Opera in Transnational Context:

Reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*

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The following set of short essays is the outcome of a graduate workshop held at the opening of the second conference of the Leverhulme-funded international research network 'Re-imagining italianità: opera and musical culture in transnational perspective', which took place at Brown University in May 2017. A response to the network's investigation of the relationship and the interactions between music and different notions of *italianità*, contributors to the workshop were invited to reflect on the use, translation, and transposition of Italian opera into other media and cultural contexts, during the nineteenth century and beyond. The graduate workshop set the scene for this debate through a series of encounters with Jean Jacques Rousseau's seminal *Essay on the Origin of Languages*.

Written between 1749 and 1754, in the context of Rousseau's intervention in the *Querelle des Bouffons*, but withheld from publication and appearing in print posthumously in 1781, Rousseau's essay explicates a narrative charting the development of language from climates in the European south moving northwards. On its way, according to Rousseau, language loses its expressive qualities becoming rational and persuasive. Music—ever important for Rousseau—persists as a useful metaphor, intersecting in complex ways with language and between nations. What follows reflects both the diversity of research appearing from the Reimagining Italianità network and the enduring vitality of Rousseau's thought, especially in its synthesis with current musicological interests and methodologies. The contributions combine discussion of the text (and related texts) with current musicological debate on emergent technologies, transnationalism, and the Global South. Perhaps fittingly for an essay which, at its heart, explores the evolutionary chasm between written and spoken language, the essays combine speech (as work delivered informally in a workshop) and writing (later prepared for the purpose of documentation). While three contributions investigate, from different perspectives, the relationship between language and music in Rousseau, a fourth essay explores the reception of Rousseau's ideas on music in Spain and Latin America, and the final piece considers modern implications of Rousseau's

characterisation of Italians as a 'preliterate' society. The discussion is based on John H. Moran's 1966 translation of Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Language*s (Chicago University Press).[1]

(Alexander Kolassa and Axel Körner)

Ditlev Rindom (University of Cambridge)

Rousseau and Music: Counting Time

Music plays a central role in Rousseau's genealogy of language. Indeed, for Rousseau contemporary distinctions between verse, singing, and speech are symptomatic of a broader degeneration of human society. A culture of eloquence, in which music was understood as the 'twofold voice of nature' [p. 72] an expression of passion inseparable from speech, has been replaced by one of political decadence: 'arms and cash' [p. 72] are society's only concerns now, Rousseau laments, and brute force has replaced political persuasion. The earlier union of music and language thus reflected an innate understanding of the moral and affective dimensions of sound: while languages have become more precise with time, music has declined as musicians have forgotten its initial role as the accent of language.

Rousseau's frustrations with contemporary understandings of music find a focal point in his comments on Rameau and French opera. Seeking to understand music on the basis of harmony, Rousseau argues, is a categorical error akin to analysing painting by scrutinising the colour spectrum: it reveals a focus on the 'mere mechanics' of art [p. 55], rather than its mimetic aspects, which in music reside in melody. Sound, Rousseau argues, is embodied and moral in nature, and it therefore needs to be understood in relation to its initial function in expressing passion. Rousseau thus points towards a broader theory of music: one centred not upon analysing specific compositional elements, but rather on developing a philosophy of sound, via an understanding of the fundamental impulses (and historical contexts) from which music and speech first arose.

[1] The quotations in all essays are taken from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Essay on the Origin of Languages which treats of Melody and Musical Imitation', in *On the Origin of Language: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder,* trans. John H. Moran (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966)

According to Rousseau, music first became corrupted through its gradual separation from speech and through the influence of harsh Northern tongues on the earliest, mellifluous Southern spoken sounds. These Southern tones were 'sonorous, accented, eloquent and frequently obscure because of their power' [pp. 48-9] and were initially a response to sexual passion. Notoriously, Rousseau also claims that the earliest words were figurative rather than literal—a move that reinforces his conception of sound as something rooted in passion rather than reason.

