers*, p. 9.

¹⁴ See Searle, *Morality and the Market*, p. 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78.

social groups, the frequent characterisation of Victorian society as prudish is clearly an oversimplification. The questioning of moral taboos – implicitly and explicitly – was an important part of London’s theatrical life and of the theatres’ ability to make money by selling tickets.

Because of this importance of both economic and social factors in cultural industries, consideration of – for example – funding conditions, audiences and political context can provide essential insights for musicological research. Early contributions to this field came in the late 1980s and early 1990s from Anselm Gerhard and John Rosselli, among others.¹⁶ Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli’s history of Italian opera similarly includes consideration of opera’s business-oriented aspects.¹⁷ Also useful in this context is Michael Walter’s social-historical monograph *Die Oper ist ein Irrenhaus*. Walter surveys the characteristics and differences between nineteenth-century Italy, France and Germany in terms of the opera industry, covering aspects such as the role of librettists, singers, composers and impresarios, as well as censorship, audiences and copyright laws.¹⁸

Alongside musicologists, scholars from the discipline of history have discovered ‘opera’ as a field of activity in recent years. This work has concentrated especially on themes such as the political dimensions of genre and institutions, constructions of national identity, and the integration of opera into the concept of cultural transfer – a key example here is the work of Philipp Ther.¹⁹

Given the importance of singers as protagonists in shaping the composition and performance of operas, and as the prime object of public interest in the opera industry – particularly in the nineteenth century – it is no surprise that a growing strand within the field of opera research takes singers as its focus: examples include John Rosselli’s *Singers of the Italian Opera* and Susan Rutherford’s *The Prima Donna and the Opera*.²⁰ As already mentioned, singers arguably played an even more prominent role in London’s opera industry than they did elsewhere.

¹⁶ See Anselm Gerhard, *Verstädterung der Oper: Paris und das Musiktheater des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992) [translated as *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)], and John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli (eds.), *Storia dell’opera italiana*, vols. 4–6 (Turin: EDT, 1987–8). Translated into German by Claudia Rust und Paola Riesz as *Geschichte der italienischen Oper: Systematischer Teil*, vols. 4–6 (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1990–1992).

¹⁸ Michael Walter, “*Die Oper ist ein Irrenhaus*”: *Sozialgeschichte der Oper im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997).

¹⁹ See, for example, Philipp Ther, *In der Mitte der Gesellschaft: Operntheater in Zentraleuropa* (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 2006), and Sven Oliver Müller and Philipp Ther (eds.), *Oper im Wandel der Gesellschaft: Kulturtransfers und Netzwerke des Musiktheaters im modernen Europa* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010).

²⁰ John Rosselli, *Singers of the Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Despite London's international significance as the most prominent market for Italian opera in the nineteenth century, this topic has received little consideration in musicology. Comprehensive studies of London's operatic life exist only for the eighteenth century, and include the work of Judith Milhous, Robert Hume, Curtis Price and Ian Woodfield.²¹ For the nineteenth century, the PhD dissertations of Matthew Ringel and Gabriella Dideriksen (both completed in the 1990s) laid the ground extensively, although both concentrate principally on the Royal Italian Opera House at Covent Garden.²² This emphasis is above all a function of the authors' consideration of the diaries (now housed in the ROH Collection) of Frederick Gye (1810–1878), who managed the Royal Italian Opera from 1848 to 1878. Other studies that have engaged with opera in nineteenth-century London include Daniel Nalbach's work on the King's Theatre and Harold Rosenthal's *Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden* – which provide historical overviews of the development of the King's Theatre and Covent Garden respectively.²³ Jennifer Hall-Witt's more recent monograph is concerned above all with the development of Italian opera audiences in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London.²⁴ Although this focus means that little attention is given to the singers – the system's protagonists – Hall-Witt evaluates a huge variety of sources relevant to this theme and period, allowing essential insights into the nature of audiences at London's Italian opera stages. On the subject of London opera audiences, it is also worth mentioning two chapter-length essays by Sven Oliver Müller, although music-historical considerations are peripheral rather than central to Müller's arguments.²⁵

All these studies have in common that they draw exclusively on sources in English, and thus risk partial or distorted representation. London's Italian opera houses were, after all, institutions of international interest and far-reaching significance; in attempting to reconstruct

²¹ Robert D. Hume, Judith Milhous and Curtis Price, *The Impresario's Ten Commandments: Continental Recruitment for Italian Opera in London 1763–1764* (London: Royal Music Association Monographs, 1992); Robert D. Hume, Gabriella Dideriksen, Judith Milhous and Curtis Price, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995–2001); and Ian Woodfield, *Opera and Drama in Eighteenth-Century London: The King's Theatre, Garrick and the Business of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²² Matthew Ringel, 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages": Management, Competition and Artistic Policy in London, 1861–70' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1996); Gabriella Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry: Opera at the Second Covent Garden Theatre, 1830 to 1856' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1997).

²³ Daniel Nalbach, *The King's Theatre 1704–1867: London's First Italian Opera House* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1972); Harold Rosenthal, *Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden* (London: Putnam, 1958).

²⁴ Jennifer Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London 1780–1880* (Dartmouth: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007).

²⁵ Sven Oliver Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung: Veränderungen im Publikumsverhalten in Londoner und Berliner Opernhäusern im 19. Jahrhundert', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 37/2 (2006), pp. 167–187, and Müller, 'Saalschlachten: Ausschreitungen in Londoner Opernhäusern in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Bühnen der Politik: Die Oper in europäischen Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Sven Oliver Müller and Jutta Toelle (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), pp. 160–176.

the city's nineteenth-century opera industry, international sources are therefore also relevant, and indeed promise essential insights.

Recent years have also witnessed the publication of a steady stream of biographies of prominent nineteenth-century singers, but these rarely extend beyond the bounds of a simple historical-biographical account.²⁶ The Italian opera market in London is rarely treated extensively in such biographies, despite its huge significance for the careers of the most prominent nineteenth-century singers. Relatedly, there has been little detailed consideration of the nature of the contracts between London's opera houses and the people with whom they did business. In fact, contracts provide an especially useful window onto the life of the London opera market, the different factors influencing that market, and its implications for singers' working lives. One reason for the lack of research into singers' contracts in London is surely the limited availability of source material: contracts from across the nineteenth century are difficult to locate, and most are handwritten in French and must be transcribed. Yet the engagements made by opera managers are among the most significant sources in building up a picture of London's opera industry.

The diaries of Frederick Gye are a similarly important source: as both Ringel and Dideriksen have demonstrated, the diaries contain detailed notes about contractual negotiations, and about the general running of a London opera house.²⁷ Unfortunately, I have been unable to access the diaries during the process of researching and writing this book. However, they have already been discussed by Ringel, Dideriksen, Hall-Witt and Stier; moreover, they cover only the time period after the opening of the Royal Italian Opera. As such, explicit engagement with them on my part would be of limited significance to my argument.

The operatic life of nineteenth-century London is also an unusually well-documented subject through a wealth of easily accessible sources such as memoirs, biographies, criticism, essays and travel writing; as already mentioned, it is important to gather these sources internationally, rather than focusing only on those in English. Alongside printed material, I have also drawn extensively on manuscript sources in the form of singers' contracts and letters.

²⁶ Examples include Clarissa Lablache Cheer, *The Great Lablache: Nineteenth-Century Operatic Superstar* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2009); Melanie Stier, *Pauline Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien und Irland: Formen kulturellen Handelns* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2012); Dan H. Marek, *Giovanni Battista Rubini and the Bel Canto Tenors: History and Technique* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2013).

²⁷ See, for example, Dideriksen and Ringel, 'Frederick Gye and "The Dreadful Business of Opera Management"', *19th-century Music* 19 (1995), pp. 3–30.

For my engagement with the practices of adapting operas and inserting arias, not only printed libretti but also performance materials in manuscript form (such as conductors' scores) have been invaluable sources in discerning what adaptations and insertions were made. These investigations make clear that – as Hilary Poriss also points out in *Changing the Score* – opera libretti do not reliably offer the possibility of reconstructing performance situations with any degree of precision.²⁸ Many changes were not transferred to the libretti. Nevertheless, libretti remain a significant source in approximating performance conditions, and they show the relationship between Italian texts and English translations.

This study aims to uncover the many different aspects of singers' working lives in nineteenth-century London's Italian opera world – such as the adaptation and translation practices just mentioned – and to characterise the broader system, as well as its protagonists, that sustained operatic production in London. To that end, Chapter 2 provides a chronological overview of London's operatic landscape in the nineteenth century, and also delineates the study's temporal range: the period from 1806 to 1867. These boundaries are partly a reflection of the sources available; the fire that destroyed Her Majesty's Theatre in 1867 was also an important moment for the role played by that theatre, and therefore for the structure of operatic life in London as a whole.

On the basis of the overview given in Chapter 2, and taking into account recent research by other scholars, Chapter 3 examines the audiences for Italian opera in London; this serves as the foundation for my later considerations of the lives of singers. As already mentioned, audiences were hugely influential: it was their views that made possible the formation of a system centred on prominent 'star' singers. Hence Chapter 3's differentiated characterisation of audiences is a necessary preliminary to the later chapters of this study.

Following these introductory chapters, Chapter 4 considers more closely the lives of singers in London's opera industry, and investigates the status of English singers, who played a subordinate role on London's Italian opera stages throughout the nineteenth century.

In light of the lack of attention paid to singers' contracts in existing research, I examine several contracts at length in Chapter 5, which forms a major part of this study. In order to allow a chronological overview of how contracts were used in London, I use selected representative examples of contracts (from among the limited extant sources) to identify tendencies in contractual practice, and set these tendencies in their historical context. My examples from the beginning of the century are a fictitious draft contract involving Angelica Catalani, and an actual contract between Giuditta Pasta and John Ebers. Contractual practices

²⁸ Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

of the 1830s are represented by Pierre François Laporte's contracts with Antonio Tamburini and Giulia Grisi. Almost no contracts are available from the time of Benjamin Lumley's management (1842–52 and 1856–58), but the legal basis of contracts in the 1840s can be reconstructed from records of court cases, which were frequent during this period.²⁹ Finally, the contracts between Pauline Viardot-García and the Royal Italian Opera serve as examples of contractual practice from the late 1850s, and are followed by Frederick Gye's contract with Mario from 1861. Several versions of this contract survive, and have been transcribed by Ringel, from which the process of negotiation between Gye and Mario can be discerned. Complete transcriptions of all these contracts can be found in the appendix.

Chapter 6 is concerned with practices of adaptation, and of aria insertion, in Italian opera in London, and attempts to identify factors that contributed to a work's success in London. Daniel François Esprit Auber's *L'Enfant prodigue* and Carl Maria von Weber's *Oberon* serve as examples of how non-Italian operas were adapted into Italian versions for the London market. I examine the enthusiasm for inserting arias from outside a given opera through three case studies: the 'meta-opera' *La prova di un'opera seria*, which was hugely popular in London; an aria composed by Michael Costa for Giulia Grisi, for insertion into Gioachino Rossini's *L'assedio di Corinto*; and finally, two different libretti, both published in London, for Gaetano Donizetti's *Maria di Rohan*.

My consideration of the themes just outlined aims to build up a wide-ranging picture of the working lives of singers of Italian opera in London, and to point out the various factors that influenced this operatic world and are therefore of considerable significance for the social history of opera in the nineteenth century. Not least, this study is intended to address a gap in current research, by contributing to the integration of London's operatic life into the social history of opera more broadly.

²⁹ The King's Theatre Collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard University includes a contract between Lumley and the dancer Luisa Taglioni [HL, b*2008TW-694 (2)].

2 The Landscape of Italian Opera in Nineteenth-Century London

In the burgeoning complexity of its operatic landscape, London was unrivalled among nineteenth-century cities. Not only the high density of the city's opera houses but also the ever-evolving competitive relationships among them were unique in the opera industry of the time. By contrast with opera houses in France and Italy, even the leading London opera houses received no state subsidy.¹ Their managers depended instead on private funding, and therefore on the goodwill of donors, most of whom came from the social elites. Situations where a house's expenditure was too high for its creditors to bear mostly ended in financial ruin for the manager: John Ebers, who managed the King's Theatre from 1821 to 1823 and 1825 to 1827, was just one victim of this precarious system. In his memoirs, Ebers argued vehemently for the introduction of the continental European subvention system in London. Without subsidies, in his view, a system of regulated competition would remain unsustainable:

As a security against the fluctuation in the receipts, it has been suggested, that the Continental plan should be adopted, by the King's Theatre being taken under the immediate protection of the Government, and aided by its support and guarantee. [...] The Manager would have less to fear in making important engagements; and those engagements would be completed on more favourable terms, because the security of their fulfillment on the part of the Theatre would be perfect.²

Above all here, Ebers emphasises the significance of financial support for organising future engagements: a loss at the end of one season was a considerable hindrance, in that it was then often only by taking on new debts that managers could secure engagements for the following season.

This precarious financial situation for London's opera houses persisted throughout the nineteenth century, and therefore shaped the city's Italian opera industry fundamentally. In light of Ebers's comments, it is clear that the consequences affected every aspect of the industry, but were most significant in relation to the engagement of singers. Nevertheless, the opera managers, each of them differently, found ways to work within these unfavourable conditions, and so to play their role in the continued existence of London's Italian opera scene.

It is important to note at the outset that Italian opera had enjoyed high prestige value in London's aristocratic entertainment culture since the early eighteenth century; this would not

¹ On opera subsidies in Paris, see Victoria Huckenpahler (trans. and ed.), 'Confessions of an Opera Director: Chapters from the *Mémoires* of Dr. Louis Véron, Part II', *Dance Chronicle* 7/2 (1984), pp. 224–225; on Italy, see Karl Czoernig, *Italienische Skizzen, Zweites Bändchen* (Milan, 1838), p. 31.

² John Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre* (London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828), pp. xix–xx.

change significantly throughout the nineteenth century.³ For the Italian opera season, no expense or effort was spared – above all when it came to the engagement of foreign, mostly Italian star singers and French dancers, as the following report about producing Italian opera in 1788 describes:

Die Unkosten zur italienischen Oper auf dem Haymarket, die einzige, welche man in Grosbritannien [sic] und Irland antrifft, sind sehr groß. Gleichwohl bringt sie das reiche Londner Publicum auf. Fremde Sänger und Sängerinnen, Fiedler und Pfeifer, so wie Tänzer und Tänzerinnen, werden reichlich bezahlet, und manche von ihnen, die ein wenig Vorsicht gebrauchten, sind mit englischem Gelde beladen in ihr Vaterland zurück gegangen, um davon im Ueberflusse zu leben.⁴

As this quotation illustrates, for many artists an Italian opera engagement in London represented an extremely lucrative income source – and this was well-known all over Europe. Audiences' demand for these expensive star performers meant that the eighteenth-century policy of high fees continued in the nineteenth century.

While Italian opera flourished, calls for the establishment of an English 'national opera' were frequent from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards but had very little effect on the city's operatic life. Italian operas and Italian singers were thus an essential part of the 'English opera' performed in theatres such as the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and the Theatre Royal Covent Garden. For these performances, the predominantly Italian operas were translated into English, and both abridged and expanded, with newly composed arias in Scottish or Irish style. This work – a combination of arrangement and composition as the situation demanded – was mostly done by English composers.⁵

Nevertheless, the inclusion of opera productions in the programmes of renowned London theatres makes clear the huge popularity that opera as a genre enjoyed in nineteenth-century London. The repertoire of the individual houses was determined by licenses granted annually by the Lord Chamberlain, which stipulated, for example, that the King's Theatre could put on Italian opera and ballet. Because the King's Theatre – later renamed Her Majesty's Theatre –

³ On the prestige of opera see, for example, Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 101–116; Daniel Nalbach, *The King's Theatre* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1972), pp. 1–67. For a wide-ranging treatment of Italian opera in London at the end of the eighteenth century, see Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

⁴ Friedrich August Wendeborn, *Der Zustand des Staats, der Religion, der Gelehrsamkeit und der Kunst in Grosbritannien gegen das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vierter Teil (Berlin: Spener, 1788), pp. 419–420.

⁵ One composer who was extremely active in this field was Henry Bishop (1786–1855). See Robert Bledsoe, 'Critics and operatic performance practice in London during the 1830s', *Victorian Review* 16/1 (1990), pp. 61–62. Roberta Montemorra Marvin engages with burlesques based on the operas of Giuseppe Verdi in her 'Verdian Opera Burlesqued. A Glimpse into Mid-Victorian Theatrical Culture', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15/1 (2003), pp. 33–66. Christina Fuhrmann provides detailed insights into adaptation practices in English theatres in the first third of the nineteenth century in her *Foreign Opera at the London Playhouses: From Mozart to Bellini*, Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

had continuous licenses for the performance of Italian opera, it has often been labelled in scholarship as a ‘patent theatre’. However, it is important to remember that this status was not permanent: in fact, the theatre had to apply for a new license for every individual year; partly out of habit, these requests were mostly granted.⁶

Despite this element of impermanence, the ‘fashionable’ institution of Italian opera – established in the eighteenth century – continued to play an essential role in London’s social life in the nineteenth century, which began with the period of William Taylor’s management of the King’s Theatre. Following a fire that burned down the theatre in 1789, Taylor managed the house from 1793 to 1803, when he was forced to transfer all his shares in the theatre to Francis Gould, his successor as manager.⁷

Gould’s era was shaped most significantly by the demands of the prima donna Angelica Catalani: for example, for the 1807 season she demanded the fantastical sum of £5000 – not including two benefit concerts, each with a guaranteed fee of £100, as well as permission to sing twenty concerts outside the King’s Theatre;⁸ however, she ultimately ‘only’ received £2000, and £100 in guaranteed income from each of the two benefit concerts.⁹ A commercially-run opera house like the King’s Theatre had to find ways of compensating for such huge costs, in order to minimise the resultant loss for the management. Sure enough, the price of a subscription rose from 180 guineas in 1806 to 240 guineas in 1807: Catalani’s effect on audiences was so extraordinary as to justify this price rise.¹⁰

After Gould’s death in 1807, Taylor returned to manage the theatre until 1813, but had to pay dearly for Gould’s subscription price increases. A further increase to 300 guineas angered some subscribers, who responded with an attempt to turn the Pantheon Theatre, on Oxford Street, into an additional Italian opera house; this failed, however, because a license was not granted.¹¹ After a brief closure for the 1813 season, when Taylor had deliberately not applied for a licence in frustration at the financial and managerial situation, in 1814 Edmund Waters was named as Taylor’s successor in a court ruling. Waters managed the King’s Theatre until

⁶ See Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, vol. 1, pp. 6–7.

⁷ See Nalbach, *The King’s Theatre*, p. 95.

⁸ See Edmund Waters, *The Opera Glass* (London, 1808), cited in Michael Burden (ed.), *London Opera Observed, 1711–1844*, vol. 4 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. 111–114.

⁹ See Veritas [pseud.], *Opera House: A Review of this Theatre* (London: for the author, 1820), p. 33; and Theodore Fenner, *Opera in London: Views of the Press 1785–1830* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 77.

¹⁰ On this price rise, see for example Veritas, *Opera House*, p. 33; and Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 279. One pound equalled 20 shillings, while a guinea was 21 shillings (see Enoch Lewis, *The Arithmetical Expositor*, Part 1, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Kimber and Sharpless, 1829), p. 130).

¹¹ See Nalbach, *The King’s Theatre*, p. 96.

1820, when the financial problems he had faced throughout his tenure – partly caused by ongoing quarrels with Taylor – finally forced him to flee the country.¹²

At this point, the former bookseller John Ebers made a career change, becoming manager of the King's Theatre from 1821.¹³ As already mentioned, because of the King's Theatre's lack of funds at this time, he was supported by an aristocratic committee, whose members commanded significant power in all areas of the theatre's management, reducing Ebers's capacity to enact change.¹⁴ Ebers's time at the helm of the King's Theatre is therefore one example of the high level of interest in, and engagement with, Italian opera on the part of the English social elites: it was 'fashionable' to go to the Italian opera – not to appear there meant becoming a nonentity in English high society. Interestingly, in his memoirs Ebers's main complaint concerned his committee members' meddling in casting decisions; they were apparently less interested in influencing repertoire choices.¹⁵ A later description of Ebers's management by Ellen Creathorne Clayton in the magazine *London Society* suggests a similar set of values at work: alongside the cliques in the King's Theatre's management, Clayton pays most attention to the singers and dancers the theatre engaged, and barely mentions specific works.¹⁶ Given this magazine's elite target audience, the article is a further indication of Italian opera audiences' priorities: anecdotes, and star singers from continental Europe, held far greater interest than operatic works themselves. Hence, with strong support from his subscribers, Ebers set up a green room, to which selected audience members had access, allowing direct encounters with performers. The enthusiasm at the prospect of this green room was so great that subscribers offered to cover half of the costs.¹⁷

The artists Ebers engaged at the King's Theatre were among the best-known in Europe, and therefore highly effective in attracting audiences: singers included Giuditta Pasta, Giovanni Battista Velluti, Maria Catarina Caradori and Violante Camporese. The dancers engaged were no less prominent: Noblet, Albert and Coulon were three of the most famous dancers in Paris. Ebers paid much attention to ballet, and audiences responded very favourably to this strategy; indeed, ballet was among the theatre's most successful means of

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.

¹³ The role of booksellers in the opera industry developed in the early 1790s. Previously, opera tickets had been extremely hard to come by, apart from via subscriptions. Now, the booksellers' business model consisted of procuring large numbers of tickets and selling them individually, at lower prices than the theatre box office offered. As Hall-Witt illustrates, these measures were still directed towards an elite audience, because the prices remained high. Nevertheless, this was the first step towards a commercialised opera market. See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 149–155.

¹⁴ See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, pp. 41–42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶ Ellen Creathorne Clayton, 'The London Opera Directors', *London Society* 8 (1865), p. 141.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

drawing in audiences.¹⁸ Such was ballet's importance that the process of engaging dancers even affected diplomatic relations with Paris. Engaging a dancer at the King's Theatre required the approval of the French government; such ventures therefore usually only succeeded with the help of diplomacy and with support from aristocratic individuals.¹⁹

In terms of repertoire, Ebers's decisions were more conservative: Rossini's operas formed the backbone.²⁰ At one stage, the possibility of commissioning a new opera from Rossini was considered, but this was never realised.²¹ We can conjecture that this project failed because of the difficult financial situation in which Ebers found himself, having to recover from a loss in every season.²² A distinctive moment in the repertoire history of the King's Theatre was *Il crociato in Egitto*: its performance on 29 June 1825 was the first time a Meyerbeer opera had been shown in London; Meyerbeer was entirely unknown to London audiences at this time. The reason for bringing the work to the London stage was twofold: firstly, it had enjoyed huge success in Venice and Florence in 1824; secondly, the role of Armando had been conceived for the 'male soprano' Velluti, who now made his London debut in the work.²³ The high fees of Ebers's singer- and dancer-centred management ultimately took their toll: at the end of his last season as manager, Ebers had to recover a loss of about £40,000.²⁴

In light of the considerable financial problems with which his predecessors had struggled, Pierre François Laporte – originally a French actor, and manager of the King's Theatre from 1828 – followed a different strategy, which prioritised turning income into profit. One of Laporte's first innovations, in 1829, was to introduce reserved stall seats. The advantage of these over the usual unreserved 'pit benches' was that specific individual places could be sold, or indeed allocated to a subscriber for the whole season. A further change made by Laporte was to delay the start of the Italian opera season until February, and from the mid-1830s, until March. The season had previously started between November and January, despite the fact that members of London's high society did not return to the city until around

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁰ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 297.

²¹ See Clayton, 'Opera Directors', p. 146.

²² See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 156.

²³ On the work's early success, see Armin Schuster, *Die italienischen Opern Meyerbeers: "Il crociato in Egitto"* (Marburg: Tectum, 2003), pp. 138–139. On Velluti, see Richard Edgcumbe [2nd Earl of Mount Edgcumbe], *Musical Reminiscences of an Old Amateur chiefly respecting the Italian Opera in England for fifty years from 1773 to 1823*, 2nd ed. (London: W. Clarke, 1827), p. 159. For Edgcumbe, Velluti seems to have been more of an attraction than Meyerbeer's opera: he barely gives any details of the work in his description. The fact that Meyerbeer conceived the role of Armando for Velluti certainly contributed to the sensation. For an assessment of performances involving Velluti in the 1820s and the status of castrati in general, see J. Q. Davies, 'Velluti in Speculum: The Twilight of the Castrato', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17/3 (2005), pp. 271–301.

²⁴ See Nalbach, *The King's Theatre*, p. 100, and Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 156. Benelli was certainly also partly responsible for this loss, having fled England unexpectedly after a brief period leading the King's Theatre, leaving Ebers to deal with unpaid singers' fees. (See Chapter 5.1).

Easter. Thus Laporte improved his financial position noticeably by comparison with his predecessors. Apart from these changes, at the high point of the season – in May and June – Laporte introduced so-called ‘extra subscription nights’ on Thursdays, which were additional performances and therefore increased revenue.²⁵

These measures aimed not only to increase takings, but also to combat a new form of competition that was emerging at this time. For example, in 1835 the Theatre Royal Covent Garden engaged the already celebrated Maria Malibran for a performance of Bellini’s *La sonnambula* in English; her performance was reported to have ‘created a great “sensation” in the dramatic world, which extended to all classes, all ranks, all professions’.²⁶ Malibran had appeared in an English adaptation of the same opera before, in 1833 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.²⁷ In engaging her, the Theatre Royal entered into direct competition with the Italian opera at the King’s Theatre, whose season also revolved around the engagement of renowned singers. The fact that Laporte introduced new methods at precisely the time of Malibran’s success at the ‘English opera’ points to an intensifying need to continue attracting audiences. The repertoire at the King’s Theatre broadened under Laporte to include the operas of Donizetti and especially Bellini – these works were imported directly from Paris to London, often with singers included.²⁸ Laporte’s time as manager saw the London debuts of prominent members of the ‘*vieille garde*’ – an alliance of singers who would come to shape the city’s opera industry decisively: Luigi Lablache (1830), Giovanni Battista Rubini (1831), Antonio Tamburini (1832), Giulia Grisi (1834), Fanny Persiani (1838) and Mario (1839). In relation to ballet, too, which continued to play a major role at the King’s Theatre, Laporte was responsible for the engagement of Fanny Elssler (debut 1833) and Fanny Cerito (debut 1840), both of whom would be among the theatre’s most prominent assets and advertisements, alongside singers, for years to come.

Laporte encountered great difficulties, however, caused by singers’ cliques and scheming, which affected programme planning significantly. Short-notice withdrawals by star singers usually necessitated programme alterations, because of the lack of possible replacements who were sufficiently well-known to win audiences’ approval.²⁹ In any case, an evening at the opera in the 1830s and 1840s was very much a potpourri affair, usually consisting of

²⁵ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 157–158.

²⁶ María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1840), pp. 34–35. Malibran had made her debut at the King’s Theatre in 1829 (see *ibid.*, pp. 21–22).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁸ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 297–98.

²⁹ See Appendix, Season 1841 HM.

individual acts from popular operas, followed by a ballet.³⁰ Hence it is clear that it was the names of the engaged singers that attracted the audience's interest – the works themselves, lacking meaningful dramatic context in this format, were presumably not a factor of great significance in deciding to visit the opera.

Despite Laporte's reforms, he too found himself in a disastrous financial situation, prompting him to enlist the assistance of the lawyer Benjamin Lumley in 1835 as a financial and legal advisor. Even so, the singers – with the help of members of the English aristocracy – demonstrated their power over the manager several times during Laporte's era.³¹ Laporte's leadership of the theatre ended abruptly when he died suddenly in 1842, and his death meant that all the engagements he had made became invalid, since they applied to him personally rather than to the theatre. Lumley now stepped into the role of manager of the theatre (which had been renamed Her Majesty's Theatre upon the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837); he had the urgent task of renewing all the engagements, so as not to face the start of the new season without any singers.³² Lumley's policies as manager were significantly shaped by his earlier experiences as Laporte's assistant. It was extremely important to him to break the dominant position of the 'vieille garde' – a strategy that ultimately led to the opening of a second Italian opera house in London in 1847. Signs began to accumulate in 1846 that the leading singers – Grisi, Persiani, Mario and Tamburini (the bass Luigi Lablache was the only one to remain at Her Majesty's) – were considering the possibility of a second Italian opera house, under the leadership of the conductor Michael Costa, because they were dissatisfied with Lumley's running of the theatre, finding him insufficiently deferential to the singers.³³ 1847 saw the opening of the Royal Italian Opera House Covent Garden, initially under the joint management of Giuseppe Persiani, his business partner Galletti and the publisher

³⁰ For example, in the 1841 season, the performance for 11 May was announced as Bellini's *La straniera* as late as the previous day. Because Tamburini was indisposed, however, the programme had to be changed on the day itself to Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*. There was a similar situation on 25 May. The originally-announced *L'elisir d'amore* was replaced with *Don Giovanni* on the day of the performance because Mario was indisposed. In total there were eight such programming changes in the 1841 season (see HL, GEN TS 319.24).

³¹ One example of this was the much-cited 'Tamburini row'. For a detailed description see Chapter 3, 'London Audiences'.

³² See Lumley, *Reminiscences of the Opera* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864), pp. 32–33.

³³ One factor was Lumley's alleged refusal to put on an opera composed by Persiani's husband. See Thomas Willert Beale [writing as Walter Maynard], *The Light of Other Days Seen Through the Wrong End of an Opera Glass*, 2 vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1890), vol. 1, pp. 42–44.

Frederick Beale.³⁴ The house aimed to compete with the long-established Her Majesty's by favouring a more work-oriented aesthetic.³⁵

Up to this point, Lumley's management can be characterised as highly successful financially – so successful, in fact, that he was able to buy Her Majesty's in 1845.³⁶ The purchase brought Lumley some advantages, above all in terms of reducing costs. The rent could be cut from the budget, significantly improving the house's financial footing. In the seasons 1847 (the opening year of the Royal Italian Opera) and 1848, Lumley's engagement of the 'Swedish Nightingale' Jenny Lind – long-awaited by London audiences – allowed him to establish a stable financial base. 'Lind mania' was certainly in large part the result of a media campaign started by Lumley himself: this campaign involved repeatedly spreading and then denying rumours about Lind's arrival at regular intervals.³⁷ Thus Lind was the object of enormous hype even before her actual arrival in London.³⁸ All the same, and despite financially successful seasons at Her Majesty's, the opening of the Royal Italian Opera represented a significant threat to Lumley's market share: he had not only lost hugely prominent singers, but also a renowned musical director in Michael Costa, who also managed to convince large sections of the orchestra at Her Majesty's to leave with him.³⁹ Moreover, there was little difference between the repertoires of the two Italian opera houses. Both put on mainly Italian opera, sometimes in the aforementioned potpourri form, followed by a ballet. Both houses continued to rely on the names of renowned singers, who also functioned as advocates for the repertoire they performed. Thus initially neither of the two houses had particularly distinguishing features.

The opening of a second Italian opera house had wide-ranging consequences. Two similarly-positioned enterprises now confronted one another on the relatively elite, small-scale Italian opera market, and neither of the two had a stable financial footing to fall back on. At the same time, the singers could take advantage of this competition to increase their fees. The rivalry could function only with difficulty. Clearly, Lumley had the advantage of having

³⁴ Thomas Frederick Beale (1804–1863) – to give the publisher's full name – was the father of the impresario and writer Thomas Willert Beale (1828–1894), who also plays an important role in this study. For clarity, and in line with sources from the time, I refer to both men by their middle names.

³⁵ Among others, the critic Charles Gruneisen was influential in disseminating this orientation towards operatic works. See, for example, Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press* (London: R. Hardwicke, 1869).

³⁶ See Nalbach, *The King's Theatre*, p. 105.

³⁷ Henry Scott Holland and William Smyth Rockstro, *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt: Her Early Life*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 81.

³⁸ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 164–65.

³⁹ See, for example, *Musical World* 22 (1847), p. 533. This was partly a personal dispute between Costa and Lumley. The latter was not prepared to accept the Music Director's request for a pay rise and guaranteed composition commissions. Costa's successor as Musical Director at Her Majesty's was Michael William Balfe (see Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 133–34).

generated small profits in the few years before the Royal Italian Opera opened. This financial safety net gradually shrank following Jenny Lind's retirement from the opera stage in 1849. Furthermore, from 1848 the management of the Royal Italian Opera was taken over by Frederick Gye, who already had management experience of London's musical world through his family background, and who was extremely successful at Covent Garden until 1878.⁴⁰

Gye, in contrast to Lumley, had the advantage of taking over a relatively stable ensemble of star singers – an ensemble that had already made a name for itself with London audiences. Lumley had to go to great lengths every season to secure new singers; even if he had spent money only on engagements that were comparable with the renown of the Covent Garden singers, the project would have been impossible to finance. It was, after all, well known throughout Europe that financially advantageous engagements were available to singers in London – this reputation was not insignificant for the size of singers' fees. Hence Lumley's decision to restrict his engagements to individual stars rather than a whole ensemble must surely have been made for financial reasons.⁴¹

Under Lumley's management, the programme at Her Majesty's broadened to include the operas of Verdi, who was beginning to enjoy his first successes in continental Europe around this time: London premieres at Her Majesty's included *Ernani* (1845), *Nabucco* and *I Lombardi* (1846), *I due Foscari* (1847), *Attila* (1848), *La traviata* (1856) and *Luisa Miller* (1858), although the opera commissioned from Verdi for the theatre, *I masnadieri* (1847), found little success with audiences.⁴²

But Lumley, and Gye too, later struggled with ever-more-enormous financial difficulties, which in 1849 and 1851 even led to negotiations about the possibility of merging the two opera houses, although ultimately nothing came of these.⁴³ The rivalry culminated in 1852 in a dispute between the two managers over the singer Johanna Wagner – Lumley in particular was relying heavily on her engagement.⁴⁴ Lumley was eventually rescued from his increasingly hopeless financial situation when a committee of aristocratic supporters stepped in, including Lord Ward.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Her Majesty's Theatre was unable to open from the

⁴⁰ Gye had gained his early management experience in the context of the Vauxhall Concerts, which he took over from his father. See Ringel, 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', p. 19.

⁴¹ By contrast, Ringel sees this aspect as a deliberate aesthetic decision. 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', p. 26.

⁴² For censorship reasons, *Nabucco* was performed under the title *Nino* in London. On this, see Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 'The Censorship of Verdi's Operas in Victorian London', *Music and Letters* 82 (2001), pp. 582–610. Lumley attributed the lack of success of *I masnadieri* to what he saw as the insufficient potential in the work for Jenny Lind to become the focus of the performance. See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 193.

⁴³ See Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', p. 26.

⁴⁴ See also Chapter 5.3, 'Court Proceedings in London's Opera Industry in the Mid Nineteenth Century'.

⁴⁵ As Lumley describes the situation, Lord Ward – later the Earl of Dudley – had Her Majesty's Theatre's best interests at heart in protecting it in this way: 'His Lordship's pecuniary interest in the maintenance of the Opera,

1853 season onwards.⁴⁶ Thus, having lost its direct competitor, the Royal Italian Opera under Gye's management found that it had a monopoly. Moreover, since 1849 Gye had been putting on the works of French composers such as Charles Gounod and Fromental Halévy, but above all Giacomo Meyerbeer, in Italian adaptations, creating a significant point of difference between his own theatre and Her Majesty's.⁴⁷ Increasingly, the ballet was less important in Gye's theatre than at Her Majesty's, because ballet by its nature involved high costs. Still, ballets continued to be performed within opera performances in the 1850s.⁴⁸

Gye's success at Covent Garden was abruptly interrupted by a fire in 1856 – the entire house was completely destroyed – which prompted Lumley to attempt another Italian opera season at Her Majesty's. Unsurprisingly, because of the amounts owed to Lord Ward, Lumley once again found himself in financial difficulty, without sufficient means even to pay the monthly rent.⁴⁹ This meant a definitive end to Lumley's career as a London opera manager in 1858. In the meantime, Gye was able to borrow money to rebuild the Royal Italian Opera, and reopened it in 1858.⁵⁰ His resulting debts were a significant risk to his liquidity for the next few years, to the extent that he was sometimes unable to pay interest at the agreed rates.⁵¹

After a break of two years, Her Majesty's opened once more in 1860, having been taken over by the well-known London entrepreneur E. T. Smith, although Smith delegated the theatre's management to James Henry Mapleson from the outset.⁵² As a result of speculative trading outside the theatre, Smith, too, found himself in a bad situation financially in 1861, and Gye exploited this. In order to increase his chances of gaining a monopoly on the Italian opera market, Gye offered Smith the sum of £2250 if he would keep Her Majesty's closed for the 1861 season.⁵³ At this point, Smith withdrew from the Italian opera business, leaving Mapleson to take over from him entirely.

as the holder of valuable property boxes, had probably less influence in prompting him to this course than his laudable ambition to enact the part of a munificent patron of art' (Lumley, *The Earl of Dudley, Mr. Lumley, and Her Majesty's Theatre: A Narrative of Facts* (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1863), pp. 5–6).

⁴⁶ See Nalbach, *The King's Theatre*, p. 109. The reason for the year-long closure lay above all in the disagreements between Lumley and Lord Ward over the management of the theatre. See Lumley, *The Earl of Dudley*. Also, in 1852 Lumley allegedly defaulted on payments to singers of the Parisian Théâtre Italien, where he was Director between 1850 and 1852. This meant he was also taken to court in France (see *Süddeutsche Musik-Zeitung* 1 (1852), p. 96).

⁴⁷ See Dideriksen and Ringel, 'Frederick Gye and "The Dreadful Business of Opera Management"', p. 13.

⁴⁸ See Appendix, Seasons RIO 1847, 1852 and 1855; and Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', p. 35.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Lumley, *The Earl of Dudley*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ For all investors who purchased £5000 worth of shares in the theatre, Gye guaranteed a box on subscription evenings for a twelve-year period. A £1000 contribution would secure a stall seat for the same period. He also paid these investors between 5% and 10% in interest. See Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', p. 81.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

⁵² See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 163.

⁵³ See Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', p. 27. Drawing on Mapleson's memoirs, Nalbach names the sum of £4000 in this context, but this is unlikely in view of the detailed notes in Gye's diaries, which Ringel uses. See

In contrast to Gye, Mapleson had learned the ropes of opera management through practical musical experience: he had been a violinist in the orchestras of Her Majesty's and the Royal Italian Opera, and later attempted – with little success – to make his name as a singer.⁵⁴ Moreover, in his role as manager under Smith he had already established working relationships with many artists, which stood him in good stead after Smith's departure: among Mapleson's contacts, for example, was the conductor Luigi Arditi, who was now to become the musical director of Her Majesty's.⁵⁵

Intensive opposition grew between Gye and Mapleson, as had existed earlier between Gye and Lumley; in Gruneisen's view, this competition brought a 'return to the ruinous star system'.⁵⁶ But in fact, in the development of London's operatic life since the founding of the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden, it is not possible to identify a move *away* from a system in which the singers were the most prominent players. Gruneisen's description can only be considered wishful thinking on his part, without which he would have been unable to legitimise his claim that the Royal Italian Opera was a work-oriented house. Moreover, the repertoire performed in both houses alike was relatively predictably limited to the works of Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi and Meyerbeer – principally because of a lack of other compositions suitable for London tastes.⁵⁷ It was the singers engaged at each house who served as important points of differentiation between the two, as is demonstrated by an 'Operatic Eclogue' published in the satirical magazine *Punch*. The piece consists of a fictional dispute between Mapleson and Gye about which of them has the better singers at his disposal.⁵⁸ Mapleson's enterprise at the time mainly centred on Therese Tietjens as prima donna – alternating with Christine Nilsson and Ilma de Murska – while the Royal Italian Opera could boast Adelina Patti or Pauline Lucca. As far as tenors were concerned, Gye had Mario, and Enrico Tamberlik; Mapleson initially engaged Antonio Giuglini, and then Pietro Mongini.⁵⁹ As Eduard Hanslick declared in 1862, the Royal Italian Opera, 'das in besseren Geschäften und in größerem Ansehen steht', therefore had 'mehr Sterne und ein geordnetes Planetensystem; Her Majesty's wenig Sterne bei überdies dunklerem und unverlässlichem Himmel'.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, it is clear from this remark that the singers continued to be the essential cornerstones of London's Italian opera houses. For example, Gye made attempts in 1862 to

Nalbach, *The King's Theatre*, p. 111, and James Henry Mapleson, *The Mapleson Memoirs 1848–1888*, vol. 1 (London: Remington, 1888), p. 33.

⁵⁴ See Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', pp. 21–22.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵⁶ See Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*, p. 45.

⁵⁷ See also Chapter 3, 'London Audiences', and Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', p. 65.

⁵⁸ *Punch* 44 (1863), p. 148.

⁵⁹ See Ringel, 'Donizettian Dark Ages', p. 37.

⁶⁰ Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: IV. Die Oper', p. 120.

tempt Mapleson's poster-child Tietjens away from Her Majesty's with the offer of a huge fee. Had Gye been successful, the consequences for Mapleson would have been serious, and might even have spelled ruin for Her Majesty's.⁶¹ Funding their own operation required constant attention from each manager. Gye proved far more efficient than Mapleson at borrowing money; Mapleson found himself close to bankruptcy at the end of almost every season.⁶²

It is possible that this precarious financial position led Mapleson to economise when it came to insuring the theatre against fire. The building itself was insured by the Earl of Dudley, but the theatre's props and sets were not. It is especially striking in this context that shortly before the fire at Her Majesty's in 1867, Mapleson apparently considered insurance of this type, but postponed the crucial transaction.⁶³ Without insurance, he therefore suffered huge losses following the serious fire that completely destroyed the theatre, making it impossible to re-open for the fast-approaching season.

In view of this situation, it seems hardly surprising that Mapleson tried his luck elsewhere in London opera management, rather than attempting immediately to re-open Her Majesty's. After a season at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1868, in 1869 Mapleson attempted a collaboration with Gye in managing the Royal Italian Opera, but this failed. From then on, as manager at Drury Lane, Mapleson was mainly active in the field of 'English' opera.

The destruction of Her Majesty's in 1867 can therefore be considered a crucial development for London's Italian opera industry. After a twenty-year rivalry that had been formative for London's operatic life, Gye now had a full monopoly on Italian opera in London, and by the time of his death in 1878, he had established the Royal Italian Opera as the city's leading Italian opera house.

As well as the different strategies of the individual London opera managers, and the ever-changing rivalries, the opera houses' audiences, too, played a significant role in the system. The next chapter, building on the historical overview I have given here, aims at a nuanced characterisation of London's opera audiences. The opera managers' commercial strategies were decisively influenced by audiences' preferences and wishes – the audience, of course, being the theatres' most important income source through their purchase of tickets and subscriptions.

⁶¹ See Mapleson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, pp. 41–42.

⁶² Ringel gives a detailed account of the economic situation of the two opera managers in the 1860s. 'Donizettian Dark Ages', pp. 78–113.

⁶³ Mapleson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, pp. 107–8.

3 London Audiences

The question of who went to the opera is essential for a thorough understanding of the opera industry. In the operatic life of nineteenth-century London the audiences' influence is particularly significant – hence my inquiry into audiences in this study will serve as the basis of the consideration of singers' working lives that follows. By contrast with the opera houses of continental Europe, London opera managers could not rely on state subsidies: they had to acquire the necessary funds privately.¹ In many cases this involved seeking support from stakeholder groups, which in turn meant incurring liabilities to wealthy supporters of the opera house.² The social elites were an essential, formative group in London's opera industry, not only because of these financial ties, but also because they constituted much of the audience and therefore wanted a say in the engagements of singers. Given London opera managers' financial dependence on their audiences, and on possible supporters within those audiences, the managers' decisions can always be considered responses to the market forces of supply and demand – forces that were fundamentally shaped by audiences.

Taking into account existing research by other scholars, this chapter aims to outline the demographics of Italian opera audiences in nineteenth-century London, and to examine the implications of that demographic composition on other aspects of London's opera industry.

Musicological research has not yet engaged fully with the subject of London's Italian opera audiences; the field therefore remained open for contributions from the discipline of history, and several investigations into London opera audiences have appeared in recent years. Two important contributions in this context are the essays by Sven Oliver Müller, and Jennifer Hall-Witt's monograph – which is based on invaluable detailed primary-source research – although Müller and Hall-Witt reach different conclusions about the composition of London's opera audiences.³

Müller believes that London's Italian opera was frequented by many different social groups, ranging from the lower classes through the bourgeoisie to the aristocracy. In his view, opera 'simultaneously represented and generated social status, cultural models of behaviour, and political inequality'.⁴ Müller reaches this conclusion via an analysis of listening behaviour in opera houses in London and continental Europe: listeners shifted from disregard for music

¹ On this, see, for example, Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 2.

² See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, pp. 40–42. As Ebers's descriptions show, aristocratic and other elite individuals were often intensively involved in the day-to-day business of opera, particularly until the 1830s.

³ See Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung' and 'Saalschlachten', and Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*.

⁴ 'Die Oper repräsentierte und generierte gleichzeitig sozialen Status, kulturelle Verhaltensmuster und politische Ungleichheit.' Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung', p. 168.

to concentrated listening over the course of the century, he contends, basing his argument partly on London audiences' concentrated listening to the operas of Richard Wagner.⁵ In Müller's view, moreover, the seating plan of the opera house could be 'read as a map for the interpretation of the social labyrinth of London society'.⁶ In the pit, in his account, were the lower-class groups, so that the stall seats were not especially desirable.⁷ His argument is based mainly on comments by English newspaper critics of the time – a form of evidence that requires especially thorough research into the sources' background, and Müller's engagement with such source criticism is limited, as will become clear.

This limitation is made particularly conspicuous by Müller's use of one quotation to illustrate the opera audience's lack of interest in the particular work being performed; he remarks that the review contains 'not a single line [...] about the musical qualities of the evening or the obscure opera *Zord*'.⁸ Although Müller identifies the title of the opera as 'obscure', it apparently does not occur to him to question his transcription. In fact, this opera was not *Zord*, but *Zora* – a version of Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*, with the title changed for reasons of censorship.⁹ Furthermore, Müller's consideration of opera audiences is not supported by attention to the works performed, suggesting that he views specific works as irrelevant to his argument. This lack of attention to repertoire is also evident in Müller's assessment that the single purpose of bright lighting in opera houses was to allow opera-goers to see others and to be seen (a factor that is certainly not to be dismissed).¹⁰ But he apparently sees little significance in the fact that the lighting of opera houses also facilitated the reading of libretti – essential for a rudimentary understanding of the opera, or at least of the evening's running order.¹¹ Relatedly, Müller does not consider audience members' possible use of the English translation of the libretto during performances, given that (in Eduard Hanslick's assessment) apart from a few scholars and businessmen, no one in England understood

⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 183. At one point, Müller misinterprets responses to performances of Wagner's Ring Cycle (Her Majesty's, 1882) and *Lohengrin* (Royal Italian Opera, 1875). In both cases, Müller quotes from criticism with the aim of illustrating a shift in audience behaviour towards pure listening. But according to these excerpts from reviews, there was applause following individual scenes in both performances, which would contradict Wagner's conception of the musical work.

⁶ 'Der Sitzplan des Opernhauses ließ sich als Karte zur Deutung des sozialen Labyrinthes der Londoner Gesellschaft lesen.' *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 172–73.

⁸ 'Keine Zeile findet sich hier über die musikalischen Qualitäten des Abends oder die obskure Oper *Zord*.' *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁹ See, for example, *Musical World* 25 (1851), p. 332. The title character of Rossini's original was also renamed *Zora*.

¹⁰ Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung', p. 171.

¹¹ As well as allowing audience members to follow the text on which an opera was based, libretti could help to make a work's important moments more salient. Some libretti from both the Royal Italian Opera and Her Majesty's include an overview of the 'highlights' under the cast list.

Italian: such important questions about the composition of the audience go unasked in Müller's investigation.¹²

Müller's claim about the 'map for the interpretation of the social labyrinth' (mentioned above) also suffers from his lack of attention to repertoire or critical engagement with sources.¹³ His assumption that the pit was frequented mostly by members of lower social classes is simply incorrect. The source from 1829 that he cites as evidence resists his interpretation in several ways: although the report in question does describe the pit as full of poorly-dressed spectators, it also casts doubt on the reason for their presence there ('Whether the manager fills the pit of the Opera with orders, or not, we cannot say').¹⁴ Furthermore, this description gives no information about the social class of the poorly-dressed audience members in the pit. The evocations of the 'fat citizen' and the 'shop man' are clearly hypothetical exaggerations, stock types that serve a polemical depiction of the conditions, rather than corresponding to reality.

Nevertheless, the poor dress of spectators in the pit at the King's Theatre is also corroborated by a prospectus published in the *Metropolitan* magazine in 1831:

Under the late systems of management, all the performers, chorus and *corps du ballet*, together with many of the servants, workmen, and others attending upon the house, claimed and received orders for admission to the pit and gallery; – these orders, being vended at a low price, were the principal cause of that shameful and disreputable deterioration which has of the late years been but too evident in the character of the audience frequenting the pit of the King's Theatre.¹⁵

Workers at the King's Theatre, then, could acquire tickets for the pit at reduced prices. This quotation on the one hand supports the observation in the review quoted by Müller; on the other, it makes clear that spectators' standards of dress cannot be taken as evidence of social

¹² 'Außer einigen Gelehrten und Kaufleuten versteht dort [in England] kein Mensch Italienisch.' Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: IV. Die Oper', p. 118.

¹³ Müller's assumption that the tardiness of aristocratic opera-goers was purely a demonstration of status is a further consequence of his lack of attention to the repertoire performed: he does not consider that aristocratic interest – particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century – was directed above all towards the 'fashionable' ballet which was performed either after the opera or between acts. See Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung', p. 173.

¹⁴ 'The Performance of *La Donna del Lago* was [quite] [...] disgraceful to the Establishment. [...] Whether the manager fills the pit of the Opera with orders, or not, we cannot say: but we never saw such a collection of odd looking and ill dressed people assembled together [...] vulgar looking men in old black stocks, dirty neck cloths, muddy boots, drab trousers, yellow waistcoats, and greasy *casquettes*, and a mob of ill-dressed and dowdy women, fill the pit nightly, after they have squeezed themselves into it by means of shoving, elbowing, oaths and blows. This should really be reformed. If the Operahouse once loses its aristocratic character, its occupation is gone. Fashionable people will not sit in an atmosphere of orange-peel and city-dust, or be squeezed between a fat citizen and his apprentice or shop man, or a female dealer in tallow candles from the Borough, who has engaged to *chaperon* a tribe of millions' (*Cuttings from Newspapers*, vol. 3, quoted in Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung', p. 174).

¹⁵ *The Metropolitan* 2 (September 1831), pp. 19–22.

mixture in the wider audience beyond the theatre workers. Indeed, in the long term, the critical attitude evident in both quotations towards the appearance of spectators in the pit would surely have changed the status quo. Furthermore, the pit did not necessarily have negative connotations. The strict separation that Müller posits between the aristocratic audience in the boxes and the bourgeois audience in the pit is unimaginable in light of a description of a typical evening at the opera in the fashion magazine *La Belle Assemblée* (whose primary target market was upper-class): beneath the title ‘Calamities at the Opera’, a fictional, implicitly aristocratic young woman (corresponding to the magazine’s target audience) describes her experience of the opening night of the season at the King’s Theatre.¹⁶ On the one hand, this piece supports the idea that a majority of the aristocratic audience did not confine their attention to the opera being performed, but were more concerned with social interactions; at the same time, the evening’s entertainment did include highlights – in the form of the ballet, certain arias, or particular singers – when the music and the performance commanded more attention. In order to see the ballet, the protagonist makes her way to the pit for a better view of the stage, although her hopes are disappointed:

I had scarcely seated myself, however, when the short gentleman rose, and who should take his place but Sir Thomas Titan, who is seven feet high, and wide in proportion. I shifted my seat of course, and unfortunately found myself next to Mr. Scentsh, who indulges in perfume to a degree that obliged me to retreat to the further corner of the pit.¹⁷

Although this report, as is obvious from the characters’ names, is purely fictional, it would surely not have been published without a certain level of credibility, and thus allows us to assume that aristocratic audience members were regularly present in the pit as well as the boxes. The object of mockery here is not the presence of lower-class operagoers, but the numerous social engagements that came with a visit to the opera. Those social engagements and conversations increase the difficulty of following the action on stage. But this fictional depiction of an evening at the opera in the 1830s suggests that audiences did not, as Müller claims, show a complete lack of interest in the performance.¹⁸ In light of the piece’s use of names such as Winter, Lablache, Méric and Mariani, as well as the narrator’s weakness for

¹⁶ For Müller’s posited class hierarchy among audiences, see his ‘Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung’, p. 172. On publications such as *La Belle Assemblée*, see Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman’s Magazine 1800–1914* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996), here esp. p. 27. For ‘Calamities at the Opera’, see *La Belle Assemblée* 15 (1832), p. 129.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Müller, ‘Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung’, p. 171. Whilst Müller admits that the music may have played a role, he also states that the proximity of art and entertainment, of high and everyday culture, was ‘fluid’ in the first half of the nineteenth century. In fact, no such separations existed in the nineteenth century.

ballet and her regret that the level of conversation meant that she ‘lost one or two of the finest airs in the opera’, a certain interest in the events on stage cannot be denied.¹⁹ Having said that, this interest must not be mistaken for an interest in the works performed as unified wholes; rather, it applied to particular highlights and to the performers.²⁰

The high ticket prices represent a further reason to doubt the presence of a middle- and working-class audience – the expense of London’s Italian opera was often lamented in foreign reports:

In London erfreut sich kein Theater irgend einer Zubeße. Daher die hohen Preise der Plätze, zumal in der italienischen Oper: Logenplätze sind einzeln gar nicht zu bekommen, indem alle Logen (boxes) von reichen Familien auf die Dauer der Season gemiethet sind, ein Platz in denselben kommt für jede Vorstellung auf eine Guinee (über 7 Thaler) zu stehen. Derjenige, welcher keine Loge nehmen konnte und keine Bekannte hat, die ihm einen Platz in denselben abtreten, muß sich mit dem Parterre (pit) oder der obersten Galerie begnügen. Im erstern kostet ein Platz eine halbe Guinee und ist jeder gehalten in full dress, in Ballanzug, die Damen ohne Hut, Mantel u. f. f., zu erscheinen. Auf der obersten Galerie, dem letzten Platze, kostet das Billet immer noch zwei Thaler.²¹

As well as the high prices, this excerpt implies that tickets in the gallery were even less desirable than those in the pit. In the pit, one had to be well-dressed, and there were strict controls on this upon entry to the theatre – suggesting that if members of lower social groups did frequent the theatre, they would at most have watched from the gallery and not from the pit. It is more probable, however, that the spectators in the gallery of the King’s Theatre were for the most part the servants of wealthy opera-goers, rather than a general cross-section of the working classes.²² The *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* for 1841 gives a similar report, but a much more explicit one:

Die italienische Oper ist im Städtchen London nie populair gewesen. Die hohen Eintrittspreise machen sie zu einem Exclusiv=Vergnügen und darum gehört es dann und wann zu den stehenden Artikeln der Presse, in Ziffern nachzuweisen, wie viel mit dem, was die fremden Singvögel kosten, für das einheimische Drama und für die englische Oper gethan werden könnte. Das war so, als König Wilhelm noch auf dem Throne saß, den jeder Shilling dauerte, den er Herkommens halber einmal im Jahre im Drury=Lane und

¹⁹ The preference for ballet within an evening at the opera is entirely in keeping with conventional taste in the first half of the nineteenth century (see for example *Literary Gazette* (1837), p. 148, or Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 17).

²⁰ The assumption that the dramatic context of an opera or ballet is essential for its reception does not necessarily imply an interest in the work as an artistic unit. But it would also be false to suggest that audiences were so focused on singers as to be entirely ignorant of operas as works.

²¹ August Jäger, *Der Deutsche in London: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Flüchtlinge unserer Zeit*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1839), p. 4.

²² See Fenner, *Opera in London*, p. 87.

Coventgarden=Theater bezahlte, der die italienische Oper nie mit seiner Gegenwart beehrte und einer diesfallsigen Bittschrift des Unternehmers Laporte den Bescheid erteilte: ‚habe kein Geld‘.²³

Not only the prices, but also the dress code for a visit to the opera would have limited the potential for a socially mixed audience. As already mentioned, audience members (apart from those with gallery tickets) could expect to have their clothing inspected upon entry to the opera house:

The persons who visit the King’s Theatre must all go in full dress. Any disregard of this regulation will be inevitably attended by the exclusion of the party, no matter what his rank. Some years ago, it was necessary for gentlemen to have three-corner hats, but that regulation has been departed from, and gentlemen wearing hats of the usual shape are now admitted. It was customary a short time since for ladies and gentlemen to go on levee and drawing-room days to the Opera in full court-dress. The display of fashion, when the house is full, is still imposing; on those occasions it was magnificent in the extreme. It was absolutely dazzling to behold.²⁴

It would have been near impossible for members of the working classes to afford suitable clothing as well as tickets.²⁵ The strictness with which the dress codes in London’s Italian opera houses were enforced is illustrated by Henry Sutherland Edwards’s description of an incident where an extremely well-dressed visitor was denied entry to the King’s Theatre during John Ebers’s management.²⁶ His ‘*superfine blue coat, with gold buttons, a white waistcoat, fashionable tight drab pantaloons, white silk stockings, and dress shoes*’ notwithstanding, the man was in contravention of the opera house’s rules, which permitted only black and white clothing. Edwards commented on the situation as follows – with a similarly polemical orientation to that in the quotation used by Müller about audience members in the pit:

The absurdity of the present system is that, whereas, a gentleman who has come to London only for a day or two, and does not happen to have a dress-coat in his portmanteau; who happens even to be dressed in exact accordance with the notions of the operatic check-takers, except as to his cravat, which he will suppose through the eccentricity of the wearer, to be black, with the smallest sprig, or spray, or spot of some colour on it; while such a one would be regarded as unworthy to enter the pit of the Opera, a waiter from an oystershop, in his inevitable black and white, reeking with the drippings of shell-fish, and the fumes of bad tobacco, or a

²³ *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* 41 (1841), p. 484.

²⁴ James Grant, *The Great Metropolis*, vol. 1 (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1837), p. 36.

²⁵ A comfortable member of London’s middle classes might expect to earn £150 annually in 1844 (see Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing 1840–1880* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), p. 183). This makes clear that going to the opera would have been beyond the reach of average Londoners. For example, in 1840 a stalls subscription cost 40 guineas (£42). In 1839, single tickets cost 10s. 6d. in the pit, 5s. in the lower gallery, and 3s. in the upper gallery (see Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 282).

²⁶ Henry Sutherland Edwards, *History of the Opera from its Origin in Italy to the Present Time*, vol. 2 (London: W. H. Allen, 1862), pp. 137–8.

drunken undertaker, fresh from a funeral, coming with the required number of shillings in his dirty hands, could not be refused admission.²⁷

In fact, it is unlikely that either the waiter or the undertaker attended the opera at the King's Theatre. The polemical tone of the description simply arises from resentment at the refused entry on grounds of impressive but incorrect clothing.

As further evidence of the purported social mixture of London opera audiences, Müller cites the riots that were frequent at the King's – later Her Majesty's – theatre, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. In these riots Müller sees

emotions self-consciously displayed in the course of cultural demonstrations and struggles for political agency. The opera house was a space where various political, social and ethnic groups publicly demonstrated their interests. Moments of ostensibly spontaneous, collective emotional overflow, and seemingly purely aesthetic concerns, could thus acquire a powerful political dimension.²⁸

As evidence he cites a report about an audience riot triggered by a short-notice change of the work to be performed: instead of Rossini's *Semiramide* as planned, the composer's *Otello* was given, and the riot delayed the start of the performance.²⁹ Müller interprets this event as purely a demonstration of political power; a demonstration simply for the sake of demonstrating. But he does not discuss the events that immediately preceded the riot.

In fact, a month prior to this event, there had been an unannounced but significant casting change in a performance of *Pietro l'eremita* (a version of Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*, renamed to comply with censors' requirements).³⁰ Giuseppina Ronzi de Begnis, who was to play the role of Agia, was indisposed, and the opera was performed without the prima donna; Agia's part was simply omitted.³¹ This represented an unparalleled affront to the star-loving London audience:

[...] it was a manifesto setting forth in a very regal style, that in consequence of the sudden death [...] of Madame Ronzi de Begnis' voice, the opera of Pietro would be performed *without the character of Agia*, that

²⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁸ '[...] bewusst zur Schau gestellte Emotionen im Zuge von kulturellen Demonstrationen und politischen Deutungskämpfen. Den Raum der Oper nutzten verschiedene politische/soziale und ethnische Gruppen um ihre Interessen öffentlich zu bekunden. Vermeintliche spontan-emotionale Operntumulte und augenscheinlich rein ästhetische Angelegenheiten konnten so eine mächtige politische Dimension erlangen.' Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung', p. 177.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

³⁰ These renamed productions were common in cases of operas treating religious themes. See Marvin, 'The Censorship of Verdi's Operas in Victorian London'.

³¹ The only place in the performance where Agia's part was included was a duet with Curioni, in which Caradori took the part of Agia; the rest of the role was omitted. See *London Magazine* 2 (1825), p. 291. Caradori was playing the Sultana in this production. See *New Monthly Magazine* 3 (1825), p. 247.

is to say, without the principal character; and this was endured, patiently endured! Thus we were entertained with a performance substantially similar to that of Hamlet, without the Prince of Denmark.³²

Ronzi de Begnis's performance as Agia would have been especially attractive to audiences because it allowed for direct comparison between Ronzi de Begnis and Violante Camporese, her predecessor in the role; Ebers mentions in his memoirs that Ronzi de Begnis was just as influential an Agia as Camporese, emphasising how sensational she was considered in this role.³³ The audience's dissatisfaction would have been heightened by the fact that de Begnis frequently pulled out of performances during 1825, necessitating repertoire changes.³⁴ In these circumstances, the aforementioned unrest at the performance of *Pietro l'eremita* is hardly surprising – but not because the opera house was used as a 'public arena', or because music consumption was 'a widely accepted outlet for the domestication and partial release of emotions in a regimented society, bound by social etiquette that meant other forms of transgression were not open to the elites'.³⁵ Rather, the unrest was simply the result of dissatisfaction with the opera management – over which many opera-goers could have a certain amount of influence through their subscriptions or other financial support. If the audience was dissatisfied with the management's casting policies, then (which seems very plausible in 1825), their expression of resentment, within the exclusive space that the opera house always was, represents simply a consequence of their dissatisfaction, far from any broader socio-political concerns. An interpretation such as Müller's can arise only from a lack of attention to the contextual details surrounding the review he cites. The programme change from *Semiramide* to *Otello* followed a series of previous incidents, as the *London Magazine* recorded: 'On the whole we are very glad that this affair has taken place, we are glad that the Opera audience has made a row, we are glad that it has been provoked to resist the experiments which have so long been made on its assinine [sic] quality of exceeding patience'.³⁶

A further riot that Müller takes as evidence for a socially mixed audience is the much-cited 'Tamburini row' of 1840, when the audience protested against a cast change affecting the part of Riccardo in Bellini's *I puritani*: Filippo Coletti was supposed to replace Antonio Tamburini.³⁷ Because this unrest was certainly started by aristocrats within the audience at Her Majesty's, Müller does not consider it simply a demonstration against an unpopular

³² *London Magazine* 2 (1825), p. 291.

³³ See Ebers, *Seven Years*, p. 337. Agia had become one of Ronzi de Begnis' classic roles since her debut in 1821. See Fenner, *Opera in London*, pp. 226–7.

³⁴ See Ebers, *Seven Years*, p. 246.

³⁵ Müller, 'Distinktion, Demonstration und Disziplinierung', p. 176.

³⁶ *London Magazine* 2 (1825), p. 293.

³⁷ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 13–17.

casting decision, but rather an ‘attempt [...] to reinforce [the aristocracy’s] own social status and the exclusive character of the public space of the opera’, which in turn implies – falsely – that the audience for Italian opera in London was not in fact composed of elite social groups.³⁸ We have already seen that this assessment is incorrect for the first half of the nineteenth century. Once again, drawing on the socio-cultural context of the Tamburini row, and its background in terms of repertoire, allows a reassessment that contradicts Müller’s oversimplified interpretation of the incident.

Particularly in the context of *I puritani*, Tamburini was an extremely significant figure: the part of Riccardo had originally been conceived for him, making him a crucial member of the famed ‘Puritani quartet’.³⁹ The casting change cannot therefore be dismissed as a trifling matter that the audience at Her Majesty’s would accept calmly. Moreover, Tamburini belonged to the so-called ‘vieille garde’, a clique of singers which had emerged from the Puritani quartet, who insisted upon accepting engagements only as a group.⁴⁰ They therefore exerted considerable pressure on the opera house, and had extremely strong allies within the English aristocracy.⁴¹ Tamburini’s links to English aristocrats are illustrated, for example, by a report in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* of 26 July 1838, describing a grand party organised by the banker’s wife Baroness Charlotte von Rothschild at the family’s home, Gunnersbury Park.⁴² Many high-ranking members of the English aristocracy were present, including Prince George, Duke of Cambridge (a cousin of Queen Victoria). Tamburini attended and performed there along with Grisi, Rubini and the conductor Costa. Interestingly in this context, Prince George himself seems to have had significant involvement in the Tamburini row, apparently guiding the agitation, along with other members of the aristocracy, from the ‘omnibus boxes’.⁴³

As well as frequent performances with the ‘vieille garde’ at high-society parties and balls, at the time of the furore surrounding him, Tamburini was lodging at the home of the Duke of Wellington, which further illustrates his personal connections to elite circles. Tamburini even publicised this state of affairs: he wrote an open letter to complain about the rumours that his recent engagement at Her Majesty’s had fallen through only because he had demanded

³⁸ Müller, ‘Saalschlachten’, p. 168.

³⁹ The quartet consisted of the principal singers for the premiere of *I puritani* in 1835: Giulia Grisi, Giovanni Battista Rubini, Luigi Lablache, and Tamburini.

⁴⁰ In the ‘vieille garde’, the tenor Rubini was replaced by Mario, Grisi’s lover and later husband.

⁴¹ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 14.

⁴² See *Allgemeine Augsburger Zeitung* 207 (1838), p. 1649.

⁴³ See, for example, *Oesterreichischer Beobachter* 1 (1840), p. 679, *Didaskalia* 131 (1840), n.p., and *Examiner* 1683 (1840), p. 282. On ‘omnibus boxes’, see Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 187–88.

excessive fees. On the contrary, in Tamburini's explanation, he had not asked for an increase on the previous year's fees, but Laporte had not engaged him, and had given no reason:

Sir, Having had the honour of remaining at Strathfieldsaye, in attendance upon his grace the duke of Wellington, during the week just elapsed, I had not the opportunity, if I had the inclination, to notice what has occurred at her majesty's theatre with regard to my non-engagement. But since my return to town I have had translated to me, by my friends, several extracts from the papers, stating that my not being engaged arose from my having demanded higher and most extravagant terms. I now feel it would be wanting in respect and gratitude to the public, if I should allow it to be believed that such a cause has separated me from my kind patrons of her majesty's theatre. Therefore, however loth to interfere, I feel it a duty I owe to the public and myself to make known that I never demanded any increase of emolument. Having in November last written to Mr. Laporte to beg he would not leave me in uncertainty as to whether he would engage me, I received in answer the following note; since then I have never heard from Mr. Laporte.⁴⁴

The fact that Tamburini publicly addressed the issue of the disturbances, and the circumstances surrounding his engagement, in this rather sanctimonious letter, can be taken as an indication that the aristocratic troublemakers really were concerned with the (non-) engagement of Tamburini, and at most wanted to show that they could take a stand against the management. Laporte, like many of his colleagues in London's Italian opera industry, was hugely dependent on the support of the aristocracy, as is evident from the continued importance of the culture of subscription tickets – notwithstanding the alternative business models Laporte had already developed.⁴⁵ Müller's argument that the initiators of the disturbances wanted to demonstrate to the middle- and working-class opera-goers their power over the management, the selection of singers, and repertoire, is hardly tenable: as already illustrated, hardly any of the audience members at Her Majesty's came from outside the social elites. That resentment towards managerial policies was 'publicly' demonstrated in the opera house, rather than through the withdrawal of financial support or cancellation of subscriptions, simply suggests that wealthy opera-goers did not want to go without 'their' Italian opera, which would have been the consequence of withdrawing funds.⁴⁶

The details discussed by Müller in relation to the interruption of the performance – he identifies the voices calling for the performance to continue as coming mainly from the pit – cannot be taken as evidence that this group belonged to London's middle classes. Rather, the

⁴⁴ *The Annual Register or a View of the History and Politics of the Year 1840* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1841), pp. 46–47.

⁴⁵ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 157.

⁴⁶ Lumley's description of how the omnibus box remained empty until the ballet on the night of Tamburini's first performance does not suggest that singers were not the real reason for the dispute. The goal of a renewed engagement had been achieved; it was therefore not essential to be at this performance, because Tamburini's financial support had been reinstated by his re-engagement (see Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 17).

affair must be considered simply a personal skirmish between aristocratic acquaintances of Tamburini, such as Prince George, Duke of Cambridge, and Laporte's management, who – to the displeasure of Tamburini himself and some of his contacts – had not engaged the singer. It is important to bear in mind that even for an internationally renowned singer such as Tamburini, engagements in London were an extremely lucrative prospect, and one he did not want to pass up.⁴⁷

Likewise, the criticism of aristocrats' behaviour in the more middle-class media mentioned by Müller – above all in reviews – cannot be taken as evidence that the middle classes did in fact frequent the Italian opera. Rather, this criticism represents the views of external observers, for whom the behaviour of the aristocracy in relation to a single singer was incomprehensible. It would be inappropriate, and an over-interpretation of the facts, to read such writings as suggesting that the audience was made up of people from all social classes.

In light of this, Müller's hypothesis that audiences at London's Italian opera houses changed significantly during the 1830s, leading to a situation where opera was available to all social groups, seems simply incorrect. Moreover, Davis and Emeljanov, in their book on theatre audiences in London, find that the West End theatres in general were hardly frequented by really working-class people, because a night at the theatre was simply beyond the financial means of many members of the middle classes, not to speak of the working classes; to borrow their phrase, the problem of high ticket prices worsened as, from the 1840s onwards, the West End became increasingly like a 'theme park' in its variety of extravagant forms of entertainment.⁴⁸

Financial costs were significant in preventing opera audiences from being socially mixed, as Hall-Witt demonstrates extensively in *Fashionable Acts*, using ticket prices and subscription figures from London's Italian opera houses. In addition, by contrast with Müller, she considers the differences between the various periods of management, and relatedly the various measures for attracting audiences, building up a considerably more nuanced picture. An important aspect here is the increasingly widespread practice of selling private box tickets through booksellers from the mid 1820s onwards: when subscribers were unable to attend, or had spare tickets in their box, these would be resold as pit tickets (a box ticket also granted access to the pit).⁴⁹ The advantages for the aristocratic subscribers were firstly that one could

⁴⁷ For example, Lumley reports the following reaction by Laporte to Tamburini's reengagement: 'Tamburini was reengaged, and was so deeply affected by what he chose to consider the "sympathy of the public," that he shed tears of emotion. "If those tears could but be analysed," said Laporte, [...] "their component parts would be found of gold and silver"' (Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 17).

⁴⁸ Davis and Emeljanov, *Reflecting the Audience*, p. 175.

⁴⁹ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 156–7.

avoid sharing one's box with strangers, and secondly that one could reclaim a small amount of the cost of one's subscription. The problems with this system were that these additional ticket sales made the pit overcrowded, and that privately resold tickets did not bring in any income for the opera house. For this reason, Laporte decided in 1829 to reintroduce the 'orchestra stalls' – four rows between the orchestra and the unreserved places in the pit, subscriptions for which were significantly cheaper than for boxes.⁵⁰ As already seen, however, these prices were still high enough that even comfortable middle-class Londoners could not readily afford subscriptions.⁵¹

Hall-Witt also notes that the change in ticket policy, which brought more flexibility to the King's Theatre from the middle of the 1820s onwards, did not necessarily lead to a smaller proportion of the audience being aristocratic:

The expansion of the public, then, did not necessarily imply a reduction in the aristocratic audience but instead pointed to a reorganization of operatic culture. In the subscription system, the 'public' comprised those spectators who were not subscribers. In contrast to the boxes, which were private because they were 'owned' by the subscribers for the season, the 'public' initially sat in the pit and galleries.⁵²

Here Hall-Witt draws attention to a not-insignificant linguistic difficulty, concerning the caution needed in interpreting the word 'public'. In this context, it is important to remember that 'the public' refers not to the public sphere at large (as Müller interprets it, for example), but indicates a specific change in subscription culture; it would be misleading to read the word as suggesting that the opera house was 'public' in the word's commonly understood sense today. This linguistic nuance is specific to English-language sources; we will return later to the many insights offered by contemporary German-language sources, which – unsurprisingly, in light of the significant international interest that London's opera industry represented – are plentiful, and offer useful external perspectives on London.

Hall-Witt also points out that Italian opera managers, beginning with Laporte, offered several non-subscription evenings with lower ticket prices ('extra nights'), in order to increase their income and broaden their audience; this might suggest the kind of social mixture for which Müller argues.⁵³ On the other hand, the form that these events took suggests that they probably would have been of great interest to the regular subscribers as well. Under Laporte's management, extra nights consisted mainly of benefit concerts for the house's star singers,

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵¹ See Davis and Emeljanov, *Reflecting the Audience*, p. 183. Hall-Witt's argument would be strengthened by a consideration of the relationship between ticket prices and different income groups in London.

⁵² Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 149.

⁵³ Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 166–67.

and it was also on these occasions that many works received their London premiere. Such evenings were thus highly attractive for the audience.⁵⁴ Within the tradition of extra nights, the 1848 season stands out as a high point, largely because of the new rivalry that emerged in London's Italian opera industry with the opening of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden as an Italian opera house in 1847.⁵⁵ The competitive relationship between the two opera houses becomes especially clear with the announcement of an extra night on 13 July 1848, when both houses put on Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*.⁵⁶ Strikingly, the two houses' announcements of these performances appeared in opposite columns on the same page of the *Musical World*, rendering the rivalry visual. In both cases, the singers were to be the star attraction for the audience. At Her Majesty's and the Royal Italian Opera respectively – and in their competing *Musical World* advertisements – the rival protagonists were Jenny Lind and Giulia Grisi as Susanna; Sofia Cruvelli and Bina Steffanoni as the Countess; Therese Schwartz and Marietta Alboni as Cherubino; Giovanni Battista Belletti and Ignazio Marini as Figaro; Luigi Lablache and Agostino Rovere as Bartolo; and Filippo Coletti and Antonio Tamburini as Almaviva. Clearly, both houses had the same tactics in their advertisements: big names, like those of Lind, Grisi, Lablache, Tamburini and Alboni served as enticements – although the less well-known ensemble members were also mentioned. The advertisements also show that pit tickets for the Royal Italian Opera were cheaper than those for Her Majesty's, at eight shillings, as against 10s. 6d. In this context it is clear that in 1848 the two opera houses were competing for the same audience, and that this group consisted for the most part of members of the social elites.⁵⁷ The single obvious difference between the two productions (apart from the different casts) is the lower prices at the Royal Italian Opera – a necessary strategy in order for the new player on the market to put pressure on its already-established competitor.⁵⁸ Interestingly, the Royal Italian Opera positioned itself as operating with different priorities to those of the star-singer-based Her Majesty's. Not singers but operatic works were to have pride of place:

⁵⁴ See also my discussion of Laporte's contracts in Chapter 5.2.

⁵⁵ This can be seen above all in the numerous advertisements in the *Musical World* for 1848.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 448.

⁵⁷ Sedgley Marvel described the 1847 audience at Her Majesty's in detail. Members of the middle classes seem not to have been present in the pit: 'The Pit, instead of being filled as at Paris, with miscellaneous company of men, here admits persons of both sexes always becomingly dressed. It besides communicates with the boxes; and in its centre walk to which has been given the name of "*Fops Alley*," which is enough to make well-bred men shun it, or at least when in it make themselves look as natural as possible, since they are in a *locale* positively stigmatised with affectation – in this central avenue but more frequently in the circular passages on either hand, congregate sometimes men of the highest rank, who descend to talk, to survey the house, and to keep appointments' (Sedgley Marvel, *The Opera: Views before and Peeps behind the Curtain* (London: C. Mitchell, 1847), pp. 16–17).

⁵⁸ Müller also neglects to address the change in competitive relationships brought about by the opening of the Royal Italian Opera, leading to a lack of nuance in his arguments.

