

Reshaping Secular Music Spaces in Pius IX Rome

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The two decades of Roman history that marked the end of the Church State (1850–1870) have been often viewed by traditional music scholarship as a period of obscurity.¹ Such a view has been partly conditioned by old Risorgimento or anti-papal readings that viewed Rome as a victim of the conservative and obscurantist policies of Pope Pius IX Mastai-Ferretti (1792–1878) and, at the same time, as the principal antagonist to the inevitable fulfilment of liberal, modern and progressive dreams of the Italian Unification.² It is, of course, not possible to refute these views in their entirety. Even without making comparisons between Rome and larger or more active capitals (e.g., Paris or Vienna), or between this period and brighter epochs (e.g., Rossini's Rome), it is well known, for example, that “the city's opera scene was extremely unstable, full of uncertainties due to the ups and downs of the impresario system fortunes.”³ It is necessary to take into account also

1 Giuseppe Prospero Zuliani, *Roma musicale. Appunti, osservazioni, notizie* (Rome: Tipografia Eredi Botta, 1878); Giuseppe Radiciotti, “Teatro e musica in Roma nel secondo quarto del secolo XIX,” in *Atti del congresso internazionale di scienze storiche VIII* (Rome: Accademia dei Lincei, 1905); Alberto De Angelis, *La musica a Roma nel secolo XIX* (Rome: Bardi, 1944). See also Raoul Meloncelli, “Sul rinnovamento della vita musicale romana,” in *La musica italiana del primo Novecento. La generazione dell'80*, ed. Fiamma Nicolodi (Florence: Olschki, 1981), 219–60.

2 See, for example, Nicola Nisco, *Roma prima e dopo del 1870* (Rome: Tipografia Barbera, 1878); Giuseppe Leti, *Roma e lo Stato Pontificio dal 1849 al 1870. Note di storia politica* (Ascoli Piceno: G. Cesari, 1911); Carl Thomas McIntire, *England Against the Papacy, 1858–1861. Tories, Liberals, and the Overthrow of Papal Temporal Power during the Italian Risorgimento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

3 “La vita operistica della città [era] estremamente instabile, piena di incertezze, dovute agli alti e bassi delle fortune impresariali.” Arrigo Quattrocchi, “La vita operistica a Roma nell'Ottocento,” in *Musikstadt Rom. Geschichte – Forschung – Perspektiven*, ed. Markus Engelhardt, *Analecta musicologica* 45 (2011): 362.

the Church's idea of culture in this period, which dismissed all modernity⁴ (and thus one of its most powerful symbols, opera) firmly relying on the teachings and precepts of Catholic orthodoxy, both in the socio-cultural and political spheres.⁵ Methods of control and inhibition took the form of censorship, or the widespread control of all musical activity by both the Papal State bodies and the French occupation corps, which protected Rome from the Risorgimento uprisings throughout these two decades.⁶ The study of instrumental music was not encouraged—there was a lack of both a musical conservatory and professional orchestras—nor, paradoxically, was the performance of sacred music promoted: famous and major chapels were experiencing a steep decline, lagging far behind the international progress in musical composition.⁷

However, archival research has sought to highlight how the Rome of Pius IX had more composite characters than what the older historiography era had established. The citizenry was curious about cultural and musical novelties that went beyond the interests of the papal government. In the field of chamber music, for example, there were many ensembles and musical events independently organized by local musicians even outside officially established cultural organizations—such as theaters or pontifical academies—which promoted and performed contemporary music.⁸ In this respect, we also cannot underestimate the impulse of the many foreigners

4 Philippe Boutry, "Papauté et culture au XIXe siècle. Magistère, orthodoxie, tradition," *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle* 28 (2004): 31–58.

5 Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World. A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 5.

6 Monica Calzolari, "La censura nella Roma pontificia dell'Ottocento. Il ruolo predominante della Direzione Generale di Polizia," in *La musica a Roma attraverso le fonti d'archivio*, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini, Arnaldo Morelli, and Vera Vita Spagnuolo (Lucca: LIM, 1994), 287–97; Ornella Di Tondo, *La censura sui balli teatrali nella Roma dell'Ottocento* (Turin: UTET, 2008); Alessandro Capone, *La protection française des États pontificaux. Occupation militaire et souveraineté partagée dans l'Italie du Risorgimento (1849–1870)*, PhD diss (Institut d'études politiques de Paris – Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 2019).

7 Giancarlo Rostirolla, *La Cappella Giulia 1513–2013. Cinque secoli di musica sacra in San Pietro*, vol. 2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2017); Leopold M. Kantner and Angela Pachovsky, *Storia della Cappella musicale Pontificia*, vol. 6, *L'Ottocento* (Rome: Hortus Musicus, 1998).

8 Cristina Cimagalli and Francesca Vacca, "Attività concertistiche nella Roma preunitaria. Avvio di una cronologia e primi risultati," *Fonti musicali italiane* 11 (2006): 175; Daniela Macchione, "Attività concertistica e musica strumentale da camera a Roma (1856–1870)," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 37, no. 2 (2002): 265–319; Francesca Vacca, "L'Ottocento musicale romano nelle carte della Polizia Pontificia. I concerti pubblici del ventennio 1850–1870," *Fonti musicali italiane* 19 (2014): 69–109.

(musicians or not) living in the city and somehow superimposing their idea of modernity and modern culture on local conservatism.⁹

Roman citizens in any case did not lack contemporary theatrical music. More than active were the popular theaters that staged both comedies and modest opera productions (such as the Valle after its decline, the Capranica and the Metastasio) and the *teatri dialettali* (Teatro Emiliani, Montanara, Sant'Apollinare) which staged popular theater with actors or puppets, by newcomers or old favorites, in Roman dialect. In these theaters, numerous *azioni in prosa e musica* ("dramas in prose with music," a kind of vaudeville) reached a record number of performances; among them, it is worth mentioning at least *Meo Patacca er greve* and *Marco Pepe la crapetta* (*Meo patacca the Rude* and *Marco Pepe the Weak*), a reduction of Giuseppe Berneri's seventeenth-century poem *Meo Patacca* by leading actor Filippo Tacconi, with music by Cesare Galanti.¹⁰ Some sources estimate that, by the end of the century, there had been 1,500 performances of this play.¹¹

The world of contemporary opera, staged in the two main theaters, Apollo and Argentina, deserves a separate discussion. Both venues belonged to the extremely wealthy Torlonia family and for about forty years had a single impresario, Vincenzo Jacovacci, a figure repeatedly vituperated by Verdi and his publisher Ricordi for his parsimonious and almost indecent productions.¹² Although censors closely monitored their productions, sometimes to the point of the ridiculous or grotesque—as when they completely changed the plots and titles of many works, including *Rigoletto*, which became *Viscardello*—they did not ban the staging of operas by major composers such as Pacini, Petrella, or Meyerbeer, which were performed regularly. The Teatro Apollo even secured two remarkable exploits, the premieres of *Il trovatore* (1853) and *Un ballo in maschera* (1859): this was due precisely to a broader appetite for contemporary theatrical music—an appetite sustained not only by astute impresarios and the general public, but also by high-ranking prelates.¹³

9 Pierre Musitelli, "Artisti e letterati stranieri a Roma nell'Ottocento. Strutture, pratiche e descrizioni della sociabilità," *Memoria e Ricerca* 46 (2014): 27–44.