Given Rousseau's emphasis on sound's affective qualities, it is therefore striking how committed he remains to ideas of enumeration and quantification throughout the essay. Indeed, while Rousseau at one level points to an understanding of sound rooted in affect and morality, his historical approach is nevertheless wedded to ideas of counting. In speculating on the earliest language, for example, Rousseau asserts that it would have rejected 'grammatical analogy for euphony, *number*, harmony and beauty of sounds' [p. 15, emphasis my own]. In exploring different languages later in the essay, Rousseau examines at length the different sounds produced by the human mouth, and enumerates the vowels that it can produce: '[t]he gentlemen of Port Royal count ten, M. Duclos, seventeen' [p. 21]. Imagining the earliest civilisations without language, he similarly observes that 'the only measure of time would be the alternation of boredom and amusement' [p. 45].

Notwithstanding Rousseau's emphasis on spoken language's immediacy, then, it is noteworthy how he still cleaves to various forms of embodied counting in his imagined history. Rousseau's valorisation of spoken language over written language has of course been the subject of a celebrated critique by Jacques Derrida: one that identifies a metaphysics of presence at work in the essay, that favours speech over writing. One might add that, even if Rousseau considers written language to substitute 'exactitude for expressiveness' [p. 21], Rousseau's conception of speech and embodied experience nonetheless remain characterised by enumeration. Both spoken language and music, it seems, are here shaped by various forms of quantification and even inscription that are not exclusive to writing.

The tensions that Rousseau locates between sound and writing are further sketched out in his musings on audio and visual sensation. Rousseau begins the essay by finding the eye more powerfully affected than the ear, but as the treatise continues he becomes increasingly entangled in the relationship

between the two. Colours are discrete, Rousseau argues—'[y]ellow is yellow, independent of red and of blue' [p. 63] —whereas sound is inherently relational. And yet sound can imitate sight in a way that sight cannot imitate sound: 'it cannot imitate music as music can imitate it' [p. 64]. If sound is characterised by its temporality, it can nevertheless be perceived in terms defined by space, the discrete domain of the visual.

The friction in Rousseau's essay between the voluptuous, flowing qualities that he identities in the earliest language and in sound more generally, and the undercurrent of quantification that marks his essay, might productively be placed in dialogue with recent scholarly interventions in musicology and the world of media theory. As Alexander Rehding argues in a colloquy for the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 'the pair discrete/continuous seems to take us far from the concerns of musicology and place us firmly in the realm of statistics, data analysis and number crunching'; and yet ideas of counting in fact take us back to a 'different and seemingly outmoded approach to music aesthetics': the world of Leibniz and the late-seventeenth century.[2] Like Rousseau, Leibniz was (in Rehding's account) concerned with the basic principles governing the emergence of the music rather than the analysis of specific musical features, which for Leibniz meant arithmetic. This focus on music and numbers was eventually superseded by Kantian aesthetics and a focus on the work concept, Rehding contends, ideas that have made an emphasis on counting in relation to music seem profoundly alien.

Rousseau's essay might therefore be read as a document on the cusp of two different ways of theorising music and sound: between music as counting, and music as transcendental object; between music as discrete, and music as continuous. In turning to writing, moreover, Rousseau's history of sign systems offers a tantalising analogy with Friedrich Kittler's adaptation of Jacques Lacan in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*.[3] Like Kittler, and Charles Pierce before him, Rousseau imagines inscription systems (in this case written language) as divided between iconic, indexical and symbolic

[2] Alexander Rehding, 'Introduction' in 'Colloquy: Discrete/Continuous: Music and Media Theory after Kittler', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol.70 No.1 Spring 2017, 221-258; cited passages pp221-228. While Leibniz's approach ultimately differs significantly from Rousseau's, therefore, there is clearly also a fundamental similarity in their focus on sound and its origins, rather than musical form.

[3] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, translated by Geoffrey Winthrop Young & Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; original German edition 1986).

systems. For Rousseau, the movement from iconic to symbolic appears 'entirely natural' [p16], but also entails a loss of passion. And yet Rousseau's own writings seem to reveal a fundamental uncertainty about this unhappy narrative. Nostalgic for the sonic past, he nonetheless cannot avoid imagining it in terms shaped by a more recent, enumerative mindset. Rousseau's fantasy of music as 'the *twofold* voice of nature' [emphasis mine] at the same time anticipates later, nineteenth-century ideas about music's sublime qualities: ones that would make counting seem increasingly antithetical to discussions of music's fundamental nature.[4]

Isaac Kerr (University of Campinas)

Melody and imitation: strength and fragility in Rousseau's thought

I would like to elucidate the importance, for Rousseau, of imitation in music to achieve the expression of feelings: he takes melody as the fundamental element in this regard. Indeed, there are clear moments in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* which stress the importance of the relationship between melody and imitation. However, there are several other occasions in Rousseau's earlier work (*Letter on French Music* especially), where he posits that imitation is fundamental, but its power limited. Many of the themes taken up by Rousseau in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* are also explained in his *Letter on French Music*, but with an explicitly musical focus.