The assurances which were given that unlimited capital was forthcoming for a second Italian Theatre eventually induced Mr. Gruneisen to draw up a plan of management to extend the existing Italian *répertoire*, and to widen the domain of art by the production of the masterpieces by the French and German masters, in short, to create an establishment which should combine the essential attributes of the Italian Theatre, the Grand Opéra, and the Opéra Comique, at Paris, and the classic German opera houses [...] The main principle of its undertaking is to elevate lyrical art, and to place the Italian Opera on a basis of efficiency never before attained, not only in England, but in Europe.⁵⁹

The plans announced here were certainly not realised in the house's first season, under the joint management of Frederick Beale, Giuseppe Persiani and Galetti. Rather, repertoire was limited – following the example of Her Majesty's – to the kinds of works that were considered authentic 'Italian' opera in London. Only when Frederick Gye took over the management in 1848 were there some changes to the repertoire, above all in the form of performances of works by Meyerbeer.⁶⁰ This general lack of differentiation between the two houses suggests that their audiences were not significantly different groups – for example, Gye too was dependent on financial support from the aristocracy to keep his business going in the early 1850s, as Hall-Witt explains.⁶¹ The fact that members of the aristocracy pledged their financial support to the Royal Italian Opera strongly indicates that there was continued interest in attending an opera house that positioned itself as prioritising operatic works rather than singers.

The fact that Lumley put on opera performances at 'playhouse prices' in 1851 cannot be considered an opening-up of access to the opera house, in view of the socio-economic circumstances.⁶² This was the year of the Great Exhibition in London, which brought the opportunity of extra income from tourists. Hence Lumley decided to introduce more affordable evenings at the opera, alongside the usual subscription. These appear to have been hugely successful: 'Hundreds were turned away from the doors who received tickets for another night, and hundreds more were satisfied with being transferred from the pit to the gallery, where if they could procure standing room, they had a view of the stage'.⁶³

⁵⁹ Charles Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*, pp. 6–7. This stance is also in evidence in the announcement of the opera house's opening in the *Musical World*, which states that 'it is proposed to produce, in the course of the season, some of the established works of **CIMAROSA**, **MOZART**, **ROSSINI**, **MEYERBEER**, and others of the more modern Italian school, including operas by **BELLINI**, **DONIZETTI**, **MERCADANTE**, and **VERDI**, on a scale of the utmost perfection in every department; to which intent the management company has assembled a company embracing the greatest and most varied talent in Europe' (*Musical World* 22 (1847), p. 128). Equally, it is clear that it would have been impossible to realise this plan without an ensemble of internationally renowned singers.

⁶⁰ See Dideriksen and Ringel, 'Frederick Gye and "The Dreadful Business of Opera Management"', pp. 12–13.

⁶¹ *Fashionable Acts*, p. 162.

⁶² See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 320.

⁶³ *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 566; see also Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 320–21.

Despite what was by all accounts a sold-out house, these ‘playhouse prices’ probably did not turn out to be profitable for Lumley because of the enormous expenditure on singers. The financial difficulties, and the financial arrangements more generally, of Her Majesty’s were well-known internationally as well as nationally, as the following report from the *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung* illustrates:

Uebrigens stand es mit Lumley’s Theater schlecht: allein die hohe Aristokratie lässt ihn nicht sinken. Vor acht Tagen trat eine Versammlung in seinem Interesse zusammen: mehr als hundert Personen aus der vornehmsten Welt, z. B. der Herzog von Cleveland, der Herzog v. Leinster, der Marquis von Clanricarde, Baron Brunow u. s. w. waren da und stellten sich an die Spitze. Man beschloss, ein Comite zu wählen und eine Subscription zu eröffnen, um ungestörten und glänzenden Fortgang der Unternehmung für diese Saison zu sichern.⁶⁴

Lumley, like Gye, received significant support from aristocratic donors, who presumably had a considerable interest in the continuation of the elite institution of the Italian opera. In fact, in view of the political situation in London at the time, there was a significant need for the aristocracy to reinforce their status. Since 1831, the aristocracy had been engaged in a bitter struggle against the Anti Corn Law League, led by Richard Cobden. The latter group had campaigned for the repeal of the Corn Laws that had been introduced in 1815 to protect grain prices; their repeal was an important step in the direction of free trade. Members of the English aristocracy, who often owned large estates, saw these efforts as a threat to their economic foundations and therefore to their social status. Interestingly, this predominantly economic issue came to be seen as a conflict for status between the aristocrats and the people.⁶⁵ The Theatre Royal Covent Garden was a crucial site in this conflict, in that weekly rallies by the Anti Corn Law League took place there; the theatre was thus positioned on the side of the free-trade advocates in public consciousness.⁶⁶ These rallies found their high point in the ‘Anti Corn Law League Bazaar’ in the theatre in 1845, where craftsmen’s wares were exhibited and political speeches were given by Cobden and important figures among his allies.⁶⁷ Through this event, the Anti Corn Law League probably aimed to gain still further support for a cause that was already well-received in public opinion.

⁶⁴ *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 2 (1851), p. 815.

⁶⁵ See Ingeborg Zechner, “...And the English buy it”: Londons Opernwesen am Beispiel von Benjamin Lumley und Her Majesty’s Theatre’ (Master’s thesis, Graz, 2011); published as ‘...And the English buy it’: Londons Opernwesen am Beispiel von Benjamin Lumley und Her Majesty’s Theatre’ (Saarbrücken: Akademikerverlag, 2013), pp. 9–11. Subsequent page numbers refer to this published version.

⁶⁶ See K. de Roth, *Richard Cobden: Ein Meister der Staatswirtschaft und Muster politischer Redlichkeit, in Leben und Leistungen ein nachahmungswürdiges Vorbild* (Coburg: Riemann, 1867), p. 35.

⁶⁷ See Archibald Prentice, *History of the Anti-Corn-Law League*, vol. 2 (London: W. & F. G. Cash, 1853), pp. 335–341; Richard Cobden, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, vol. 1 (London: Ridgway, 1867), pp. i–iii.

The Corn Laws were eventually repealed in 1846, smoothing the way towards free trade. For elite landowners this meant a reduction of their income basis. In order to conceal this new economic weakness from public view, we can conjecture that institutions such as the Italian opera continued to provide a space for the social representation of the elites, who saw themselves faced with increased social pressure beyond this protected space.⁶⁸ The importance of Covent Garden to the Anti Corn Law League is above all significant to the establishment of an Italian opera season there in 1847. Inevitably, the Anti Corn Law League meetings in what was then called the Theatre Royal Covent Garden brought about an association of the theatre with the liberal ideas that Cobden and his allies represented. The possible implications for the establishment of an Italian opera house will be discussed later in this chapter.

In this context, it is important to consider the definition of the English ‘aristocracy’. The term cannot be considered synonymous with the titled nobility, because there were various ways of acquiring a title in nineteenth-century England, besides inheriting one. Generally, ‘nobility’ was used to refer to those born into a title; ‘gentry’ referred to landowners; and ‘peers’ referred to those with a parliamentary title.⁶⁹ Additionally, Hall-Witt establishes that wealthy businessmen who had opera subscriptions often also had titles such as Lord, Lady, Sir, or The Hon., which significantly broadened the application of the term ‘aristocracy’.⁷⁰ All the aforementioned groups had in common significant financial assets – a necessary prerequisite, of course, for going to the Italian opera. Eduard Hanslick differentiates among groups within the aristocracy in the following description of London’s Italian opera industry:

Wenn irgendwo die Oper den Kainsstempel ihrer Entstehung, den Charakter höfischer leerer Ergötzlichkeit aufweist, so ist dies der Fall in London. Dies Institut, das fabelhafte Summen verschlingt, steht mit der Nation nicht in dem leisesten inneren Zusammenhang. Es hat gar kein Verhältniß zu dem Volk. Nur die Geld- und Geburts-Aristokratie, verstärkt durch die neugierige Touristenschaar, nimmt Antheil daran. Die italienische Oper zu besuchen ist Mode, sie gehört zu den Satzungen des *bon ton*.⁷¹

Sensations surrounding new *prime donne* or ‘new’ works served as magnets for audiences (operas that a theatre had not put on for a substantial period of time could count as ‘new’ for these purposes) – which explains the predominance of aristocrats noticed by the reviewer for the *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung* at the first 1863 performance at the Royal Italian Opera of Meyerbeer’s *Gli Ugonotti*:

⁶⁸ See Zechner, ‘...And the English buy it’, p. 11.

⁶⁹ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 12, and Zechner, ‘...And the English buy it’, p. 27.

⁷⁰ Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 177.

⁷¹ Hanslick, ‘Musikalisches aus London: IV. Die Oper’, p. 117.

So hat denn auch dieses Jahr der Director von Coventgarden, Herr Gye, einen glücklichen Wurf durch die Aufführung von Meyerbeer's ‚Hugenotten‘ gethan, welche erst am 18. des Mts. [Monats] zum ersten Male in dieser Saison, die schon am 1. August schliesst, in Scene gingen. Die Versammlung war eine der zahlreichsten und glänzendsten, die hiesigen Blätter bringen ganze Listen von anwesenden hohen Herrschaften, Herzogen, Grafen, Baronen u. s. w. und deren Gemahlinnen, wie das sonst nur bei Hoffesten gewöhnlich geschieht.⁷²

These extracts from international reports make clear that at least until well into the 1860s, both London's Italian opera houses were frequented almost exclusively by the aristocracy. Nevertheless, it seems that the opening of the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden was not left entirely unaffected by the political situation discussed above, in which the Theatre Royal Covent Garden had been the site of free trade rallies before its conversion into an opera house. Further differentiation between the audiences of the two opera houses may therefore be necessary.

In her analysis of the audiences, Hall-Witt identifies a preference for the Royal Italian Opera on the part of the 'lesser aristocracy', while the 'upper aristocracy' preferred Her Majesty's Theatre, with these preferences developing for political and economic reasons. She specifies the relevance of the slightly lower ticket prices at the Royal Italian Opera – notwithstanding the fact that they remained out of reach of normal Londoners. She also characterises the Royal Italian Opera audience as including a greater number of liberal politicians, whereas the majority of Tory politicians were to be found at Her Majesty's.⁷³ This probably reflects the implicit ideological associations that Covent Garden acquired through the Anti Corn Law League rallies. Hall-Witt's quantitative evidence does have some limitations, however: it is possible that the differences between the two audience groups had more to do with the status they aimed to demonstrate than with their real social status.

The aforementioned price difference between the two opera houses is thus of limited significance for the identification of audience demographics. On the one hand, ticket prices at both houses always remained high, making the differences between the two relatively marginal. On the other hand, in such a market-based system, it is highly probable that price, above all in the early years of the Royal Italian Opera, was used as a means to pressurise Her Majesty's, the firmly-established competitor. A later price rise above the competitor's prices would have brought significant risks, which is probably why Royal Italian Opera prices always remained lower than those at Her Majesty's. We cannot necessarily infer a difference between the two audiences from the differences in ticket price.

⁷² *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 11 (1863), p. 238.

⁷³ Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 181–83.

It is more probable that the difference between the two audiences was ideological – and Hall-Witt’s discussions of politicians’ opera habits also support this possibility. The liberal background of the Royal Italian Opera, developed through the house’s theatrical history, its role in liberal rallies, and finally its self-positioning as an artistically serious Italian opera house, attracted a slightly different layer of the aristocracy.⁷⁴ By attending the Royal Italian Opera, this group aimed to embody an attitude that was above all artistically appreciative. It therefore seems probable that Royal Italian Opera audience attempted to set themselves apart from the ‘musical amateurs’ of Her Majesty’s by prominently demonstrating an aesthetic ideology that was more focused on works. The fact that the type of performances did not actually differ significantly between the two houses may not have mattered greatly to the Royal Italian Opera audience – what counted was the demonstration of a lifestyle that differed markedly from the musical dilettantism of Her Majesty’s.⁷⁵

The identification of social groups, however, represents only one aspect of the composition of London opera audiences – Müller, for example, ignores virtually any other considerations. Particularly given the privately-financed, market-oriented nature of London’s operatic life, the audience’s expectations and preferences played an important role, affecting all areas of the business for managers.

It is clear that there was a great affinity among nineteenth-century London audiences for Italy, and above all for Italian opera. Audiences attended largely for reasons of fashion, rather than because of the music:

For every one knows that there are special circumstances surrounding Italian opera which take it out of the category of all like undertakings. It is not the love of music alone that supports Italian opera; it is fashion that pays the larger share of its cost; and its motive is every day gathering fresh force with increasing luxury and wealth of the age.⁷⁶

This Italian enthusiasm arose above all from longstanding trade relations with northern Italy in the cotton industry, and from aristocrats’ frequent visits to Italy, with its favourable climate.⁷⁷ The resultant fashion for all things Italian can be characterised as a distinctive feature of the aristocracy, as against other social groups, because of the high costs associated

⁷⁴ Henry Chorley shared the view that the Royal Italian Opera represented artistic seriousness. He saw its opening as a consequence of the unsatisfactory performances given at Her Majesty’s. Chorley, *Thirty Years’ Musical Recollections*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862), vol. 2, pp. 2–4.

⁷⁵ This dilettantism, and the possible differences between the two opera houses, are investigated in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁷⁶ *Musical World* 42 (1864), p. 706. These remarks were made in the context of a discussion of the efforts to establish an English ‘National Opera’, which, by contrast with the Italian, would not have counted as ‘fashionable’.

⁷⁷ See Zechner, ‘...And the English buy it’, p. 6.

with such journeys. The category ‘Italian’ thus acquired exclusive, elite connotations, which ultimately benefited Italian opera. Going to the Italian opera was a mark of good taste, the ‘done thing’, so to speak, with which one could demonstrate one’s social status to one’s peers. Interestingly in this context, in nineteenth-century London an opera needed only be *translated* into Italian to fulfil the definition of ‘Italian opera’ – a situation that suggests a degree of musical amateurism, or even a lack of interest in the actual operas. It did not matter in the slightest whether the audience understood Italian; what was more important was one’s participation in an elite event. The audience’s incomprehension of Italian was especially evident in performances of comic opera, in that – despite the English translation printed alongside the Italian in libretti – punchlines would usually pass them by, as Hanslick reported:

Es war in Her Majesty’s Theatre, wo ich eines Abends den ‚Barbier von Sevilla‘ hörte. Ich war erstaunt, *Zucchini*, der in Wien als Doctor Bartolo von Laune förmlich übersprudelte, hier so wirkungslos und unaufgelegt zu finden. Ein Blick auf die steinerne Miene des Publicums klärte mich rasch auf. Die Leute verstanden ja nicht eine Sylbe vom Dialog und nahmen diesselben Spässe, die in Wien schallendes Gelächter hervorrufen, so feierlich ernsthaft auf, als spräche der steinerne Gast im ‚Don Juan‘.⁷⁸

Fashionable Italian opera, in the audience’s eyes, naturally had to be complemented by a cast of the leading Italian singers from continental Europe – only then was a truly ‘authentic Italian’ evening’s entertainment guaranteed. The necessity of accepting exclusively internationally renowned singers onto London’s Italian stages was dictated to managers by the wealthy audiences, who wanted to be able to see the stars of the continental opera world in their own country as well.⁷⁹ This focus on individual singers, rather than on operas – the works performed were necessarily decided in light of the engagement of particular singers – can be considered an essential characteristic of London’s Italian opera audiences.

However, Hall-Witt – analogously with Müller, who bases his argument on the operas of Wagner – identifies a shift in London, beginning in the 1840s, towards a mode of reception based on individual works, based on the following factors: first, she states that the singers’ influence on the specific works performed became less and less significant, so that a relatively

⁷⁸ Hanslick, ‘Musikalisches aus London: IV. Die Oper’, p. 118. Similarly, Ferdinand Hiller made the following remarks on London opera audiences’ lack of understanding of Italian: ‘Die Opern aller möglichen Nationen und Schulen werden aber mit dem bekannten Erfolge den Engländern auf italienisch vorgeführt. Das Verständnis der Worte mangelt daher dem großen Publicum gänzlich, und die Uebersetzungen in den Textbüchern können diesem Mangel in dessen dramatischen Werken doch nur aufs ungenügende nachhelfen’ (Hiller, *Die Musik und das Publikum: Vortrag gehalten zu Gunsten der Veteranen in Köln* (Cologne: Du Mont-Schauberg, 1864), pp. 21–22). The question of translated humour is considered in more detail in my discussion of *La prova di un’opera seria* in Chapter 6.

⁷⁹ See, for example, the anonymous *Viaggio a Londra* (Bologna, 1837), p. 197. The audiences’ fixation on singers can also be seen in the opera houses’ advertisements in the *Musical World*, in which the singers’ names are usually listed first and made prominent through layout and typeface.

consistent repertoire of operas could develop, and the practice of inserting arias from outside a given opera became standardised.⁸⁰ In Hall-Witt's view, despite the unconventional performances of operas in London, there was increasing interest in operas as works, rather than as vehicles for singers' performances: 'What these examples of performance practice suggest is that opera production in London became more work oriented without operas necessarily being performed exactly as written in the original score and libretto'.⁸¹

In light of singers' contracts of the time, though, it becomes clear that singers maintained significant bargaining power in relation to managers. Indirectly, they were still able to determine which works were performed. The engagement of new artists happened almost exclusively via Paris, and it was standard practice that singers who had been engaged in London would bring with them from Paris works that had already been produced there; thus the available singers, and not the London opera managers, determined the programmes.⁸² As for the development of an operatic standard repertoire in the second half of the nineteenth century, this was solely a consequence of the lack of 'new' compositions. The operas of Verdi only gradually gained popularity in London from the 1850s onwards, and the works of Donizetti, Rossini and Bellini already had a firm place in the programmes of the London opera houses. Italian adaptations of the operas of Meyerbeer or Auber were also slow to find a footing in London programming choices, but did establish themselves later. Clearly, then, there was a stabilisation of the repertoire; but this development had obvious origins in the history of musical composition, and is not solely attributable to the ability of opera managers to determine their theatres' programmes.

Hall-Witt then argues, on the basis of aristocratic opera-goers' diary entries, that audiences began to listen more deliberately to operatic works, so that works gradually gained significance; the event-based nature of opera in the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries seemed no longer to prevail, because reports of conversations during performances become increasingly rare. But Hall-Witt does not fully acknowledge the consequences of diaries' extremely subjective nature, or of their writers' tendency to present themselves in a positive light.⁸³ One suspects that these entries were heavily influenced by the views expressed in the

⁸⁰ Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, pp. 248–264.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 251. Here Hall-Witt draws on Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry'. I consider London performance practices in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁸² For a detailed analysis of this practice see Chapter 5. The following description of singers' cliques and their influence on productions appeared in the *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung*: 'Und wie tyrannisiren die Sänger die Unternehmer! Mario findet, dass der Johann im Propheten ihm unbequem wird, und singt ihn nicht mehr; die Grisi macht es ebenso mit der Fides, u. dgl. mehr' (*Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 1 (1853), p. 95).

⁸³ Hall-Witt does mention these issues, but nevertheless uses these sources as the basis of her argument about the development of a work-oriented mode of reception.

London press, which did indeed propagate a work-based aesthetic. It would not do to show oneself up as a ‘musical amateur’ by displaying an obvious lack of knowledge. For foreign visitors to Italian opera in London, audiences there appeared lacking in musical knowledge and easily influenced by publicly-disseminated opinion:

In den Londoner Theatern ist das Publikum mit dem Beifall weit karger, als in den festländischen, und sind hiervon nur die Darstellungen der Italienischen Opern ausgenommen. Bei diesen wird klar, wer denn der eigentliche Herr in England ist; es ist, bis jetzt, die – Presse. Fast ist es komisch zu sehen, wie sich das Londoner Publikum, welches sich bei der Darstellung Englischer Stücke sein Recht zu urtheilen schon selbst wahrt, in Betreff der Italienischen Opern=Aufführungen so gänzlich der Führung der Presse, vorzüglich der Times, unterwirft. Hat ein bekannter Berichterstatter, wie Herr Orenford von der Times, eine Sängerin wegen einer bestimmten Note herausgestrichen, so bricht der Beifall bei dieser bestimmten Note immer wieder los, und zwar mit stets wachsender Macht, sobald die Oper zur Aufführung kommt. Er ist, mit einem Worte, Mode geworden.⁸⁴

Hall-Witt conjectures, moreover, that from the mid-century onwards opera houses began to dim the lights in the auditorium, so that it was no longer possible to observe other audience members or to follow the libretto. But her evidence for this possible change is sparse.⁸⁵ In fact, it is highly unlikely that 1860s London audiences watched opera from a darkened auditorium. Precisely because a majority of the audience did not understand Italian – as Hanslick complained in the 1860s – it was necessary to follow the libretto. In a darkened auditorium this would have been impossible, and the opera being performed would have been incomprehensible. In this context, Hall-Witt also discusses the indications of ‘highlights’ that can be found in some libretti. These, she says, clearly indicate a work-oriented mode of reception and suggest that opera was no longer understood to be centred on one-off events. In fact, it is more plausible to draw the opposite conclusion. The audience apparently knew so little about the operas that they needed an introduction in order to recognised the reputed highlights at all. This becomes clear when one examines the type of indications in question,

⁸⁴ Julius Faucher, *Vergleichende Culturbilder aus den vier europäischen Millionenstädten Berlin, Wien, Paris, London* (Hannover: C. Rümpler, 1877), pp. 425–426. Even Italian visitors to the King’s Theatre mentioned audiences’ lack of musical knowledge: ‘Agli spettacoli in musica d’italiano è tutto orecchi, e l’inglese è tutt’occhi: l’italiano applaude alla cabaletta, al trillo, alla volata; L’inglese manda un *bravo* frenetico alla mossa tragica, alla cadenza vibrata, agli empiti di voce che mettono un palpito in cuore: la musica par l’inglese dev’esser un gemito ed un fremito’ (Anon., *Viaggio a Londra*, p. 199).

⁸⁵ Hall-Witt supports the possibility of a darkened auditorium only with a description by Théophile Gautier, originally written in 1842. But she does not mention that the low lights in this case were simply intended to enhance the special effects of the ballet: ‘Les loges sont garnies de rideaux de damas rouge qui les rendent un peu sombres; la salle elle-même n’est pas très-éclairée; toute la masse de lumière est réservée pour la scène. Cette disposition et la puissance des rampes de gaz permettent d’exécuter des effets vraiment magiques. Le lever de soleil qui termine le ballet de *Giselle* produit une illusion complète’. Gautier, ‘Une journée à Londres’, in Gautier, *Caprices et Zigzags*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1856), p. 171 (the essay was originally published in *Revue des deux mondes* 2 (1842), pp. 49–67).

which mostly refer to arias with prominent singers, or especially striking chorus scenes. These documents, then, announced to their readers the arias that one should know and the points at which one should give one's undivided attention to the events on stage.⁸⁶ They do not suggest an orientation towards operas as works. In order to grasp an opera as a whole, it would be necessary to follow its entire dramatic structure – and concentration on the work's proclaimed highlights did not enable this form of reception. In this light, it seems unlikely that London opera audiences shifted in their mode of reception during the nineteenth century from a purely event-centred aesthetic to a more serious, work-oriented attitude. Rather, the guides to operas' highlights suggest that audience members could attempt to improve the status of the persona they projected by demonstrating some superficial musical knowledge.

In summary, then, it can be argued that London's Italian opera audiences in the nineteenth century came mostly from aristocratic circles, and that opera served as a social status symbol. What opera symbolised differed significantly between Her Majesty's Theatre and the Royal Italian Opera: at Her Majesty's, simply displaying one's elite social status was paramount, whereas there was a more intellectual aspect to the type of persona that audience members at the Royal Italian Opera aimed to embody – and this was used consciously as a mark of differentiation from the audience at Her Majesty's. Furthermore, the affinity for the 'Italian' opera, and the need to engage star singers, were products of the prevailing 'fashion', which was supported by the audiences' almost complete lack of knowledge of Italian. Through the precarious financial situation of the London opera industry, precisely this audience group acquired great bargaining power, which affected all aspects of the industry, but especially the engagement of singers. Star singers were an absolute necessity and the crux of the system. In order to investigate London's operatic life, it is thus insufficient simply to determine which social groups went to the opera; rather, the implications that these groups had for the opera

⁸⁶ It is important to bear in mind that reviews in the press would consider individual arias, which one would need to know by name in order to avoid a public faux pas. Libretti from both the Royal Italian Opera and Her Majesty's indicated highlights in this way. One example from Her Majesty's is an 1843 libretto for Rossini's *Semiramide*. The libretto's 'note' on the opera's highlights makes clear the audience's lack of knowledge of the work: 'Rossini having fallen out with the Venetians, endeavoured to make his peace by calling his talents into action in the Opera of *Semiramide*, which was for the first time performed at the theatre *Della Venice*, in which a part was sung by Galli. A passage in the Overture tending much to conciliate the audience, and obliterate the former unfavourable impressions, and this feeling was strengthened by the air of Arsaces, which is full of beauty and sweetness. The next piece that called forth applause was the Duet between Semiramide and Arsaces, besides which an air of Assur, and a terzetto were received with tumultuous applause. The Opera obtained an enthusiastic success at Vienna, where it is continually performed, and it is a popular piece on the principal stages of Italy, and throughout Europe. Rossini was called for at the end of the Second Act, and came forward with a humble obeisance to receive his token of reconciliation. Critics speak highly of the movement with chorus, that forms the Finale of the First Act. This Opera combines most happily the easy, flowing, and expressive melodies of Italy, with the severer beauties, and the grander accompaniments of the German school' [BL, Gen. Ref. Northcott 216].

houses' management must also be considered. It is therefore essential to consider the available sources in light of as much contextual detail as possible, in order to avoid misinterpreting them. For this reason, the characterisation of London's Italian opera audiences undertaken in this chapter also forms the basis for the subsequent chapters of this study, which engage first with singers' working lives in general, and then with the practices surrounding contracts, and the insertion of arias and adaptation of operas for the London stages.

4 The Singers

The performances in London's Italian opera houses in the mid-nineteenth century were determined by the engagement of Italian singers; opera managers found these singers by travelling to the musical capitals of the continent, above all Milan and Paris, and engaged the most highly renowned performers to sing in London.¹ The orientation towards Italy – in terms of the works performed, and above all in terms of the singers engaged – had a long tradition in London and in England generally. English trade relations with northern Italy in the cotton industry dated back centuries; in the nineteenth century the northern Italian ports became increasingly busy trading centres, which intensified the economic relations between the two countries. On the basis of what was initially an economic relationship with two relatively equal parties, a brisk tourist industry developed: Italy attracted wealthy English visitors because of its natural beauty and rich culture.² Naturally, visits to the opera were *de rigueur* for English tourists in Italy, who therefore became familiar with the operatic works and singers of contemporary Italy, and correspondingly wanted to import works and singers to London. Over the centuries, this desire fostered a practice of international importation of opera; supported by the technological developments of the nineteenth century, this practice shaped English operatic life fundamentally.

Italian opera thus acquired a high level of prestige in the English capital: one did not go to the opera to hear a particular work, but rather to be part of an exclusive group, or to see and hear this or that famous singer.³ In the Theatre Royal Drury Lane (where opera was performed in English), by contrast with the city's Italian opera houses, these questions of persona and prestige were less important. This difference in status of the various opera houses is also noticeable in singers' engagements. Star singers from the continent committed themselves to the Italian opera first, and only later (if at all) performed at the English opera too.⁴

Throughout the nineteenth century, then, the singers, serving as audience magnets, formed the basis of London's opera industry, as can be seen from the following comparison between opera houses in Italy and in England:

La sola differenza sta in ciò che nei teatri d'Italia si tollerano talvolta anche gli artisti mediocri, e sul real teatro di Londra non so vogliono che i più distinti. Questa scelta non è propriamente voluta dal buon gusto

¹ The relationship between London and Paris was particularly intensive (see my discussion of Laporte's contracts in Chapter 5).

² See Zechner, '...And the English buy it', pp. 51–52.

³ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, and my Chapter 3, 'London Audiences'.

⁴ See also my discussion in Chapter 5.3.

del paese, ma dall'ambizione che ivi si ha di voler far conoscere che si è in caso di pagare i cantanti meglio di tutti gli altri, e vogliansi perciò fame europee. [...] L'orgoglio britannico vuole avere questa soddisfazione di crederci destinato a confermare per ultimo giudicato la celebrità de' buoni cantanti, ed è per questo che gli paga generosamente.⁵

Because of the privately-funded nature of operatic life in London – which was not subsidised by the government or the monarch – the aforementioned orientation towards singers gave the singers significant bargaining power, which affected all aspects of the opera industry. Firstly, singers and their agents were very well aware that the whole system depended on the engagement of the 'stars', which of course meant that London fees could be exorbitant. Hence Italian opera in London became a hugely lucrative undertaking for many singers.

Especially for the London opera managers, this brought about a situation where a whole range of factors exerted immense pressure: the need to satisfy the public's desire for star singers conflicted with the need to run the opera house in a financially sensible way. The latter could be rendered nearly impossible by singers' demands for high fees. A particular difficulty was that, although there were contracts between opera managers and singers, if a singer broke their contract it was extremely difficult for a manager to recoup the resulting loss, as the following comments from the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikzeitung* illustrate:

Der Direktor hat gut reden, dass er seine Einnahme verliert, die Sängerin ist unerbittlich. Freilich, ihr Kontrakt verpflichtet sie, jede ihr zukommende Rolle bei 20000 Thlr. Strafe zu übernehmen. Der Direktor kann klagbar gemacht werden, und es leidet kein Bedenken, dass er nach Verlauf eines Jahres den Prozess gewonnen haben wird. Aber von dem Moment an, wo er die Klage einreicht, wird das Engagement gebrochen, die Sängerin tritt nicht mehr auf, die Subscribenten, welche nur unterzeichnet haben, um *sie* zu hören, brechen dem Direktor den Stab, das Haus steht leer, der wackere Mann ist ruiniert, und wenn er das Urteil [sic!] in Händen hat, sitzt die Dame, die ihn gestürzt in Neapel oder Madrid.⁶

The influence of London singers extended beyond the economic dimension described here, however. They not only determined the fees and details of their engagement, but also had considerable influence on repertoire programming. New works entered an opera house's repertoire when new contracts were signed with singers: a contract might mention a specific work, or the acquisition of the work might be implicit, in the case of roles a singer had already performed successfully.⁷ But as well as these official means, a prima donna's real or fictional illness could necessitate last-minute programme changes: audiences were not willing to listen to a different, perhaps unknown prima donna instead of the one who had been advertised in

⁵ Anon., *Viaggio a Londra*, pp. 197–198.

⁶ *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 6/44 (1829), pp. 349–350.

⁷ See also Chapter 5.

the role.⁸ The practice of engaging understudies was common elsewhere, but not in London, as Willert Beale described:

The comprimaria, or understudy, although included in every Italian Opera Company, is rarely required in this country. If the prima donna be prevented singing, a change of opera takes place as it is supposed an English audience would not be satisfied to listen to a deputy of the leading artiste they had paid to hear. In Italy, where the same opera is given several times in succession, the comprimaria is a necessity.⁹

In some cases, fully-fledged cults developed around individual singers, and many industries took advantage of this situation for profit. Perhaps the most prominent example is that of the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, who caused enormous excitement, which among other things enabled merchandising opportunities:

[...] ‘the Jenny Lind fever,’ as some of the more vulgar organs of The Press affected to call it, extended to the remotest corner of the Kingdom. Portraits of ‘The Swedish Nightingale’ were sold on snuff-boxes, on match-boxes, on bon-bon boxes, on tea-boards, and even on pocket-handkerchiefs. Horses, and dogs, and cats, and singing birds, were named after her; and little children, in the simplicity of their hearts, gave the popular title to the creatures that were dearest to them in the world.¹⁰

Especially popular in this context were porcelain figures depicting singers in their classic roles, and here this cult-like following was not limited to *prime donne*. The bass Luigi Lablache, who was extremely popular in London, was available immortalised in hand-painted porcelain as Figaro, Dulcamara or Falstaff, alongside Jenny Lind and Giuditta Pasta.¹¹ A further sign of the kind of collection culture typical of London are the numerous iconographic representations of the singers of the Italian opera; these consisted not only of simple portraits, but often represented the singers in the dramatic context of a particular role.¹² Strong associations between roles and particular singers often developed, and the roles and scenery depicted in illustrations of singers are a significant source for uncovering these associations.

This celebrity culture surrounding the Italian stars of London’s operatic life also meant that many singers became sought after socially, and therefore built up good contacts to the social elites and even to the royal family. In elite social circles, it was a mark of good taste to organise private concerts involving the stars of the Italian opera stages, or to take singing lessons with a renowned star. Particularly the Italian singers, most of whom spoke only

⁸ See also Chapter 2.

⁹ Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, pp. 67–68.

¹⁰ Holland and Rockstro (eds.), *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, p. 81.

¹¹ See Cheer, *The Great Lablache*, pp. 159, 174.

¹² See Marvin, ‘*Idealizing the Prima Donna in Mid-Victorian London*’, in Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 21–41.

broken English, were well-connected among themselves, prompting Félix Remo to remark that Italians in London

form among themselves [...] a kind of implied freemasonry. They freely assist each other, and each and all help to push one another forward in the world. [...] They possess agreeable manners, and their conversation has an original flavor about it which is attractive. They have not only known how to conquer for themselves a high place in English society, where they are well received, but they know what means to adopt to maintain their place there.¹³

Once again here, the Italian language is considered attractive and therefore fashionable, which is a further indication of the London opera audience's fondness for Italy. Many singers also used their role in English society to help other musicians gain a foothold as music teachers – which could be a highly lucrative profession once a teacher was well-established. For example, a young composer by the name of Stanzieri was introduced by Grisi and Mario as a possible singing teacher for Lord William Ward (1817–1885), the First Earl of Dudley, who was a patron to London's art scene and purchased Her Majesty's Theatre in 1856. Similarly Maria Malibran enabled Julius Benedict, a native of Germany, to establish a stable footing for the long term in London's musical life.¹⁴

In view of the aspects of singers' lives in nineteenth-century London outlined here, it can be seen that Italian opera singers were of great importance not only to the opera industry but also to London society more generally. In an operatic world where 'Italianness' in all its manifestations commanded high prestige, and even counted as synonymous with quality regardless of actual vocal performance, it was especially difficult throughout the nineteenth century for English singers to hold their ground on the Italian stage. As this chapter aims to demonstrate, this situation was not solely a result of the singers' inadequate abilities.

4.1 British and Irish singers and Italian opera: A search for identity

The prestige of the London opera houses was based principally on the singers engaged there, most of whom already had track records of excellent performances on the continent. As the example of Jenny Lind shows, it was rarely possible for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane to engage internationally renowned singers for their London debut or even for a subsequent

¹³ Félix Remo, *Music in the Land of Fogs*, pp. 142–143. The tenor Mario never managed to learn English, although he lived in England for many years. Even learning songs in English was only possible for him with the help of an interpreter. See Cecilia Maria Godfrey Pearse, *The Romance of a Great Singer: A Memoir of Mario* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), pp. 195, 293.

¹⁴ Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, pp. 71–72.

commitment.¹⁵ The effects on the theatre's prestige in public opinion are clear; the Theatre Royal Drury Lane's position in the theatrical hierarchy, as well as its 'English repertoire', meant that more English singers performed there, while the singers at the Italian opera houses were mostly of Italian origin, or else international 'Italian' stars.¹⁶ Whilst examples of English singers who performed at the Italian opera did appear, scattered throughout the nineteenth century, these are exceptions to the general trend.

The absence of English singers from the Italian stages was probably largely a result of English audiences' prejudices against English singers who sang in Italian. Although in many cases an audience would have only a rudimentary knowledge of Italian, prevailing opinion dictated that sung Italian must not be marred by any kind of foreign accent, least of all an English one. The music critic Henry Fothergill Chorley expressed the matter in a nutshell as follows:

Indeed, whatever be his, or her, endowments, it must be always an ill chance for a home artist to sing in a foreign language on the stage in England. We are curiously bad linguists ourselves [...] but, before the curtain, we cannot endure bad language in those who amuse us.¹⁷

The following description by Benjamin Lumley reads similarly; in Lumley's view, the resentment of his audience was not directed solely at English singers:

[...] It should be mentioned that a considerable portion of the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre only admitted at this period, as acceptable on its boards, the Italian school, *pur et simple*, and looked with coldness and mistrust on any names, however accredited, which revealed a French, a German, or, still worse, an English origin.¹⁸

This indication of low regard for French or German singers notwithstanding, English origins seem to have represented a particularly strong drawback for singers' chances of a career in Italian opera in London until well beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. From the 1850s onwards, increasing numbers of singers of various nationalities began to celebrate great success on the two Italian opera stages, but this did not seem to trouble London audiences

¹⁵ Alfred Bunn's attempts to engage Lind failed largely because of the theatre's lack of prestige and for financial reasons (see Chapter 5.3). The exception to this inability of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane to secure international debuts was its brief engagement of Maria Malibran in the early 1830s (see Chapter 2).

¹⁶ More important than national origins was to have succeeded on operatic stages in Italy, which granted one the status of an 'Italian' singer regardless of actual nationality. Examples of this are the careers of Henriette Sontag, Sofia Cruvelli, Jenny Lind and Therese Tietjens.

¹⁷ Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, pp. 242–243.

¹⁸ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 88.

significantly. Although individual voices loudly lamented the lack of Italian singers, this did not stop the excitement over non-Italian singers.¹⁹

That ‘Italian’ meant not only a national language, but also something fashionable and a specific vocal quality to London opera audiences of the time, was also evident in singing teaching, which was given mainly by Italian teachers:

A professor of singing who estimates himself at his true worth ought assuredly to call himself ‘Signor.’ That is the reason why we see so many signori springing up around us who, as a rule, know as much about singing as the German governesses know about music. Indeed, the trick of the profession consists not in being a professor, but being an Italian.²⁰

As Remo shows, whether these ‘Signori’ had sound musical knowledge was often insignificant; the Italian title ‘Signor’ legitimated employment as a music teacher. For many members of the English aristocracy, taking singing lessons with an Italian teacher brought important prestige. The most prominent example of this trend was Queen Victoria herself, who for many years took lessons with the renowned bass Luigi Lablache.²¹ Precisely the abundance of Italian singing teachers demonstrates the huge prestige associated with Italian opera and the singers connected to it.

English singers’ involvement in Italian opera did not only agitate the musically uneducated audience; it also preoccupied English composers, such as George Alexander Macfarren, who – not entirely without self-interest – penned an essay about the bad influence of the Italian in music.²² He began by complaining – as opera audiences did – about non-Italian singers appearing in Italian opera, because of what he considered their inability to reach the level of linguistic perfection that native Italians could. This situation, he argued, greatly endangered the expressive content of the music. He further criticised the widespread teaching of English singers by Italian teachers:

To judge from the practice of [...] nearly all the private singers who study under the best esteemed Italian teachers, it would be fair and right to denounce the Italian language as eminently, nay, pre-eminently bad for

¹⁹ Examples include the hype surrounding Jenny Lind, Johanna Wagner or Pauline Viardot-García.

²⁰ Remo, *Music in the Land of Fogs*, p. 49. On Italianate vocal qualities, see Susan Rutherford, ‘“Bel canto” and cultural exchange: Italian vocal techniques in London 1790–1825’, in Roland Pfeiffer und Christoph Flamm (eds.), *Umbruchzeiten in der italienischen Musikgeschichte. Deutsch-italienische Round-Table-Gespräche*, *Analecta musicologica* 50 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2013), pp. 133–146.

²¹ See Cheer, *The Great Lablache*, p. 217.

²² George Alexander Macfarren, ‘The Italian Language: Its Evil Influence upon Music’, *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 14 (1869), pp. 7–10.

music; and this because it appears to induce a habit of false musical phrasing, and of violating one of the most obvious and simple laws of musical expression.²³

For Macfarren, the Italian language had a direct influence on music, and held potential dangers, damaging compositions and preventing composers' intentions from being fulfilled. Incorrect articulation and emphasis in Italian by non-Italian singers, he believed, distorted an opera's meaning. He considered this effect to be all the stronger because singers performing in a foreign language were unable to reach the same intensity of expression of which they would be capable in their native language. A more national orientation of the opera industry seemed to Macfarren the logical solution. English singers should appear only in English operas and other works in English, such as oratorios, and leave Italian opera to the Italians to whom it belonged:

The vocation of English singers is, in the highest rank, to sing oratorios, which are always in English, and, in the successive lower grades, to sing translated foreign or original compositions. The study of Italian songs does nothing whatever to fit them for this vocation by enabling them to pronounce the words, or to interpret the music of these works, from the grandest to the lightest, from the oratorio to the ballad. Nobody whatever wants to hear Italian songs from the lips of English singers, or cares for them in any respect but as vehicles for the exhibition of foreign celebrities who are engaged from year to year at our opera houses.²⁴

As can be seen in this quotation, Macfarren is not entirely consistent in his nationalism. He considered the translation of operas into English to be legitimate; he seems unconcerned by the possibility that a translation might effect the kind of distortion of an opera that he initially criticises so sharply.

If we compare Macfarren's view to those of London opera-goers more generally, his opinion about English opera singers on the Italian stage emerges as more radical than that of the prejudiced London audiences. All the same, audiences continued to accept continental stars – and not only Italians – and to integrate them into London's musical culture. There is certainly an element of nationalism in Macfarren's argument, understandably in view of his position as an English composer in an Italian-dominated system. Here it is also worth bearing in mind that his compositions were mostly performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.²⁵ In view of the lower level of prestige of this theatre, Macfarren's remarks certainly include an element of self-interest. Also significant is his involvement in the widespread practice of adapting operas for the English stage.²⁶ In this light, his illogical argument about the

²³ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁵ See Henry Banister, *George Alexander Macfarren: His Life, Works, and Influence* (London: Bell, 1891).

²⁶ See, for example, *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine* 10 (1841), pp. 280–281.

translation of operas makes more sense. Nevertheless, it is interesting that negative opinions of English singers in Italian operas prevailed in both musically trained and less knowledgeable groups. Although the two groups had different motives, their end goal was the same.

Despite this universally negative attitude, individual engagements of English singers in Italian opera houses did occur. In order to examine this development more fully, and relatedly to investigate the possibility of a national musical identity, in the following section I examine closely the careers of four singers: Catherine Hayes, Rita Favanti, Louisa Pyne and Sims Reeves (although Hayes hailed from Limerick, in Ireland, these singers have in common that their first language was English). These anglophone singers have been selected on the basis that they were all successful in London's Italian opera houses in the mid-nineteenth century, allowing for ease of comparison across their careers.

Catherine Hayes, born in 1825 in Limerick, set out on the usual training path for singers: singing lessons with an Italian teacher, in her case Antonio Sapio.²⁷ While still studying with him, she enjoyed some success in concerts in Dublin, before going to Paris to study with Manuel García. García was among the nineteenth century's best-renowned and most prominent singing teachers. Studying with him was more or less essential for anyone aiming at a singing career. The list of his prominent students included, for example, Jenny Lind and Christine Nilsson. After only eighteen months with García, Hayes moved to Italy on his recommendation to study with Felice Ronconi – also an extremely well-known teacher, and brother of the baritone Giorgio Ronconi. There is no doubt that such a cluster of prominent teachers benefited all aspects of Hayes's career. Her debut as Elvira in Bellini's *I puritani* in Marseille in 1845 was highly acclaimed, opening her way to the principal stages of France (directly from Marseille she was taken on in Paris) and Italy. Her debut at La Scala in Milan, also in 1845, was followed by many more successes internationally; she began to establish herself on the continent as a prima donna. The next logical step would be a debut at the Italian opera in London, which came in April 1849, in Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* at the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden.²⁸

²⁷ See *Memoir of Miss Catherine Hayes: "The Swan of Erin"* (London: Cramer, 1852), p. 2, and 'Hayes, Catherine', in Karl-Josef Kutsch und Leo Riemens (eds.), *Großes Sängerlexikon*, vol. 1 (Bern: Saur, 1993), column 1259.

²⁸ See Ellen Creathorne Clayton, *Queens of Song* (New York: Harper, 1865), pp. 274–283. Hayes's debut at La Scala in Milan was also in *Linda di Chamounix*, so it was unsurprising that she also performed in this work in London (see *Memoir of Miss Catherine Hayes*, p. 11).

Hayes's career provides a typical example of how singers' engagements worked in London. Singers needed to have prior success in Paris and Milan – these two stages were particularly carefully scrutinised by London opera managers, who travelled there on recruitment visits on a regular basis.²⁹

Hayes's debut at the Royal Italian Opera went very well, according to the newspaper critics of the time. Against expectations – given her origins and the prevailing prejudices of London audiences – there were no complaints of a non-Italian accent or any other weaknesses in her singing; quite the opposite. The reviewer in *The Times*, rather than seeing prejudices confirmed, praised above all her flawless vocal technique and style:

Miss Hayes's style of singing is artistic and graceful; she never forces her voice, but has abundance of energy at command, which she uses legitimately, and without any tendency to exaggeration. In the first scene the uproarious welcome she received from the attendance appeared to overcome her altogether, and it was not till near the end of the well-known *cavatina*, 'O luce di quest' anima', that she entirely recovered her presence of mind; here, however, an elegant *cadenza*, introducing a clever and well-executed shake, gained her great applause and an *encore*, which restored her to confidence, and enabled her to repeat the *cabaletta* with double effect. Her next hit was in the duet with Carlo, 'Salvi', in which first occurs the pretty melody so frequently employed in the opera, 'A consolarmi affrettisti'; this was given so effectively by both singers, that it was unanimously redemanded. In the grand scene with Antonio (Linda's father), Miss Hayes was excellent, and the mad scene that follows was sung with admirable effect, especially the well-known *bravura* passage, 'Non è ver', where her execution of the chromatic passages was perfect, and the ascending trait with the violins, at the end, was accomplished with remarkable decision and brilliancy. In this, as well as in the last scene, Miss Hayes gave evidence of a great deal of dramatic feeling, and a thorough familiarity with stage effect. Nothing could be warmer or more unanimous than her reception by the audience, who applauded her enthusiastically, and recalled her before the foot-lights after every act.³⁰

Chorley's remarks, meanwhile, contradicted the predominantly effusive tone of most other commentators:

It was less singular that Miss Catharine Hayes – who for a while had been a leading favourite at *La Scala* in Milan, and aspired to the same position here – should be disappointed in her attempt. We had not, as yet, descended to the level at which one so irregularly cultivated as she proved herself to be, could appear a finished artist.³¹

Clearly, in Chorley's case, a generally negative attitude towards anglophone singers in Italian opera prevailed, so that in his opinion – although the press cuttings suggest the reality was different – it was a foregone conclusion that Hayes would disappoint. We can therefore

²⁹ See, for example, Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 204.

³⁰ *Times*, reproduced in *Dublin University Magazine* 36 (1850), p. 592.

³¹ Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 89.

surmise that Chorley's ideological attitude on the subject of anglophone singers in Italian opera was similar to Macfarren's.

In light of the frequently-expressed conservative attitudes of London audiences, it is interesting that Hayes's London debut was so positively received. The location of her debut – the Royal Italian Opera – may have played a role here. With this theatre's opening as an opera house in 1847, it became a direct rival for the renowned Her Majesty's Theatre, intensifying the level of competition in the opera world in London.³² It was therefore necessary for the two houses to differentiate themselves from each other. Her Majesty's remained loyal to its repertoire of Italian opera and ballet and tried to strengthen its tradition as a prestigious theatre, and the audience's interest there was directed more towards the *prime donne* than the operatic works. By contrast, the Royal Italian Opera committed itself to what was at least ostensibly a work-based approach: the works performed, rather than the singers, were supposed to be the centre of attention.³³

In this light it seems unsurprising that Hayes made her debut at the Royal Italian Opera and not at Her Majesty's. She did not perform at the latter theatre until a year later, when she and the English tenor Sims Reeves appeared together in *Lucia di Lammermoor* on 2 April 1850. Hayes sang Lucia and Reeves Edgardo – that is, the two leading roles were played by anglophone singers. One could speculate that this combination was chosen deliberately, in order to avoid an obvious opposition between one English singer and one Italian, which might have strengthened the audience's prejudices. Lumley described the performance as a success, although without the effusive enthusiasm that characterises many descriptions of this type in his memoirs. Also, in his brief description of Hayes's debut at his theatre, Lumley limits himself to visual impressions and the audience's reactions; he seems not to have been interested in detailed musical analysis of the sort that appeared in *The Times*.³⁴ The brief review in the *Musical World* simply mentions the sensational occurrence of two English singers appearing on the Italian opera stage:

Miss Catherine Hayes made her first appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre on the Tuesday after Easter in Lucia di Lammermoor, Mr. Sims Reeves playing Edgardo. This was a highly interesting performance. The fact of two English artists performing the two leading characters in an Italian opera at an Italian opera house

³² See Robert Hume and Arthur Jacobs, 'London', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol. 3 (London, 1992), p. 22.

³³ See also my Chapters 2 and 3.

³⁴ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 273.

was, perhaps, unprecedented. Miss Catherine Hayes was received with the utmost favour. Mr. Sims Reeves awakened all the old enthusiasm which has so often been conferred on his best part.³⁵

A detailed description in the *Literary Gazette* also declines to report an unqualified success: Hayes is praised for her vocal abilities, drawing above all on her successes at the Royal Italian Opera the previous year, but the only element that seems to have really impressed the critics and audience is her dramatic account of the mad scene.³⁶

Significantly, Hayes did not perform in London's Italian opera houses again; she continued to enjoy great success on concert stages in London, and undertook highly acclaimed and lucrative international tours, including to New York and Sydney.³⁷

By contrast with Catherine Hayes, very little is known about the life of Rita Favanti. She studied first at the Royal Academy of Music and then in Italy, where she enjoyed success as a prima donna above all in Naples, which (as for Hayes) formed the prerequisite for a debut on London's Italian opera stages.³⁸

Although her name immediately suggests Italian origins, Rita Favanti was neither an Englishwoman of Italian descent, nor married to an Italian (as was the case, for example, with Emma Albertazzi, *née* Howson). On the contrary, Favanti was born Rita Edwards, and probably took the Italian-sounding name for professional reasons. Apparently she wanted to improve her chances of a good reception at her debut, in view of London audiences' affection for all things Italian, by concealing her English origins. This behaviour is typical of the problematic situation in which English singers found themselves, although the concealment of national origins in this field also had a certain international tradition: for example, the German singer Johanne Sophie Charlotte Crüwell changed her name to Sofia Cruvelli, and enjoyed success under that name in London and elsewhere.³⁹ The singer and renowned singing teacher Mathilde Marchesi also advised her pupils to assume Italian names. Although Marchesi's aim was to improve non-Italian singers' chances on the Italian market – Antonietta Fricci's original surname was Fritzsche – the Italianised names she bestowed on her students were easily recognised by Italians as inauthentic. Marchesi liked to allude to a singer's place of origin in the names she created, with results such as Oselio (from Oslo), Toronta, Vilna and

³⁵ *Musical World* 25 (1851), p. 565.

³⁶ *Literary Gazette and Journal for the Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences &c.* (1850), p. 251.

³⁷ See Clayton, *Queens of Song*, pp. 294–96.

³⁸ See *Dwight's Journal of Music* 1 (1853), p. 151.

³⁹ 'Cruvelli, Sofia', in *Großes Sängerlexikon*, ed. by Karl-Josef Kutsch and Leo Riemens, vol. 1 (Bern, 1993), column 607.

Melba; in the case of these names, too, we can assume that their intended purpose was career advancement.⁴⁰

In Favanti's case, the concealment of her English origins from the public in London was not a huge success. Commentators were aware that she was English, and reacted to the potential deception with ambivalence:

'What's in a name?' says Shakespeare. We reply, 'every thing.' Favanti hath a sweet sound – it is far more musical than Edwards. But does it make *the sung* the sweeter, or would Rubini lose his voice, if a fortune were left to him on condition of his taking the name of **SMITH**? Alas! For fashion! Had the lady above mentioned married an Italian gentleman, we should not have been surprised to see her announced as Mdme. Favanti, just as Emma Howson was called Mdme. Albertazzi; but to see Mademoiselle Favanti in the place of Miss Edwards, (formerly, we believe of our Royal Academy) rather puzzles and perplexes us.⁴¹

Nevertheless, Favanti could boast of great success in Italy and was thus well-qualified to appear on the London stages, as the writer continued: 'Be this as it may, the lady is a vocalist of most extraordinary powers, and has had brilliant success in Italy. Her voice possesses prodigious volume and depth, and will have full scope to exhibit its powers in the part selected for her *débût*'.⁴²

Favanti's London debut was to take place at Her Majesty's Theatre, which was run by Benjamin Lumley at this time. Lumley, aware of his audience's prejudices against English singers, prepared for the event with a well-funded media campaign, in order to maximise his income. Before Favanti's debut, he spread rumours about the uniqueness and brilliance of a newly-discovered prima donna who had caused a stir in Italy in the title role of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* – this report was all over the newspapers. After this initial step, Lumley announced that he had managed to engaged this very same rising star for *La Cenerentola* in his own theatre. He thus made Favanti's debut the talk of the town, building it up to an unmissable event in London society. Henry Chorley vividly described the intensity of the marketing campaign:

The comedy began with a series of exciting and mysterious paragraphs, put forth in the morning papers. – A real treasure, said these, had been discovered at Naples – a young lady with an exceptional and splendid voice, boundless execution, and remarkable personal beauty, who was setting on fire the Capital of the Two Sicilies by her appearance in 'La Cenerentola'. – When one attestation of this kind after another had prepared the ways, next came hints that there were hopes of securing this *Phoenix* for England: - A few weeks later we were invited to rejoice that such hopes were certainties; [...] It was announced that Madame Pasta had

⁴⁰ See Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, pp. 193–94.

⁴¹ *Illustrated London News* 4 (1844), p. 189.

⁴² *Ibid.*

expressed the highest admiration of the coming young lady's talent. She was heralded [...] by an opera of preparation, with overture, chorus, orchestra, *solo singers*, dresses and decorations [...].⁴³

Lumley had thought of every possible way to ensure a fitting reception for Favanti, or rather to protect himself financially and fill the house. The expense of his campaign indicates the problematic situation in which Lumley found himself, and the possible negative consequences of which he was surely aware. The engagement of an English singer, particularly under a false name, involved a certain amount of risk, which was only increased by the effort to cover up her origins in the media. He had to consider the eventuality that audiences would not show up in huge numbers; in order to exclude this possibility and to make sure the debut – a singular event, after all – achieved its full financial potential, he launched the aforementioned media campaign. He could not know how successful the singer's subsequent performances would be; his only option was to make the most of the debut, which was to some extent a more predictable occasion, and indeed he ultimately managed to do this successfully.

According to Lumley, Her Majesty's was a completely full house, and Favanti enjoyed a highly acclaimed debut.⁴⁴ Chorley however, did not share the pronouncement of an effervescent success; in his account, Favanti lacked musicality and struggled with significant intonation difficulties, although he remarked that these went unnoticed by a large part of the audience, hence the general enthusiastic applause.⁴⁵ It is hardly surprising that the audience did not share Chorley's opinion; they were surely under the influence of the widespread media reports, and Favanti's delicate appearance probably also had its predictable effect on her positive reception. This indicates that a large part of the audience consisted of 'musical amateurs', who frequented the Italian opera chiefly because of its prestige value.⁴⁶ Apparently Favanti's debut was not an unqualified success musically, as the following review also shows:

On the 23d of March, 1844, she made her first appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre as *Cenerentola* [...] Her return, after an absence of eight years, was looked upon with interest, to ascertain if the defects of her style had been amended by considerable practice in Italy. In one respect a marked improvement has certainly taken place; the production of the voice is no longer attended with the same disagreeable effect, as in 1844. In point of execution something has also been gained in precision; but her imperfect intonation has not yet been remedied. [...] the organ of Mlle. Favanti ranges from the highest to the lowest of the soprano and contralto registers, and in quality it is infinitely more sympathetic. She fails because she has never thoroughly mastered

⁴³ Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, p. 245.

⁴⁴ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 86.

⁴⁵ Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, pp. 246–7.

⁴⁶ For more on this, see my Chapter 3.

her scales, and she labors to astonish not to charm. The music of the concerted pieces she sacrifices entirely; [...], her beautiful voice will not suffice to place her in the rank of a *prima donna*.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Favanti's career illustrates much about the mechanisms of the market for singers in London, and the implications of those mechanisms for the careers of English singers. To a greater extent than in the other musical metropolises of Europe, London's operatic system was based on targeted marketing, with prestige and status, rather than music, being the most important factors.

Alongside the examples of female singers already considered, there were, of course, also English men who tried their luck on London's Italian opera stages. The tenor Sims Reeves (1818–1900) was one of the most prominent English singers of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, even in his case we can see signs of the significant status differences between female and male singers: the *prima donna* had long been considered the main protagonist in the business of opera, attracting far higher fees and levels of prestige. Occasional male stars did exist, such as the tenors Rubini and Mario or the bass Lablache, but did not command the same status that a *prima donna* did.⁴⁹ Reeves lamented this unfortunate situation for tenors repeatedly and vehemently in his memoirs:

If, in spite of the increased favour with which opera is generally regarded, we possess few eminent basses, and can name no baritones, whose conflicting claims to supremacy would be likely to cause popular commotion, the case of the tenors is still more deplorable. [...] Their chief airs, their final scenes, are either omitted by the conductor, or, worse still, are neglected by the public. When, as they frequently do, [they] commit suicide on the stage, they die, if not in silence, at least in solitude. There was a time when playgoers would no more have quitted a representation of 'Lucia', without waiting for the dying strains of the hero, than it would now take its departure before the delirium of the heroine has set in.⁵⁰

These remarks by Reeves illustrate not only the position of the nineteenth-century tenor, but also the status audiences accorded to operatic works: apparently the dramatic function of an aria within an opera counted for little. Most important were the figure of the *prima donna*, her big aria and her specific performance of it. This phenomenon, which existed on all the European opera stages, found its strongest manifestation in London's Italian opera houses,

⁴⁷ *Dwight's Journal of Music* 1 (1853), p. 151.

⁴⁸ It is important to mention the similar prominence of Charles Santley, whose career path, including his training in Italy, closely paralleled that of Sims Reeves. See Santley, *Student and Singer: The Reminiscences of Charles Santley*, (New York and London: Macmillan, 1892).

⁴⁹ See Rosselli, *Singers of the Italian Opera*, pp. 176–195.

⁵⁰ Sims Reeves, *Sims Reeves: His Life and Recollections* (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1888), pp. 265–66.

intensified by the audience's prejudices. This was the difficult situation in which Reeves found himself.

Reeves's early career path was geographically similar to those of his female colleagues: he studied first in Paris with Marco Bordogni and then in Milan with Alberto Mazzucato – both renowned teachers. Because of this training, it was not long before he had his debut at La Scala in Milan, as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The following description of this debut is an important indication of how Reeves thought of himself as a singer: 'Thus proud to be called an English singer, it ought not to be forgotten that my first operatic triumph was gained in the Italian Opera, in the presence of an Italian audience at the first lyrical theatre in Italy'.⁵¹ Reeves's inflationary use of the adjective 'Italian' while simultaneously pointing to his English origins suggests that he thought it absolutely necessary to position himself as an Italian singer, and considered Italianness a criterion of quality important to a singer's success; these views corresponded to his contemporaries' perceptions of singers.

Following his La Scala appearance, Reeves had his London debut at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in the English version of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1847.⁵² That he appeared in London in the same piece and the same role in which he had succeeded in Milan was clearly part of the London theatre's marketing strategy. That is, an opera that had contributed to the successful debut of an English tenor in Milan could help to sell that singer to London audiences. This proved to be an important consideration:

The new tenor, Mr. Sims Reeves, achieved, and most deservedly achieved, the most unequivocal success we have witnessed on the English stage for a quarter of a century. [...] We have heard no voice out of Italy so decidedly Italian as Mr. Reeves's. It is Italian in character[,] in *timbre*; and there is the Italian feeling in his style. [...] Mr. Reeves's *debut* [...] was a great triumph.⁵³

Again, the Italianness of Reeves's style of singing is emphasised here, although the performance in question was of an English adaptation of *Lucia*, so that he surely could not fulfil the Italian ideal: the specifically Italian way of singing was based strongly on the Italian language, which (even in spoken form) has a song-like character because of its many vowel sounds. Performing a fairly literal translation of the opera's text thus made the Italian ideal much more difficult to achieve. This ideal, as is evident from the review in the *Musical World*, was nevertheless considered an irrefutable criterion of quality even for opera in English in this case – and even if perceptions of the ideal were in fact far removed from the Italian reality.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵² Ibid., p. 60.

⁵³ *Musical World* 22 (1847), p. 792.

The fact that Reeves's London debut, despite his success in Italy, took place at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and not at one of the renowned Italian opera houses, again illustrates English singers' lack of prestige in Italian opera. Only after his Drury Lane debut did Reeves then appear on London's Italian opera stages. In 1848 he played Carlo in *Linda di Chamounix*, and according to Benjamin Lumley, this went very well, despite Reeves's English origins.

Scarcely less noteworthy was the first appearance of the well-known English tenor, Mr. Sims Reeves, in the part of *Carlo* [...]. It was in those days a rare event for an English singer to venture upon the boards of the Anglo-Italian stage; and the force of fashion and prejudice made the venture one of unusual difficulty. But with his advantages of Italian training and style, Mr. Sims Reeves was entitled to be fairly considered as an Italian singer.⁵⁴

Following this, however, there was a scandal between Lumley and Reeves that would significantly influence Reeves's future career at Her Majesty's Theatre: he pulled out of the planned repeat performances of *Linda di Chamounix* on the basis of contractual issues. Reeves complained that before entering into the engagement, he had been promised not only the part of Carlo, but also that of Edgardo in *Lucia*, among others. Because the management did not keep this promise, Reeves declined to reappear in *Linda*. According to Lumley, the demonstrations that had been announced by Reeves's followers had little success – probably because Lumley had engaged the popular Italian tenor Gardoni for the role of Edgardo.⁵⁵

As we can see from this example, musical quality was a secondary consideration for the majority of the Italian opera audience. Had Gardoni been placed in a similar situation by the management, there probably would have been uproar from audience members, causing considerable difficulties for the management. In the case of an English singer who in any case faced significant prejudice, the risk for the management was lower.

A year after his debut at Her Majesty's, Reeves finally succeeded at the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden as Elvino in Bellini's *La sonnambula*. This was a particularly important role: as Reeves described in his memoirs, the opera was one of the most popular in England and was performed very frequently, both in the original Italian and adapted into English.⁵⁶ Reeves declared himself against translation into English, however, believing that the dramatic expression was entirely lost, for example in the tenor aria 'Tutto è sciolto': '[...] and here the

⁵⁴ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 223.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 223–4.

⁵⁶ Reeves, *His Life and Recollections*, p. 161.

words so expressive in the Italian are absolutely without expression – or, indeed, express what neither the composer nor the librettist intended – in the English version’.⁵⁷

He also criticised translation’s implications on singing style, with reference to Thomas Lamb Phipson’s essay on *La sonnambula*.⁵⁸ Phipson describes the differences between the two languages through the example of the tenor aria ‘Ah! Perchè non posso odiarti’ – in the English translation ‘Ah! Why can I not hate thee’. In the Italian version of the aria, explained Phipson, the tenor would normally crescendo on the ‘a’ vowel in the word ‘odiarti’ and sing in chest voice, conveying hatred. In the English version, by contrast, this passage appears as ‘still so gently o’er me stealing’: the vowel sounds in the word ‘stealing’ would dictate a lyrical tone, and perhaps even falsetto. In the English version, according to Phipson, the aria took on an entirely different character that was not intended by the composer.⁵⁹

Reeves was in complete agreement with Phipson on this point, which demonstrates that even the singers considered translations and adaptations of Italian operas less prestigious than the originals. Adaptations in various forms were nevertheless an integral component of London’s operatic life: this was not only a matter of creating English versions of Italian operas, but also of adapting non-Italian works to the Italian opera stages.⁶⁰

After his appearance at the Royal Italian Opera, Reeves barely performed on London’s Italian opera stages again. He concentrated instead on opera in English by English composers, and on oratorio, becoming one of the best-known oratorio and concert singers in England.

From its outset, the career of Louisa Pyne, born in London in 1832, contrasted strikingly with those of her female colleagues Catherine Hayes and Rita Favanti, as well as with that of Sims Reeves. Pyne studied not with an Italian singing teacher, as one might expect, but with George Smart. Nevertheless, she began to enjoy remarkable success in concerts in London in the 1840s, together with her sister Susan.⁶¹ On the basis of this success, Louisa made her Paris concert debut in 1847, and then her opera debut in Boulogne two years later, as Amina in *La sonnambula*, before returning to her native London. There, later the same year, she appeared at the Princess Theatre in an English adaptation of *Don Giovanni*, and in works by Macfarren.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

⁵⁸ Thomas Lamb Phipson, *Bellini and the Opera of La Sonnambula* (London: Wertheimer, 1880).

⁵⁹ Ibid.; discussed in Reeves, *His Life and Recollections*, pp. 163–4.

⁶⁰ For more on this, see my Chapter 6.

⁶¹ See Clayton, *Queens of Song*, p. 502.

⁶² ‘Pyne, Louisa’, in *Großes Sängerlexikon*, ed. by Karl-Josef Kutsch and Leo Riemens, vol. 2 (Bern, 1993), column 2380.

Surprisingly, Pyne barely every had any form of connection to Italy. One might assume that she narrowed her chances of an international career from the start, by not following the industry norm of studying with an Italian teacher. But a closer examination of her background suggests other possibilities. Pyne was born into a family of English singers. Her father George Pyne was a countertenor and a doctor, and her uncle James Kendrick Pyne was a successful concert tenor.⁶³ We can therefore assume that Pyne's family were well-informed about the peculiarities of the London opera business, and correspondingly had a good sense of the career chances of English singers on the Italian stages. In this light, it seems plausible that the family deliberately decided against an Italian musical education. An English singer had vastly better chances of success in concerts and English opera than in Italian opera. Notwithstanding the difference in prestige and the lower fees for English opera, we can assume that these very considerations formed the basis for Pyne's career. Moreover, concerts were in fact an extremely lucrative way of earning money, which was reflected in the career paths of many English singers who therefore favoured the concert room over the opera house.⁶⁴

Despite Pyne's lack of stage experience, she quickly accumulated positive reviews praising her musical skills, as this report of a performance of *La Sonnambula* in Liverpool illustrates:

It is a personation [sic] which charms by its simplicity, though it never overwhelms by its intensity. We can not, perhaps, give a better idea of Miss Pyne's peculiarities of singing and acting than by saying that she is somewhat of an English Sontag, though, of course, we do not intend to insinuate that she can pour out the fluent and unapproachable graces of that delightful vocalist. She resembles her, however, in the graceful delicacy of her action, and also in the surprising elegance of her vocalization.⁶⁵

This critic compares Pyne to an English counterpart of Henriette Sontag. The comparison also makes clear, however, that the Italian opera and its singers continued to function as an uncontested gold standard and aesthetic ideal.

On 14 August 1851, Pyne finally gave her debut at the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden.⁶⁶ On this occasion, however, she had not been engaged in the normal way, but was a last-minute substitute for the German soprano Anna Zerr as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (here performed, as usual, in Italian as *Il flauto magico*), as Chorley described:

On one evening she was replaced, at an hour's warning, and with as much gain as loss to the performance, by Miss Louisa Pyne, who had never till then attempted Italian Opera: – another illustration of the mastery with

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ See 'Choragus', 'Opera in English', *Music & Letters* 13 (1932), pp. 5–6.

⁶⁵ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, p. 504.

⁶⁶ At this time Pyne was a member of the opera company at the Haymarket. See *ibid.*, p. 504.

which our best English artists can assume various occupations in foreign music; in none, possibly, complete – but as a body more steady, meritorious, and prepared, than the singers of Italy, Germany, or France, so-called on, could prove themselves. – This may be because we have, till now, no great stage style, nor stage-music, of our own; and because our vocalists must have, therefore, a reference to, and a dependence on, the music of foreign countries; and because, as a company, they are more skilled musicians than those of other lands.⁶⁷

Chorley's comments are significant on several counts. His use of the verb 'attempt' to describe Pyne's debut implies that success was impossible from the outset; Pyne could only try – and fail. In the same breath, Chorley laments the English opera market's practice of importing singers, and the influence of this practice on London's music industry and especially on singer's lives. These statements can be considered analogous to Macfarren's assessment of the opera scene. It is no surprise, then, that the public response to Pyne's appearance at the Royal Italian Opera was rather lukewarm, bearing no comparison to the successes she had enjoyed by this time in opera in English.⁶⁸

Later in her career, Pyne mostly steered clear of Italian opera, concentrating instead – and with great success – on its English equivalent. An exception was her appearance in 1862 as Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* at Her Majesty's Theatre, once again standing in for another singer (this time the American soprano Clara Louise Kellogg); this was 'no minor triumph', according to Clayton.⁶⁹ Contemporary press reports were also positive about Pyne's performance; we can assume, however, that the audience's attention on this occasion was mostly directed towards Therese Tietjens, who played the Countess.⁷⁰

Between 1854 and 1856, Pyne undertook a grand tour of North America, and after returning to England, she and William Harrison together founded the Harrison-Pyne Opera Company. The company specialised in performing works by English composers, and quickly became an important part of the English season, as well as playing a key role in organising tours to America, satisfying the demand there for 'English' opera performances.⁷¹

This aspect, too, shows how deliberately Pyne planned her career. Rather than be lured by the high prestige of London's Italian stages, she concentrated on English opera. The fact that

⁶⁷ Chorley, *Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 150.

⁶⁸ The review in the *Athenaeum* also gives the impression that Pyne was an exceptionally able singer, but by no means enjoyed a euphoric success on this occasion. We can also assume that the *Athenaeum*'s rosy prognosis for Pyne's future was based on her considerable success in 'English' opera. See *Athenaeum* (1851), p. 775.

⁶⁹ Clayton, *Queens of Song*, p. 506.

⁷⁰ See *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 10 (1862), p. 333.

⁷¹ 'Pyne, Louisa', in *Großes Sängerlexikon*, ed. by Karl-Josef Kutsch and Leo Riemens, vol. 2 (Bern, 1993), column 2380; see also Alfred Freiherr von Wolzogen, *Theater und Musik: Historisch-kritische Studien* (Breslau: E. Trewendt, 1860), p. 156; Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Travelling Opera Troupes in the United States 1825–60* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 258–9.

she also founded an opera company shows that despite the success of her singing career, she felt the need for another string to her bow, another source of income.

As can be seen from these varied examples, English singers found themselves in a very difficult situation, which culminated in a search for their identity as singers. Each of the singers sketched here tackled this problem in their own way. Rita Favanti attempted to improve her career chances on the Italian opera stage in London by concealing her English origins; this attempt failed, however, partly because of her inadequate musical skill. The fact that she changed her name, however, shows that she wanted to construct an identity as an Italian singer, which involved giving up her English origins.

Catherine Hayes was less extreme than Favanti in her pursuit of a career as an Italian singer. Nevertheless, we have seen that despite considerable successes in continental Europe, she had difficulty establishing herself in London's Italian opera houses – the audience's prejudices against anglophone singers in Italian opera were too strong. Sims Reeves's career followed similar paths. Like Hayes, he did not reach the status of an unqualified success in Italian opera in English, despite seeing himself as an Italian singer and marketing himself as such.

By contrast, Louisa Pyne focused her efforts primarily on a soprano career in English opera, probably aware of the inevitable difficulties she would have faced in Italian opera. With this decision, from the outset she relinquished the chance to appear on London's most prestigious stages and to command enormous fees as a star of the Italian opera.

We can see, then, that broadly speaking there were two possible career trajectories for English singers. The first possibility was to pursue an Italian career against all the odds, holding out hope of international fame, and above all of high fees and prestige. This option, however, required thorough Italian singing training, and a career in Italy and France. Only after that was the path open to London's opera stages, which were highly prized by singers of all nationalities because of their high fees.⁷² The conservative attitudes of London audiences meant that the risk of failure with this route was very high.

The second possibility was to disregard Italian opera and establish a secure career on the less prestigious English opera stages. Exorbitant fees and widespread recognition in society on the level offered by Italian opera were not necessarily part of this career path. However, one's chances of success as a prima donna, and of maintaining a regular stream of engagements, were far higher.

⁷² See Rosselli, *Singers of the Italian Opera*, pp. 142–3.

These questions of identity thus emerged because of the preferences of London audiences, although it would be inappropriate to characterise audiences collectively as entirely averse to English singers in Italian opera. This kind of generalised prejudice was mostly limited to those significant portions of the Italian opera audiences who lacked musical knowledge and for whom ‘Italianness’ was a fashionable quality. Chorley’s and Macfarren’s comments, however, illustrate a different aspect of this search for identity. Even musically well-informed opera-goers were opposed to performances of Italian operas with non-Italian singers, fearing that the opera’s expressive content would be lost because of the singers’ lack of linguistic expertise. Singers like Catherine Hayes or Sims Reeves tried to allay these fears with their thorough Italian singing training, and in many cases such attempts were successful, but the ingrained prejudices of the ‘musical amateurs’ were not to be overcome. The English singers of London’s Italian opera therefore found themselves stuck between two conflicting identities, neither of which by any means represented an ideal career path.

5 Singers' Contracts in London

As already illustrated in previous chapters, in an opera industry that was above all economically oriented, the singers involved played a fundamental role. Rules and guidelines were therefore crucial, both in order to regulate day-to-day business and for the legal protection of managers and singers. In this context, singers' contracts are essential sources for the engagement practices that prevailed in London opera houses, and also bear witness to the distributions of power that operated in operatic life.

The next chapters therefore aim to identify the essential features of London singers' contracts from the 1820s to the 1860s and to situate these in their socio-cultural context. Alongside original singers' contracts, other documents of great significance include hypothetical demands by singers, such as those of Angelica Catalani, and court proceedings between managers and singers, such as those between Alfred Bunn and Jenny Lind, and between Benjamin Lumley and Johanna Wagner. On the basis of this evidence, we can draw conclusions above all about the legal foundations on which these kinds of engagement rested. Furthermore, these contracts paint a vivid picture of how the practices surrounding contracts changed in the course of the century, as London's opera system gradually established a professional and contractually binding foundation.

5.1 Exceptional contracts from early nineteenth-century London

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, London was the financial centre of Europe for singers. Particularly during the management of John Ebers and his predecessor Edmund Waters, members of London's social elites had substantial influence over the engagement of singers. If a manager failed to engage a great singer, he would have to justify himself comprehensively to his elite backers, as is illustrated by this extract from an interview between the *Theatrical Inquisitor* and Michael Kelly, who was stage manager at the time, and who served here as Waters's deputy:

Q. Why was she [Camporese] allowed to go away?

A. I cannot take upon myself to say exactly, but I know from a conversation with Mr. Waters that it was his wish she should be retained. Afterwards I heard from Mr. Waters that Madame

Camporese's husband went to Mr. Water's box at the Opera on a Saturday night, and expostulated with some warmth with Mr. Waters on his not having had an answer to his letter. Mr. Waters replied he had not received one from him. Upon an investigation it was found, that a letter was handed by Madame Camporese's husband to a person then holding a principal employment in the Theatre, to have been delivered a fortnight back, but which was by some accident forgotten. The Monday following I understood Mr. Waters called on Madame Camporese, to engage her. Her reply was, that she has signed articles with the theatre at Milan, not having had an answer to her letter; and that she could not sign articles with Mr. Waters, unless he would give her 500 l. to pay the penalty of the engagement she had entered into at Milan. However, he regretted the loss of Madame Camporese's talents, he could not in honour sanction the breach of the articles, as he would not like the same to be done to him, as he could not expect engagements to be kept sacred with him, when he sanctioned the breach with others.²⁵¹

This extract illustrates not only the extent of Kelly's efforts at justification, but also several important characteristics of the contractual practices of the time. For example, it was absolutely standard practice for the husbands of female opera singers to handle financial transactions and thus to take on the role of the singer's agent. The husband of the extremely famous *prima donna buffa* Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle wrote to William Ayrton, musical director of the King's Theatre, on 4 December 1816, to complain about the terms of his wife's contract, which he described as containing 'plusieurs erreurs'.²⁵² These comprised the lack of a benefit concert, obligatory for a prima donna; the terms of payment (Mainvielle asked for payment in equal monthly instalments); the question of who was responsible for providing costumes; whether extra concerts would be organised; and the inclusion of new stipulations concerning the singer's departure.²⁵³ The precise nature of these stipulations is not specified in the letter, but according to Mainvielle's wishes, the theatre ought to have mentioned them earlier. This letter is revealing not only because of the husband's role as agent, but also in terms of the practices surrounding contractual negotiations at the time. Mainvielle was writing to Ayrton because he had not received an answer from

²⁵¹ *Theatrical Inquisitor and Monthly Mirror* 12 (1818), p. 426. For more on Kelly and his role, see *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly of the King's Theatre and Theatre Royal Drury Lane*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), esp. p. 363.

²⁵² Letter from Mainvielle to William Ayrton, 4 December 1816 [BL: Add MS 52336: 1816–after 1831 ff.14–17b].

²⁵³ Apparently the issue of costumes was not laid out clearly in Waters's contract: Mainvielle insisted on a prompt reply on the grounds that his wife needed to know whether to purchase costumes before leaving Paris; he also pronounced the sum named in the contract of £2 per evening for costumes to be ridiculously low. As for the question of organising extra concerts, apparently there was a passage concerning this subject in Waters's contract. Mainvielle wrote that his wife would only agree to these terms if she would receive the takings from the concerts – which would significantly increase her overall fee.