10 Filippo Tacconi, *Meo Patacca er greve e Marco Pepe la crapetta. Azione storica in prosa e musica in dialetto romanesco* (Rome: Puccinelli, 1865).

11 Carlo Boschi, "Tosti e la vita musicale romana dall'Unità ai primi del nostro secolo," in *Tosti*, ed. Francesco Sanvitale (Turin: EDT, 1991), 104.

12 Marcello Conati, "Il maestro Verdi e l'impresario Jacovacci," in *Verdi. Interviste e incontri* (Turin: EDT, 2000), 37–42; Marco Marica, "Jacovacci, Vincenzo," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Treccani, 2004).

13 Andreas Giger, "Social Control and the Censorship of Giuseppe Verdi's Operas in Rome (1844–1859)," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9, no. 3 (1999): 233–65; Giger, "Behind the

Examining these dynamics brings into view both Roman conservatism and its openness. Yet even this openness can be understood in two distinct ways. There were those who sought novelty in the dialogue with romantic instrumental music, opening up to international influences, and those who only wanted more enjoyment of theatrical or entertainment music. However, these opposing strains—the popular versus the progressive, the theatrical versus the instrumental, the local versus the international—failed to integrate into a cohesive Roman musical culture. For twenty years, this lack of synthesis hindered the city's ability to mirror the modernising trends characteristic of the European nineteenth century. Where in a city like Paris immigration, state regulation and urban culture were engines of rapid progress, in Rome they had no fruitful outcome except, perhaps, after the fall of the Papal States.¹⁴ It is necessary to understand how and why this interaction did not take place in the Eternal City.

One answer can be found in the urban conformation of Rome and the social dynamics that it both promoted and sanctioned. Drawing on musicological perspectives that focus on music as a primarily social force¹⁵ and on the so-called *spatial turn*,¹⁶ I will attempt to illustrate how society, space and music interacted in a classical environment *par excellence* such as Rome, and how the conformation of this city gave rise to dynamics that are difficult to trace elsewhere. Such an inquiry will be useful not only to gain a more complete understanding of this period's musical society, but also to redefine those resistances and delays attributed to the Roman musical culture after the city became the capital of a national kingdom.

Police Chief's Closed Doors: The Unofficial Censors of Verdi in Rome," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 7, no. 2 (2010): 63–99.

14 Bianca Maria Antolini, "Roma di fine Ottocento. Una capitale per la musica," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 130 (2007): 29–42; Gesa Zur Nieden, "The Internationalization of Musical Life at the End of the Nineteenth Century in Modernized Paris and Rome," *Urban History* 40, no. 4 (2013): 663–80; Meloncelli, "Sul rinnovamento della vita musicale romana."

15 Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life. The Politics of Participation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Georgina Born, "After Relational Aesthetics: Improvised Music, the Social, and (Re)Theorizing the Aesthetic," in *Improvisation and Social Aesthetics*, eds. Georgina Born, Eric Lewis, and William Straw (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 33–58.

16 From Adam Krims, *Music and Urban Geography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007) to Jacek Blaszkiewicz, *Fanfare for a City. Music and the Urban Imagination in Haussmann's Paris* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2024). For an up-to-date bibliography on this disciplinary turn see Hubert Knoblauch, and Martina Löw, "The Re-Figuration of Spaces and Refigured Modernity: Concept and Diagnosis," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45, no. 2 (2020): 263–92.

Society and Culture

On a symbolic and imagological level, until the Italian conquest the “official image of Rome in Europe ... [was] that of one of the last bastions *against* progress, *against* liberal and democratic society, *against* modernity and modernization. And not only on the terrain of ideologies and worldviews, but also explicitly on that of customs and ways of life.”¹⁷ This statement by Vittorio Vidotto sums up the position of Pius IX’s Rome on several levels. On a political level, the threat of invasion by the Kingdom of Italy (the so-called *Questione romana*) and the consequent papal opposition to the socio-cultural instances of the Risorgimento (liberalism, progressivism, secularism) had led Pius IX to an increasingly rigid closure towards contemporaneity. This opposition was, however, counterbalanced by the simultaneous exaltation of the values of Christianity in a universal, timeless and a-historical sense.¹⁸ If Pius IX was in danger of losing his earthly throne, he wanted, on the contrary, to consolidate his role as the guide of all Catholics, reaffirming the centrality of worship, corroborating the functions of the pontiff (*Dogma of Infallibility*, 1869–70) and combating immoral anti-Christian principles (*Syllabus of Errors*, 1864). He wanted, in short, to raise his state above any national or international conflict, even in the cultural sphere. This also had decisive effects on Rome’s musical society, as the public debate on many aspects of contemporary life, which elsewhere had been conveyed by the local press and publications since the beginning of the century,¹⁹ was reduced to a minimum in the city. The city’s main periodical, *Il giornale di Roma*, hardly ever discussed music; *L’osservatore romano* was the only periodical to address it sporadically, but it was only founded in July 1861. Among specialist periodicals, only *L’Eptacordo* existed, although it appeared irregularly under oppressive state supervision.²⁰ This slowed down many of the reforming actions that were taking place in other European cities.²¹

17 Vittorio Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea* (Rome: Laterza, 2001), 3. Emphasis added. Unless otherwise specified, translations from non-English texts are my own.

18 Giacomo Martina, *Il pontificato di Pio IX (1846–1878)*, vol. 2 (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1976), 114–5.

19 Emanuele Senici, “Delirious Hopes: Napoleonic Milan and the Rise of Modern Italian Operatic Criticism,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27, no. 2 (2015): 97–127.

20 Daniela Macchione, “‘Ne’ latifondi delle lettere, e delle arti belle’ sotto l’occhio vigile della censura. Storia dell’*Eptacordo*, periodico romano di metà Ottocento,” *Fonti musicali italiane* 13 (2008): 177–95.

21 Roger Magraw, *France 1814–1915: The Bourgeois Century* (Oxford: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983).

Those who might have subverted this order were the industrial and capitalist bourgeoisie, the true agents and catalysts of change in nineteenth-century Europe. Rome, however, lacked such a class: limited industrial development, cautious infrastructural modernization, and reliance on a landowning and manufacturing economy prevented it from flourishing. Demographically, Rome had an almost unique composition. The size of the city was that of a small capital, like Munich or Copenhagen.²² According to a survey of the time, in 1853 almost 30 percent of the inhabitants belonged to the poorer classes (farmers, laborers, caretakers), while the wealthier groups (including the Roman *generone* and the aristocracy) accounted for 6 percent, and the clergy for about 2 percent.²³ For our purposes, we need to consider the population of resident artists: “of the fine arts workers [just over 1,000] one seventh are foreigners, one quarter Italians from other provinces, and the remainder from Rome and the Papal States.”²⁴ This statistic, however, does not take into account migratory flows, especially seasonal or temporary ones from all over the West. “The number of foreigners who come to Rome from November to almost the whole of April varies from 25,000 to 60,000 ... Many of them come for the ceremonies of Christmas, Lent and Easter; but the majority come for pleasure, to admire the treasures of fine art and its stupendous ruins.”²⁵

Among them were numerous artists (painters, sculptors, writers, musicians) drawn, despite or perhaps because of Pius IX’s conservative policies, by the prospect of encountering one of the last oases of genuine antiquity and anti-modernity. In general, it was difficult for them to integrate fully with the local population. The reasons for this incompatibility lay primarily in perceptions of the city itself. In the eyes of foreigners, Romans failed to understand the value of the places they inhabited; for the Romans, by contrast, their city was a capital like any other—poorer, certainly, but worthy of greater consideration only because it was older and more sacred. “For-

22 From 170,000 inhabitants in 1850 to 200,000 twenty years later.

23 Cesare Mazzoni, *Roma. Dati statistici* (Forlì: Luigi Bordinandini, 1861), 13–4.

24 “Degli addetti alle belle arti un settimo sono stranieri, un quarto italiani delle altre provincie, e il restante romani e statisti.” Mazzoni, 15.