For Rousseau, music and language were born of the manifestation of passions (love or hate) by equally sensitive human beings: language and music had the same starting point. In this way, we can understand that, in order to imitate language, or rather for melody to imitate the accents of the voice, music must return to its own origins. From Rousseau, we can thus conclude that if the ability to speak is born of the need to communicate feelings, and the more music approaches the imitation of accent, the more expressive it necessarily becomes. In Rousseau's view, talking about imitation means talking about melody: and the importance of melody, for Rousseau, is superior to that of harmony. Rousseau, moreover, understands melody and singing to be synonymous. In his *Letter on French Music*, Rousseau

[4] In the original French, 'elle était doublement la voix de la nature'.

defines melody as being equal to singing: 'all music is composed of three things: melody or singing, harmony or accompaniment, tempo or rhythm'. In both essays the philosopher exemplifies this statement, arguing that melody draws and shapes music: harmony cannot do this. Understanding love as a symbol of feeling and drawing as a representative of shape, clarifies what Rousseau means by saying that 'love[...] was the inventor of drawing' [p. 10].

When Rousseau explains that language is born of feelings—as in 'the first dicourses were the first songs' [p. 50]—he refers to primitive, not to modern languages. Modern languages, he claims, were increasingly becoming cold, monotonous, and strictly communicative—rather than expressive—with accents formalised in script and no longer intended to be primarily sung. We must also, of course, remember that accent for Rousseau, in what he imagined as primitive language, was related to variations of pitch. This is evidenced when he says that accents stood for modifications of sound (glottis). From this, and similar to Rousseau's reflections in his *Letter on French Music*, one notices a new function for melody: the return of passion in modern languages. Curiously, even with melody that imitates the accents of voices and thereby reacquires its expressivity, Rousseau suggests that some modern languages are so cold and rational that they cannot be saved by melody. From this position a new problem arises, which, according to Rousseau, has no solution: if language is cold, rational, and free of accents, its melody would also be cold, rational, and free of accents. Melody, therefore, is mere imitation.

A richly composed melody or an effectively-performed recitative would appear incoherent only in cases where the language does not correspond. Imitation would not solve this problem, because there is no imitation if, for instance, an Italian-style melody is paired with a French text. Rousseau illustrates this point in his *Letter on French Music,* where he analyses a French aria and a recitative that are both creative and beautiful, but which do not succeed in imitating language. As a result, in his *Letter on French music* Rousseau assigns imitation an even greater responsibility than he does in his *Essay on the Origin of Language*. Writing beautiful melodies is not enough, they have to successfully imitate language itself.

To push this issue further, musical works in modern languages are becoming less expressive and therefore less comprehensible. In the *Letter on French Music*, Rousseau explains that certain works can only be understood, because the singers use gesture:[5]

> But without the arms and the acting of the Actress, I am persuaded that no one could endure the recitative, and that such a Music has great need of the help of the eyes in order to be bearable to the ears.[6]

My reflections here aim to elucidate how, for Rousseau, words' ability to communicate feelings has been weakened by modern language. Initially, language had the capacity to speak, sing, and communicate passions. In modern times, it seems necessary to use three different means to achieve the same: language, music, and gesture. Imitation is fundamental, but limited; for, according to Rousseau,

> [...] if one took it into one's head to perform the Music of this scene without joining the words to it, without shouting or testiculating, it would not be possible to sort out anything in it analogous to the situation it wants to depict and the feeling it wantsto express, and all this would seem only a tiresome series of sounds, modulated by chance and only in order to make it last.[7]

Andrea Sartori (Brown University)

Music, Loss and Language in Rousseau's Essay on the Origin of Languages

Like the previous two contributions to this collection of short essays, I would like to compare and contrast Rousseau's idea of language with that of music, but with a specific focus on two inter-related concepts that are hidden in the text: those of *loss* and *death.* It is probably possible to argue that loss and death lie at the heart of Rousseau's notion of language. Following Rousseau, by 'language' I mean Western and modern tongues, the ones spoken and written in countries like France and Italy, England and Germany. Rousseau seems to say that while Western and modern languages developed, they left

[5] In the final part of the *Letter on French Music*, Rosseau uses the opera *Armide*, by Lully (monologue), for his poetic and musical analysis.