Waters, and there were large parts of the contract to which he did not agree. This situation suggests that Ayrton had significant influence over the organisation of engagements – otherwise it would have been useless for Mainvielle to write to him. Also, in his role as music director Ayrton may well have had a certain degree of proximity to the theatre’s artists, which might have represented an advantage for both sides when it came to contractual negotiations.²⁵⁴

The letter also suggests that the implementation of contracts was not standardised in London at this time. Fodor-Mainvielle was not new to the theatre: she had made her London debut earlier in 1816 as Griselda in Ferdinando Paer’s eponymous opera, and if contracts had been standardised, her first season’s contract could have been re-used for the following season with minor adaptations.²⁵⁵ Mainvielle’s remarks indicate that this did not happen – in relation to the terms of payment, he even mentions specifically that these should be made ‘comme à la saison dernière’.

Waters also had to endure significant interventions from his socially elite supporters, who wanted to see the stars from the continent on their Italian stages but did not understand why this demand might lead to raised subscription prices.²⁵⁶ In addition, Waters’s casting policies did not meet with complete satisfaction:

With regard to the Italian singers, they were reduced to four of the male singers, and there was not one single Italian female singer belonging to the company. From this it was obvious there could be no performance of serious Operas. In fact, they could not be given at all; and this was in a manner a saving to the proprietor, the expense of a serious opera being considerably more than that of a comic one. Mr. Waters, the manager, might have engaged Madame Camporese, but he had neglected so to do. In various other respects he had acted in a way which neither kept pace with his own assurance nor the liberality of the subscribers.²⁵⁷

A considerable outgoing in the opera’s budget at this time was the ballet, for which dancers from Paris in particular were engaged at the King’s Theatre for enormous fees – at this time, these were comparable to those of the singers.²⁵⁸

Waters obtained information about the different singers’ fees above all through Italian agents who were apparently also responsible for the implementation of engagements. Even Ebers worked intensively for some time with the agent Giovanni

²⁵⁴ Ayrton served as an important artistic advisor to Ebers, and had considerable influence on engagements of singers. See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King’s Theatre*, esp. p. 90.

²⁵⁵ On Fodor’s London debut, see Fenner, *Opera in London*, p. 220.

²⁵⁶ See *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* 1 (1818), p. 242.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ See *Theatrical Inquisitor and Monthly Mirror* 12 (1818), p. 432.

Battista Benelli, who in fact took over the management of the King's Theatre in the year 1824, before his ignoble and unexplained disappearance from London, owing a mountain of debts.²⁵⁹ The reasons why managers worked with agents were probably to do with the lack of efficient transport infrastructure at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The development of the railways around the middle of the century would reduce journey times considerably both within England and between England and the continent.²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, in the 1830s Paris could be reached within a little over two days of leaving London, the coach being the preferred means of transport.²⁶¹ Because of the greater ease and speed of travel afforded by the expansion of the railways, by the middle of the century London opera managers such as Benjamin Lumley undertook many international trips for contractual negotiations or to recruit new young talent.²⁶² Into the 1830s, the negotiating power of foreign agents seems to have been considerable, because of London managers' limited ability to travel. For example, Willert Beale reported in relation to the second half of the century that Italian agents deliberately circulated false information about the fees singers received from opera houses in Italy. This, of course, drove London fees up into the stratosphere. In order to make the rumours more convincing, forged contracts between singers and Italian impresarios circulated, purportedly evidencing that a singer had been paid a multiple of their actual fee.²⁶³ This practice or something similar may already have been widespread at the beginning of the century, because the London opera industry's dependence on star singers was known everywhere.

The following letter, published in 1818 in the *Theatrical Inquisitor* as a 'literal translation' of an 1817 letter between an unnamed Italian agent 'V.B.' and Edmund Waters, provides an example of the often extremely bold demands of Italian opera singers in relation to engagements at the King's Theatre. In order to prevent the

²⁵⁹ See *London Society* 8 (1865), p. 147.

²⁶⁰ See Jim Harter, *World Railways of the Nineteenth Century: A Pictorial History in Victorian Engravings* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 8. In 1859 Meyerbeer travelled from Paris to London, and reported that this was achievable within a day thanks to the railway and the steam ship. See Robert Ignatius Letellier (ed.), *The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer 1857–1864: The Last Years*, vol. 4 (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 124.

²⁶¹ According to an 1829 travel guide, it took just 58 hours to reach Paris from London, if one used night coaches. Francis Coghlan, *A Guide to France* (London: Onwhyn, 1829), pp. 7–9. Other accounts from this time speak of four days' travel, although this timescale involved several stops for tourist activities, so that two days seems more likely for business trips. See Dorothea Knighton, *Memoirs of Sir William Knighton* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838), pp. 286–288.

²⁶² See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 32–33. Ebers also went to Paris every autumn to negotiate engagements for the following season (see Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 310). However, Lumley's business trips were undoubtedly more frequent.

²⁶³ See Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 2, p. 153.

singers from being recognised, the letter designated them only with initials, which – at least from today’s perspective – makes it considerably more difficult to identify them. Especially prominent singers, however, such as Giovanni Battista Velluti, are easily identified because of the fees they demanded and the roles associated with them. For contemporary audiences, it surely would not have been difficult to identify the other singers. This letter is an important source of evidence for how London engagements came about, and is therefore worth reproducing in its entirety.

Sign. B—a to Mr. Waters.

Venice, 1817

I acknowledge your two favours, dated 26th October, 28th October, wherein you acknowledge mine. I observe, that in the first, you promise to continue your correspondence with me from London, which place you were on the point of setting out from, and where you would be anxious to hear respecting the singers, whom I proposed to you, but whom I am unable, this year to engage.

Prima Donna Seria Siga E. P. demands *two thousand five hundred pounds sterling*, a free benefit, travelling expenses paid, a table, and permission to make her debût in a man’s character in an opera which she will take with her.²⁶⁴

Prima Donna Seria, Siga A—, demands 1,500 l. sterling, six covers, a free benefit, travelling expenses paid.

Prima Donna Buffa, Siga T—B—²⁶⁵, asks 1000 l. sterling, free benefit, travelling expenses paid.

Prima Donna Buffa, Siga L—F—, of this lady I will send you particulars the earliest opportunity, and will let you know whether she will accept your offer of 700 l. sterling, and 50 l. for travelling expenses.

Primo Tenore Serio e Buffo, Sig. B—C—, and *Prima Donna Buffa e Seria* Siga C—B—, his wife, ask together 2,500 guineas, with the privilege to sing at concerts, a dressing-room, *fourteen covers*, the convenience of a coach to the theatre, and an advance of 250 guineas.²⁶⁶

Primo Musico Sig. Gio B—V—. [Giovanni Battista Velluti] He asks 2,500 l. sterling, the privilege to sing at concerts, a free benefit, and travelling expenses.

You will, no doubt, expect me to give you an early account of the demands of all those professors of music, who desire to come to London; I therefore, think it a duty to communicate to you all the particulars I could collect, reserving further accounts for my next, as I have not yet received answers from any of them. I must give you to understand that the terms of all of them are for a

²⁶⁴ The description of the singer and her wish to perform in a male role might suggest Giuditta Pasta, but the initial of the first name does not match, and the fee of £2500 would be improbable for Pasta in 1817, because her career did not take off until the 1820s.

²⁶⁵ This may refer to Terese Giorgi Belloc.

²⁶⁶ The explicit reference to a dressing room may be explained by the lack of space available at the King’s Theatre. After the theatre’s reopening in 1791, the new artists’ dressing rooms were underneath the stage, and this space also had to suffice for the storage of costumes. Because of these limitations, dressing rooms were in short supply; the letter’s specific mention of the issue is therefore unsurprising. See Nalbach, *The King’s Theatre*, p. 91).

whole season, to begin from the time they are called upon to set out for London, and to terminate at the period which shall be settled upon in their agreement.

I have the honour to be, &c &c,

V.B.—²⁶⁷

Despite the singers' uncertain identities, among these sometimes unreasonable-seeming demands we can isolate several elements that appeared again and again in different individuals' requirements, and which therefore seem to have been of great significance to the singers. As well as determining a fee, in most cases singers also requested the reimbursement of travel costs, and agreement to hold a benefit performance. Because of his exceptional position as the 'last male soprano', Velluti also stipulated that he wanted to sing in other concerts, which would bring significant financial gain for him.

We can also see that the fees of a *prima donna seria* – even if the figures in this example are not drawn from reality – were far higher than those of a *prima donna buffa*, which was certainly a function of London audiences' high regard for the *seria* genre. Whether the fees indicated here corresponded to reality is insignificant; it is the proportional difference between the fees that is revealing. Nevertheless, we can assume – bearing in mind Beale's comments – that the figures indicated were from an early stage in the negotiating process, and were therefore deliberately set in the upper range of what was plausible. We can also assume that the agent V.B. worked on commission, which was probably included in the indicated sums. The sometimes enormous commission fees of agents like this, which were often not meant entirely seriously, are likely to have represented a significant problem for London opera managers – especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when journeys to Paris or Italy still involved considerable expense. John Ebers worked intensively with Giovanni Battista Benelli for some time, but Benelli was not entirely reliable in implementing individual engagements, and was probably trying to make his own fortune at the King's Theatre's expense.²⁶⁸ In 1824, this conflict finally came to a head: Ebers found himself facing legal action by artists whose fees Benelli had not paid; ultimate responsibility for the fees lay with Ebers. According to Ebers, these

²⁶⁷ *Theatrical Inquisitor and Monthly Mirror* 12 (1818), pp. 433–34.

²⁶⁸ See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 234. Ebers states that following his sudden disappearance from London in 1824, Benelli offered sets, costumes and other property of the theatre for sale.

debts totalled £5600.²⁶⁹ But the London opera managers depended on agreements with singers' agents in order to have any chance of putting together an adequate ensemble.

Another letter making enormous demands was one from a certain Mademoiselle F. to Edmund Waters, printed in the *Theatrical Inquisitor*. The identification of the singer is made more difficult by the fact that the letter itself is not marked with the year it was written. Given that the other excerpts from Waters's correspondence printed in the *Theatrical Inquisitor* are mostly from 1817 and 1818, however, we can assume a similar date for this one. The statement that Mademoiselle F. aimed to succeed as the 'first comic absolute singer' at the King's Theatre initially suggests Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle, but the editors' use of 'Mademoiselle' rather than 'Madame' means that in fact Fodor can be ruled out: she had married Mainvielle, a French actor, in 1812, and had always appeared under the name Fodor-Mainvielle thereafter. Also, her career mainly moved between the opera houses of Vienna, London and Paris – and this letter refers to an engagement in Milan. Regardless of the unknown identity of the singer, it is clear that she was making unbelievable demands of Waters. As well as a fee of 2000 guineas (£2100), the prima donna insisted on having free choice over the opera performed for her debut, and over the rest of the singers who would join her. She also stated that she was only willing to perform in opera buffa and opera semi-seria. Naturally, she also requested a 'free benefit' with a guaranteed fee of 500 guineas (£525), which would make her total fee at least 2500 guineas (£2625) – a fantastical sum.²⁷⁰ To safeguard herself financially, the singer asked for an advance of 200 guineas (£210) upon signing the contract. This approach brought financial liabilities from the outset for an opera manager who struggled financially at the best of times; with scarce liquid funds, such liabilities represented a significant risk to the theatre's budget. Costumes to the prima donna's satisfaction were also to be provided for her by the King's Theatre, which surely would have incurred huge costs for the manager, given that we can assume a prima donna would not have been satisfied with simple attire. Other special provisions

²⁶⁹ Ibid. Ebers also reports that Benelli failed to pay six months' rent during his year-long tenure as manager, and mortgaged his shares in the theatre.

²⁷⁰ For comparison, at the high point of her career in 1826, Pasta received a minimum fee of £3000 (including a benefit performance) from Ebers. In view of Pasta's exceptional status at this time, and the fact she performed as a *prima donna seria*, Mademoiselle F.'s demands seem extremely ambitious (see Appendix: Contract between Ebers and Pasta).

included the request for a coach, to be at the prima donna's disposal at all times, and the freedom to sing at private concerts without seeking the opera manager's consent.

In addition to these enormous demands, if Waters failed to accept elements of the contract, the singer could use her pre-existing engagements to exert great pressure on him, so that he almost forced to agree immediately. For Waters, the absence of a prima donna would probably have meant a considerable reduction in income from subscriptions. Nevertheless, the fees indicated in the letter must be seen in light of Beale's comments about fictitious contracts that named enormous sums: it seems possible that the singer was simply trying to mislead Waters with these immense demands, in order to make the greatest possible profit from her engagement in London.

As well as the influence of the stipulations of singers' contracts, the day-to-day business of the King's Theatre was also governed by a manual of theatre regulations, whose contents mostly detailed arrangements surrounding rehearsals and costumes, and other general information about the running of the theatre.²⁷¹ There were fines for failing to adhere to the rules. For example, a singer who arrived at a rehearsal or performance late (beyond a ten-minute grace period) in 1816 would have been fined 10s. 6d. The same penalty applied to unauthorised changes made to costumes, and to singers who did not return their costumes according to the rules at the end of a performance: this group of offences included both declining to return the costume at all, and returning costumes in a damaged state.²⁷² Some misdemeanours carried significantly higher fines, including: failing to return sheet music in good condition after the end of the season (one guinea); refusing to sing a particular role (one-third of the singer's monthly fee); wearing a costume outside the theatre (one month's fee); leaving the theatre 'before his or her duty is complete' (one month's fee);²⁷³ 'not residing on the stones of the metropolis', or failing to give an address for depositing 'call tickets' (10s. 6d., and the cost of the tickets); and improper behaviour (one month's fee). This hierarchy of fines indicates the management's priorities. The penalty for refusing to sing a particular role seems comparatively small, suggesting that such behaviour was more or less tolerated, and did not significantly influence the

²⁷¹ See 'Regulations to be Henceforth Observed by the Performers at this Theatre', reproduced in Burden (ed.), *London Opera Observed*, vol. 4, pp. 253–255. Burden includes a complete transcription of the Regulations for 1816; further citations in my discussion refer to this edition.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 253–4.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

overall running of the theatre. This rule also illustrates the negotiating power that singers held, in that they were able to determine the programme at the King's Theatre without fearing severe consequences.

As well as threatening the significant fines just mentioned, the King's Theatre's list of regulations also set minor penalties for loitering in the wings without good reason, for re-entering the dressing rooms after the preparation of one's own costume was complete (each 5s.), or for violating the ban on taking fresh flowers onto the stage (2s. 6d.), which was based on superstition. This demonstrates how widespread superstition was in the opera industry at this time: why else would this kind of rule, and the threat of even a small fine, be included in a theatre's list of regulations?

There were, however, no consequences to speak of for contravening the ban on bringing outsiders into the theatre without the manager's permission. That breaches of this rule were not punished may indicate that it was a well-established practice, not least because many *prime donne* travelled with a sizeable party of staff and family members – with the men (usually the singer's father or husband) often taking on a kind of agent's role, as we saw in the case of Fodor-Mainvielle.²⁷⁴ This function necessitated the husband or father's presence in the theatre, close to the prima donna, which explains the relatively relaxed attitude to this rule.

The general tone of the King's Theatre's manual of regulations suggests that it applied to the whole company of engaged singers, because the rules outlined mainly concerned standard situations and practicalities. The lower fines – of, for example, 10s. 6d. or a guinea – may have mainly functioned as deterrents for second-tier singers, because a repeated transgression would result in a considerable reduction of one's fee. Not for nothing were fines at this level given primarily for lateness or for irregularities when returning costumes. For a prima donna, a fine like this was probably of no consequence, given the size of her fee. Larger fines for transgressing other rules, however, such as wearing theatre costumes in public or leaving the theatre without permission (for which the fine was a month's fee), may have applied to star singers in practice as well as in theory. Theatres' manuals of regulations thus served to establish rules for different groups of people, and this need to address multiple audiences is also reflected in their structure. Indeed, the King's Theatre's

²⁷⁴ See Henry Sutherland Edwards, *The Prima Donna: Her History and Surroundings from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2 (London: Remington, 1888), pp. 280–282.

manual can be considered a prime example of this, because at no other theatre was there such a wide disparity between the leading singers and the second-tier singers (in cases where theatres had second-tier singers at all).

No less brazen than Mademoiselle F.'s proposal were the demands of the prima donna Angelica Catalani, submitted by her husband, Paul Valabrègue, to John Ebers in relation to a possible engagement in the 1826 season.²⁷⁵ Catalani began by requesting free entry to the King's Theatre for herself and her husband, whom the document described as her manager; the free tickets were to be differently shaped than the standard tickets, and were therefore immediately recognisable as denoting special status – which was probably considered important in this case, given that the issue is mentioned explicitly. Furthermore, Catalani and Valabrègue were each to have a 'good box' put at their disposal. At the time, this was understood to mean not the box with the best view of the stage, but ideally one in the first tier, and close to the King's box. The aim of this kind of calculated self-positioning, in a culture of seeing and above all being seen, was to ensure an improvement in one's social status.²⁷⁶

The second clause in Catalani's proposed contract is comparable to the demands of Mademoiselle F.: Catalani, too, requested unrestricted choice as to the operas for which she would be engaged, as well as the option to select the other singers herself. In this context, the phrase 'choose and direct' is particularly interesting; we can assume that the verb 'direct' refers to possible adaptations performed by Catalani (such as inserted arias) – and she was well-known for this practice.²⁷⁷ With unlimited control over the works given and over their specific form in performance, Catalani could make herself the centre of attention, which was beneficial to her attempts to market herself as an extraordinary operatic phenomenon. In the same passage of the contract, the words 'she will have no orders to receive from anyone' seem particularly presumptuous, reducing the role of the opera-house manager to a purely passive one. Finally, Catalani insisted on costumes that were for her sole use – another indication of the special status she claimed.

²⁷⁵ See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, pp. 283–85.

²⁷⁶ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 100. Hall-Witt locates the phenomenon of the opera as a place 'to see and to be seen' primarily in the eighteenth century, but the nineteenth century would see little change in this regard.

²⁷⁷ See Edgcombe, *Musical Reminiscences of an Old Amateur*, pp. 115–6. It is unlikely, however, that Catalani took on a director's role (see also my discussion in Chapter 5.4 of Pauline Viardot's contracts and influence on the Royal Italian Opera).

The third clause in the proposed contract specified the obligatory benefit performances, the takings from which would be shared between Catalani and the opera-house manager, although the contract does not specify the proportions. Normally, the profits would be split equally, but given Catalani's stratospheric demands elsewhere, that may not have been the case here.²⁷⁸ She then asked to be able to decide the timings of these concerts herself – again, a prerogative that the manager would normally have reserved for the theatre.

The fourth clause seems still more unusual, even if it is understandable from a financial point of view: it grants Catalani and her husband access to the receipts – which more or less means the theatre's financial situation would have been revealed to them. This knowledge would not only bring an advantage for negotiations, but would also allow thorough familiarity with the theatre's cash flow, which was important for the reliability of payments. A singer aware that the management was not succeeding in filling the house for performances, resulting in a poor financial position, might decide not to renew their engagement for the following season. Also, in the case of benefit concerts, this move also meant Catalani and Valabrègue would be able to ensure that the sum she was actually paid was in line with the takings from the concert. The fifth clause in the proposed contract ensured that fees would be paid at regular intervals every six weeks – an absolutely standard clause for contracts from this time.

Clauses six and seven specify the location and general rights and conditions of the engagement. Catalani was restricted during the season to singing exclusively for the King's Theatre, without additional fees for concerts and oratorio performances. At first glance, this clause appears to correspond to the conventions of the time, according to which a singer would receive a lump sum covering their involvement in all performances organised by the opera house. However, the wording 'in the Concerts or Oratorios, where she *may* sing' (emphasis added) implies that these were not considered binding commitments – in this respect, this contract can be considered an unusual one. Also unusual was the seventh clause, which gives the prima donna permission to travel to Bath, Oxford or Cambridge during the season. In fact,

²⁷⁸ Most contracts stated explicitly that profits would be split equally between the manager and the singer. See, for example: Laporte's contracts with Grisi and Tamburini from the 1830s, reproduced in the appendix; a French contract between Louis Véron and Nourrit (Louis Quicherat, *Nourrit: Sa vie, son talent, son caractère, sa correspondance* (Paris: Hachette, 1867), pp. 393–94); or a Viennese contract between Bartolomeo Merelli and Agnes Schebest (Schebest, *Aus dem Leben einer Künstlerin* (Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1857), pp. 150–55).

Catalani appeared frequently in concerts in all these places, although these did not have the sole purpose of increasing her income, but were sometimes charitable events. Given the huge number of such concerts given by Catalani, this philanthropic element seems to have been of great concern to her, although of course potential advantages in terms of self-promotion cannot be ruled out.²⁷⁹ At the same time, the fact that Catalani wanted permission to be absent from London without the specific consent of the opera manager highlights her intention to carve out an exceptional position for herself among the singers of the time. A clause stipulating that singers should be available at all times was absolutely standard in London contracts throughout the nineteenth century; here, then, Catalani was reinforcing her special status in her contract.²⁸⁰

In this context, clause eight appears to be an affront against the manager, who was supposed to allow Catalani to withdraw from a performance at any time for health reasons, although the contract expressed this less directly: ‘Madame Catalani shall not sing oftener than her health will allow her. She promises to contribute to the utmost of her power to the good of the theatre. On his side, Mr. Ebers engages to treat Madame Catalani with every possible care.’²⁸¹ This wording sounds considerably less demanding than the clause’s implicit subtext, which places the manager and therefore the theatre’s programme at the mercy of a single singer.

The next clause included gaps to fill in the details of the duration of the engagement. Ultimately, however, this was a mere formality, because Catalani also stipulated that she would fulfil the engagement for the stated time period ‘unless Madame Catalani’s health, or the state of her voice, should not allow her to continue’.²⁸² Again, here it becomes apparent that Ebers’s negotiating position would be weak if he agreed to this engagement.

The tenth clause of the draft contract is particularly brazen, stating that Catalani would receive half of all the King’s Theatre’s takings from the given season. This included ‘the subscription to the boxes, the amount of those sold separately, the monies received at the door of the Theatre, and of the Concert-room’.²⁸³ This also makes clear why Catalani and her husband wanted access to the theatre’s financial

²⁷⁹ See Poriss, ‘Prima Donnas and the Performance of Altruism’, in Cowgill and Poriss (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna*, p. 51.

²⁸⁰ See my discussion of Laporte’s contracts in Chapter 5.2.

²⁸¹ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King’s Theatre*, p. 284.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

records at all times: they would be able to prevent any concealment of takings by the manager. Had Ebers agreed to this passage, he would have had to cover all the theatre's costs with half of the takings – costs, that is, including the rent, insurance against fire, expenses for scenery and costumes for the ballet and opera, as well as artists' fees. On top of that came, varying according to the circumstances, many different liabilities to supporters of the theatre, to whom Ebers had made funds available on credit. In light of the lack of state subsidy, Catalani's demands were utopian and could never be fulfilled. In his memoirs, Ebers gives the theatre's income for the 1825 season as £27,227 and 12 shillings. The outgoings, however, amounted to £33,378, 4s. 9d., leaving a loss of £6150.²⁸⁴ Had Ebers agreed to Catalani's bold requests – which would have meant giving her £13,613, 16s. – the deficit would have been greater still. In view of the enormous sums involved, it seems probable that Catalani's 'half part of the general receipts of the Theatre for the season', although this was not stated explicitly, referred only to the performances in which Catalani actually took part. It is likely that the passage in the proposed contract for 1826 came about because of a short-term engagement between Catalani and the King's Theatre in 1824. During this engagement, Catalani only sang on a few evenings, and actually *was* supposed to receive half of the evening's takings as her fee.²⁸⁵ Whether she received these fees is unclear: this was the year in which the King's Theatre was run by Giovanni Battista Benelli, who disappeared without trace at the end of the season, leaving Ebers with all manner of liabilities. One of the people who lost out from these events was no less a figure than Giuditta Pasta – because of Benelli's behaviour, she did not receive her full fee.²⁸⁶

Catalani's high financial demands in 1826 seem downright presumptuous. In 1822, she had withdrawn from her London career for a short time after eight years, in order to concentrate on her activities as a concert singer in Europe. As already mentioned, she returned to the King's Theatre in 1824 for a brief engagement, above all so that her fame could compensate for the fact that Isabella Rossini-Colbran was having little success with audiences.²⁸⁷ By this time, Catalani's voice was already not

²⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 273.

²⁸⁵ See Eberhard von Wintzingerode, *Angelica Catalani-Valabregue: Eine biographische Skizze* (Kassel, 1825), pp. 41–42.

²⁸⁶ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 250.

²⁸⁷ See Wintzingerode, *Angelica Catalani-Valabregue*, pp. 41–42.

what it had been, hence her concentration on concert performances, which allowed for easier concealment of the signs of decline:

In der großen Oper zu London erscheint sie nicht, weil diese schon mit tüchtigen Sängerinnen besetzt war, und wohl auch deshalb, weil ihre Stimme von einem hohen zu einem tiefen Sopran übergegangen war, und sie deshalb ihre vorigen Rollen nicht mehr ohne Transposition singen konnte, welche indeß nur in wenigen Fällen in der Art möglich ist, daß die Windinstrumente brauchbar und wirksam bleiben, und auch der Zusammenhang nicht ganz zerrissen wird.²⁸⁸

Also, in the mid-1820s Giuditta Pasta was working her way up to the position of audience favourite, and ongoing international furore surrounded her singing and acting, as well as her huge fees. This intense interest in sopranos other than Catalani can be considered a further reason why the latter's financial demands could not be fulfilled. Nevertheless, precisely in this context, Catalani's demands do seem plausible: she had already made a name for herself in London extremely successfully, and under normal circumstances this status with audiences in the city would have been long-lasting, even if there were vocal deficiencies; at the same time, because Pasta had been engaged, she also knew that London opera managers were prepared to pay huge sums to engage stars. Catalani's demands to Ebers can therefore be seen as an attempt to make use of the prevailing situation on the opera scene for her own gain.

Clause 11 of the proposed contract mainly serves to re-confirm the terms stated in the previous clauses. Here it is made explicit that Catalani need fear no deductions of any kind from her fees. 'Every possible expense' that the theatre incurred, such as rent or singers' fees, was to be paid exclusively by Ebers. In this light it also becomes clear that Catalani really was asking for 50% of the theatre's entire takings in the previous clause. If the contract had also proposed that Catalani and her husband would be liable for part of the costs, then this clause would have been tantamount to making them part of the management – but Catalani only wanted to profit from the takings. This impression is supported by the way Catalani asked to be allowed to influence programming and casting decisions. By this point, if not before, it is clear not only that this draft contract would have been impossible for Ebers to fulfil, but also that the kinds of contractual agreements involved were completely without foundation in reality. In presenting such utopian suggestions to the manager of the

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

King's Theatre, Catalani and Valabrègue's intentions probably reflected Catalani's personal circumstances: apparently she was in need of money, and it was not easy to earn significant sums through standard engagements because of her vocal problems. She was aware both that she was a big name on the London opera scene, and that the managers depended on popular singers. Catalani's demands may have been intended to increase the sense of excitement surrounding her, which then would have been reflected in her fee. But proposals such as this one probably did not in fact form the basis of negotiations, serving instead as self-promotional tools for the singers.

A contract between Ebers and Giuditta Pasta from 1826, also reproduced in Ebers's memoirs, bears a closer relation to reality, and shows that in some cases, exceptional clauses for specific singers were indeed used in real engagements. A good reason for them was required, however. In the year in question Ebers had extremely limited cash flow, and on a purely economic level he was simply unable to pay the kind of fantastical fees Pasta demanded. But pressure from the audience to see Pasta re-engaged in London for this season left him no choice but to enter into such an obligation. Pasta had already earned a glowing reputation following her Paris debut in 1822, which necessitated a London debut in 1824.²⁸⁹ The *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* gives a vivid description of the hype surrounding her:

Mad. Pasta, die bekannte Sangerin der Pariser italienischen Oper, welche einen Contract fur drei Monate in London angenommen hat, trat dort am 24. April zuerst als Desdemona im Othello auf, und nie ward ein vollkommener Sieg errungen. Die Bureaux waren vier Stunden vor ihrer Eroffnung schon belagert, und die Logengange waren mit Liebhabern erfullt, die keine Eintrittsplatze mehr gefunden hatten, und welche von Zeit zu Zeit Nachrichten uber das verlangten, was auf der Buhne vorging. Man rief ihnen aus dem inneren Hause zu: ‚das ist herrlich, klatschen Sie nur,‘ und man bezeugte einen wuthenden Beifall, und auerte das unbeschrankteste Vertrauen, obschon man nichts gehort hatte. Am Schlue ward Mad. Pasta hervorgerufen, und nachdem sie erschienen war, ging es an ein Rufen, ein Stampfen ohne Ende, Blumenstraue, die auf die Buhne, und Sacktucher, welche in die Luft flogen, mischten sich mit dem Beifallsruf, der zum allgemeinen larmenden Getose ward.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Pasta's actual stage debut was in 1817, although it received little public attention. She used the time between this first appearance in Italy and her Paris debut in 1822 for intensive singing training. See George Hogarth, *Memoirs of the Musical Drama*, vol. 2 (London: R. Bentley, 1838), p. 395.

²⁹⁰ *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 8 (1824), p. 176.

The review paints a picture of an audience entirely unconcerned with operatic works or with a singer's vocal capabilities. Rather, it was sufficient to be present at the scene of the action, even if one did not set eyes on the prima donna. Over-filling the house was of course extremely lucrative for the manager, because opera-goers had to pay even to enter the theatre – the tickets for the performance itself were then sold separately.²⁹¹

The enthusiasm for Pasta before her London debut in 1824 was naturally reflected in her fee, which at £1400 lay well above those of the other singers engaged at the King's Theatre. Only Manuel García's £1000 even approached such heights.²⁹²

Strikingly, in the 1825 season the relationship between García's and Pasta's fees seems to have reversed. According to Ebers's records, Pasta received only £1000, while García's fee was much higher, at £1250. But it would be inappropriate to take this as evidence for a crisis in Pasta's popularity. It is important to bear in mind that these sums did not include the extremely lucrative benefit performances reserved for star singers, and so do not tell the whole story.²⁹³ Also, in order to understand the significance of the figures we must take the historical context into account. As already mentioned, Giovanni Battista Benelli had been in charge of the 1824 season, and had fled the country without regard for his financial obligations to the singers he had engaged. Pasta, as we have seen, was among those affected, and she was therefore probably not prepared to fulfil her contract with the King's Theatre for 1825 without some compensation. She requested from Ebers the entire sum that had been lost because of Benelli's disappearance, which was impossible for Ebers to pay because of his near-ubiquitous debts. Also, the contract for 1825 had originally been signed by Pasta and Benelli, so that Ebers had limited room for manoeuvre, leading him to propose an alternative engagement to the prima donna as follows: during her time off from the *saison* at the Théâtre Italien in Paris, which lasted from 10 May until 5 June, Pasta would sing at the King's Theatre and receive a fee of £1000.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ See the correspondence between Pierre François Laporte and William Ayrton, 26 January 1828 [BL, Add MS 52336 f. 58]. In this letter, Laporte offers Ayrton, as the critic for the *Harmonicon*, complimentary press tickets for Pasta's first performance that season. However, Ayrton's notes suggest that he would have had to pay for entrance to the theatre (which was charged separately from the ticket prices) himself, and so he declined Laporte's offer.

²⁹² See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 394.

²⁹³ See my discussion of Laporte's contracts, Chapter 5.2.

²⁹⁴ During a period of 'congé', a singer would be excused from their normal commitments at the theatre – in this case, the Théâtre Italien; as was standard practice, Pasta's contract stated that permission from the theatre management would be needed before taking on any other engagements.

The possibility of extending her leave for the duration of the London season was also mentioned in the contract, and for this Pasta would receive £2000. Unsurprisingly, this plan failed because the directors of the Théâtre Italien were unwilling to cooperate.²⁹⁵

London audiences therefore had to make do with only a short guest appearance by Pasta in May and June 1825. This unsatisfactory situation unsurprisingly had negative consequences for the King's Theatre. After Pasta's return to Paris, the theatre had no comparable star singer at its disposal. Ebers decided to compensate for this lack with the famous castrato Giovanni Battista Velluti, who rounded off the 1825 season in Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto* for a fee of £600.²⁹⁶ Again, in comparing the fees it is important to consider the context: Velluti was not engaged for the whole season, and sang only a few performances.

It is in light of these circumstances that we must interpret the sum of 'only' £1000 for Pasta's engagement at the King's Theatre in 1825. Given the short duration of her engagement, it becomes clear that although this might seem a small fee at first glance, in fact it was more than a match for Pasta's status. She was also allowed a benefit concert on 26 May 1825, in which Paisiello's *Nina* was performed in a one-act version, despite the fact that this opera had been well-known to English audiences since its first performance in an English version in 1787.²⁹⁷ Ebers did not consider this a break with the tradition of offering the audience a 'new' opera at benefit concerts: 'At the time of its production it was immensely successful, but its last performance at the King's Theatre dwelt only in the memories of the old frequenters of the Opera, associated with other singers and other audiences.'²⁹⁸

Evidence of Pasta's income from this concert does not survive, but it must have been considerable, because we can assume that her prominence resulted in a sold-out house. Ebers's specified sum of £1000 for a four-week period was probably increased considerably by the benefit concert, and an awareness of this provides some context for the fees mentioned in Ebers's memoirs, and a more realistic sense of their significance.

The true extent of Pasta's special status at this time can be seen from the 1826 contract between her and Ebers, which engaged her at the King's Theatre for the

²⁹⁵ See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, pp. 249–51.

²⁹⁶ See *Harmonicon* 3 (1825), p. 118; Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 394.

²⁹⁷ See *Harmonicon* 3 (1825), p. 118.

²⁹⁸ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, pp. 257–8.

whole season.²⁹⁹ As was usual with London singers' contracts, this one was in French, indicating the close relationships between the Italian opera houses in Paris and London: in most cases, singers were engaged from the end of the Paris *saison* in April for the beginning of the Italian season at the King's Theatre. In the course of the nineteenth century, there were necessary adjustments to the timings of the seasons in the two cities. During Ebers's management, London's opera season, which started in January, involved unknown singers until the end of April; because of their commitments in Paris, the big star singers did not travel to London before April.³⁰⁰

The first clause of the contract establishes the status and the duration of the engagement: Pasta was to be engaged as a 'prima donna assoluta' and 'musico assoluto', and the engagement would run from 15 April to 31 July 1826. The designation 'musico assoluto' refers to the fact that Pasta, as a mezzo-soprano, also performed in trouser roles, such as that of Romeo in Nicoló Antonio Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta*, or Tancredi in Rossini's eponymous opera. The term 'musico' was usually a general designation for singers who performed these kinds of roles.³⁰¹

The second clause states that Pasta's basic fee would be an enormous £2300, payable in three instalments: two of £500, on 12 April in Paris and on 22 April in London, with the remaining £1300 also coming before her first performance. The dates were chosen for good reason: 12 April was the end of the Paris *saison*, and on 22 April, rehearsals began at the King's Theatre. The payment of an advance before the singer departed for London would remain a standard clause in London singers' contracts throughout the century, offering the singers financial security, and providing evidence of the London managers' credibility and liquidity.³⁰² Pasta's request for her entire fee before the first performance was probably a result of her experience with Benelli. These advance payments represented a considerable financial burden for the manager, because at the start of the season his only income was from subscriptions, so that paying advances to all the singers engaged created a

²⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 387–90. The contract, as transcribed from Ebers's memoirs, can be found in the Appendix.

³⁰⁰ Lumley calls the period before the arrival of the better-known singers the 'pre-Easter period'; during his management, this period would have been considerably shorter than in Ebers's time. See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, esp. pp. 35, 61.

³⁰¹ See, for example, *Oriental Herald and Journal* 12 (1827), p. 435; *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 6 (1829), p. 128; and Susan Rutherford, '“La cantante delle passioni”: Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19/2 (2007), pp. 107–138.

³⁰² See also my discussion of Laporte's contracts in Chapter 5.2, and of a contract involving Mario in Chapter 5.5.

notorious bottleneck in cash flow. Engaging Pasta was a necessary condition if Ebers was to have even a chance of ending the season with a profit, so he could do nothing but agree to this request. He also had to make further concessions in relation to Pasta's total advance of £1000: if for whatever reason Pasta was not in fact paid before her debut, she would have the right to keep this sum as compensation, with the option of pulling out of the contract. Again it becomes clear that the prima donna had no intention of risking a missed payment – or as Ebers put it, 'she "stood upon security"'.³⁰³ The size of her fee drew the attention of the public, and the following report from the *Athenaeum* makes clear the importance to Ebers of engaging a singer with Pasta's effect on audiences:

It is now said that the management must agree to Madame Pasta's terms, in order to bring over that attraction to the theatre. It is quite ludicrous to hear of the negotiations and treaties in these operatic affairs: Mr. Canning's political discussions with kingdoms are nothing in comparison with their intricacy, pretensions, abatements, terms, and conditions.³⁰⁴

From clause 3 of the contract, it becomes clear that the choice of her roles lay with Pasta alone; the 'rôles de son double emploi' mentioned at this point refer to the fact that Pasta would perform as both a 'prima donna assoluta' and a 'musico assoluto' at the King's Theatre. This passage certainly meant that Pasta would have significant influence over the theatre's programming.

The fourth clause of the contract limits Pasta's maximum number of performances at the King's Theatre to six evenings within a 30-day period. This implies that she was available to the theatre for a maximum of 21 performances between mid-April and the end of July, although this did not include the concerts organised by the King's Theatre, or her colleagues' benefit performances; her own benefit performance was also naturally excluded from this figure.³⁰⁵ Taking a slightly different approach to such restrictions, Antonio Tamburini, for example, stipulated in a contract for 1833 that he would perform up to a maximum of four evenings a week, including concerts organised by the King's Theatre. Given Tamburini's status as a

³⁰³ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 297.

³⁰⁴ *Athenaeum* 5 (1826), p. 208.

³⁰⁵ Ebers mentions the figure of 30 performances involving Pasta, which would scarcely have been possible within the terms of the contract. He also states that Pasta's average fee for one evening was £76, clearly intending to contradict the rumours that circulated in the media of £200 or £300 per evening (see *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 298). Ebers's calculation of £76 per evening would be correct if Pasta had performed 30 times; in view of the restrictions in the contract, 21 performances seems a more likely figure, which would give a fee of approximately £110 per evening.

prominent *basso cantante*, however, this passage must also be considered an exception, and demonstrates again the unusual extent of the restrictions in Pasta's contract, and her exceptional position.³⁰⁶

The fifth clause of the contract was also unusual, explicitly naming operas for Pasta's performances. Unsurprisingly, the works named were ones in which Pasta had previously enjoyed success and had thus shaped perceptions of the roles through her interpretations.³⁰⁷ For the 1826 season, the contract lists Rossini's *Tancredi*, *Otello* and *Semiramide*, Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta*,³⁰⁸ Simon Mayr's *Rosa bianca e rossa* and *Medea in Corinto*, and Paisiello's *Nina*. It is important to note that Pasta was in no way obliged to sing these works – if she so wished, she could have changed the list.

But it was not only the choice of operas that fell to Pasta; as the sixth clause stipulates, she was also in charge of casting decisions relating to other singers, as well as rehearsals and staging. The clause does not allow anyone the right to intervene against Pasta's decisions, although she would naturally have had to accept the conventional differences of status between individual singers.³⁰⁹ This clause bears obvious similarities to Catalani's demands of Ebers for her planned engagement in the same year, except that because of Pasta's exceptional status in 1826, she was actually able to include such seemingly ludicrous arrangements in a real contract. By this time, Catalani had neither the vocal condition nor the status that might have made a similar situation possible for her. In light of these differences in the significance of a demand such as this – unrealistic in one case, justifiable in another – we can see what a wide range of possible contractual situations could operate in London's Italian opera houses. At the height of Catalani's career, she would surely have been able to make similar demands with no problems, but they were utopian for her in 1826, while representing an achievable reality for Pasta.

³⁰⁶ See also my discussion of Laporte's contracts in Chapter 5.2.

³⁰⁷ See, for example, *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 36 (1822), columns 593–594; *Belle Assemblée* 7 (1828), p. 132.

³⁰⁸ In the contract, this work is identified only by the title *Romeo*. Given that Pasta appeared frequently in Zingarelli's opera in 1826, we can infer that this work is meant; Vaccai's opera of the same name was not performed in London until 1832. See Constantin Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, vol. 21 (Vienna, 1870), p. 335.

³⁰⁹ Similarly to the argument put forward by Melanie Stier in her monograph on Pauline Viardot-García, this would mean that Pasta – like Viardot in Stier's argument – took on a director's role in the modern sense. However, historical evidence shows that this was not actually true of either of the singers. See my discussion of Viardot's contracts in Chapter 5.4.

Clause 7 lists further rights for Pasta in relation to programming decisions; once again, the wording suggests that these details were not absolutely binding. For example, Pasta agreed in principle to sing in an opera composed for the King's Theatre, but was under no obligation to fulfil this clause, should the role allocated to her in the work fail to meet her satisfaction. From this we can see that singers were also of great significance for the composition of operas. Particular singers' vocal characteristics were an important factor in a work's success, because the performers' vocal skills were among the most important reception criteria of audiences internationally – and especially in London. At the same time, it was of course also in the singers' interests to sing roles that brought their vocal strengths to the fore. One manifestation of this was the practice of inserting arias – or, as in this case, declining to sing a particular role.³¹⁰

Clauses 8 and 9 set the terms for the benefit concerts that were *de rigueur* for an internationally renowned prima donna, the takings from which would significantly increase a singer's overall income. The costs arising from the benefit concert, according to clause 8, were to be borne entirely by the King's Theatre, implying that London opera managers probably only made marginal profits from this kind of performance. Because of the guaranteed fees for singers associated with benefit concerts and the practice of sharing profits, a complete restoration to profitability of an opera house on the back of a benefit concert was unlikely. In Pasta's case, the guaranteed income from her benefit concert would be £1000, and excess profits would be split – although these conditions would only come into play if Ebers was unable to organise for the benefit concert to take place on the day Pasta wished, and with her preferred opera. If this sum of £1000 were added to the £2300 fee already paid, Pasta's total fee would be a fantastical £3300, before her share of the profits from the benefit concert.³¹¹ If the benefit concert happened according to plan, then all the evening's takings would go to Pasta; they were to be delivered the same evening to an agent appointed by her (this stipulation was probably intended to avoid any misappropriation). In either case, then, Pasta stood to make an enormous profit from

³¹⁰ I discuss the practice of inserting arias in Chapter 6.2.

³¹¹ The soprano Emilia Bonini, who was also engaged in 1826 on Velluti's recommendation, had to be content with a fee of £1700, not including profits from benefit performances. The latter were probably not very lucrative by comparison with Pasta's: apparently Bonini's appearance was not considered attractive, and so she was not received enthusiastically by London audiences. In the 1826 season, only Velluti equalled Pasta's £2300 fee. See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, pp. 280–81, 392, 394.

the benefit concert. The relatively high guaranteed fee that would be paid if the concert did not conform to Pasta's wishes can be interpreted as a form of punishment for such behaviour by the manager – a situation that once again illustrates the negotiating power a *prima donna assoluta* commanded. The management merely imposed the restriction that the benefit concert would be held on a Thursday during June – the high point of the season. As far as the choice of works was concerned, Pasta was obliged to tell Ebers her wishes by 10 May at the latest, in order to allow him enough time for preparation. These preparations were limited to, on the one hand, in-house questions of casting and programme planning, since the evening usually involved a ballet, and, on the other hand, marketing tasks such as placing a well-timed announcement in the press. This passage, ensuring preparation time for Ebers, suggests that a *prima donna* – notwithstanding her contractually stipulated, generous sphere of potential influence – did not play a direct role in the management of the opera house. The contract simply gave her the option of influencing certain aspects of its operations; final decisions remained with the manager.

In the 1826 season, Pasta chose to give the London premiere of Mayr's *Medea in Corinto* as her benefit performance. The success of the benefit was not due to the work, but was

almost wholly ascribable to the acting of Madame Pasta, for masterly as the music is, the bulk of it is not of that popular kind that would have stamped the opera so suddenly and decidedly as a favourite, without the effect of her fine talents as an actress, which are fully equal to her vocal powers, and raise her to a rank that few Italian performers in this country have ever attained.³¹²

Exceptionally in Pasta's case, clause 9 further stated in relation to her benefit performance that the theatre would be available exclusively to her on that day, apart from two boxes in the third tier, the opera manager's box, and eight pit tickets. Pasta's engagement at the King's Theatre also included a total of eight days' holiday, should she wish to take it, although she was obliged to make up the performances that she would have given during that period (clause 10). A clause like this one was, of course, only considered in the cases of exceptional singers.³¹³ Under normal circumstances, singers had to be available to the manager without restriction for the

³¹² *Harmonicon* 4 (1826), p. 154.

³¹³ The term 'exceptional' here relates above all to Pasta's extreme popularity and the enormous fees she commanded.

duration of their engagement, and were not permitted to leave London even for short periods.³¹⁴

Clauses 11 and 12 provide further indications of Pasta's exceptional status. Clause 11 gives her the right to sing in both private and public concerts during her engagement – something managers usually tried to prevent, for good reason. Firstly, managers were keen to have singers at their disposal at all times, in case of casting issues because of last-minute withdrawals; also, a theatre with exclusive rights to a prima donna could gain a considerable competitive advantage. The singers' wishes, of course, were often opposed to those of the managers: singing at concerts could bring lucrative fees, significantly adding to one's income from the King's Theatre engagement. In fact, London singers' contracts were particularly strict on this matter because of the high level of competition: in exceptional cases, they might allow performances in private concerts, but no more than that.³¹⁵ In this respect, Pasta's engagement can be considered extremely unusual for the nineteenth century. The importance to Ebers of securing this engagement meant that he had to accept such potentially damaging conditions.

In clause 12, Pasta specified her allocation of complimentary tickets, aside from the benefit performance. This consisted of a box in the third tier, at her disposal at all times, as well as twelve pit tickets and twelve gallery tickets. Given that there were usually six seats in a box at the King's Theatre, Pasta thus had thirty tickets per performance at her disposal, which could therefore not be sold – and this was particularly significant for the theatre in light of the fact that Pasta's performances usually sold out.³¹⁶

In view of the special provisions in the contract already mentioned, clause 13, concerning Pasta's costumes, is unsurprising. It states that 'sur le choix de Madame Pasta', the necessary costumes for each role were to be provided by Ebers – which of course meant further expense on an already tight budget. Despite such difficulties, clauses along these lines would become standard in London contracts, at least where star singers were concerned, by the 1860s.³¹⁷

The formulation of clause 14 again implies a certain caution on Pasta's part, prompted by what had happened with Benelli. Here it was stipulated that, if the

³¹⁴ See my discussion of Laporte's contracts (Chapter 5.2).

³¹⁵ See Chapter 5.2–5.5.

³¹⁶ On the capacity of the King's Theatre, see Nalbach, *The King's Theatre*, p. 84.

³¹⁷ See my discussion of Mario's contract (Chapter 5.5).

management of the King's Theatre failed to uphold any element of the contract, she could terminate her activities at the theatre with immediate effect, and without having to fear the consequences. This was nothing less than *carte blanche* for the singer, with the manager inescapably at the mercy of her possible caprices; the contract also stated that in these circumstances he would not be able to obligate the singer to make up for the dropped performances. Given that this clause begins with a concession on Ebers's part ('Mr. Ebers voulant prouver à Madame Pasta la loyauté de ses intentions'), we can assume that this provision was indeed a result of the lack of payment from Benelli. In the case of a prima donna whose reputation was not on the level of Pasta's, Ebers surely would not have agreed to a clause that was so disadvantageous to him. That he did so indicates both Pasta's crucial importance to the 1826 season, and, more generally, the impasse in which London operas found themselves when faced with a pre-existing financial deficit.

Clause 15 details the terms in the event that the King's Theatre should be forced to close by unforeseeable circumstances ('événements majeurs'). During such a closure, Pasta undertook to pay back half of her fee for the cancelled performances. In light of the other special arrangements made for Pasta, this clause initially seems oddly strict, suggesting that it was an insurance measure added by Ebers. But the last sentence of the clause lessens its strength, stating that these were absolutely the only circumstances in which repayments might ever be necessary. Moreover, had Ebers really made such demands of Pasta, she might have refused future engagements at the King's Theatre, losing Ebers the most prominent prima donna of the age.

The final clause of the contract stipulated when Pasta had to be in London: between 18 and 21 April 1826. Given that her first performance of the season was on 22 April, it is clear that not much time was allocated to rehearsals.³¹⁸ Pasta's precise time of arrival in London is unclear, but Ebers recalled that she had unexpectedly been delayed in leaving Paris, and had given a brilliant performance in Rossini's *Otello* despite the strains of the journey.³¹⁹ This report suggests that in this case there was even less rehearsal time than usual, which shows that the audience was more concerned with particular stars' individual performances, or simply the fact they appeared at all, than with the overall performance of the ensemble.

³¹⁸ See *Quarterly Musical Magazine* 8 (1826), p. 135.

³¹⁹ See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 299.

The 1826 engagement between Pasta and Ebers was exceptional in every respect, and this was only partly a reflection of her especially prominent status ('At no period of Pasta's career has she been more the fashion than during this engagement').³²⁰ Her negative experiences with Benelli also played a significant role, creating an urgent need for financial protection. In this light, it is clear that engagements were far from standardised at this time, at least for star singers. The special provisions in many of the contract's clauses were by no means standard for the early nineteenth century: given the privately-financed nature of opera in London, such practices would not have been widely practicable.

Nevertheless, the examples examined here of real contracts, brazen demands, and correspondence between 'agents' and managers illustrate that the singers on London's Italian stages in the first third of the nineteenth century were of huge importance in the system. Not for nothing did Ebers agree to a contract that was actually far beyond his financial means.

A sensible financial decision *not* to engage a star singer would also have had serious consequences for relations between the manager and the supporters of the King's Theatre. As can be seen from the press reports surrounding Edmund Waters, such 'mistakes' were discussed in public discourse. At the same time, opera-goers were reluctant to accept the higher ticket prices that resulted from ever-increasing costs; in this light, we can also suspect that the audience was to a certain extent ignorant of the financial workings of an opera house. Early nineteenth-century opera managers thus had to serve a wide range of different stakeholder groups, often with opposing interests and considerably more bargaining power than the manager himself, so that the opera company ended up making a loss. This situation would not improve significantly in the 1830s, as will be seen next in light of the contracts between Pierre François Laporte and the singers Giulia Grisi and Antonio Tamburini.

5.2 Pierre François Laporte's 1834 and 1835 contracts with Giulia Grisi and Antonio Tamburini

Alongside Giorgio Ronconi and Luigi Lablache, Giulia Grisi and Antonio Tamburini made up the famed 'Puritani quartet' for the Paris premiere of Bellini's eponymous

³²⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 298. This remark by Ebers was surely partly an attempt to justify the enormous fee he had agreed to pay to Pasta.

opera in 1835. Close relationships existed between the theatre of the premiere – the Théâtre Italien in Paris – and London’s King’s Theatre, particularly in terms of the exchange of singers and works. Frequently, as in the case of *I puritani*, London opera managers imported whole productions, including the ensemble of singers involved, in order to allow London audiences to partake of the latest operatic fashions from the continent. One factor that eased the processes of transfer was that Pierre François Laporte and Édouard Robert (director of the Théâtre Italien) established an efficient system of agreements, which was often far more extensive than a simple coordination of season dates. The next section of this chapter examines more closely the extent of these agreements.

Laporte had engaged both the then-unknown soprano Giulia Grisi and the baritone Antonio Tamburini – who was already renowned in Paris – for the 1834 and 1835 London seasons, which enabled the first London performance of *I puritani* in 1835. Both singers’ contracts survive, and offer revealing insights into the organisation of early 1830s contracts.³²¹ It is therefore instructive to examine these documents in terms of their organisation, implementation and possible differences between them. As these examples will make clear, singers’ contracts in general are an important source in relation to the development of a social history of opera, and their usefulness is not limited to financial concerns; rather, they give precise information about the workings of an opera industry.

Figure 1: First page of the contract between Antonio Tamburini and Pierre François Laporte [BF, Carte Romagna busta 638-73a-d].

At first glance, the most striking thing about the two contracts is that they are not produced by the King’s Theatre, but are printed standard contracts in French from the Théâtre Italien, which Laporte adapted by hand to fit the circumstances in London. This explains the otherwise curious presence in the printed version of the name of Édouard Robert as a contractual party. For the London adaptation of the contract, then, it was sufficient to cross out Robert’s name and replace it with Laporte’s by hand. Similarly, the words ‘de Londres’ have been added by hand after ‘Théâtre Royal Italien’, in order to refer to the King’s Theatre.

³²¹ Grisi’s contract is part of the King’s Theatre Collection at the Houghton Library, Harvard University [HL, TS 319.99.1]. Tamburini’s contract is now in the Biblioteca Forlì [BF, Carta Romagna busta 638-73a-d]. I provide transcriptions of both contracts in the appendix.

That standard French contracts were used as a basis of King's Theatre contracts indicates the close relations between the Parisian directors and London opera managers. This impression is strengthened by an agreement between Laporte and Robert from 1838 relating to the bass Luigi Lablache, which illustrates that the two directors undertook engagements jointly for the Paris and London seasons.³²² In the engagement in question, Robert plays the role of an agent in relation to Lablache: it is to Robert that the singer is contracted for the opera seasons in both cities; Laporte could secure Lablache's services for the London season only by paying fees totalling 40,000 francs (£1569) to Robert.³²³ However, the agreement brought considerable advantages for both parties. Laporte was able to gain a certain degree of security in his engagements of singers, which allowed him to build up considerable competitive advantages against other directors and impresarios in continental Europe. For example, the autumn *stagione* in Italy began in summer and continued until November, thus potentially overlapping with the London season, which continued into August.³²⁴ This situation represented a significant risk to Laporte's planned engagements, and motivated him to cultivate such deals with Robert even when his financial position was precarious. Meanwhile, Robert used Laporte's situation to increase his income and therefore his liquidity. Laporte agreed to pay the fee in four instalments of 10,000 francs (£392): an instalment on the last day of the months April, May and June, with the remaining 10,000 francs deposited in a Parisian bank account before Lablache's departure for London. Because these fees are so high, we can assume that they included Lablache's own fee.

These engagements, evidently made by mutual consent between Laporte and Robert, also show why Laporte used standard Paris contracts for London – this was a pragmatic, practical solution for him, requiring only slight adaptations to the London market. Moreover, the contracts with Grisi and Tamburini were both signed on the

³²² See the engagement between Robert and Laporte of 4 April 1838 [BNF: FRBNF39814278].

³²³ In 1838, one pound could be exchanged for 25.50 in French Francs. See *Galignani's New Paris Guide* (Paris: Galignani, 1838), p. 17, and *Allgemeine Encyclopädie für Kaufleute und Fabrikanten*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: O. Wigand, 1838), p. 99.

³²⁴ On season dates, see Walter, *Die Oper ist ein Irrenhaus*, p. 10. For example, the Italian autumn season in 1824 lasted from the end of August to the beginning of November. However, the precise beginning of the season was not consistent from one year to the next; it might be as early as the beginning of August (see, for example, Luigi Romani, *Teatro alla Scala: Cronologica di tutti gli spettacoli* (Milan, 1862), p. 73). In any case, at the end of the London season, singers usually returned to Paris for the beginning of the autumn season there in October. See B. Cassinelli, A. Maltempi and M. Pozzoni, *Rubini: L'uomo e l'artista*, vol. 1 (Romano di Lombardia: Cassa Rurale ed Artigiana di Calcio e di Covo, 1993), esp. p. 250.

same day, 4 April 1833. This date would indicate that they were signed in Paris, because although Grisi would not make her London debut until the following season, 1834, she was already engaged at the Théâtre Italien in 1833.³²⁵ It seems that, at the end of the Paris *saison*, Robert presented the London contracts to the singers on Laporte's instructions, and they could thus be signed without extra effort. This indicates the efficiency of the system that Laporte and Robert established between them, and presumably the same meeting provided an opportunity for the singers to sign Robert's contracts for the Paris *saison* as well – at what other time, after all, were almost all the renowned singers of the age to be found in the same place?³²⁶

The general structure of one of Laporte's contracts consists of 19 standardised, printed clauses, and four additional clauses added by hand. The first clause specifies the type of engagement. For example, Grisi was engaged as a 'prima donna soprano', and Tamburini as a 'primo basso cantante' – designations that immediately limited the singer to particular roles: 'musico' (trouser) roles were thus not included in Grisi's contract.³²⁷ The designated roles also implied a certain hierarchical position, which would be manifest above all in concessions in the contract and in the size of the fee. Also in this first clause, the singers agreed to perform not only in opera productions at the King's Theatre but also in concerts and oratorio performances as the opera manager wished.³²⁸ In Tamburini's contract – although not in Grisi's – there is a short handwritten addition to this clause, limiting the singer's performances to a maximum of four evenings per week. Tamburini may have decided on the basis of personal experiences of his last contract with Laporte to make this limit explicit, avoiding the repetition of a possibly unsatisfactory state of affairs. Grisi, on the other hand, had no experience at this point of the peculiarities of the London opera industry, and so had no reason to impose such a restriction.

The last paragraph of this clause specifies that the singers must arrive on time to rehearsals and performances. The fact that this significant factor in the running of an opera house is dealt with in such a rudimentary way may imply that singers allowed

³²⁵ See Charles Hervey, *The Theatres of Paris* (Paris: Galignani, 1847), p. 158.

³²⁶ Severini, who managed the Théâtre Italien jointly with Robert (and Rossini as musical director), also apparently worked for a period as an agent for Lablache. See *Musical World* 8 (1838), p. 45.

³²⁷ Pasta's contract was different in this respect: she was engaged by Ebers as a 'prima donna assoluta' and 'musico assoluto'. See Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, p. 387, and my discussion of Pasta in Chapter 5.1. Pasta even took on the title role in Rossini's *Otello*, opposite Henriette Sontag as Desdemona. See *London Magazine* 1 (1828), p. 437.

³²⁸ A passage restricting concerts to a 60-mile radius of Paris was crossed out in both contracts.

themselves some leeway as far as rehearsal attendance was concerned. Rehearsal times in London were indeed extremely tight throughout the nineteenth century, usually only extending over a few days.³²⁹ In theory, limited rehearsal time would not have been a problem for *I puritani* in the 1835 season, because the production had recently been performed in Paris, and so the music was well known to the singers. But given that the opera was new to the orchestra at the King's Theatre, its move there must surely have involved a certain loss of quality, despite the singers' familiarity with their roles.³³⁰

In the London versions of the contract, the second clause is crossed out. In the printed version, this clause commits the singers to performances in concerts at the royal court that may be organised by the 'entrepreneur' or his representatives. This state of affairs, where the opera manager would organise royal concerts, was completely inapplicable to the situation in London, so it is unsurprising that Laporte eliminated the clause entirely. Appearances in private concerts for the royal family or elite individuals were indeed an important source of income for many star singers of London's Italian opera, but only in very rare cases were opera managers involved in their organisation.³³¹

Clause 3 stipulates that the singers are to make their services available exclusively to the manager: appearing in public concerts was thus completely prohibited. In the standard Parisian contract, singers were also prevented from appearing in private concerts (concerts 'de société'), but this restriction was crossed out in the adapted contracts for London. This shows how significant such concerts were for the singers and therefore for the manager of the King's Theatre: they served as a point of contact with elite supporters of the opera house, which, in the case of a particularly successful singer, might lead to an upturn in subscriptions. Equally, private concerts in the houses of elite opera-goers offered singers the chance to improve their standing in relation to opera managers.³³² In fact, cliques made up of particular singers' supporters caused Laporte serious trouble in the management of the King's Theatre. Just one example was the famed 'Tamburini row', when the audience briefly brought

³²⁹ See *Ausland: Eine Wochenschrift für Kunde des geistigen und sittlichen Lebens der Völker* 7 (1834), p. 189.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ The origins of this clause are unclear, but in any case it is not relevant to the London contract, and was crossed out in this case.

³³² See Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 2, p. 6, and Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 126.

a performance to a standstill by demonstrating their displeasure at a casting change.³³³

Clause 4 paints a vivid picture of the singers' cliques that were part and parcel of everyday operatic life at the time. The clause outlines circumstances that would not be considered a valid reason for a singer to refuse a role: namely, the fact that the role had been performed by a singer of the same status before or during the engagement. Thus according to the contract, singers did not have exclusive rights to particular roles. In practice, of course, this rule was impossible to implement, because the audience, too, usually wanted to see a particular prima donna in her well-publicised signature role.³³⁴ Furthermore, singers could not refuse to sing the roles that the manager had allocated to them. In Laporte's case, however, this clause seems to have been of little relevance to the day-to-day running of the theatre, as is indicated, for example, by the numerous changes to the productions that had been announced for the 1841 season. Benjamin Lumley allowed himself the following exaggerated characterisation in his *Reminiscences*:

From all the evidence afforded by the annals of the theatre at this period, it would scarcely be unreasonable, much less cruel, to suppose that the constant insubordination, the incessant annoyances, and the wear and tear of mind, occasioned by the habitual conflicts between manager and artists, materially hastened the death of M. Laporte. It is sufficiently well attested that the director was scarcely allowed a voice in the selection of operas, or even in the choice of artists to be employed.³³⁵

In the fifth clause of Laporte's contracts, the problematic degree of power at singers' disposal becomes even clearer: singers clearly had significant influence in many domains, and this is also visible in the regulations that appear later on in the contracts. For example, at least contractually, a singer who had recovered from a period of illness could not refuse to sing a role that had originally been planned for them – even if another singer had performed the role as an interim solution. Further difficulties seem to have been created by the exclusive rights that some singers demanded, above all in connection with debut roles: in this passage of the contract,

³³³ See John Edmund Cox, *Musical Recollections of the Last Half-Century*, 2 vols. (London: Tinsley, 1872), vol. 2, p. 89, and my Chapter 3.

³³⁴ Exclusive rights to particular roles for individual singers began to be granted explicitly in London singers' contracts around the middle of the century. See my discussion of Pauline Viardot in Chapter 5.4.

³³⁵ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 9–10.

singers agreed to release the roles in which they had made their debut for other singers' debuts, rather than insisting on exclusive rights. Finally, singers had to declare themselves willing to replace another singer of comparable status in case of illness – a stipulation that seems rather at odds with the London 'star system'. But this passage, too, was probably not binding in practice, because singers were only obliged to replace their colleagues *if* there was sufficient time available to prepare for the roles concerned – which was probably only rarely the case. Unforeseen hitches usually resulted in short-notice programme changes, rather than cast changes – and the numerous programme changes during the 1841 season confirm this impression. The fact that the passage relating to exclusive rights, cancellations and illnesses gives such detailed stipulations can be taken as an indication of the 'anarchic' conditions at the King's Theatre. Indeed, the so-called 'cold and illness system' seems to have presented a huge problem for Laporte's management, and the following quotation from Lumley reads like a farcical reference to clause 5 of the contract:

Opportune 'colds' and 'indispositions' had to be accepted as reasons for change of performances and refusal of 'parts,' whenever it suited caprice, or desire to thwart, on the part of any one of the powerful cabal; until the term 'singer's illness' passed into a proverb.³³⁶

Clause 6 governs the procedure for dealing with breaches of contract. The two contractual parties were to refer any concerns to an impartial outsider engaged by them, who would then decide the matter without legal proceedings. It was clearly preferable not to allow such disputes to take place in public: above all for the managers, this would have had considerable drawbacks. The legal disputes between Lumley and Gye over the engagement of Johanna Wagner, or that between Alfred Bunn and Jenny Lind, are salient examples here. It was in order to avoid bad publicity and to demonstrate his integrity, then, that Laporte went to such lengths to resolve such difficulties without going to court. It is important to bear in mind the potential consequences of a trial, even if it was the singer who had breached the contract. As a best-case scenario, the result would have been a ruling against the singer and a fine, after which the singer probably would not have been inclined to take on further engagements in London, the audience's wishes notwithstanding. Even if a manager won the trial, then, he was the one who would bear most of its negative

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 10. On the 'cold and illness system', see *ibid.*, p. 34.

consequences. He would simply have been depriving himself of an audience-drawing star performer.

After the end of the engagement, all sheet music and costumes, as well as the rights to perform particular roles, were to be returned to the theatre, or else a singer faced a financial penalty (Clause 7).³³⁷ This implies that costumes were provided by the opera house, taking up a significant portion of the budget, particularly because *prime donne* always looked for visual extravagance in their stage attire. Alongside the sumptuous ballet costumes expected by audiences, this often necessitated ‘unreasonable outlays’.³³⁸

In its printed version, clause 8 is fragmentary: gaps were left for the dates of the engagement to be filled in by hand. Grisi’s and Tamburini’s contracts both stipulate an engagement for two seasons, 1834 and 1835, from 5 April to the beginning of August in each year.³³⁹ The two-year term suggests that Laporte wanted to secure singers’ services for the long term, in order to have a consistent ensemble of singers available in future. In view of the Europe-wide competition for the engagement of star singers, this represents an attempt – if nothing more – to be able to plan in the long term to a certain extent.³⁴⁰

Clause 9 states the fees to be paid to the singer in question, as a total for the whole season. It is not easy to draw conclusions about the difference between Tamburini’s fee and Grisi’s, because they are given in different currencies: Tamburini was promised £300 for the first season and £400 for the second; Grisi’s contract states 6250 francs for the first season and 10,000 francs for the second.³⁴¹ Grisi’s fees may

³³⁷ The frequency of allusions to singers’ (purported or actual) exclusive rights to particular roles suggests that this issue presented significant problems in the opera industry.

³³⁸ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 127.

³³⁹ Because the autumn season in Italy usually began in August and seems to have involved considerably longer rehearsal times than were usual in London, in some years the end of the London season and the beginning of the Italian one may have overlapped. See Walter, *Die Oper ist ein Irrenhaus*, p. 22.

³⁴⁰ The Italian impresario Domenico Barbaja sometimes made engagements covering even longer periods: in 1826, the soprano Adelaide Tosi signed a 14-year engagement (see *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 28 (1826), p. 638). In order to secure young, talented singers early, Barbaja signed ten-year contracts with promising singers while they were still children. Contemporary reports on this describe it as a kind of slave trade. See, for example, *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* 55 (1855), p. 345.

³⁴¹ In this case, it is reasonable to compare the fees per season, because both engagements cover the same time period. In other cases, fees for a whole season are usually only usefully comparable if one then calculates the fee a singer received per month or per evening. The extraordinary amounts Grisi was paid can be illustrated by a comparison with the top singers at the Paris Opéra. For example, Gilbert Duprez – a top earner – was paid 40,000 francs per season in 1844–45, plus additional fees of 20,640 francs, bringing his total income for the year to 60,640 francs (see Kimberly White, ‘The

have been stated in francs because 1834 was her first season in London, so there were no fees in pounds from earlier seasons to serve as a point of comparison. Her fee from Robert at the Théâtre Italien was of course paid in francs; Laporte may have simply named her Paris fee as the amount she would receive in London, or adjusted the Paris fee to reflect the duration of the London engagement. Tamburini, on the other hand, had become a well-established participant in the King's Theatre's season since his London debut in 1832, so it is unsurprising that his fee is given in sterling.³⁴²

An 1833 pound-franc exchange rate suggests that Grisi's fee was the equivalent of £250 in the 1834 season and £400 in her second season.³⁴³ By comparison with Tamburini's fees, these sums initially appear rather low for a prima donna. But at 23, Grisi was still in the early stages of her career, and had only slowly begun making a name for herself in Italy following her debut in Bologna in 1829.³⁴⁴ Indeed, Grisi was constantly overshadowed at this time by Giuditta Pasta, who was then at the height of her career. In 1831, Bellini conceived the title role in *Norma* for Pasta, while Grisi sang Adalgisa. After successes in Italy, it was not until October 1832, as a substitute for Maria Malibran, that Grisi made her Paris debut, and so steadily began to build up an international reputation.³⁴⁵ In this light, it seems unsurprising that Grisi, still relatively unknown in London, commanded a lower basic fee than did Tamburini, who was already well established in the Italian opera *saison* in Paris, justifying a higher fee in London too.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Grisi's fee also seems less surprisingly low if we consider the benefit performances that were typical in London. Ultimately, an engagement as a prima donna was associated with a high level of prestige, and this also influenced the fee, as we will see in more detail later.

Cantatrice and the Profession of Singing at the Paris Opéra and Opéra Comique, 1830–1848' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University, 2012), p. 133). Duprez would thus have received 15,160 for a three-month period; in 1835, Grisi received at least 25,000 francs (including fees for benefit performances) for three months.

³⁴² See Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, p. 47. Tamburini's Paris debut was also in 1832, and this engagement was probably also agreed between Robert and Laporte.

³⁴³ 100 francs equalled £4 (see Baron d'Haussez, *Great Britain in 1833* (Philadelphia, 1833), p. 126).

³⁴⁴ See Clayton, *Queens of Song*, p. 185.

³⁴⁵ On the occasion when Grisi replaced Malibran, see Hervey, *The Theatres of Paris*, p. 158.

³⁴⁶ As will be discussed in more detail later, benefit performances would of course provide extra income in addition to a singer's basic fee. For the Paris season 1833/34, Tamburini apparently received a total of 40,000 francs. See *Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger* 5 (1833), p. 39.

As well as naming the sums to be paid, clause 9 of the contract details the rather strict terms of payment.³⁴⁷ The first instalment would be paid only at the beginning of the engagement (rather than any earlier, for example upon signature of the contract). In the event that a singer fell ill for more than a month, payments would stop until the engagement was resumed. Clause 10 details the arrangements in the case of an unforeseen event ('événement majeur'); in London especially, given the frequency of fires in theatres and bankrupt opera managers, this clause had real relevance. In such cases, the singer would not be entitled to any payments until their engagement was resumed.

Next, clause 11 deals with the provision of singers' costumes (already mentioned briefly in clause 7): the costs would be borne entirely by the opera manager. The only exceptions were the 'habit de ville' (everyday clothes) and, relatedly, the cost of hairdressing and shoes, for which singers were responsible. The rather spartan-sounding guidelines about the costumes the manager would provide suggest that they were unlikely to be hugely extravagant. We have already seen that contractual specifications and the reality of the opera business often differed; it is hard to imagine an opera manager insisting on economising where a prima donna's costume was concerned, and indeed the last passage of this clause establishes that in principle, brand-new costumes might be provided.

Clause 12 is concerned with special provisions surrounding the illness of a singer; in view of the large number of illness-related clauses in Laporte's contracts, this was clearly an important area for regulation, which suggests that Lumley's description of Laporte's management can be considered reliable. In this contract, a financial penalty of a third of the monthly salary would be incurred if a singer performed in concerts or other external events when they had cancelled performances at the King's Theatre due to illness. Lumley mentions an offence along these lines in his *Reminiscences*: the baritone Ronconi claimed that he was ill and therefore unable to sing; by Lumley's own account, he managed to expose Ronconi's lie by drawing the singer into an impassioned discussion, which so enthused him that he forgot to sound hoarse.³⁴⁸

Clause 13 requests again that singers maintain discipline with regard to rehearsal attendance: late arrival at a rehearsal would incur a penalty of one day's fee.

³⁴⁷ The extra clauses added by hand show the issue of payment in a very different light.

³⁴⁸ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 55–56, and Zechner, '...And the English buy it', pp. 62–3.

Unexplained absence from a performance, necessitating a programme change, was punishable with a fine of one month's fee, according to clause 14, unless it was a result of 'force majeure'. If the absence resulted in the closure of the theatre for the evening, the singer would also be liable to pay a flat fee of 4000 francs to cover the lost takings. It is doubtful, though, whether such situations really did result in these consequences, because of managers' aforementioned high level of dependence on singers.

Clause 15 makes clear just how standardised clauses 1 to 19 really are: in this clause, the name of the city in question has not been altered from Paris to London. This suggests that the parts of the contract were barely discussed, and were therefore considered binding only to a limited extent. Clause 15 is a case in point, in that it forbids singers from leaving the city during the season without the manager's permission; given that the name of the city is incorrect, singers would have had plenty of room for manoeuvre.

Clause 16 allows insights into the prevalence of cast changes in the opera business at this time; these were particularly frequent during Laporte's management, and often led to programme changes.³⁴⁹ In order to be able to react as flexibly as possible when changes were necessary, all singers had to be available on performance days until 8 o' clock in the evening; if they were unexpectedly away from the theatre, they had to provide an address at which they could be reached at any time – again, the fines indicated in clause 14 applied to breaches of this rule.

Clauses 17, 18 and 19 are very general, standardised clauses, confirming the legal validity of the contract and indicating that financial penalties would be incurred for any breaches.³⁵⁰ Finally, the contract asks the singer to confirm that they understand all its contents.

At this point the standard Paris contract ends, and the overall impression it creates is one of generalisation, leaving very little leeway or variation between individual singers, but this inflexibility was not necessarily transferred to London. Rather, especially given the inexactness in the adaptations of individual clauses, it seems that singers in London had room for manoeuvre that applied in a general sense to the contract as a whole. In this context, the clauses that Laporte added by hand are

³⁴⁹ For an example, see footnote 30 to Chapter 2 (p. 17).

³⁵⁰ In clause 18, once again the city in which the contract was valid has not been changed from the Parisian original. With regard to enforceability of the penalty fee threatened in this clause, this oversight may have had significant consequences.

especially significant in identifying the characteristics of engagements at London's Italian opera houses specifically. Interestingly, the added clauses in Tamburini's and Grisi's contracts do not differ significantly, whether in their wording or the themes addressed. This suggests that these additional clauses, too, were already broadly standardised at this time, with only small details adapted to the individual singers. Clearly, Laporte set out a certain amount of leeway in advance, within the bounds of which concessions to singers were possible.

Clause 20 is identical in both contracts, and concerns each singer's journey to London, which was to be undertaken straight after the end of the Paris *saison*, in order to arrive in London in good time for the start of the season on 5 April 1834. As can be seen from the identical wording, once again this is a standard clause, but one that was necessary in order to adapt the contract to the London season.

Clause 21 is more detailed, and clarifies the arrangements for a benefit concert. We can assume that only principal singers were entitled to these. In the 1841 season, for example, only Lablache, Mario, Grisi, Persiani, Rubini and Tamburini were allowed them.³⁵¹ Such potpourri-style performances brought a significant improvement to the fee stated in the contract: the Grisi and Tamburini contracts entitled each singer to a benefit, although the income from these concerts differed considerably between the two singers. According to the contract, Grisi would receive £400 for the benefit concert she would give during the first season, and £600 (15,000 francs) for the one in the second season.³⁵² Tamburini's fee for his benefits was just £260 in the first season and £400 in the second. The sums stated, however, by no means corresponded to what the singers would ultimately receive from these concerts: they were merely the guaranteed fees. As the clause makes explicit, beyond the guaranteed fee, the takings from a benefit concert would be shared equally between the opera manager and the singer; with a sold-out theatre, a benefit concert would therefore bring a considerable increase in income. Close examination of this agreement in Grisi's contract makes clear that Laporte originally intended to keep the surplus profits from both her benefit concerts for himself, because Grisi's name does not appear in the appropriate place for the first season, and is crossed out in the second season. There was apparently some uncertainty between Laporte and Grisi

³⁵¹ See Appendix: Season HM 1841. Compiled on the basis of [HL, GEN TS 319.24].

³⁵² In the contract the sums were given in francs; I have converted them to sterling here in order to aid comparison.

about the contractual terms surrounding benefit concerts, resulting in several rounds of bargaining. The end result of these negotiations was that the profit from both concerts – the £200 increase in the guaranteed fee for the second season notwithstanding – was shared equally between them. In addition, Grisi had the right to keep any gifts – this was a *prima donna*'s privilege, and it therefore seems unsurprising that this factor is not mentioned in Tamburini's contract.³⁵³

Tamburini's contract also stipulates that the surplus profit from the benefit concerts in both seasons would be divided between the manager and the singer. Analogously to Grisi's contract, the guaranteed fee for the benefit increased by £140 between the first season and the second; this passage also clearly underwent similar, if less intensive, renegotiation to that evidenced in Grisi's contract.

The contractual stipulations surrounding benefit concerts make the singers' financial situation look very different from the picture that emerges if only their basic fees are considered. Even if each singer had received only the guaranteed fee from their benefit concerts, Grisi's total fee would have been £650 in 1834 and £1000 in 1835; Tamburini would receive £560 in 1834 and £700 in 1835. The fees cited in London contracts are thus of limited significance unless we also consider benefit concerts. If one simply compared Grisi's fee of £250 for the first season to Tamburini's £300 for his first season, the result would be a misleading picture of the *prima donna*'s significance on the London stage. Taking benefit concerts into account, however, allows a clearer view of how and why singers received the fees they did, and of the elements that were considered relevant to a singer's fees.