25 “Il numero de’ forestieri che dal Novembre a quasi tutto l’Aprile si noverano in Roma varia dai 25.000 ai 60.000 ... Parecchi di essi vi si conducono per le cerimonie del Natale, della Quaresima e della Pasqua; ma la maggior parte ci viene a diletto, per ammirarvi i tesori di belle arti e le sue stupende ruine.” Mazzoni, 16. I do not take into account here the migratory flows of people from poorer social classes or employed in non-artistic jobs, estimated at almost 100,000. See Massimiliano Crisci, “Migrazioni e trasformazione urbana a Roma dalla metà dell’Ottocento alla fine dell’età liberale (1850–1920),” *Giornale di storia* 35 (2021): 4–8.

eigners take possession of Rome. Only they know the right way to use the eternal city; Romans obscure its clear presence.”²⁶ Herman Melville, who arrived in Rome in 1857, admired the statues of St John Lateran and wrote:

Standing in every grand or animated attitude, they seem not only to attest that this is the Eternal City, but likewise, at its portal, to offer greetings in the name of that great company of statues which, amid the fluctuations of the human census, abides the *true and undying* population of Rome. It is, indeed, among these mute citizens that the stranger forms his most pleasing and cherished associations, to be remembered when other things in the Imperial City are forgotten.²⁷

By contrast, the Roman population displayed an ambiguous attitude: it benefited from the wealth generated by visitors—“With a cigarette or two, one can gain a supporter,” Georges Bizet remarked in 1857, referring to a Roman beggar²⁸—yet also showed a certain indifference, which at times turned into hostility. This was especially true of the large French community, represented in the city not only by tourists but also by the military contingent first sent by France to restore Pius IX to the throne after the Roman Republic of 1849, and later maintained by Napoleon III to protect Rome from the ambitions of the Kingdom of Italy until 1870.²⁹ Historian Alberto De Angelis explains that

Foreign society and Roman society in Rome are two distinct and unmistakable worlds ... and since it is evident that, in such a situation, artistic progress could only have taken place in the upper classes of the city, where the ease of life and the easiest contact with culture was possible, it is in the salons and the artistic circles of Rome that we must look for the first signs of an intellectual rebirth and before that in the neutral—“extraterritorial,” we might even

26 “Gli stranieri si appropriano di Roma. Solo loro conoscono l’uso giusto della città eterna, i romani ne offuscano la limpida presenza.” Elisabeth and Jörg Garms, “Mito e realtà di Roma nella cultura europea. Viaggio e idea, immagine e immaginazione,” in *Storia d’Italia*, vol. V, *Il paesaggio*, ed. Cesare De Seta (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), 638. See also Musitelli, “Artisti e letterati stranieri a Roma nell’Ottocento.”

27 Herman Melville, “Statues in Rome,” in Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville as Lecturer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 130. Emphasis added.

28 “Pour une cigarette ou deux on se fait un partisan.” Georges Bizet, *Lettres. Impressions de Rome (1857–1860). La Commune (1871)* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1907), 69.

29 On the French occupation, see Capone, *La protection française des États pontificaux*.

and not improperly say—areas of the embassies ... where cultured or wealthy Romans found ... opportunities to approach and mix with cultured foreign elements flowing into or residing in Rome.³⁰

Foreigners should in any case be credited with providing the strongest impetus for Rome's opening to European instrumental music, which, until the 1830s, had remained "*lettre close pour les Romains*"—according to a famous expression by Berlioz.

There is much evidence of this: programs written in French ...; an audience of exclusive subscribers, sometimes referred to in the programs themselves; the silence of the city's press; the sessions in honor of foreign performers (for example, in 1863, the one in honor of [Auguste] Franchomme); the collaboration of foreign instrumentalists resident in or visiting Rome, such as the Berlin violist Wilhelm Troschel (who later became Roman by adoption) and the English pianist Walter Bache, who stayed in Rome between 1862 and 1865.³¹

Nor should we underestimate the contribution of the musicians and organizers of the time, for example the German violinist Ludwig Landsberg and the activities of the amateur choir of the Association of German Artists,³² the Danish composer Niels Ravnkilde, or the members of the Circolo Scandinavo,

30 "Società straniera e società romana in Roma sono due mondi distinti e inconfondibili; E poiché è evidente che, in tale situazione di cose, il progresso artistico non avrebbe potuto verificarsi che nei ceti superiori della città, dove l'agio della vita e il più facile contatto con la cultura era possibile, è nei salotti e negli ambienti artistici romani che dobbiamo ricercare i primi segni di rinascita intellettuale e prima ancora nelle zone neutre extraterritoriali," potremmo addirittura e non impropriamente dire – delle ambasciate ..., dove i romani colti o facoltosi trovano ... occasione di avvicinare e di mescolarsi con colti elementi stranieri che affluiscono o risiedono in Roma." De Angelis, *La musica a Roma nel secolo XIX*, 11–2.

31 "Varie prove potrebbero addursi al riguardo: i programmi in francese ...; il pubblico esclusivo di abbonati, cui talora accennano questi stessi programmi; il silenzio della stampa cittadina; le sedute in onore di esecutori stranieri (vedi, nel 1863, quella in onore di [Auguste] Franchomme); la collaborazione di strumentisti stranieri residenti o di passaggio a Roma come il violista berlinese Wilhelm Troschel (fattosi poi romano d'adozione) e il pianista inglese Walter Bache, a Roma tra il 1862 e il 1865." Claudio Annibaldi, "Beethoven a Roma nell'Ottocento (I)," *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 5, no. 3 (1971): 377n68.