[6] Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 'Letter on French Music', in *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, trans. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 173

[7] Ibid. 173

behind themselves the possibility of a harmonious tongue—like ancient Greek—where the combination of sound and word was characterized by a sort of natural musicality. The loss of that harmonious language—one that, properly speaking, was *sung* instead of being just spoken—is the condition for the development of modern tongues, with their sophisticated grammar systems. Indeed, Rousseau writes, having in mind the 'natural' language of the ancient Greeks:

> We have no idea of a sonorous and harmonious language, spoken as much according to sounds as it is according to words. It is mistaken to think that accent marks can make up for oral intonation. One invents accent signs only when intonation has already been lost (pp. 24-25).

When Rousseau says that we have no idea of such a harmonious tongue, he means that—as he states at the end of the quotation—that past language has irrevocably been *lost*.

The development of a graphic system including accents and punctuation for intonation and rhythm comes *too late*, as it were: written signs try to *compensate* the loss of a musicality and of a naturalness that cannot be reintegrated into language, because that loss is the *condition* for the development, over time, of language itself. Graphic signs and grammar rules become more and more articulated, because temporality affects language:

> only the pressure of time brings these changes about […]. Language changes its character. It becomes more regular and less passionate. It substitutes ideas for feeling. It no longer speaks to the heart but to reason. Similarly, accent diminishes, articulation increases. Language becomes more exact and clearer, but more prolix, duller and colder. This progression seems to me entirely natural (p. 16).

What happens here is a sort of exchange: over time, language experiences a diminishment of passion, feelings and harmonic intonation, and it receives—in exchange—clarity, exactitude and rationality. What Rousseau is delineating seems to be similar to Sigmund Freud's diagnosis in his work on modern civilization and its discontents (1929). Indeed, the act of giving up passion and feelings to obtain rational exactitude recalls Freud's substitution of happiness for safety. In a sense, once language has exited its golden age—the age when the pleasure principle permeated, uncontested, language itself—grammar and graphic signs take on the role of protecting language from a reality that now requires it to face the risks of loss and death. On the one hand, intonation is not 'natural' anymore, because musicality inherent

to language has been lost. On the other hand, written traces and graphic conventions—in one word: grammar—make up a counterfeit naturalness, a counterfeit image of the original, lost happiness.

In this process, as Jacques Derrida has highlighted in *Of Grammatology* (1967), the role of writing and of its traces is predominant. The reasons for this can be detected in Rousseau's text. In the section *On Script*, Rousseau says:

> Writing, which would seem to crystallize language, is precisely what alters it. It changes not the words but the spirit, substituting exactitude for expressiveness. Feelings are expressed in speaking, ideas in writing. In writing, one is forced to use all the words according to their conventional meaning. But in speaking, one varies the meanings by varying one's tone of voice, determining them as one pleases. Being less constrained to clarity, one can be more forceful. And it is not possible for a language that is written, to retain its vitality as long as one that is only spoken" (pp. 21-22).

Expressiveness and *vitality* vanish from written language—from *grammar*, the *written trace*, the root of *grammar*—because writing stands for clarity and rationality, both *signs* of an original loss: that of the harmonic language of Homer, where there was no difference between music and language.

The *split*, introduced by writing between word and sound, word and music, therefore brings about a loss of *pow*er inherent to language (one could also say, in Freudian terms, a loss of *happiness*). As Rousseau writes in the chapter *On Modern Prosody*:

> literary languages are naturally bound to undergo changes of character, and to lose in power what they gain in clarity (p. 27).

Thus, by losing vitality, power and expressiveness, literary language—unlike music—becomes a site of *death*. In a sense, writing and books are places for absence and nothingness, rather than harmonic fullness. This point is made clear by Rousseau when presenting the differences between Western and Oriental languages:

> Our [Western] tongues are better suited to writing than speaking, and there is more pleasure in reading us than in listening to us. Oriental tongues, on the other hand, lose their life and warmth when they are written. The words do not convey half the meaning; all the effectiveness is in the tone of voice. Judging the Orientals from their books is like painting a man's portrait from his corpse (p. 49).