As a proportion of the total budget available to Laporte, the sums paid to Grisi and Tamburini can be characterised as enormous. Laporte's outgoings for singers and chorus in the 1834 season amounted to approximately £10,000.³⁵⁴ At £1210, the total fees for Grisi and Tamburini in 1834 already made up 12.1% of this budget; in 1835 it was 17% – almost a fifth of the planned expenditure on engagements.³⁵⁵ The size of

³⁵³ The gifts given to *prime donne* included valuable jewellery, and if Henry Sutherland Edwards's polemical account is to be believed, this was sometimes concealed in bouquets which were thrown onto the stage. Because of the high numbers of such gifts, and their weight, Edwards suggested it would be wise 'to introduce some such rules with respect to the throwing of bouquets as were proposed at the Brussels Conference in regard to warlike operations' (Edwards, *The Prima Donna*, vol. 2, pp. 274–5).

³⁵⁴ See *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* 309 (1834), p. 1236.

³⁵⁵ The figure of £1210 included the guaranteed fees from benefit performances. We can assume that Laporte's total budget for singers in 1835 was not significantly larger than the £10,000 of 1834,

these star singers' fees, and their relationship with the budget as a whole, makes clear how important the singers were to London's opera industry. In order to afford these huge fees on such a restricted overall budget, it was necessary to find other ways of reducing costs, as the following description from the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* makes clear:

Gleichwohl kann er [Laporte] sich nur dadurch eine reichliche Subscription verschaffen, dass er eine Liste der gewonnenen Sänger vorlegt und mit seinem Personal das Interesse seiner Kunden zu ködern weiss. Er braucht also Talente von Ruf, und die müssen überall theuer honorirt werden. Kann er nun hier keine Ersparniss machen, so muss er sie da bewerkstelligen, wo sie das Publikum nicht gleich gewahrt: Orchester, Dekorationen, Maschinen, Chöre, Kostüm, Statisten, Gehülften, Bureaux – daran übt er sein Sparsystem.³⁵⁶

Laporte, by contrast with the singers, did not stand to gain very much from benefit concerts.³⁵⁷ Even so, the sharing of profits would at least have offered marginal improvements to his own extremely tight budget. Throughout his management, Laporte had to struggle again and again with difficult financial bottlenecks, and of course the singers did not remain unaware of this. Maria Malibran, for example, was advised from several quarters that she should not follow through with her 1830 engagement at the King's Theatre, because Laporte was in an 'insolvent state' and might be unable to pay fees. Nevertheless, Malibran decided to go ahead with the engagement. Given that there is no evidence of any difficulties surrounding her fees, we can assume that Laporte did manage to raise the necessary sum.³⁵⁸

Grisi's benefit performance in 1835, at which the first London performance of Bellini's *I puritani* was given, seems to have been a great success, although this had less to do with Bellini's opera than with the strong performances of the singers involved – Laporte's contractual arrangements did at least allow for some improvement to his budget in cases such as this.³⁵⁹

because Laporte, according to the *Morgenblatt* article just quoted, would already have needed to recoup losses in 1834.

³⁵⁶ *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 6 (1829), p. 348.

³⁵⁷ In light of the high numbers of benefit performances during Laporte's management, Hall-Witt speculates that Laporte reduced singers' fees for benefit concerts in order to make a profit. However, Grisi's and Tamburini's contracts would suggest that this was not the case. See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 167.

³⁵⁸ María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, vol. 1, pp. 107–8.

³⁵⁹ See *Athenaeum* (1835), p. 396.

Whilst benefit concerts proved profitable for managers and above all for singers, in many cases they were not occasions for high-quality artistic performances, as can be seen from the following critical description:

Die Vielfältigkeit der Benefiz=Vorstellungen ist eine weitere Ursache des schlechten Spieles, wodurch im Kings=Theater das Ohr beleidigt wird. Diese Vorstellungen, die einen Theil der den Sängern bewilligten Besoldung ausmachen, finden an den Donnerstagen beinahe jeder Woche statt. Dazu bedarf es allzeit einer Oper, die während der Saison noch nicht gegeben worden ist; daher die Nothwendigkeit, die Proben für jedes Tonwerk auf die Zahl von zweien oder dreien zu beschränken. Man kann sich leicht denken, wie, so obendrein einstudirt, die Darstellungen ausfallen müssen.³⁶⁰

This depiction suggests that benefit concerts were organised mainly for financial reasons. The first London performance of a new opera was simply a means to an end, a way to suggest artistic interest and to offer the audience a novelty in the hope of increased takings.

Clause 22 returns to a subject already mentioned in the printed part of the contract: that of ‘difficultés ou contestations’ between managers and singers; the contract states that these would lead to requests for compensation. The repeated references to fines and the threat of consequences if elements of the contract were not fulfilled do not necessarily give the impression that was probably intended, of strict contractual regulation from which no deviation would be tolerated. On the contrary, this tone may indicate instead that merely stating the threat of consequences – in most cases, managers went no further – was necessary in order to curb singers’ capriciousness at least on paper. Lumley’s descriptions of Laporte’s management support the hypothesis that contracts were applied in a fairly relaxed manner. A singer’s contract in 1830s London, then, served more as a set of rough guidelines than strict rules.

Laporte’s contract does not include any specification of roles to be sung, as would be expected in singers’ contracts generally. Clause 23 merely notes that Grisi had the right to choose fifteen pieces (‘pièces’) from the current repertoire for her debut; in Tamburini’s case his selection was limited to ten ‘pièces’. Although the intended meaning of this term is not entirely clear, in France it was synonymous with ‘work’, in the sense of an opera or play.³⁶¹ In this interpretation of the word, Grisi and

³⁶⁰ *Ausland: Eine Wochenschrift für Kunde des geistigen und sittlichen Lebens der Völker* 7 (1834), p. 189.

³⁶¹ See *Revue de Paris* 37 (1832), p. 262.

Tamburini had considerable influence over the King's Theatre's programme, with Grisi having greater freedom because of her prima donna status.³⁶² It is thus unsurprising that the London programmes that resulted from this system consisted mainly of operas that the principal singers in question had already sung with great success in continental Europe. The programming for a season during Laporte's management was thus not only dependent on the audience's preferences – although naturally, opera-goers were interested in successful productions from the continent – but also, or to a greater extent, on individual singers' priorities. The engagement of a particular singer, or ensemble of singers such as the 'vieille garde', therefore had huge consequences for how the season was put together: programme choices were not the result of managers' calculations or strategies. This situation also explains the frequent long delays between an opera's first performances in Italy and London. Bellini's *Norma*, for example, was premiered in Naples in 1831, but only appeared on London's Italian stages two years later.³⁶³ By contrast, Italian operas that were premiered in Paris made their way to London far more quickly, because of the close relationship between the two cities. Bellini's *I puritani* is a good example: as we have seen, following its Paris premiere, it was performed in London that same year, 1835, as Grisi's benefit performance.

The next additional clause, number 24, concerns the form in which fees would be paid, and further indicates the higher status of the prima donna in relation to a basso cantante of equal prominence. In Grisi's engagement, Laporte agreed to deposit a month's fee in a Paris bank account before she left Paris. We can assume that this advance payment was agreed because of Laporte's difficult financial situation, which, as Malibran's reservations show, was common knowledge in the opera world at the time. It is therefore understandable that Grisi thought it important to ensure her financial security: if the agreed advance had not arrived, the engagement would have been annulled and Grisi would not have needed to leave Paris.

The clause then goes on to mention the possibility that Laporte might withdraw from his commitment to the second season, and would have the right to do so if he notified Grisi before the end of the first season. By contrast, there is no escape clause at the equivalent point in Tamburini's contract. Apparently Laporte was certain that

³⁶² This seems plausible in light of the number of performances that made up an opera season. The Italian seasons at Her Majesty's in 1841 (between April and August) included 53 evenings' performance, comprising at least 23 different operas. (See Appendix: Season HM 1841).

³⁶³ See Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, p. 60.

Tamburini would return for the second season, and did not need to set out precautionary measures in relation to a possible withdrawal. Also, only in the second season did Tamburini have a right to a month's fee in advance before he left Paris. As in Grisi's case, but to a lesser extent, this measure safeguards Tamburini. Any cash-flow difficulties for Laporte during the first season would have resulted in a high level of financial risk for Tamburini, but he was apparently willing to take this chance. Moreover, by contrast with Grisi, Tamburini had already been engaged at the King's Theatre in the 1832 and 1833 seasons, so that he was probably better informed than Grisi was about the opera manager's situation, and knew that he could be more or less sure of receiving his fee, given that Laporte could not easily have foregone Tamburini's involvement.

London singers' contracts clearly involved a high degree of flexibility, which is evident above all in Laporte's handwritten additions. Moreover, some clauses were probably more significant than others. Grisi signed with her initials under clauses 1, 2, 3 and 9 (with their additions) individually, as well as the non-numbered opening clause that named Laporte as a contractual party.³⁶⁴ By contrast, the standard printed clauses 11 to 19 were not even acknowledged with a signature at the foot of the page. Tamburini, on the other hand, simply signed his name at the end of each page. He did not sign individual clauses, which may be another sign that he was already familiar with London contracts and the practices associated with them. The clauses that Grisi signed were those containing essential components of the contract, such as her engagement as a 'prima donna soprano' (clause 1), the crossing-out of the clause about performances at the royal court (clause 2), permission to perform in private concerts (clause 3) and the statement of her fees for each season (clause 9). We can conclude from this that these clauses, as well as the added handwritten ones, were essential for London contracts. The other standardised clauses, with their Parisian origins, are probably not representative of London contractual practices in the 1830s.

Essential characteristics of London's opera industry in the 1830s can emerge from detailed analysis of singers' contracts, and especially from the comparison between two contracts from the same seasons, including consideration of their reception. Clearly, relations between the London opera managers and the Paris opera directors were extremely close, and included not only mutually-agreed arrangements, but

³⁶⁴ She also wrote her initials 'G.G.' at the end of pages 1 and 2 of the contract; there is no signature on the standardised third page.

whole combined engagements, which were financially advantageous to the Parisian directors, and may even have been essential for the London managers to stay afloat. These forms of cooperation were clearly encouraged by the dependence of the London opera industry on the engagement of star singers, so that such agreements continued even in precarious financial situations. The huge significance of the singers for the London stage is also illustrated by their contractually stipulated potential to influence programming, and programming decisions in London mostly consisted of taking on operas that were currently being performed in Paris, rather than deliberate independent planning. This practice of putting on ‘suitcase operas’ also explains the short rehearsal times for opera in London – usually only a few days.³⁶⁵

Furthermore, comparing Tamburini’s and Grisi’s contracts shows that the basic fees stated in London contracts offer only limited insights. In order to make an informed comparison of singers’ fees, it is important to consider benefit performances as well as the basic fees; these performances represented the largest part of singers’ total fees in London. Indeed, it is only in light of this income that the prima donna’s high status – and high earning power – in relation to other singers becomes clear.

Finally, we have seen that the status of London contracts was that of a loose set of guidelines rather than of firm regulations; contracts demanded a high degree of flexibility on the part of opera managers and allowed singers considerable negotiating power, which indeed they often used to their advantage. Lumley, who succeeded Laporte, wanted to curb these tendencies during his management and regulate singers in London more tightly. His legal training put him in a good position to realise this intention, and he did not shy away from challenging breaches of contract in court. His approach to legal grey areas and the numerous resulting legal disputes between managers and singers in the mid-nineteenth century are the subject of the next section of this study.

³⁶⁵ I use the consciously exaggerated term ‘suitcase opera’ by analogy with the term ‘suitcase aria’. On suitcase (or ‘trunk’) arias, see Poriss, *Changing the Score*, esp. p. 66.

5.3 Court proceedings in London's opera industry in the mid-nineteenth century

In the last years of his management of Her Majesty's Theatre, Laporte had engaged the young lawyer Benjamin Lumley to help him in legal and financial matters. Lumley was therefore able to experience first-hand the frequent problems one encountered when running an opera house, for example in relation to the so-called 'cold and illness system' and the practices of the 'vieille garde'.³⁶⁶ The practices surrounding contracts at the time support the view that power was shifting towards the singers, reducing the opera manager to a mere observer of their machinations. It therefore seems entirely understandable – especially in light of Lumley's hands-on experience of opera management and his legal background – that he sought to change this system: by his own account he saw no other way to steer the opera house onto safer financial ground. In his *Reminiscences of the Opera* he states that both his legal knowledge and his extensive contacts to elite figures in London gave him particular advantages over earlier managers of Her Majesty's, and before that the King's Theatre.³⁶⁷

No contracts from Lumley's management survive, so it is impossible to discuss them explicitly. However, some components of the contracts can be reconstructed on the basis of the legal disputes in which he was involved during his management. Indeed, the fact that Lumley entered into legal proceedings at all – usually against rival managers – can be considered a significant new aspect of his management compared to others'. In what follows I examine two trials in which he was involved in light of their socio-economic context. These are the 1848 case of Alfred Bunn versus the prima donna Jenny Lind, and the cases between Lumley and Johanna Wagner in 1852 and between Lumley and Frederick Gye in 1853. The latter two cases continue to serve as precedents for contract law today.³⁶⁸

From these trials, which were well documented in the press, we can proceed to a rough reconstruction of relevant elements of the contracts, and perhaps also draw conclusions about contractual practice and the contractual parties' priorities when

³⁶⁶ On the 'cold and illness system', see Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 34.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

³⁶⁸ On the significance of the trials involving Lumley for contractual law in the UK and USA today, see Albrecht Götz von Olenhusen, 'Die "Casta Diva" und der "König des Humbugs" (Jenny Lind und P. T. Barnum): Zum Vertragsrecht und Vertragsbruch von Sängerinnen im 19. Jahrhundert in Europa und den USA', *Archiv für Urheber- und Medienrecht* 2 (2014), pp. 435–513.

making engagements. The trials also illustrate the options that were open to managers in singers in terms of legal action following breaches of contract.

In 1847, the soprano Jenny Lind was at the peak of her career – no other singer was more in demand internationally than the ‘Swedish Nightingale’, and naturally the London market was no exception to this intense interest in Lind. The *Berliner Musikzeitung* described the fascination with her as follows:

Den Lichtkreis der Kunst, den die Jenny Lind als eine feststehende Eigenthümlichkeit uns vor Augen rückt, den zu betrachten, möge diese astronomische Studie dienen, da Jenny Lind selbst einem Gestirn verglichen ist. Jenny Lind in ihren Rollen, Jenny Lind in ihrem Leben und Jenny Lind endlich in ihrer Umgebung, bietet uns immer ein und dasselbe, und zwar nicht ihre Kunst, sondern ihre Natur, ihre Eigenthümlichkeit. Fällt diese Eigenthümlichkeit in die Kunst, d.h. in die Kunstaufgabe ihrer Rollen, dann trifft jene unvergleichliche Leistung ein, die uns zu ihr hinzieht, wir sagen hinzieht, und soll dieses den divinen Typus ihrer Eigenthümlichkeit bezeichnen.³⁶⁹

Later on in this effusive description, Lind is characterised – to give just a few examples – as a ‘comet’ and as some kind of perfect natural phenomenon; there is then a brief overview of her classic roles to date. This quotation illustrates the intensity with which the ‘Jenny Lind crush’ enthralled the opera-going public at this time.³⁷⁰ In this atmosphere, it became absolutely necessary for Lumley to engage the singer at Her Majesty’s. All the more so, because this particular season was a decidedly risky one for Lumley: this was the same year that the ‘vieille garde’ – with vigorous support from Michael Costa, who did not agree with Lumley’s business practices – had set up a competing Italian opera establishment in the Theatre Royal Covent Garden.³⁷¹ Lumley, then, no longer had these big, audience-drawing names at his disposal for the season, and this initially caused him serious difficulty. He therefore needed to engage a real superstar of the opera world in order to maintain subscription levels and interest in his theatre and therefore keep the financial risks that were ever-present in London’s opera industry under some degree of control: ‘The

³⁶⁹ *Berliner Musikzeitung* 1/14 (1847), p. 117.

³⁷⁰ The phrase ‘Jenny Lind crush’ is taken from Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 330. Lind-mania would remain fervent for several years after this point, prompting Hanslick to remark in a concert review from 1855 that „Was Jenny Lind singt, ist Alles schön“ (Eduard Hanslick, ‘Das niederrheinische Musikfest III, 23.6.1855’, in *Sämtliche Schriften. Aufsätze und Rezensionen 1855–1856*, vol. I/3, ed. by Dietmar Strauss (Vienna: Böhlau, 1995), p. 81).

³⁷¹ See Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, p. 220.

fortunes of the theatre, in the face of the threatened rivalry, depended upon the successful appearance of the “Swedish Nightingale”.³⁷²

Lind’s engagement at Her Majesty’s in 1847 did not come off entirely without hitches. Following her successful Berlin debut in 1844, Alfred Bunn of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane had harboured serious ambitions of engaging her for an English version of Meyerbeer’s *Ein Feldlager von Schlesien* at his theatre.³⁷³ If he had managed to secure such an engagement, it would have guaranteed him a full house. As for Lind, she too had some rudimentary knowledge of the many advantages an engagement at a London opera house would bring; at this point, however, she was not aware of the considerable differences in prestige between the individual London theatres.

In January 1845, a contract was signed between Lind and Bunn, witnessed by Meyerbeer himself and by Lord Westmoreland, a British diplomat in Berlin who was acting in an agent-like capacity.³⁷⁴ The agreement stated that Lind would sing twenty performances at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, either between 15 June and 30 July, or between 30 September and 15 November, as she chose – she would need to communicate her choice of dates to Bunn by the end of March. Her fee would be 50 Louis d’Or (£44) per performance, and in addition there would be a benefit concert with shared takings; she would be paid within 24 hours of each performance.³⁷⁵ She would give a maximum of three performances per week, with the exception of the final week of the engagement, when she would have the luxury of not having to perform on two consecutive nights. As already mentioned, the English-language *The Camp of Silesia* was chosen as the opera for Lind’s debut; the contract mentioned that she might also be required to sing the role of Amina in Bellini’s *La sonnambula*.³⁷⁶ Naturally, the prima donna’s costumes were to be provided by Bunn ‘at his own cost’.

³⁷² Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 165.

³⁷³ Bunn managed the Theatre Royal Drury Lane from 1833 to 1848 and attempted to establish the theatre as a stage for opera in English.

³⁷⁴ The complete contract between Bunn and Lind is reproduced in an English translation in Bunn’s report on the trial. See Bunn, *The Case of Bunn versus Lind* (London, 1848), pp. 6–7.

³⁷⁵ In 1845, one pound equalled 1.14 Louis d’Or, giving a fee of about £44 per evening for Lind. See Frederic M. Scherer, *Quarter Notes and Bank Notes: The Economics of Music Composition in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 206–207.

³⁷⁶ The fact that *The Camp of Silesia* would have been a London premiere would have made Lind’s prospective London debut even more attractive for Bunn.

After these standard clauses, the contract ends with a clause that allowed Lind to make alterations and additions to the engagement before a cut-off point of 1 March. No alteration would be permitted to the first two clauses, which stated the fee and the dates of the engagement. We can see from this that London opera managers, even beyond the prestigious Italian stages, allowed a high degree of freedom to a well-renowned prima donna. In this light, the final line of the contract, which states that Bunn was not obliged to approve Lind's alterations and could call off the engagement if he chose, seems unconvincing: any possible concessions he might have to make would pale into insignificance against the risk of a failed engagement. Clauses such as this had a strong incentivising effect in contractual negotiations. In Lumley's *Reminiscences*, he reports that Bunn and Lord Westmoreland put pressure on Lind to sign the contract, having called her to an unexpected meeting between two acts of an opera she was performing; Lind would also refer to this in Bunn's lawsuit against her.³⁷⁷

For Alfred Bunn there was initially no reason to worry about the engagement; he then received a letter from Lind on 22 February 1845, detailing her difficulties with learning the English language:

Unfortunately, weeks of continued learning and fruitless efforts, have proved to me that it is impossible for me to learn the English language in the short time allowed to me, and, on account of that, if I were to come to London in October, I should not be ready to appear in an English Opera.³⁷⁸

She then asked Bunn explicitly to call off her engagement, and also cited serious health problems which had prompted her doctors to forbid strenuous activities. Because of the singer's sudden change of mind, Bunn prudently suspected other reasons behind her 'request'. It seemed that word had now reached Lind that 'the true and fitting arena for her talent in London was the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre'; the prospect of a higher fee and higher level of prestige had made her realise she had made a bad decision, and she now wanted to use any means possible to withdraw from the agreement with Bunn.³⁷⁹ In view of the situation and Lind's contractual duty, Bunn tried to continue liaising with her. By Lind's account, proceeding would

³⁷⁷ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 161.

³⁷⁸ *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 8.

³⁷⁹ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 162.

have harmed her career as well as Meyerbeer's opera, and despite the legally valid contract, she did not take up her engagement in autumn 1845.³⁸⁰

Bunn reacted strongly to Lind's breach of contract, as a letter of 30 October shows.³⁸¹ It seems that he still believed that an engagement with Lind was possible, because he presented her with an ultimatum. Either she would sing at his theatre in August 1846 and pay compensation for the costs he had incurred because of her breach of contract, or:

I [Bunn] shall cause the whole matter to be laid before his Majesty the King of Prussia, who is too good to suffer an English subject to be defrauded by one paid by the Prussian Government. I shall also commence an action at law at Berlin (where the contract was made), and another in England whenever you land here. This is my fixed determination.³⁸²

Having received no reaction to this threat, Bunn made another, more diplomatic attempt on 20 March, telling Lind he was aware of the 'overtures which have been made to you to sing at our Italian opera'.³⁸³ He also offered to pay part of her fee in advance, in case uncertainty about payment was deterring her. Finally, he adopted a flexible attitude to her reluctance to sing in English, stating that 'the public here would be ready to hear you sing in German as well as English, and there is no question of your having immense success'.³⁸⁴ By comparison with his threatening letter of October 1845, Bunn seems almost conciliatory here; his threats towards Lind had clearly not had the desired effect, because no reaction was forthcoming.

In the meantime, Lind-fever had continued to intensify, and Lumley, the manager of Her Majesty's, had also made attempts to engage Lind for the 1846 season. Indeed, Lumley went so far as to name Lind as prima donna at Her Majesty's in his announcement of the 1846 season, despite the fact he probably did not have a valid contract with her at this time.³⁸⁵ Including Lind in his advertising was probably a calculated move, in order to increase interest in his theatre and put his competitor –

³⁸⁰ *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 9.

³⁸¹ Lind was clearly looking for ways to prove that the contract with Bunn was not legally valid. In a letter to the actress Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer of 28 October 1845, she mentioned that she did not believe the contract to be valid because Bunn's signature was missing from it. She had probably heard rumour of this possibility, and so thought she was on safe legal ground. See Holland and Rockstro, *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, vol. 1, p. 291. From Laporte's contracts we can see that it was probably part of the conventions of the time that contracts would be signed only by singers (see Chapter 5.2).

³⁸² *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 12.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 165.

who was experiencing contractual difficulties with Lind, as Lumley was well aware – under pressure. It was not only in relation to singers that Lumley advertised in this way; he used similar tactics when circulating advance information about his programme planning. In the same prospectus that named Lind as prima donna, for example, Lumley announced the premiere of Mendelssohn's *The Tempest*, despite the fact that the opera did not exist at the time, and indeed never came to exist in the future.³⁸⁶ In order for such advertising to achieve its intended purpose, the question of whether the works and singers named would in fact be heard was of no consequence at all.³⁸⁷

In Lind's case, though, Lumley really did go to great lengths to arrange an engagement; this can be seen, for example, in his correspondence with Meyerbeer. As Bunn had done before him in 1845, Lumley was now planning the first London performance of Meyerbeer's *Ein Feldlager von Schlesien* with Lind in the role of Vielka, although this production would be in Italian. Because of Lind's breach of contract, Lumley glimpsed the possibility that Lind might make her London debut at Her Majesty's, and that this would be entirely legal: her contract with Bunn had related only to the 1845 season, meaning that there was no legal reason why the singer could not now be engaged by Lumley for all other seasons.

Drawing on all his powers of persuasion, in December 1846 Lumley was able to convince Lind – who feared the consequences of her breach of contract – to sign a contract for the 1847 season, as Lumley's correspondence with Meyerbeer shows. In a letter of 9 December 1846, Lumley also confirmed to the composer the engagement of Josef Staudigl, which Meyerbeer had considered a necessary condition for a production of *Ein Feldlager von Schlesien*.³⁸⁸ Interestingly, there was apparently no existing Italian adaptation of the opera at this time, because Lumley suggested to Meyerbeer that a certain 'Signor Gannetti' could serve as 'poète italien', if

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 166.

³⁸⁷ Reading about the plans Lumley publicised for his 1847 season in a report in the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, it is true that his offering – even if it turned out to be imaginary – would have been difficult to compete with: 'Die italienische Oper in London scheint einer besonders ausgezeichneten Season entgegenzugehen, die auch durch Jenny Linds Gastspiel verschönt werden soll. Was ihr aber einen besonderen Reiz verleihen wird, ist, dass Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy eine Oper zur Aufführung bringt. Der Text ist von Serilee, und nach Shakespeare's 'Sturm' gearbeitet. Die Rolle des 'Prospero' hat Lablache, 'Caliban' Staudigl, 'Ferdinand' Gordoni und 'Miranda' Jenny Lind. Später wird Meyerbeer sein 'Feldlager in Schlesien' und die Wiederholung seines Robert einstudieren. Verdi hat eine Oper, deren Text Schiller's Räufern entnommen ist, geschrieben' (*Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* 1/6 (1847), p. 60).

³⁸⁸ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 191.

Meyerbeer could not find a suitable librettist in Vienna to translate the opera.³⁸⁹ In view of the fact that Lumley wanted to start rehearsing the singers, under Meyerbeer's guidance, as early as the beginning of March, it seems fair to assume that this was rather a last-minute plan. Hardly surprisingly, then, in these less than ideal circumstances, Meyerbeer did not agree to the proposed 1847 production of *Feldlager*.³⁹⁰

In his *Reminiscences*, Lumley describes the process of reaching an agreement with Lind as extremely difficult; because of Lind's fear of legal action by Bunn, Lumley was forced to make considerable concessions:

Besides holding out to her the most brilliant prospects both of fame and fortune, I went so far as to undertake to bear any loss that might fall upon her in the event of a law-suit with Mr. Bunn. The terms of this engagement were far superior to any hitherto offered to the celebrated singer.³⁹¹

In her engagement with Lumley, Lind's total fee for the 1847 season (which ran from 14 April to 20 August) would be £4800. In addition to this enormous sum, accommodation and a coach were to be provided free of charge. She might also receive a further £800 for a possible trip to Italy to study her roles. Furthermore, if her debut did not prove to be the great success that was expected, Lind had the option of cancelling her engagement with Lumley without having to fear repercussions.³⁹² Interestingly, debates over the precise terms of Lind's contract played out internationally as well as in London. Here is the *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung's* heated, disbelieving reaction to the extortionate terms of the engagement:

Die Bedingungen, unter denen Jenny Lind in London singen wollte, und die Director Lumley nach ihrer eigenen Niederschrift in Nürnberg annahm, sind folgende: 1) freie Reisekosten hin und zurück, (wahrscheinlich nicht in 2ter Cajüte oder 3ter Wagenklasse); 2) freie Station in London für sich und ihre gesamte Dienerschaft, 3) die Gestaltung, alle Wochen ein Concert, sowohl in London, als überhaupt in England geben zu dürfen, wozu die Direction die Reisekosten zahlen

³⁸⁹ See Lumley's letter to Meyerbeer of 9 December 1846, in *Giacomo Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 4, 1846–1849, ed. by Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), p. 164.

³⁹⁰ An Italian adaptation of the work never materialised. In 1854, during the London premiere of *L'Étoile du Nord* as *La stella del Nord* at the Royal Italian Opera, individual pieces from *Feldlager* were performed, because Meyerbeer had included parts of *Feldlager* in *L'Étoile*. See Sebastian Werr, *Musikalisches Drama und Boulevard: Französische Einflüsse auf die italienische Oper im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), p. 149; and Christoph Blitt, 'Inszenierte Geschichte. Die Opern Giacomo Meyerbeers', in Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller, Marion Linhardt and Thomas Steiert (eds.), *Meyerbeer-Wagner: Eine Begegnung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), p. 49).

³⁹¹ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 163.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

müsse (das geht in's Aschgrae!), und 4) für den Monat ein Honorar von 12,000 Pfd. St. (ca. 83,000 Thlr. Ein Pr. Ct. P. Mon, während Irland verhungert!).³⁹³

In light of the conditions stipulated by Lumley, it is clear that rumours about the terms of Lind's engagement were wildly exaggerated in the international press – in this example, the exaggeration manifests itself above all in the fantastical fee – although such exaggerations also served to further strengthen Lind's status as a *prima donna assoluta*.³⁹⁴

Bunn became aware of the existence of a contract between Lumley and Lind in December, whereupon he immediately threatened the singer with serious legal consequences from 'the moment [she] set foot in this country'.³⁹⁵ Bunn also suspected – rightly – that Lumley had offered to pay all the compensation costs arising from Lind's breach of contract with Bunn; to strengthen his own position, Bunn initially tried to convince her that this was a false claim on Lumley's part.³⁹⁶

Lumley's agreement to pay the compensation costs raises the question of why he would have agreed to such an obligation. Lind's basic fee was already enormous, and in the case of a ruling against her, Lumley's costs would have risen still further, probably taking Her Majesty's Theatre to the brink of ruin. However, the opening of the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden put Lumley under immense pressure, so that engaging the 'Swedish Nightingale' was simply the only way for him to remain competitive. Through his legal background and knowledge of the legal infrastructure of London, he may also have been aware that Bunn would have little chance of pursuing any possible lawsuit against Lind to its full potential, so that the risk of having to pay costs seemed unlikely to be realised.

Even so, and even after Lumley published his prospectus, Bunn had not given up all hope of bringing Lind to his own theatre. In a final letter to her on 23 January 1847, he mentions – surely in full awareness of the effect his words would have – his certainty that her contract with Lumley must be nothing more than a 'conditional arrangement', because it seemed to him 'impossible that an artiste of such celebrity and character could visit this country liable to the consequences of two attested

³⁹³ *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung* 4/20 (1847), n.p.

³⁹⁴ Of course, because only Lumley's report survives, rather than the actual contract between him and Lind, we also cannot assume that the fee Lumley stated is correct. Realistically, however, the actual fee would have been much closer to Lumley's figure than to the exaggerations of the *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung*.

³⁹⁵ *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 12.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

contracts, and prepared to forfeit the one for the larger offer subsequently held out in the other'.³⁹⁷ Bunn also invited Lind to sing in German or Italian at his theatre, so that her problems with the English language would no longer be a reason to refuse his offer.

In light of the imminent start of the opera season, and the fact that Bunn's lawyers, Lewis & Lewis, had been engaged as early as January, this last offer appears not to be a serious suggestion, but a strategic move for a possible court case.³⁹⁸ Bunn's remarks would make it easier for him to argue convincingly that he had, after all, offered Lind the option of singing in a language of her choice, which she nevertheless refused.³⁹⁹ On 28 February, Bunn finally received an answer from Lind, which was evidently written with legal advice. Claiming that at the time in question, Bunn had not been in possession of either an English translation or the music for Meyerbeer's *Feldlager*, Lind offered him a goodwill gesture of £2000 in compensation for the inconvenience he had suffered, if he was prepared to annul the contract.⁴⁰⁰

Once again, Bunn probably had a possible court case in mind when he answered Lind, because he offered 'to take the £2000 you offer as a partial compensation, and trust for any further indemnity to the result of your singing three times in this theatre (before you sing elsewhere in England), in any language you prefer'.⁴⁰¹ Had Lind agreed to this offer, she would have broken her contract with Lumley – a further indication that this was a strategic move rather than a realistic suggestion on Bunn's part: he was creating a paper trail that suggested a willingness to cooperate with Lind, which could have been used as evidence in his favour during a possible trial.⁴⁰² Once again, Lind did not reply, prompting Bunn to suspect that 'much of the matter had been altogether kept from her knowledge'.⁴⁰³

Finally, Bunn lodged a complaint against Lind on 28 April 1847, although the trial did not begin until February 1848. From today's perspective, it seems surprising that nearly two years passed between Lind's breach of contract in October 1845 and the point when Bunn filed for compensation. The lengthy correspondence between Bunn

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁹⁹ It is clear that Bunn actually used this argument during the trial: he discusses the debate prompted by this remark. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² It is likely that Bunn, similarly to Laporte and Gye, included an exclusivity clause in his contracts, preventing the singers he engaged from performing in other London opera houses.

⁴⁰³ *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 18.

and Lind, and his offers – even if these were deliberately deceptive – suggest that for opera managers at this time, a court case was not the most obvious consequence in cases of breach of contract. Rather, they first tried to reach informal agreements, including by making threats. Indeed, court cases against singers were extremely rare in nineteenth-century London. When legal disputes arose in the opera world, they were usually between creditors and managers of an opera house, or between singers and managers when a manager had defaulted on payment.⁴⁰⁴ Court cases between two opera managers were also rare.⁴⁰⁵

This reluctance to take legal action also implies that the contracts of the time lacked strong foundations: individual clauses continued to be considered as guidelines that could be adapted to singers' advantage, without the singers needing to fear negative consequences. The reason for this level of informality in London singers' contracts is to be found in the nature of the 'star system'. The outcome of the court case against Bunn is one of many indications of the high levels of prestige that singers enjoyed at this time. Bunn's arguments mostly related to Lind's 'false' claims about her difficulties with English, to the allegation that he had pressurised her to sign the contract, and to his belief that her motives for breaching the contract were mainly based on her realisation that she could secure better conditions at Her Majesty's.⁴⁰⁶ Lind herself was not present in court – a further indication of her special status, which apparently extended to the courtroom.⁴⁰⁷ Bunn's aim with the court case was to make as high a compensation claim as possible. Had Lind performed at his theatre, he argued, he could have been sure of a sold-out house, so that her non-appearance had meant a considerable loss of income for him. As the basis of his calculations he used the hugely successful performances involving Maria Malibran in the early 1830s, which had each generated an average profit of £450 for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.⁴⁰⁸ Calculating the potential profit from Lind's

⁴⁰⁴ One example of a dispute between an opera manager and a creditor was that between Lumley and Lord Ward over the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre. See Lumley, *The Earl of Dudley*. An example of a dispute over payment between a singer and a manager is the case of De Begnis and Laporte in 1834. See *Reports of Cases of Bankruptcy*, vol. 1 (London: Butterworth, 1834), pp. 277–282.

⁴⁰⁵ The dispute between Lumley and Gye over Johanna Wagner was a significant exception. See Von Olenhusen, 'Die „Casta Diva“ und der „König des Humbugs“', p. 459.

⁴⁰⁶ A detailed description of the trial can be found in *Bunn vs. Lind*, pp. 19–70.

⁴⁰⁷ See *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ See María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, vol. 1, p. 169.

performances on this basis, Bunn sued for £10,000.⁴⁰⁹ However, the court awarded him only a fraction of this: £2500 for Lind's breach of contract – a sum in the same range as the one Lind had suggested. The attorney general recommended that only Bunn's travel expenses to Berlin and the cost of preparing an English translation (£150) should be considered for compensation, which Bunn must have considered an affront.⁴¹⁰ According to the judge, Bunn's demands of Lind could be dismissed as mere 'commercial speculation', remarking that it was highly doubtful

how far the probabilities are that a person destitute of the knowlege [sic] of our language, wanting confidence, and forced forward unwillingly, perhaps in a bad state of health [...] how far a person under those circumstances was calculated to succeed, how far she was likely to succeed, had she been brought out at Drury Lane with the performers then at the Theatre.⁴¹¹

This interpretation suggests a certain bias towards Lind, which Bund clearly noticed, naturally feeling that he himself was being treated unfairly:

Notwithstanding that Jenny's friends pronounce her to be a dear, unsophisticated creature, I really must say she has betrayed every symptom of being what her refined and garrulous pleader, the Attorney General, would call 'wide awake'! If ever there was an adept in worldly ways, the *naïve* **JENNY** is one! If ever arithmetician knew how to calculate 'the odds,' and profit by them, that calculator is **JENNY**.⁴¹²

In the course of the dispute with Lind, Bunn seems to have made many defamatory statements like this one – even his report of the trial reads more like an accusation than an objective representation.⁴¹³ One illustration of the extent to which the disagreement was discussed internationally is a letter written by Heinrich Heine – who, incidentally, was an acquaintance of Lumley – to the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁴¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, Heine took Lind's side, and accused Bunn, among other things, of 'gleichnerische Verhöhnung'.⁴¹⁵ A report in the *Wiener Musikzeitung* of 16 September 1847 (based on false information) reads similarly, also defending Lind.

⁴⁰⁹ See *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 69; Holland and Rockstro, *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, vol. 2, p. 199.

⁴¹⁰ See *ibid.*

⁴¹¹ *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 70.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴¹³ Even so, Bunn's report can be considered a reliable source in that it reproduces all correspondence alongside his subjective comments.

⁴¹⁴ The professional collaboration between Lumley and Heine extended to plans to put on a ballet based on the Faust legend, but according to Lumley, this failed because Heine's adaptation was ultimately not suitable for the stage. See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 198–99.

⁴¹⁵ *Heinrich Heine Briefe 1842–1849*, vol. 22 (Leipzig, 1972), p. 240.

According to Bunn, the final decision was not reached until 22 February 1848 – hence this report is a case of wishful thinking rather than fact:

Sein [Bunns] übermütiges Verlangen hatte aber einen kläglichen Erfolg. Der Justizchef wollte nicht, daß England so ungastlich mit der jungen Primadonna verfare, und verurtheilte sie bloß zu einer Entrichtung von sechs Shilling und acht Pence für die Nichteinhaltung ihres zuerst unterzeichneten Contractes.⁴¹⁶

Precisely the clearly fictional character and implausibility of this report shows that the international press did not expect too harsh a verdict for Lind. The six shillings and eight pence cited here would have represented an affront to Bunn that would have been impracticable in reality.

Nevertheless, the actual verdict, with Bunn emerging victorious, can only be interpreted in light of these contextual details: to international onlookers as well as commentators in London, it seemed inconceivable that a prima donna of Jenny Lind's status would be subject to a ruling that both hindered her ability to work in England and involved a high financial penalty, possibly taking her to the brink of financial ruin. Lumley, who needed Lind to draw audiences to his theatre in order to compete with his new rival, was therefore taking a risk, but not a reckless one, because Lind's status meant that the ruling was unlikely to be very harsh. It is not clear whether Lumley paid the entire penalty, as he had promised Lind, but this seems likely. This trial can be considered the beginning of a trend whereby singers' engagements in London became more formal and more strictly enforceable legally.

The legal disputes of 1852–53 between Lumley and Gye over the engagement of Johanna Wagner were similarly significant landmarks in the contractual politics of opera in London, and still serve as precedents in contract law today. Similarly to Lind, Johanna Wagner (the niece of Richard Wagner) enjoyed great success in Berlin prior to her engagement in London, although this success may not have been primarily a result of her vocal accomplishments. She was more or less self-taught, and only began taking regular singing lessons *after* her first opera performances.⁴¹⁷ She was probably able to impress audiences with her expressive acting more than with her singing, as is illustrated by the following comments from the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* about an 1851 production of *Don Giovanni*:

⁴¹⁶ *Allgemeine Wiener Musikzeitung* 7–8 (1847), p. 448.

⁴¹⁷ See *Album des königl. Schauspiels und der königl. Oper zu Berlin* (Berlin: Schauer, 1858), pp. 141–42.

Diese junge talentvolle Künstlerin gehört unzweifelhaft zu den bedeutendsten Erscheinungen auf der Bühne der Gegenwart. In ihrer Auffassung der Donna Anna erinnert sie an die hervorragendsten Persönlichkeiten einer Schechner, Milder und Devrient. Das volle Metall der Stimme wirkt ebenso erschütternd wie mildernd und erweckt in dem Zuhörer das Gefühl der höchsten Befriedigung. [...] Wenn wir im Allgemeinen nun zugeben müssen, dass Frl. Wagner die ergreifendsten Wirkungen durch ihre Darstellung erzielt, so ist andererseits doch auch nicht zu läugnen, dass ihre Stimme in der Höhe zuweilen das nicht erreicht, was die Aufgabe erfordert. In gewissen Tonverbindungen weiss sie allerdings auch den höchsten Tönen Schmelz und Farbe zu verleihen, die Kunst reicht da nicht aus, wo die Natur aufhört. Fräulein Wagner ist auch zu unbedeutenden Veränderungen und Transpositionen genötigt.⁴¹⁸

Lumley described the excitement surrounding Johanna as ‘Wagner mania’, analogously evoking the ‘Lind mania’ of recent years. Clearly, this enthusiasm was provoked by factors other than vocal skill. Even the fact that Wagner was forced to transpose some passages seems not to have lessened the Berliners’ fervour. Not all critics reacted so positively, however. The periodical *Deutsches Museum*, for example, saw the euphoria surrounding Wagner as a short-lived craze and a sign that audiences and critics lacked the ability to evaluate singers objectively:

Das Berliner Publikum hat die Eigenthümlichkeit sich hin und wieder sehr schnell und in sehr übertriebenem Maße zu begeistern: aber es fehlt ihm an Treue und Ausdauer. Auch die Kritik ist theils zu abhängig, theils zu befangen, als daß sie den wetterwendischen Stimmungen unseres Demos Maß und Ziel setzen könnte.⁴¹⁹

Because of her considerable weaknesses, at least according to this writer, Wagner was unlikely to enjoy a long career.⁴²⁰ Despite this prognosis, the widespread enthusiasm for Wagner prompted the star-oriented London managers Lumley and Gye to try to engage her at their theatres. Since the opening of the Royal Italian Opera in 1847 as a second Italian opera house in the city, the two houses, whose opposition was heightened by their similar artistic orientations, had been engaged in a bitter rivalry over the leading singers from the continent. For each house, engaging Johanna Wagner to sing would be a considerable competitive advantage.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* 5 (1851), p. 187.

⁴¹⁹ *Deutsches Museum* 1 (1851), p. 451.

⁴²⁰ Henry Chorley was similarly harsh in his judgment of Wagner’s vocal capabilities. See his *Thirty Years’ Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 176.

⁴²¹ According to Lumley, even the announcement of Wagner’s name had a positive effect on ticket sales. See *Reminiscences*, p. 330.

The necessity of bringing Wagner to London was also discussed in the press. As early as 1851, the *Musical World* was speculating about which of the three managers – Lumley, Gye or Bunn – would manage to secure her.⁴²² It is interesting that Bunn was named among the possible competitors, despite the fact that his theatre did not enjoy the same level of prestige as the Italian opera houses. It is possible that public memory of his failed attempt to engage Jenny Lind remained strong, and that this is what prompted commentators to name him in this context. The similar status aimed at by the two Italian opera houses probably made for a far more intense level of competition between Gye and Lumley than between either of them and Bunn.⁴²³

Both Lumley and Gye, then, began to make intensive efforts to secure a contract with Johanna Wagner in the second half of 1851. With assistance from Josef Bacher, a ‘friend and ally of the Wagner family’, Lumley managed to close a deal with Johanna Wagner’s father, Albert, on 9 November 1851; the contract was, of course, in French.⁴²⁴ Wagner herself could not sign, because at the time she was only twenty-three: the contract was signed in Berlin, and according to Prussian law the age of maturity was twenty-four.⁴²⁵

The contract engaged Wagner for three months at Her Majesty’s, beginning on 1 April 1852, and stated that during that time she would perform the roles of Romeo (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), Fidès (*Le Prophète*), Valentine (*Gli Ugonotti*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) and Alice (*Roberto il Diavolo*), as well as an additional ‘opera chosen by common accord’.⁴²⁶ The roles of Romeo, Fidès and Valentine would be performed first; after Wagner had succeeded in those performances, Lumley might ask her to take on the others as well.⁴²⁷ In light of Wagner’s career up to this point, this passage is unsurprising. The first three roles listed were the ones in which she was currently enjoying most success in Germany, leading to the desire for London

⁴²² *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 648.

⁴²³ See Chapter 2.

⁴²⁴ The description of Josef Bacher is from Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 331. On this contract, see also John P. Gex and John Smale, *Reports of Cases Adjudged in the High Court of Chancery*, vol. 5 (London, 1853), p. 485.

⁴²⁵ See *Verhandlungen der Württembergischen Kammer der Abgeordneten in den Jahren 1862 bis 64*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1864), p. 328.

⁴²⁶ See Gex and Smale, *Reports of Cases*, vol. 5, p. 485.

⁴²⁷ Wagner’s contract is formulated very similarly in many respects to the contracts between Pauline Viardot and the Royal Italian Opera. These parallels suggest that the aspects of Wagner’s contract under discussion here probably did correspond to reality. See my discussion of Viardot’s contracts in Chapter 5.4.

audiences to see and hear her in those same roles.⁴²⁸ That the role of Donna Anna was included in the contract is probably mainly a sign of the huge popularity of *Don Giovanni*. And the mention of Meyerbeer's Alice may reflect an attempt on Lumley's part to find a replacement for Lind, who had retired from opera in 1849 and whose performances as Alice had been greatly enjoyed by London audiences. Lumley's explicit comparisons between the hype surrounding Wagner and that surrounding Lind support this hypothesis about the relevance of Lind to the details of Wagner's contract.⁴²⁹

Wagner had exclusive rights to all six roles mentioned above, which meant that during her three-month engagement, she would be the only one to perform them. It followed from this clause that Wagner would have the status of a *prima donna assoluta*; this was an absolute economic necessity for Lumley in view of the strong competition at the Royal Italian Opera from the likes of Giulia Grisi and Pauline Viardot-García. A further extravagance that Lumley allowed Wagner was that if for any reason one of the operas named in the contract was not performed, he would nevertheless pay her reduced fees for that opera.⁴³⁰ By contrast, the clause concerning what would happen if Wagner fell ill and was unable to perform eight times per month (twice per week) does not seem particularly generous to her: in this case, Lumley would only have to pay her for the performances she actually sang.

However, the contract then immediately softens this regulation: if Wagner was unable to perform twice per week, she could make up for the missed performances later with no penalty. She also probably would not have objected to additional performances, if the management requested them, because she would receive an extra £50 payment for each one. These extra fees seem generous in light of Wagner's basic fee, which according to the contract was £400 per month – i.e., given that she would perform eight times per month, £50 per performance. The fact that additional performances were offered at the same regular price, and that this was laid down in the contract, indicates both the financial astuteness of Wagner's agent and the difficult situation in which Lumley found himself and which led him to agree to this passage. For the sake of Wagner's financial security, her fee was to be paid in weekly

⁴²⁸ For Wagner's performances in Berlin, see *Album des königl. Schauspiels und der königl. Oper zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1858), p. 144.

⁴²⁹ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, esp. p. 238.

⁴³⁰ See Gex and Smale, *Reports of Cases*, vol. 5, p. 486.

instalments of £100 – which would have pushed Lumley further into a precarious financial situation, given that cash flow already presented difficulties for him.

The weekly payment of fees can be considered exceptional in the context of London singers' contracts. Even the 1826 contract between Ebers and Pasta, which was extreme in many other ways, did not stipulate weekly payments, despite the fact that Pasta had considerable doubts about the ability of London managers to pay her, following her experiences with Benelli.⁴³¹ The fact that Wagner insisted on including this in her contract would of course ease her cash flow as well as her security, meaning that she would not have to rely on her own funds whilst in London.

As well as the weekly payments, Wagner asked for a deposit of £300 to be paid in Berlin on 15 March 1852, which would offer her some security in the event that the opera manager cancelled her contract for whatever reason. Assuming the engagement went ahead, this sum would then be taken from Wagner's fee in three monthly instalments of £100. This seemingly innocuous aspect of the contract would later be Lumley's undoing.

For his part, Lumley had reservations about Wagner's trustworthiness – the Jenny Lind affair had made him wary, although in that case he had been the beneficiary. His caution is evident, for example, in a clause that lays out the procedure in the event that Wagner did not start her engagement on time. There would be a grace period of eight days; if she did not arrive in London after that time – except in the case of illness – Lumley would consider her to have breached the contract and would claim compensation. Precisely how this would be implemented is unclear from the English translation of the contract (to which I refer here, because the original contract in French does not survive). However, the inclusion of this passage shows that Lumley was bearing this possibility in mind. The example of Jenny Lind had shown that a prima donna of this status could emerge from contractual disputes relatively untarnished.⁴³²

The final clause of the contract also reveals the influence of Lumley's past experience: it states that if the management of Her Majesty's Theatre should change hands, the contract with Wagner would transfer to Lumley's successor. After the sudden death of Laporte, following which Lumley had taken on the management, all

⁴³¹ See Chapter 5.1.

⁴³² Lumley recalled that 'I relied upon the good faith and fair dealing of the artists with whom the contract had been ratified, as I had always done in similar cases. I had suffered before, it is true, from vacillations, the overstrained susceptibilities' (*Reminiscences*, p. 331).

Laporte's engagements had become invalid, so that Lumley was forced to renew them all within a very short space of time.⁴³³ Also, by 1852 he was already considering leaving the London opera scene, seeing the Royal Italian Opera as an almost all-powerful rival that was driving him close to financial ruin. In addition to Her Majesty's, in 1850 Lumley had taken over the direction of the Parisian Théâtre Italien, which brought more demands on his time. The advantages that he may have envisaged in holding both posts had largely failed to materialise by 1852, and his financial situation was worsening noticeably.⁴³⁴ In fact, all the signs pointed to his management ending before much longer; Johanna Wagner represented a final chance of 'winning the game, and repairing the losses of fortune in the past'.⁴³⁵

After the contract with Wagner was signed in November 1851, an addition was made to it at Lumley's request, with the agreement of Bacher, Wagner's agent: Wagner would now be forbidden from appearing in other theatres or concerts, whether public or private, without Lumley's written permission.⁴³⁶ Clearly Lumley had become aware that Gye had also made advances towards Wagner. A contract without any reference to performances outside Her Majesty's would have given Wagner carte blanche not only to perform elsewhere but to breach her contract, because Gye, as Lumley had in Bunn's case, probably would have agreed to pay the legal costs. By adding this restriction, Lumley would have believed himself on very safe ground in his agreement with Wagner.

However, it later emerged that – allegedly – Bacher did not make Wagner and her father aware of this change; it was also alleged that the £300 deposit had not arrived on 15 March as agreed, which could be interpreted as a breach of contract on Lumley's part.⁴³⁷ Shortly afterwards, on 5 or 6 April, Wagner had signed a contract with Gye, who had offered her a much higher fee – apparently £2000 for two months – obviously wanting to trump his competitor.⁴³⁸ Previously, on 6 February, Wagner

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴³⁴ On the possible advantages for Lumley of holding positions in both London and Paris, see Chapter 5.2.

⁴³⁵ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 329. In fact, Lumley seems to have acted with great confidence in securing contracts with the hugely popular singers Cruvelli, Fiorentini, Alboni, Bertrand, and of course Wagner. However, the engagements with Wagner and Alboni ultimately failed. See Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 167.

⁴³⁶ See Gex and Smale, *Report of Cases*, vol. 5, p. 487.

⁴³⁷ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 331–332.

⁴³⁸ On the fee offered by Gye, see *Spectator* 25 (1852), p. 390. See also Edmund Hatch Bennett and Chauncey Smith (eds.), *English Reports in Law and Equity*, vol. 13 (Boston: C. C. Little and J. Brown, 1853), p. 254.

had asked Lumley to delay the start of the engagement by 15 days, and Lumley agreed to this during March.⁴³⁹ It is unclear whether contractual negotiations were already underway with Gye at that stage.

Johanna Wagner thus found herself in 1852 with two more-or-less legally binding contracts with the two managers, and was inclined to drop the less lucrative offer from Lumley. The trial that unsurprisingly followed attracted much international attention and was all over the newspapers. The *Münchener Punsch* described the dispute as follows:

Die erste Differenz zwischen Lumley und Fr. Wagner hat sich dadurch ergeben, daß Lumley's Colporteur, Hr. Dr. Bacher – anstatt ihr die stipulierten 300 Pf. St. Vorschuß am 15. März baar auszahlen – ihr geschrieben hat: ‚Diese Sache werden wir später (28. März) persönlich in Schwerin abmachen‘. Dann wurde ihr zum Debüt die Rolle der ‚Fides‘ von Lumley zugesichert, und nun stellt sich heraus, daß das Recht zur Aufführung des ‚Prophet‘ dem Hrn. Lumley gar nicht zusteht, da selber nur im Coventgarden bei Mr. Gye gegeben werden darf.⁴⁴⁰

This writer comes out strongly in favour of Wagner, probably because of her nationality. At the same time, Bacher's role emerges from this passage as ambivalent. It seems that Wagner, or at least her father, knew that there would be difficulties if they knowingly received Lumley's deposit and failed to honour it. We can suspect on the basis of this description that this move was a deliberate one by Bacher in order to strengthen Wagner's position in relation to Lumley and make it more likely that she could fulfil the engagement at the Royal Italian Opera with Gye instead. This impression is supported by Lumley's report that Bacher did not communicate the changes in the contract to Wagner and her father. All these factors suggest that the Wagners were trying to extricate themselves from the situation with minimal costs.

The court reached a similar conclusion when Lumley took legal action on 22 April against Johanna and Alfred Wagner, and later against Gye. Bacher's actions led to a late payment, but he had made Wagner aware of this in his letter; Lumley had assumed, correctly, that the payment had been transferred with no problems, and so

⁴³⁹ See *Spectator* 25 (1852), pp. 389–90. The request was repeated by Albert Wagner on 9 March: apparently he had not yet received an answer from Lumley. However, Lumley's answer, agreeing to this request as well as to paying Wagner's advance, arrived on 11 March.

⁴⁴⁰ *Münchener Punsch* 5 (1852), p. 135. As is evident from a letter written by Meyerbeer to Amalia Beer on 14 June 1849, Lumley did not in fact have performance rights for *Le Prophète*. Gye did secure the rights, although not until 1849; Meyerbeer makes no mention of having previously sold rights to Lumley. See Heinz Becker, Sabine Henze-Döhring and Hans Moeller (eds.), *Giacomo Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), pp. 6–7; and Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*, p. 13.

he was not in breach of contract. The final ruling placed all blame at the feet of Johanna Wagner, and prevented her from appearing at either of the two theatres – so it was only a Pyrrhic victory for Lumley. It is striking that in this case – even if it was on the basis of nothing more than precedent cases, including *Bunn vs. Lind* – the ruling was against the prima donna.⁴⁴¹ It seems that all partiality towards star singers was laid aside. A comment by Albert Wagner may also have played a role in the harshness of the verdict: he wrote in a letter that ‘England is to be valued only for her money’, and this apparently provoked widespread outrage when it was reported.⁴⁴² Reactions to the verdict in Lumley’s favour were largely positive – it was understood as an indictment of the unreasonable demands made by singers:

Though in consequence of the litigation about Mademoiselle Wagner the English public have apparently lost all opportunity of judging of the lady’s merits, it is impossible not to applaud the spirit and determination with which Mr. Lumley has asserted his rights. May the circumstances which have occurred prove a salutary lesson to a class of persons – numbering, of course, many admirable individuals – but as the rule generally extravagant, and frequently perfectly unreasonable in their demands.⁴⁴³

Encouraged by the outcome, Lumley went on to file a compensation claim against Gye, attempting to recoup losses of £20,000, but in this he was unsuccessful. Although Lumley was found to be in the right, he was not awarded any costs, on the basis that it was impossible to prove whether Gye had in fact been aware of the pre-existing contract between Lumley and Wagner. Her Majesty’s Theatre had been ailing already, and this was a huge setback; at the end of the 1852 season, the theatre was forced to close.

The court cases pursued by Bunn and Lumley against Lind and Wagner indicate the extent to which singers’ contracts of the time were legally largely insignificant. Lumley himself, with his legal background, attributed a high degree of informality to the relationships between theatre managers and singers; under normal circumstances,

⁴⁴¹ See Bennett and Smith (eds.), *English Reports in Law and Equity*, vol. 13, pp. 255–57. In the trial between Bunn and Lind the verdict was also decided on the basis of precedent cases (see *Bunn vs. Lind*, p. 46). This decision method points to the lack of a specific system of laws relating to the theatre in nineteenth-century London.

⁴⁴² Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 332. There seems to have been a counterproductive attempt by the Wagners to downplay the negativity of this comment during the trial: ‘The explanation offered by the Wagner-counsel, that the words should be translated, “England is only able to reward with her money,” was received in court with shouts of derision, as only giving a still worse interpretation of their meaning’ (ibid).

⁴⁴³ *Lady’s Companion and Monthly Magazine* 1 (1852), p. 331.

neither party would take issue with this informality. However, it is important to differentiate between the frequent allowances made for singers' extravagances on the one hand, and actual breaches of contract on the other. The former were tolerated by managers because of the high levels of public and financial pressure, whereas a breach of contract brought the whole legal basis of the contract into question. Not for nothing did Bunn first try all possible informal means to arrive at a possible agreement out of court: he was aware that the public's influence on the legal system was not to be underestimated.

In Jenny Lind's case, public enthusiasm for the prima donna led to a relatively mild verdict which was based on false information. As Bunn mentioned several times, Lind clearly had no difficulties with the English language, as the following 1851 description of her talent for languages shows:

It was a common remark that she spoke it [German] 'better than a German,' for, with her keen perception and fine taste, she threw out the local abbreviations and corruptions of the familiar dialect, and with her mastery of sound, she gave every syllable its just fullness and proportion. She is perfect mistress of French, and speaks English very sweetly, every day making rapid advance in the knowledge of it.⁴⁴⁴

Lumley, on the other hand, took advantage of this situation, and was probably aware of Bunn's low chances of a positive outcome to the court case. In 1852, Lumley unexpectedly found himself in a similar situation, although Alfred Wagner's remarks meant that public opinion was probably not strongly in favour of a positive outcome for Johanna Wagner. In this case, then, the verdict was probably once again influenced by public opinion; the fact that with his follow-up claim Lumley was unable to enforce his demands for compensation is in keeping with this interpretation. A recent examination of the Lumley vs. Gye case had characterised it as a direct consequence of the Bunn vs. Lind case: the verdict for the latter was not nearly harsh enough, and therefore had to be reconsidered through Lumley vs. Gye.⁴⁴⁵ But the sources from these cases paint a different picture, and one that raises serious questions about the neutrality of the courts. Johanna Wagner breached her contract and did not receive so much as a fine – apparently a ban on performing was

⁴⁴⁴ Nathaniel Parker Willis, *Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind* (Philadelphia: Robert E. Peterson, 1851), p. 161.

⁴⁴⁵ See Martín Hevia, *Reasonableness and Responsibility: A Theory of Contract Law* (Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2012), p. 136.

considered a sufficiently serious response. In court, then, and even in the context of a negative public attitude towards Wagner, it seems it was almost impossible to rule strongly against a prima donna. The fact that Lumley received no compensation in his second case against Gye, despite having won the case against Wagner, strengthens the impression that opera managers had relatively little negotiating power.

Nevertheless, the cases discussed here probably prompted a significant change in terms of the professionalisation of practices surrounding contracts in London's opera industry. This can be seen, for example, in the way that Gye's contracts differ markedly from Laporte's. Laporte used threats of considerable fines for a wide range of offences, attempting to ensure by all possible means that any disagreements would be resolved without a court case. The changes in the competitive relationships between the opera houses from the mid-nineteenth century are also an important factor in the considerable differences between contracts from the Royal Italian Opera and those of Laporte, as I will examine in the next section.

5.4 Pauline Viardot-García's contracts with the Royal Italian Opera, 1847–1855

In the mid-nineteenth century, the world of Italian opera in London was shaped more strongly than ever by the intense rivalry between the two Italian opera houses the city now had. An essential point of differentiation between the two houses, which had similar target audiences, were the particular singers they managed to engage. For example, by engaging the 'Swedish Nightingale' Jenny Lind in 1847, Lumley was initially able to develop a competitive advantage over his then newly-established rival house, which was relying on the renown of the 'vieille garde'.⁴⁴⁶ In its opening season, although the Royal Italian Opera wanted to position itself and its work-oriented aesthetic as opposed to the star-based Her Majesty's, in fact this merely amounted to publicising particular ideological criteria that were not in fact reflected in the theatre's business plan. Instead, as a newly-established enterprise, the Royal Italian Opera was particularly preoccupied with financial difficulties, as Willert Beale described. It was above all Giuseppe Persiani who was responsible for the Royal Italian Opera's difficult financial situation at the beginning, and Persiani eventually

⁴⁴⁶ On Lumley's engagement of Lind, see Chapters 2 and 5.3.

saw no other option than to flee the country.⁴⁴⁷ Then, still in 1847, Persiani's debts and the management of the house were taken on by the concert organiser Frederick Beale in partnership with Edward Delafield and Arthur Webster; when Beale and Webster withdrew in 1848 and 1849 respectively, the management fell to Delafield and his representative, Frederick Gye.⁴⁴⁸ When Delafield, too, found himself in financial difficulties after the 1849 season, Gye was left alone as manager. These changes give some indication as to the large numbers of people involved in the management of the Royal Italian Opera, above all in its early days – and this situation was also reflected in the singers' contracts during this period. However, at this point it is important to clarify that the theatre was never managed by anything that could be described as an artists' 'Commonwealth' or a 'Republic of Artists', as Melanie Stier has characterised it.⁴⁴⁹ It is true that Willert Beale also uses the term 'Commonwealth' in connection with the Royal Italian Opera, but only in the following context:

It is worth while noting that, notwithstanding the difficulties that occurred – difficulties that were increased by the powerful opposition of Jenny Lind at Her Majesty's – the theatre was not closed a single night, nor has it ever been so during an Italian Opera season. A commonwealth was formed by the principal artists, who selected Mr. Frederick Gye as their director. The commonwealth did not answer. Mr. Gye ultimately assumed the post and liabilities of sole lessee and manager of Covent Garden Theatre, a position he filled with consummate skill and administrative power.⁴⁵⁰

Clearly, despite the singers' ambitions to an artistic 'commonwealth', it was necessary to have a manager to run the house, as Dideriksen also describes:

Towards the end of the 1849 season the finances of the opera house had deteriorated to such an extent that Beale advocated its closure. The company was saved through a scheme by which Gye took over the theatre under a 'joint stock concern' or 'Commonwealth' together with the principal artists. A group of artists, including Costa, Grisi, Mario, Tamburini and Viardot, agreed to manage the company with Gye on whom the main responsibility for all financial and administrative matters rested.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ See Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 1, pp. 49–51. Part of the problem lay with the extravagant fees that Persiani promised to singers, which in the end he could not afford to pay (see *ibid.*, p. 58).

⁴⁴⁸ For a detailed description of the dissolution of the management partnership, see *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁴⁹ See Melanie Stier, *Pauline Viardot-García in Großbritannien und Irland*, pp. 68–77.

⁴⁵⁰ Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 1, p. 62.

⁴⁵¹ Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry', p. 79.

Dideriksen also provides a more nuanced representation of the situation. In 1849, Gye signed a lease agreement with the owners of the theatre, but because of the insecure financial situation, this agreement did not stipulate a fixed monthly rent, but anticipated that the building's owners would take a share of the theatre's takings.⁴⁵² Also, some of the performers engaged at the house decided to forgo their usually high fees in the hope of facilitating the continued survival of the theatre, given its precarious position.⁴⁵³ After all, the Royal Italian Opera existed largely because of the disagreements between the 'vieille garde' and Lumley – for the new theatre to go bankrupt would amount to a failure of their new venture. Moreover, if the theatre collapsed, the affected singers would have to try to secure engagements at Her Majesty's again, and in that case, given that Lumley had already engaged other singers, he would be in a much stronger position. He would not have been dependent on the Royal Italian Opera singers, which at worst might have meant they did not manage to secure a contract at all. In this context, then, the lower fees at the Royal Italian Opera can be considered the lesser of two evils for the singers.⁴⁵⁴ The involvement of singers in the theatre's management that Stier identifies, then, is in fact nothing more than a case of the singers accepting lower fees; it was always Gye who took charge of running the theatre. Moreover, it had been standard practice since the beginning of the century for singers to determine the repertoire; this did not amount to the singers taking on the role of 'artistic directors' of the opera house.⁴⁵⁵

It is in this light that we must consider our next case study: the contracts between Pauline Viardot-García and the Royal Italian Opera from the years 1848 to 1855. Given the Royal Italian Opera's high turnover in managers in its early years, it is useful to compare and contrast Gye's contracts with those of the management in the theatre's opening years: this comparison allows us to pinpoint the differences between the two leadership periods. The availability of contracts involving different contractual partners, who found themselves in similarly precarious financial conditions, provides an especially revealing insight into the organisation of singers' contracts on London's Italian opera scene in the mid-nineteenth century.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 94–96 (this interim agreement remained in place until 1854).

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–4.

⁴⁵⁴ In the appendix to her dissertation, Dideriksen gives an overview of the fees at the Royal Italian opera between 1848 and 1855, which shows a general decline in the monthly fees paid. See *ibid.*, pp. 357–58.

⁴⁵⁵ See Chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

Pauline Viardot made her London debut in 1848.⁴⁵⁶ In fact, Charles Gruneisen (who negotiated the contracts with Viardot at this time on behalf of Frederick Beale) had engaged her to sing in 1847, but this arrangement was not followed through. It seems that at this time, the managers of the Royal Italian Opera were considering the possibility that their theatre's season would take place outside of the April-to-August season that Laporte had established at Her Majesty's and which had now become routine. However, the managers then apparently reconsidered and decided to put their own opera season into direct competition with that of the longer-established theatre. These contracts also make clear that Gruneisen's role at the Royal Italian Opera went far beyond that of a critic who was enthusiastic about the aesthetic outlook of this new enterprise. It is therefore important to bear in mind his vested interests when considering his comments about the opera house.⁴⁵⁷

As compensation for the cancellation of the autumn engagement, the management agreed to pay Viardot the enormous sum of £1000; this can be taken as a sign of the informality of contracts with singers at this time.⁴⁵⁸ This concession also indicates how important it was to the management to secure Viardot for the following season; there is also a clause in the compensation agreement that restricts her from performing in London before May 1848.⁴⁵⁹ A further indication of the management's sense of urgency is the fact that Viardot's contract for the 1848 season was signed on 15 September 1847 – just one day after her engagement for 1847 was annulled.⁴⁶⁰

It is unsurprising that Viardot entered the London opera scene in 1848. Since 1847, the musical world all over continental Europe had been under the spell of Jenny Lind, whom Lumley accordingly engaged at Her Majesty's for the 1847 and 1848 seasons. At the same time as Lind's successes, though, another singer was

⁴⁵⁶ After her marriage to Louis Viardot, Pauline often used her maiden name, García, as well as her husband's surname, probably to draw attention to her family background. As the daughter of Manuel García, her maiden name was renowned enough to be useful in self-promotion. For ease of reading, I refer to her in this chapter simply as Pauline Viardot, which is also the name she used to sign contracts.

⁴⁵⁷ See, for example, Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*; and Dideriksen, *Repertory and Rivalry*, p. 71.

⁴⁵⁸ See also Thomas Willert Beale [writing as Walter Maynard], *The Enterprising Impresario* (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co., 1867), pp. 77–85. (As is clear from Beale's description of the system at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, this informality applied only to the 'stars' of an ensemble, and not to the rank-and-file artists. Beale also reproduces a long excerpt from the manual of regulations of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

⁴⁵⁹ See Appendix, 14 September 1847 [BNF, NAF 16278 f. 3].

⁴⁶⁰ See Appendix, 15 September 1847 [BNF, NAF 16278 ff. 4–5].

causing a furore, and was referred to in the press as a direct competitor for the Swedish prima donna – Pauline Viardot-García, the ‘Spanish Nightingale’:

[...] Es gelang der spanischen Nachtigall, wie auch Morning Chronicle vom 5. Mai ganz richtig bemerkt, diesen Winter [1847] zu Berlin den Gesang der schwedischen Nachtigall so wohl zu ersetzen, dass mindestens eine gleiche Bewunderung und Sensation erfolgte. Mögen Apollo und Hygiea immerdar die holden Nachtigallen beschützen, und mögen sie bald uns wieder entzücken.⁴⁶¹

The rivalry between the two ‘nightingales’, as this quotation suggests, lived above all in the British press, and was thus an important prerequisite for Viardot’s engagement at the Royal Italian Opera in 1848, as Lind’s opposite number.⁴⁶²

The contract between Gruneisen (representing Beale) and Viardot for the 1848 season is entirely handwritten; some of its clauses are standard formulations relating to the names of the contractual parties, the singer’s status within the ensemble (clause 1), or general information about the contract’s validity and scope (e.g. clauses 2 and 8). That these standard components of the contract are not in printed form indicates the low degree of professionalisation in the practices surrounding contracts, and this is unsurprising given the then-recent establishment of the Royal Italian Opera. By contrast, the fact that the contract is in French may seem unexpected. It seems that the use of French was a continuation of established traditions: contracts for London’s Italian opera houses had used French since the beginning of the century, and Gye, too, would continue this practice.⁴⁶³

The moment of signing Viardot’s contracts always happened in the presence of her husband, who would confirm the legality of her signature and take charge of fee negotiations.⁴⁶⁴ In light of the sources and the general practices of the time, then, it

⁴⁶¹ *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 49 (1847), p. 424. The press-driven opposition between Lind and Viardot is reminiscent of the early eighteenth century rivalry between Faustina Bordoni and Francesca Cuzzoni, which was made manifest in Handel’s opera *Admeto*. See Suzanne Aspden, ‘The “Rival Queens” and the Play of Identity in Handel’s *Admeto*’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18 (2006), pp. 301–331.

⁴⁶² Lumley, aware of Viardot’s successes, had made attempts to bring her to Her Majesty’s in 1846, but failed ‘on account of the exigencies of her repertoire’. See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 155. In terms of the press-fuelled nature of the rivalry between Lind and Viardot, it is no coincidence that Gruneisen was a critic for the *Morning Chronicle*. For another example of the opposition of the ‘Spanish jay’ and the ‘Swedish Nightingale’, see *Dublin University Magazine* 49 (1857), p. 496.

⁴⁶³ As late as the 1870s, French was the language used for a blank contract bearing Gye’s name that survives from a North American tour [HL, TS 319.99].

⁴⁶⁴ Louis Viardot’s signed confirmation is present in all the contracts under discussion here. See also Stier, *Pauline Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien und Irland*, pp. 70–71. In the source that Stier cites here, when the two names are given, Louis Viardot’s name always appears before Pauline’s.

would be incorrect to describe contractual negotiations as undertaken jointly by Louis and Pauline Viardot.⁴⁶⁵ The necessity of the husband's consent paints a clear picture, and one that contrasts, for example, with that of Grisi, who did not involve a male representative in signing her contracts in the mid-1830s.⁴⁶⁶

After the standardised phrases specifying the parties involved in the contract, clause 1 establishes the duration of the engagement (1 May to 24 August), and Viardot's official status, including the musical genres in which she was contracted to perform: she would be a *prima donna assoluta* in *opera seria*, *semi-seria* and *opera buffa*, and would also appear in concerts organised by the theatre.

Clause 2 stipulates that Viardot should arrive a few days in advance of 1 May – probably for rehearsals – and that a benefit performance would be held in her name but would not bring her any extra income. The contract limits Viardot's performances to exactly three per week, not more or fewer; this would later become a standard component of all her contracts with the Royal Italian Opera. The final sentence of clause 2 is a typical formulation in contracts, and states that the singer should follow the opera company's normal rules.

Clause 3 addresses the procedure in the case of illness. If a serious illness prevented Viardot from performing for more than eight days, she would cease to receive payments until she resumed performing. This was apparently the management team's attempt to mitigate against the prevailing 'cold and illness system' with which Lumley also struggled.⁴⁶⁷

The next clause relaxes the restriction on performing outside the theatre: it permits appearances in court concerts and in the Concerts of Ancient Music.⁴⁶⁸ The latter concession probably stemmed from the strong aristocratic interest in this concert series, the audiences for which can be considered identical to those at the Italian opera. This permission to perform in concerts meant a considerable increase in income for the singers, but it is interesting that no other public concert appearances

⁴⁶⁵ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 82.

⁴⁶⁶ See my discussion of Laporte's contracts in Chapter 5.2.

⁴⁶⁷ Singers cancelling performances under false pretences was a widespread problem in London's Italian opera industry. See my chapter 5.2; Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 55–56, and Zechner, '...And the English buy it', p. 62.

⁴⁶⁸ The Concerts of Ancient Music were a concert series that existed from 1776 to 1849, organised by aristocratic sponsors. The music performed was above all vocal music from the past, including Mozart, Pergolesi, Handel and Gluck. See William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London and Vienna between 1830 and 1848*, 2nd ed. (London: Ashgate, 2004), p. 71.

were allowed. However, the definition of what constituted a public concert rested not on whether the singer would earn a fee, but on whether tickets were sold. This makes clear that the Royal Italian Opera wanted to maintain exclusive rights to its singers as far as possible. It was necessary to accept that the singers would perform in aristocrat-organised events, but this might also have a positive effect by encouraging audiences to attend the opera itself. The attempt to secure exclusive rights is also evident from another restriction within the same clause of the contract, which prevents Viardot from appearing in London or elsewhere in Britain prior to her Royal Italian Opera debut. The opposition to Jenny Lind at Her Majesty's thus becomes obvious.

Clause 5 specifies the operas that Viardot would sing; unsurprisingly, these are the works in which she had already enjoyed success in continental Europe, and with which she was therefore identified: Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* – as a London premiere, in Italian – Bellini's *La sonnambula* and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Mozart's *Il flauto magico*, Halévy's *La Juive* and Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and *Don Pasquale*.⁴⁶⁹ It is clear that these operas were not decided on by the managers, because of the additional remarks made about some of the works. For example, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* was to be sung with the extremely popular third act by Vaccai, and in *Il flauto magico*, Viardot was free to choose which soprano role to sing.⁴⁷⁰

The extent to which the theatre's programming was influenced by Viardot is also indicated by the stipulation that in addition to the operas named in the contract, the management might suggest other works, but these would be subject to her approval: it is clear who had final authority on these decisions. Nevertheless, this form of influence on the management is not to be confused with participation in the management itself. It is important to remember that Viardot would have been keen to make the most favourable impression possible on audiences – and what better way to do that than to bring with her the roles she had already performed successfully elsewhere? Viardot's influence, then – whether during her 1848 engagement, or in relation to the adaptations of French operas in which she would appear in London in

⁴⁶⁹ On Viardot's earlier successes, see, for example, *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 49 (1847), p. 422; *Musical World* 23 (1848), p. 294; and *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* 1 (1846), p. 47.

⁴⁷⁰ For a detailed account of Vaccai's third act for *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, see Poriss, *Changing the Score*, pp. 114–124.

the years to come – certainly did not amount to any coherent approach to programming based on overarching aesthetic principles.

In the 1848 season, Viardot appeared in the first London performance of *Gli Ugonotti*, and in *La sonnambula*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, and *Don Giovanni*. This last work was not listed in the contract, but had long been a repertoire staple; most singers were therefore able to perform it at short notice without difficulty, and Viardot herself had enjoyed international success as Donna Anna.⁴⁷¹ It therefore would have seemed unnecessary to make a contractual commitment to the work. This state of affairs suggests that the list of operas in the contract may have functioned more as a guideline than as a totally binding clause. It seems most likely that although Viardot included particular roles from her repertoire in the contract, this was not intended as a binding commitment, and the final decision was made at a later stage.

Clause 6 is another of the standardised formulations that appear in the contracts of the leading singers at London's Italian opera houses: it states that the theatre was responsible for providing – and paying for – all the costumes, hairdressing and shoes that Viardot would need in order to play the roles assigned to her.

Interestingly, the terms of payment are not laid down until clause 7, which is the penultimate clause and therefore not a particularly prominent position. This format would remain standard until the period of Frederick Gye. This subordinate position probably indicates a lack of professionalism, resulting partly from the uncertain staffing situation at the Royal Italian Opera. For opera and concert performances in the period between 1 May and 24 August, Viardot received the enormous sum of £2500, which once more underlines her special status as the Royal Italian Opera's star performer and her positioning as Jenny Lind's opposite number. Also, the exceptions in Viardot's contract relating to 'non-public' concerts gave her a lucrative opportunity for increased earnings, so that her London engagement overall represented an important income source. Her fees from the Royal Italian Opera would be paid in instalments, as was standard practice at the time.⁴⁷² For Viardot's financial security, and to cover the costs of her journey to London, the first instalment of £500 would be paid on her arrival in the city. The remaining £2000 would then be paid in equal instalments at the end of each month.

⁴⁷¹ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 308.

⁴⁷² See Chapter 5.2.