32 Friedrich Noack, *Das Deutschtum in Rom seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Deutsche Verlag, 1927), 585–87; Bianca Maria Antolini, "Un musicista tedesco nella Roma dell'Ottocento. Ludwig Landsberg," in "*Vanitatis fuga, aeternitatis amor*." Wolfgang Witzemann zum 65. Geburtstag, eds. Sabine Ehrmann-Herfort and Markus Engelhardt (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2005), 465–87.

an association of Nordic artists that attracted, among others, the young Edvard Grieg.³³ Naturally, credit cannot be assigned to foreign contributions alone: the synergy between local actors and external interlocutors proved exceptionally fruitful. Violinists Tullio Ramacciotti and Ettore Pinelli, together with pianist Giovanni Sgambati, for instance, took advantage of the large foreign audience to organize several initiatives (matinées, academies, and full-orchestra concerts) throughout this twenty-year period. Franz Liszt's presence in Rome between 1861 and 1869 was also central to the promotion of these enterprises and to the formation of a new generation of pianists and composers, of whom Sgambati was certainly the main representative.³⁴

Music theater did not constitute a true international hub, and only in particular and sporadic events, such as premieres, was it attractive to the elite public of foreigners. Almost twenty years after the fall of the papal kingdom, a municipal official stated that "people accustomed to the performances of the main foreign capitals will not come to Rome to go to the theater, but to see the ancient queen of the world or to study the progress of modern arts."³⁵ American sculptor William Wetmore Story, who lived in Rome for decades, even implied that the only reason to attend a Roman opera house was its affordability.³⁶

The "old and swampy"³⁷ Teatro Apollo (also known as Tordinona) was the only theater devoted exclusively to musical entertainment. It was frequented mainly by Romans, who occupied both the most prominent boxes and the majority of seats in the other sectors; social distinctions were largely absent inside the theater, emerging only at the ticket counter. Similarly, the authors most frequently performed at the Apollo or the Argentina (the city's second most important theater in terms of both importance and quality), were Italian, with the sole exception of Meyerbeer.³⁸ It is therefore not possible to identify in the

33 Edvard Grieg, "Diary of 1866," in *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson (New York: Peer Gynt Press, 2001), 40–41.

34 The bibliography on Liszt in Rome is extensive, I will only mention Nicolas Dufetel, "Liszt e Roma: bilancio e prospettive di ricerca," in *Musikstadt Rom. Geschichte – Forschung – Perspektiven*, ed. Markus Engelhardt, *Analecta musicologica* 45 (2011): 452–77; Elisabeth Reisinger, "Heaven and Hell. Performances of Liszt's Works and their Reception in Rome, 1861–1886," *Studia Musicologica* 60, no. 1–4 (2019): 169–85. On Sgambati, see Bianca Maria Antolini and Annalisa Bini (eds.), *Giovanni Sgambati: musicista dell'avvenire o epigono romantico?* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale di S. Cecilia, 2018).

35 Quoted in Zur Nieden, "The internationalization of musical life," 667.

36 William Wetmore Story, *Roba di Roma*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1867), 213.

37 "Vecchio e paludoso." Raffaele De Cesare, *Roma e lo Stato del papa. Dal ritorno di Pio IX al 20 settembre*, vol. I, 1850–1860 (Rome: Forzani, 1907), 151.

38 Data retrieved from the *Corago* database, accessed July 7, 2026, corago.unibo.it. One

opera house the mixture and variety of repertoires resulting from transcultural exchange that were more evident in other capitals.³⁹ Indeed, the opera house was perhaps the place where the preponderance of the local population—its tastes, moods, and network of relationships—could be felt most strongly.⁴⁰

At the same time, the papal government did not prohibit theater attendance, since keeping theaters open allowed it to exercise closer supervision over individual behavior; it recognized “the educational need to direct young people in particular toward a venue more easily subject to supervision than other meeting places: namely, the theater.”⁴¹ The theater therefore had to be a popular and attractive venue to the highest degree, and in no way exclusionary. Historian Giuseppe Prospero Zuliani argued that “The [Roman] people have good ears, but are not educated in artistic finesse. Give them an opera that they love, such as *Il trovatore*, and if at least half of the singers possess some voice, they will easily pass over coarse shouting, exaggerations, uncertainties and even out-of-tune singing.”⁴²

Instead, the places where an effective interaction of the entire population was possible were public spaces: the Corso (which at the end of winter exploded in the festivities of the Roman Carnival), the more central squares (such as Piazza del Popolo or Piazza Colonna) and Villa Borghese, the biggest park in the center of the city. Places of worship did not belong entirely to the same category: foreigners frequented their national churches—such as San Luigi dei Francesi or Santa Maria dell’Anima for German-speaking communities—and often belonged to confessions other than Catholicism.⁴³ The Christian universality invoked by Pius IX found expression chiefly in the great papal basilicas, which served as major attractions for tourists, destinations for pilgrims, and worldwide symbols of papal power.⁴⁴

work by Gounod and one by von Flotow were also performed over the same twenty-year period.

39 See the example of Paris: Damien Ehrhardt, “Les musiciens étrangers et l’émergence du champ musical,” *Hommes & migrations* 1308 (2014): 139–47.

40 See the social composition of Apollo frequenters in De Cesare, *Roma e lo Stato del papa*, 302.

41 Monica Calzolari, “Censura e spirito pubblico. Voci di autori, impresari e spettatori a confronto con la revisione degli spettacoli,” in *Gregorio XVI Promotore delle arti e della cultura*, eds. Francesca Longo, Claudia Zaccagnini, and Fabrizio Fabbrini (Pisa: Pacini, 2008), 475.

42 Zuliani, *Roma musicale*, 34.

43 Golo Maurer, *Preußen am Tarpejischen Felsen. Chronik eines absehbaren Sturzes. Die Geschichte des Deutschen Kapitols 1817–1918* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2005), 51–61; McIntire, *England Against the Papacy*, 40–46.

44 Richard Boursy, “The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Romantic Era,” *The*

The Tale of Two Cities

The socio-musical perspectives of Georgina Born and Thomas Turino can be useful in this investigation as they shift the focus from musical products or facts as such to the effects they have on people. Born argues, for instance, that music “produces its own diverse socialities, ... has powers to animate imagined communities ... refracts wider social relations, from the most concrete to the most abstract of collectivities.”⁴⁵ In such dynamics, the spatial dimension assumes a pivotal role, insofar as “our bodily practices shape spaces, but the latter in turn contribute to the repetition over time of the former, sending us signals regarding the use of space through bodies.”⁴⁶ It can therefore be suggested that, even without an actual “musical district” in Rome, socio-musical practices originating from different *habitus* were materially anchored in specific spaces and boundaries. Conservative state policies would merely have favored the realization of such a district, without intervening to curb certain practices—by prohibiting attendance at the most popular theaters, or even demolishing them—or to separate activities, for example, by intentionally “ghettoizing” certain sectors of music production in order to control them more effectively. However, this seems paradoxical at a time when, precisely for socio-political purposes, the papal government was changing the urban structure of Rome, implementing the construction of new housing, manufacturing centers and infrastructures such as bridges and a railway station.⁴⁷ Such disinterest in the musical and spectacular sphere can be considered quite antithetical to the interests of other European rulers: just consider, for instance, the contemporary constructions of the Opéra Garnier in Paris (1861–1875) or the Royal Albert Hall in London (1867–1871).

Given Rome’s relatively small size and its historical subdivision into *rioni* (Figs. 1 and 2), it is possible to identify on a map the main places where music played a central role: theaters, salons open to the public, outdoor spaces used for musical events, and even music shops. It will be necessary, however, to leave aside those places that contributed little or nothing to the city’s social

Journal of Musicology 11, no. 3 (1993): 277–329; Graham O’Reilly, *Allegrì’s Miserere in the Sistine Chapel* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2020), 121–182.

45 Born, “After Relational Aesthetics,” 43.

46 Alfredo Agustoni and Serena Sansevieri, “Tempo, spazi, distanze e luoghi,” in *Sociologia dello spazio, dell’ambiente e del territorio*, eds. Alfredo Agustoni, Paolo Giuntarelli, and Roberto Veraldi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007), 23.