A book is here presented as the corpse of a spoken language: it only contains the residual vestiges of a musicality, of an immediacy and a naturalness that time and progress have always already cancelled.

José Manuel Izquierdo (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile)

The Other Souths: Rousseau from a Spanish perspective

The centrality of Rousseau to eighteenth-century musical thought cannot be denied. However, I believe that in terms of his reception and actual influence beyond France there is still ample room for debate and further study. In fact, reading his work on the origin of languages anew for this conference, it was inevitable for me to think about how his reception in Latin America (where I am from and where my expertise lies) would have been seriously affected by colonial censorship, as well as by necessary processes of translation. Being that his work is one that constantly confronts norths and souths (imaginary and geographical), the problem of reading and discussing Rousseau in the multiple 'souths' as well as in other regions of the globe, is certainly a pivotal point for discussion.

In fact, while Rousseau might not have been as directly influential or well-read in Spain and Latin America as he was in France or Germany, he still proposes the discussion of Italian as a language directly affecting ideas about music and language in these parts of the globe. Particularly in the case of Spain, a direct neighbour of France, his discussions were taken to be highly relevant for musicians and intellectuals of the period, even if they were not always directly influenced by him. If Spain was also part of an imagined 'south', why was Italian different from Spanish, and how musical was Spanish really?

There were multiple responses to this problem in the late eighteenth century, some of them drawing directly from Rousseau's ideas and others constructed from other sources or from indirect quotations of his works. I want to just mention two different ones: those by Antonio Eximeno and Tomás de Iriarte. Eximeno, an exiled Jesuit whose primary interest was mathematics, printed in Rome

in 1774 his *Of the Origins and Rules of Music, with the History of its Progress, Decadence and Renovation*.[8]

For Spanish readers and for anybody interested in Spanish music during the late eighteenth century Eximeno was probably the most influential music theorist, and it seems evident today that many of Rousseau's ideas were first known to Spanish audiences through him, both in Spain and in the colonies. Moreover, as Ellen Lockhart has mentioned in her *Pimmalione: Rousseau and the Melodramatisation of Italian Opera,* Eximeno not only influenced Rousseau's Spanish reception, but also responses in Italy, where readers had access to Eximeno's book before Rousseau's own works were available.[9] Eximeno's friendship with Stefano Arteaga, another Spanish Jesuit exiled in Rome, was key to this circulation of ideas. Arteaga was an influential critic, who published a book on opera history in 1783. He shared many of Rousseau's ideas, which he only knew via Eximeno's views and through his books.

As his influential book appeared as early as 1774 Eximeno does not directly comment on Rousseau's Essay (written in the 1750s, but published poshumously in 1781), but many of Rousseau's ideas had found expression in works that had been published before. Eximeno, for example, agrees with Rousseau's idea about the relation between the Italian language and melody, and gives new and interesting perspectives on the matter. Eximeno specifically posits that Italian, rather than Spanish, was the true primordial and fossilised language, a survivor from earlier human times: 'The influence of the climate on their language [Italian] is more durable than stones'. For Eximeno, living in Rome, 'Italians speak like they sing'. Comparing both languages, he specifically mentions how people with speech impairments can easily communicate in Italian, but not in Spanish, due to of the amount of bodily mimesis in Italian.

On the other side of the debate we find the enormously influential Tomás de Iriarte, whose 1779 poem *La Música* was both popular with non-musicians and central in music education and theory in

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[8] Antonio Eximeno. *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza, e rinnovazione* (Rome: Michellangelo Barbiellini, 1774)

[9] A good discussion of Eximeno's reception can be found in the sixth chapter of Hernández Mateos, Alberto. *El pensamiento musical de Antonio Eximeno*. (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2014)

Spanish-speaking countries until the mid-nineteenth century.[10] Compared to Eximeno, Iriarte was much more critical of Rousseau's ideas. Clearly, for Iriate there was no good argument to define Italian—rather than Spanish—as the proper southern/musical language: 'If outside of Italy I try to look for a language that is better for singing than any other, it is in the Spanish soil that I find one […]; and each day that passes the Spanish melody will envy that of Florence and Rome less and less'.[11] The difference, for Iriarte, was not in the structure of the language, but in the use of it: While Italian music used melody primarily in the theatre, Spain did so, more successfully, in the church.