As already mentioned, the final clause of the contract is a standardised phrase, and points to the informal nature of the contract: there would be no legal consequences of a breach of contract or a misinterpretation; rather, any disputes would be resolved out of court through a third party. In this light, it seems unsurprising that double engagements or breaches of contract by singers occurred so often: at least before the trials that took place around the middle of the century, these singers did not need to fear public defamation through court proceedings.⁴⁷³ Below this clause are the signatures of the members of the management: Gruneisen (representing Beale), Edward Delafield and Arthur Webster.

However, below the signatures, two extra clauses were added, apparently at a later date. These provide a detailed insight into the interests of Frederick Beale, who was active as a concert organiser at this time: the extra clauses specified that Beale could, if necessary, ask Viardot to perform in other concerts that were not connected to the Royal Italian Opera and beyond the exceptions already stated in the contract. Viardot would then receive an extra £500 in addition to the already-agreed £2500. This extra clause can be considered an attempt to expand the managers' sphere of influence, strengthening their exclusive rights to the singer and offering the opportunity for increased income.

Viardot's contract for the 1849 season is similar in many respects; because of the disagreement between Beale and Webster, it was signed only by Delafield, but like the previous year's, it is a combined contract for opera and concert performances.⁴⁷⁴ The main differences from the 1848 contract arise from the fact the later contract envisaged that Viardot's concert performances would take the form of a tour of England and Scotland; however, this plan was never realised.⁴⁷⁵

After the standardised opening formulas identifying the contractual parties, the duration of the engagement is stated: 10 July to 10 September 1849, with the tour beginning after the end of the season in August. Clause 2 states that Viardot's

⁴⁷³ See my discussion of court cases involving opera singers in Chapter 5.3.

⁴⁷⁴ For the first version of the contract for 1849, see Appendix, 11 December 1848 [BNF, NAF 16278 ff. 6–7].

⁴⁷⁵ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, pp. 323–24. It is possible that Beale played a significant role in organising the tour: he prepared and signed the revised contract confirming the cancellation of the tour (see Appendix, 10 July 1849 [BNF NAF 16278 ff. 8–9]). He also engaged her to sing at the 1849 Liverpool Festival at short notice (see Appendix, 30 July 1849 [BNF, NAF 16278 f. 10]).

performances at the Royal Italian Opera would, as usual, be limited to three per week; on tour, staged performances would also be limited to three per week, and Viardot would not be required to sing in more than one concert per day.

As in 1848, Viardot committed to appearing in a benefit performance for the theatre, allowing them to increase their profits rather than claiming the takings for herself. This type of clause ceases to appear in later contracts between Viardot and the Royal Italian Opera, and its presence at this point indicates the particularly desperate position in which the managers found themselves. Clearly they were expecting such benefit performances to help bring the theatre's budget back to health. Ultimately, though, this strategy probably changed little, and its ineffectiveness may explain why Gye did not use benefit concerts in this way in his contracts. After the mention of benefit performances, clauses 4 and 5 are identical to clause 3 (illness) and clause 5 (concerts outside the theatre) of her contract for 1848.

However, the contract for 1849 departs from its predecessor in clause 6, which stipulates the roles assigned to Viardot for the coming season. Here she is granted exclusive rights to the role of Fidès in an Italian adaptation of Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*. The composer had conceived this role for Viardot, which made it highly suitable for performance in London, allowing Viardot to present her vocal and acting skills in the best possible light – particularly because Fidès is the central character in the opera.

Moreover, the première of *Le Prophète* took place during the Paris opera *saison* of the same year, on 16 April 1849, and was a huge success for Viardot, which increased London audiences' interest in the work.⁴⁷⁶ The foreword to the libretto for the first London performance further indicates the extent to which Royal Italian Opera audiences were influenced by the success of singers and works in continental Europe, justifying the inclusion of *Le Prophète* in the theatre's programme as follows:

This Opera was first produced at the *Théâtre de l'Opéra*, in Paris, on the 16th of April, and up to the 6th July obtained twenty-five representations, and despite of the cholera and of political events, attracted immense audiences. The triumph of Madame **VIARDOT**, in the character of *Fidès*, was one of the greatest successes ever known in lyric annals. Although the opera is divided into five

⁴⁷⁶ See Edwards, *The Prima Donna*, vol. 2, p. 124. Success in continental Europe was the basis of the careers of almost all singers who went on to succeed in London.

acts by **SCRIBE**, it is, in point of fact only in four, as, in Paris, the curtain did not drop between the First and Second Acts.⁴⁷⁷

Alongside the exaltation of Viardot, the justificatory tone of this passage is present especially in that last remark about the division between acts one and two in the Parisian production. This comment probably sought to shore up the four-act London version: rhetoric that legitimised artistic choices, usually in terms of authenticity and completeness, was important to the dissemination of the new work-orientated aesthetic advocated by Gruneisen. The fact that the London audience was far more interested in the singers than in the first performance of Meyerbeer's opera is indicated by the final element of the foreword: an overview of the arias in the opera, naming the individual singers, to help audience members find their way through the work. Strikingly, this overview does not provide the titles of the arias – in any language – but rather gives categories such as 'Romance', 'Air' or 'Duo'. This makes clear that the overview served simply as a guide to the performance, helping opera-goers to avoid missing any 'highlights'.

As well as Fidès, Viardot was promised exclusive rights to the part of Valentine in *Gli Ugonotti* – a role she had performed successfully in the work's London première at the Royal Italian Opera in 1848. However, in 1849 it was not Viardot but Giulia Grisi who would play Valentine in almost the whole run of performances.⁴⁷⁸ Viardot arrived in London late, and audiences were hugely enthusiastic in their anticipation of *Gli Ugonotti*, so Grisi volunteered – not without self-interest – to take over the part of Valentine.⁴⁷⁹ The other roles named in the contract for 1849 corresponded exactly to those of the previous year – a further indication of the extent to which programming choices were oriented towards the singers. In light of the events of the 1848 season, it seems plausible that Viardot would also have sung Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, given the work's status as a repertoire staple in London. For the planned tour of England and Scotland, the operas *Otello* (Desdemona) and *Norma* would be added – both were already in Viardot's repertoire. Once again, as in 1848, a standardised clause states that if the management should suggest any other roles to Viardot beyond those named in the contract, she would be free to decline them.

⁴⁷⁷ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Le Prophète*, libretto, RIO (London, 1849) [n.p.].

⁴⁷⁸ See Becker, Henze-Döhring and Moeller (eds.), *Giacomo Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, p. 13.

⁴⁷⁹ See Cox, *Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 210.

Clause 7, which concerns the provision of costumes, corresponds exactly to clause 6 of the previous year's contract. Once again, Viardot's fee is stated relatively late, in clause 8. She was to receive £1800 for two months (10 July to 10 September), and once again payment would be in instalments: £450 on arrival in London, on 30 July, at the end of the season at the Royal Italian Opera, and on 9 September. The cost of travel, food and accommodation during the tour for Viardot, a companion – most probably her husband – and one servant would also be covered entirely by the management. Even taking into account the lucrative concerts in which Viardot would perform, this would be a serious financial burden for the management. Finally, clause 9 mentions the possibility that Viardot might begin her engagement earlier than stated. If she could arrange for the management of the Paris Opéra to release her to travel to London before 10 July, she would be paid pro rata for the extra time she was available to perform in London. This possibility was probably conceived with the rehearsals for the London première of *Le Prophète* in mind, which would likely have required extra time, given that the opera was new to all the singers and instrumentalists apart from Viardot.⁴⁸⁰ Clauses 10 (*force majeure*) and 11 are, once again, standardised articles, and are identical with clause 8 and the first additional clause of the contract for 1848.

However, the contract discussed here, which was drawn up on 11 December 1848, was not realised as planned. There seem to have been problems with the dates of the planned tour, which led Frederick Beale to prepare a revised version of the contract on 10 July 1849. The fact that Beale appears as a signatory to the contract here, when he had long since ceased to be involved in the theatre's management, suggests, as previously mentioned, that he was involved in the organisation of the tour.⁴⁸¹ In the contract itself, he is described as 'agissant comme administration non-responsable du Théâtre Royal-Italien de Covent-Garden', which can be taken as an indication of the importance to the management of intensive networking at this time.⁴⁸² This impression is supported by the specific changes made to the contract. The tour was cancelled, which shortened the engagement: it now covered the period 10 July – the

⁴⁸⁰ The cast for the London première comprised Viardot (Fidès), Hayes (Bertha), Mario (Jean de Leyde), Tagliafico (Oberthal), Polonini (Jonas), Mei (Mathisen) and Marini (Zacharie). See Meyerbeer, *Le Prophète*, libretto, RIO (London, 1849). I will return to the theme of rehearsals and Viardot's role in them later in this chapter.

⁴⁸¹ Viardot's engagement at the Liverpool Festival is one indication of Beale's intensive involvement in the organisation of concert tours at this time. See Appendix, 30 July 1849 [BNF NAF 16278 f. 10].

⁴⁸² See also Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, pp. 70–71.

day the new contract was drawn up – to 25 August (clause 1). Of course, given this considerable change to the overall shape of the contract, it was necessary to adjust the fee: the revised contract mentioned the previously agreed flat fee of £1800; this would now be replaced by a fee of £60 per performance.⁴⁸³ Clause 3 of the revised contract emphasises again Viardot’s exclusive right to the role of Fidès, further stating that Fidès (a role composed for her) would be her debut role of the season. In fact, this passage resulted in Viardot’s performances for that season being limited to Fidès alone. She sang the role a total of twelve times – including full-opera performances and excerpts. It seems likely that this was a deliberate marketing strategy, forging a strong connection between Viardot and this role and setting a standard for future performers – a strategy that hit the mark with London audiences. With this approach, Viardot could also be sure that, if the première went well, further engagements at the Royal Italian Opera would follow in the coming years; and with the première in Paris behind her at this point, it was reasonable to expect success in London too.

Clause 4 reflects typical practice in London contracts, providing financial security for the singer: Viardot would be paid in advance for the first five performances of *Le Prophète* (a total fee of £300). She would be entitled to this payment even if a performance was cancelled for any reason. In view of the contract’s timing, this clause surely indicates the slow progress of rehearsals: the première looked to be in danger because musical standards were not improving quickly enough.

In this context, and with reference to written correspondence between Viardot and Meyerbeer, Stier writes that Viardot took on a role similar to that of a musical director, and voiced Meyerbeer’s views on his behalf during the rehearsals.⁴⁸⁴ However, a letter that Meyerbeer wrote on 21 June 1849 to the publisher Louis Brandus (who was in London at the time) paints a different picture.⁴⁸⁵ To Brandus, Meyerbeer lamented that ‘niemand dort von den Dirigirenden das Werk [kenne]. Suchen Sie wenigsten’s von Beal[e] zu erlangen daß so viel Zeit bleibt daß M^e Viardot ein paar Klavierproben ein paar Orchesterproben, und ein paar Mise en

⁴⁸³ On the basis of the list of Viardot’s performances in England and Ireland prepared by Stier (see *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, pp. 307–374), Viardot would have earned £840 from a total of 14 performances: she only performed in *Le Prophète* and *Gli Ugonotti*.

⁴⁸⁴ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 44.

⁴⁸⁵ See Becker, Henze-Döhring and Moeller (eds.), *Giacomo Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, p. 11.

Scène Probe halten kann'.⁴⁸⁶ The composer was also considering travelling to London himself if the worst came to the worst, in order to 'mit jedem Sänger *einzel*n die Rolle, und mit Costa die Partitur durchzugehen. [...] Nur müßten die Sänger doch schon einigermaßen *die Noten* ihrer Rolle kennen'.⁴⁸⁷ In late June, then – the premiere was scheduled for 24 July – the singers were apparently having significant problems with fundamental musical aspects of the piece that would need to be in place in order to develop an interpretation. It seems unsurprising that there were problems, given that *Le Prophète*'s very first performance, in Paris, had been so recent, on 16 April 1849. The London performance required a singable Italian version of the text, which entailed many changes to the work, including musical ones. The singers' practice copies, orchestral parts and conductor's score would therefore have needed to be based on this new Italian version.⁴⁸⁸ The time between April and July would have been very tight for this undertaking – particularly given that once these preliminaries were in place, the performers still needed to learn an opera's worth of entirely unknown music: both singers and orchestra were therefore probably insufficiently prepared.

With his letter to Brandus, Meyerbeer also enclosed a letter to Costa, which Brandus passed on.⁴⁸⁹ To Costa, by contrast with his comments to Brandus, the composer emphasised that he did not think it necessary to travel to London himself:

Je Vous prie donc mon cher Maestro de me faire le plaisir de diriger non seulement les répétitions, mais aussi toutes les représentations du Prophète, car j'ai la plus grande confiance dans votre immense talent & dans vos sentiments personnels de bienveillance pour moi, & je suis sur que sous votre excellente direction la partition du Prophète sera parfaitement bien exécuté à Londres.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. Stier sees this as evidence that Viardot actually conducted the orchestra, but this is not explicitly clear in the source. It is more likely that Meyerbeer was simply asking for more rehearsals for the opera's central singer, on whom the work's success in London depended.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ On this, see also Chapter 6.1.1.

⁴⁸⁹ Meyerbeer: *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, pp. 12–13.

⁴⁹⁰ Letter from Meyerbeer to Costa, 21 June 1849, Meyerbeer: *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, p. 13. In volume 4 of Meyerbeer's correspondence there is another letter from Meyerbeer to Costa which was probably written on 7 June 1849 and is not the same as the one in volume 5 (for the earlier letter, see Meyerbeer: *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 4, p. 499). The contents of this earlier letter suggest that it must have been written before 21 June: Meyerbeer mentions to Costa that he will not be conducting the premiere. In the letter of 21 June, by contrast, Meyerbeer was irritated by fact that the opera house's prospectus had announced incorrectly that he would conduct the premiere. In any case, these letters make clear that Meyerbeer communicated extensively with Costa via Brandus; Viardot therefore cannot be regarded as the composer's only point of contact in London.

Meyerbeer was thus not entirely consistent across his communications with Brandus and with Costa. The letter to Costa was probably intended both to increase the pressure on the musical director and to pacify him, particularly in light of the fact that the Royal Italian Opera had advertised to its subscribers the possibility that Meyerbeer might direct the premiere.⁴⁹¹ It seems that Costa was not informed by the management of whether he would be conducting the premiere, and this – as Meyerbeer perhaps feared – may have affected the quality of rehearsals. The composer, by confirming that he would not conduct the premiere himself, probably hoped to improve the efficiency of the rehearsals.

Nevertheless, these letters demonstrate that Meyerbeer did not get his information exclusively from Viardot, but also had other correspondents, sometimes via intermediaries.⁴⁹² The letters also make explicit the extent of the singers' fundamental musical difficulties with the work at this stage. It is in this light that the following comment from Viardot must be interpreted (which Stier cites as evidence that Viardot was active in a musical director-like role): 'Il faut que j'exépedie cette lettre aujourd'hui, autrement je ne pourrais le faire qu'après Le Prophète, car d'ici là, je ne vois plus un instant de liberté. C'est moi qui dirige toutes les répétitions avec piano et de mise en scène'.⁴⁹³ But this quotation is evidence only of Viardot's probably marginal involvement in leading piano rehearsals and stage rehearsals. In the piano rehearsals, this was probably simply a case of helping performers to learn their notes, remedying the musical shortcomings of the singers she was working with. These shortcomings were probably considerable, given the short time frame available, and in light of Meyerbeer's comments. It is highly likely that the 'mise-en-scène' rehearsals simply involved helping with the dramatic elements of the performance (as opposed to any fundamental decisions between different staging options).⁴⁹⁴ This form of rehearsal became necessary above all because of a cast change: Jean de Leyde was played by Mario, rather than by Jean-Etienne August Massol as in Paris. In the 21 June letters, Meyerbeer was still assuming that Massol would play Jean.⁴⁹⁵ A diary entry from 6 July provides evidence that the switch to Mario had been made by then, and this leads Stier to identify Viardot as acting in the role of a legal

⁴⁹¹ *Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, p. 5.

⁴⁹² See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, pp. 46–47.

⁴⁹³ Quoted in Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 50.

⁴⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 50, note 69. Indeed, 'staging', as it might be devised by a modern opera director, did not exist in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁹⁵ *Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, p. 11.

representative to Meyerbeer.⁴⁹⁶ But it is more likely – above all in light of the fact that Viardot did not sign her own contracts – that she simply played a role in communicating on Meyerbeer’s behalf, helped by her familiarity with the work; she surely did not have the level of authority that Stier suggests. It is also possible that the name Viardot in the Meyerbeer fragment in question (‘Ob nicht Viardot hier bleiben kann um seine Bezahlung und sein Engagement zu verfolgen’)⁴⁹⁷ actually refers to Louis Viardot rather than his wife: in view of her rehearsal commitments in London, it would have made little sense for the soprano to remain in Paris longer than planned; the possibility also seems unlikely given that she did not even carry out the negotiations for her own contracts.

Clause 5 gives Viardot the option of appearing in operas other than *Le Prophète*, but as already mentioned, she did not take up this offer. Clauses five to six also state that Viardot should give a total of at least ten performances during the season. Again, this worked to the singer’s advantage, in that it gave her a guaranteed fee of £600, which she would receive even if *Le Prophète* was not successful: at least in the financial sense, then, her London season could definitely be considered a success. Finally, clause 7 states that apart from the changes already detailed, all other clauses from the previous contract of 11 December would remain in place. The contract then ends with the usual standard formulations.

Considered together with its revision of 10 July 1849, Viardot’s contract for the 1849 season provides important evidence of the nature and strength of the legal commitment in singers’ engagements of this type. Although the original engagement was agreed long before the start of the season, in practice this turned out not to be binding, even in terms of essential elements such as the fee and dates covered; rather, there was plenty of room for revisions, and these could be incorporated even at short notice. In terms of their contents, there was very little standardisation among the 1848 and 1849 Royal Italian Opera contracts; this was probably because of the lack of professionalisation of the practices surrounding the contracts, as well as the opera house’s unstable staffing situation. The specific form that the final contracts took was thus inevitably affected by their highly informal foundations. The Royal Italian Opera also made efforts to secure as many combined engagements as possible, extending

⁴⁹⁶ Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 46.

⁴⁹⁷ Diary entry by Meyerbeer, July 1849. *Meyerbeer: Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, vol. 5, p. 20; quoted in Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 46.

beyond a simple commitment to perform at the opera house. The tours and concerts as originally envisaged would have broadened the scope of the opera house's exclusive rights to the singer, bringing in additional income. However, these ambitions were ultimately not realised in either 1848 or 1849.

Viardot's contract for the 1850 season includes some significant differences from the contracts for 1848 and 1849, despite the fact that its signatory, Gye, was acting only as Delafield's representative at the time.⁴⁹⁸ Above all, it is striking that key points of the engagement were positioned prominently within the contract: Viardot's contractual status (*prima donna assoluta*), the duration of the engagement (15 June to 15 August 1850) and above all the fee (£1500) appear in the first clause, directly after the standardised passage naming the contractual parties. Similarly important, the second clause mentions a possible extension of the contract until 28 August, which would be implemented only if Gye confirmed it by 1 June. For this extended season Viardot would receive £1800, and this possibility was ultimately realised.⁴⁹⁹

There are also small differences in the third clause, which states the roles Viardot would sing: as before, she would play Fidès in *Le Prophète*, Rachel in *La Juive*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, and would sing in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* if these works were performed at all (the different status of these last two works is indicated by the fact that only the works' titles are given, rather than the name of Viardot's role as with the other operas). It is in the cases of *Le Prophète* and *La Juive* (which was performed under the title *L'ebrea* in London) that the singer is most clearly identified with a particular role in the contract, and this prominence for those works and roles is also evident in the actual performances that took place in the 1850 season. Above all, Viardot emphasised her signature role, Fidès, with twelve performances in total. She performed as Rachel on five occasions, and Adina only twice; these figures paint a clear picture of the singer's strategic priorities. Unsurprisingly, apart from Mario, the rest of the casts of *Le Prophète* and *La Juive* did not consist of active members of the Royal Italian Opera's 'vieille garde', such as Grisi and Tamburini. This group performed mainly in works that were 'Italian' in origin such as *Norma* or *Don Giovanni*, as opposed to works that were

⁴⁹⁸ Gye's status in relation to Delafield is not mentioned explicitly in the contract, as was the case in his predecessors' contracts. For the contract, see Appendix, 15 November 1849 [BNF, NAF 16278 ff. 11–12].

⁴⁹⁹ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 326.

translated into Italian.⁵⁰⁰ It is clear, then, that Viardot's self-positioning was her strategic response to the high number of *prime donne* at the Royal Italian Opera at the time.⁵⁰¹ The only way forward was to allow each soprano exclusive rights to particular roles, in the process labelling her as an 'Italian' or 'French' prima donna to audiences.

This situation becomes especially clear in a passage of the contract's third clause relating to *L'elisir d'amore* – the only 'Italian' opera in Viardot's list. The contract states that Viardot need only appear as Adina if *L'elisir* had not been performed before her arrival, or if the singer who had initially taken the role had since left the theatre. This implies that having exclusive rights to particular roles was an important concern for all the *prime donne*, including Viardot, and that this exclusivity affected the range of operas that were ultimately performed at the Royal Italian Opera. The rivalry between Viardot and Grisi was put on display in especially conspicuous fashion. Grisi did not hesitate to use her partner, Mario, to her own advantage, as Cox described:

With every fresh presentation the enthusiasm respecting *Les Huguenots* increased; and in like proportion grew the jealousy which was raised against the heroine, only to display itself soon afterwards [...] in a most contemptible form, that happily was defeated. The occasion was Madame Viardot's benefit, when *Les Huguenots* was, naturally enough, put up for representation. On the morning of that day Madame Viardot was waited upon by a gentleman of great influence in the theatre who had to convey to her intelligence that Mario was too ill to sing at night, but that under such untoward circumstances Madame Grisi would play the Norma *for her*, if that opera were substituted. Whilst requesting that Madame Grisi might be cordially thanked for her courtesy and friendly feeling, Madame Viardot inquired whether the costumes were ready for each opera, and being assured that they were, she added, 'Do you not know that Roger is still in town! I will ask him to play Raoul; but if he cannot do so, let *Norma* be given; *only I shall play Norma!*'.⁵⁰²

Clause 3 closes with the standardised passage relating to choosing any further roles, which would require the singer's permission.

⁵⁰⁰ See *Musical World* 25 (1851), e.g. pp. 236, 396, 476. As already mentioned, Viardot had also had to relinquish the part of Valentine in *Gli Hugonotti* to Grisi the previous year. Grisi did not then give up the part. See Cox, *Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 210.

⁵⁰¹ As well as Viardot, Castellan and Grisi were engaged, among others. See Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry', p. 357.

⁵⁰² Cox, *Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, pp. 207–208.

Clause 4 broadens the engagement to include performances in concerts organised by the theatre, while maintaining a limit of three performances per week. As already mentioned, this passage was the only aspect that remained unchanged in all Viardot's contracts (apart from the standardised clauses). This clause also imposes a strict ban on performing in public concerts outside the theatre without the manager's permission. Strikingly, though, the equivalent passage in Viardot's contracts for 1848 and 1849 was far more detailed. For 1850, as before, private concerts would be the only exception to the ban, but the legal basis of this passage was weakened by the fact that it gives no more detail about what constitutes a private concert. This contract also lacks the standardised closing formula that would usually state the consequences of breaching this rule. Rather than tightening or loosening the restrictions, this seems to have been simply a case of inexact wording which probably did not have any consequences.⁵⁰³

Clause 5 (provision of costumes without charge to the singer) corresponds to the standardised clauses on this topic in contracts from previous years, in both content and wording. By contrast, clause 6 seems to have been newly created, probably because of the Royal Italian Opera's unstable financial situation at the time – a situation that led to Delafield withdrawing from the management entirely in 1849. The clause stated that Viardot's fee had to be paid entirely from the 'casse du théâtre' – that is, the box-office takings – so that it could be guaranteed that she actually received the promised sum.⁵⁰⁴ The theatre's financial circumstances were known to the public because of publicity surrounding the legal proceedings against Delafield.⁵⁰⁵ In this light, the argument that Viardot took on a role in the theatre's management is untenable.⁵⁰⁶ Moreover, a comparison with the fees of other *prime donne* at the Royal Italian Opera, such as Grisi and Castellan, makes clear that Viardot was still being paid considerably more than the other singers.⁵⁰⁷ If Viardot had really been interested in ensuring the long-term existence and financial stability of the theatre, she would at least have limited her own fees to the level of the other

⁵⁰³ This interpretation is supported by the fact that the more detailed information concerning a breach of contract are included in all Gye's later contracts. That this case might form an exception to the rule seems highly unlikely.

⁵⁰⁴ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 74.

⁵⁰⁵ See, for example, *The Jurist* 14 (1851), Part 1, p. 216.

⁵⁰⁶ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 73.

⁵⁰⁷ See Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry', p. 357. According to Dideriksen's figures, in 1850 Grisi received £560 per month, and Castellan only £200 per month, whereas Viardot's fees amounted to £750 monthly.

singers' – instead, she emerges from this situation as a typical *prima donna* figure, who secured her engagement with the manager of the Royal Italian Opera primarily on the basis of the lucrative fees available in London. The fact that she was paid so highly was surely a reflection of her effectiveness in attracting audiences; as the location stated in the contract indicates, Gye even considered it worth travelling to Paris to secure Viardot.⁵⁰⁸ After all, he had to bear in mind the possibility that Lumley, after Jenny Lind's withdrawal from the opera stage in 1849, might also try to make tempting advances towards Viardot.⁵⁰⁹

By contrast with the contract for the 1850 season, which was signed as early as November 1849, the 1851 contract was signed only in February of that year; as well as being agreed at less notice, it was considerably closer to a standardised contract.⁵¹⁰ Both the general contents and the order in which the clauses appeared corresponded entirely to Gye's 1850 contract; only small details were changed to suit the new circumstances.

For example, this time Viardot's engagement as a *prima donna assoluta* would run from 10 June to 10 August 1851, and she would receive a fee of £1000. Differently from in 1850, this year the contract specified the precise terms of payment, in four instalments of £250, on Viardot's arrival in London on 10 June and then on 30 June, 20 July and 10 August (clause 1).

As in 1850, Gye had the option to extend the contract, this time until 25 August, for which Viardot would receive an extra £200, payable on 24 August (clause 2). Given the concrete details in this clause, it is clear that Gye was attempting to improve the strength of his contractual agreements at this time.

The third clause, which concerns the roles Viardot would play, also differs from the contract for 1850. As well as Fidès and Rachel, Amina in Bellini's *La sonnambula* was added to the contract – again on the understanding that Viardot would play the roles named only if these operas were performed at all; it was possible that they would not be. Viardot would also have exclusive rights to play either Rosina

⁵⁰⁸ Viardot's contracts of the 1851, 1854 and 1855 were also signed in Paris (see Appendix).

⁵⁰⁹ In 1850, the only comparable *prima donna* Lumley could offer was Henriette Sontag. See Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 111.

⁵¹⁰ See Appendix, 28 February 1851 [BNF, NAF 16278 ff. 13–14].

(*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) or Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*).⁵¹¹ Viardot also had the exclusive right to perform the title character in Gounod's *Sapho*, which was to enjoy its first London performance shortly after the Paris premiere on 14 April. The contract stated that Viardot's season debut would certainly be as either Fidès or Sapho; in the end, she first appeared as Fidès, and once again, this was probably the result of delays during the rehearsal process. Gounod's *Sapho* was not hugely well received in London. Chorley put this down to the conservative tastes of an opera-going public that preferred *Don Giovanni* to new works; he himself considered *Sapho* 'the best first opera ever written by a composer – Beethoven's *Fidelio* (his first and last) excepted'.⁵¹² Even with the help of a prominent singer like Viardot, then, new works did not necessarily hit their mark with London audiences.⁵¹³ In this context it is unsurprising that *Sapho* did not appear on the following season's programme.

Clauses 4 and 5 (concerts and costumes, respectively) are identical to those in the previous year's contract. Clause 6 brings another significant difference, which again offers insight into the theatre's financial situation. Whereas in 1850, this clause stated that Viardot's fee would come directly from the theatre's takings, this passage disappears in the contract for 1851. In the equivalent place, the contract secures Gye's theatre an exclusive right to Viardot for the following year, 1852. The conditions would remain the same, except that the clause leaves open the question of whether Gye's theatre would by then mean the Royal Italian Opera, Her Majesty's, or the Theatre Royal Drury Lane (apart from this uncertainty, Viardot's contractual conditions would remain unchanged). This clause indicates that Gye was attempting to put long-term plans in place, and we can also infer the nature of those plans: in this very year, Gye made advances towards Lumley with regard to going into business together.⁵¹⁴ The contract for 1851 then ends with the standardised formulation that the 1850 contract lacks.

⁵¹¹ In fact, Viardot sang neither Rosina nor Adina at the Royal Italian Opera in 1851; of the roles stated in the contract, she performed only Fidès and Sapho (see Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, pp. 326–29). She also appeared as Papagena in *Il flauto magico*; this was not stated in the contract, but would have been covered by the standardised formula related to additional roles at the end of clause 3. One factor in the performance of *Il flauto magico* was that that opera's first performance of the season was given at the wish of Queen Victoria (see *ibid.*, p. 327).

⁵¹² Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, pp. 151–52.

⁵¹³ *Sapho*'s premiere in Paris also cannot be characterised as a success, which of course did not bode well for the opera's move to London. See, for example, the review in *Revue et gazette musicale* 18 (1851), p. 21, and *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung* 1 (1851), p. 385.

⁵¹⁴ See Chapter 2, The Landscape of Italian Opera.

In the end, no engagement between Gye and Viardot materialised for 1852. A document dated 27 February 1852 revises the plans that had been mentioned in the previous year's contract, and makes clear that Viardot was having serious doubts about whether she would be able to fulfil its terms.⁵¹⁵ The fee she was paid in 1851 may have been behind this uncertainty: it was considerably lower than that for 1850. According to clause 6 of the 1851 contract, Viardot would be able to expect only the same low fee for 1852, which probably seemed unsatisfactory to her. Moreover, the court proceedings between Benjamin Lumley and Johanna Wagner dominated London's opera world in 1852; if Wagner was actually engaged at the Royal Italian Opera, it would mean considerable expenditure, and a higher fee for Viardot would certainly not be possible.⁵¹⁶ And because Wagner's repertoire was similar to Viardot's, there would certainly have been conflict between the two sopranos: Viardot would not have been able to exercise her exclusive rights to roles in the way she was used to.⁵¹⁷ In addition to these factors, Gye had already made concessions to Wagner on all fronts because of her engagement with Lumley; he would not have been able to undo these for Viardot's benefit.⁵¹⁸

Despite these less than ideal circumstances, Gye attempted to persuade Viardot to appear at the Royal Italian Opera. He reduced the duration of the engagement to one month and offered flexibility (Viardot was free to choose either 15 July–15 August or 20 July–20 August), with a fee of £500. His efforts went unrewarded, however. Although Viardot had no other engagement in England during this period, she declined to take up Gye's offer.⁵¹⁹

Again, no engagement was concluded between Gye and Viardot in 1853 – instead, the singer took on a busy schedule of concerts in England – and their next contract comes from 1854.⁵²⁰ As in 1851, this was agreed at relatively short notice, in March 1854; the formulation of the contract differed from the structure that Gye had established previously. This was because for this season Louis Viardot had negotiated

⁵¹⁵ See Appendix [BNF, NAF 16278 f. 16].

⁵¹⁶ On Lumley and Wagner, see Chapter 5.3.

⁵¹⁷ Wagner's repertoire included *Fidès* and *Romeo* (in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*). See *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 42–43 (1855), p. 85.

⁵¹⁸ See, for example, Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 80, and my Chapter 5.3.

⁵¹⁹ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 329. Because of Lumley's financial difficulties, there was no question of an engagement at Her Majesty's for Viardot (see Chapter 5.3.).

⁵²⁰ See Appendix, 15 March 1854 [BNF, NAF 16278 f. 17].

£60 per evening, rather than a flat fee. Gye had initially offered a flat fee of £1000, or £1300 from 2nd May to the end of the season – probably because a flat fee made financial calculations easier – but this did not meet with Louis Viardot’s satisfaction.⁵²¹ For the singer, separate payment for each evening had the advantage that she was not tied to specific dates; according to her husband, such a commitment would no longer be possible because of her poor physical health.⁵²² In order to ensure that the engagement would nevertheless be lucrative, it was decided that Viardot would be guaranteed at least six performances per month. If the engagement began on the earliest date stated, 1st June, this would mean a maximum fee of £1080.⁵²³ If Gye was unable to arrange this number of performances, Viardot would be paid for six performances anyway. On the other hand, if Viardot refused the performances offered to her, the theatre would not be obliged to offer extra opportunities.

Clause 3, which restricts concert appearances, is highly detailed in this contract. It is specified that ‘concerts particuliers et gratuits’ means concerts where no tickets are sold; also, the concerts of the Philharmonic Society are named as an exception to this restriction.

In 1854 Viardot had exclusive rights to the role of Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – as her season debut – and, of course, to that of Fidès, which was once again to be the main emphasis of her season’s performances. However, in the end Viardot’s debut was not as Rosina, but as Corilla in Francesco Gnecco’s *La prova di un’opera seria*.⁵²⁴ Like *Don Giovanni*, this meta-opera had become firmly established in London programmes; deviations from what was contractually agreed were particularly common in relation to these standard repertoire operas. The rest of the contract corresponds to Gye’s standard formula, although it does not refer to any possible renewal for the following year, 1855; such agreements would become standard practice in Gye’s contracts in the 1860s.⁵²⁵ It is possible that securing artists’ services a year in advance did not seem necessary at this time, given that Her Majesty’s Theatre had gone bankrupt at the end of the 1852 season and the Royal Italian Opera therefore did not face any competition.

⁵²¹ See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 81.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ This figure is based on six performances per month in June, July and August. In reality, according to Stier’s overview, Viardot gave 16 performances (including concerts), thus probably only earning £960.

⁵²⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 335.

⁵²⁵ See my discussion of Mario’s contract, Chapter 5.5.

Once again, Gye's contract with Viardot for 1855 can be considered an entirely individual agreement.⁵²⁶ This is because of a concert tour organised by Gye, rather than because of the Viardots' extravagances.

Clause 1 states that Pauline Viardot would be engaged from 24 April to 24 July as a 'première cantatrice mezzo-soprano' (the term mezzo-soprano was not meant in the way we would understand today).⁵²⁷ The total fee would be £1200 – proportionately, this was significantly lower than Viardot's fees for her early seasons in London. As well as the usual roles of Fidès, Rosina and Desdemona, clause 3 also granted Viardot the roles of Azucena in the first London performance of Verdi's *Il trovatore*, and Valentine in *Gli Ugonotti* – except that she would only play Valentine if Grisi was not engaged at the Royal Italian Opera for the season. In 1854, Grisi had announced her retirement from the opera stage with a series of 'farewell performances', but this would turn out not to be final.⁵²⁸ In partnership with Mario as Raoul, Grisi was enormously effective in drawing in audiences when she played Valentine – hence Viardot would have to give the role back to Grisi if the Italian soprano returned, and this did indeed happen.⁵²⁹ Viardot's popularity was clearly waning.

Examination of the 1855 season also makes clear that as in previous years, Viardot chose one role to emphasise above all others. In this case, rather than Fidès, her main role was that of Azucena in *Il trovatore*. From this we can see that, given the now declining popularity of *Le Prophète*, Viardot was trying to win acclaim in other, new roles. Her focus on *Il trovatore* also follows a similar pattern to her other three London premieres, *Les Huguenots* (1848), *Le Prophète* (1849) and *Sapho* (1851):

⁵²⁶ See Appendix [BNF, NAF 16278 ff. 18–19].

⁵²⁷ The term 'mezzo soprano' can be considered purely an indication of vocal quality; more important in this context is the designation 'première cantatrice', which implies a hierarchical position. On this, see, for example, Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, p. 168.

⁵²⁸ On the farewell performances, see *Musical World* 32 (1854), p. 531, and my discussion of Mario in Chapter 5.5.

⁵²⁹ See *Musical World* 33 (1855), p. 519. On Londoners' partiality to Grisi-Valentine and Mario-Raoul, see also Emile Mario Vacano, *Die Coulissenwelt ohne Lampenlicht: Theater-Plaudereien*, vol. 1, 2nd unchanged printing (Berlin: Schlingmann, 1860). Even Heinrich Heine could not resist the charms of Mario and Grisi: 'Welche Wonne, wenn Mario singt und in den Augen der Grisi die Töne des geliebten Sprossers sich gleichsam abspiegeln wie ein sichtbares Echo! Welche Lust, wenn die Grisi singt und in ihrer Stimme der zärtliche Blick und das beglückte Lächeln des Mario melodisch wiederhallt! Es ist ein liebliches Paar, und der persische Dichter, der die Nachtigall die Rose unter den Vögeln und die Rose wieder die Nachtigall unter den Blumen genannt hat, würde hier erst recht in ein Imbrogljo geraten, denn jene beiden, Mario und Grisi, sind nicht bloß durch Gesang, sondern auch durch Schönheit ausgezeichnet' (Gottfried Wilhelm Becker (ed.), *Heinrich Heine's Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 6/2 (Philadelphia: J. Weik, 1865), p. 451).

before *Il trovatore*'s London premiere in 1855, Viardot had been a successful Azucena in Paris earlier the same year, so success in London seemed highly likely.⁵³⁰

Clause 3 ends with a standard formula concerning additional roles that Viardot might take on; clauses 4 and 5 cover concerts and costumes and are also standardised. Then, as he had before, in clause 6 Gye offered Viardot the option of extending her engagement, in this case from 24 July to the end of the 1855 season.⁵³¹ For this extension she would receive an additional fee of £400 per month. There was good reason for this planned extended season. Gye was planning a tour in which Viardot and other singers from the Royal Italian Opera would give performances in other English towns. It was hoped that putting on works that had already enjoyed success in London would be financially lucrative.⁵³² The planning of this tour demanded formidable logistical organisation from Gye, because Viardot was already engaged to sing at the Birmingham Festival at the end of August (clause 7). The tour performances therefore had to be organised around the festival, which led to Viardot performing at the Royal Italian Opera immediately before and after the festival (on 27 and 31 August).⁵³³ Clause 8 makes clear that signing the contract did not mean that the tour was set in stone. Closer examination reveals that clause 6, which states the length of the extension, was adapted after the addition of clause 8, which returns to the issue of the tour and its duration. If the adapted clause 6 had been present initially, clause 8 would have been redundant.⁵³⁴

The contract also states that Viardot's engagement could not last beyond 10 September, and that Gye would cover the costs of transport, food and accommodation for Viardot, a companion and a maid. This clause also states that during the tour, Viardot would perform the same roles she had sung during the normal Royal Italian Opera seasons. These familiar roles would not demand large amounts of rehearsal time, and they were also what audiences outside London wanted to see and hear, in order to be able to partake of the 'fashionable' London opera season without

⁵³⁰ On *Il trovatore* in Paris, see *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (1855), p. 70. The fact that Francesco Graziani had also played the Conte di Luna in Paris in 1855 may have been an advantage for the work's London premiere. Tamberlik (Manrico) and Ney (Leonora), on the other hand, were not yet familiar with their roles. See *Musical World* 33 (1855), p. 293.

⁵³¹ The original version of the contract envisaged a shorter extension, until 13 August (see Appendix, 19 March 1855).

⁵³² See Beale, *The Enterprising Impresario*, p. 103. Unsurprisingly, then, *Don Giovanni*, *Il barbiere* and *Il trovatore* were on the programme in Liverpool and Manchester. See Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, pp. 344–45.

⁵³³ See *ibid.*, pp. 345–46.

⁵³⁴ This is also clear from the fact that the fee of £400 is mentioned again in clause 8.

travelling to the capital. This allure meant that theatre managers were prepared to pay enormous sums for appearances by the London Italian opera company, and this was profitable for the London opera managers, even taking into consideration the high costs of travel and accommodation during the tour.⁵³⁵

There are significant differences between Gye's contracts and those of his predecessors in the opening years of the Royal Italian Opera. Gye tried to standardise the formulation of his engagements as far as possible, when this was not hindered by unplanned events. Because of the constantly changing circumstances in which he operated, complete standardisation was not possible; the compromise solution he found can be seen in his contracts from 1854 and 1855. This lack of standardisation once again implies a high level of informality in the contracts – deviating from them did not present great difficulties if the circumstances called for flexibility. Moreover, it is striking that contracts were signed later and later each year, creeping closer to the start of the season. Engagements agreed far in advance would initially seem preferable, because they secured the singer's services early, but because of the wide time-frame, in the end the engagement might have to undergo several revisions. One important factor in the shift towards engagements made at shorter notice may have been the expanding network of railways, which made travelling within Britain significantly easier, and was therefore hugely significant for provincial tours by Italian opera companies.⁵³⁶

A further common factor to all the Royal Italian Opera contracts – and a striking difference from the contracts of Pierre Laporte – is the lack of detailed specifications concerning benefit performances. Although these performances represented an opportunity for singers to increase their income, they brought uncertainty for opera managers regarding their expenditure.⁵³⁷ The fact that benefit performances are not mentioned at all in the Royal Italian Opera contracts can be interpreted as a change of direction in the business policies of the London opera houses, bringing them onto slightly firmer financial ground. Also, the Royal Italian Opera contracts are shorter than Laporte's, and make barely any reference to the penalties incurred if particular elements of the contract were not fulfilled. We can suspect from this that the day-to-

⁵³⁵ See Beale, *The Enterprising Impresario*, p. 103.

⁵³⁶ See *ibid.*

⁵³⁷ See my discussion of Laporte's contracts in Chapter 5.2.

day practices in London's opera houses had stabilised somewhat, so that such excessive levels of regulation – which had ultimately not been implemented anyway – were no longer necessary.

Singers continued to exert considerable influence on the form of their contracts. This is clear above all from the emphases stated in Viardot's contract in relation to specific roles. In effect, the theatre's programme was determined not by the manager but by the prima donna, as had been common practice since the beginning of the century. As can be seen from Viardot's example, the singer restricted herself to a small number of roles for the season, and stayed with them for a long time (except in cases where they were unsuccessful, such as that of *Sapho*). In selecting her roles, Viardot prioritised above all those in which she had already enjoyed success in continental Europe, or the roles she had learned most recently. Her motivation in this was probably not only the noble goal of bringing 'French' works, such as those of Meyerbeer or Gounod, to London audiences, prioritising those works' success over her own interests. On the contrary, it is important to bear in mind that in *Fidès* and *Sapho*, she had two roles she could rely on that were perfectly tailored to her vocal qualities and needs – a considerable advantage for any singer.

But another important factor is that Meyerbeer had by this time become extremely popular, which made his operas interesting to London audiences. The combination of such an eminent composer with a renowned prima donna like Viardot was almost sufficient on its own to ensure success in London. For Gounod, on the other hand, the situation was very different: he was less well known, but precisely this relative obscurity made him interesting to the Royal Italian Opera, with its supposedly work-oriented aesthetic.⁵³⁸ *Sapho* appeared in the Great Exhibition year of 1851, and was part of the Royal Italian Opera's efforts to distinguish itself from the competition in a particularly crucial year.⁵³⁹ It is clear, then, that London opera premieres were not determined entirely on the basis of aesthetic criteria under Viardot's guidance; the operas put on can also be viewed as a product of the external conditions. In this context it is significant that Lumley, too, had made attempts to engage Viardot as early as 1846, but then backed off because of her extravagant repertoire wishes.⁵⁴⁰ For

⁵³⁸ See Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*.

⁵³⁹ This was also the reason for the premiere of Thalberg's *Florinda* at Lumley's Her Majesty's Theatre, although that production was not a success. See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 316, and Zechner, 'And the English buy it', p. 8.

⁵⁴⁰ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 154–55.

the Royal Italian Opera, unusual works were simply an important means of differentiating the theatre, as a new entrant onto the market; the standard 'Italian' repertoire also remained an essential component of the programme. The foregoing discussion prompts substantial re-evaluation the picture that Stier paints of Viardot's role at the Royal Italian Opera:

Unusually for an operatic soprano, for a time Pauline Viardot was part of a group of directors at an opera house. At a time of financial uncertainty, she offered the business her artistic and organisational skills, and used those skills to bring *Sapho* [...] into the repertoire, and to establish French opera definitively in England with *Sapho* and the performances of *Le Prophète*, *Les Huguenots* and *La Juive*.⁵⁴¹

This image is at odds with the evidence provided by Viardot's contracts, and with the socio-cultural context, which was significantly shaped by the Royal Italian Opera's rival, Her Majesty's. Similarly, Stier's idea that *Sapho* was added to the theatre's repertoire (which would seem paradoxical in light of the work's unsuccessful first outing in London), and that French opera was established in England through Viardot, also emerges from this examination as over-simplified and based on false information.⁵⁴² In talking of the establishment of French opera in London, Stier is surely missing the fact that the Meyerbeer and Halévy works performed in London were Italian adaptations of the French originals, with significant changes, rather than a simple translation of the text.⁵⁴³

Yet the contracts between Viardot and the Royal Italian Opera provide a highly informative picture of contractual practices in London's opera industry in the mid-nineteenth century. As I will go on to illustrate, the contracts between Gye and Viardot were particularly influential in the increasing standardisation of contracts at the Royal Italian Opera; Viardot's contracts were therefore an important landmark for the professionalisation of opera contracts in London.

⁵⁴¹ Stier, *Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 83.

⁵⁴² Stier may be using the term 'repertoire' as a synonym for 'programme', rather than in any long-term sense, but there is just as little evidence that *Sapho* was taken up in future programmes in London.

⁵⁴³ See Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry', pp. 286–343, and my Chapter 6.1.1.

5.5 Contracts in the 1860s: Frederick Gye and Mario

Notwithstanding any intention to foreground operatic works rather than singers when the Royal Italian Opera was established, this work-based aesthetic remained limited in influence, including during Frederick Gye's management of that theatre in the 1860s.⁵⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, then, Gye fulfilled his audiences' wishes for star singers, as these comments from the periodical *Deutsches Museum* illustrate:

In der That dürfte man vergebens in La Scala oder irgendeinem andern Theater Italiens – von Deutschland und Frankreich ganz abgesehen – eine solche Masse an Künstlern ersten Ranges jemals zusammenfinden, wie sie sich in den verflossenen Monaten in Coventgarden drängten. In der vorigen Saison hatten wir zwei große italienische Opern hier, eine in der Majesty's Theater, die andere in Coventgarden, und diese Häuser machten einander eine solche Concurrenz, daß beide Unternehmer große Verluste erlitten. Hr. Gye beschloß daher, dies Jahr eine Concurrenz dadurch unmöglich zu machen, daß er fast alles, was überhaupt an Talenten existirt, mit ungeheuern Kosten für seine Bühne monopolisirte. [...] Dies Theater litt geradezu an einem *Embarras de richesses*, und viele Sänger und Sängerinnen konnten überhaupt nur ein paar mal auftreten, weil eine zu große Menge anderer dar war.⁵⁴⁵

Among the singers engaged at the Royal Italian Opera in 1861, this writer cited the *prime donne absolute* Giulia Grisi, Adelina Patti, Rosa Csillag and Rosina Penco, and the tenors Enrico Tamberlik, Mario Tiberini and Mario himself (the latter was born into an aristocratic family as Giovanni Matteo de Candia, but was almost always known simply as Mario). Mario was advancing in years by this time, at 51, but this did not dampen audiences' enthusiasm.⁵⁴⁶

Given Mario's popularity, the contract between him and Gye from 1861 (which is available in a transcription by Matthew Ringel) can serve as an example for engagements of leading singers at London's Italian opera in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴⁷ Mario was one of the most renowned tenors of the time, and this status affected the form of the contract as well as his fee. Also, the contractual

⁵⁴⁴ See Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*, pp. 69–70.

⁵⁴⁵ *Deutsches Museum* 11 (1861), p. 518.

⁵⁴⁶ Singers with a long tradition in London often enjoyed a considerable advantage. Once singers had made a name for themselves the city, their good reputation lasted with audiences, even if their voice weakened. See Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: V. Die Oper', in *Sämtliche Schriften* vol. 1/6, p. 126.

⁵⁴⁷ For Ringel's transcription, see his 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', pp. 291–96. The original contract is part of the Royal Opera House Collection in London. I was unable to access this archive during my research and so relied on Ringel's transcription. It is likely that the Royal Opera House Collection includes other relevant material that would offer significant new insights into London's operatic life. For the sake of completeness, I reproduce Ringel's transcription of the contract and its various versions in the Appendix.

relationship between Mario and Gye was longstanding, dating back to the departure of the ‘*vieille garde*’ from Her Majesty’s in 1847. This 1861 contract is therefore likely to have been largely consistent with other contracts of the same period. The contract survives in three versions; as well as allowing insights into the contractual practices between singers and London opera managers, the differences between the versions provide indications of the priorities that influenced the contractual negotiations.

It is worth noting at the outset that while contracts for London singers in the 1830s were standardised to a fairly high degree, this was not the case in the contracts from the early years of the Royal Italian Opera. The latter were handwritten and included considerable adaptations to individual situations, although there were some standard clauses. Moreover, detailed comparison of Gye’s contracts with Viardot and with Mario reveals that the standard clauses in the contracts with Viardot became the model for the printed, standard contracts used at the Royal Italian Opera in the 1860s.

In what follows, I examine the contracts between Gye and Mario in detail (taking into account the chronological order of the revisions), in order to account for the characteristics of the engagement as well as the differences between the individual versions.

The first version of the contract, from 15 April 1861, comprised eleven highly standardised clauses in French.⁵⁴⁸ Strikingly, this first version does not make explicit that Mario was being engaged at the Royal Italian Opera; rather, the engagement covers performances in England, Ireland and Scotland. It seems highly likely that this very broad clause would have been made more specific in the course of negotiations. Its breadth means that from the outset, a wide range of possibilities lay open to the opera manager; to restrict the performance locations straight away would have given the manager a much weaker basis for negotiations. Gye often agreed combined engagements with Beale, who was largely responsible for tours by Italian opera singers from London; this cooperation served to tie a singer more strongly into their contract with the opera house.⁵⁴⁹ In this light, the very general indication of the locations for the engagement seems unsurprising.

⁵⁴⁸ The date of 15 August 1861 is given in the contract itself, but Ringel identifies this as an error. See Ringel, ‘Opera in “the Donizettian Dark Ages”’, p. 292.

⁵⁴⁹ See Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 1, p. 352.

The second and third clauses of the contract concern the duration of Mario's engagement – 1st June to 3rd August 1861 – and his fee: £1400.⁵⁵⁰ However, it is only in the changes that were made to the second version that the contract clarifies the fact that this fee covers the whole period. The first version states: 'Les appointements de M Mario pour cette période seront £ 1400 par mois, être payés par mois *en parties égales*'.⁵⁵¹ The significance of the words 'par mois' is unclear because the handwritten changes to the printed clause are ambivalent. Given that £1400 would be an enormous fee for a month, we can assume that that is not the intended meaning. Rather, Gye probably simply omitted to cross out the printed words 'par mois'; he must have expected to make changes later anyway, given the general nature of the contract at this stage. This clause also illustrates the fact that singers' fees in London were not necessarily calculated by the month; payment terms differed between contracts, making meaningful comparison of singers' fees more difficult, even if one takes into account exchange rates. It is especially difficult to understand the significance of fees that were paid per evening, as was the case, for example, with the leading *prime donne* at the Royal Italian Opera, such as Adelina Patti and Christine Nilsson.⁵⁵²

The fourth clause of the contract restricts the forms of performance permitted to the tenor, granting the Royal Italian Opera a certain degree of exclusivity. Without Gye's written permission, Mario was not allowed to perform anywhere within a 50-mile radius of London. Interestingly, this was the result of an adaptation to the contract: the printed standard clause forbids all performances in Britain and Ireland in 1861, except with Gye's written permission; the exception for performances more than 50 miles from London was added later by hand. This suggests that even – or especially – in the case of a renowned tenor such as Mario, it was difficult to maintain exclusive rights to a singer, because the tenor, aware of his own exceptional status, did not need to consent to a disadvantageous engagement. After all, provincial tours and concert appearances often represented a lucrative addition to a singer's fixed engagements. Given the close cooperation between Gye and Beale, a clause

⁵⁵⁰ Ringel states that the late starting date resulted from the fact that Gye had already engaged the tenor Mario Tiberini. 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', p. 201.

⁵⁵¹ Italics here represent the handwritten parts of the contract.

⁵⁵² See Ringel, 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', pp. 178–81.

relating to provincial engagements can be considered a necessity.⁵⁵³ Apart from the strains of travelling, these tours cost singers little, because there was no need to prepare a separate concert repertoire: audiences were interested above all in hearing a famous tenor or soprano singing well-known highlights of London's Italian opera.⁵⁵⁴

Clause 5 commits Gye to providing Mario's costumes for all his roles. Partly because it is printed rather than handwritten, this clause can be identified as a standard one; in fact, it was *de rigueur* in London singers' contracts from the beginning of the century onwards. The unaltered state of this clause is in keeping with the first version of the contract as a whole, which includes barely any specific details. This strengthens the impression that this version was intended simply as the basis for further, more detailed negotiations.

Clause 6 concerns the procedure in case of illness and for rehearsals, although it remains extremely open – probably allowing the singer plenty of room for manoeuvre – with the words 'M *Mario* se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions etc'. The lack of specificity in this particular clause – one that would have significantly affected the day-to-day running of the theatre – illustrates the informality that prevailed in many opera houses at this time, allowing great flexibility, above all to the leading singers. Of course, by the 1860s this flexibility differed considerably from that enjoyed by singers earlier in the century, for example during John Ebers's management of the King's Theatre.⁵⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this passage of Mario's contract seems excessively relaxed and lacking in detail. It is possible that formulating this regulation too strictly would have been counter-productive, particularly in terms of rehearsal times, which varied hugely in length in London, and were in general relatively short.⁵⁵⁶ Given this tight schedule, if a leading singer were to withdraw during the rehearsal process, the probable consequence

⁵⁵³ Beale frequently organised tours with singers from the Royal Italian Opera, including Mario and Grisi. See, for example, Beale, *The Enterprising Impresario*, p. 368.

⁵⁵⁴ Although journey times had become considerably shorter by the 1860s with the development of the railways, these tours often operated on very tight schedules and were therefore still strenuous for singers. See Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 2, pp. 124–25.

⁵⁵⁵ For more on Ebers, see Chapter 5.1.

⁵⁵⁶ The rehearsals for the first London performance of Meyerbeer's *Dinorah* at the Royal Italian Opera in 1859 lasted slightly over a month, from 23 June to 25 July (see Letellier (ed.), *The Diaries of Giacomo Meyerbeer 1857–1864: The Last Years*, pp. 124–128). However, in view of the fact that this was a premiere and involved rehearsals led by the composer, this rehearsal period can be considered unusually long by London standards. In most cases, rehearsal time was limited to a few days. According to Hanslick, the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre, James Henry Mapleson, scheduled only two rehearsals of Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* before its first performance. See Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: IV. Die Oper', in *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. I/6, p. 120.

would be to change the season programme and with it the rehearsal schedule. In this light, the lack of precise conditions relating to rehearsals in contracts seems unsurprising: a wholly impractical number of exceptions would have followed. The explicit mention of the possibility of fire reflects the fact that London opera houses did indeed go up in flames on many occasions, often to the extent that complete reconstruction was necessary.⁵⁵⁷

The next clauses (7 to 9) specify the conditions of the engagement in more detail. In Mario's case, the tenor was required to be in London six days before the beginning of the engagement. He was also committed to singing in concerts that Gye organised outside London; for concerts more than ten miles from the city, Gye would cover the transport costs. Again, this arrangement is probably a reflection of the combined engagements with Beale, which appear here as part of the standard contract. Clause 9, on the other hand, which specifies that Mario would not be required to sing more than three times per week including concerts, was added by hand; this points to Mario's special status, but in relation to the house's leading singers it was a standard condition. Moreover, in light of the large ensemble of star singers mentioned by the correspondent of the *Deutsches Museum*, a clause like this probably did not entail serious concessions on Gye's part. As well as Mario, he had two other first tenors in the form of Tamberlik and Tiberini who could alternate performances.

The last two articles (10 and 11) served mainly to provide some security for Gye, in that they mention the possibility of further engagements with the singer in subsequent years, which Gye would need to confirm by the end of August 1861 (clause 10). This was a new kind of clause, differing from earlier London contracts. Clause 11 of the first version of the contract goes into more detail; the precise conditions, however, were added by hand; only the first very general statement, referring to the possibility of a repeat engagement in principle, is standardised.

The significance of this for Gye is clearly that it enabled him to ensure at the outset the possibility of a repeat engagement, thus blocking the tenor from engagements elsewhere during this extended period. The greatest danger was from Gye's rival in London, Her Majesty's Theatre, which, like Gye's own theatre, was

⁵⁵⁷ For example, the fires at the Royal Italian Opera House, Covent Garden in 1856 and at the King's Theatre in 1789 completely destroyed the theatres.

based on the much-discussed ‘star system’.⁵⁵⁸ There was also the possibility of slight overlaps with the Paris opera *saison*, which usually lasted until the beginning of April. The first version of Mario’s contract states that the possible renewed engagement would be longer than the tenor’s 1861 engagement (three months, as opposed to two), and that his total fee would be £2500 (i.e. about £833 per month) – somewhat higher than in 1861. Mario thus had a considerable incentive to accept this early agreement, even if that entailed foregoing other possible engagements he might be offered. For the manager, fixing the singer’s fee so far in advance made financial calculations easier and enabled him to engage in a certain degree of planning of his expenditure for future seasons – a considerable advantage, given the precarious financial situation of the opera industry in England. We can see from this that Gye was extremely conscious of the economic situation of his theatre, and this awareness was reflected in the way he organised contracts.

Surprisingly, Mario’s contract – like Gye’s contracts with Viardot from the 1840s and early 1850s – lacks a clause relating to benefit performances. It is possible that Gye did not organise these at all because of their unpredictable financial returns: benefit performances made it impossible to calculate the total sums that would be paid out to singers before the end of the season.⁵⁵⁹ For Gye, financial interest was clearly a priority on which many other things depended. By contrast, at Her Majesty’s in the same year, Mapleson put on a benefit performance for Tietjens, which suggests that Mapleson’s approach to running an opera house was entirely different from Gye’s.⁵⁶⁰ At the same time, the lack of a clause about benefit performances represents a shift of negotiating power from the singers to the opera manager, in that a lack of benefit performances made the manager’s expenditure easier to calculate.

The first version of the contract, then, remained at a very general level, and would inevitably require further clarification. Also, most of the clauses in the first version were unchanged from Gye’s standard contract. Apart from the usual added details of the singer’s name and voice type, the only deviations are in clause 4 (restriction of performances), clause 9 (this entire clause was handwritten and concerned the

⁵⁵⁸ See Gruneisen, *The Opera and the Press*, pp. 9–10. Gruneisen uses the term here above all in relation to Benjamin Lumley’s direction.

⁵⁵⁹ See Chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

⁵⁶⁰ See Mapleson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 103, 159.

number of performances per week), and clauses 10 and 11 (concerning the possibility of a repeat engagement).

The second version of the contract was sent to Paris via Mario's agent, John Woodford, on 17 April, and was returned to Gye on 20 April with numerous alterations. Gye then used this version to prepare the final contract, which Woodford signed on 23 April. This timing seems plausible and also fits with the speed of the postal service at the time.⁵⁶¹ However, it is called into question by an annotation to the second version of the contract: 'A copy of this was sent to Mario on April 17 1861 but returned on the 20th with many alterations – F. G. then made out another engagement & sent it by Woodford on the 20th.'⁵⁶² With reference to Gye's diaries, Ringel assumes that this remark actually related to the third version of the contract, which is also entirely plausible in terms of timing, given that a remark like this may have been added at a later date for archiving purposes.⁵⁶³

Consideration of the changes between the first and second versions makes clear that the suggestions made by Mario and his agent Woodford were incorporated into the second version; the contract is thus no longer purely a reflection of Gye's interests. In the first clause, phrased in general terms, Ireland and Scotland were removed from the list of locations for performance; as in the previous version, the Royal Italian Opera is still not mentioned explicitly as the location for the engagement. A further change was made in relation to the terms of payment: the second version specifies that Mario's total fee of £1400 would be split into two equal monthly instalments, payable in the first week of July and the first week of August (the second version thus corrects the first version, which neglected to adapt the standard contract). Interestingly, however, it seems that Mario did not insist on payment of part of the fee in advance, as had been standard until the 1850s.⁵⁶⁴ Given that the financial situation of the Royal Italian Opera had stabilised somewhat, it is

⁵⁶¹ On the speed of postal services, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), p. 443 [available in English translation as Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)].

⁵⁶² Annotation to the contract between Gye and Mario, quoted from Ringel, 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', p. 293.

⁵⁶³ See *ibid.*, p. 192. Gye's diaries are also in the ROH Collection, which, as already mentioned, I have been unable to access.

⁵⁶⁴ The legal dispute between Lumley and Gye over Johanna Wagner is worth mentioning here: it involved an advance payment that was laid out in the contract but paid too late. See Chapter 5.3.

likely that singers no longer needed to fear that they would not be paid, and therefore did not consider advance payments necessary.

The second version also includes increased detail in relation to the possibility of taking on performances without Gye's written permission (regulated in clause 4): it was now made clear that Mario would be allowed to appear in private concerts for which audiences did not have to buy tickets. The change probably reflects the fact that Mario – like his partner, Grisi – often appeared at such events throughout his career.⁵⁶⁵ The same arrangement is present in Viardot's contracts from around a decade earlier – it can therefore be considered a standard-practice necessity rather than an exception. The fact that this small change was incorporated into the contract suggests that at this time Gye's contracts were no longer understood to be mere guidelines, but were considered binding, so that breaches would incur consequences. Otherwise, this addition regarding private concerts would have been entirely unnecessary.

A further change related to the seventh clause, which was a standard one that clarified how many days before the start of the engagement the singer was required to arrive in London: the standard six days were reduced to three in this case. On the one hand this is an indication of Mario's importance, but at the same time it also points to the brevity of rehearsal periods in London. Prolonged rehearsals were often unnecessary, because in many cases the works performed were from the international repertoire, or works that the singers had performed successfully in Paris. Moreover, rehearsal periods of several weeks, or even months, would have been impossible, partly in view of the coordination of the Italian opera seasons in Paris and London: the Paris *saison* usually ended only a few days before the first performances in London.

Probably the most significant change to the contract is in clause 11, in which Gye deals with Mario's re-engagement for the following season. As well as specifying the start date of this second engagement, it was now specified that if Mario should end his career, Gye would be obliged to withdraw his request; Mario would have to inform Gye of a decision to retire from the stage in January of 1862 or 1863, according to which season was affected.

⁵⁶⁵ See Beale, *The Light of Other Days*, vol. 2, p. 6.

This state of affairs is formulated in neutral terms in the contract, although it is important to bear in mind the implications for Gye if Mario did indeed decide to retire: from a January start, it would have been difficult to find another tenor with Mario's status or level of audience popularity. The number of tenors who fulfilled those criteria and were not bound to other engagements was vanishingly small.

It was probably Mario himself who incorporated the possibility of retirement into the contract. As well as his own advanced age, a second factor was that Grisi was planning finally to end her career that same year.⁵⁶⁶ In this light, the addition to the contract seems unsurprising: Mario and his partner may have been thinking along similar lines, and he would have wanted to avoid any contractual difficulties later.

The third and final version of the contract becomes still more specific than the second in many places, and makes clear that contracts at this time – at least those relating to the leading singers – were not standardised to the degree one might expect, given that engagements were becoming ever more international. Almost all the changes incorporated here served to expand the singer's room for manoeuvre in relation to the manager.

At the very beginning of this third version of the contract, the first clause now provides the necessary level of specificity regarding the location of the engagement; as well as the 'Théâtre de Covent Garden', as expected, the Crystal Palace is also named. The latter may seem surprising, given that Gye did not usually organise concerts at the Crystal Palace, but becomes understandable in light of circumstances of Grisi's retirement. Given her prominence, the end of her career was naturally commemorated with a 'Farewell Festival' – there were obvious financial advantages to organising such an event – and this took place at the Crystal Palace.⁵⁶⁷ All the best-known singers of the time were involved – including Mario, of course – in order to maximise the evening's profits. Given that this concert took place on 31 July 1861, during Mario's engagement at the Royal Italian Opera, the Crystal Palace also had to be mentioned in the contract.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ See Pearse, *The Romance of a Great Singer*, pp. 216–17. Grisi had been announcing her retirement at irregular intervals since 1854, and there were lucrative farewell performances on each occasion. See *Musical World* 39 (1861), p. 168.

⁵⁶⁷ *Athenaeum* 1761 (1861), p. 97.

⁵⁶⁸ See *ibid.*

Clause 4, which concerns performances that Mario might give outside his engagement at the Royal Italian Opera, is expanded in the third version; Ringel identifies Woodford as the author of the addition, which states that during the season in question, Mario was not permitted to use his own name to advertise concerts, or to allow others not connected to the management of the Royal Italian Opera to do so on his behalf. It was probably Gye who sought this change, which would give him complete control over the marketing of the tenor, allowing him to be far more effective.⁵⁶⁹

A further change appears in clause 5 in relation to the costumes, which – according to the first and second versions – the opera house would provide. In the third version, an extra detail is added: Mario’s costumes were to be ‘*expressément confectionné pour lui*’. Mario was clearly an exceptional case in this regard – he was extremely partial to historical costumes:

Apart from his matchless singing and splendid acting, Mario’s impersonations were remarkable for the historical fidelity of his costumes [...]. He insisted that every detail of a dress should be correct, and to obtain this correctness he himself studied for hours at the British Museum, when in London, and at the Bibliothèque Nationale when in Paris. He made collections of old drawings of costume, and it was from his own sketches that his dresses were made.⁵⁷⁰

Even in standardised contracts, then, there might still be room for singers’ extravagances in exceptional cases. In Mario’s case, given that he had worked with Gye over many years, the manager would have learned to pay attention to the tenor’s predilection for unusual costumes. It might seem unnecessary to include this detail in the contract, rather than simply reaching a more informal agreement; the fact that it *was* mentioned explicitly is an indication that contractual regulations were taken seriously at this time.

An interesting change occurs in clause 8 of the contract’s third and final version. Originally, this clause had dealt with reimbursement of Mario’s travel costs for journeys to engagements outside London, but now this detail was removed entirely. Instead, at this point, the final contract lays out in detail the operas that Mario would

⁵⁶⁹ Ringel states in his transcription of the contract that this passage was added in Woodford’s handwriting (“Opera in “the Donizettian Dark Ages””, p. 295). For the reasons previously stated, I have been unable to confirm this. However, if the handwriting is indeed Woodford’s, this would suggest that such decisions were made by mutual agreement; it is therefore of no consequence who ultimately added the details to the contract.

⁵⁷⁰ Pearse, *The Romance of a Great Singer*, p. 5.

sing at the Royal Italian Opera during the engagement: Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, Verdi's *Il trovatore*, *Rigoletto* and *Un ballo in maschera*, Flotow's *Martha*, Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Apparently it was at Gye's suggestion that the latter opera was included in the contract; this would take advantage of the longstanding popularity the work had enjoyed ever since it was first performed in England.⁵⁷¹ This clause in its final version did not exclude the possibility that Mario might appear in roles from works other than those listed; according to a handwritten addition, new roles might be added at mutual agreement. In comparison to the contracts of the 1830s, which did not name possible roles, Gye's contracts provided a higher level of specificity, facilitating planning of the season in advance.⁵⁷² Particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, the organisation of an opera house's programme was, at least indirectly, under the control of the singers, because they were allowed such freedom to choose what they performed. This state of affairs came with the inherent risk of frequent programming changes when singers pulled out at short notice. For singers, the move towards specifying certain roles in their contracts presented an opportunity to turn their interpretation of a particular role into the benchmark performance for critics and the public. Although this type of connection between a singer and a role had been a significant part of operatic life in London throughout the century, previously it had hardly ever been reflected in contracts.⁵⁷³ It is highly likely that the privilege of restricting one's performances to only a few operas was only conferred on a theatre's leading singers. This enabled the manager to plan the season in rough outline in advance; he could then cast the remaining roles from among the less prominent ensemble singers who were available to him at all times during the season.

The addition to clause 9 can be considered a concession to Mario: his appearances were not only limited to a maximum of three evenings per week; the contract now further specified that he would not be required to perform on two consecutive evenings. The fact that Gye agreed to this is another indication of the exceptional

⁵⁷¹ See, for example, *Musical World* 39 (1861), p. 313, and Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 308. In relation to *Don Giovanni*, the contract was annotated as follows: 's'il convient à M. Gye de [le?] lui faire jouer'. Quoted from Ringel, 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', p. 295.

⁵⁷² Pasta's contract from 1829 is an exception to this generalisation about earlier nineteenth-century contracts (see Chapter 5.1).

⁵⁷³ Famed interpretations included Lind's Alice in *Robert le diable*, or the *Norma* performances of Pasta and Grisi in the title role. Opera reviews in the London press frequently made recourse to comparisons between such 'standard interpretations' and those on stage at the time of writing.

status that Mario enjoyed at the Royal Italian Opera – ultimately, this change meant that Mario was not always at Gye’s disposal. A clause like this would be far less likely to appear in the contracts of less renowned singers, who were required to be available to the manager at all times in case of cast changes.

But the most extensive change to the final version of the contract concerns clause 11, and a twelfth clause that Woodford added by hand. In the final version, the form of Mario’s engagements for subsequent years (1862 and 1863) has changed, and has been made more specific: where the second version mentioned an engagement beginning on 22 April 1862, the start date was now postponed to 1st May, and Mario did not need to arrive in London before that day. Between the second and third versions, other contractual commitments had clearly come into play for Mario, preventing the earlier start to the season. At the same time, Gye was keen to put contracts in place further and further in advance, in order to commit the best singers to his own theatre. The fact that contracts were drawn up for such repeat engagements more than a year in advance, including details such as the singers’ arrival date in London, is a sign of the growing professionalisation of the practices surrounding contracts in the London opera industry. Also, in an addition to this eleventh clause, Woodford laid out the payment terms for this later engagement: Mario’s fee would be paid in three parts, beginning on the fifth day after the start of the engagement. On the basis of the first and second versions of the contract, it seems that Gye would have been satisfied merely to determine how much Mario would be paid, and was not initially not concerned about the terms of payment. Simply fixing the basic parameters of future engagements (within existing contracts) was enough to increase the opera manager’s room for manoeuvre. As can be seen from the numerous revisions to Viardot’s contracts, for an opera business that had to react at short notice to changing circumstances, it was hardly possible to determine every detail of a contract a year in advance. By confirming the basics of the agreement, the future engagement was at least protected. Contractual details relating to arrival dates and roles could then be organised relatively close to the start of the season with little difficulty. This shift towards laying down the basics of future years’ engagements in advance is also evident in the versions of Mario’s contract.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁴ In fact, the key details of the engagement for 1861 – fee and dates – remained unchanged in all three versions, suggesting that these aspects were no longer part of the negotiating process during the revision of the contract in April 1861.

The other change to clause 11, in relation to the possibility of Mario's retirement, seems surprising. The second version referred explicitly to the fact that he might end his career and would then be released from all contractual duties, but this possibility disappears from the third version. Instead, Mario was now free to withdraw from his engagement at any time, provided that he did not then give any other performances in Britain. Either party could invoke this clause and end the engagement, as long as they notified the other by the end of the year 1861 or 1862. This substantial change to the contract probably reflects the intense competition between London's two Italian opera houses.

Indeed, in the very same year, 1861, there was considerable controversy surrounding Mario and Grisi between the two theatres' managers, Mapleson and Gye. E. T. Smith, the leaseholder of Her Majesty's Theatre, announced on 2nd February 1861 that as well as the soprano Therese Tietjens and the tenor Antonio Giuglini, Mario and Grisi had also been engaged at Her Majesty's.⁵⁷⁵ Because of the pair's longstanding connection to the Royal Italian Opera, this was sensational news. Soon after, on 2nd March, another notice appeared in the *Musical World*, spreading the rumour that Gye had been able to convince Jenny Lind to return to the stage and had engaged her at his theatre as compensation for the departure of Mario and Grisi.⁵⁷⁶ In view of the fact that Lind's career had ended twelve years previously, even the most star-obsessed readers were probably quick to spot that this was a marketing gimmick. On 16 March the *Musical World* published the following notice, announcing complications in Mario and Grisi's engagement at Her Majesty's:

That Grisi and Mario retire from the Covent Garden establishment, is incontestable. The great *prima donna* and great tenor not only secede, but go over to the rival house. Signor Mario, nevertheless, must not appear this year at Her Majesty's Theatre, in consequence of some stipulation in his agreement with the director of the Royal Italian Opera, which we cannot quite understand.⁵⁷⁷

Then, on 20 April, the paper speculated that Mario and Grisi had probably been engaged at the Royal Italian Opera after all, and confirmation of this came the

⁵⁷⁵ See *Musical World* 39 (1861), p. 74. Mapleson even mentioned that his theatre had secured Mario and Grisi for the season in question, their engagements at the Royal Italian Opera having expired. See Mapleson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁶ *Musical World* 39 (1861), p. 139.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

following week.⁵⁷⁸ The coverage in the *Musical World*, and its timing, has striking parallels with the changes in Gye's different versions of his contract with Mario, although the first draft is dated 15 April, which seems unusually late, in view of the long-term planning that Gye clearly aimed at in his contracts. Moreover, Mapleson also mentions in his memoirs that there was an engagement between Mario and Her Majesty's that was never realised.⁵⁷⁹ Mapleson and Gye seem to have had several intense struggles in relation to singers' engagements. For example, Mapleson reports a shameless offer made by Gye to Therese Tietjens (a prima donna of long standing at Her Majesty's):

The subscriptions began pouring in, and all appeared *couleur de rose*, when Mr. Gye's envoy, the late Augustus Harris, again appeared, Tietjens [sic] not having yet signed her contract with me; and he produced a contract signed by Mr. Gye with the amount she was to receive in blank. She was to fill in anything she chose.⁵⁸⁰

In this light, it seems plausible that Mapleson may have tried a similar strategy with Mario in 1861. When he knew that the tenor's engagement with Gye had just ended, Mapleson probably made Mario an extremely tempting offer, which Mario – at least according to Mapleson – did not refuse. Mario, or rather his agent Woodford, was very much aware of the financial potential of this situation. It brought the opportunity to win Mario a higher fee from Gye, who would not tolerate such an affront from Mapleson. This also explains Mario's considerably higher fee of £2500 for the 1862 and 1863 seasons, which can be interpreted as a concession to Mario on Gye's part in order to encourage the tenor to agree to such a long-term engagement. Also, in this light the change to clause 4 in the final version of the contract, relating to the use of Mario's name for publicity, becomes plausible. Given Mapleson's advances, it was clearly very important to Gye to secure exclusive rights to Mario. After all, in the recent announcements in the *Musical World*, Mapleson had used Mario's name for precisely the kind of publicity to which the later revision to the contract referred, despite the fact he clearly did not have a valid engagement with the singer at the time.

A further connection to the dispute between Gye and Mapleson can be seen in the changes to clause 11 (concerning the singer's performances in London if he should withdraw from the contract): if Mario had pulled out of Gye's contract because he had subsequently received a better offer from Mapleson, then in light of this clause –

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 247, 266.

⁵⁷⁹ Mapleson, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 33.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

common practice in such contracts – he would not in fact have been permitted to sing at Mapleson’s theatre; Mario’s withdrawal would therefore effectively have been from both theatres, and would thus not have affected the rivalry between the two. Gye clearly intended to eliminate all the possible eventualities that might make maintaining Mario’s engagement more difficult. The contract was finally signed by Woodford on Mario’s behalf on 23 April. Again, this fits neatly with the *Musical World*’s public confirmation of the engagement on 27 April.

In addition to the extensive changes to the eleventh clause, Woodford also added a twelfth clause to the final version, stating that the engagement would be rendered invalid if either party did not fulfil the terms of the contract.⁵⁸¹ In view of the changes between the second and the final version of the contract, this addition served to ensure that the special conditions the parties had negotiated were upheld; the main priority here was probably the payment of fees.⁵⁸²

The contract between Mario and Gye provides a detailed impression of the process of contractual negotiations between London’s Italian opera managers and a renowned tenor. Engagements usually covered a long time period – in this case three seasons – although key details for each future year would not be agreed until the current year’s contract ended. Not for nothing did Mapleson choose this moment to make Mario an offer. Negotiations took as their starting point a basic, standard version of the contract, which was then adapted step by step. The example of Mario’s contract shows that the specific form of the engagement could vary considerably according to the personal situation of the singer. The specific circumstances dictated whether details such as possible withdrawal, the concerts at the Crystal Palace, or exclusive rights to the singer were included. From this we can also see how much pressure London opera managers were under from the high level of competition in the city, and singers’ agents accordingly used this state of affairs to their advantage. The various parties involved used the media as an effective mouthpiece for strategically disseminating reports (whether true or false) to the public.