47 Gianfranco Spagnesi, *L’architettura a Roma al tempo di Pio IX (1850–1870)* (Rome: Studium, 2000).



Fig. 1 – Map of Rome in 1862.

discourse, such as private salons or the scriptoria of sacred-music scholars. At stake here is nothing less than what Habermas termed *the public sphere*.⁴⁸ Indeed, decisive value cannot be assigned to discourses and practices in the reconfiguration of the urban musical context unless they were reworked through forms of action at least open to the public: public debate in periodicals, academies, or other venues such as cafés—which, actually, exerted no influence on music in Rome and did not host concerts of contemporary music.

The situation was completely different for sacred music, which will not be discussed in this study but should be mentioned for the sake of completeness. The distribution across the city of places devoted to the performance of sacred music—such as churches, basilicas, and convents—was extremely dense. According to an 1849 survey, whose data remained substantially unchanged over the following twenty years, there were 371 churches in which liturgies were at least occasionally set to music, as well as 30 permanent music chapels and 23 *maestri di cappella* serving one or more churches.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

⁴⁹ The survey was carried out by the Cecilian academic Luigi Rossi in the document *Nota*



Fig. 2 – The city's division into *rioni*.

The musical theaters active in this period were the Apollo, Argentina (specialized in opera and ballet), Valle, Metastasio, Capranica (comedy and vaudeville, rarely opera), Emiliani, Montanara (comedy, pantomime and puppets) and Sant'Apollinare (puppets). These were located in the *rioni* Ponte (V), Parione (VI), Regola (VII) and Sant'Eustachio (VIII), with the exception of Capranica and Argentina, which were located a little further away, in the *rioni* Colonna (III) and Pigna (IX), respectively. Mention must also be made, in passing, of the Teatro Alibert (the eighteenth-century Teatro delle Dame), which was renovated around 1848 but destroyed by fire in 1863. In its last fifteen years, it no longer maintained the reputation as an important opera house that it had acquired in the previous century, instead hosting parties and various kinds of performances, including equestrian and dramatic shows.

Chamber music concerts took place mainly in the *riione* Campo Marzio (IV), in music halls located in Vicolo del Vantaggio, Via dei Pontefici, in the Sala dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia (via di Ripetta), and in Palazzo

de' servizi musicali nelle chiese di Roma (1848), analyzed and published in full in Giancarlo Rostirolla, "Luoghi e protagonisti della musica sacra nella Roma di metà Ottocento," *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 9, no. 3 (2005): 307–49.

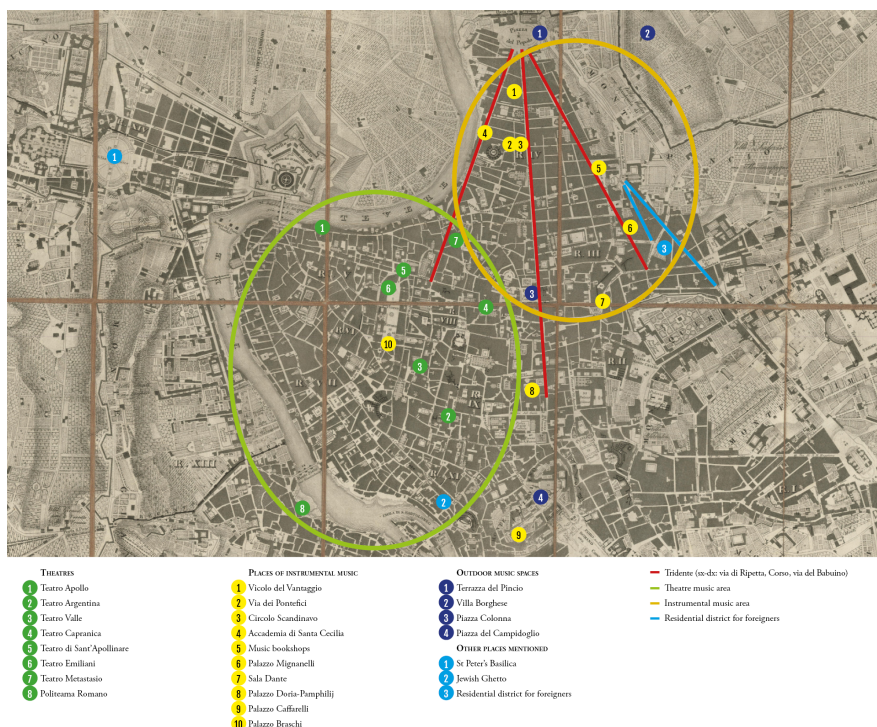


Fig. 3 – A detailed map of Rome.

Mignanelli; another venue was Palazzo Doria Pamphilij (*rione Pigna*, IX).⁵⁰ In *rione* Campo Marzio there were also music bookshops owned by Bartolo, Monaldi and Spithover, in Piazza di Spagna. Outside this area were the hall of Palazzo Braschi and the hall of Palazzo Caffarelli, seat of the Prussian embassy. Campo Marzio also shared with *rione* Colonna (III) the main venues for outdoor music, namely the Corso, Piazza Colonna and the Pincio gardens, where, as Nathaniel Hawthorne (a guest of the city at the time) said, “on certain afternoons of the week, a French military band flings out rich music over the poor old city, floating her with strains as loud as those of her own echoless triumphs.”⁵¹

It is interesting to compare these areas with those inhabited by wealthy tourists, who formed the main audience base for many musical events. According to historian Raffaele De Cesare, foreigners rented

50 Cimagalli and Vacca, “Attività concertistiche nella Roma preunitaria”; Vacca, “L'Ottocento musicale romano”; Macchione, “Attività concertistica e musica strumentale.”

51 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1860), 124.



Fig. 4 – Piazza Navona, ca. 1862 (ph. Giorgio Sommer).

the large flats in Piazza di Spagna, Via Gregoriana, Via Sistina, Via Condotti, Fontanella di Borghese, Quattro Fontane up to Villino Franz, Due Macelli, Ripetta and Babuino, and used to rent quarters in almost all the historical buildings to the richest foreign families. ... In the Chigi, Ruspoli, Albani, Mattei, Santacroce, Colonna and Doria palaces, there were always large quarters supplied to foreign families or diplomats.⁵²

It is evident that richer social classes tended to congregate in the north-eastern part of the city, the same area that also included the places dedicated to instrumental music performances and at the same time cut off, or only marginally touched, the areas dedicated to theaters. The so-called “English ghetto,” i.e. the area around Piazza di Spagna where most of the wealthy English-speakers resided,⁵³ and the wretched Jewish ghetto, in *rione Sant’Angelo* (XI), where the Jewish community of Rome had been confined since 1555, were at the opposite ends of the spectrum. And yet, according to the maps of the time, it cannot be claimed that the city was divided by census (Fig. 3). On the left side of the Tiber, aristocratic palaces and working-class

⁵² De Cesare, *Roma e lo Stato del papa*, 79.