Iriarte was so convinced of his ideas that in 1788 he created a Spanish response to Rousseau's *Pygmalion*: the opera *Guzmán el Bueno*. He wrote the Spanish libretto and the music, which included melodically-thought poetic recitations and instrumental music intermezzos. The piece caused a huge impact on the Madrid scene, and was widely discussed. Many Spanish composers imitated or parodied the work during the last decade of the century.[12]

Iriarte's idea of Spain as another melodic south would prove very influential over the following decades: By 1800 Spanish music theatre was being protected from the influence of Italian opera, and the *Real Conservatorio* was founded in 1830 with the explicit purpose of making Spain the new glory of the musical south, with declamation in Spanish forming a central part of the curricula (a model copied in the following decades by several countries in Latin America, including Chile and Mexico). By the early nineteenth-century, both Spain and Latin America were debating the conceptual limits of the 'musical south', still reflecting on Rousseau's ideas of *italianitá* and the 'otherness' of truly musical languages.

[10] See, for example, Hugo Quintana's paper "El poema *La música* de Tomás Iriarte: a propósito del poema didascálico en la sociedad colonial caraqueña", *Extramuros*, 28 (2007), 51-85.
[11] Tomás de Iriarte, *La Música, (*Madrid: Imprenta Real de la Gazeta, 1779) 124
[12] Joseph Jones, 'María Rosa de Gálvez, Rousseau, Iriarte y el melólogo en la España del siglo XVIII', *Dieciocho: Hispanic Enlightenment* 19/2 (1996), 165 – 180.

Alessandra Jones (University of California Berkeley)

Rousseau, language, and the telegraph

Despite Rousseau's admiration for Italian melody and his valorization of voice, he betrays an unfortunate prejudice in this *Essay*: the Italians' similarity to the 'Orientals' in modes of communication marks them as a preliterate society, one whose time in history had come and gone.[13] For Rousseau, 'judging the Orientals from their books is like painting a man's portrait from his corpse' (p. 49), because any true understanding of 'southern' peoples' language relies on hearing tones rather than vocabulary. In both cases, the message is sent and received, but the materials—sound or text—are dependent on climate. The conference theme—Adaptation, Transcription, Mediation—proposes an inversion of the stereotypes of Italian immediacy and expressive excess. Among the many objects, networks, and practices that highlight the rearrangement of the materials of Italian opera, I want to focus on one apparatus whose connection to opera might seem tenuous. In mid-nineteenth-century Italy the telegraph excited musical imaginations, not for its technological wizardry, but rather for the perception of its immediacy, a value most often associated with opera. Rousseau's Enlightenment argument for Italian vocal music as the consummate communicator still found purchase in the mid-nineteenth century, although it could now be expressed with the metaphors and global reach provided by new media. Thinking about these two superficially different modes of communication—Italian opera and the telegraph—together offers insight into how Italians construed the apprehension and transmission of information in the historical moment around 1848.

The connection between operatic and telegraphic communication begins with a metaphorical usage: a composition titled 'Telegrafo musicale', a *pot-pourri* of recent operatic excerpts composed by

[13] Roberto Dainotto has traced the history of this attitude, in which Italy is both idealized and fossilized as part of a Global South, and I will not retrace his steps here. See Roberto Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.) On Italian stereotypes, see also Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). The recent English translation of Ernesto de Martino's *Sud e magia* (1959) offers English speakers the chance to read a specific deconstruction of Italian marginalization, focused primarily on superstition in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Naples. See Ernesto de Martino, *Magic: A Theory From the South*, trans. Dorothy Zinn (Chicago: Hau Books, 2015). For Rousseau on Italian melody see his 'Letter on French Music' in *The Complete Works of J.J. Rousseau*, vol. 8 (Edinburgh: W. Coke, 1774), 5-60.

the flautist Joseph Fahrbach and first published by Ricordi in 1843.[14] Fahrbach continued to publish new pieces under the same title until 1845, while simultaneous publishing arrangements titled 'Feuilleton musicale' and 'Revue théâtrale', both of which continued into the 1860s. Fahrbach's (likely opportunistic) titles draw on terms from contemporary journalism, suggesting that his 'telegrafo' referred to the sections of a newspaper rather than to telecommunications. But the journalistic usage was grounded in new technologies, highlighting the collection and printing of many short bursts of information so as to capture a kaleidoscope of affects from around the world, to record the doings of a moment in all its multiplicity. Fahrbach's *Telegrafo* suggests an analogous practice of 'telegraphic listening', in which listeners were confronted with excerpts from many sources and challenged to find some unity or pattern. Considering the cultural significance of these collections allows us to explore the many forms Italian opera takes: be it noise, signal, technology, communication, affect, or performance.