Moreover, Gye’s contracts were probably considered binding to a far greater extent than Laporte’s, and this probably reflects the improvements to the legal

⁵⁸¹ See Ringel, ‘Opera in “the Donizettian Dark Ages”’, p. 296.

⁵⁸² That Grisi and Mario were of enormous financial importance to Gye is clear from the fact that all their performances were on non-subscription evenings: clearly, Gye intended that the pair would help to balance his books. See *Musical World* 39 (1861), p. 285.

foundations of London's operatic life that came about through Benjamin Lumley's various sets of court proceedings. This is evident above all from the complete lack of any clauses dealing with financial penalties for singers who breached the theatre's everyday regulations. As discussed earlier, such clauses were largely ineffective for Laporte. Since his time, these internal house rules had probably established themselves well enough that it was no longer necessary to include them in singers' contracts.

For Gye, long-term planning and financial predictability were paramount when he initiated a new engagement. One indication of this is the fact that lump-sum fees were stated in contracts. This was not possible under the system of benefit performances that prevailed into the 1850s, where takings would be split between the manager and the singer. For this reason, Gye's contracts represent an important contribution to the contractual and financial professionalisation of the opera industry in London.

6 Italian Operas for London

Womöglich noch entsetzlicher haben sie die Partitur des Propheten zugerichtet. Im ersten Act kommen die drei Wiederläufer nur einmal vor; statt ihres zweiten Erscheinens folgt ganz unmotiviert und ohne Fallen des Vorhangs der zweite Act. Das Finalterzett des zweiten Actes ist barbarisch gekürzt, unter anderm wird auch die schönste, dankbarste Cantilene der ganzen Partie: Leb wohl, o Mutter! weggelassen. Es würde uns zu weit führen, dem Rothstift der Herren Costa und Arditi weiter zu folgen; spasseshalber sei nur erwähnt, daß man in Her Majesty's Theatre den zweiten Act des Robert mit der Bravour-Arie der Prinzessin *schließt*.¹

In his report of his visit to London in 1862, Eduard Hanslick described witnessing operas being dreadfully mutilated. London's operatic life was indeed based on a practice that might initially seem strange, which involved adapting operas especially for the performance conditions in the city. These adaptations were not simply translations into Italian from other languages; sometimes the work was reconceived entirely in the process. Curiously, these practices of translation and adaptation also extended to works by English composers – Michael William Balfe is one example. His opera *The Bohemian Girl* enjoyed its Italian London premiere at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1858, under the title *La Zingara*, with specially composed recitative to replace the original spoken dialogue.² The Italian language was, it seems, a necessary condition for success on the 'fashionable', prestigious London stage, with all English national pride receding into the background; it was fashion that dictated London opera tastes. One consequence of this was the frequency of performances comprising individual acts of several operas, usually followed by a ballet – these composite performances continued into the mid-nineteenth century, and were not confined to benefit performances.³

The singers, of course, played a crucial role in this kind of adaptation; for London audiences they were the main attraction of a visit to the opera. Many nineteenth-century operatic adaptations reflect attempts to make the most of specific singers' popularity by giving them a more prominent position within a given work, as I discuss further in Chapter 6.1.1. One example of this is the adaptation of the second act of Donizetti's *La Figlia del Reggimento* for a performance at Her Majesty's in 1847. In this season, the part of Maria was played by the 'Swedish Nightingale' Jenny Lind, and the adaptation shifts the musical and

¹ Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: V. Die Oper', in *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. I/6, pp. 126–27.

² Balfe's opera had already been performed in Italian in Bologna in 1854, among other productions. See Balfe, *La Zingara*, libretto (Bologna, 1854).

³ See the season overviews in the Appendix, and Hilary Poriss, "'To the Ear of the Amateur': Performing Ottocento Opera Piecemeal", in Marvin and Poriss (eds.), *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 111–131.

dramatic emphasis onto Maria's aria 'Le ricchezze e il grado fastoso'.⁴ The aria's original position was near the beginning of the second act, directly after the trio between Maria, the Marquise and Sulpizio, 'Sorgeva il dì'. It would then normally be followed by another trio between Maria, Tonio and Sulpizio ('Stretti insiem tutti tre'), a Tyrolean-style instrumental number, and the opera's finale.⁵ In the Her Majesty's Theatre production, the Tyrolean number comes directly before the highlight 'Le ricchezze e il grado fastoso', providing a moment of low dramatic intensity immediately before the tensely-awaited highlight of the act – the appearance of Jenny Lind.

An 1851 adaptation of *Fidelio* seems to operate along similar lines. The piece's dialogue was replaced with recitative, and the prisoners' chorus was 'ennobled' by added solos from all the theatre's singers, including Gardoni, Calzolari, Pardini, Poultier.⁶ This unusual set of practices surrounding opera in London was mostly viewed in the continental European media as at best eccentric and at worst deplorable, but these reactions did nothing to deter the London theatres from their adaptations.

Singers engaged in London could also exercise their influence on the operas performed by interpolating arias from elsewhere. The practice of inserting arias enjoyed huge popularity, above all at the beginning of the century, in the performances of star sopranos such as Angelica Catalani and Giuditta Pasta.⁷ Particularly in Catalani's case, the substitution served mainly to display her unique vocal skills. These were evident, for example, in a set of variations originally composed for violin by Pierre Rode, with which she astonished audiences, prompting one contemporary to remark that 'Spohr is the greatest singer on the violin, Catalani the greatest instrumental performer with her voice'.⁸ Catalani's vocal extravagances were not limited to performances of instrumental pieces, but also included performances in which an opera was strongly centred around her, regardless of 'the general effect of an opera, and the general cast of all the other characters'.⁹

Similar practices of substitution flourished throughout the nineteenth century all over Europe, as Hilary Poriss has shown. There were some works whose dramatic structure lent itself particularly naturally to interpolated arias. This was especially true when there was no need for the interpolated aria to fit directly into the dramatic context, for example in the music

⁴ The following discussion is based on a full conductor's score of the second act [BL, MS.Mus 1715/14].

⁵ See Donizetti, *La figlia del reggimento*, vocal score (Rome: Ricordi, 2000)

⁶ *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 2 (1851), p. 431. There is a critical undertone to this review, directed towards solo singers in Germany who refused to accept solo lines within a chorus.

⁷ For more on this see Poriss, *Changing the Score*, esp. pp. 67 and 150–53.

⁸ *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* 1 (1818), p. 261.

⁹ Edgcumbe, *Musical Reminiscences of an Old Amateur*, p. 103.

lesson scene of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. *Prime donne* interpolated various arias at this point, mainly in order to display extravagant virtuosity.¹⁰

For moments such as this, composers frequently wrote insertion arias for specific singers, thus not only accepting the practice but supporting it.¹¹ These arias were usually tailored precisely to the given singer's vocal characteristics, providing the basis for an impressive interpretation that would be well-received by London audiences.

The following sections focus on the practices of adaptation and the aria-insertion practices that predominated in London. The intention is to provide as comprehensive and diverse a picture as possible of the performance traditions of Italian opera in London. My discussion of audiences earlier in this study forms the necessary basis for this investigation of the specific details of musical practice.

6.1 Adaptations

The next two chapter sections (6.1.1 and 6.1.2) investigate the processes involved in the adaptation of non-Italian operas for London's Italian stages. First, through the example of Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's *L'Enfant prodigue*, I aim to reconstruct the process of adaptation and trace the various factors that influenced it. My second case study uses the reworking of Carl Maria von Weber's *Oberon* to analyse the interventions that turned an opera that was only moderately successful in English into an Italian opera that fared far better with audiences. This raises questions about the identity of a work and about how this issue was understood by London audiences.

6.1.1 French operas on London's Italian stage: Auber's *L'Enfant prodigue*

Soon after it opened as London's second Italian opera house, the Royal Italian Opera began to differentiate itself from its rival by expanding its programmes to include operas originally in French, such as those by Auber or Meyerbeer. In 1847 and 1848 it was Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots* that introduced an expanded 'French repertoire' to London. *Les Huguenots* thus appeared twelve years after its premiere in Paris in 1836, and this length of time can be considered a sign of audiences' conservative preference for works of 'Italian' origin. Nevertheless, there is a widespread belief that as a result of frequent and successful performances of Meyerbeer's works, French grand opera became firmly established on

¹⁰ See Poriss, *Changing the Score*, p. 135.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 10.

London's opera stages.¹² However, this interpretation ignores the fact that the works performed in London were not the French originals, but Italian versions. (London's well-loved tradition of adapting operas also included German-language works.) Operas that could conventionally be categorised as 'French' (that is, works from Paris's Opéra and Opéra-Comique) were very rarely performed in their original versions in London, because audiences were mainly interested in 'fashionable' Italian opera. It would be inappropriate to refer to works written for Paris or by French composers as 'French opera' in the context of nineteenth-century London.

This phenomenon is identified and described in relation to the Theatre Royal Covent Garden in Gabriella Dideriksen's 1997 dissertation. Her discussion is not limited to Covent Garden as an Italian opera house, but also considers adaptation practices of foreign works for performance in English. This leads to a lack of differentiation between the Italian and English opera houses, which contrasted markedly in terms of status and prestige, as I discussed in chapter 2. Nevertheless, through case studies focused on *L'étoile du Nord* (*La stella del Nord*) and *Les Huguenots* (*Gli Ugonotti*), Dideriksen illustrates above all the shifts in operas' dramatic emphasis that occurred through these processes of adaptation and abridgement – in some cases under Meyerbeer's supervision.¹³ This is especially striking in the case of *Gli Ugonotti*: the substantial cuts to the ballet came directly from Meyerbeer, which suggests that he wanted to make his opera more Italian in structure and atmosphere, in order to fulfil audiences' preferences. As well as the transposition of Urbano's aria for the mezzo-soprano Marietta Alboni and a reduction from five acts to four, the London version focused more intensively on the soloists, in line with London tastes.¹⁴

The focus of Dideriksen's discussion, then, is the structural changes associated with adaptation, while the process itself receives little attention. Such processes merit closer investigation; in the following discussion of Auber's *L'Enfant prodigue*, questions relating to the selection of the Italian text come to the fore. This discussion is based on a French vocal score with Italian text added by hand, which belonged to Her Majesty's Theatre, and on the libretto from the first London performances.¹⁵ I use these sources in conjunction with contemporary accounts of the opera.

¹² See Stier, *Pauline Viardot-Garcia in Großbritannien*, p. 83.

¹³ See Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry', p. 301. For the London premiere of *Gli Ugonotti*, Meyerbeer tasked the musical director Michael Costa with incorporating his suggested adaptations.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 327. Dideriksen provides a clear overview of the changes between the Paris premiere in 1836 and the London Royal Italian Opera production in 1848 on pp. 328–29.

¹⁵ The vocal score is in the British Library, MS Mus 1715 2/2.

1851, the year of the Great Exhibition in London, would also be the year of the first London production of Auber's *L'Enfant prodigue*, six months after the work's premiere at the Paris Opéra on 6 December 1850. English opera-goers could read about the new opera by Auber – the 'universal favourite' composer – and its success, for example in the *Musical World* in January 1851, giving rise to the desire for a London production of the work.¹⁶ Accordingly, both Gye and Lumley tried to secure the performance rights, and Gye was the first to succeed.¹⁷ The forthcoming performance of *L'Enfant prodigue* at the Royal Italian Opera was announced all over the London and international media, leaving no doubt that Gye was in possession of full performance rights.¹⁸ But in fact the work was ultimately put on by Lumley at Her Majesty's, despite the fact that he apparently did not initially have the right to perform it. This suggests that copyright was treated very casually in the London opera business at this time: apparently even contractual agreements relating to performance rights meant little and were not of legal consequence.¹⁹ A further reason for Gye to avoid another court case against Lumley may have been a letter from Giulia Grisi in which the soprano informed Gye that she could not under any circumstances sing the role planned for her in *Il prodigo* (this was the title of the Italian adaptation).²⁰ If Gye had brought a case against Lumley and had won (as seems likely in the circumstances), he thus still would not have had one of his most popular sopranos at his disposal, and this probably would have led to the cancellation of the production anyway.

The London premiere of *Il prodigo* at Her Majesty's had a star-studded cast: Henriette Sontag (Jeftele), Italo Gardoni (Azael), Filippo Coletti (Bocchoris), Jean-Etienne August Massol (Reuben) and Delphine Ugalde (Nefte) – the latter making her debut on the Italian stage. Before this point, Ugalde had sung only at the Opéra-Comique; this engagement therefore heralded a new stage in her career.²¹ Lumley's strategy in engaging a French singer in a 'French' opera is clear: given that the *Musical World* praised Ugalde's voice as 'decidedly French', the manager's intention must have been to maintain elements of

¹⁶ *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 20.

¹⁷ Gye was to pay £300 to the French publisher Brandus for the rights to *L'Enfant prodigue*: £150 on delivery of the score and £150 after the second performance. See Dideriksen and Ringel, 'Frederick Gye and "The Dreadful Business of Opera Management"', *19th-Century Music* 19 (1995), p. 20.

¹⁸ See, for example, *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 272 (an announcement from April that rehearsals were underway at the Royal Italian Opera), and *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 1 (1850), p. 343.

¹⁹ In a letter printed in the *Musical World*, Gye threatened Lumley with legal action if he actually produced *Il prodigo*. This probably was not taken further (see *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 387). The *Athenaeum* also speculated that Brandus might have sold the rights twice over, while expressing relief that a production that was 'musically so insufficient and so little adapted to the resources of its company' would not now be performed at the Royal Italian Opera. See *Athenaeum* (1851), p. 692.

²⁰ See Rosenthal, *Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden*, pp. 93–94.

²¹ *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 378.

'Frenchness' in the Italian adaptation of Auber's opera.²² Casting Massol in the piece would also have contributed to this; he had also played Reuben in the Parisian premiere, and since his London debut in Auber's *Masaniello* at the Royal Italian Opera, he had mainly been employed in productions of originally French-language operas.²³

Interestingly, English reviews of Auber's opera always used its original French title, *L'Enfant prodigue*, although it is not mentioned in the Her Majesty's Theatre libretto.²⁴ This may signal a certain ambivalence towards this kind of adaptation: despite the fact that this production was an Italian adaptation, performed in an Italian opera house, the work's French origins clearly maintained a certain relevance, which reviews alluded to repeatedly. The casting of French singers also fits well with this overall sense of the work as French. There was little awareness in reviews of the extent of the adaptation: writers might mention the Italian title *Il prodigo*, but would refer to an 'Italian version' or a performance 'under its Italian title' – both descriptions suggest something not too distant from the original.²⁵ This indicates that nineteenth-century London audiences had little sensitivity to these issues.

The adaptation of *L'Enfant prodigue* for Her Majesty's probably occurred in several stages. First, an Italian translation was made of the French libretto. It is not entirely certain who was responsible for this. In February 1850, the *Musical World* mentioned a 'poet of merit and distinction' called 'Gianone', whom Lumley had tasked with making an Italian translation.²⁶ This was probably the Italian librettist Pietro Giannone, who prepared several libretto translations for Her Majesty's, as well as the Royal Italian Opera, in the early 1850s.²⁷ Royal Italian Opera libretti, particularly translations of French works into Italian, were often, but not always, the work of Manfredo Maggioni, an Italian librettist who lived in London.²⁸ Given that both theatres planned to produce *L'Enfant prodigue* in 1851, it is possible that a single translation was made that would have been used by either theatre, although there is no proof of this.

²² Ibid.

²³ See Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, pp. 85, 120. *Masaniello* was an Italian adaptation of Auber's *La muette de Portici* and was performed frequently in England.

²⁴ See Auber, *Il prodigo*, libretto (London, 1851). Available online: <https://archive.org/details/ilprodigo00englgoog> (accessed 2 May 2017).

²⁵ *Athenaeum* (1851), p. 641; *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 376.

²⁶ *Musical World* 25 (1850), p. 95.

²⁷ These included Thalberg's *Florinda* (1851, HM), Halévy's *La Juive* (1850, RIO), and *La tempesta* (1850, HM). Giannone was also the librettist of Marliani's *Ildegonda* (premiered 1837) and Carlo Coccia's *Maria Stuart* (1827, KT), among others. All libretti for London productions mentioned here can be found in the Houghton Library.

²⁸ See Dideriksen, 'Repertory and Rivalry', p. 306.

The prepared Italian translation was then transferred into the French vocal score belonging to the Musical Director of Her Majesty's, Michael William Balfe, without making any cuts.²⁹ The Italian translation is striking for its closeness to the French text, not only in an overall dramatic sense but also in terms of phonetics. This is particularly noticeable in the recitatives, as the following excerpt from the first act illustrates:

JEF: Attendez! Le voilà! Le voilà!
 Azaël! Mon fils!
 C'est toi que je revois! Qui t'avait retardé?
 AZA: Vous le voyez, mon père!
 Ces voyageurs, à qui j'offris
 l'abbri de votre tente hospitalière !
 RUB: Soyez les bien venus !
 Un hôte est un ami

JEF: Aspettiam! Aspettiam! E la sua voce!
 Azael mio figlio!
 al fine ti riveggo chi ritardato t'ha?
 AZA: Voila vedete o padre
 Quei viaggiatori a cui offerti
 Il vostro tetto ospitale!
 RUB: Siate il ben venuti!
 Un ospite e un amico!

These clear similarities between the French and Italian texts in terms of both structure and wording are partly explained by the two languages' common origins. But the similarity goes beyond this inevitable proximity, transferring the structure of the French text into the Italian. This is especially striking in the case of the 'voila' in the Italian libretto, which is necessary only to make the verse structure match the French. There is also a degree of similarity between the sounds of the individual syllables of the words 'voila' and 'vous le'. Clearly the translator aimed to stay close to the original not only in terms of content but also in terms of sound. This had the advantage that the vocal lines would need only minimal adaptation, for example through minor rhythmic changes.³⁰

After the translation had been added to the score, the next stage involved initial musical cuts made by Balfe, which were mostly limited to repeated text in choruses, and long recitatives. Bocchoris's F-major aria in the second act ('Quel ciel de pourpre et d'azur') was also annotated 'one note higher for Coletti in g', which suggests that this vocal score was used for rehearsals with singers and represents a largely fixed version of the musical text.³¹ On the whole, the extent of these changes is limited, suggesting that Balfe stayed relatively close to the original and did not intend to cut entire acts, as was commonly done in London (and first performances were not immune to this).³²

A comparison with the libretto text printed for the performance makes clear, however, that the text added to the vocal score did not represent the final version for this production. First,

²⁹ This is stated in an annotation on the title page of the vocal score.

³⁰ At several points in the vocal score, notes have been added to account for differences in the number of syllables between the French and Italian texts.

³¹ See [BL, MS Mus 1715 2/2, f. 90].

³² An example is the aforementioned London premiere of *Gli Ugonotti*.

there are textual differences between the vocal score and the libretto in Reuben's aria 'Toi qui versas la lumière':

Italian text (vocal score)	French text (vocal score)	Libretto text (HM 1851)
Tu che spandevi la luce su Mosè e il popol fido Signor Signor nostro duce, d'un padre calma il dolor! Qual vaga inquietudine Di mio figlio turba il cor Perché [sic] nella solitudine Erra in preda a cupo orror?	Toi qui versas la lumière Sur Moïse et ses enfants Seigneur, Seigneur Notre père, d'un père Vois les tourments! Quelle vague inquiétude De mon fils trouble le cœur Pourquoi dans la solitude Erre t'il, sombre et rêveur.	Tu che dovunque spandi La luce tua celeste, O mente onnipotente! D'un padre calma il dolor Qual vaga inquietudine Di mio figlio turba il cor Perché nella solitudine Erra in preda a cupo orror?

Table 1: Comparison of the texts in the vocal score with the Italian text in the printed libretto

As can be seen in Table 1, the efforts to keep the translation faithful and phonetically similar are clear in this passage, in both the texts in the vocal score and libretto. However, the opening lines, concerning God and Moses, were replaced in the libretto with words that would appear more innocuous to the English censors. The obvious reference to God was replaced with a 'mente onnipotente' ('almighty mind' in the English translation). This practice of censorship was entirely in keeping with the conventions of the time, which mainly came into effect in relation to immorality, or religious allusions, as Roberta Montemorra Marvin has shown in relation to Verdi's operas.³³ The censors made rudimentary interventions in the Italian text, but concentrated on the English translation, since most audiences understood little Italian (as Marvin shows, and as this study will also go on to demonstrate).³⁴ Marvin notes, for example, that the word 'Dio' is almost always rendered as 'heaven' in English translations.³⁵ This was clearly not universal, however, because it is not the case in the libretto of *Il prodigo*: all references to God are maintained in the English translation, with 'Dio' translated directly as 'God'. This suggests that the censors – given that the subject matter of the opera was religious to begin with – allowed a certain degree of freedom. Eliminating the religious basis of the story would have made it impossible to put on Auber's opera; thus there was clearly some room for manoeuvre in London opera censorship, and we can assume that the censorship of religious elements in Italian opera was only rarely carried to its full extent.

However, another of Marvin's hypotheses is better supported by the source material at hand. Given the short turnaround times in which the censors read libretti, and in light of the

³³ Marvin, 'The Censorship of Verdi's Operas in Victorian London'.

³⁴ An example of the kind of basic changes made to Italian texts is the change of Verdi's opera and title character from *Nabucco* to *Nino* for London performances.

³⁵ Marvin, 'The Censorship of Verdi's Operas in Victorian London', p. 590.

fact that the changes made were usually relatively minor, Marvin believes that potentially problematic passages tended to be removed pre-emptively *before* the text was printed and shown to the censors.³⁶ In the case of *Il prodigo*, as can be seen from the differences between the Her Majesty's Theatre libretto and the vocal score, the libretto was probably edited after a first version of the translation in order to align it with the censors' expected demands.³⁷

A further substantial change – this time a musical one – concerns Nefte's aria 'L'aurore étincelante', which appeared in the Italian libretto as 'L'aurore risplendente'. The original French aria begins with a 4/4 Allegretto in B♭ major, in which Nefte expresses her feelings about watching the city of Memphis glow in the morning light. Then comes a 6/8 Andante in F major; the mood of the text does not change significantly, but musically this section provides scope for ornamentation. Interestingly, the closing passage of this section, including a virtuosic cadenza, has been crossed out in the vocal score.³⁸ Then, after a brief melodic interjection by Azael that brings a change of time signature to 2/4 ('O piacer che m'inebbria'), comes a choral passage supporting the mood of Nefte's aria ('Del piacer che l'inebbria') and involving Azael, Amenophis and Reuben. There is then a section where Nefte sings new melodic material ('Su questa spaggia'), with interjections from the choir, and finally Nefte returns to the opening text and musical material, varied through ornamentation, with interruptions from both Azael and the chorus. A comparison between the texts of the vocal score and the libretto reveals significant dramatic differences (see Table 2).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 585.

³⁷ Whether this libretto was printed for the premiere performance is of little significance, because libretti were usually reprinted, unchanged, for several years. It is therefore highly likely that the libretto from 1851 was the same as the one presented to the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

³⁸ Vocal score p. 28, bb. 1–5. In Table 2 this passage is indicated by the bracketed text in italics.

HM theatre vocal score

NEF: L'aurora risplendente
Di fulgidi color
E' meno rilucente,
Di Menfi in sul mattin!

Terra ove brilla
L'orrore e l'amore.
E trova il core
Gioja e piacer!
Qui l'occhio ammira,
il cor desira
e tutto spira
gioja ed amor.
O Menfi qui sol vivae
Possente la cantatrice ardente
Sulla lira fulgente
rapisce il cor.
*[allor che delle almee
La danza inebbriante,
nel vostro sen festante.
Accende un nuovo ardor]*

AZA: O piacer che m'inebbria
O voluttà del ciel

NEF: Sì la solo io
Potrò vivere
Solo là sarò felice ognor.

CORO: Del piacer che l'inebbria
lo dobbiamo allontanar

NEF: Su questa spiaggia
Si puro è il ciel,
che ogni alma saggia
Ripete ognor
Per sol ministro
Prendi il piacer
Al suon del sistro
Si dei goder.
Si la solo io
Potrò vivere
Solo là sarò felice ognor
L'aurora risplendente
Di fulgidi color
E' meno rilucente,
Di Menfi in sul mattin!

CORO: Del piacer che l'inebbria
lo dobbiamo allontanar
a qui sol deve vivere
esser felice ognor.

HM Theatre 1851 libretto

NEF: L'aurora risplendente
Di fulgidi color
E' meno rilucente,
Di Menfi in sul mattin!

Terra ove brilla
L'orrore e l'amore.
E trova il core
Gioja e piacer!
Qui l'occhio ammira,
il cor desira
e tutto spira
dolci pensier.

Su questa spiaggia
Si puro è il ciel,
che ogni alma saggia
ripete ognor
Per sol ministro
Prendi il piacer,
al suon del sistro
si dei goder.
Sol qui viva e possente
La cantatrice ardente
Sulla lira fulgente
Rapisce il vostro cor.
Allor che delle almee
La danza inebbriante,
nel vostro sen festante.
Accende un nuovo ardor.

AME e NEF: Piacer che vi seduce
O voluttà del ciel!
Sia sempre vostro duce
Sarai felice ognor.

AZA: O piacer che m'inebbria
O voluttà del ciel!
Là solo potrò vivere
Esser felice ognor.

RUB, JEF, CORO: Dal piacer che l'inebbria
Lo debbo allontanar.
Qui solo deve vivere,
Felice qui sarà.

Table 2: Comparison between the Italian texts of the vocal score and the libretto

It is particularly striking that the bringing together of the passages interrupted by the chorus results in the creation of a single long scene for Nefte. The ensemble passage with the chorus now forms the conclusion to the number. Given that Ugalde, making her Italian opera debut, was the ‘novelty of the evening’, this change was surely intentional, making her the centre of attention on her first appearance.³⁹ What had been an aria with ensemble became a typical entrance aria, although it remained largely well-integrated in the dramatic context. This was only possible because the chorus does not have a contrasting function in this number, but simply comments on the scene. In order to create a musical ending as well as a dramatic one, Nefte’s entrance aria ends with the cadenza that was crossed out in the vocal score, on the words ‘accende un nuovo ardor’. This aria was reported to be a high point of the first act, which was otherwise full of musical weaknesses. In the words of the *New Monthly Magazine*: ‘Between the “Aurora risplendente” of Ugalde, and the “Ah! Va secondo” of Sontag, we pity and forgive his weakness.’⁴⁰

Interestingly, the change to end with a cadenza is not present in the vocal score, which strengthens the impression that the latter was a provisional working document, on the basis of which another score was prepared and used in performance. Only during the singers’ rehearsals, then – as is indicated, for example, by the annotation concerning the transposition for Coletti – was the final structure of the adaptation arrived at; this version was then used for the libretto. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that new performance materials – parts, singers’ practice copies, and full scores – were almost always prepared for new adaptations.⁴¹

The premiere of *Il prodigo* had a mixed reception. The scenery, the ballet, the casting and the special effects were unanimously praised, but reactions to Auber’s music were ambivalent. Some commentators were scathing:

The scenery, decorations, properties and costumes, too, are of oriental liberality and magnificence. But let ‘Il Prodigio’ be dressed even in cloth of gold and wear the Koh-i-noor on his head, or – in plainer English – let the opera be ever so strongly cast, ever so sumptuously put upon the stage, – it is musically too weak to prove attractive to any such musical audience as our English opera-public now is. All that seems rightfully belonging to M. Auber in ‘Il Prodigio’ is a faded grace in some of its turns of melody and combinations of orchestra.⁴²

³⁹ *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 378. The *Spectator* announced Ugalde’s debut as follows: ‘This great Artiste has been engaged for a Limited Number of Representations, and will appear for the first time in this country on THURSDAY NEXT, JUNE 12th, in Auber’s new Grand Opera IL PRODIGIO (*Spectator* 24 (1851), p. 550).

⁴⁰ *New Monthly Magazine* 92 (1851), p. 377.

⁴¹ For example, hand-written performance materials survive for the Italian adaptations of *Casilda*, by Ernst II, Duke of Saxe-Coburg (British Library), and Carl Maria von Weber’s *Oberon* (discussed in Chapter 6.1.2).

⁴² *Athenaeum* (1851), p. 641.

The *Athenaeum*'s reference to a 'musical audience' – which in this context seems to mean an audience with some degree of musical knowledge – is somewhat at odds with the way the writer precedes discussion of the music with praise for the scenery and casting, and does not then go into detail about the music. Similarly, the review in the *Musical World* reaffirms that *Il prodigo* was well-received by the audience, but attributes this mainly to the impressive scenery and spectacular staging. Like the *Athenaeum*'s correspondent, this writer was unenthusiastic about the music, pronouncing it considerably inferior to Auber's other works, *Masaniello* and *Gustave III*, although again, these comments on the music are extremely brief. The review also mentions that the success probably would have been even greater if not for the delays between acts caused by the changes of unwieldy scenery.⁴³

In this light it is interesting that the *Musical World* also published a lengthy review of the second performance of *Il prodigo*, discussing exactly this issue:

Il Prodigio was repeated on Saturday for the second time and proved infinitely more attractive than on Thursday, inasmuch as the long delays between the acts were considerably reduced, and the fourth and fifth acts were merged into one, thereby effecting a great saving of time. [...] The *Enfant Prodigue* is a very long work, and although it is in no part tedious or trivial, to keep attention alive for five hours is perhaps beyond the power of any opera. That the *Enfant Prodigue* is the longest work ever produced at Her Majesty's Theatre is proved by the unusual fact that no ballet or divertissement is given after the opera, the ballets in the second and third acts being found sufficiently long and important to preclude any subsequent entertainment of the kind.⁴⁴

Indeed, London opera-goers had hardly experienced any performances of a whole opera of this length by 1851; they were more used to watching individual acts, compiled to form an evening's entertainment.⁴⁵ Hence the necessary consequence of the criticisms of the work's length was to make cuts to the opera. This change between the first and second performances is not reflected in the libretto. Because the second performance followed so soon after the first, we can exclude the possibility of a newly printed libretto – the five-act version of the libretto probably simply remained in use without incorporating the changes.

This abridgement illustrates that changes to an opera – including far more significant ones than the interpolation of arias – might also be made during performance. If audiences' reactions were not positive, further changes might be made – in this case the running together of acts four and five. A cut to the ballet would probably have been out of the question for

⁴³ *Musical World* 29 (1851), pp. 376–78. As usual, the review concentrates on the scenery and the singers.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

⁴⁵ See, for example, *Musical World* 29 (1851), p. 566. In the 1851 season, these mixed performances were mostly given on evenings with reduced prices.

London audiences of the time: the ballet was one of the most popular and therefore integral parts of the opera.

Following the abridgement of *Il prodigo* through the merging of acts four and five, as well as improvements to the stage machinery, the opera met with the audience's satisfaction, as the *Musical World's* review illustrates. The third performance was even attended by the royal family, and the Queen 'testified her approbation of the performance, in every scene, in a manner not to be mistaken' – for the 'fashionable' London audience a clear sign of the quality of an opera whose music had not initially been particularly well-received.⁴⁶ Generally, the focus was mainly on the singers, as the following description of the opera's highlights not only shows but also makes explicit:

In addition to the ballet music, the pieces which continue to obtain the most share of public applause are, Jettele's first song, exquisitely sung by Madame Sontag; the two romanzas of Nefte, in the first and fourth acts, warbled with infinite volubility and surprising brilliancy by Madame Ugalde – who has already become an immense favourite with the *habitués* of the theatre; Massol's appeal song in the second act, which nightly produces an overpowering effect; Azaël's aria in the last act, charmingly sung by Gardoni; and the arietta of Boccoris, given by Coletti with great power and expression. To these *morceaux* the public attention is especially drawn by the admirable singing of the principal artists.⁴⁷

The adaptation of 'L'aurora risplendente' was clearly undertaken in the knowledge that the audience was far more interested in impressive arias, inserted ballets and stage effects than anything else, and thus saw no reason to pay attention to the work in its entirety. Ultimately, this meant that even an opera that the critics described as musically inferior could be a great success with audiences in London, if it had the help of a good, or at least popular, cast, and effective scenery.⁴⁸

Il prodigo can serve as an example of the various stages within the process of adaptation and their order, which can be summarised as follows: first a librettist made a complete Italian translation of the original libretto; in this case the whole libretto was translated and then added to the vocal score without regard for cuts that might occur later. This vocal score was used in early rehearsals, which led to changes to the libretto and to the musical structure of individual numbers, which were then incorporated into specially-prepared performance materials. At the same time, parts of the text that might be problematic for the censors were eliminated, before

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 392. The audience's enthusiasm apparently reflected not only the more efficient stage machinery – although that would certainly have been welcome in shortening the opera by an hour – but also the fact that 'the singers get better acquainted with their parts'. Both factors can be considered symptomatic of the short rehearsal times that prevailed in London.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The case of the Italian adaptation of Weber's *Oberon* is similar, as discussed in Chapter 6.1.2.

the final libretto went to print. The fact that further cuts were made after the premiere, above all as a result of problems with the stage machinery, can be interpreted as a sign both of the insufficient rehearsal time and of the flexibility of the opera industry in London. From this discussion it becomes clear that not all changes to a production were necessarily reflected in its libretto; it is therefore useful to consult libretti in conjunction with other sources such as reviews in order to better understand their significance.

6.1.2 Weber's *Oberon* and its path to Italian opera success

Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Oberon* was conceived as an 'English opera', commissioned for the Theatre Royal Covent Garden: in its original form the work has spoken dialogues and an English libretto; in Weber's words it is 'more a drama with songs'.⁴⁹ In giving Weber the commission, Charles Kemble, the theatre's manager at the time, was reacting to the huge popularity of the composer's *Der Freischütz*.⁵⁰ What better prospect as the composer of a new English opera than a man whose music was already renowned and enjoying remarkable success internationally?

Reactions to *Oberon*'s premiere in 1826 were ambivalent, however. The 'splendour of the scenery' was universally praised.⁵¹ Listeners reacted to the music in direct comparison with *Der Freischütz*, and were not hugely enthusiastic:

But while we give the highest credit to the deep thought which the composer has bestowed upon his work [...] we cannot conceal from ourselves that there is not enough of melody to render it popular, or even greatly pleasing. It is for the few. There is also no small quantity of mannerism.⁵²

Weber also came in for particular criticism for a perceived lack of sensitivity in handling the voices, which were apparently dominated by excessive use of orchestral effects.⁵³ Other commentators were more even-handed:

The music has been said to be below Weber's general productions; but it will [...] be found, that though differing from his usual style, it is by no means inferior. There is more fancy – less depth; and this arises from the subject.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Letter from Weber to James Robinson Planché, 6 January 1825, quoted in Planché, *The Recollections and Reflections of J. R. Planché*, vol. 1 (London: Tinsley, 1872), p. 75. The Theatre Royal Covent Garden was not purely an opera house at this time, but put on mainly spoken theatre and opera in English. Until 1847, the King's/Her Majesty's Theatre had a monopoly on Italian opera in the city.

⁵⁰ See Planché, *Recollections and Reflections*, vol. 1, p. 74.

⁵¹ *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes* 5 (1826), p. 17; see also *Quarterly Magazine and Musical Review* 8 (1826), p. 91.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

In what was by far the most positive review, William Ayrton in the *Harmonicon* predicted later successes for *Oberon* in Germany, because ‘M. Weber outstripped the period in which he lived; he will be better understood thereafter’.⁵⁵

According to the general tenor of the reviews, the premiere was not an overwhelming success, and as a result the work was largely dropped from the programmes of London theatres. London audiences’ predilection for Italian opera surely played a role here, in prompting many of the city’s theatres – in most of which opera was not the main focus – to put on English adaptations of ‘Italian operas’ when they put on opera at all.⁵⁶ The phenomenon of a supposedly ‘fashionable Italian opera’ in the broadest sense was thus not confined to the social elites that continued to make up opera-house audiences in the nineteenth century.⁵⁷

In 1860, the manager of Her Majesty’s Theatre, James Henry Mapleson, decided to resurrect Weber’s *Oberon*, albeit in an Italian version, with Italian text and recitatives – necessary premises for a work to be performed in an Italian opera house: the audience expected an Italian opera, and *Oberon* therefore had to undergo considerable reworking.

Because of these fascinating and extensive processes of change, this Italian version of Weber’s *Oberon* is the focus of the rest of my discussion of opera adaptations for London’s Italian stage. Analysis of the 1863 libretto and of accounts in the contemporary press will help us to understand the form that this adaptation took and the factors that were at work. I also draw on a provisional version of the score, dating from 1860, in order to identify the effects of the adaptation on the music. Although the score is incomplete – it lacks the fourth act of the adaptation – this does not present a problem for my work, since I focus especially on the numbers from *Euryanthe* that were inserted into *Oberon* for this adaptation, such as the duet between Reiza and Huon.⁵⁸ A particularly interesting factor in this duet is that in the score it is underlaid with French text, and thus provides important evidence regarding the process of producing an Italian libretto.

The first problem in turning a work into an Italian opera was that of the recitatives. According to the usual adaptation practices of the time, new music would be composed for the new recitative text so that music and text would fit together well. In the case of *Oberon*, however, the adapters were motivated by concerns of authenticity, wanting to do justice to

⁵⁴ *Oxberry’s Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes* 5 (1826), p. 17.

⁵⁵ *Harmonicon* 4 (1826), p. 146.

⁵⁶ See Leanne Langley, “‘Our Thing Called Opera’”: Some Covent Garden Productions of the 1820s through Contemporary Eyes’, *Musical Times* 23 (1982), pp. 836–838; and Marvin, ‘Verdian Opera Burlesqued’.

⁵⁷ For more on audiences, see Chapter 3.

⁵⁸ In this chapter I refer to the opera’s characters by the names that were used in London.

Weber, who had died in 1826 (soon after the work's premiere). They therefore decided against composing new music, and instead substituted recitatives from Weber's other operas. These mostly came from *Euryanthe*, probably because the two works came from the same period of Weber's life: *Euryanthe* was premiered in 1823, and the composer began working on *Oberon* in 1824. These were his last two works, making it appropriate to combine their musical material – at least, that was how the adapters saw it. In a further attempt at authenticity, the work was undertaken by Julius Benedict, a former student of Weber. James Robinson Planché, the librettist of both versions of *Oberon*, explained this in his preface to the libretto:

Deeply as it is to be regretted that the gifted composer has not lived to superintend the revival of his work in England, – the country for which it was originally composed, and in which it was produced under his personal direction, – the musical world will admit that the task could not have been confided to a more competent substitute than Jules Benedict, his favourite pupil and affectionate friend. By such hands it was sure to be performed as reverently as efficiently.⁵⁹

German commentators at the time took a similar attitude. Weber's biographer Friedrich Wilhelm Jähns wrote in 1871:

Wie bedenklich alle Uebearbeitungen und Umgestaltungen von Meisterwerken durch Andere jederzeit gelten müssen, so war doch hier dergleichen eher zu wagen, da der Organismus des Gedichts von Grund aus als ein mustergültiger leider nicht vorlag, und hier die Neugestaltung mit der grossen Liebe und demjenigen feinen Sinne für den Geist der musikalischen Composition unternommen wurde, die in den meisten derartigen Fällen zu fehlen pflegen.⁶⁰

While Jähns's argument at first glance seems similar to Planché's view, there is an essential difference: for Jähns, this kind of adaptation is only legitimate because in *Oberon*'s case the work would at least not be made worse, given that it had significant deficiencies in the first place (Ayrton's prediction of success in Germany did not prove correct, then). Hermann Gehrman also found weaknesses in the work, although he argued that they merely reflected 'die Kürze der Zeit und die Rücksicht auf das englische Publikum'.⁶¹

The original English version of the work was in three acts, which were extended to four for the Italian version, in order to 'facilitate the scenic arrangements at Her Majesty's Theatre'.⁶² Also, the number of scenes within each act was reduced, which was probably intended to give

⁵⁹ Planché, 'Advertisement' to Weber's *Oberon*, libretto (London, 1863), n.p. [HL, 98TW-6.1 (693)].

⁶⁰ Jähns, *Carl Maria von Weber in seinen Werken* (Berlin: Lienau, 1871), p. 404.

⁶¹ Hermann Gehrman, *Carl Maria von Weber* (Berlin: Reimann, 1899), p. 96.

⁶² Planché, 'Advertisement' to Weber's *Oberon*, n.p.

a simpler dramatic structure. Planché claimed in his preface as an example of this simplification that the number of scenes in the last act had been reduced from seven to three, but a comparison with the 1863 libretto – in which his preface appears – contradicts this: in the libretto, the fourth act has 13 scenes.⁶³ Planché may have been referring to performances of the Italian version in 1860, which took the form of two benefit performances for Therese Tietjens and the manager E. T. Smith, where cuts were necessary because of the composite character of such events.⁶⁴ Interestingly, one review in the *Niederrheinische Musikzeitung* refers to an 1863 performance of *Oberon* with five acts – but according to other contemporary reviews, and the libretto, there were only four. The five-act form referred to would have been the combined total, counting as the fifth act of *Oberon* the finale to *Euryanthe*, which ended the evening’s entertainment (and reportedly meant that the opera went on until midnight).⁶⁵ It is not necessary for my purposes to detail the effects that this would have had on the opera’s dramatic structure. This production apparently took a flexible attitude to the number of acts and therefore the length of the opera, which may sometimes have turned the evening’s performance into something closer to a potpourri than a single, complete opera.

Examining the division of scenes in the libretto also contributes to the sense that dramatic structure was not a primary concern. Moreover, the Italian text’s status as a translation is also obvious. Some scenes consist of three-line monologues that do not necessarily merit being considered a scene in their own right. For example, the ninth scene of Act IV consists only of the following lines for Almanzor:

ALM. Maledizione! Un uomo in queste stanze!
 Entro il corso d’un ora
 Nel cortil del palazzo arso egli sia.

The second scene of Act II is similar, and consists of a conversation between Fatima, Reiza and the Caliph – again, the dramatic context is unclear. The whole scene consists of the following lines:

REI. (*guardando intorno con grande agitazione*)
 Ei non è qui, m’abbandonasse adesso.
 FAT. Ma più, mia principessa. Ah non temere.
 CAL. Figlia t’appressa. (*s’ode srepito d’armi.*)
 D’armi suon! Per gli avi miei!
 Quai disperati schiavi.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ For example, in one such benefit performance at the end of the 1860 season, *Oberon* was preceded by individual numbers from operas by Meyerbeer and Donizetti and from ballets (see *Musical World* 38 (1860), p. 488). See also *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 8 (1860), p. 281.

⁶⁵ *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 11 (1863), pp. 239–40.

In both examples, the scene is detached from any dramatic context. This probably reflects the fact that the original English version of 1826 envisaged dialogue between the musical numbers in order to move the plot forwards. The addition of recitatives does not change this lack of dramatic continuity: fuller coherence would also have necessitated changes in the musical numbers. The musical focus of the opera thus remained centred on the arias, which probably suited the tastes of the audience at Her Majesty's perfectly. Moreover, in reworking the opera, Benedict also added a series of new musical numbers, further fulfilling the audience's wishes for arias with memorable melodies. According to Planché, this too was in Weber's spirit:

The absence of a duet between *Huon* and *Reiza* was greatly lamented by Weber; and in one of his charming letters to me, he says[:] 'My musical heart sighs that the first moment when the loving pair find each other passes without music.' His wishes are now as far as possible fulfilled.⁶⁶

The duet in question (Act II, scene 4, 'Hin nimm die Seele mein') was originally sung by Euryanthe and Adolar in *Euryanthe*, and here it was intended to contribute to the musical variety of *Oberon*, in the spirit of Weber. In the theatre's surviving performance materials, rather than having been integrated into the score by a copyist, the pages of the duet have been inserted – in the most literal sense of the word – into the score, complete with a title page that clarifies the piece's origins. Also, the text of the duet is in French ('Ah pour nous quel bonheur'), without an Italian translation. This full score was clearly not the final document used in performance, but rather was part of the preparation process. The noticeable discrepancies between the Italian texts in the score and in the libretto point to similar conclusions: while there are similarities, they often differ considerably in wording. This score, examined in conjunction with the duet text given in the Italian libretto from 1863, thus usefully documents part of the process of adapting and translating a duet for Italian opera in London. We can assume that suitability for singing was a prime consideration in the writing and setting of the Italian text, and this probably explains the following variant:

Music example 1: Excerpt from the duet from *Euryanthe* that was inserted into *Oberon*, underlaid with French and Italian texts⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Planché, 'Advertisement' to Weber's *Oberon*, n.p.

⁶⁷ This is a transcription of the soprano line from the copy of the duet that was inserted into the manuscript score. Because the two voices move in rhythmic unison, one voice is sufficient to illustrate the treatment of the text.

Here the highest notes of the individual musical phrases usually coincide with open vowels such as ‘a’ and ‘e’, which naturally facilitate tone production in such high registers. The elision of syllables, and in this case vowel sounds, from one word to the next (as in Reiza’s ‘annunzia il’) also makes a passage easier to sing, especially in high registers. This kind of elision does not occur in the French text, in which the top notes are always set to a single syllable, such as ‘quel’ or ‘cœur’. From the distribution of the Italian text, then, we can see that ease of singing was a prime concern in the text’s construction, with its lines of six Italian syllables (*senari*; see music example 1). This impression is strengthened by the English translation of the text, in which little effort has been made to imitate the Italian:

Sir H. & REI.

Mine! Mine! For ever mine!
 Thine! Thine for ever thine!
 Constant through storm and shine!
 Fearing no star malign
 While love’s own light divine
 Beams on our way!
 Heart thus exchanges for heart,
 Now of my being, part!
 Hush’d be each care to rest,
 Here on this faithful breast.
 Lock’d in these loving arms
 Shelter’d from all alarms.
 Mine! mine! &c.

The structure of the Italian text, with its quatrains of six-syllable lines, is barely hinted at in the English translation, despite the latter’s deliberate use of end-rhymes. Also, there is no sign in the Italian text of the lines that the translation marks as being sung by both voices (‘Mine’/‘Thine’), which at first glance suggests that there was no *a due* in the Italian version. But this is unlikely, given that the Italian text had not yet been added to this score; the opening lines transcribed here were followed in the French version by a decorated musical and textual variation on the simple opening melodic material. This passage may have been left out of the libretto because of the textual repetition and therefore could have served as an *a due*. It is also possible that these lines were sung first by Huon and then by Reiza – again, the English text gives no indication of this. Even the score indicates the two voices moving in parallel, although with the same text sung by both protagonists. By contrast, in the Italian version the two characters sing different texts, making it seem unlikely that their voices would have moved in parallel in rhythmic unison.

A further addition to the 1860 performance of *Oberon* was the reinstatement of the aria 'From boyhood trained in the battle-field' (here 'Appena in lui uscia ragion').⁶⁸ This aria had been removed from the first production at the request of John Braham, the singer who played Huon. When it was restored for the opera's Italian revival in 1860, however, the piece was interpolated into the role of Oberon by the Spanish tenor Buenaventura Belart, as this excerpt from the *Musical World* explains:

The song 'From boyhood trained in the battle-field' in the original score belonged to Sir Huon, but was objected to by Braham, and 'O, 'tis a glorious sight to see,' substituted in its place. The original song is now restored, but assigned to Oberon in place of Sir Huon, by merely an alteration of the words from the first to the second person singular, whereby, as Mr. Planché observes, 'the feeling of the composition is perfectly preserved, and the character of Oberon rendered of more musical importance without loss to that of Huon.' To our thinking, this song is much more striking and beautiful than the bellicose *scena* written expressly for Braham, and which we have always considered to be so much overrated.⁶⁹

This writer's clear focus is the aria's beauty, which comes from its being well-written for the voice; at least according to this review, the addition of this aria improved the opera as a whole. The number offers a singer numerous opportunities to show his voice off at its best: it is clear from the frequent coloratura, which mostly consists of rapidly repeating pairs of notes and scalic runs in both directions, that Weber envisaged a singer of great vocal flexibility for this role. There are also extensive lyrical passages, which represent a contrast to the virtuosic flourishes but also provide ample opportunities for cadenzas. It can be considered a difficult piece, and thus a risky one. A successful performance would be likely to ensure an enthusiastic reception for the singer, given this audience's predilection for virtuosic ornamentation.

Belart himself was very probably responsible for the re-inclusion of the aria in the 1860 production: his role provided fewer solo opportunities than the other main roles, such as Reiza (four arias) and Huon (three arias).⁷⁰ It was probably the comparison with the role of Huon that was decisive: this was another tenor role, with one aria more than Oberon and thus of considerably higher status, which Belart of course would not have wanted to accept. From his

⁶⁸ See Weber, *Oberon*, manuscript score used at Her Majesty's Theatre (London, 1860). Available online at <https://archive.org/details/oberonromanticop01webe> (accessed 2 May 2017).

⁶⁹ *Musical World* 38 (1860), p. 426. The aria written for Braham to replace 'From boyhood trained in the battle-field' was 'O 'tis a glorious sight' ('O di qual fuaco ardente ha il cor'), which is in Act I scene 10 in the 1863 libretto. 'From boyhood trained in the battle-field' can be found in the manuscript score at the beginning of Act III, where the name Huon has been crossed out and replaced with that of Oberon.

⁷⁰ I base these numbers on the 1863 libretto. A comparison with the vocal score from 1860 shows that no further substitutions were made between the two versions in the first three acts.

point of view, the inclusion of ‘From boyhood trained in the battlefield’ restored the balance between the two main tenor roles.

Belart’s change, which led to the aforementioned enhanced status of the role of Oberon, is also present in the later version of the libretto, despite the fact that in 1863, Oberon was played by Bettini. This may suggest that the libretto was based on the 1860 production and was simply reprinted in later years for pragmatic reasons, as very often happened at this time.⁷¹ This possibility is also supported by the fact that in Act IV scene 6 of the libretto, instead of Huon’s aria (‘E ancor ti stringerò sopra il mio core’/‘I revel in hope and joy again’) there is an aria that Sims Reeves had inserted into the role, ‘Tutto è ridente e bel’. The text of this inserted aria is printed on a single sheet, inserted between the Italian text and the English translation, which states explicitly that the music for this aria was also by Weber. A review in the *Niederrheinische Musikzeitung* provides useful information for the identification of this aria: the writer mentions in passing that an aria for Huon in Act IV was replaced by one from *Euryanthe*. Examination of a German libretto for *Euryanthe* makes clear that the aria in question can only be Adolar’s Cavatina from Act II scene 3, ‘Wehen mir Lüfte Ruh’.⁷² Huon and Adolar are both tenor roles, and there are also close parallels between the two in terms of dramatic content. Also, the Italian text of ‘Tutto è ridente e bel’ could be set to the music of ‘Wehen mir Lüfte Ruh’ without difficulty.⁷³ The fact that Reeves’s substitution was not discussed in the London press suggests that listeners may have accepted the aria as a part of the work: given its origins in another Weber opera, Reeves might be considered to be acting in line with the composer’s intentions.

Another entirely new addition to the opera was an aria for Roschana, which is surprising, given that in the English version of 1826 Roschana was only a speaking role. Once again, the inserted aria comes from *Euryanthe*: it is Eglantine’s ‘O mein Leid’, Italianised here as ‘Odi, o prode cavaliere’.⁷⁴ Thus Roschana, who only appears in the fourth act of the Italian *Oberon* and is of no dramatic significance, is enhanced in terms of musical status, even if not in dramatic status. The former certainly played a bigger role for audiences of the time, which benefited the singer of this role, who thus had the opportunity to succeed in an Italian opera house. Indeed, the aria may have been added precisely in order to create that opportunity: the singer playing Roschana in 1860 was Pauline Vaneri, who had not previously performed on the Italian stage in London, but who had belonged to the Harrison-Pyne Opera Company in

⁷¹ See also my discussion of Gnecco in Chapter 6.2.1.

⁷² Weber, *Euryanthe*, libretto (Vienna: Kärntnertortheater, 1824), pp. 23–24.

⁷³ See Weber, *Euryanthe*, vocal score (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1871).

⁷⁴ See Jähns, *Carl Maria von Weber in seinen Werken*, pp. 403–404.

1858 and 1859 and had sung in English opera at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, directed by E. T. Smith.⁷⁵ It may have been through her connections to Smith, the leaseholder of Her Majesty's Theatre, that she came to be cast as Roschana. Smith was trying to establish Italian opera performances at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane at this time, and Vaneri was involved in these too, even if they 'hardly [...] entitled [her] to the epithet "celebrated"' (in the words of the *Musical World*).⁷⁶ Smith was therefore probably interested in the possibility of one of his singers succeeding on the prestigious Italian stage. If Vaneri did well, he might have been able to spread the idea that she was *his* prima donna, giving his own Italian opera season a boost. The inserted aria for Roschana thus probably represented an important career opportunity for both Smith and Vaneri.⁷⁷ Smith's intention to create a noteworthy success for Vaneri almost worked: she was at least deemed 'entitled to honourable mention' by the *Musical World*, but that was the full extent of the writer's enthusiasm.⁷⁸ Vaneri seems to have vanished from the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre soon afterwards. The only mention of her in 1861 is that she had to be replaced as Donna Elvira by a Mlle. Sedlatzek; the year after that, she seems not to have been in the ensemble at all.⁷⁹

By contrast with the reception of *Oberon*'s premiere, reviews of the first performance of the Italian version in 1860 gushed with enthusiasm. It was an 'immense success', necessitating additional performances.⁸⁰ As well as the singers – Tietjens as Reiza, Pietro Mongini as Huon, Belart as Oberon, Camille Everardi as Scherasmin, and above all Marietta Alboni as Fatima – the scenery came in for high praise:

Since the production of Auber's *Il Prodigio*, some ten or twelve years since, no spectacle either in ballet or opera at Her Majesty's Theatre can be compared with *Oberon*. The eye indeed is dazzled by a series of pictorial illusions, changes, and transformations, such as we look for in our Christmas entertainments only. It would take more room than we can well spare, after all we have written, to describe the splendour and novelty of the *tableaux*, the richness and variety of the dresses, and the magnificence of the appointments, and the brilliant assemblage of fairies, water-nymphs, dancing-girls, &c.⁸¹

The intensity of this description of the scenery indicates that impressive effects of staging were an important criterion for the audience. Scenery was probably also of great significance

⁷⁵ *Musical World* 38 (1860), p. 426; *Musical World* 36 (1858), p. 612; *Dwight's Journal of Music* 13–14 (1859), p. 224.

⁷⁶ *Musical World* 36 (1858), p. 612.

⁷⁷ Smith also cast Vaneri in other productions at Her Majesty's in the 1860 season. For example, she played Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*.

⁷⁸ *Musical World* 38 (1860), p. 427.

⁷⁹ See *Musical World* 39 (1861), p. 426, and *Musical World* 40 (1862).

⁸⁰ *Musical World* 38 (1860), p. 477.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

to the production process, and the relatively small stage at Her Majesty's Theatre presented challenges for the scene painters:

The limited space behind the curtain in the old Opera House, where the stage was nearly all proscenium, prevented many of the mechanical effects so tastefully designed and accomplished by Messrs. Grieve and Bradwell at Covent Garden from being reproduced by Mr. Beverly at Her Majesty's Theatre; but all that painting could do, I need scarcely say, was done for it, and, unlimited power having been given me by Mr. Smith in the wardrobes, the piece was put upon the stage with as much splendour, and, in many points, with more correctness, as regarded the costumes and appointments, thanks to the kind information afforded me by Mr. Lane, the erudite Orientalist and translator of the 'The Arabian Night's Entertainments'.⁸²

From this description we can also see that audiences of the time were interested in any invocation of authenticity, even if only in a subjective form: the insertion of numbers from other Weber operas by his student Benedict, and the historically correct costumes (whatever historical correctness meant in the context of a fairy-tale opera) testify to this. Smith was of course aware of his audience's weakness for visual effects, and so he spared no expense or effort on them, despite the less than ideal conditions at Her Majesty's Theatre. This brought success within reach for the production.

The 1863 production of *Oberon*, with a different cast, saw no letting-up of the audience's enthusiasm for the work. While Tietjens and Alboni returned as Reiza and Fatima, Huon and Scherasmin were now played by the Englishmen Sims Reeves and Charles Santley.⁸³ Although this may seem surprising in light of London audiences' general conservative prejudice against English singers on the Italian stage, in this case the work's character may explain the casting choice.⁸⁴ Despite its Italian adaptation, *Oberon* was probably seen as an English opera: Weber had written it especially for London, and its content was related to that of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This hypothesis about audiences' understanding of the work is supported by the fact that reviews always referred to the arias by their English titles. This excerpt from an 1860 review is one example:

Mad. Alboni (Fatima) obtained the only encore of the evening (except one) in the romance, A lonely Arab maid, which she gave with incomparable grace, expression, and finish. Mlle. Tietjens never sang more superbly, both in the air, Haste, gallant knight! and in the grand scena, Ocean, thou mighty monster, creating a powerful sensation.⁸⁵

⁸² Planché, *Recollections and Reflections*, vol. 2, p. 194.

⁸³ These two names appeared first in the cast list in the 1863 libretto; Alboni and Tietjens were at the end of the list.

⁸⁴ See my discussion of English singers in Chapter 4.1.

⁸⁵ *Musical World* 38 (1860), p. 426.

This was by no means a short-term phenomenon in relation to *Oberon*. Commentators on a Royal Italian Opera production of the work in 1870 also adhered to the English titles, which suggests that these had become well established despite the frequent performances in Italian.⁸⁶ If the premiere in 1826 had been a success, this would not be surprising, but the premiere's failure makes it unexpected.

During the performance, audiences clearly followed mainly the English libretto in order to understand the piece, making the English aria titles more memorable – and this would have been true for the music critics as well; not for nothing did they use the English titles in their discussions. Nevertheless, the Italian adaptation was necessary in order to bring a previously disdained opera into line with contemporary fashion, laying the foundations for the production's success. The casting of international stars of Italian opera in the 1860 performances also contributed, lending the work the prestige of Italian opera to transform it into something modern and sophisticated. Thus audiences could enjoy an Italian opera production that was 'fashionable' according to English criteria and that also enjoyed a veneer of authenticity and thematically evoked an idealised English national character. The interest in the opera itself began to grow, at least among the most musically knowledgeable minority of the audience (as had not noticeably been the case following the Royal Italian Opera's attempts to position itself as a work-oriented opera house when it opened in 1847); the 1860s saw many such performances of 'classic' works such as Gluck's *Orfeo* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which targeted precisely this subset of the audience.⁸⁷

In the case of *Oberon*, the chosen solution to the increased demands for authenticity was to interpolate numbers from other works by the same composer, presenting this practice as the will of the composer himself: he too (so the argument went) had recognised the weak points in his opera. These interpolations also offered the singers numerous opportunities to change the work's musical high points to their advantage and to make themselves more prominent in the work. This was made all the easier by the dramaturgically absurd division of scenes, which reduced the recitatives between the musical numbers to near-insignificance and served simply to create the character of an Italian opera. The Italian text itself was constructed with ease of singing as the main priority, often resulting in superficiality of content, as the example of the aria 'Ah pour nous quel bonheur' or 'A mia bel anima' shows.

⁸⁶ *Musical World* 48 (1870), p. 767.

⁸⁷ See John Hullah, 'Gluck's "Iphigenia in Tauris"', *Fortnightly Review* 5 (1866), pp. 212–220, and *Musical World* 40 (1862), p. 488. In the case of *Orfeo*, Gye's intention failed completely: supporters of the Royal Italian Opera apparently objected to the work, and it disappeared from the programme.

Generally, the specific singers cast played a crucial role in the adaptation of operas, and this went beyond simply modifying their roles. The announcement of the cast was at the same time a statement about the positioning of the opera house and the opera performed. In 1860, the effort to make a production as fashionably Italian as possible was paramount, whereas in 1863 there was a conscious decision to cast English singers in two leading roles, so that *Oberon* could be positioned as an ‘English work’ – the Italian language apparently did not detract from this.

The Italian adaptation of Weber’s *Oberon* in 1860 was a noteworthy marketing achievement, uniting all the criteria for success for an opera in London at the time. The Italian text, the performance at an Italian opera house, the casting of renowned Italian opera singers, and finally the use of elaborate stage effects, all combined to bring success in London within reach.

6.2 Aria insertion

As Hilary Poriss has demonstrated, the practice of inserting arias into operas other than the ones they were written for flourished in the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ This practice was an essential element of many Italian opera productions in London. The final sections of this study consider various aspects of the practice and then survey the specific forms these insertions took in London.

My first example is Francesco Gnecco’s meta-opera *La prova di un’opera seria*, the dramatic structure of which made it well-suited to insertions and substitutions.⁸⁹ Then I consider the characteristics of an aria composed by Michael Costa especially for Giulia Grisi to insert into Rossini’s *L’assedio di Corinto*. Finally, I compare the commonalities and differences between two libretti from productions of Donizetti’s *Maria di Rohan* at Her Majesty’s Theatre and the Royal Italian Opera in the early 1850s. Here the primary focus is not on arias inserted by *prime donne*, but on the extensive engagement in the practice of aria insertion by tenors and basses.

6.2.1 Gnecco’s *La prova di un’opera seria*: A substitute aria becomes a highlight

This examination of aria substitution in Gnecco’s *La prova di un’opera seria* draws on libretti from performances at the King’s Theatre in 1835 and 1836; apart from minor differences in

⁸⁸ Poriss, *Changing the Score*.

⁸⁹ In the vast majority of libretti and reviews in English, the title of Gnecco’s work appears incorrectly as *La prova d’un opera seria*.

casting, the two are identical. In order to investigate the types of substitution and the adaptation of the opera for London's Italian stage specifically, I later compare the King's Theatre libretto to an Italian version of the libretto – specifically, one from a production at the Teatro Canobbiana in Milan in 1837, since a production close in time to the King's Theatre ones is most appropriate. In light of this combination of temporal proximity and geographical distance, these libretti offer useful comparisons in terms of performance practice and dramaturgical aspects. Finally, integrating these comparisons into a broader context of reception can provide insight into the work's performance and reception history on London's Italian stages.

Gnecco's *La prova di un'opera seria* is well-suited to this kind of investigation for several reasons. It remained in the standard repertoire of London's Italian opera houses into the second half of the nineteenth century and thus had a long and successful history in which nearly all the most renowned London singers participated.⁹⁰ The city's first performance of the work was at the King's Theatre in 1831, with Giuditta Pasta in the role of the *prima donna seria*, Corilla Tortorini. The fact that a *prima donna seria* such as Pasta was appearing in a comic role – and therefore as a parody of herself – made the first performance a great success.⁹¹

The work is a meta-opera – an opera about an opera – and is a parodic compilation of events and difficulties that occur during an opera rehearsal. Given this structure of the content, we can assume that the work's plot itself was central to its success with London's highlight- and prima donna-focused audiences. The involvement of prominent singers of course also helped. If audiences had focused solely on particular arias, the work's comic and parodic aspects might have gone largely unobserved; as the reception of the first performance shows, however, the opera *was* understood as comic by London audiences, which suggests they were not responding to it in an entirely singer-centric way. We can therefore assume that the dramatic content was also a consideration in the aria insertion practices surrounding the work. Nevertheless – and as Poriss demonstrates in relation to Mayr's *I virtuosi* – meta-operas in particular are perfectly suited to aria insertion: the format allows arias to be interpolated as if they were pieces from fictional operas, without needing to consider their compatibility with the plot of the meta-opera.⁹² These last two statements – regarding the importance, or non-importance, of dramatic content – seem contradictory; the following comparison of libretti examines their combined role in *La prova di un'opera seria*.

⁹⁰ See Lumley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 89 and 148.

⁹¹ See *Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 3 (1831), p. 360.

⁹² See Poriss, *Changing the Score*, p. 75.

The most immediately striking difference between the King's Theatre and Teatro Canobbiana versions of the opera is their length: the Milan version is in two acts, while the King's Theatre version is 'compressed into One Act'. This may reflect the fact that London opera performances were usually followed by a ballet, and a two-act opera would have meant a considerable increase in the length of an evening's programme. Also, Gnecco's opera was a popular component of benefit performances in London and internationally, and these usually took a potpourri form.⁹³ Comparing the London libretto with the standard two-act Milan version can thus also reveal some of the London version's priorities in terms of plot and content; these priorities in turn suggest the standards and expectations through which London audiences understood opera.⁹⁴

Two further noticeable differences between the libretti concern the number of characters and the printing. The King's Theatre version did not include the roles of the peasant couple, Pipetto and Checchina. These secondary roles without an aria to sing had little to offer an opera world based on star singers; indeed, the necessary second-tier singers would simply not have been available. As will be seen in more detail later, removing these roles also made it easier to shorten the piece to one act. The cast at the King's Theatre in 1836 consisted of Grisi (Corilla Tortorini, prima donna), the tenor Rubini (Federico Mordente), Castelli (Violante Pescarelli, *seconda donna*), Lablache (Campanone), De Angeli (Grilletto Pasticci, the librettist) and Galli (Fastidio Frivella, impresario).⁹⁵ The name of the singer playing Fischetto – the prompter and chorus master – is not given in the libretto.

As for the printing of the King's Theatre libretto, as well as the inexactness of the layout of the individual Italian lines in relation to their metre, it is also noticeable that the scenes of the fictional opera being rehearsed are barely differentiated in the printing from the action on stage. The presence of a passage from the fictional opera is signalled only by quotation marks at the beginning. The Milan libretto indicates this much more clearly, by printing the sections of the fictional opera in italics. This makes considerable difference to the audience's orientation and sense of the work as a whole. The fact that this sense of overview is almost absent from the London libretto could be taken as an indication that London audiences saw no need to differentiate between the work's two modes, because following the plot of an opera was in general only of secondary importance. Apparently a rough sense of the plot, and

⁹³ See *Athenaeum* (Jan–June 1860), p. 861.

⁹⁴ The original version of the opera, entitled *La prima prova dell'opera "Gli orazi e curiazi"*, was composed in 1803; Gnecco revised it into a two-act version in 1805, and it is from this later version that the King's Theatre's one-act version was adapted.

⁹⁵ In the King's Theatre libretto, the name of the impresario (incidentally spelled 'impresario') is misprinted as Fastidio Trivella.

knowing the names of the singers in each role, was all that was needed. For this kind of superficial understanding, the English translation of the libretto (printed on facing pages to the Italian text) was sufficient. This impression that audiences did not aim at a detailed understanding of content is strengthened by a detailed analysis of the sequence of scenes in the two libretti.

The first scene – a chorus rehearsal – is identical in the Italian texts of both libretti. However, closer investigation suggests that the audience did not focus on the parodic details of the text, as is illustrated by the following excerpt from the part of the librettist Grilletto:

Italian text

Signori miei, perdonino;
 Fermate un momento:
 Sentite questi sdrucchioli,
 Sentite che portentoso;
 Gli ho fatti ad una giovane
 Che devesi sposar.
 “O tu, bellissima
 “Bellezza mia,
 “Che splendidissima
 “Splendida splendi
 “Se un amantissimo
 “Amante prendi,
 “O felicissima
 “Felicità!

English translation

Gentlemen I beg your pardon
 Stop a moment
 Listen to these verses
 Listen to a very prodigy;
 I made them upon a young lady
 Who is about to be married.
 “Oh thou most beautiful
 “Of beauties.
 “ In splendour most
 “Splendidly splendid
 “Should you but get the
 “Most loving of lovers,
 “O what most happy
 “Of happiness will be thine!

‘Sdrucchioli’ has simply been translated as ‘verses’, which does not give a full sense of the humour of the original. The ‘verses’ that Grilletto recites – in order to show off the quality of his libretto – are all sdrucchioli (the emphasis comes on the third-to-last syllable); the comic effect does not result from the sdrucchioli in themselves, but rather from the words Grilletto chooses to create this stress pattern: they are all superlatives, and in superlatives the stress always falls on the third-to-last syllable, so the choice exposes the librettist’s dilettantism. Of course this linguistic joke cannot be transferred directly into English, so the translator made do with ‘verses’. It therefore seems likely that London audiences did not understand the full extent of the comedy in this scene: this would have required a working knowledge of the Italian language and its poetic metre, which can be considered highly unlikely on both counts.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ In English translations of Italian libretti, the main priorities seem not to have been aesthetic. It was sufficient to achieve a rough correspondence to the Italian text in terms of content, as well as preserving important vowel sounds and some of the idiosyncrasies of the Italian. These concerns necessarily resulted in weaknesses in English libretti as judged by the criteria of other literary genres. See Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman, ‘The Worst Translations: Almost Any Opera in English’, *Translation Review* 48–49 (1995), p. 26. The excerpt quoted above from the first scene of *La prova di un’opera seria* can serve as an example of this: ‘Fermate un momento’ has been translated as ‘Stop a moment’ – the translator was clearly concerned to retain the word ‘moment[o]’.

The second scene, set in the prima donna's house, differs considerably between the two libretti. At the very beginning of the scene in the London libretto, Corilla's aria 'Ah tu sol, tiranno amore' has been replaced by the aria 'Lungi dal caro ben' from Giovanni Pacini's *La sposa fedele* (Venice, Teatro San Bernadetto, 1819). The form of the insertion is lightly modified from Pacini's original, and the central section has been removed (see Table 3).

King's Theatre

Lungi dal caro ben,
 Pace per me non v'ha,
 No, da sperar non c'è
 Per me felicità.
 Ma se il cielo a me lo rende,
 S'io lo stringe a questo seno.
 Tornerà per me sereno
 A brillar di gioja il cor.

Pacini, *La sposa fedele*⁹⁷

Lungi dal caro ben,
 Pace per me non v'ha
 No, da sperar non v'è
 Col più costante amor
 Erardo adorerò,
 Fra le sventure ancor
 Fedele a lui sarò.
 Ma se il cielo a me lo rende
 Se lo stringo a questo seno,
 Tornerà per me sereno
 A brillar di gioja il cor.

Table 3: Comparison of the insertion aria 'Lungi dal caro ben' from the King's Theatre libretto with Pacini's original aria

In comparing the two texts, the linguistic inaccuracies in the King's Theatre libretto are conspicuous. Instead of the correct 'Se lo stringo' we find 'S'io lo stringe', a grammatically incorrect construction. That errors like this were not picked up indicates the relative insignificance of the Italian text, and the audience's lack of language skills.

After the inserted aria comes a new connecting recitative for Corilla which serves to restore the balance following the aria and to anchor the aria into the dramatic context:

Ma viene Federico; il Signorino
 Colla Seconda Donna
 Vuol darmi gelosia; dispettosetta
 Io qui mi assido; a piedi miei pentito
 Allorchè lo vedrò,
 Di fargli poi la grazia fingerò.

This practice of adapting the scenes surrounding the insertion aria was common at this time, as Poriss demonstrates in detail through the example of Carolina Ungher.⁹⁸ Clearly the integration of the dramatic context was an important consideration when inserting arias. The choice of Pacini's aria can be explained in light of the context of the production: the prima donna of the first London performance of *La prova di un'opera seria* in 1831 was the

⁹⁷ Giovanni Pacini, *La sposa fedele*, libretto, Teatro Carignano (Turin, 1820), p. 10 [HL, GEN TS 8637.500 1820].

⁹⁸ See Poriss, *Changing the Score*, pp. 48–50. Like Poriss, I give the version of the soprano's name that was commonly used in London; in her native Austria the spelling was Karoline Unger.

extraordinarily renowned Giuditta Pasta, who was known for including aria insertions in many performances.⁹⁹ Pacini himself composed an insertion aria for the revival of his opera *La sposa fedele* in 1820 at the Teatro Carignano in Turin – none other than ‘Lungi dal caro ben’. Given that it was composed especially with Pasta in mind, the aria naturally displayed her voice to its very best advantage. For this reason, she also interpolated ‘Lungi dal caro ben’ instead of the usual entrance aria sung by Imogene in Bellini’s *Il pirata* in a production at the Kärntnertortheater in Venice in 1830.¹⁰⁰ The aria was also known to English audiences before the 1831 performance of *La prova*: Pasta had sung ‘Lungo dal caro ben’ at occasions such as the 1824 Norfolk Festival, the 1827 Oxford Music Festival and a concert at the Royal Academy of Music (where one listener reported that the piece was ‘intolerably dull’).¹⁰¹ Her interpolation of the piece in *La prova di un’opera seria* therefore seems unsurprising. A further advantage of ‘Lungo dal caro ben’ was its thematic proximity to Gnecco’s original aria at this point: it was therefore ideally suited as a substitute. The King’s Theatre production was met with huge enthusiasm from the audience:

In Gnecco’s *Prova d’un Opera Seria* [sic], Pasta appeared to unusual advantage, and showed much versatility in this amusing caricature of the rehearsals of a serious opera at the house of the prima donna and at the theatre. Alternately arch, whimsical, playful, and capricious, she provoked roars of laughter by her burlesque singing, without advancing a step toward vulgarity.¹⁰²

It is striking that the insertion of ‘Lungi dal caro ben’ is not mentioned here – it is possible that the change went unnoticed by most of the audience. This review, and probably the audience, focused largely on aspects related to the specific performance. In any case, Pasta’s success in Gnecco’s *opera buffa* can be considered the reason for Grisi’s inclusion of the same aria when she was the prima donna in productions of the work in 1835 and 1836, so that the piece shaped the work’s identity.

After ‘Lungi dal caro ben’, the text is once again identical across the two libretti (apart from very minor changes), until another substitution. In this case, again, the text of the recitative preceding the substituted duet has been adapted in order to improve the dramatic integration. These adjustments result in considerable changes to the content of the opera. In the Milan libretto the scene ends with a dispute over the prima donna’s jealousy. In the King’s Theatre libretto, however, it ends with reconciliation between the two protagonists Corilla and

⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 73–74.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁰¹ Robin Humphrey Legge and W. E. Hansell, *Annals of the Norfolk & Norwich Triennial Musical Festivals, 1824–1893* (London: Jarrold, 1896), p. 25; *Harmonicon* 5 (1827), p. 206.

¹⁰² Clayton, *Queens of Song*, p. 264.

Federico – precisely the opposite outcome. But this adaptation is necessary because the mood of the inserted duet ‘Cara, tu dici il vero’ is positive, which would have caused confusion had it followed straight after the argument in its original form:

FED. Qual momento,
Cara, tu dici il vero
Oh, istante di piacer!
Oh amabile contento!
Oh mia felicità!
COR. Ah, sì, dico il vero
Oh istante di piacer!
Oh amabile contento!
Oh mia felicità!

The origin of this duet is unknown. A London edition of the piece exists, marked ‘in the opera of La prova d’un opera seria composed by Signor Gnecco; with the variations added by Madame Malibran as sung by her & Signor Rubini; introduced & sung also in the opera of Agnese by Signra. Grisi & Signor Donzelli’, which in principle identifies Gnecco as the composer.¹⁰³ But the duet does not appear in either the Milan libretto from 1837 or in an 1812 libretto from a performance at the Teatro di Via della Pergola in Florence.¹⁰⁴ In 1826, the duet was included in Act II scene 3 of a performance of Donizetti’s *L’ajo nell’imbarazzo* at La Scala in Milan. Together with the reference to its interpolation into Ferdinando Paer’s opera *Agnese*, this suggests that the duet was prominent as an insertion piece internationally.¹⁰⁵ We can also see from its presence in *Agnese* that Grisi was familiar with the piece.

A further striking difference between the Milan and London libretti relates, once again, to a humorous passage of recitative, this time in the fifth scene of Act I, in which Corilla has serious difficulties in remembering the correct text. Instead of ‘affetto’ (affection) she sings ‘effetto’ (effect), and instead of ‘svellere’ (uproot) she sings ‘svelare’ (uncover). In the complete line ‘Svelare l’impression del primo effetto’ (instead of ‘Svellere l’impression del primo affetto’), these small differences cause considerable distortion of the meaning, which is the source of the scene’s comic effect. The English translation of the libretto attempts to do justice to this joke through the correction ‘Your pardon – the word is “impression” – Can never from this bosom be effaced’.¹⁰⁶ But in the Italian text of the King’s Theatre libretto, Corilla never makes the mistake, correctly singing ‘affetto’ straight away. Although this may simply be a minor inaccuracy or printing error, its presence nevertheless indicates the lesser importance of the Italian text compared to the English, in which the comedy of the passage

¹⁰³ [HL, M1 508. G58 P7 1832].

¹⁰⁴ Libretto, Teatro Via della Pergola [HL, GEN *IC7.A100.B750 v. 89]

¹⁰⁵ Donizetti, *L’ajo nell’imbarazzo*, libretto, Teatro Milano (Milan, 1826), p. 40.

¹⁰⁶ Corilla sings ‘the deep expression of my first fond love/Can never from this bosom be defaced’.

remains intact. This suggests that audiences paid little attention, or none at all, to the Italian text (particularly because the error remains unchanged from the 1835 libretto in the 1836 edition).