⁵³ An expression used since the 1820s. Harry Nelson Gay, “John Keats e gli inglesi a Roma,” *Nuova antologia di lettere, scienze ed arti* 160 (1912): 3.

dwelling were seamlessly distributed throughout the territory. The splendor of the palaces of Piazza Navona, for example, coexisted with the daily food market, “cluttered with a layer of rubbish and filth that exhaled pestiferous miasma and on which the donkeys lay down ... and the dogs raced to find something to eat” (Fig. 4).⁵⁴ Only in Trastevere were aristocratic palaces in the minority, with poor dwellings, workshops, and taverns occupying the rest of the space.

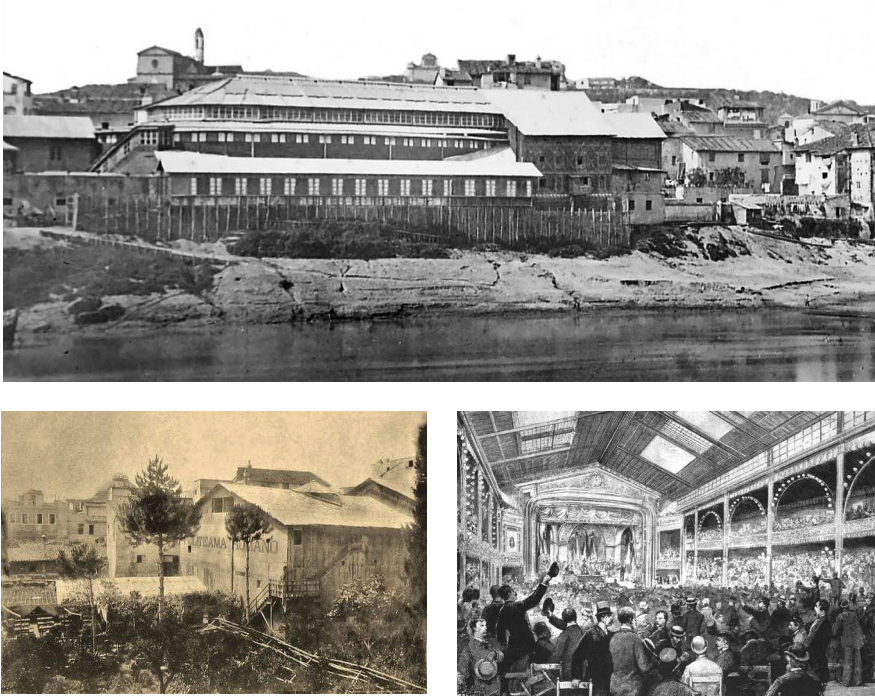
In this context, the inaugurations of a new theater and a new concert hall were emblematic, both for the significance of private initiative and for their symbolic value and location: the Politeama Romano, initially used for performances of various kinds and later established as the city’s third opera house in 1865, and the Sala Dante, which was to become the center of Roman symphonic concerts (1866). The former, a large-scale building made of wood and steel (Figs. 5–7), was built on a small beach in *rione* Trastevere (XIII) between Ponte Cestio and Ponte Sisto, probably on the remains of an earlier theater that had already been active for plays between 1860 and 1863.⁵⁵ It was designed by Eugenio Venier, chief stagehand of the Teatro Apollo, and managed by Luigi Vannutelli—former municipal secretary and last impresario of the Teatro Aliberti⁵⁶—who also became its owner. The foundation of the Politeama can be related to the state-sponsored construction of the workers’ quarter known as Quartiere Mastai, whose purpose was to provide affordable housing for the population of Trastevere around the new Manifattura Tabacchi (Tobacco Factory, 1860–63), without, however, providing recreational spaces.⁵⁷ The Politeama’s purpose was not exclusively musical, but it did lend itself to opera productions, especially in the summer when other theaters were closed. Its importance grew after 1870, when it was able to give, for example, the Roman premiere of Wagner’s *Rienzi* (1880); until then, its activities were not noteworthy even for periodicals, and its name never appeared in newspapers. Its location and patrons

54 Ottavio Pio Conti, “Il Circo Agonale e la Fontana dei Calderari,” *Roma. Antologia illustrata* 1, no. 28 (1878): 302.

55 Information about this building is scarce and fragmentary. The most documented source is Felice Guglielmi, “Nostalgia di un teatro scomparso. Il Politeama Romano,” *La Strenna dei romanisti* 48 (1987): 261–74. See also Alberto Cametti, “Teatro e musica nell’Ottocento romano,” *Capitolium* 8, no. 1–2 (1932): 93–4.

56 “Annunzio,” *Il buon gusto* 9, no. 36 (1860): 144.

57 Maria Luisa Neri, “Il Quartiere Mastai a Trastevere, un’esemplare cittadella operaia rimasta incompiuta,” in *Santa Maria dell’Orto. Il complesso architettonico trasteverino. Studi, progetti, restauri*, eds. Michele Funghi and Williams Troiano (Rome: Dei Merangoli, 2015), 95–124.



Figa. 5–7 – Politeama Romano (1870 ca.): exterior, facade, interiors.

were indeed at the margins of the public narrative and institutional politics: Trastevere itself seemed to bear the image of a *terra incognita* for the entire left-bank Tiber population—poor, violent, dangerous.⁵⁸

After all, both the Politeama and the other theaters frequented by the poorer classes only rarely appeared in publications of that time; for example, to get a description of the Emiliani theater in Piazza Navona or the theaters in Piazza Montanara and Piazza Sant'Apollinare it is necessary to follow the gaze of curious foreigners, such as that of the sculptor William Wetmore Story⁵⁹ or that of the German historian Ferdinand Gregorovius, who, in the first volume of his *Wanderjahre in Italien*, described a *Faust* interpreted by puppets and a parody of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Roman dialect.⁶⁰ These were *invisible places*, ignored by the public debate, with no influence on cultured musical activities,

58 See in this regard the narration of a Trastevere exploration recounted by French writer Edmond About in *Rome contemporaine* (Paris: Lévy, 1861), 110–27.

59 Story, *Roba di Roma*, 294–306.

60 Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Wanderjahre in Italien*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1870), 216–28.

from which they themselves drew artistic nourishment. On the stage of these theaters appeared parodied, disguised, and rewritten comedies, such as *Didona* [sic] *abbandonata* (from Metastasio's *Didone abbandonata*, 1838, published 1851) or *Il trovatore* (1854–55), based on Verdi's opera of the same name, which had premiered exactly one year earlier at the Teatro Apollo.⁶¹ Their aim was to entertain the poorer population, not so much by mocking the taste of the richer ones—in the typical dialectic of domination-dominance—but by entering the same aesthetic-productive dynamics of the wealthy class from a side entrance. Such proximity (not only artistic but also geographical) between these *invisible places* and opera houses testifies to their close connection. Moving from one theater to another was not difficult for Roman audiences, even financially. If impresario Jacovacci saved money on operatic productions (Verdi called it “Jacovacci's stinginess” [*la spilorceria di Jacovacci*]),⁶² he still managed to have a full theater, as tickets for opera were accessible to various strata of the population. At the Teatro Apollo, “there were no admission tickets, indeed it is recalled that when the 1859 contract notice stated that the price per seat was raised to sixty *baiocchi* ... people protested and called poor Jacovacci a thief.”⁶³ Because of the popular character of its productions and affordable tickets, at the Apollo one could see as many clerks, merchants, *mercanti di campagna* (country merchants), even priests in bourgeois dress, as the richest Roman aristocracy of the Torlonia, Orsini and Colonna families. At the same time, the presence of foreigners was minimal.⁶⁴

The situation was not so different in the very popular puppet theater in Piazza Sant'Apollinare, where tickets cost 5 baiocchi. “The spectators belong to the middle class,” Gregorovius recounted, “and also to the distin-

61 Jean-François Lattarico, “Réécritures métastasiennes. Notes sur la *Didone abbandonata* en romanesco,” *Cahiers d'études romanes* 20 (2009): 299–320; Giulio Vaccaro, “Cummedie nove, falsette e pantomimme. Il teatro nella Roma dell'Ottocento dai burattini alla Compagnia Tacconi,” *Il 996. Rivista del centro studi Giuseppe Gioachino Belli* 25, no. 2 (2017): 59–74.