We can gain a deeper sense of what 'telegraphic listening' might have meant to listeners and readers of the period from a satirical sketch published in the Neapolitan periodical *Lanterna magica* in 1849. This comic vignette imagined European heads of state using a musical telegraph to send each other messages couched in the language of opera arias and ensembles. For example, the deposed Louis-Philippe sends a 'cabaletta' to his friend (and nephew) Louis-Napoléon, borrowing and adapting the words of Percy's aria 'Da quel dì che lei perduta' from *Anna Bolena*.[15] The comedy comes in part from the operatic exaggeration of the political figures' emotions, but also from the fact that these emotions are twice adapted and translated: once through opera, then again through the impossible telegraph. There is a self-consciousness in hearing Italian opera as the chatter of out-of-touch politicians, since

[14] Joseph Fahrbach, *Il Telegrafo musicale. Raccolta periodica di Pot-Pourris bril. sopra motivi delle Opere teatrali più recenti e più acclamate, per Flauto, Clarinetto o Oboe, e Fagotto*, Op. 21 (Milan: Ricordi, 1843.) A few selections from later issues of the *Feuilleton musicale* and the *Revue théâtrale* are available in the British Library under the shelfmarks Music h.2050.c.(2.) and Music h.2050.c.(3.).
[15] The other examples include: Louis-Napoléon singing 'Questa soave immagine' from Donizetti's *Gemma di Vergy*; Isabella II of Spain serenading the exiled Pope Pius IX with 'Ah vieni a questo seno'. from Act II of Meyerbeer's *Roberto il diavolo* and the Pope's response with 'Dunque andiam; de' giorni miei' from Donizetti's *Belisario*; Francesco of Modena's plaintive 'Fin dell'età più tenera' from *Anna Bolena* once again; the armistice-happy Carlo Alberto of Savoy causing a comic effect with the belligerent 'Ah! Del tebro al giogo indegno' (including the choral response) from Bellini's *Norma*; and finally the characterization of the democratic government elected in Florence via the taunting and superior 'Tu nascesti a mezzo inverno' followed by 'Rospi e serpi in seno io sento', attributed to the blustering Minister Bozzelli of Naples, both numbers drawn from Luigi Ricci's *Eran due, or son tre*.

transmitting melody through such technology renders it precariously close to noise.[16] This line of satire seems to have been inspired by the description of a fictional academy published in the Florentine paper *Il Lampione* in August 1848, which similarly introduced cartoonish historical figures with arias. Academies during this period were carefully curated listening experiences—consisting of extracted pieces—often meant to produce patriotic affects for local audiences, but occasionally benefiting causes further away. The similarity between the satirical depiction of operatic excerpts as the medium of bored politicians and the community built both locally and 'nationally' through academies lies not in the actual apparatus of the telegraph, but rather perception of what the telegraph—and opera—does. Both adapt, transcribe, and mediate; while also sending messages that can be adapted, transcribed, and mediated.

Yet Rousseau's notion of immediacy never quite disappears. While the centrality of the telegraph within this mid-century medial landscape might counter the prejudice of Italians as forever backwards, there seems to be a contemporary hesitation about the perceived value of Italian opera. Rousseau may have been a player in supporting Italian opera's global dominance; but that dominance meant perpetuating possibly damaging stereotypes. At the very least, there was ambivalence as to how—and by whom—Italian opera was wielded outside of Italy. The association with the telegraph, perhaps, is evidence of an Italian thought-experiment through which music (and Italians) could become something other—or something more—than sheer affect.

[16] For a representative example of opera's association with noise, see Melina Esse, 'Rossini's noisy bodies', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 21/1 (2009): 27-64.