After the sixth scene, which is completely identical in both libretti, the seventh begins totally differently in terms of both text and content: in the King's Theatre libretto, Corilla seems to be acting reasonably with regard to her jealousy of the *seconda donna*, confessing that she herself is sometimes emotionally volatile. Then, sitting at the piano, she begins to rehearse her Act II Rondo when the composer (who is also the conductor) enters. This section corresponds to the last part of the scene in the Milan libretto ('Veramente, il confesso'), in which the scene begins with a dialogue between Federico and Corilla, which makes dramatic sense. Since the King's Theatre libretto does not include this dialogue, Corilla's mood at the beginning of the scene is presented as a *fait accompli*. Then – probably in order to help reduce the work to a single act – scenes 7 and 8 in the Milan libretto are combined in the King's Theatre version, which makes this seventh scene a point of dramatic emphasis. The scene's later development – which involves the protagonists Corilla and Campanone, sung by Grisi and Lablache – makes clear the reason for this change: at the end of the scene comes another inserted duet – the famous 'Oh guardate che figura' by Pietro Carlo Guglielmi.¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, Guglielmi's duet appears in both libretti, and at a similar point. Given that the two performances had entirely different casts, and took place in close chronological proximity but in different countries, this can be considered an example of an inserted duet establishing itself in an opera without being associated with a specific singer. In cases where a singer cultivated an association with a personal repertoire of arias for insertion into different operas, the term 'suitcase aria' (or 'trunk aria') is generally used. Reference to suitcase arias usually implies that these arias were substituted in place of another piece within a given opera, in most cases independently of the dramatic context.¹⁰⁸ However, the term suitcase aria is not applicable to 'Oh guardate che figura', because the duet had no association with a particular singer or singers, and did not negate the dramatic context of *La prova*; rather, *La prova* was adapted to fit the duet. A libretto of the opera from Florence in 1812 does not include 'Oh guardate che figura', which suggests that it did not become an integral part of the

¹⁰⁷ This duet originated in Guglielmi's farce *La sposa bisbetica* (premiered Teatro Valle, Rome 1797), on the model of Da Ponte's *La capricciosa corretta*. In a London edition of the duet for piano and voices, Guglielmi's *La capricciosa corretta* is named as the source of the duet (see [HL, M1 508. G945 P7 1831]). As well as the connection to Da Ponte, it is probable that this resulted from a confusion of Guglielmi's work with Martini's *La capricciosa corretta*, within which the same 'Oh guardate' was often performed as a duet insertion. (See, for example, Vincenzo Martini, *La capricciosa corretta*, libretto, Teatro San Samuele (Venice, 1819), pp. 30–31.)

¹⁰⁸ See Poriss, *Changing the Score*, p. 66.

work until later.¹⁰⁹ The insertion of the duet also results in a shift of the dramatic emphasis in the work as a whole. At the point where ‘Oh guardate che figura’ appears, there was originally a relatively short duet between the two protagonists, which did not provide the same level of dramatic emphasis and therefore did not count among the highlights of *La prova*. The insertion of Guglielmi’s duet changed this substantially. The practice probably dates from the first London performance in 1831, with Pasta and Lablache, which was enormously successful. This success is reflected in the fact that the duet was published in an edition with piano accompaniment in London in the same year, and in the effusive praise for the duet, and for Lablache and Pasta’s performance of it, in the following review from the *Monthly Magazine* (which does not mention the piece’s origins outside *La prova*):

Her scene with Maestro Campanone (Lablache), and their duet, ‘Oh, guardate che figura!’ shook the risible faculties of the most elderly and demure among the audience. *Here*, Lablache was in his element, and his humour proved equally, if not more, irresistible in the concluding scene, where he directs the orchestra. When a manager sees such a comic excellence in one of his *sujets*, it would but be an act of charity to lock up the buskin ever from his sight.¹¹⁰

Enthusiasm for the duet remained strong even twenty years later: ‘Lablache’s duet with Madame La Grange, “*Ah, guardate che figura,*” was received as usual with shouts of merriment, although it had been heard season after season for upwards of twenty years’.¹¹¹ These lines from a review in *Dwight’s Journal of Music* for 1853 indicate both the work’s long history of success and the fact that it was not explicitly characterised as an inserted piece, but rather was a fully legitimate element of the opera. The following remarks from the *Spectator* read similarly, and refer to a performance of excerpts from the opera within an evening’s programme at Her Majesty’s Theatre where *La prova di un’opera seria* formed the second part of the programme, following Donizetti’s *La figlia del reggimento*:

On the same evening, Lablache and Frezzolini played the scenes from the *Prova d’un Opera Seria* which used to be given so often when Lablache and Grisi were together. Frezzolini’s humour was less rich and spontaneous than Grisi’s, but her performance was very spirited, and the famous duet, ‘*Ah guardate che figura,*’ lost little of its old effect.¹¹²

Given that only individual scenes from Gnecco’s opera were performed on this occasion, and we can assume that the ones chosen were considered the highlights, we can conclude that as a result of the longstanding practice of inserting the duet into *La prova*, it had become an

¹⁰⁹ See [HL, GEN *IC7.A100.B750 v.89].

¹¹⁰ *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 33/3 (1831), p. 360.

¹¹¹ *Dwight’s Journal of Music* 1–2 (1853), p. 87.

¹¹² *Spectator* 23 (1850), p. 683.

integral part of the work. It thus seems unsurprising that the review did not mention either Guglielmi as the composer, or the duet's status as an inserted piece: 'Oh guardate che figura' functioned primarily as a touchstone for the singers' abilities in performance, as can be seen from the comparison the writer makes between Frezzolini and Grisi. The tradition of inserting arias and duets thus made it easier for audiences to make direct comparisons between singers and to establish criteria for judging singers' quality.

Although the duet is present in both the Milan and King's Theatre libretti, there are small differences between the two versions, which point to the duet's exceptional status on the London stage. In the King's Theatre version, after a short interjection in recitative the first two sections of the duet are repeated before the concluding part of the scene, which ends in an *a due*. The reason for the repeat of the first sections becomes clear on examination of the duet's musical structure. (I base my analysis on the aforementioned 1831 edition of the duet with piano accompaniment. This edition is transposed from the original D major to B \flat major, but the transposition is insignificant for my discussion of structural changes.)¹¹³

The duet consists of three musically contrasting sections: a parlando opening, a central section in recitative with chordal accompaniment from the orchestra and short melodic interjections ('ha la faccia pizzicata') and a closing cantabile section with opportunities for virtuosic elaboration ('Donne belle se volete'). These three sections are first sung by the soprano and then repeated by the bass, before the *a due* section begins ('ha la bocca'). The Milan version ends at this point, whereas the London version has only just begun to exploit its comic potential. In the repeat of the first parlando section, the bass sings the individual phrases alternately in falsetto and in 'voce naturale' (Lablache was apparently imposing in stature, which must have enhanced the potential for humour here). Also, in the repeat the soprano part is marked '8a bassa, imitando il basso se può' (an octave lower, imitating the bass if possible), which would have been entirely within the capacity of a mezzo-soprano such as Pasta. This humorous switching of registers was only made possible by the repetition of the first section of the duet, because it required familiarity with the musical material. Thus the duet's comic effect in the London version did not come primarily from the text but from the way the singers used the text dramatically and vocally in performance. 'Oh guardate che figura' demonstrates how performance practice could influence the structure of a libretto and of an opera.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ [HL, M1508.G945 P7 1831].

¹¹⁴ In 1855, 'Oh guardate che figura' was described as the 'favourite scene' from *La prova di un'opera seria* in relation to a performance where it followed Verdi's *Il trovatore* at the Royal Italian Opera. The singers were Pauline Viardot and, again, Luigi Lablache. See *Musical World* 33 (1855), p. 415.

At the beginning of the next (eighth) scene in the London libretto, again a dialogue is added in order to maintain the dramatic sense. Then there are major cuts: where in the Milan libretto scenes 9 to 14 then follow (scene 14 is the finale to Act I), the London version omits this first dramatic high point because of the compression of the work into a single act. In the text there are interpolations here from the first scene of Act II in the Milan version ('Oh, oh siamo quà tutti'). On closer examination, the reason for the cuts is obvious: these scenes would normally involve the peasants Pipetto and Checchina, who were removed entirely from the King's Theatre version, which therefore loses the effect of these scenes (in which Pipetto and Checchina fulfil their function as typical comic 'rustics' and announce an approaching storm, which causes the expected outbreak of chaos in the choral finale). In the one-act version, maintaining this first finale would be dramatically nonsensical. The subsequent recitative passage in the eighth scene, which concerns difficulties in the rehearsal, is initially identical in both libretti, apart from the difference in emphasis according to whether this is the beginning of Act II (in the Milan version) or the middle of a one-act structure (London version). Towards the end of the scene there is another cut in the London version: the return to the original Italian text comes with Fischetto's words 'Signori, dice il sarto, che se il vestario voi veder volete'. The cut includes the aria for Federico ('Viva la vita il barbaro'), in which he laments his fate, before Fischetto interrupts him with the request for the singers to attend their costume fitting.

Up to the librettist Grilletto's call of 'Misera!', the ninth scene of the London version is identical with Act II, scene 2 of the Milan version (in the Italian libretto, Grilletto calls 'Minerva!' while Campanone calls 'Misera!'). The alignment of the two characters' wording means that subtle nuances of the comedy are not transferred into the Her Majesty's libretto – a further indication of a lack of detailed understanding.

The tenth scene, which corresponds in its dramatic structure to Act II scene 3 of the Milan libretto, begins identically but is then modified again. Instead of a call to all the protagonists ('Presto, presto Signori'), here only the prima donna is addressed ('Presto, presto, Signora'), and the explanation for this lies in the cuts made to the King's Theatre version. In the Milan version, all the characters are on the stage at this point, reading out the letters they have just received, so that a call to all of them makes sense (even if what follows is a rehearsal only of the prima donna's Rondo). In the King's Theatre version, the letter scene is omitted, so that a call to the prima donna alone to rehearse her Rondo is dramatically sufficient. But Campanone realises that the 'primo musico' (Milan version) is missing, which means that the rehearsal cannot begin. The impresario Fastidio Frivella kindly offers to cover the role. In the

King's Theatre version it is not the 'primo musico' who is missing, but – in the Italian text – simply a musician ('Mi manca il musico'), although this is translated into English as 'but I have not the music', which is incorrect. In light of the wording of the line in Italian, the mistranslation at this point seems to have been deliberate, to fit with the translation of 'Non serve, io sarò' as 'Never mind, I know it', which is incorrect, and in terms of content does not help to defuse the situation: even if the impresario knows the music, this does not change the fact that (in the English translation) the score is missing – it is Campanone who must conduct and not Fastidio (see Table 4).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ 'Sarò' is a form of the verb *essere* (to be), but the translator may have mistaken it for a form of the verb *sapere* (to know).

Libretto King's Theatre

CAM. Ben lo faccio io;

Ma manca il musico.

FAS. Non serve, io sarò quello.

CAM. Well then, I will do it;

But I have not the music.

FAS. Never mind, I know it.

Libretto Teatro Canobbiana

CAM. Ben lo face'io.

Ma manca il primo Musico.

FAS. Non serve, io sarò quello.

Table 4: Comparison of King's Theatre and Teatro Canobbiano libretto texts

The authors of the English adaptation were clearly trying to find a logical way to iron out incongruities in the text at this point. It is important to bear in mind that this scene is the finale of the opera in both libretti (in the King's Theatre version the scene is broken off in the middle). The appearance of the *primo musico* in the Milan version comes after the point where the King's Theatre version ends. Given this ending, a change to the reference to the *primo musico* is necessary in order to avoid inconsistency in the plot. The resulting difference between the English and Italian texts in the King's Theatre libretto, and the translation error, further strengthen the impression that the Italian text played only a subordinate role in the work's reception in London.

Once the protagonists' problems have been solved, they proceed with the rehearsal of the prima donna's Rondo. Within the conventions of the time in relation to insertion arias, a rehearsal scene was an ideal place to substitute the original aria with one that displayed the soprano's skills to better effect, given that there was no need for the aria to fit the dramatic context. In this case, in the London libretto the Scena and Aria 'Vien superbo' from Giuseppe Nicolini's *Malek Adel* replaced the aria with chorus that appears in the Milan libretto. The text was expanded, with slight differences from Nicolini's opera, although it retained certain key words (see Table 5).

Originaltext aus Nicolini – *Malek Adel*¹¹⁶

MAL. (con impeto) Chi! Lusignano?
 Ah perfido! Comprendo il suo disegno.
 Metilde qui l'indegno
 Viene a rapir. – Ma invano. – Si prevenga.
 S'involi a lui la preda. – Olà! Atterrate
 Quelle porte, o miei fidi, - Penetrate
 In que' recinti. – Tu, che la conosci,
 Kaled, va: la rapisci.
 Qui l'inimico . . . e solo io basto, attendo.
 (Kaled e i guerrieri atterrano la porta del Ritiro, e
 v'entrano)
 Vien, superbo! – A tua sciagura
 Trovi qui rivale e morte.
 Traditore! omai la sorte
 T'abbandona al mio furor.

Libretto King's Theatre

COR. Chi? ... quell iniquio, ah perfido ...
 Comprendo il suo disegno
 Ettore qui? ... L'indegno
 Viene a rapir; ma invano; si prevenga,
 S'involi a lui la preda: olà atterrate
 Quelle porte, o miei fidi, penetrate
 In que' recinti; tu che lo conosci
 Amico va, eseguisi, lo rapori,
 Ed io fremendo
 Qui la sola basto, e l'inimico attendo.
 Vien, superbo, in tua sciagura,
 Trovi qui vendetta e morte ...
 Traditore! omai la sorte
 T'abbandona al mio furor.
 Ettore! Meandro! oggetti
 De' miei più cari affetti!
 Ridestarsi in petto io sento
 Tutto in sen l'antico ardor!
 Io rivivo in tal momento
 Alla gloria ed all'amor! ...

Table 5: Comparison between the substitution aria 'Vien superbo' in the King's Theatre libretto and the original aria in Nicolini's *Malek Adel*

After the substituted Scena and Aria (which underwent some adaptations to avoid creating confusion),¹¹⁷ a passage of recitative was added that in some respects resembles the omitted chorus, with its repeated exclamations of 'Viva'. The removal of the chorus resulted in more performance time for the prima donna, making her aria the centre of the finale. In light of the fact that Corilla was often performed by Pasta or Grisi, we can assume that the aria inserted at this point played an important role in representing the prima donna who sang it. An aria so close to the end of the opera would remain far more memorable than earlier numbers; retaining the original aria with chorus would have considerably lessened the prima donna's special status by comparison with the King's Theatre version. Interestingly, audiences probably did not listen to 'Vien superbo' in the same comic mode as the rest of the opera; rather, it served to represent and display the prima donna's skills, as already mentioned.

Finally, after the protagonists on the stage have congratulated Corilla on her performance ('Brava, brava, Corilla'), the overture is rehearsed, with Campanone leading the orchestra. This scene, with Lablache in the role of the maestro, was very well-received by audiences,

¹¹⁶ Nicolini, *Malek-Adel: Melodramma Eroico in Tre Atti*, libretto, Teatro Carcano (Milan, 1830–1831), p. 48.

¹¹⁷ The word 'rivale' in the second verse of the aria was replaced with 'vendetta', to avoid raising the question of the rival's identity. The fact that a female protagonist could not, according to convention, have a masculine 'rivale' was another reason for the change. (Although *Malek Adel* was a male character played *in travesti*, the plot of *La prova di un'opera seria* has previously established that Corilla is rehearsing a female lead.)

mainly because of Lablache's acting – although the review in the *New Monthly Magazine* makes no mention of the thoroughly humorous text.¹¹⁸ Here the King's Theatre version ends, omitting an impressive final chorus and brilliant finale that appear in the Milan version. The parodic element of the finale of the Milan version, which is constructed entirely according to the conventions of opera buffa, is therefore lost completely, so that Gnecco's parodic opera lacked certain dimensions of its comedy as performed in the King's Theatre.

The loss of the opera's parodic construction in translation is a general problem of the King's Theatre version, as this chapter section has illustrated. Moreover, accounts of the opera create the impression that for London audiences its comedy did not arise from the parodic construction, but mainly from the brilliant performances by the protagonists. This effect was certainly intensified by the involvement of real *prime donne serie*, such as Pasta and Grisi. The relative insignificance of the opera's text and the details of its content for audiences of the time is indicated above all by the many omissions in the text and the shifts in dramatic emphasis that result from the compression of the opera into a single act. The new emphases created by this version rely less on dramatic content than on performance, as is clear, for example, from the duet 'Oh guardate che figura' and the aria 'Vien superbo'. This points once more to the prominent role of the singers in London's Italian opera, which did not diminish even in the context of a self-parodying opera.

The multiple insertions of arias and duets in King's Theatre productions in 1835 and 1836 serve to illustrate the mechanisms and priorities that were at work when external musical material was inserted into a work.¹¹⁹ Rather than an entirely disconnected substitution, arias and duets, as well as the recitative passages surrounding them, were edited to create a coherent dramatic context.¹²⁰ This is also true – perhaps especially true – for meta-operas such as Gnecco's *La prova di un'opera seria*, in which the text itself was adapted to the aria insertion at a point where dramatic coherence did not matter ('Vien superbo').

The example of the duet 'O guardate che figura' shows strikingly how a duet from an external source could ultimately become an integral part of a work and even a highlight, without necessarily having a personal association with a particular singer. In this case, one might assume in light of Pasta's great success with this duet in 1831, that it only became a standard component of *La prova* because singers hoped to increase their chances of success

¹¹⁸ *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 33/3 (1831), p. 360.

¹¹⁹ In *Changing the Score*, Poriss mainly considers solo aria insertions. As the King's Theatre performances of *La prova di un'opera seria* make clear, however, duets, too, might be interpolated or substituted.

¹²⁰ See Poriss, *Changing the Score*, p. 48. Poriss identifies a similar process of adaptation in the case of Carolina Ungher and Donizetti's *Marino Faliero*.

by conferring some of Pasta's renown on themselves.¹²¹ This process might well have happened in relation to virtuosic solo arias, but in a duet such considerations of status surely played a lesser role. Firstly, the parlando duet offered only limited opportunities for virtuosic elaboration; secondly, any soprano would be reliant for success in this duet on a suitable stage partner with a talent for comic acting, such as Lablache, in order to exploit the parodic elements of the piece to their full potential. This last factor illustrates that a comic opera might be understood as comic by the audience even if the text itself played a subordinate role and was not understood by the majority. As this examination of *La prova di un'opera seria* has shown, non-textual means were required in order to communicate these comic elements and win the enthusiasm of the King's Theatre audience.

6.2.2 'Dall'asilo alla pace': success through virtuosic display

Gioachino Rossini's opera *L'assedio di Corinto* is an example of the widespread practice whereby composers made adaptations to their own operas. The composer's first complete setting of Cesare della Valle's libretto was premiered in Venice in 1820 under the title *Maometto II*, but the reception of the premiere was disastrous (the work was 'in Venedig geboren und gestorben' – that is, its first outing was both birth and death – according to one later commentator), prompting extensive revisions.¹²² The Paris version of 1826, now entitled *Le Siège de Corinthe*, proved far more suitable for the stage because of changes to the dramatic structure; moreover, many of the numbers in the opera were redistributed into different acts.¹²³ This commission from the Académie Royale de Musique met with great enthusiasm from the audience.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, it was not until 1834 that the work enjoyed its London premiere in its Italian version, *L'assedio di Corinto*. The cast at the King's Theatre comprised the most renowned singers of the time, which in London was normally enough to guarantee a full house: Tamburini as Maometto, Ivanoff as Cleomenes, Rubini as Neocles and Grisi as Pamira.¹²⁵

The theatre's engagement of Grisi in her London debut year sparked particular interest, her good reputation from Paris having preceded her. These circumstances necessitated an

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 96.

¹²² *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 48 (1826), p. 786.

¹²³ See Henze-Döhring, 'Rossini's Opern in Paris unter gattungsgeschichtliche Aspekten', in Bernd-Rüdiger Kern and Reto Müller (eds.), *Rossini in Paris*, Schriftenreihe der Deutschen Rossini Gesellschaft 4 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), pp. 92–93.

¹²⁴ See *Harmonicon* 4 (1826), p. 215.

¹²⁵ See *Supplement to the Musical Library* (March–December 1834), p. 48.

adulatory announcement of the singer's arrival placed in the London press by Laporte. This kind of extensive marketing campaign can be considered characteristic of the London opera system, although the hymns of praise often proved unwarranted when the singers actually performed:

The name Giulietta Grisi had been introduced by the usual flourish of trumpets, in the shape of newspaper paragraphs, long before her arrival, and, if our opinion can be said to have been all that affected by such state and vulgar doings, it was against the be-puffed singer; our surprise, therefore, and gratification, were the greater on finding that she belongs not to that class of which so many had been heralded by the most undeserved nauseous praise, but is of the very limited order of those who unite vocal and histrionic talent of a kind as nearly approaching perfection as we can imagine natural gifts and laborious study capable of arriving at.¹²⁶

Unusually, then, Grisi's extraordinary vocal skill seemed beyond all doubt, particularly in light of her debut as Ninetta in Rossini's *La gazza ladra*. Contemporary accounts praised above all the evenness of the different registers in her voice, her brilliant tone and her clear execution of coloratura.¹²⁷ On top of these qualities came her pure intonation in both scalic passages and leaps, and the ability to nuance her performance according to the dramatic situation:

Her shake was clear and rapid; her scales were certain; every interval was taken without hesitation by her. Nor has any woman ever more thoroughly commanded every gradation of force than she [...] not using the contrast of loud and soft too violently, but capable of any required violence, of any advisable delicacy.¹²⁸

This flexibility of dramatic expression prompted commentators to consider her as uniting the strengths of Catalani (in the 'energetic passages') and Ronzi de Begnis ('when grief and tenderness is to be expressed').¹²⁹ Such comparisons to other sopranos were typical of London's singer-centred operatic scene: the identification of resemblances enhanced a singer's status by placing her on the same level as her renowned predecessors. This effect was intensified in London by audiences' unusually long memory for exceptional performances that reached legendary status.

When listeners did report negative opinions of Grisi's singing, these mostly related to a tendency to overshoot certain notes, as in this review by Franz Grillparzer of *L'assedio di Corinto* at the King's Theatre:

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

¹²⁷ For example, Chorley exclaimed: 'And what a soprano voice was hers! – rich, sweet – equal throughout its compass of two octaves (from C to C) without a break, or a note which had to be managed' (*Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, p. 110).

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 111.

¹²⁹ *Supplement to the Musical Library* (March–December 1834), p. 24.

Das ist eine so vortreffliche Sängerin als je eine war. Weniger stark leidenschaftlich, aber dafür immer wohlklingend. Anfangs dieselbe Neigung zum Zuhochsingen als da ich sie das erstemal hörte. Später setzte sich alles zurecht. Ich habe diese Oper oft aufführen gesehen, aber erst heute gehört. Sie hat eine Leichtigkeit und Annehmlichkeit in der Stimme, wie selten eine Primadonna, die meistens schon halb ausgesungen sind, wenn sie zu den letzten Stufen gelangen.¹³⁰

Grisi thus had all the necessary qualities to rise to a leading position as a prima donna on London's Italian opera stages. Following Catalani's vocal excesses, and at the peak of the vogue for Rossini, London audiences of the 1830s – as was also the case later – were more interested in singers' vocal performance than in the operas themselves: 'the *fioriture* and *tours de force* [...] captivate the mob'.¹³¹ The conventions of ornamentation that were characteristic in Rossini operas seemed to correspond perfectly to the London *Zeitgeist* – although this was less the case in *L'assedio di Corinto*, because the adaptation of *Maometto II* for Paris involved adjustment to French conventions, which were based on simpler melodies.¹³² But excessive ornamentation did not disappear from the work altogether – coloratura remained a means of differentiating the singers from one another. Philip Gossett points out in this context that in Rossini's French operas in particular – *Le Siège de Corinthe* and *Moïse* – performance materials show that the composer's simplifications were contradicted by the coloratura added by the leading singers.¹³³ It thus seems unsurprising that in the Italian version of the work for London, a wide variety of impressive vocal effects found their way into the work.

One striking example of this tendency is an aria inserted by Grisi into Act II scene 2 of *L'assedio di Corinto*. The piece was composed especially for Grisi by Michael Costa, the Musical Director of the King's Theatre, and so we can assume that it was adapted to her vocal characteristics and was intended to be the bravura highlight of Pamira's part. The location of the insertion – at the beginning of the second act – corresponded to a tradition that involved both the first and second scenes of Act II (Pamira's aria, and the duet between Maometto and Pamira respectively).¹³⁴ In an 1829 performance of *L'assedio di Corinto* in Venice, Giulia Grisi's older sister Giuditta replaced the original 'Dal soggiorno degli estinti' with what

¹³⁰ Franz Grillparzer, quoted in Heinz Kindermann, 'Grillparzer und das Welttheater', in *Grillparzer-Feier der Akademie 1972: Politik, Gesellschaft, Theater, Weltwirkung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1972), p. 104.

¹³¹ *Supplement to the Musical Library* (March–December 1834), p. 24. On Catalani, see Poriss, *Changing the Score*, pp. 154–55.

¹³² Practices of aria insertion flourished in Rossini operas, in keeping with the vocal virtuosity demanded by the operas themselves. See, for example, the report in *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 31 (1829), p. 351.

¹³³ Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, p. 300. *Moïse* was the French version of *Mosè in Egitto*.

¹³⁴ For the Paris version, against Italian conventions, Rossini had removed the cabaletta of the duet. A substitute cabaletta by Donizetti ('Pietoso all'amor') was interpolated into an 1828 performance, and became a standard part of the Maometto-Pamira duet in the course of the nineteenth century. See Gossett, Review of Rossini's *The Siege of Corinth*, *Musical Quarterly* 61 (1975), p. 633, and Poriss, *Changing the Score*, p. 101.

Gossett assumes was an aria composed especially for her by an unidentified composer (Adagio ‘Ah non fia mai ver ch’io viva’; Cabaletta ‘Parmi vederlo ahi misero’).¹³⁵ However, there is no surviving evidence to support this theory that what Giuditta Grisi sang was a newly-composed aria. On the contrary, it is more likely that at least the cabaletta in question came from Giovanni Pacini’s *Amazilia*, which was performed at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples in 1825, with Joséphine Fodor-Mainvielle in the title role.¹³⁶

Pamira’s Adagio and Cabaletta are entirely absent from Italian libretti for *L’assedio di Corinto* in Florence in 1828 (when Giuditta Grisi sang Pamira) and 1830 (with Clementina Fanti as Pamira).¹³⁷ The first scene of Act II consists only of Rossini’s recitative ‘Cielo! Che diverò?’. In another libretto from Turin in 1840, the whole first scene is missing, and according to the libretto the act begins with the Maometto/Pamira duet.¹³⁸ Given that in the Florence libretti, Pamira’s Scena is directly followed (against convention) by the duet, and given Gossett’s belief that Giuditta Grisi inserted an aria at this point in 1829 (that is, a year after the Florence performance), it seems highly likely that this was already a traditional location for inserting arias. This would also be in keeping with the aforementioned flourishing tradition of substitute arias in Rossini’s operas in general, which was surely a response to the composer’s coloratura style. It is probable that the original aria (which in many cases was replaced by another piece) was simply left out of libretto for ease of printing: this way, the libretto could be reprinted many times without necessitating alterations. We can assume, then, that in inserting Costa’s aria Giulia Grisi was participating in this widespread tradition.

On examination of ‘Dal soggiorni degli estinti’ and the Cabaletta ‘Ma se alfin, placato il nembo’, it is not immediately obvious why singers replaced such a virtuosic bravura aria, which would offer plenty of freedom for vocal elaboration, with pieces from elsewhere. Pamira’s aria is conventional in structure: the Scena ‘Cielo! Che diverò?’ is followed by the G-major Adagio ‘Dal soggiorno degli estinti’.¹³⁹ The Tempo di Mezzo is interrupted by interjections from Ismene and the chorus, before Pamira sings her Cabaletta with chorus in E major.¹⁴⁰ As this overview of the scene’s structure indicates, the chorus – and particularly its

¹³⁵ Gossett, Review of *The Siege of Corinth*, p. 637.

¹³⁶ Pacini, *Amazilia*, libretto (Naples, 1825). Moreover, ‘Parmi vederlo ahi misero’ enjoyed a long life as a popular insertion aria. As the respective libretti show, it was included by various sopranos in productions of Pacini’s *Gli arabi nelle Gallie* (including in Florence and Verona in 1828, Bergamo in 1831, Cremona in 1832 and Modena in 1835), as well as Bellini’s *Il pirata* (in Mantua in 1836) and Rossini’s *Torvaldo e Dorliska* (in Milan in 1838).

¹³⁷ Rossini, *L’assedio di Corinto*, libretti (Florence, 1828; 1830).

¹³⁸ Rossini, *L’assedio di Corinto*, libretto (Turin, 1840).

¹³⁹ These details are based on Rossini, *L’assedio di Corinto*, vocal score (New York and Milan: Ricordi, 1980), here pp. 134–37. A vocal score is sufficient for this discussion, since I am predominantly concerned with the aria’s dramaturgical and melodic relationship with the opera as a whole.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 138–40; 140–47.

involvement in the *Tempo di Mezzo* – is a driving force behind the action. The chorus entries also provide contrast to the soprano’s coloratura, for example after the first repeat of the Cabaletta. The coloratura passages seem integrated into the aria’s melodic construction as a whole, rather than being disconnected, so that despite the high level of virtuosity, the piece is not purely a bravura aria. As is common in Rossini arias, the pitch range is relatively wide, although the top note, b^2 , is mostly approached by an ascending scale, which contributes to the aforementioned flowing melodic style.¹⁴¹ The piece calls for a wide range of vowel sounds in its coloratura passages, requiring even timbre and good technique from the singer. Recalling Chorley’s comments about Grisi’s two-octave range, free from registral breaks, it seems likely that ‘*Dal soggiorno degli estinti*’ would have suited her well, at least from the point of view of range, so that a bravura performance might have been possible without substituting a different piece.

But what initially seems like an irrational decision to perform a substitute aria can and should in fact be understood as a rationally justifiable choice. The inclusion of vocal embellishments, even if they were composed especially for a particular singer, never represents an absolute, unchangeable decision.¹⁴² It is also important to bear in mind that the performance of such difficult figurations and ornaments depends on multiple factors: as well as the singer’s general vocal constitution, their shorter-term physical and mental condition also plays a role. This implies firstly that the ornamentation was adapted to each specific performance, and secondly that not all singers attained impressive virtuosity in performance by the same means. Grisi’s substitution can therefore be interpreted as a necessary response to the conditions of performance, and the point of departure in the hope of a positive reception from audiences. The fact that Pamira’s aria comes at an exposed point of the opera – at the very beginning of the second act – further intensified the conditions for the singer, drawing the audience’s focus onto the aria and its promise of virtuosic display.

On closer examination, however, several differences become apparent between the insertion aria composed by Costa and Pamira’s original aria – most obviously, at the structural level.¹⁴³ Although Costa’s piece is also in the standard *Scena-Adagio-Cabaletta* form (the Cabaletta with chorus), it lacks a *Tempo di Mezzo* section, which would often provide a dramatic pivot. The role of the chorus is limited to interjections that calm Pamira and provide

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137, b. 8; p. 141, bb. 11–12. The aria’s lowest note is c^1 , making the range almost two octaves (at least in the version under consideration here).

¹⁴² See Damien Colas, ‘Melody and Ornamentation’, in Emanuele Senici (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 123.

¹⁴³ Michael Costa, ‘*Scena ed Aria con Coro per Signora Grisi*’ (1834) [BL Add MS 32383 ff. 1–29]. It is impossible to prove whether Grisi sang the aria as it is notated, but this is of little import. Examining Costa’s substitute aria allows us to infer details about Grisi’s fundamental vocal characteristics.

a musical contrast to her vocal flourishes ('Calma Pamira'), but that do not drive the dramatic action. Costa clearly based his composition roughly on the original, but then decided on an approach that made Grisi the centre of attention and let concerns for the plot fall into the background. Not for nothing does the aria consist mainly of impressive coloratura effects, as I will illustrate.

As early as the end of the Scena, Grisi cadences with a sweeping run of semiquavers that reaches its peak, c^3 , and then descends chromatically. The incorporation of virtuosic phrases into recitative passages was a widespread practice at the time, often used by Rossini himself, as Gossett has noted.¹⁴⁴

The $B\flat$ -minor, 6/8 Adagio that follows is characterised by its frequently recurring appoggiaturas, imitating a typically Rossinian style. The wide pitch range of the vocal line is particularly noticeable – there are many descending runs over almost two octaves (for example from d^3 to g^1 on the word 'face'). The presence of figurations like this supports Chorley's description of Grisi's voice as consistent in timbre over a range from c^1 to c^3 . There is an evident preference in the piece for 'a' vowels in coloratura passages, and the aria's text lays the ground for this: lines often end on words with 'a' vowels that make them well-suited to ornamentation.

This can be seen especially well through the example of the words 'a respirar', which ultimately have a probably unintentional comic effect. On the last syllable of the word, a g^2 that is emphasised through the dotted rhythm rises to a^2 and then c^2 , also on a dotted note that is repeated twice. Then, still on the same syllable, comes an extravagant run of semiquavers, which draws even more attention because of the pause marked for the orchestra. Before the first breath marked in the score, a diatonic ascent from f^1 to a^2 is followed by extended ornamentation of this note using the notes immediately adjacent.

After the breath, the vocal line once again makes an indirect ascent, via patterns of auxiliary notes, to the Adagio's highest note, e^3 . This note is repeated after a breath mark, and then the voice descends chromatically. The coloratura passage finally ends on d^2 , via both g^1 and b^2 . This suggests that Grisi's preferred register and her point of greatest flexibility probably lay in the range between d^2 and c^3 . She must also have had outstandingly good intonation, because executing these kinds of extended coloratura passage, and without the harmonic support of the orchestra, would otherwise be almost impossible. After a brief caesura on an orchestral unison and further repetitions of the words 'a respirar' comes a final

¹⁴⁴ Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, p. 303.

ascending and descending scale, this time forming a cadenza, once again reaching a peak of e³.

In the C-major Cabaletta that follows, 'Per te accende', decoration is used to create points of melodic emphasis in an entirely different way from the logic of the Adagio. The Cabaletta often employs ornamentation at the beginnings of phrases, and vocal flexibility is also required for the high notes that conclude each of the ascending runs. The whole Cabaletta has an extremely simple chordal accompaniment from the orchestra, which serves to provide harmonic grounding for the soprano's coloratura.

The soprano's runs become more and more frequent, eventually appearing in almost every bar, until the aforementioned choral interjections ('Calma la pena amara'), which have a contrasting effect because of their simple chordal structure. Entirely in line with Rossinian convention, the whole Cabaletta is then repeated, culminating in a coda that once again plays with the contrasts between chorus and prima donna. The alternation between the entries draws attention to the soprano's ornamentation; after a pattern of sequentially ascending four-note figures, she approaches and reaches a high C (c³) on ten separate occasions, before returning to material demanding more flexibility. The coloratura passages are made all the more prominent by the chorus's pauses and the fading of the orchestral accompaniment. The Cabaletta ends after the repeat in the almost obligatory unison of chorus and orchestra, and the soloist joins in too by once again reaching a high C.

Comparing the two arias makes clear that Costa probably intentionally imitated the musical style and mood of Rossini's original aria, focusing mainly on the vocal part, while the aria's dramatic function and the orchestra both receded into the background. This is especially true in the most virtuosic passages, all of which are sung unaccompanied, and in the Cabaletta with its very basic orchestral accompaniment. In this context, though, Costa's simplistic handling of the orchestra can be considered a strength: the intention is to enhance the focus on Pamira's vocal line. Moreover, Costa's treatment of the chorus is particularly interesting: by contrast with Rossini, in Costa's piece the chorus, too, is subordinated to the soloist's virtuosity, its role confined to commentating. A comparison of the two arias' texts makes clear that Costa's overarching goal was to write a bravura aria; his piece makes frequent use of 'a' vowel sounds, contributing to the ease of execution for the singer. Also, the text of Rossini's aria is shorter but more poetic, whereas the Italian of Costa's aria is relatively simple (see Table 6). This strengthens the impression that ease of singing was also an important consideration in the writing of the text, whereas content and poetic structure seem to have been secondary. It is also striking that the text of Rossini's aria is far shorter than

Costa's substitution. As is common in Rossini, his aria uses extensive repetition, while Costa's piece sets the text from beginning to end with barely any repetition.

Text of Rossini's aria

Adagio

PAM.:

Dal soggiorno degli estinti
le mie preci, o madre intendi:
di Pamira tu difendi
l'innocenza e la virtù;

Tempo di mezzo

IS./CORO:

Oh ciel che fia..chi mai s'avanza?
Ah! Chi forza ne darà?
Si armi il petto di costanza,
qual si visse si morrà

Cabaletta

PAM.:

Ma se alfin placato il nembo
rieda il ciel qual pria sereno,
tanto affanni possa almeno
la mia patria, o Dio, scordar.

IS./CORO:

Bella pace scenda almeno
tanti affanni a compensar.

Text of Costa's aria

Adagio

PAM.:

Dall'asilo della pace
sulla figlia tua infelice
volgiam guardo o Genitrice
di conforto e di pietà
spegnito d'amor
la face che di
vora l'alma mia
e un istante più sereno
tormi il core a respirar

Cabaletta

PAM.:

Per te m'accende l'anima
te vero amar mio bene
la tua fedele immagine
conforte è allo mie pene
a te pensando giubila
per te sospira il cor
i miei lamenti all'aure
all'eco invan ripeto
di dolce speme vittima
restò delusa l'anima
abbandonata e misera
in preda al suo dolor

CORO:

Calma la pena amara
Calma Pamira povra chella bella
Calma al tuo dolor.

Tabelle 6: Comparison of the scene structure of Pamira's aria in Rossini's original and Costa's substitution

It seems that vocal concerns, and the question of Grisi's relative prominence in the drama, played the most important role in this substitute aria. But contemporary reviews did not share this interpretation, as is shown by the following comments in praise of the integration of the substitute into the dramatic context:

During the progress of the scene of this opera, Grisi introduced a song, written expressly for her by Signor Costa, which, unlike most interpolations, was exceedingly well adapted to the situation, and met with an enthusiastic reception. Of this opera – now never heard – it may be most appropriately and truly said, that its

success did not arise from the mere brilliancy of a *scèna*, or the tunefulness of a melody, but from those concerted pieces and dramatic adaptations of sound to sense, which afford the greatest delight.¹⁴⁵

Given this praise precisely for the integration of the substituted aria, it seems likely that opera-goers had rather limited knowledge of the opera's plot as a whole. That a frequent listener such as Cox noticed and mentioned the aria suggests at least a degree of knowledge and interest in the work, although it is important to bear in mind that this source is a retrospective account and could therefore contain inaccuracies of memory. Nevertheless, precisely the perspective of hindsight can offer valuable insights in this context: we can see that *L'assedio di Corinto* made a strong positive impression on Cox, but one that he (later) attributed not to the singers' vocal performances but to the opera's dramaturgy. This can be considered an indication of the 'musical amateurism' of London audiences: Cox does not want to show himself up as a musical amateur, but does so indirectly through his description of Costa's aria.

Other opera-goers, by contrast, seem not to have noticed Grisi's substitution; instead, their attention was captured by the fact that the royal family attended one of the performances of *L'assedio di Corinto* and 'seemed highly pleased with both the music and the style of execution'.¹⁴⁶ Thus the royal family's visit and alleged positive response to Rossini's opera was seen to represent the work's actual quality. This review dealt with the singers' performances – even Grisi's – only briefly through superficial adjectives, and the descriptions clearly indicate the writer's lack of musical knowledge.¹⁴⁷ The same goes for the discussion of Rossini's music, which is described as having convinced through its 'freshness' and 'vigour throughout' – but the writer does not give a detailed musical analysis.¹⁴⁸ The review in the *Athenaeum*, by contrast, concentrated on the vocal performances, finding that 'as regards the singers, Grisi is best, and always good, when in action, and executes a song composed by Costa, (the introduction to which is particularly good,) with perfect finish of execution'.¹⁴⁹

As these reviews of the performance show, perceptions of a work often differ considerably, both among themselves and from the probable reality of the performance. Particularly in a consideration of London's operatic life and its culture of musical amateurism, it is therefore important to differentiate precisely the intentions behind a given source and the context in

¹⁴⁵ Cox, *Musical Recollections of the Last Half-Century*, vol. 1, pp. 297–98.

¹⁴⁶ *Court Magazine and Monthly Critic and Lady's Magazine* 5 (1834), p. 44.

¹⁴⁷ 'Grisi, in this piece, is unrivalled; Rubini and Tamburini sing their best – and that best is of surpassing excellence. Our favourite, Ivanoff, is somewhat lost in the part assigned to him; it is not suited to his voice, and he is scarcely heard throughout the performance.' Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Chorley also does not mention a substitute aria for Grisi, but gives a detailed and largely positive description of Rossini's music. See his *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 1, pp. 72–74.

¹⁴⁹ *Athenaeum* (1834), p. 458.

which it was written. For the ‘fashionable’ London audience, the reactions of the royal family may have played a far higher role than the opera itself; in some cases, even the singers’ performances may not have been a main focus of attention. Nevertheless, Costa’s substitution of Pamira’s aria evidences an audience-oriented approach, positioning the prima donna at the centre of the action.

Grisi went on to use Costa’s aria frequently in concerts, and to ‘Dall’asilo alla pace’ came to acquire the status of a ‘stock piece’ for her.¹⁵⁰ The aria’s impressive virtuosity prompted other singers to use the piece to delight audiences far beyond London (examples included Ginevra Guerrabella in Manchester and Angelica Lacy in Vienna).¹⁵¹ The aria was even published in France, probably to allow ambitious singers a sense of the difficulty of its bravura style.¹⁵²

This reception history of Costa’s piece speaks for its musical quality as an internationally successful aria. As well as serving as a bravura piece for Grisi, allowing her to display the full extent of her talents to audiences, the aria fulfilled London audiences’ desire for vocal extravagance. The fact that it was written especially for Grisi certainly did not harm the piece’s fortunes, because other singers who performed it could enjoy a kind of transfer effect whereby Grisi’s prominence and association with the piece enhanced their own status.

6.2.3 Gaetano Donizetti’s *Maria di Rohan* in two London productions

Donizetti’s operas dominated the programmes of opera houses in continental Europe and in London for almost the whole of the nineteenth century. The main focus of this section is his *Maria di Rohan*, which premiered in 1843 at Vienna’s Kärntnertortheater. Selected key scenes will offer insights into the practices of aria insertion that were associated with the opera. *Maria di Rohan* is particularly suitable for this kind of investigation because of its prominent position in London’s Italian opera programmes from the late 1840s until the early 1860s. The frequency of London productions of the work was at its highest in the early 1850s.¹⁵³ In 1852, both the city’s Italian opera houses produced it at the same time, before Her Majesty’s Theatre was forced to close at the end of the season because of financial difficulties.¹⁵⁴ The following year, making most of its monopoly on the London opera market,

¹⁵⁰ *Supplement to the Musical Library* (March–December 1834), p. 75.

¹⁵¹ *Dwight’s Journal of Music* 19–20 (1862), p. 416 (despite the American publication, the Manchester in question was the northern English city); *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 36 (1838), column 597.

¹⁵² *Bibliographie de la France*, vol. 24 (Paris, 1835), p. 272.

¹⁵³ See Chorley, *Thirty Years’ Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, pp. 1, 167, 180, 193, 273.

¹⁵⁴ The following passage from *Dwight’s Journal of Music* provides a sense of the intensity: ‘Both the Italian Opera Houses selected “Maria di Rohan” for their opening night. At Lumley’s Fiorentini, Ida Bertrand and

the Royal Italian Opera put on *Maria di Rohan* again. The libretti used in the following discussion date from these years: Her Majesty's Theatre in 1852, and the Royal Italian Opera in 1852–53.¹⁵⁵ The proximity in time of the two productions and the intense competition between the two opera houses make the comparison between these productions especially revealing in terms of the emphases created by the aria insertions: it was possible for audiences to make direct comparisons between the two productions, and the opera managers probably created this unusually direct rivalry deliberately.

In comparing the two libretti, the visual similarity of the printed text in both versions is striking. It seems that both publications were based on the same source, which makes it considerably easier to identify the inserted arias.

There are significant differences between the two versions from the early scenes (scenes II and VI) onwards.¹⁵⁶ The entrance of Riccardo, the Count of Chalais, in the second scene is normally heralded by the two-part 'Quando il cor da lei piagato' – the Adagio proceeds straight to the Cabaletta ('A te divina immagine') without a Tempo di Mezzo.

Because of this structural peculiarity, the entrance aria offers the singer playing Riccardo everything he could want from his first scene – he is absolutely the centre of attention. This makes it all the more surprising that in the Royal Italian Opera version this Cabaletta was left out. The individual sections of the original aria differ widely in their degree of difficulty. The B \flat -major Adagio consists predominantly of long lyrical phrases, never requiring wide leaps.¹⁵⁷ The ornamentation included by Donizetti is mostly scalic figurations in both directions, and dotted-rhythm legato notes, which intensify the character of the Adagio. This movement is in a far lower register than the Cabaletta that follows, mostly using the range between b \flat ¹ and g², and has only one note that could be classed as high: the a \flat ² in b. 13, which is accentuated by a fermata.¹⁵⁸ The vocal part therefore requires a tenor able to sing long phrases but not necessarily with a particularly wide range. Even the highest note would

Ferlotti, appear in this singular opera. At Covent Garden, Castellan, Mdllle. Seguin, Tamberlik and Ronconi, take the principal rôles. This selection forebodes a severe competition for the season of 1852, and proves Lumley boldly defiant as he challenges Ronconi in his greatest rôle, and makes play for the prize from the very start.' *Dwight's Journal of Music* 1–2 (1853), p. 23.

¹⁵⁵ The Her Majesty's Theatre libretto is [BL, Gen. Ref. Northcott 74]. Both Royal Italian Opera libretti are identical, apart from a minor printing error in the second scene in the libretto of 1853: 'Ella udirmi in ver regò' has been printed instead of 'in ver negò'. In the copy referred to in this discussion, the error has been corrected by hand. There was also some continuity between the two seasons in the casting of the roles relevant to this discussion (Riccardo and Enrico): Enrico was sung by Ronconi in both years; Riccardo was sung by Tamberlik in 1852 and by Neri Baraldi in 1853 [BL, Gen. Ref. Northcott 75].

¹⁵⁶ These scene numbers relate to those given in the London libretti.

¹⁵⁷ Donizetti, *Maria di Rohan*, vocal score (Milan: Ricordi, 1870), pp. 16–17.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

not present any real difficulty to a singer with some training, especially because it is approached stepwise ($f^2-g^2-ab^2$).

The Cabaletta in D \flat -major ('A te, divina immagine') is considerably more demanding: it lies in a higher register than the preceding Adagio throughout, and reaches bb² at its highest point.¹⁵⁹ By contrast with the Adagio, the high notes are not prepared by gradual approach, but reached by octave leaps (bb¹ to bb²), and these occur many times.¹⁶⁰ Donizetti also calls for a high degree of flexibility from the singer through rapid septuplets and scalic runs. For a singer with inadequate technique or a narrow range, this Cabaletta could easily become problematic.

In the 1852 Royal Italian Opera production, Riccardo was played by the tenor Enrico Tamberlik, who was an international sensation at the time, above all because of his chest-voice high C. The *Musical World* described his vocal qualities as follows:

Signor Tamberlik's voice is a *tenore robusto*, or pure chest voice, of a fine, ringing, sonorous quality, capable of the most varied expression. The upper notes are powerful and clear, the middle round and sweet, possessing a remarkable evenness throughout. The voice is very extensive, reaching as high as the C in alt, which the singer gave out with tremendous power [...] Signor Tamberlik makes no use of his *falsestto*, at least uses it very rarely. He thus presents a strong contrast to Rubini and Mario, some of whose best effects were and are produced by this means.¹⁶¹

It is interesting that Tamberlik of all tenors, who seems to have had the ideal voice for such a virtuosic Cabaletta, omitted this and only sang the relatively simple Adagio.¹⁶² We can assume, however, that Tamberlik was only able to use his chest voice for isolated high notes and that he could not transition entirely smoothly between registers, which the Cabaletta would have demanded. Moreover, Donizetti had written the part of Riccardo for the Italian tenor Carlo Guasco – a singer who was renowned above all for his unique timbre. In his youth, Guasco's vocal flexibility had made him a popular choice for Rossini roles; he later became one of the most important tenors for the operas of Donizetti and Verdi.¹⁶³ His voice was described as extremely even, and he is said not to have made much use of attention-grabbing vocal effects.¹⁶⁴ By contrast, if other contemporary sources are to be believed, Tamberlik's timbre was apparently not especially beautiful – positive reviews, such as the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 18–20.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 18, bb. 9, 17; p. 19, bb. 7, 15.

¹⁶¹ *Musical World* 25 (1851), p. 214.

¹⁶² This practice seems to have been widespread internationally: the Cabaletta also does not appear in the libretto of an 1857 production in Naples (see Donizetti, *Maria di Rohan*, libretto (Naples, 1857), p. 4.

¹⁶³ See Giorgio Appolonia, *Carlo Guasco: Un tenore per Verdi* (Turin: EDA, 2001), pp. 36–41.

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 124.

Musical World one just quoted, are the exception rather than the rule.¹⁶⁵ Henry Chorley also noted that Tamberlik's technique was by no means reliable or refined:

One may tell those of the future, that the voice, howsoever effective, and in its upper notes capable of great power, can hardly be called a charming one – though warm with the South – neither regulated by an unimpeachable method. I conceive that its owner may have begun to sing ere it was thoroughly settled – may have never thoroughly followed up those exercises of vocalization on which alone there is a real dependance to be placed; relying rather on a natural fervour and readiness, than on studies such as made Rubini and M. Duprez respectively so complete.¹⁶⁶

From this we can conclude that Tamberlik may not have wanted to take the risk of failure in a Cabaletta that might not have been compatible with using his radical vocal technique to please the audience. From Tamberlik, opera-goers expected thrilling high notes in chest voice.¹⁶⁷ This was probably the reason for his decision to omit the Cabaletta. The Adagio also offered an opportunity to display chest-voice high notes up to ab^2 – on the whole, then, it was a safer option and not without its own impressive effects.

As for the 1852 production at Her Majesty's Theatre, Riccardo was played by Enrico Calzolari, who would remain part of the theatre's ensemble for many years and whose voice was entirely different from Tamberlik's. Calzolari was an Italian coloratura tenor; nuanced vocalisation was his strength, and he probably sang high notes in falsetto:

The public judged him to be a serious artiste and valued him highly, making him a favourite equal to Tamberlik. Of course he did not ignite them to the extent of Tamberlik, in his ecstatic moments he did not have the fire of the latter and he was less good at lyrical than dramatic parts as he could not touch the heart of his listener so strongly. However, if Tamberlik had more inspiration, Calzolari had incomparably more ability and understanding. His school was the genuine *vero canto italiano* school [...] Calzolari never sang for effect, never allowing himself to sacrifice the beauty of the whole success in certain parts. His training was remarkable [...] his repertoire was vast. His voice, which was not particularly strong, was remarkable for his delightful timbre, soft velvety and pouring out from the soul; it was a voice of sweet words, tender outpourings and sadness.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ 'Tamberlik was a mere creaking wreck, whose boasted *ut de poitrine* was an eldritch screech which might just as well have been aimed an octave higher, for all the claim it had to be received as a vocal note in the artistic sense' (George Bernard Shaw, 'Rossini Centenary', *Illustrated London News* (1892), quoted in Sebastian Stauss, 'Wagner und Belcanto', in Udo Borchmeyer, Dieter Borchmeyer and Hermann Danuser (eds.), *Wagner und Italien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), p. 84). It is rare to find as positive a report of Tamberlik's voice as the *Musical World* comments. Even Rossini himself disliked this way of singing (see Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 141).

¹⁶⁶ See Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 126.

¹⁶⁷ See *New Monthly Assemblée* 32 (1850), p. 311.

¹⁶⁸ M. Ivanov, *The First Decade of the Italian Theatre of St. Petersburg in the 19th Century*, quoted in Cheer, *The Great Lablache*, p. 451.

Surprisingly, unlike Tamberlik, Calzolari included the Cabaletta ‘A te divina immagine’, although ‘his’ version, as printed in the Her Majesty’s Theatre libretto, has some slight differences from the vocal score, which is based on the work’s 1843 premiere (see Table 7):

Libretto, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1852	Vocal score, 1870
A te divina immagine	A te, divina immagine,
Io sacro affetti e core	sacro gl’affetti il core
Propizio veggo amore	un raggio dell’ amore
Brillare sul mio destin.	Ah brilla sul mio destin.
Nè temerò del turbine	Né temerò del turbine
L’ira fatal vorace	L’ira fatal, vorace
Se un’angelo di pace	se un angelo di pace
Vicino a te sarà.	Sarammi ognor vicin.

Table 7: Comparison of the text of ‘A te divina immagine’ in the Her Majesty’s Theatre libretto and the 1870 vocal score

One might initially assume that the changes to the text reflect adaptations made by Calzolari in order to make the Cabaletta easier to sing. But this seems relatively unlikely: in the vocal score, the last syllable of ‘amore’ in the third line of text and the first syllable of the fourth line (‘Ah’) both fall on high B \flat s (b \flat ²; vocal score p. 18, b. 9). In the Her Majesty’s Theatre version, Calzolari would have had to change his embouchure on the high B \flat after the last syllable of ‘amore’ in order to produce the ‘bri’ of ‘brillare’. Executing this shift in such a high register would have been very difficult. The same is true of the differences in the second line of the text, where the elision between ‘affetti’ and ‘il’ allows the singer to sing through the line with the same embouchure. According to the Her Majesty’s Theatre libretto, there would be a change of embouchure here (from ‘affetti’ to ‘e’), and this would present difficulty in light of the decoration of ‘core’ that follows (b. 7). Even the third line, which at first glance seems to have undergone a considerable change from the vocal score libretto (‘propizio veggo amore’ instead of ‘un raggio dell’amore’), does not significantly help matters in terms of vocal technique: the tricky high note (b \flat ², b. 8) falls on ‘zio’ or ‘gio’ in both cases, which would make little difference to the singer’s way of executing the phrase.

It therefore seems more likely that the changes to the Her Majesty’s Theatre libretto reflect an attempt to render the text easier for audiences to understand. The changes include unusual formulations – for example, ‘sacro’ becomes ‘io sacro’. By comparison with the more difficult poetic Italian of opera texts, readers with little knowledge of the language may have been helped towards at least a feeling of understanding by the key words added here, such as

'io', 'il core' and 'brillare', or the common phrase 'vicino a te sarà'. It was of no great significance if the singer actually sang a slightly different text.

A further substantial change to both libretti occurs in Act I scene 6, during Enrico's entrance. In place of the original extensive Scena with chorus, and Enrico's conventional aria ('Gemma ti tetro carcere...Se ancor m'è dato stringerti), both London libretti make huge cuts to the Scena and replace the expansive three-part Aria with a Scena and Aria. In both versions, the cuts to the Scena affect the chorus above all: the Scena stops at Riccardo's 'Ebben domani', answered *tutti* with a 'Domani!' that is not in the original libretto and vocal score (see vocal score p. 40, bb. 3–4). Enrico's recitative follows; in both the Royal Italian Opera and Her Majesty's versions, the recitative and the aria that follows are substitutions.

In the Royal Italian Opera version, Giorgio Ronconi in the role of Enrico interpolated Corrado Waldorf's aria 'Ah non avea più lagrime' from Donizetti's 1838 opera *Maria di Rudenz*. The role of Waldorf had been composed for Ronconi; interestingly, the same was true of Enrico in *Maria di Rohan*, so it probably would not have seemed necessary to substitute an aria in order to improve the match between the singer and the role.¹⁶⁹ However, Ronconi enjoyed using the *Maria di Rudenz* aria in a range of contexts:

Maria di Rudenz, per non dire d'altro, nel primo atto contiene la bellissima romanza di Corrado: 'Ah! non avea più lagrime' che il Ronconi cantava divinamente, e che divenne poi celebre di modo che i più rinomati baritoni dell'epoca l'avevano nel loro speciale repertorio, sia introducendola in altre opere, sia ripendola in ogni accademia o concerto.¹⁷⁰

Closer examination of the piece suggests some plausible reasons for Ronconi's use of it in London. Strikingly, not only the aria but also its preceding recitative 'Egli ancora non giunge' were included. This is highly unusual: in most cases, the original recitatives were adapted for the sake of dramatic coherence, or new recitative texts were written. But here Ronconi used the recitative almost unchanged. Only the name 'Matilde' was changed to 'Maria' (for obvious reasons), and the word 'iddio' was replaced with the synonym 'nume'.¹⁷¹ In terms of content, the mood of longing in this scene, in which Enrico swears his love to Maria, is not significantly at odds with the substituted piece. The vocal challenges of the two pieces are

¹⁶⁹ Enrico became a long-standing signature role for Ronconi, so that audiences strongly identified him with the role. See William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and his Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 179, and Roger Parker (ed.), *Illustrierte Geschichte der Oper*, trans. Ute Becker, Dieter Fuchs and Dorothee Göbel (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998), p. 489 [originally published as Parker (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)].

¹⁷⁰ Eugenio Checci (ed.), *Lettere Inedite di Gaetano Donizetti* (Rome: Unione Cooperative Editrice, 1892), p. 143.

¹⁷¹ See Donizetti, *Maria di Rudenz*, libretto (Siena, 1860), p. 5, or *Maria di Rudenz*, libretto, Teatro Carignano (Turin, 1841), p. 8.

also similar. Both are in a relatively high register for a *basso cantante*, and also demand vocal flexibility through frequent rapid runs of notes, as well as a smooth legato with good intonation. Neither piece includes difficult leaps or scalic passages over a wide range. Ronconi's vocal limits are the emphasis of the following remarks by Chorley:

There are few instances of a voice so limited in compass, (hardly exceeding an octave), so inferior in quality, so weak, so habitually out of tune as his. – Nor has its owner ever displayed any compensating executive power. Volubility there has been none, nor variety in ornament – one close, of the simplest possible form, doing duty perpetually, – in this, marking the entire contrast between him and his predecessor, Signor Tamburini.¹⁷²

Henry Sutherland Edwards also noticed Ronconi's intonation difficulties in the role of Enrico, remarking that *Maria di Rohan* 'contains a very strong part for the baritone, in which, at our Royal Italian Opera, Ronconi has often shown the highest histrionic genius, together with a certain inability to sing in tune'.¹⁷³

Thus Ronconi's insertion of 'Ah! non avea più lagrime' does not seem to have been motivated by vocal or musical concerns. Dramaturgical reasons are more likely. The extended construction of Donizetti's original Scena, which involves the chorus and the characters Armando, Riccardo, Fiesque and Enrico, is a point of dramatic emphasis, which is then followed by Enrico's Cabaletta. By contrast, interpolating the *Maria di Rudenz* aria gave Ronconi a solo scene, where he was the centre of attention, with no interjections from the chorus. Ronconi's approach seems understandable above all in light of the rivalry between Her Majesty's Theatre and the Royal Italian Opera: he found himself in direct competition with another Enrico, and if his competitor retained the original scene then he, Ronconi, would be better able to make his mark as a solo artist.

The baritone Raffaele Ferlotti, who played Enrico at Her Majesty's, probably had similar concerns in mind.¹⁷⁴ He made the same cuts to the scene as Ronconi and inserted another aria, Alessandro Nini's 'Nel vederla, in me si accese' from the opera *Virginia*, premiered in 1842 in Genoa. Ferlotti probably used this piece frequently as an interpolation in operas by

¹⁷² Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 15.

¹⁷³ Edwards, *Rossini and his School*, 2nd ed. (London, 1888) p. 100.

¹⁷⁴ Ferlotti was a very popular baritone in his time. He was especially well received in the 1840 revival of Verdi's *Oberto* at La Scala, for which the composer adapted the title role to Ferlotti's voice. Less than flatteringly, though, Verdi commented that 'the bass part can now be performed by any baritone, because it was adjusted for Ferlotti last fall' (Letter to Lorenzo Molossi, 21 January 1841, quoted in David Lawton and David Rosen, 'Verdi's Non-Definitive Revisions: The Early Operas', in *Atti del III° Congresso Internazionale di Studi Verdiani* (Milan, 1974), p. 194.

Donizetti – one occasion was in 1849 in a production of *Poliuto* at the Teatro Regio in Turin.¹⁷⁵

Opinions of Ferlotti's vocal skills diverge. The manager of Her Majesty's Theatre, Benjamin Lumley, attested to his excellence in every respect (although Lumley's professional interest may of course have influenced this statement):

[...] Signor Ferlotti, a barytone of great note and considerable power, made his first appearance in the important part of *De Chevreuse*. [...] As a singer of a fine quality of voice, a well-exercised 'method' of the modern Italian school, considerable feeling, and no small powers as an actor, Ferlotti made a most favourable impression.¹⁷⁶

The following Italian description of Ferlotti is less positive, finding both visual defects and a lack of stamina:

Il Ferlotti è un basso buono per cantare un adagio, sempre che non voglia come fa troppo di sovente ingrossare la sua voce costringendola prima di emetterla a rotearsi lungamente per tutta la cavità della bocca; ma egli non ha sufficiente forza per sostenersi in un tempo mosso, e molto menu per eseguire tutta una parte di qualche fatice.¹⁷⁷

As was often the case in such situations, Ferlotti did not use the recitative from *Virginia*, because his substitute piece was less similar in content to the original aria than in Rubini's case. Instead, he used a newly-written recitative, with only a passing similarity to the original from *Virginia* in its final line:

Her Majesty's Theatre libretto

Libero alfin respirar mi è dato,
In seno di coler, che tanto adoro,
Ella dell' amor suo, mi fè beato,
Ricchezze, onori, vita darai,
Per quell' angoil d'amor.
Dei pensier miei.

***Virginia*¹⁷⁸**

E questo amor, che mi governa! Ignota
Fiamma mi scorre per le vene e m'arde.
Più che il desio di regno ...
M'avria mutato il core
Quelle ignobile donna? Ah potess'io
Questo malnato amore
Strugger dall'alma ! indarno io lo tentai ...
Tutti costringe in lei
Una magica forza i pensier miei.

The librettist seems to have approached the substitution of the aria as follows: the first task was to assess pragmatically whether the original recitative would be thematically appropriate, or whether a dramatic adaptation with minor changes could be achieved. If not, as in Ferlotti's case, a completely new recitative was written. However, the similarity in the last line indicates

¹⁷⁵ See Donizetti, *Poliuto*, libretto, Teatro Regio (Turin, 1849), p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ Lumley, *Reminiscences*, p. 334.

¹⁷⁷ Glissons, *n'appuyons pas: Giornale di Scienze, Lettere, Arti, Varietà, Mode e Teatri* 7 (1840), p. 263.

¹⁷⁸ Alessandro Nini, *Virginia*, libretto (Milan, n.d.), p. 8.

that the librettist, Manfredo Maggioni, used the original recitative as a starting point and was concerned to maintain at least some connection to it.

Musically, the two-part *Scena and Cantabile* ‘Nel vederla, in me s’accese’ is considerably simpler than either of Ronconi’s arias.¹⁷⁹ It makes extensive use of repeated notes and uses only a small pitch range, although there is some decoration in the form of runs of semiquavers at the beginning of the *Cantabile*. But such *coloratura* passages are not a prominent element of the aria as a whole – where they do appear, they are usually doubled by the orchestra. Thus the aria does not make high demands of the singer’s virtuosity. Rather, its effect comes mainly from the frequent portamenti over the intervals of a descending sixth or a seventh, which serve to demonstrate the evenness of the voice across the register. Nevertheless, probably because of the limited range, this effect remains rather modest. The aria sits in a much lower tessitura (c to f¹) than either of Ronconi’s pieces, and its range is even more limited (Ronconi’s pieces are not particularly wide-ranging), mainly hovering around c¹ and only once sustaining an e¹. When the orchestra is not simply providing simple support for the voice, it offers contrast to the slow-moving vocal melody through rapid accompaniment figures. Nevertheless, ‘Nel vederla, in me s’accese’ is a piece of no particular difficulty, offering the singer an opportunity to display his expressive capacities. One gets the impression that this insertion was in a sense a safe option, allowing the singer to put in a solid performance without demanding any virtuosic fireworks. Ferlotti seems in fact not to have had the vocal and virtuosic attributes necessary for the latter. It is also important to bear in mind that, had he performed the original aria, Ferlotti would have stood in direct comparison with Ronconi, for whom the piece had been written. Avoiding Enrico’s original entrance aria also meant avoiding the direct comparison, leaving Ferlotti with better chances of success.

From this it becomes clear that Ferlotti used his inserted aria in the Her Majesty’s Theatre production in several ways. By substituting an alternative to the original larger-scale four-part scene, the dramatic emphasis shifted onto Ferlotti’s entrance and his aria (the same was true for Ronconi). At the same time, Ferlotti avoided the considerably more difficult original cabaletta in favour of the interpolated ‘Nel vederla, in me s’accese’, in which he was not taking any risks vocally – the piece was therefore likely to be relatively well-received by audiences. Comparisons between the performances of Ronconi and Ferlotti in the role would therefore have been indirect, at least in relation to these scenes. This may have been Ferlotti’s intention, as well as Lumley’s – the pair would likely not have benefitted from offering audiences a more direct comparison. Moreover, Ronconi had become almost legendary

¹⁷⁹ See Nini, *Virginia*, vocal score (Milan, n.d.), pp. 40–46 [HU; MUS HD Mus 750.7.620].

among London audiences, and once singers had earned this status, they tended to maintain it, even if their voices began to deteriorate.¹⁸⁰

From this comparison of two *Maria di Rohan* libretti, we can see that the insertion of arias from outside a given opera was not only practiced by *prime donne* or in order to display vocal excess. Male singers engaged in the practice too; it is also clear that various different motivations affected the type of interpolation that was chosen, and that the socio-cultural context exerted considerable influence – in this case, the conditions were shaped by the rivalry between London's two Italian opera houses. Chance was probably not of great importance in the choice of interpolated scenes.

The prospect of an enthusiastic reception from audiences was probably the most influential factor that motivated a singer to interpolate or substitute an aria. As can be seen from the kinds of examples discussed here, this success in London had less to do with the operas as works than with the singers themselves. Why else would an already celebrated singer like Ronconi substitute an aria to increase his own prominence in the production? Why would a Tamberlik cut a scene's bravura piece, fearing that he would not meet the audience's expectations? Finally, Ferlotti's example shows that an inserted aria could also represent a risk-avoidance strategy, and did not necessarily allow direct comparison with other singers. All these efforts were directed towards the London opera-going public, whose idiosyncrasies had considerable influence on the practices of aria insertion.

¹⁸⁰ See Hanslick, 'Musikalisches aus London: V. Die Oper', p. 126.

7 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study has been to examine the various characteristics of London's operatic life in the nineteenth century through the lens of the singers who performed there. As we have seen, the singers were the basis of the opera system in the city, and influenced the specific form that the system took in many ways. These areas of influence not only covered the financial dimension of the singers' fees, but more importantly extended to programming choices: there was no need for singers to make great innovations or to experiment with 'new' works; the programming choices they actually made had pragmatic advantages for rehearsal schedules, and also appealed to conservative London tastes. Most of the works performed had already enjoyed sensational success on the continent in connection with particular singers. Only rarely did audiences express a direct wish for a particular work; far more frequently, opera-goers expected managers to engage continental European stars, who were thus also responsible for the sold-out performances. It is especially important to bear in mind this close interrelationship between singers, audiences and the London opera managers.

The transcription and evaluation of London singers' contracts is particularly important in closing a gap in musicological research; this discussion highlighted above all the intensive relations between London and the continent, particularly Paris. Nineteenth-century London singers' contracts can be characterised as highly informal, especially in the first half of the century; following the increasingly frequent legal proceedings relating to opera around midcentury, the status of contracts began to change, and Frederick Gye's contracts of the 1860s tended towards greater professionalisation.

In this context it is important to note that, with regard to the still sparse state of research into London's operatic life, the diaries of Frederick Gye are a significant source, and one that should be made accessible for research. An edition of this extensive collection of diaries would be desirable, since they promise essential insights, even if they have long been difficult to access. Such limitations mean that a considerable chapter of nineteenth-century music history remains unexamined, despite widespread awareness of this gap. Comprehensive historical research seems not to be a priority for the Royal Opera House. Matthew Ringel and Gabriella Dideriksen argued for the importance of Gye's diaries and the need to make greater use of them as early as the 1990s. Despite the digitalisation technology that is now available, this wish seems no closer to realisation at the time of writing.

Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that this study contributes to our understanding of nineteenth-century London's Italian opera houses as a prominent marketplace in the international operatic system and a hub of a global opera market. The preconditions for this

status were the commercial and privately-financed nature of opera in London; more than any other institutions, the London system was dependent on arrivals from outside, in particular on imports of nightingales and other songbirds.

8 Appendices

8.1 Transcriptions of Singers' Contracts

I.	Contract between Giuditta Pasta and John Ebers (10 April 1826)	236
II.	Contract between Antonio Tamburini and Pierre François Laporte (4 April 1833).....	237
III.	Contract between Giulia Grisi and Pierre François Laporte (4 April 1833).....	240
IV.	Revision to a contract between Pauline Viardot and C. Gruneisen (14 Sept. 1847)	243
V.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Charles Gruneisen (15 Sept. 1847).....	243
VI.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Edward Delafield (11 Dec. 1848).....	245
VII.	Revision to a contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Beale (10 July 1849) .	246
VIII.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Beale (30 July 1849).....	247
IX.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (15 November 1849).....	248
X.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (28 February 1851)	248
XI.	Revision to a contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (27 Feb. 1852) ...	249
XII.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (15 March 1854)	250
XIII.	Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (19 March 1855)	251
XIV.	Versions of a contract between Mario and Frederick Gye (1861).....	253

Giuditta Pasta's contract is reproduced from John Ebers's *Memoirs*, and Mario's contract appears here in the form transcribed by Matthew Ringel and included in his dissertation. All other transcriptions here were made from the original contracts. Handwritten passages are italicised; handwritten annotations and additions are italicised and in square brackets. Where I have expanded words that were abbreviated, these appear in square brackets, not italicised.

Contract between Giuditta Pasta and John Ebers (10 April 1826)

Entre les soussignés Mr. JOHN EBERS, Entrepreneur et Administrateur du Théâtre du Roi à Londres, et Madame PASTA, Artiste, il est convenu ce qui suit, savoir:

ART. 1° Que Madame Pasta s'engage en qualité de *Prima Donna assoluta* et de *Musico assoluto*, pour chanter et jouer l'opéra seria au Théâtre du Roi à Londres pendant trois mois et demi, depuis le 15 Avril au 31 Juillet, 1826.

2°. Mr. Ebers payera ou fera payer à Madame Pasta, deux mille trois livres sterling (2300) de la manière suivante, 500 l. à Paris le 12 Avril, 500 l. à Londres le 22 Avril, et mille et trois cents livres sterling à Londres avant son début. Mr. Ebers n'aura pas le droit de faire débiter Madame Pasta, qu'après lui avoir payé les susdites 2300 l., et Madame Pasta, arrivée un fois à Londres et prête à remplir ses obligations, ne pourra dans aucun cas pour évènements indépendens de sa volonté, être tenue à la restitution des 1000 l. qu'elle aura touché à Paris et à Londres. Si le 1000 l. ne lui était pas payées le dit 22 Avril, elle aura toujours droit à les réclamer pour dédommagement des pertes que lui aurait cause le congé reçu à Paris, et elle pourra ensuite, à cause des payemens non accomplis à Paris et à Londres résilier son engagement.

3° Dans tous les opéras où jouera Madame Pasta elle aura toujours le choix des rôles de son double emploi.

4° Madame Pasta ne pourra être obligée à chanter et à jouer plus que six fois dans un mois (30 jours). Elle ne sera pas obligée non plus à chanter ni dans les concerts qu'on pourrait donner au King's Théâtre, ni dans les opéras de bénéfice, excepté un bénéfice que lui demandera Mr. Ebers.

5° Madame Pasta ne sera obligée de chanter pendant la durée de son engagement que dans les opéras suivants: *Tancredi*, *Romeo*, *Otello*, *Semiramide*, *Rosa bianca e rossa*, *Nina*, et *Medea*; Mr. J. Ebers s'engage à monter tous les dits opéras si Madame Pasta le juge nécessaire.

6° Dans tous les opéras où jouera Madame Pasta, ce sera elle seule qui aura le choix des acteurs, la distribution des rôles, la direction absolue pour tout ce qui regarde les répétitions et tout autre pour la mise en scène des dits opéras. Personne n'aura le droit d'intervenir aux répétitions, ni de s'immiscer en rien pour la représentation de ces opéras; bien entendu que Madame Pasta respectera le rang des acteurs.

7°. En outre des opéras sus-mentionnés, Madame Pasta consent à jouer dans un opéra nouveau qui sera composé exprès pour le dit Théâtre du Roi, à condition pourtant qu'elle doit être entièrement contente de son rôle, autrement elle ne sera pas obligée d'y chanter.

8°. Il sera accordé à Madame Pasta un bénéfice, *tous les frais de toute espèce* à la charge de l'entreprise.

9°. Madame Pasta aura le droit de choisir un jeudi du mois de Juin pour le susdit bénéfice: Elle aura pour cette occasion la première représentation d'un nouvel opéra qu'elle choisira, et qui pourra être un autre que ceux indiqués dans l'article 8°. Madame Pasta indiquera à Mr. Ebers, au plus tard, le 10 Mai, quel opéra elle aura choisi pour l'occasion, afin qu'il ait le tems de faire les préparations nécessaires. Il est bien entendu et convenu que toutes les Loges, toute la Galerie, tout le Pit, enfin tout le Théâtre sera à la disposition de Madame Pasta le jour de son bénéfice; il n'y aura d'excepté que deux Loges des troisièmes, la Loge de l'entrepreneur et 8 billets de Pit. Si par la faute de l'entreprise le bénéfice n'aurait pas lieu avec l'opéras désigné par Madame Pasta, et dans le tems fixé par elle, il est entendu que Mr. J. Ebers se trouvera obligé par le fait même d'assurer le bénéfice de Madame Pasta en mille livres sterling (1000 l.) Alors le surplus de la recette, s'il y en a, sera partagé également entre Madame Pasta et Mr. Ebers. Dans le cas où Madame Pasta aura son bénéfice à l'époque qu'elle aura fixé, alors tout argent reçu aux portes sera, le même soir, remis à l'agent nommé par Madame Pasta.

10°. Madame Pasta pourra profiter, si elle le veut, d'un congé de huit jours, et elle s'oblige de remplacer ensuite les représentations qu'elle aurait dû faire dans les huit jours.

11°. Pourvu qu'elle ne manque point à son service ordinaire et régulier pour le King's Théâtre, Madame Pasta pourra chanter à sa volonté dans tous les concerts privés et publics, et partout ailleurs.

12°. Il sera mis à la disposition de Madame Pasta une Loge des troisièmes, pendant la durée de son engagement; en outre elle aura toutes les fois qu'elle jouera douze billets de Pit et douze de Galerie.

13°. Sur le choix de Madame Pasta, Mr. J. Ebers lui fera fournir tous les costumes nécessaires pour ses différens rôles.

14°. Mr. Ebers voulant prouver à Madame Pasta la loyauté de ses intentions, consent à ce que dans le cas qu'une des conditions quelconques du présent engagement ne soit pas remplie fidèlement par la faute de l'administration du Théâtre du Roi, Madame Pasta pourra suspendre ses représentations et ne les reprendre que lorsque la condition contestée aura été remplie. Mr. Ebers n'aura pas le droit dans ce cas d'exiger de Madame Pasta de remplacer les représentations qu'elle n'aurait pas faites pendant la contestation.

15°. Dans le cas de la clôture du Théâtre du Roi par suite ou cause d'évènemens majeurs, il est convenu que pour la durée de la dite clôture, Madame Pasta ne sera tenue qu'à la restitution de la moitié de la somme qu'elle aurait dû garder *pro rata* après cet événement: ce seul cas excépte, Madame Pasta ne sera jamais obligée à restitution.

16°. Madame Pasta s'engage à se trouver à Londres, du 18 au 21 Avril, 1826.
Fait à Paris, ce 10 Avril, 1826.

Témoin, EDWARD THOMAS ALLAN
Secrétaire de l'Opéra

GIUDITTA PASTA

I. Contract between Antonio Tamburini and Pierre François Laporte (4 April 1833)

Théâtre Royal Italien

Engagement

M. ~~ÉDOUARD ROBERT~~ Laporte, Directeur-Entrepreneur du Théâtre Royal Italien de Londres, demeurant ~~à Paris, à Londres, Pall-Mall 18.~~

Et M Tamburini d'autre part, sommes convenus de ce qui suit:

ARTICLE PREMIER

Moi, *Tamburini* m'engage à jouer, chanter et réciter l'opéra séria, semi-séria et buffa, en qualité de *primo basso cantante* tant dans les susdits opéras que dans les concerts, oratorios et cantates, sur ledit théâtre ou sur tout autre de la capitale, ~~et jusqu'à six lieues de distance de Paris mais pas plus de quatre fois par semaine;~~ comme aussi à paraître toutes les fois que j'en serai requis, et à me trouver exactement [sic!] aux heures indiquées pour les assemblées et répétitions ou représentations.