62 Giuseppe Verdi, *I copialettere*, eds. Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio (Milan: Ceretti, 1913), 570. See also John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi. The Role of the Impresario* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 25.

63 De Cesare, *Roma e lo Stato del papa*, 303. It should be noted that at that time there was a distinction between admission tickets (*biglietto d'ingresso*) and seat tickets (*biglietto di posto*). The former, as in this case, could be free, but did not entitle the holder to a seat. “The holder of a seat ticket is not permitted to enter the theater to occupy their assigned seat without first purchasing an admission ticket.” Nicola Tabanelli, “I diritti e gli obblighi degli spettatori riguardo al posto,” *Rivista musicale italiana* 6 (1899): 802. See also Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy*, 67–70.

64 De Cesare, *Roma e lo Stato del papa*, 302.

guished class, who do not shy away from the occasional pleasure of a puppet show.”⁶⁵ Jacovacci himself came from the *teatri dialettali*. He had begun by managing the Fiano, a puppet theater that had closed in the mid-century, then moved on to the Alibert and also to the Amphitheatre Corea, an open-air venue mostly dedicated to comedies or equestrian games.⁶⁶ To this experience, Jacovacci added a mercantile mentality,⁶⁷ arguably derived from his family’s business in the fish-selling sector; this was compounded by the chronic lack of public funds for adequate opera productions.⁶⁸ The results of his operations were thus closer to popular entertainment than to the glittering stagings found in many other European capitals.

The demands of the instrumental-music audience—not necessarily wealthier than the theater-going public, but certainly more culturally open—were of an entirely different kind. From the early 1850s, building on tentative ventures that had begun some twenty years earlier, a number of Roman musicians began to organize chamber-music concerts, especially in the *rione* Campo Marzio (IV). These were not official or academic initiatives—although there was an obligation to request authorization from state institutions⁶⁹—but rather spontaneous expressions of a perceived need to fill the gaps in a musical landscape that was not opening up to contemporary international currents. However, this did not concern the two Roman music academies, Santa Cecilia and the Filarmonica: the former was engaged almost exclusively in concerts of Italian vocal music, while the latter was only active for a four-year period (1856–60) and hardly ever opened to non-academics.

Between the 1850s and the 1860s, Tullio Ramacciotti, his nephew Ettore Pinelli, and Giovanni Sgambati performed several chamber-music concerts in a hall at Vicolo del Vantaggio 1 and another at Via dei Pontefici 50, near Via di Ripetta. Their programs consisted of works from the previous fifty years by, among many others, Weber, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schumann.⁷⁰ Beginning in December 1864, Sgambati and Pinelli also orga-

65 Gregorovius, *Wanderjahre in Italien*, 207.

66 Regarding the puppet theaters, see Davide Marzattinocci, *Cassandrino al Teatro Fiano. Il teatro delle marionette a Roma nella prima metà dell'Ottocento* (Azzano San Paolo: Junior, 2006).

67 Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy*, 24.

68 The situation was very similar in the state’s second city, Bologna. See Cormac Newark, “‘In Italy We Don’t Have the Means for Illusion’: Grand Opéra in Nineteenth-Century Bologna,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19, no. 3 (2007): 199–222.

69 Vacca, “L’Ottocento musicale romano.”

70 Cimagalli and Vacca, “Attività concertistiche nella Roma preunitaria.” See also Vacca, “L’Ottocento musicale romano” and Macchione, “Attività concertistica e musica strumentale.”



Fig. 8 – The Sala Dante.

nized matinées in a large hall rising through two storeys inside Palazzo Poli, the building into whose facade the Trevi Fountain is built. On February 22, 1866, an exhibition of twenty-seven paintings inspired by the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth in 1265 was inaugurated there. Liszt arranged for his *Dante-Symphonie* (1855–56) to be performed at the inaugural event, entrusting the conducting to his pupil Sgambati, who made his debut on the podium. From then on, the hall was renamed first Galleria Dantesca and later Sala Dante, becoming the Roman centre of Romantic instrumental music (Figs. 8 and 9).⁷¹ However, this was not a repertoire specifically intended for those who frequented Roman theaters. The poet Decio Cortesi recounts:

⁷¹ On the Sala Dante, see Bianca Maria Antolini, “La musica nelle celebrazioni del sesto centenario dantesco,” in *Il mito di Dante nella musica della Nuova Italia (1861–1914)*, ed. Guido Salvetti (Milan: Guerini, 1994), 41–47.



Fig. 9 – Entrance to the Sala Dante today.

Walking along the Corso, in the company of a poet friend of mine ... I was struck by a small poster in which it was announced that a Beethoven Quartet would be performed in the Sala Dante ... Then the desire was born in my soul to know what Beethoven and his music was, and I knew that almost ‘clandestinely’ ... egregious artists such as Sgambati and Pinelli, performed before forty or fifty people, *most of them not Roman*, chosen classical music ... It was an afternoon, ... and the rare audience [was] scattered here and there around the hall. Everyone was attentive: they were all performers and there was no trace of the audience that today crowds theaters and concerts.⁷²

In those years, the composition of the audience of the Sala Dante would always be the exact opposite of that of the Roman theaters: a “small number”

⁷² Quoted in De Angelis, *La musica a Roma nel secolo XIX*, 30. Emphasis added.

of Romans and “various ministers of foreign courts, various ecclesiastical dignitaries, and the flower of the cultured people from beyond the borders of the Alps residing in Rome.”⁷³ Moreover, the Sala Dante’s location made it conveniently accessible to the many foreigners who lived between Piazza di Spagna and Piazza Barberini. If the concerts failed to reach the Roman population, the reason did not lie in ticket prices either: although not cheap, they were not particularly high. The average price was 1 scudo (100 baiocchi) per ticket, more than twice the price of one of the cheapest tickets at the Apollo (40 baiocchi). Later, Sgambati and Pinelli also organized so-called “popular concerts” at the Sala Dante (May–December 1866), whose cheaper tickets cost 30 baiocchi, in order to attract precisely—or so we may assume—the Roman audience that frequented the opera and was accustomed to lower ticket prices. The initiative was unsuccessful, however, since the concerts did not attract the local public they had in mind.

Another Rome: Toward a Conclusion

In his global history of the nineteenth century, Jürgen Osterhammel establishes opera as the “characteristic aesthetic form in Europe at the top of the artistic hierarchy.”⁷⁴ The very building of the opera house constitutes the symbolic center of power and its performance in modern cities: as Ruth Bereson observes, in many cities opera houses “were traditionally placed at significant axes ... close to courts or amusement centres of the aristocracy, their location shifting as focal centres of power changed.”⁷⁵ This was not the case in Rome, where the Apollo, the main opera house, occupied a marginal position overlooking the Tiber, its silhouette indistinguishable from the adjacent buildings (Figs. 10 and 11). Although it was neglected, one cannot go so far as to say that it was an embarrassment for the pope; rather, it was perhaps a necessary evil. Maintaining a theater in which the population could be concentrated—and gathering the theaters themselves within a well-defined area—was useful to the papal regime as a means of containing and controlling, like a *panopticon*, a population not always inclined to follow its directives. Finally, none of the Roman

73 *L'osservatore romano*, 13 december 1866, quoted in Annibaldi, “Beethoven a Roma,” 381.

74 Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 5.

75 Ruth Bereson, *The Operatic State. Cultural Policy and Opera Houses* (London: Routledge, 2002), 6.



Fig. 10 – Fishers near the Teatro Apollo (ph. Ettore Roesler Franz).



Fig. 11 – Teatro Apollo (ph. Fratelli D'Alessandri).

theaters could boast a significant aesthetic presence that distinguished its social and cultural function within the city, as was the case with the most important Italian theaters. Suffice it to say that the Apollo's facade, still overlooked today, was nothing more than "four doors, under a canopy, [that] opened onto the street."⁷⁶ There was no theater that was a symbol of Rome, in the way that La Scala, for example, was an emblem of Milan and a point of reference for its community.

At the same time, it is surprising how music theater did not play a major role in the eyes of the Roman wealthier classes; calls for its reform, refinement and greater centrality in the urban fabric were almost non-existent at this time.⁷⁷ Even those who, like the many foreigners in the city, had a broader view of contemporary novelties did not intervene in local theatrical dynamics. Moreover, the cultural solidity represented by theaters, anchored in tradition, customs, politics and city life itself, could not have been easily undermined. *Teatri dialettali* were, indeed, *invisible places* outside the Aurelian Walls, but they were very popular because they were economically accessible and demographically transversal.

The city of Rome, by virtue of its acknowledged classicism and supra-temporality, was also intangible from the point of view of urban planning. Pius IX provided for a peculiar *renovatio urbis* in a more modern sense, without altering the urban morphology but attempting to enlarge the city area (the Quartiere Mastai in Trastevere, Termini Station and the Verano Cemetery next to the Esquiline Hill). However, those who tried to modify it in the following decades would make changes that were never universally accepted.⁷⁸

It can therefore be said that two distinct cities developed within Rome. One was the city of the Romans: a theatrical city, fond of spectacular representations—whether refined or not—and itself a theater, which foreigners wished to admire in rapture. Toward the end of his fellowship at the Villa Medici, Massenet wrote: "I didn't want to leave my window until the setting sun had completely disappeared behind St Peter's. It seemed to me that it was Rome in turn, taking refuge in the shadows, bidding me farewell."⁷⁹ The other was the city that imitated

⁷⁶ De Angelis, *La musica a Roma nel secolo XIX*, 138.

⁷⁷ Apart from the warnings and demonization of opera itself by certain para-statal apparatuses, such as the Jesuit periodical *La Civiltà cattolica*. See "Del teatro italiano," in *La Civiltà cattolica* 5 (1854), 257–77.

⁷⁸ Vidotto, *Roma contemporanea*, 63–71.

⁷⁹ "Je ne voulais pas quitter ma fenêtre avant que le soleil couchant eût complètement dis-

the customs of the great metropolises, but without these customs being rooted in its territory. Outside the theatrical sphere, informal alliances, *microsocialities*,⁸⁰ were formed by those who preferred other types of music, especially instrumental music. Urban morphology only facilitated these dynamics: the areas of chamber music were those inhabited by wealthy Romans and foreigners, delimited as the so-called *Tridente*, the three streets branching off from Piazza del Popolo—Via di Ripetta, Corso, and Via del Babuino, the latter continuing further toward Piazza Barberini through Via Sistina.

Three decades would pass before Roman society felt the need for an infusion of the latest European musical innovations. The first step, after Rome's annexation to the Kingdom of Italy, was the establishment of a music lyceum, first located in Via di Ripetta and later in Via Vittoria, inside the *Tridente*. An attempt was then made to shape a different, more international urban image of the city, including in the field of music.⁸¹ Some theaters were upgraded, such as the Politeama, which became the third opera house in the city until its demolition in 1883. More significantly, new theatrical venues were created and distributed more evenly throughout the city, from the Alhambra (1880), next to Castel Sant'Angelo, to the Rossini (1873), a conversion of an old convent near the Pantheon. The culmination of this process can be seen in the construction of the imposing Teatro Costanzi (1880) in the newly urbanized area around Termini Station, far removed from the eighteenth-century theaters—Valle, Alibert, and Argentina—but also, and above all, from the more recent ones: the Apollo and Emiliani.

From the perspective of the local population, while it was understandable that the most progressive musical institution—the new music lyceum, coordinated by Sgambati—should be located near the Corso, it must have seemed strange that the theaters were placed outside the perimeter to which they had been confined for the previous three quarters of a century. The Kingdom of Italy sought to modernize the city according to its own vision of Rome, following a map that had little meaning for local society. Thongchai Winichakul clearly defines a similar situation, which occurred in his homeland during a period similar to the one under scrutiny here:

paru derrière Saint-Pierre. Il me semblait que c'était Rome, à son tour, se réfugiant dans l'ombre, qui me faisait ses adieux"; Jules Massenet, *Mes souvenirs, 1848–1912* (Paris: Lafitte, 1912), 61.

80 Born, "After Relational Aesthetics," 43.

81 Zur Nieden, "The internationalization of musical life at the end of the nineteenth century."

Communication theory and common sense alike persuade us that a map is a scientific abstraction of reality. A map merely represents something which already exists objectively. In the history [object of analysis], this relationship was reversed. A map anticipated a spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent. A map was not a transparent medium between human beings and space. It was an active mediator. ... Perhaps more than has been realized, the regime of mapping did not passively reflect Siam. Rather, it has actively structured “Siam” in our minds as well as on earth.⁸²

Italy, in short, was trying to superimpose its own musical idea of Rome onto a city built on quite different assumptions. In this city, the music of the future was the affair of foreigners, and Vincenzo Jacovacci was not the stingiest of opera impresarios, but the most enlightened among the impresarios of the *teatri dialettali*.

82 Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 130. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 173–74.

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Abstract

This essay reassesses musical life in Pius IX's Rome (1850–1870), challenging long-held views of the late Papal State as a period of musical obscurity and passive resistance to modernity. Drawing on urban studies and music sociology, the study examines how urban morphology and social relations shaped sonic practices. This reveals the coexistence of “two cities” that never integrated: the theatrical and dialectal pole, rooted in historical districts and functional to papal control, and the chamber music sphere of the *Tridente*. In this latter domain, the contribution of foreign residents (such as Liszt) was decisive; synergizing with local musicians (Sgambati, Pinelli), they imported the European repertoire. This socio-spatial polarization conditioned the post-unification transition: after 1870, the Italian State attempted to superimpose a new urban and institutional map to force a modernization alien to the city's historical roots.

Keywords: urban musicology, Pius IX, Rome, secular music spaces, transnational networks

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