ART. II.

~~Je m'engage en outre, en madite qualité, à me transporter, d'après les ordres de l'Entrepreneur ou son représentant, partout où l'exigera le service de la Cour, et à ne prétendre, pour frais de déplacement, que les voitures qui me seront fournies à cet effet, et une indemnité de dix francs par chaque jour.~~

ART. III.

Je renonce, pendant la durée de mon engagement, à toute retraite du théâtre, à peine de dommages et intérêts auxquels l'Entrepreneur aura droit de me contraindre; je renonce

également à faire usage de mes talents sur aucun théâtre, ni dans aucun concert public ~~ou de~~ ~~société~~, soit gratuit, soit sujet à des billets payans, abonnements ou souscriptions, sous peine, en cas d'infraction, de subir une amende d'un mois d'appointemens.

ART. IV.

Je m'oblige à ne refuser et à ne quitter aucun des rôles de l'emploi pour lequel je suis engagé, bien que ces rôles aient été joués antérieurement ou pendant mon engagement et par des artistes du même emploi que moi; je me sou mets, en outre, à jouer, chanter et réciter les susdits rôles tels que l'entrepreneur les aura fait arranger dans l'intérêt de son service, pour le bien de l'exécution et les convenances de la scène.

ART. V.

En cas de maladie, je ne pourrai me refuser à ce qu'ils soient remplis par un autre artiste désigné par l'Entrepreneur; je ne pourrai également me refuser de reprendre les rôles aussitôt le rétablissement de ma santé; je ne pourrai non plus me refuser à céder les rôles de mon répertoire pour les débuts des artistes nouvellement engagés. Je m'oblige, en cas de maladie d'un artiste du même emploi que le mien, à le remplacer, pourvu que j'aie le temps nécessaire pour apprendre les rôles qui me seront donnés.

ART. VI.

Je consens à m'en rapporter, pour toutes difficultés, contestations ou discussions quelconques, à la décision d'arbitres nommés par les parties contractantes, sans avoir recours à l'intervention des tribunaux.

ART. VII.

A l'expiration de mon engagement, je promets, sous peine d'en payer la valeur, de remettre tous les rôles, parties et costumes qui m'auront été confiés.

ART. VIII.

La durée dudit engagement est de *deux saisons consécutives, savoir: Le cinq avril aux premiers jours d'août mil huit cent trente quatre; et le cinq avril aux premiers jours d'août mil huit cent trente cinq.*

ART. IX

M. ~~ROBERT~~ *Laporte* s'engage à payer à *M Tamburini* en raison de conditions stipulées aux articles précédens, une somme de *Trois cents livres sterling* De mois en mois, [*pour la première saison et une somme de quatre cents livres sterling, par mois, pour la deuxième saison. renvoy approuvé*] sans aucune réserve ni retenue quelconque, sauf le cas des amendes que l'artiste aurait encourues, conformément aux articles suivans.

Le paiement ne commencera toutefois que du jour où l'artiste se mettra à la disposition de l'Entrepreneur, et, en cas de maladie qui se prolongerait au-delà d'un mois, les appointemens seront suspendus jusqu'à la reprise régulière du service.

ART. X.

Dans le cas de clôture du Théâtre, pour cause d'événement majeur, le paiement de la somme accordée par l'article précédent sera suspendu jusqu'à la reprise du service.

ART. XI.

L'Entrepreneur promet en outre de faire fournir à *M Tamburini* tous les costumes nécessaires à ses rôles, excepté cependant le menu vestiaire, qui se compose de l'habit de ville complet, y compris la coiffure et la chaussure qui sont à sa charge. Les costumes fournis par l'Entrepreneur seront propres, convenables, en bon état, et tels que comporte l'importance des rôles, et il n'en sera établi de neufs que suivant l'exigence des ouvrages, et les besoins reconnus du service. Les souliers et gants de caractère seront seuls fournis par l'Entrepreneur.

ART. XII.

Si l'artiste, après avoir refusé de jouer pour cause de maladie ou d'indisposition, est aperçu dans un spectacle ou autre lieu d'amusement, ou chante dans un concert particulier, il sera mis à l'amende du tiers de son traitement d'un mois.

ART. XIII.

L'artiste est tenu de se rendre au Théâtre aux heures fixées pour les répétitions; à défaut de quoi, il subira une amende d'un jour d'appointemens.

ART. XIV.

L'artiste qui, par mauvaise volonté ou faute de s'être rendu au Théâtre, hors les cas d'empêchement par force majeure, contraindrait de changer le jour même une représentation annoncée, sera mis à l'amende d'un mois de ses appointemens. Dans le cas où il serait cause de la fermeture du Théâtre, il encourra la peine de rembourser la recette, fixée dès à-présent à 4,000 francs.

ART. XV.

Il est défendu aux artistes de s'absenter de Paris, même pour un jour, sans avoir obtenu le consentement de l'Entrepreneur par écrit, sous peine d'une amende de quinze jours d'appointemens pour chaque infraction.

ART. XVI.

L'artiste engagé est tenu d'être à la disposition de l'Entrepreneur les jours de représentation jusqu'à huit heures du soir, quand même il ne jouerait pas dans la pièce annoncée, afin d'être prêt dans le cas d'un changement de spectacle; à cet effet il sera tenu, dans le cas où il s'absenterait de chez lui, de laisser l'adresse de l'endroit où L'on pourrait le trouver à toute heure de la journée, sous peine des amendes indiquées à l'art. 14.

ART. XVII.

Du jour où le présent engagement aura été passé entre les parties respectives, son exécution ne pourra être retardée ni empêchée, et l'artiste qui l'aura souscrit et ne remplirait pas, sera contraint, sur la présentation du présent, qui est et demeure valable devant les tribunaux et autorités comme lettre de change acceptée, à en payer le montant en quelque lieu qu'il puisse être, et ce, avec obligation de sa propre personne, et sous la gantie de ses biens présents et à venir.

ART. XVIII.

A dater du jour de l'arrivée de l'artiste à Paris, il ne pourra, en aucun cas, être dérogé aux conditions annoncées ci-dessus, sous peine d'un dédit qui sera des deux tiers du montant du présent engagement, et payable dans les vingt-quatre heures de la renonciation, à moins toutefois que la résiliation ne soit consentie respectivement et par écrit entre les parties contractantes.

ART. XIX.

M *Tamburini* quoique étranger, déclare connaître parfaitement la valeur des expressions contenues dans le présent engagement et renonce à toutes les difficultés qu'il pourrait élever à ce sujet.

Fait double et de bonne foi, entre nous soussignés,

A _____ le _____

Art. 20

M Tamburini s'oblige à partir de Paris immédiatement après la clôture du Théâtre Italien afin de pouvoir chanter à Londres le cinq avril.

Art. 21

M Tamburini jouira d'une représentation à bénéfice dans chacune des deux saisons, dont le jour et la composition du spectacle seront déterminés par M Laporte. La recette de sa représentation de la première saison lui est apurée à deux cent soixante livres sterling, et en cas ou le produit de cette soirée s'eleverait au delà de la somme de Deux cent soixante livres sterling, l'excédent en sera partagé entre les deux parties contractantes.

Quant à sa représentation à bénéfice de la deuxième saison, elle lui est apurée à quatre cents livres sterling, et dans le cas ou son produit s'eleverait au delà, l'excédent ~~en appartiendra au bénéficiaire même~~ en sera partagé entre les parties comme il est lit cidessus.

Art. 22

En cas sur des difficultés ou contestations s'éleveraient entre le Directeur et l'artiste, celui ci ne pourra surprendre son service, sans peine de damages intérêts.

Art 23

M Tamburini ne pourra choisir pour ses débuts que dix pièces au courant de répertoire.

Art. 24

M Laporte s'engage à faire au commencement de la deuxième saison, un dépôt d'un mois d'appointemens, lequel devra être fait chez un Banquier de Paris, avant le départ de M Tamburini pour Londres.

Fait double à Paris le quatre avril mil huit cent trente trois.

Antonio Tamburini

II. Contract between Giulia Grisi and Pierre François Laporte (4 April 1833)

Théâtre Royal Italien

Engagement

M. ~~ÉDOUARD ROBERT~~ *Pierre Laporte*, Directeur-Entrepreneur du Théâtre Royal Italien de Londres, demeurant à ~~Paris~~, à Londres, Pall-Mall N° 18.

Et Mlle *Julie Grisi*, artiste lyrique d'autre part, sommes convenus de ce qui suit:

ARTICLE PREMIER

Moi, *Julie Grisi* m'engage à jouer, chanter et réciter l'opéra séria, semi-séria et buffa, en qualité de *prima donna soprano* tant dans les susdits opéras que dans les concerts, oratorios et cantates, sur ledit théâtre ou sur tout autre de la capitale, ~~et jusqu'à six lieues de distance de Paris~~; comme aussi à paraître toutes les fois que j'en serai requis, et à me trouver exactement [sic!] aux heures indiquées pour les assemblées et répétitions ou représentations.

ART. II.

~~Je m'engage en outre, en madite qualité, à me transporter, d'après les ordres de l'Entrepreneur ou son représentant, partout où l'exigera le service de la Cour, et à ne prétendre, pour frais de déplacement, que les voitures qui me seront fournies à cet effet, et une indemnité de dix francs par chaque jour.~~

ART. III.

Je renonce, pendant la durée de mon engagement, à toute retraite du théâtre, à peine de dommages et intérêts auxquels l'Entrepreneur aura droit de me contraindre; je renonce également à faire usage de mes talents sur aucun théâtre, ni dans aucun concert public ~~ou de société~~, soit gratuit, soit sujet à des billets payans, abonnements ou souscriptions, sous peine, en cas d'infraction, de subir une amende d'un mois d'appointemens.

ART. IV.

Je m'oblige à ne refuser et à ne quitter aucun des rôles de l'emploi pour lequel je suis engagé, bien que ces rôles aient été joués antérieurement ou pendant mon engagement et par des artistes du même emploi que moi; je me sou mets, en outre, à jouer, chanter et réciter les susdits rôles tels que l'Entrepreneur les aura fait arranger dans l'intérêt de son service, pour le bien de l'exécution et les convenances de la scène.

ART. V.

En cas de maladie, je ne pourrai me refuser à ce qu'ils soient remplis par un autre artiste désigné par l'Entrepreneur; je ne pourrai également me refuser de reprendre les rôles aussitôt le rétablissement de ma santé; je ne pourrai non plus me refuser à céder les rôles de mon répertoire pour les débuts des artistes nouvellement engagés. Je m'oblige, en cas de maladie

d'un artiste du même emploi que le mien, à le remplacer, pourvu que j'aie le temps nécessaire pour apprendre les rôles qui me seront donnés.

ART. VI.

Je consens à m'en rapporter, pour toutes difficultés, contestations ou discussions quelconques, à la décision d'arbitres nommés par les parties contractantes, sans avoir recours à l'intervention des tribunaux.

ART. VII.

A l'expiration de mon engagement, je promets, sous peine d'en payer la valeur, de remettre tous les rôles, parties et costumes qui m'auront été confiés.

ART. VIII.

La durée dudit engagement est de *deux saisons consécutives, savoir: Le cinq avril aux premiers jours d'août mil huit cent trente quatre; et le cinq avril aux premiers jours d'août mil huit cent trente cinq.*

ART. IX.

~~M. ROBERT~~ *M Laporte* s'engage à payer à *Mlle Julie Grisi* en raison de conditions stipulées aux articles précédents, une somme de *six mille deux cent cinquante francs* de mois en mois, [*pour la première saison et une somme de Dix mille francs, par mois, pour la deuxième saison. renvoy approuvé*] sans aucune réserve ni retenue quelconque, sauf le cas des amendes que l'artiste aurait encourues, conformément aux articles suivans.

Le paiement ne commencera toutefois que du jour où l'artiste se mettra à la disposition de l'Entrepreneur, et, en cas de maladie qui se prolongerait au-delà d'un mois, les appointemens seront suspendus jusqu'à la reprise régulière du service.

ART. X.

Dans le cas de clôture du Théâtre, pour cause d'événement majeur, le paiement de la somme accordée par l'article précédent sera suspendu jusqu'à la reprise du service.

ART. XI.

L'Entrepreneur promet en outre de faire fournir à *Mlle Julie Grisi* tous les costumes nécessaires à ses rôles, excepté cependant le menu vestiaire, qui se compose de l'habit de ville complet, y compris la coiffure et la chaussure qui sont à sa charge. Les costumes fournis par l'Entrepreneur seront propres, convenables, en bon état, et tels que comporte l'importance des rôles, et il n'en sera établi de neufs que suivant l'exigence des ouvrages, et les besoins reconnus du service. Les souliers et gants de caractère seront seuls fournis par l'Entrepreneur.

ART. XII.

Si l'artiste, après avoir refusé de jouer pour cause de maladie ou d'indisposition, est aperçu dans un spectacle ou autre lieu d'amusement, ou chante dans un concert particulier, il sera mis à l'amende du tiers de son traitement d'un mois.

ART. XIII.

L'artiste es tenu de se rendre au Théâtre aux heures fixées pour les répétitions; à défaut de quoi, il subira une amende d'un jour d'appointemens.

ART. XIV.

L'artiste qui, par mauvaise volonté ou faute de s'être rendu au Théâtre, hors les cas d'empêchement par force majeure, contraindrait de changer le jour même une représentation annoncée, sera mis à l'amende d'un mois de ses appointemens. Dans le cas où il serait cause de la fermeture du Théâtre, il encourra la peine de rembourser la recette, fixée dès à-présent à 4,000 francs.

ART. XV.

Il est défendu aux artistes d s'absenter de Paris, même pour un jour, sans avoir obtenu le consentement de l'Entrepreneur par écrit, sous peine d'une amende de quinze jours d'appointemens pour chaque infraction.

ART. XVI.

L'artiste engagé est tenu d'être à la disposition de l'Entrepreneur les jours de représentation [sic!] jusqu'à huit heures du soir, quand même il ne jouerait pas dans la pièce annoncée, afin d'être prêt dans le cas d'un changement de spectacle; à cet effet il sera tenu, dans le cas où il s'absenterait de chez lui, de laisser l'adresse de l'endroit où l'on pourrait le trouver à toute heure de la journée, sous peine des amendes indiquées à l'art. 14.

ART. XVII.

Du jour où le présent engagement aura été passé entre les parties respectives, son exécution ne pourra être retardée ni empêchée, et l'artiste qui l'aura souscrit et ne remplirait pas, sera contraint, sur la présentation du présent, qui est et demeure valable devant les tribunaux et autorités comme lettre de change acceptée, à en payer le montant en quelque lieu qu'il puisse être, et ce, avec obligation de sa propre personne, et sous la gants de ses biens présents et à venir.

ART. XVIII.

A dater du jour de l'arrivée de l'artiste à Paris, il ne pourra, en aucun cas, être dérogé aux conditions annoncées ci-dessus, sous peine d'un dédit qui sera des deux tiers du montant du présent engagement, et payable dans les vingt-quatre heures de la renonciation, à moins toutefois que la résiliation ne soit consentie respectivement et par écrit entre les parties contractantes.

ART. XIX.

Mlle *Julie Grisi* quoique étrangère, déclare connaître parfaitement la valeur des expressions contenues dans le présent engagement et renonce à toutes les difficultés qu'elle pourrait élever à ce sujet.

Fait double et de bonne foi, entre nous soussignés,

A _____ le _____

Art. XX

Mlle Grisi s'oblige à partir de Paris immédiatement après la clôture du Théâtre Italien, afin de pouvoir chanter à Londres le cinq avril.

Art. XXI

Mlle Grisi jouira d'une représentation à bénéfice dans chacune des deux saisons sus énoncées, dont le jour et la composition du spectacle seront déterminés par M Laporte. La recette de sa représentation de la première saison lui est apurée à Dix mille francs, et en cas on le produit de cette soirée s'élèverait au delà de la somme de Dix mille francs garantie, l'excédent en ~~appartient~~ sera partagé entre M Laporte et Mlle Grisi.

Quant à sa représentation à bénéfice de la deuxième saison, elle lui est assurée à quinze mille francs et dans le cas ou son produit s'élèverait au delà, l'excédent est appartient à ~~Mlle Grisi~~ elle et M Laporte. Les cadeaux personnels appartiennent à Mlle Grisi.

Art. XXII

En cas sur de difficultés ou contestations s'élèveraient entre le Directeur et l'artiste, celle ci ne pourra suspendre son service, sans peine de damages intérêts.

Art. XXIII

Mlle Grisi ne pourra choisir pour ses débuts quinze pièces au courant du répertoire.

Art. XXIV

M Laporte s'engage à faire au commencement de chaque saison, un dépôt d'un mois d'appointemens qui devra avoir lieu chez un Banquier de Paris, avant le départ de Mlle Grisi, et il est également convenu qu'il ne sera pas tenu de remplir les conditions spécifiés à l'égard de la deuxième saison, si avant la clôture de la première saison, il signifie à Mlle Grisi son intention de ne pas continue la seconde.

Fait double à Paris le quatre avril mil huit cent trente trois

Giulia Grisi

III. Revision to contract between Pauline Viardot and Charles Gruneisen (14 September 1847)

Théâtre Royal de Covent Garden

Les Soussignés

M. Charles Lewis Gruneisen, homme de lettres, demeurant à Londres, et agissant en nom et par M. Beale, Directeur du Royal Italian Opera de Covent Garden, dont il a les pouvoirs et dont il promet la ratification, d'un part,

Et Made Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste lyrique, duement assistée de son mari d'autre part sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Le contrat signé par M. Beale le 27 Mars dernier à Londres, et par Made Viardot le 6 Avril suivant, à Berlin, contenant engagement par cette dernière pour le Théâtre Anglais, de Covent Garden du 16 Octobre, au 18 Decre [Decembre] prochain est et demeure résiliée d'un common accord.

Ce contrat est nul et non avvenu des deux parts. La présente résiliation est faite à deux conditions.

1° M. Beale paiera à Madame Viardot a titre de dedommagement la somme de ~~mille livres sterling~~ en deux portions de ~~cinq-cent livres~~, le dix-hui octobre et le dix-huit novembre prochain. Le paiement de cette somme sera fait à Paris entre les mains du fondé de pouvoirs que designera Made Viardot, si elle-même n'est pas là pour la recevoir.

2° Made Viardot s'engage, sans peine d'un dédit de la même somme de mille livres sterling à ne point chanter à Londres avant le premier mai, dell'an prochain 1848.

Fait double à Courtavenel canton di Rozoy, Dept [Departement] de Seine et Maine, le quatorze Septre [Septembre] mil huit cent quarante sept.

Pauline Viardot

Approuvé Louis Viardot

On the part of M. Beale

C. L. Gruneisen

IV. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Charles Gruneisen (15 September 1847)

Théâtre-Royal-Italien de Covent Garden à Londres

Les Soussignés

M. Charles Lewis Gruneisen, homme de lettres, demeurant à Londres, et agissant au nom et pour M. Beale, Directeur du Royal Italian Opera de Covent Garden dont il a les pouvoirs et dont il promet la ratification, d'une part

Et Made Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste lyrique, duement assistée de son mari, d'autre part sont convenus de ce que suit:

Art 1^{er} Made Viardot, libre de tout engagement ainsi qu'elle le déclare, s'engage par ces présentes, à remplir au dit Théâtre l'emploi la de première cantatrice, prima donna assoluta, à partir du premier mai jusqu'au vingt quatre août de l'année prochaine mil huit cent quarante huit c'est à dire à chanter en Italien, l'opera seria, semi-seria et buffa, et dans les concerts donnés sur le théâtre.

Art 2. Made. Pauline Viardot promet et s'engage de se trouver à Londres, quelques jours avant le premier mai; de prêter son nom pour une représentation à benefice, sans

qu'elle puisse prétendre à aucune indemnité au-delà de ses appointements; de jouer réciter et chanter pas moins ni pas plus de trois fois par semaine; et de faire le service de son emploi conformément aux usages des théâtres lyriques, dont elle déclare avoir pleine et entière connaissance.

Art 3 En cas de maladie justifiée qui préserverait la Direction des services de Mad Viardot pendant plus de huit jours, ses appointements seraient suspendus pour le temps de son inactivité, à partir des huit jours, et jusqu'à la reprise régulière de son service.

Art 4 Sans nuire aucunement aux intérêts de la Directeur et au service du Théâtre, Made. Viardot, pourra pendant la durée du présent engagement, chanter dans les concerts particuliers, dans les concerts de la cour et dans eux de Musique Ancienne ou autres instituts de même nature. Tous concerts publics, soit à billets payants, soit par abonnement ou suscription lui sont interdits. Elle s'interdit également de se faire entendre à Londres et dans les villes à l'Angleterre avant son appartien sur le Théâtre de Covent Garden.

Art. 5 Le répertoire dès à présent convenu en M. Beale et Made. Viardot confinent les opéras suivants: Les Huguenots – La Sonnambula – I Capuletti e Montecchi (avec le 3me Acte de Vaccai; Iphegenia en Tauride – Fidelio – il Flauto Magico (un rôle de Soprano à choisir) La Juive d'Halevy; L'Elisir d'amore ou Don Pasquale. Made Viardot choisira dans ce répertoire son rôle de debut; la Direction lui indiquera en suite les opéras qui devront être mis à l'étude et en scène. Tous les rôles non designés dans la liste si dessus devront être proposés par la Direction et acceptés par Made Viardot, laquelle consentira de bonne grace à les chanter si elle n'y trouve des motifs raisonnables pour s'y refuser.

Art 6 M. Beale fournira à Made Viardot tous les costumes de Théâtre avec coiffure et chaussures pour les divers rôles dont elle sera chargée. Elle se pourvoiera elle-même que des costumes appelés de ville.

Art 7 Les appointements de Made Viardot pour le tems de son engagement du 1 Mai au 24 Août 1848, demeurant [fixés à la] somme de deux mille cinq cents livres sterling, payables, savoir cinq cent livres sterling à son arrivée à Londres, pour les répétitions que précéderont son début, et les deux mille livres sterling restant par quart de cinq cents livres, de mois en mois, fin mai, fin juin, fin juillet, et vingt quatre août.

Art 8 Toutes les contestations qui puissant s'élever sur l'exécution au l'interprétation du present contrat, seront jugés par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui décideront sans appel.

Fait double et de bonne foi à Courtavenel, canton de Rozoy, departement de Seine et Maine, le quinze Septe [Septembre] mil huit cent quarante sept.

Pauline Viardot

Approuvé Louis Viardot

On the part of M. Beale

C. L. Gruneisen

Edward Delafield

Arthur Webster

Articles Supplémentaires

No 1 Tous le cas de force majeure sont réservés en faveur de la Direction.

No 2 M Beale pourra, s'il le juge convenable pour Made Viardot du droit de chanter dans les concertes particuliers, et toutes espèces de concerts autres que ceux de la cour et de musique ancienne, auxquels la Reine et le Prince Mai donnant leur nom, en ajoutant cinq cents livres sterlings à ses appointements, payables en cinq partie, ce qui porterait à six cent livres chacun des paiements stipulés au Dessus.

Pauline Viardot

V. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Edward Delafield (11 December 1848)

Théâtre Royal de Covent Garden à Londres

Les Soussignés

M. Edouard Thomas Delafield, Directeur du Théâtre-Royal-Italien de Covent Garden, à Londres, de présent à Paris, hôtel Maurice d'un part,

Et Mad. Pauline Viardot, neé Garcia, artiste dramatique, demt [demeurant] à Paris rue de Donai N° 16, duement assisté de son mari, d'autre part,

Sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Art 1: Made. Viardot, libre de tout engagement, ainsi qu'elle le déclare, s'engage par ces présentes à remplir l'emploi de premier cantatrice (prima donna assoluta) à partir du dix juillet et jusqu'au dix septembre de la prochaine année mil huit cent quarante neuf, d'abord au théâtre royal-italien de Covent-Garden, jusqu'à sa cloture dans le cours de mois d'août, puis dans les villes d'Angleterre et d'Ecosse (mais non d'Irlande), où M. Delafield la conduira en tournée.

Art. 2: Au théâtre de Covent-Garden, Made Viardot chantera, en Italien, l'opera seria, semi-seria, et buffa, et dans les concerts donnés sur le théâtre, pas moins et pas plus de trois fois par semaine. Pendant la tournée dans les villes d'Angleterre et d'Ecosse, Made Viardot ne sera tenue également de chanter que trois fois par semaine, si M. Delafield donne des représentations théâtrales, et s'il donne des concerts, elle ne sera jamais tenue de chanter que dans un concert par jour. Toutefois si elle était engagée pour le festival di Birmingham, elle se conformerait aux usages de les fêtes musicales pour le nombre des concerts elle choix des nouveaux.

Art 3: Made Viardot s'engage à prêter son nom pour une représentation à bénéfice sans qu'elle puisse prétendre à aucune indemnité au delà de ses appointements et de faire d'ailleurs le service de son emploi conformément aux usages des théâtres lyriques dont elle déclare avoir pleine et entière connaissance.

Art. 4: En cas de maladie justifiée qui préserverait la Direction des services de Made Viardot pendant plus de huit jours, ses appointements seraient suspendus pour le temps de son inactivité, à partir des huit jours, et jusqu'à la reprise régulière de son service.

Art. 5 Sans nuire aucunement aux interêts dela Direction et au service du théâtre, Mad Viardot pourra, pendant la durée du présent engagement, chanter dans les concerts particuliers, dans les concerts de la cours et dans ceux de musique ancienne ou autres instituts de même nature. Tous concerts publics, fait à billets payants, fait pour abonnement ou souscription, lui sont interdits.

Art. 6: Made Viardot ira créer à Londres le rôle de Fidès du Prophète de M Meyerbeer, qui lui est réservé. Il est de même expressément convenu que si pendant le séjour de Mad Viardot à Londres, la Direction de Covent-Garden donne l'opera des Huguenots, Mad Viardot reprendra le rôle de Valentine qu'elle y a créé la 'année dernière.

Le reste du répertoire dès à présent convenu entre M Delafield et Mad Viardot comprend les opéras suivants: La Sonnambula, I Capuletti e Montecchi (avec le 3ieme acte de Vaccai), Ifigenia in Tauride, Fidelio, l'Ebreá de M. Halevy, il Barbiere di Siviglia, l'Elisir d'amore, Don Pasquale, et le rôle de Donna Anna de Don Giovanni; aux quels opéras il faut ajouter, pendant la tournée dans les provinces, ceux d'Otello et de Norma.

Tous les rôles non désignés dans cette liste devront être proposés par la Direction et acceptés par Made Viardot, qui consentira de bonne grâce à les chanter si elle n'y trouve des motifs raisonnables de les refuser.

Art 7: M Delafield fournira à Made Viardot tous les costumes de théâtre avec coiffure et chaussures pour les divers rôles dont elle sera chargée. Elle se pourvoiera elle-même des costumes après ses de ville.

Art 8: Les appointements de Made Viardot pour le temps de son engagement de deux mois, du dix juillet au dix septembre prochain, demeurant fixés à la somme de mille huit cents livres sterlings, payables, savoir: quatre cent cinquante livres à son arrivée à Londres, quatre cent cinquante livres le trente un juillet suivant, quatre cent cinquante livres le jour de la clôture du théâtre de Londres dans le cours du mois d'août, et enfin quatre cent cinquante livres le neuf septembre, veille de l'expiration du contrat.

En outre, il est convenu que, pendant la tournée dans les provinces, la Direction pourvoiera à tous les frais de voyage, de nourriture et de logement pour Mad Viardot, la personne qui l'accompagnera et un domestique.

Art 9: Si, par suite d'arrangements avec la Direction de l'opéra de Paris, Mad Viardot pourrait se rendre à Londres et commencer son service avant le dix juillet, la Direction de Théâtre de Covent-Garden lui paierait pour ce temps antérieur au dix juillet des appointements égales à ceux de son engagement de deux mois, et calculés au pro rata de cet engagement.

Art 10: Dans les cas de force majeure sont réservés en faveur de la Direction.

Art 11: Toutes les contestations que pourraient s'élever pour l'exécution ou l'interprétation du présent contrat seraient juges par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui décideront sans appel.

Fait double et de bonne foi à Paris le onze décembre mil huit cent quarante huit.

Approuvé l'écriture
Edward Delafield

VI. Revision to contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Beale (10 July 1849)

Les Soussignés

M Frédéric Beale, éditeur de Musique, demeurant à Londres, 261 Regent Street, agissant comme administration non-responsable du Théâtre Royal-Italien de Covent-Garden, d'un part,

Et Madame Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste lyrique, dûment assistée et autorisée de son mari, demeurant à Londres 27 Clifton Villas, Maida Vale, d'autre part,

Voulant réformer d'une convenue accord le contrat d'engagement signé à Paris, le onze décembre dernier entre M. Delafield, directeur du dit théâtre de Covent-Garden et Made. Pauline Viardot,

sont convenus de ce qui suit:

1° La durée de l'engagement de Mad. Viardot est réduite à l'époque comprise entre ce jour d'hui dix juillet et le vingt cinq août prochain, termine de la saison théâtrale. La partie de cet engagement relative à une tournée dans les provinces est supprimée.

2° Au lieu d'avoir droit aux appointements fixes de mille huit cents Livres Sterlings pour l'engagement de deux mois, Made. Viardot recevra une somme de Soixante Livres Sterlings pour chaque représentation à laquelle elle prendra part sur le théâtre de Covent-Garden.

- 3° *Mad. Viardot fera ses débuts pour le rôle de Fidès dans l'opéra le Prophète de M. Meyerbeer, et ne sera tenue de chanter aucun autre rôle avant celui-la!*
- 4° *M Beale remettra immédiatement à Mad. Viardot, même avant qu'elle commence les représentations du Prophète, la somme de Trois cents Livres Sterlings, qui sera le paiement anticipé des cinq premières représentations faites par Mad. Viardot. Néanmoins cette somme de trois cents Livres Sterlings demeure dès à présent acquise à Made. Viardot, quoiqu'il arrive, et même dans le cas où, non par sa faute l'opéra le Prophète ne serait pas représenté.*
- 5° *En outre, tous que les débuts de Mad. Viardot auront en lieu dans le Prophète, et pourvu que le Théâtre de Covent-Garden reste ouvert jusqu'au trente-un juillet présent mois, M. Beale s'engage personnellement à fournir à Made. Viardot l'occasion de faire cinq autres représentations des opéras de son répertoire, au même prix de soixante Livres par représentation, ou à lui en payer la reprise; Mad. Viardot ne devait pas, si ses débuts vont bien, faire moins de dix représentations avant la clôture du théâtre.*
- 6° *Après cette série de dix représentations, si l'époque de vingt cinq août n'est pas encore atteinte, M. Beale et Mad. Viardot auront réciproquement le droit, l'un de proposer, l'autre d'accepter, un ou plusieurs autres représentations au même prix.*
- 7° *Toutes les clauses et conditions de contrat signés à Paris le onze decembre dernier, non abrogés ou modifiés par le présent, conserveront leur plein et entier effet. Les contestations qui pourraient s'élever sur l'exécution ou l'interprétation du présent contrat seront signés par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui prononceront sans appel.*

Fait double et de bonne foi à Londres, le dix juillet mil huit cent quarante-neuf.

Approuvé l'écriture

F. Beale

VII. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Beale (30 July 1849)

Les Soussignés,

Mad. Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste lyrique, duement assiste de son mari, d'un part, Et M. Frédéric Beale, éditeur de musique, à Londres, Regent Street 261, d'autre part, sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Mad. Viardot s'engage envers M. Beale à chanter dans les différents concerts du matin et du soir, qui composeront le Festival de Liverpool, pendant les cinq jours compris entre le lundi 27 et le vendredi 31 août prochain.

Le programme de ses concerts, pour ce qui regarde Mad. Viardot, sera réglé d'un commun accord entre elle et M. Julius Benedict, Directeur des chœurs et de l'orchestre.

M Beale s'engage à payer la somme de trois cents Livres sterlings à Mad. Viardot, qui prend à sa charge les frais de voyage et de séjour.

Cette somme de trois cents Livres sera remise par M. Beale à Mad. Viardot pendant son séjour à Liverpool, et avant le dernier concert du 31 août, de façon que Mad. Viardot puisse repartir immédiatement.

Les contestations qui pourraient s'élever sur l'exécution ou l'interprétation du présent contrat seront signés par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui prononceront sans appel et sans formalités judiciaires.

Fait double et de bonne fois, à Londres, le trente Juillet mil huit cent quarante neuf.

Approuvé l'écriture

F. Beale

VIII. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (15 November 1849)

Théâtre Royal Italien de Covent Garden, à Londres.

Les Soussignés,

M. Frédéric Gye, Directeur du théâtre Royal-Italien de Covent-Garden, à Londres, de présent à Paris, hotel de Bristol d'un part,

Et Made. Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste dramatique, demt [demeurant] à Paris, rue de Donai No 28, duement assistée de son mari, d'autre part,

sont convenus de ce qui suit.

Art 1^{er}. Mad. Viardot s'engage à remplir l'emploi de première cantatrice (prima donna assoluta) sur le théâtre de Covent Garden, du 15 juin prochain 1850, au 15 août suivant.

Ses appointements, pour cette période de deux mois, sont fixés à la somme de quinze cents livres sterlings.

Art 2. Toutefois M Gye pourra prolonger l'engagement de Mad. Viardot jusqu'au vingt huit août, inclus; mais en ce cas, il devra la prévenir le premier juin précédent, et les appointements de Made. Viardot, pour cette période du 15 juin en 28 août, seront postés à la somme de mille huit cent livres sterlings.

Art 3. Mad. Viardot chantera le rôle de Fidès, du Prophète, celui de Rachel de la Juive, celui di Fidelio [+celui d'Iphigénie en Tauride, si ces ouvrages sont représentés au théâtre de Covent-Garden,] et enfin celui d'Adina dans l'Elisir d'amore, si le dernier opéra n'avait point encore été mis en scène avant son arrivée, ou si la cantatrice qui aurait chanté le rôle avait quitté le théâtre de Covent-Garden.

Les rôles non désignés ci-dessus devront être proposés par la Direction, et acceptés par Mad. Viardot.

Art 4. Mad. Viardot chantera dans les concerts du théâtre, aussi bien que dans les opéras, mais jamais plus de trois fois par semaine.

Elle ne chantera nulle part loin du théâtre, excepté dans les concerts particuliers, sans la permission du directeur.

Art 5. Mad. Viardot se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre, et la direction la fournira tous ses costumes, avec coiffures et chaussures, pour les divers rôles dont elle sera chargé.

Art 6. Mad. Viardot contient à ce que les appointements ci-dessus stipulés lui soient payés à la casse du théâtre, dans la forme et suivant les conditions d'un contrat fait entre M. Gye et diverses autres personnes, lequel content est également signé pour Mad. Viardot, à la date de ce jour.

Fait double à Paris le quinze novembre mil huit cent quarante neuf.

Approuvé l'écriture

Frederick Gye

Pauline Viardot

Approuvé Louis Viardot

IX. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (28 February 1851)

Royal-Italian-Opera de Londres

Les Soussignés

M. Frédéric Gye, Directeur du Royal-Italian-Opera de Covent Garden, à Londres, de présent à Paris, hôtel de Bristol, d'une part,
Et Made. Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste dramatique, demt [demeurant] à Paris, rue de Donai No 98, duement assistée de son mari, d'autre part,
sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Art 1. Made. Viardot s'engage à remplir l'emploi de première cantatrice (prima donna assoluta) sur le théâtre de Covent-Garden, du dix juin prochain 1851 au dix août suivant. Ses appointements, pour cette période de deux mois, sont fixés à la somme de mille Livres Sterlings, payables savoir à son arrivée à Londres le 10 juin, deux cent cinquante Livres; le 30 juin, deux cent cinquante Livres; le 20 juillet; deux cent cinquante Livres, et enfin le 10 août, deux cent cinquante Livres.

Art. 2 M. Gye pourra prolonger l'engagement de Made. Viardot jusqu'au vingt cinq août de la même année 1851, sous la condition qu'il la prévienne officiellement avant le premier juillet précédant; et, dans le cas, les appointements de Made. Viardot seront augmentés des deux cents Livres Sterlings, payables le 24 août.

Art. 3 Made. Viardot chantera le rôle de Fidès du Prophète, celui de Rachel de la Juive, et celui d'Amina de la Sonnambula, si ces ouvrages sont représentés au théâtre de Covent-Garden. Il est en outre, réservé et assuré à Made. Viardot l'un des deux rôles de Rosina du Barbier de Seville, ou d'Adina del' Elisir d'amore. Enfin M. Gye s'engage à faire représenter dans le cours de la prochaine saison, l'opéra de Sapho, musique de M. Charles Gounod, qui sera prochainement donné sur la scène de l'opéra de Paris, et dont Made. Viardot se réserve [Le rôle de début de Made. Viardot sera celui de Fidès ou celui de Sapho] expressément le principal rôle.

Les rôles non désignés ci-dessus devront être proposés par la Direction, et acceptés par Made. Viardot.

Art 4. Made. Viardot chantera dans les concerts du théâtre, aussi bien que dans les opéras, mais jamais plus de trois fois par semaine.

Elle ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre sans la permission du Directeur, excepté dans les concerts particuliers.

Art. 5. Made. Viardot se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre, et la direction lui fournira tous les costumes, avec coiffures et chaussures, pour les divers rôles dont elle sera chargée.

Art. 6. Made. Viardot s'engage à ne chanter à Londres, pendant la saison de la prochaine année mil huit cent cinquante deux, que dans le théâtre dirigé par M. Gye, pourvu que ce soit dans l'une des salles de Covent Garden, Queen's Theater ou Drury Lane que M. Gye continuerait de diriger un opera italien, et aux mêmes conditions que celles contenues dans le présent contrat.

Art. 7 Toutes les contestations qui pourraient s'élever sur l'exécution ou l'interprétation de ce contrat seront jugées par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui décideront sans appel.

Fait double à Paris le vingt huit fevrier mil huit cent cinquante un.

Approuvé l'écriture

F. Gye

X. Revision to contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (27 February 1852)

Les Soussignés,

Interprétant, pour la prochaine saison théâtrale de la présente année 1852, l'art. 6 de leur contrat précédent;

Sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Mad. Viardot avertira M. Gye, au moins quinze jours en l'avance, de l'époque, ou il lui sera possible, de prendre un service actif au théâtre-Royal-Italien, et, en tous cas, non avant le premier juillet.

M. Gye, de son côté, avait le droit de limiter l'engagement de Mad. Viardot à l'espace d'un mois, qui courra soit de quinze juillet au quinze août, soit de vingt cinq juillet au vingt cinq août.

Les appointements de Mad. Viardot lui seront comptés, à saison de cinq cents Livres Sterlings par mois, et au prorata du temps de son service actif.

Les rôles de Mad. Viardot seront: 1° ceux de Fidès du Prophète, de Rachel dela Juive et d'Amina dela Sonnambula; 2° ceux qui pourraient être, en outre, proposés par la Direction et acceptés par elle.

Le contrat précédent est maintenu dans toutes les autres clauses.

Fait double à Dunse Castle (Ecosse), le vingt sept février mil huit cent cinquante deux.

Approuvé l'écriture

F. Gye

Approuvé l'écriture

Pauline Viardot

Approuvé Louis Viardot

XI. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (15 March 1854)

Royal Italian-Opera de Londres.

Saison de 1854

Les Soussignés,

M. Frédéric Gye, Directeur du Royal-Italian-Opera de Covent-Garden, à Londres, de présent à Paris, Hôtel Bristol, d'une part,

Et Made. Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste dramatique, demt [demeurant] à Paris, rue Donai N° 28, duement assistée de son mari, d'autre part,

sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Art 1^{er}. Made. Viardot s'engage, pour la saison théâtrale, de la présente année, à se mettre à la disposition de M. Gye, en qualité de première cantatrice, aussitôt qu'il lui sera possible de reprendre ses rôles habituels au théâtre. Ce ne sera [par toutefois, à moins que M. Gye y consente, avant le premier juin prochain. Dès le moment ou Mad. Viardot aura mis ses services à la disposition de M. Gye] ~~Dès ce moment~~, et jusqu'à la fin de la saison théâtrale, ~~fixée au août prochain~~. M Gye devra fournir à Made. Viardot l'occasion de faire, en minimum, six représentations dans l'espace d'un mois, et en proportion, d'après cette règle, du temps que durera son engagement. Faute par lui d'offrir à Made. Viardot le moyen de faire au moins six représentations par mois, M. Gye serait tenue de payer à Made. Viardot même les représentations qu'elle n'aurait pas faites jusqu'à concurrence de ce nombre. En revanche, les représentations offertes à Mad. Viardot, et qu'elle ne feraient point, seraient comptées dans ce nombre de six par mois qui lui sont dues.

Art. 2 Chaque représentation sera payée par M. Gye à Made. Viardot, à raison de Soixante Livres Sterlings.

Art. 3 Mad. Viardot ne pourra pas être tenue de chanter plus de trois fois dans la même semaine.

Elle ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre sans la permission du Directeur, sauf dans les concerts particuliers [et gratuits, en ce sens que les assistants n'y paient point leurs places] et dans ceux de la Philharmonic Society, qu'elle se réserve expressément.

Art. 4 Mad. Viardot fera son début dans le rôle de Rosine du Barbier de Seville, qui lui appartiendra le reste de la saison. Elle reprendra, en entrant au théâtre, le rôle de Fidès du Prophète. Les autres rôles seront proposés par la direction et acceptés par elle.

Art. 5 Mad. Viardot se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre, et la Direction lui fournira tous les costumes, avec coiffures et chaussures, pour les divers rôles dont elle sera chargée.

Art. 6 Toutes les contestations qui pourraient s'élever sur l'exécution ou l'interprétation du présent contrat seront jugées par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui décideront sans appel.

Fait double à Paris le quinze mars mil huit cent cinquante quatre.

Approuvé l'écriture

Pauline Viardot

Approuvé

Louis Viardot

Approuvé l'écriture

F. Gye

XII. Contract between Pauline Viardot and Frederick Gye (19 March 1855)

Royal-Italian-Opera de Londres

Saison de 1855

Les Soussignés,

M. Frédéric Gye, Directeur du Royal-Italian-Opera de Covent Garden à Londres, de présent à Paris, hôtel Bristol, d'un part,

Et Made. Pauline Viardot, née Garcia, artiste dramatique, demt [demeurant] à Paris, rue de Donai, N° 28, duement assistée de son mari, d'autre part,

sont convenus de ce qui suit:

Art 1^{er}. Made. Viardot s'engage à remplir l'emploi de première cantatrice mezzo-soprano sur théâtre italien de Covent-Garden; du vingt-quatre avril prochain inclus, au vingt quatre juillet suivant inclus.

Art. 2 Ses appointements pour cette période de trois mois sont fixés à la somme de mille deux cents livres sterlings, payables savoir:

~~à son arrivé à Londres deux cents livres; le vingt-quatre mai deux- quatre cents livres; le vingt-quatre juin quatre cents livres, et le vingt-quatre juillet quatre cents livres.~~

Art. 3 Le répertoire de Made. Viardot se composera des rôles suivants: Fidès du Prophète, Azucena du Trovatore, Rosina du Barbier de Seville, Desdemona d'Otello, et enfin Valentine des Huguenots, dans le cas où Made. Giulia Grisi ne serait point attachée, cette saison, au théâtre de Covent-Garden.

Made. Viardot n'aura droit à ces rôles que si les operas dont ils sont partie sont mis en scène par la Direction. Mais, dans ce cas, ils lui appartiendraient pendant toute la durée de son engagement.

Les rôles non désignés ci-dessus devront être proposés par la direction, et acceptés par l'artiste.

Art. 4 Made. Viardot chantera dans les concerts du théâtre, aussi bien que dans les opéras, mais jouirais plus de trois fois par semaine.

Elle ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre sans la permission de Directeur, sauf dans les concerts particuliers et gratuits en ce sens que les assistants n'y paient point leurs places, et dans ceux de la Philharmonic Society.

Art. 5 Made. Viardot se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre, et la Direction lui fournira tous les costumes, avec coiffures et chaussures, pour les divers rôles dont elle sera chargée.

Art. 6. M. Gye aura la faculté de prolonger l'engagement de Made. Viardot du vingt-quatre juillet au ~~treize août suivant~~, jour de la clôture du théâtre, en l'avertissant au moins ~~un mois~~ deux semaines à l'avance, et, dans le cas, Made. Viardot recevra des appointements proportionnels, calculés sur le taux de quatre cents livres sterling par mois.

Art. 7 Made. Viardot dans le cours de la présente année 1855, ne pourra faire de tournée dans les provinces d'Angleterre qu'avec M. Gye, et pour son compte. Elle s'interdit même formellement le droit de chanter en public dans les provinces jusqu'à la fin de la présente année, sauf toutefois au festival de Birmingham, pour lequel elle a déjà fait une promesse, et qu'elle se réserve expressément.

Art. 8 Si Made. Viardot se décide à faire une tournée dans les provinces pour le compte de M. Gye, ce sera aux conditions suivantes, dès à présent consentis entre eux:

1° M. Gye devra prolonger l'engagement de Made. Viardot du vingt quatre juillet au ~~onze août~~ à la fin de la saison.

2° L'engagement de Made. Viardot pour la tournée au compte de M. Gye sera d'~~un mois, du onze août au dix septembre~~; Elle recevra pour ce mois de tournée ~~quatre cents Livres Sterling~~ ne pourra pas se prolonger au delà du dix septembre; elle recevra des appointements proportionnels à quatre cents livres sterling par mois, et sera en outre défrayée par M. Gye de toutes les dépenses de transport, nourriture et logement, ~~en un mot de toutes les dépenses consécutives pour le voyage~~, pour elle, la personne qui l'accompagnera, et une femme de chambre.

3° Made. Viardot ne sera tenue de chanter, dans le cours de cette tournée, que les rôles d'opéras ci-dessus désignés ou ceux dont elle conviendrait d'accord avec M. Gye, et les morceaux de concerts qu'elle choisirait ou accepterait. Opéra ou concert, elle ne sera tenue de chanter qu'une fois par jour ou plus.

Art. 9. Toutes contestations qui pourraient s'élever sur l'exécution ou l'interprétation du présent contrat seront jugées par des arbitres, amiables compositeurs, qui décideront sans appel.

Fait doubles à Paris le dix-neuf mars mil huit cent cinquante cinq.

Approuvé l'écriture

Pauline Viardot

Approuvé

Louis Viardot

Frederick Gye

Art. Supplémentaire: Il est bien entendu que, dans le cas d'une tournée dans les provinces faite par Mad. Viardot pour le compte de M. Gye, le festival de Birmingham appartiendra à ce dernier, comme tous les produits obtenus entre la clôture du théâtre et le dix septembre.

F. Gye

XIII. Versions of a contract between Mario and Frederick Gye (1861)¹

First version

Handwritten annotation by Gye at the head of the page: *The counterpart of this was sent to Mario for his signature, but was returned with alterations which FG could not agree to and therefore sent another.*

Les soussignés M. Frederick Gye, Propriétaire et Directeur du Théâtre de L'Opéra Royal Italien, à Londres, d'une part, et M. Mario artiste dramatique, d' l'autre part, son convenus ce qui suit.

1°. M. Mario s'engage à faire l'emploi de *Premier Tenor Absolu* aux Théâtres et Salles en Angleterre, en Ireland, et en Écosse, pendant la durée de son engagement avec M. Gye.

2°. Cet engagement commencera *le premier Juin et finira le 3 Août 1861.*

3°. Les appointements de M Mario pour cette période seront £1400 par mois, être payés par mois *en parties égales* —

4°. M. Mario chantera dans les Concerts aussi bien que les Opéras mais *il* ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre ~~dans la royaume de la Grande Bretagne, ni dans l'Irlande,~~ pendant l'année 1861, sans la permission écrite de M. Gye *excepté à une distance de plus de 50 miles de Londres* —

5°. M. Gye fournira les costumes à M. Mario pour ses divers rôles, selon l'usage ordinaire des théâtres.

6°. M. Mario se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions, etc.

7°. M. Mario s'engage de se trouver à Londres six jours avant le commencement de cet engagement pour les répétitions.

8°. Dans la cas où M. Gye aurait besoin des services de M. Mario à une distance de plus de dix miles de Londres, il lui payera les frais de voyage.

9°. M. Mario ne sera pas forcé de chanter plus que trois fois par semaine y compris les concerts.

10°. M Gye à la fin de cet engagement aura droit de le renouveler aux conditions proportionnelles, mais pour une époque pas plus tard que jusqu'à la fin du mois ~~de September~~ d'Aout dans l'année 1861.

11°. M Gye aura aussi le droit de renouveler cet engagement pour les années du 1862 et 1863 *avec les memes conditions ma la durée de l'engagement sera pour trois mois dans chaque saison (commençant au commencement de la saison) et les appointements seront £2500 pour chaque saison.*

Londres

Le 15 Aout 1861 Frederick Gye

Second version

Handwritten annotation by Gye at the head of the page: *A copy of this was sent to Mario on April 17 1861 but returned on the 20th with many alterations — F. G then made out another engagement & sent it by Woodford on the 20th —*

Les soussignés M. Frederick Gye, Propriétaire et Directeur du Théâtre de L'Opéra Royal Italien, à Londres, d'une part, et Monsieur G Mario artiste dramatique, d' l'autre part, son

¹ This transcription of the original French contracts is reproduced from Matthew Ringel, 'Opera in "the Donizettian Dark Ages"', pp. 291–96.

convenus ce qui suit.

1°. M. *Mario* s'engage à faire l'emploi de *Premier Tenor Absolu* aux Théâtres et Salles en Angleterre, en ~~Ireland~~, et en ~~Écosse~~, pendant la durée de son engagement avec M. Gye.

2°. Cet engagement commencera *le Premier Juin et finira le Trois Août 1861*.

3°. Les appointements de M *Mario pour cette période* seront £1400 être payés la moitié dans la première semaine de Juillet, la moitié dans la première semaine d'Août. — ~~par mois, être payés par mois~~

4°. M. *Mario* chantera dans les Concerts aussi bien que les Opéras mais *il* ne chantera nulle part hors du théâtre dans la royaume de la Grande Bretagne, ni dans l'Irlande, pendant l'année 1861, sans la permission écrite de M. Gye *excepté à une distance de plus de 50 miles de Londres et dans les concerts non payants de société* —

5°. M. Gye fournira les costumes à M. *Mario* pour ses divers rôles, selon l'usage ordinaire des théâtres.

6°. M. *Mario* se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions, etc.

7°. M. *Mario* s'engage de se trouver à Londres *Trois six* jours avant le commencement de cet engagement pour les répétitions.

8°. Dans la cas où M. Gye aurait besoin des services de M. *Mario* à une distance de plus de dix miles de Londres, il lui payera les frais de voyage.

9°. M. *Mario ne sera pas forcé de chanter plus que trois fois par semaine y compris les concerts*

10°. M Gye à la fin de cet engagement aura droit de le renouveler aux conditions proportionnelles, mais pour une époque pas plus tard que jusqu'à la fin du mois de ~~September~~ *d'Aout* dans l'année 1861.

11°. M Gye aura aussi le droit de renouveler cet engagement pour les années du 1862 et 1863 *avec les memes conditions ma la durée de l'engagement sera pour trois mois assurés dans chaque saison, et les appointements seront £2500 pour chaque saison — L'engagement de 1862 commencerait le 22 Avril, celui de 1863 le 7 Avril. C'est entendre que M Gye n'aura pas le droit de forcer M. Mario de remplir l'engagement pour les années de 1862 et 1863 si M. Mario se retire de la scene de théâtre avant le commencement de 1862 ou 1863 — dans le cas que M. Mario se decide de se retirer de la scène avant l'année 1862 et de ne pas remplir l'engagement pour 1862 il doit avertir M. Gye avant le mois de Janvier 1862 — et s'il se decide de se retirer de la scène après la saison de 1862 et avant l'année de 1863 et de ne pas remplir l'engagement de 1863 il doit avertir M. Gye avant le mois de Janvier 1863 —*
[Annotation in pencil] *A copy sent to Paris per J. Woodford April 18th/61*

Third version

Les soussignés M. Frederick Gye, Propriétaire et Directeur du Théâtre de L'Opéra Royal Italien, à Londres, d'une part, et *Monsieur G. Mario* artiste dramatique, d' l'autre part, son convenus ce qui suit.

1°. M. *Mario* s'engage à faire l'emploi de *Premier Tenor Absolu* aux Théâtres de *Covent Garden et au Crystal Palace* et Salles en Angleterre, en ~~Ireland~~, et en ~~Écosse~~, pendant la durée de son engagement avec M. Gye.

2°. Cet engagement commencera *le Premier Juin et finira le Trois Août 1861*.

3°. Les appointements de M *Mario pour cette période* seront £1400 être payés la moitié dans la première semaine de Juillet, l'autre moitié dans la première semaine d'Août. — ~~par mois, être payés par mois~~

4°. M. *Mario* chantera dans les Concerts aussi bien que les Opéras mais *il* ne chantera nulle

part hors du théâtre [Woodford: *pendant la saison ni pourra laisser afficher ou annoncer son nom même en vue de représentation près la dite Saisons*] ~~dans la royaume de la Grande Bretagne, ni dans l'Irlande, pendant l'année 1861, sans la permission écrite de M. Gye excepté à une distance de plus de 50 miles de Londres et dans les concerts non payants de société —~~

5°. M. Gye fournira les costumes à M. Mario [Woodford: *expressement confectionné pour lui*] pour ses divers rôles, selon l'usage ordinaire des théâtres.

6°. M. Mario se conformera aux règles ordinaires du théâtre en cas de maladie, d'incendie, répétitions, etc.

7°. M. Mario s'engage de se trouver à Londres ~~Trois~~ ~~six~~ jours avant le commencement de cet engagement pour les répétitions.

8°. ~~Dans la cas où M. Gye aurait besoin des services de M. — à une distance de plus de dix miles de Londres, il lui payera les frais de voyage.~~ [Woodford: *M. Mario s'engage à chanter le rôle principal de tenor dans les operas Ugonotti — Trovatore — Rigoletto — Marta — Un ballo in Maschera — Barbieri— et [celui?] de Don Giovanni s'il convenient a Mr Gye de [le?] lui faire jouer. Tous les nouveaux roles seront acceptés de gré a gré.*]

9°. M. Mario ne sera pas forcé de chanter plus que trois fois par semaine y compris les concerts et jamais deux jours consecutives.

10°. M Gye à la fin de cet engagement aura droit de le renouveler aux conditions proportionnelles, mais pour une époque pas plus tard que jusqu'à la fin du mois de ~~September~~ ~~d'Août~~ dans l'année 1861.

11°. M Gye aura aussi le droit de renouveler cet engagement pour les années du 1862 et 1863 avec mêmes conditions mais la durée de l'engagement sera pour trois mois assurés dans chaque saison, et les appointements seront £2500 pour chaque saison — L'engagement de 1862 commencerait le Premier Mai, [Woodford: *arrivant le 1 mais a Londre*], celui de 1863 le 7 Avril. [Woodford: *Dans chaque saison les appointements seront de £2500 payables en trois parties égales a un mois de distance à commencer le quinziesme jour apres le commencement de la saison —*]

C'est entendre que M. Gye n'aura pas le droit de forcer M. Mario de remplir l'engagement pour les années de 1862 et 1863 si M. Mario ne chante pas à Londres ni dans les trois Royaumes Unis de la Grand Bretagne pendant les susdites années — Si M. Gye a l'intention de profiter de ce droit il doit avertir M. Mario avant la fin des années de 1861 et 1862— Si M. Mario se decide de ne pas accepter l'engagement pour les années de 1862 ou 1863 et de ne pas chanter à Londres ni dans les Royaumes de la Grande Bretagne pendant ces années il doit aussi avertir M. Gye avant la fin des années de 1861 et 1862 —

[Woodford: *Art 12. Si l'une des parties venait à manquer à une des choses du présent engagement et contract — le susdit contract deviendrait mit et de mit effait à partir du moment du manque d'execution.*]

Par autorization de Monsieur Mario

John Woodford

April 23 1861

8.2 Sample season programme overviews

Dance interludes and ballets appear in italics.

Her Majesty's Theatre, 1841 season

MARCH	11	Gli Orazi e i Curazi		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	13	Gli Orazi e i Curazi		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	16	Gli Orazi e i Curazi		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	20	Tancredi		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	23	Tancredi		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	27	Tancredi		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	30	Beatrice di Tenda		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
APRIL	17	Norma	<i>Divertissement</i>	Lucia di Lammermoor	
	20	Norma	<i>Divertissement</i>	Lucia di Lammermoor	
	22	I puritani	Selected scenes from Tancredi	<i>Divertissement</i>	
	24	Norma	La sonnambula (Act II)	<i>Divertissement</i>	
	27	Otello		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	29	Otello		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
MAY	1	La sonnambula	Anna Bolena (last scene)	<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	4	Anna Bolena		<i>La Fille de l'exilé</i>	
	6	Il matrimonio segreto		<i>La Fille de l'exilé</i>	
	8	Il matrimonio segreto		<i>La Fille de l'exilé</i>	
	11	Anna Bolena		<i>La Fille de l'exilé</i>	
	13	La straniera	Le nozze di Figaro (Act II) + <i>Divertissement</i>	<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	Tamburini benefit
	15	La straniera		<i>La fille de l'exilé</i>	
	18	Norma		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	20	Don Giovanni		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	Lablache benefit
	22	Don Giovanni		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	25	Don Giovanni		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	27	L'elisir d'amore		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	29	Fausta		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
JUNE	1	Fausta		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	5	Lucia di Lammermoor		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	8	L'elisir d'amore		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	10	Le nozze di Figaro	Otello (last scene)	<i>La Sylphide</i>	Coulon benefit
	12	Semiramide			
	15	Semiramide		<i>La Sylphide</i>	
	17	Lucrezia Borgia	Tancredi (Act II)	<i>La Sylphide</i>	Mario benefit
	19	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>La Sylphide</i>	
	22	La Sonnambula		<i>La Sylphide</i>	
	24	Roberto Devereux		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	26	Roberto Devereux		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	29	Roberto Devereux		<i>La Gitana</i>	
JULY	1	Semiramide	Lucia di Lammermoor (last scene)	<i>La Gitana</i>	Grisi benefit
	3	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>La Gitana</i>	
	6	La Cenerentola		<i>La Gitana</i>	
	8	Il Barbiere di Siviglia	Les Horaces + <i>Divertissement</i>	Gli Israeliti in Egitto (Act II) + <i>La Gitana</i> (Act I)	Annual benefit
	10	Roberto Devereux		<i>L'Élève d'amour</i>	
	13	L'elisir d'amore		<i>L'Élève d'amour</i>	
	15	I puritani		<i>Matilde</i>	Taglioni

					benefit
	17	Il barbiere di Siviglia		<i>Matilde</i>	
	20	Anna Bolena		<i>Matilde</i>	
	22	Norma (Act II)	<i>L'Élève d'amour</i> + Il turco in Italia (one-act version)	<i>La Gitana</i> (Act I)	Persiani benefit
	24	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	27	Il turco in Italia	I puritani (Act III)	<i>Divertissement</i>	
	29	Don Giovanni		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	Albert benefit
	31	Roberto Devereux		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
AUGUST	3	Roberto Devereux		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	5	Marino Faliero		<i>La Gitana</i> (Act I)	Loewe benefit
	7	Roberto Devereux		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	10	Roberto Devereux		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	12	La gazza ladra	Lucia di Lammermoor (scenes from Act I)	<i>La Gitana</i> (Act I)	Cerito benefit
	14	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>Le Lac des fées</i>	
	17	Norma		<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	
	21	La sonnambula (Act II)	Marino Faliero (Acts II & III) + Lucia di Lammermoor (Act III)	<i>Le Diable amoureux</i>	Rubini benefit

Royal Italian Opera House Covent Garden, 1847 season

APRIL	6	Semiramide		<i>L'Odalisque</i>
	8	Semiramide		<i>L'Odalisque</i>
	10	Semiramide		<i>L'Odalisque</i>
	13	Lucia di Lammermoor		<i>L'Odalisque</i>
	15	Lucia di Lammermoor		<i>L'Odalisque</i>
	17	Semiramide		<i>L'Odalisque</i>
	20	La sonnambula		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	22	Semiramide		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	24	L'italiana in Algeri		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	27	Lucia di Lammermoor		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	29	I puritani		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
MAY	1	I puritani		
	4	L'italiana in Algeri		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	6	Semiramide		
	8	Maria di Rohan		
	11	La sonnambula		
	13	Semiramide	L'elisir d'amore	<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	15	Lucrezia Borgia		
	18	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	20	L'italiana in Algeri	Lucrezia Borgia	<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	22	I puritani		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	25	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	27	Don Giovanni		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	29	Don Giovanni		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
JUNE	1	Il barbiere di Siviglia		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	3	Don Giovanni		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	5	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	8	Norma		<i>La Salamandrine</i>
	10	Lucrezia Borgia	Il barbiere di Siviglia	<i>La Reine des fées</i>
	12	Norma		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	15	Il barbiere di Siviglia		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	17	Il barbiere di Siviglia	Norma	<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	19	I due Foscari		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>

	22	I due Foscari		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	24	Don Giovanni		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	26	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	29	Il Barbiere di Siviglia		<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
JULY	1	La sonnambula	Norma	<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
	3	Ernani		<i>L'Amour et la danse</i>
	6	Il barbiere di Siviglia		<i>L'Amour et la danse</i>
	8	Anna Bolena		<i>L'Amour et la danse</i>
	10	Anna Bolena		<i>L'Amour et la danse</i>
	13	Anna Bolena		
	15	Lucrezia Borgia	Scene from Betly (Donizetti)	
	17	Semiramide		
	20	Ernani	Scene from Betly (Donizetti)	
	22	Le nozze di Figaro		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	24	Le nozze di Figaro		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	27	Le nozze di Figaro		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	29	La gazza ladra		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	31	La gazza ladra		<i>La Rosiera</i>
AUGUST	3	Maria di Rohan		
	5	Le nozze di Figaro		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	7	Lucrezia Borgia		
	10	La gazza ladra		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	12	La donna del lago		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	14	La donna del lago		
	17	La donna del lago		
	19	Le nozze di Figaro		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	21	Semiramide		
	24	La donna del lago		<i>La Rosiera</i>
	25	Maria di Rohan	Le nozze di Figaro	<i>La Rosiera</i>

Royal Italian Opera House Covent Garden, 1852 season

MARCH	27	Maria di Rohan		<i>Divertissement</i>
	30	Maria di Rohan		<i>Divertissement</i>
APRIL	1	Guglielmo Tell		
	3	Guglielmo Tell		
	13	Guglielmo Tell		
	17	La sonnambula		<i>Divertissement</i>
	20	I martiri		
	22	I martiri		
	24	I martiri		
	27	I martiri		
	29	Norma	Guglielmo Tell (Acts II & III)	
MAY	1	Les Huguenots		
	4	Les Huguenots		
	6	Don Giovanni		
	8	Les Huguenots		
	11	Il flauto magico	I martiri (Acts III & IV)	
	13	Lucia di Lammermoor		
	15	Les Huguenots		
	18	Il flauto magico		
	20	La Juive		
	22	La Juive		
	25	I puritani		
	27	Norma (Act I)	Il barbiere di Siviglia	
	29	I puritani		
JUNE	1	Lucrezia Borgia	I martiri (Acts III & IV)	

	3	Les Huguenots		
	5	Il flauto magico		
	8	Roberto il Diavolo		
	10	Lucrezia Borgia	I martiri (Acts III & IV)	
	12	I puritani		
	15	Norma (Act I)	L'elisir d'amore	
	17	Lucrezia Borgia	I martiri (Acts III & IV)	
	19	Roberto il diavolo		
	22	Roberto il diavolo		
	24	Les Huguenots		
	26	Le Prophète		
	29	Le Prophète		
JULY	1	Le Prophète		
	3	L'elisir d'amore	Roberto il diavolo (Grand Act)	
	6	Otello	Il barbiere di Siviglia (Act I)	
	8	Le Prophète		
	10	Lucrezia Borgia	I martiri (Act IV)	
	12	Le Prophète		
	15	Faust		
	17	Faust		
	20	Faust		
	22	Les Huguenots		
	24	I Puritani		
	27	Anna Bolena		
	29	Les Huguenots		
	31	Faust		
AUGUST	2	Lucrezia Borgia	I martiri (Acts III & IV)	
	5	Le Prophète		
	7	Le Prophète		
	10	Norma	Roberto il diavolo (Grand Act)	
	12	Le Prophète		
	14	Les Huguenots		
	16	Pietro il Grande		
	19	Pietro il Grande		
	21	Pietro il Grande		
	24	Pietro il Grande		
	26	Les Huguenots		
	28	Lucrezia Borgia (Act I)	Ernani	
	30	Le Prophète		
	31	I puritani		
SEPTEMBER	1	Les Huguenots		

Royal Italian Opera House Covent Garden, 1855 season

APRIL	12	Il Conte d'Ory	L'étoile du Nord	
	14	Il Conte d'Ory	L'étoile du Nord	
	17	Il Conte d'Ory	L'étoile du Nord	
	19	Fidelio		<i>Eva</i>
	21	Fidelio	L'étoile du Nord	
	24	Il Conte d'Ory		<i>Eva</i>
	26	Ernani		<i>Eva</i>
	28	Ernani		<i>Eva</i>
MAY	1	Ernani		<i>Eva</i>
	3	Fidelio	L'étoile du Nord	
	5	L'elisir d'amore		<i>Eva</i>
	8	Il Conte d'Ory		<i>Eva</i>

	10	Il trovatore		
	12	Il trovatore		
	15	Il trovatore		<i>Eva</i>
	17	I puritani		<i>Eva</i>
	19	I puritani		<i>Eva</i>
	22	Il trovatore		<i>Eva</i>
	24	La favorita		<i>Eva</i>
	26	La favorita		
	29	Norma		<i>Eva</i>
	31	Don Giovanni		
JUNE	2	Norma		<i>Eva</i>
	4	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>Eva</i>
	5	Don Giovanni		
	7	Gli Ugonotti		
	9	Il trovatore		<i>Eva</i>
	12	Il trovatore		<i>Eva</i>
	14	Norma	Il barbiere di Siviglia (Act I)	
	16	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>Eva</i>
	18	Gli Ugonotti		
	19	Il trovatore		
	21	Norma	Il barbiere di Siviglia (Act I)	
	23	Il trovatore	L'étoile du Nord	
	26	Norma	L'elisir d'amore (one act)	
	28	Don Pasquale		<i>La Vivandiere</i>
	29	Il trovatore	La prova di un'opera seria (one scene)	
JULY	3	Gli Ugonotti		
	5	Lucrezia Borgia	Il barbiere di Siviglia (Act II)	
	7	Don Pasquale		<i>La Vivandiere</i>
	10	Il Conte d'Ory	Il barbiere di Siviglia (Act I)	
	12	Lucrezia Borgia		<i>La Vivandiere</i>
	14	Il barbiere di Siviglia		<i>La Vivandiere</i>
	17	La favorita		<i>Divertissements</i>
	19	L'étoile du Nord		
	21	L'étoile du Nord		
	24	L'étoile du Nord		
	26	L'étoile du Nord		
	28	Gli Ugonotti		
	30	L'étoile du Nord		
	31	Le Prophète		
AUGUST	2	L'étoile du Nord		
	4	Le Prophète		
	6	L'étoile du Nord		
	7	Otello	L'étoile du Nord	
	9	L'étoile du Nord		
	11	L'étoile du Nord (reduced pieces)		
	27	Il trovatore	Lucia di Lammermoor (Act I)	
	29	Il barbiere di Siviglia	Scene from Masaniello	
	31	Don Giovanni		

9 List of Abbreviations

Add. MS	Additional Manuscripts
BF	Biblioteca Forlì
BL	British Library
BNF	Bibliothèque National de France
Gen. Ref.	General Reference Collection
HL	Houghton Library, Harvard University
HM	Her Majesty's Theatre
HU	Harvard University
KT	King's Theatre
MS MUS	Music Manuscripts
NAF	Nouvelle Acquisition Française
RIO	Royal Italian Opera House Covent Garden
ROH	Royal Opera House

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Index of Names

- Albertazzi, Emma: 56–57.
- Alboni, Marietta: 35, 125, 176, 194–195.
- Arditi, Luigi: 21, 173.
- Ayrton, William: 68–69, 82, 187–188.
- Bacher, Josef: 122, 125–126.
- Balfe, Michael William: 2, 18, 173, 179.
- Barbaja, Domenico: 98.
- Beale, Frederick: 18, 36, 130, 132–133, 137, 140, 158–161.
- Beer, Amalia: 126.
- Belart, Buonaventura: 192–194.
- Belletti, Giovanni Battista: 35.
- Belloc, Terese Giorgi: 71.
- Benedict, Julius: 49, 188, 190, 195.
- Benelli, Giovanni Battista: 15, 70, 72–73, 79, 82, 84, 89–91, 124.
- Bertrand, Ida: 125, 221.
- Birch-Pfeiffer, Charlotte: 113.
- Bishop, Henry: 12.
- Braham, John: 192.
- Brandus, Louis: 141–143, 177.
- Bunn, Alfred: 50, 67, 97, 109, 111–120, 122, 125, 127–128.
- Calzolari, Enrico: 174, 224–225.
- Camporese, Violante: 14, 30, 67–69.
- Caradori, Maria: 14, 29.
- Castellan, Jeanne Anaïs: 146–147, 222.
- Catalani, Angelica: 8, 13, 67, 76–81, 86, 174, 213–214.
- Cerito, Fanny: 16.
- Chorley, Henry Fothergill: 40, 50, 54–55, 57–58, 63–64, 66, 121, 149, 213, 216–217, 220, 224, 227.
- Cobden, Richard: 37–38.
- Coletti, Filippo: 30, 35, 177, 179, 183, 185.
- Costa, Michael: 9, 17–18, 31, 110, 130, 142–143, 173, 176, 197, 214–221.
- Cruvelli [Crüwell], Sofia [Sophie]: 35, 50, 56, 125.

Csillag, Rosa: 157.
Curioni, Alberico: 29.
De Murska, Ilma: 21.
Delafield, Edward: 130, 137, 145, 147.
Donzelli, Domenico: 203.
Duprez, Gilbert-Louis: 98–99, 224.
Ebers, John: 8, 11, 14–15, 23, 28, 30, 67, 69–70, 72–73, 76, 78–91, 124, 160.
Elssler, Fanny: 16.
Ernst II., Herzog von Sachsen-Coburg: 183.
Everardi, Camille: 194.
Fanti, Clementina: 215.
Favanti, Rita: 53, 56–59, 62, 65.
Ferlotti, Raffaele: 222, 227–230.
Fiorentini, Claudia: 125, 221.
Fodor-Mainvielle, Joséphine: 68–69, 73, 75, 215.
Frezzolini, Erminia: 205–206.
Fritzsche, Antonia: 56.
García, Manuel: 53, 82, 132.
Gardoni, Italo: 61, 174, 177, 185.
Giannone, Pietro: 178.
Giuglini, Antonio: 21, 169.
Gould, Francis: 13.
Graziani, Francesco: 153.
Grisi, Giuditta: 214–215.
Grisi, Giulia: 9, 16–17, 31, 35, 42, 49, 77, 91–94, 98–99, 102–108, 123, 130, 134, 139, 145–147, 152, 157, 160, 164–165, 167, 169, 171, 177, 197, 199, 202–206, 210–217, 219–221.
Gruneisen, Charles: 18, 21, 36, 132, 133, 137, 139.
Guasco, Carlo: 223.
Guerrabella, Ginevra: 221.
Gye, Frederick: 6–7, 9, 19–22, 36–37, 39, 97, 109, 117–118, 120–122, 125–131, 133, 136, 138, 145, 147–154, 156–172, 177, 196, 231.
Hanslick, Eduard: 2, 21, 24–25, 38, 41, 43, 110, 173.
Harrison, William: 64, 193.
Hayes, Catherine: 53–56, 62, 65–66, 140.

Heine, Heinrich: 119, 152.
Ivanoff, Nicola: 212, 220.
Kean, Charles: 3.
Kellogg, Clara Louise: 64.
Kelly, Michael: 67–68.
De la Grange, Anna: 205.
Lablache, Luigi: 16–17, 26, 31, 35, 48, 51, 59, 91, 93–94, 102, 114, 199, 204–206, 210–212.
Lacy, Angelica: 221.
Laporte, Pierre François: 9, 15–17, 28, 32–34, 91–109, 118, 124–125, 129, 132, 154, 171–172, 213.
Lind, Jenny: 1, 3, 18–19, 35, 48–51, 53, 67, 97, 109–124, 127–130, 132–133, 135–136, 148, 167, 169, 173–174.
Lucca, Pauline: 21.
Lumley, Benjamin: 9, 17–21, 32–33, 36–37, 50, 55, 57–58, 61, 67, 70, 84, 96–97, 100, 105, 108–129, 131–134, 148–150, 155, 162–163, 172, 177–178, 221–222, 228–229.
Macfarren, George Alexander: 51–52, 55, 62, 64, 66.
Macready, William Charles: 3.
Maggioni, Manfredo: 178, 229.
Malibran, Maria: 16, 49–50, 99, 104, 106, 118, 203.
Mapleson, James Henry: 20–22, 160, 162, 169–171, 187.
Marchesi, Mathilde: 56.
Marini, Ignazio: 35, 140.
Mario [Giovanni Matteo De Candia]: 9, 16–17, 21, 31, 42, 49, 59, 84, 102, 130, 140, 143, 145–146, 152, 157–171, 223.
Massol, Jean-Etienne August: 143, 177–178, 185.
Mazzucato, Alberto: 60.
Mei, Luigi: 140.
Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix: 114.
Meyerbeer, Giacomo: 70, 111, 114–115, 126, 141–144, 176.
Mongini, Pietro: 21, 194.
Neri-Baraldi, Pietro: 222.
Nilsson, Christine: 21, 53, 159.
Nourrit, Adolphe: 77.
Pardini, Giuseppe: 174.

Pasta, Giuditta: 3, 8, 14, 48, 57, 73, 79–91, 94, 99, 124, 167, 174, 198, 202, 205–206, 210–212.

Patti, Adelina: 21, 157, 159.

Penco, Rosina: 157.

Persiani, Fanny: 16–17, 102.

Persiani, Giuseppe: 17, 36, 129–130.

Planché, James Robinson: 188–190, 192.

Polonini, Eutimio: 140.

Poultier, Placide: 174.

Pyne, Louisa: 53, 62–65, 193.

Reeves, Sims: 53, 55–56, 59–62, 65–66, 193, 195.

Robert, Edouard: 92–94, 99.

Ronconi, Felice: 53.

Ronconi, Giorgio: 53, 91, 100, 222, 226–227, 229–230.

Ronzi di Begnis, Giuseppina: 29–30, 213.

Rossini-Colbran, Isabella: 79.

Rovere, Agostino: 35.

Rubini, Giovanni Battista: 16, 31, 57, 59, 102, 199, 203, 212, 220, 223, 224, 228.

Santley, Charles: 59, 195.

Sapio, Antonio: 53.

Schebest, Agnese: 77.

Schwartz, Therese: 35.

Sedlatzek, Marie: 194.

Seguin, Theresa: 222.

Siddons, Sarah: 3.

Smart, George: 62.

Smith, E. T.: 20–21, 169, 189, 194–195.

Sontag, Henriette: 50, 63, 94, 148, 177, 183, 185.

Spohr, Louis: 174.

Staudigl, Josef: 114.

Steffanoni, Bina: 35.

Tagliafico, Joseph Dieudonne: 140.

Taglioni, Louisa: 9.

Tamberlik, Enrico: 21, 153, 157, 161, 222–225, 230.

Tamburini, Antonio: 9, 16–17, 30–33, 35, 85, 91–95, 98–99, 102–108, 130, 145, 212, 220, 227.

Taylor, William: 13–14,

Tiberini, Mario: 157, 159, 161.

Tietjens, Therese: 21–22, 50, 64, 162, 169–170, 189, 194–195.

Tosi, Adelaide: 98.

Ugalde, Delphine: 177, 183, 185.

Ungher [Unger], Carolina [Caroline]: 201, 211.

Valabrègue, Paul: 76–77, 81.

Vaneri, Pauline: 193–194.

Velluti, Giovanni Battista: 14–15, 71, 72, 83, 87.

Verdi, Giuseppe: 227.

Viardot-García, Pauline: 9, 51, 86, 123, 129–156, 158, 162, 164, 168, 206.

Viardot, Louis: 132–134, 144, 150–151.

Wagner, Albert: 122, 126–127.

Wagner, Johanna: 19, 51, 67, 97, 109, 120–129, 150.

Waters, Edmund: 13, 67–74, 91.

Webster, Arthur: 130, 137.

Woodford, John: 163, 166, 168, 170–171.

Zerr, Anna: 63.