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Italian International Divas in 19th-Century London

Abstract: By the early 19th century, Italian-language opera was firmly established in London and continued to attract audiences with its cosmopolitan prestige, despite the steady rise of English-language opera. As the century progressed, sopranos such as Giuditta Pasta, who performed regularly in London and brought several Rossini and Bellini roles to English audiences, Giulia Grisi and Adelina Patti, all achieved the status of world-famous divas. Their fame was greatly aided by technological advances that facilitated touring, as well as the rise of print culture and the impact of photography, which helped to turn singers into celebrities through advance publicity and the circulation of singers' *cartes de visite*. This article focuses on the reception of Italian female singers in nineteenth-century London and discusses the extent to which they came to define the age of international touring stardom, while also shaping notions of 'Italianità'. On the prestigious London stages they rivalled other foreign opera divas, such as Sweden's Jenny Lind and Spain's Maria Malibran. Like that of the international Italian theatre actresses who defined the 19th-century 'gilded stage', the success of Italian opera in England was largely due to the appeal of seeing famous female singers competing in popular leading roles.

Keywords: London; 19th Century; Italian Divas; Opera; International Touring Circuit.

1 Introduction

From the 17th century onwards, Italian opera was becoming a significant part of the cultural landscape in England, with London serving as a magnet for international composers and singers who performed at His Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket, founded in 1705 and known as the home of Italian opera. By the early 19th century, Italian opera was firmly established in London, and despite the steady rise of English-language opera, which was usually presented at the Theatre Royals Covent Garden and Drury Lane, it continued to exert its appeal over English audiences. It functioned as a symbol of elite culture and a prestigious form of entertainment that was particularly favoured by royalty and the aristocracy. Conversely, the middle-class public tended to prefer the burgeoning English-language opera.

The reception of Italian opera was influenced by competing discourses: on the one hand, it was revered by many for its cosmopolitan appeal, on the other, it was viewed by some with disdain and deemed as fundamentally a “foreign and degenerate medium associated with a Catholic and despotic Europe”, representing an alien intrusion into British culture.¹ The anti-operatic stance was reflected in the literature of the age, as writers like Fielding, Sheridan and Byron, would satirise its many excesses, ranging from the unruly conduct of singers to its association with vice and dissolution as characteristics of Italian national identity, while they also lamented the unintelligibility of the language.² These conflicting perspectives did not, however, limit the influence of Italian opera, which continued to set the standard in singing and music culture in the 19th century and Italian performers were key to opera’s enduring appeal, despite facing criticism and a reception that oscillated between unreserved praise and overt disregard.

Throughout the 18th century, Italian female singers performed in London and animated debates in cultural circles: *primadonna* rivalry was duly reported in the press, with ample coverage of the frictions between the two celebrated singers Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, the so-called “Rival Queens” of the King’s Theatre from 1726 to 1728 in London, whereas the early 19th century witnessed the rivalry between the renowned English soprano Elizabeth Billington and the ascending Italian contralto Giuseppina Grassini, as well as between Billington and the Italian soprano Angelica Catalani.³ Thus, comparisons between performers, as well as curiosity around their offstage personas, was integral to the early Italian opera scene in London and set a precedent for the reception of singers later in the century. One significant difference, however, lay in the fact that the 18th-century operatic scene was not exclusively centred on *primadonnas*, as this was also the epoch of the *primo uomo*, with castrati singers taking major roles in the works of the leading composers of the century.⁴ In turn, during the 19th century, Italian female opera singers ascended to the status of divas, a development that aligns with the early operatic usage of the term “diva”, as documented by Théophile Gautier.⁵ Studies on celebrity culture as well as on transnational mobility in 19th century theatre and opera have emphasized the role played by divas in fuelling the cult and invention of celebrity.⁶ The rise to celebrity of singers is paralleled by that of foreign theatre

1 Erman 2023, 211.

2 Saglia 2014, 10.

3 Nigro/Cawelti 2016.

4 Nigro/Cawelti 2016.

5 Davies 2012.

6 See Lilti 2017 and Marshall 2007.

actresses at the time, and London emerges as a pivotal hub within a thriving international touring circuit, showcasing both opera and spoken drama. Following the methodology of comparative cultural studies that has favoured a gender perspective and proved to be effective in documenting the reception of international theatre stars,⁷ this essay will retrace the presence of the foremost Italian divas and their reception in 19th century London, with a view to reflecting on how their English careers unfolded against the backdrop of significant socio-cultural changes in Britain. Like those of international actresses in the realm of spoken drama, the London seasons of these singers reveal a web of intense cultural exchanges, and shed light on competing conceptions of national identity, as well as on the potential of opera and drama to cross cultural and linguistic borders. Transnational musical exchanges also shaped ideas of *italianità* and contributed to creating images of Italy, at a time when opera rose to become “a global aesthetic commodity”.⁸

2 Italian Divas on the London Stage

Similar patterns underpinned opera and drama in 19th-century London, as both were performed in the summer season, traditionally assigned to touring theatre companies, followed by tours in the provinces. Part of the opera’s appeal rested on the lure of seeing famous singers pitted against each other in roles that came to represent Italian opera in the minds of English audiences. Within the realm of drama, Italian international actresses contributed to the creation of what Henry Knepler has defined as the Gilded Stage, that thrived on the competition between English and international actresses.⁹ In a comparable vein, Italian divas enlivened the international circuit in their competition with both local singers and celebrated foreign stars, including Jenny Lind from Sweden and Maria Malibran from Spain.

Leading ladies treading the boards of His Majesty’s Theatre, and later those of Covent Garden when it was refashioned as the Royal Italian Opera in 1847, had globetrotting careers that even extended as far as the Americas. What was needed to launch an artist’s international career was a successful *début* in Paris: the celebrated opera singers Giuditta Pasta and Giulia Grisi, for example, premiered at the Théâtre Italien in 1815 and 1834 respectively, which functioned as a springboard to secure regular engagements at His Majesty’s theatre in London the following

⁷ See Booth/Stokes/Bassnett 1996; Buonanno 2002.

⁸ Körner/Kühl 2022, 5.

⁹ Knepler 1968.

seasons. Similarly, the many years of success that Italian tragedienne Adelaide Ristori enjoyed in London were launched by a successful season in Paris in 1855, where she received numerous invitations to perform in London.¹⁰ The growth and consolidation of Italian divas and more generally of the celebrity culture surrounding them, was sustained by advances in technology that made travelling quicker and easier, as well as by the development of print culture, which allowed the sizeable production and circulation of sheet music that would familiarize audiences with opera and its performers.¹¹ In this respect, Britain was at the forefront of innovation, as a burgeoning consumer society benefiting from the growth of literacy and leisure time. Furthermore, the popularity of singers and actresses was enhanced by portraits and lithographs, as well as albums and yearly almanacs which contained both engravings and commemorative poems celebrating them. These cultural artifacts functioned as readily available merchandising and helped to transform singers into household figures. Subsequently, the advent of photography and the dissemination of elegant *cartes de visite* ushered in new possibilities for appreciating and “possessing” singers and secured their place within the English imagination of the 19th century.¹²

3 Angelica Catalani

In the early decades of the century, Italian opera in London was a hotbed of “gossip, intrigue, clashing temperaments, and competition between singers”.¹³ The Regency era was dominated by the figure of Angelica Catalani who first appeared in London in 1807 in Portogallo’s *Semiramis* and was the most famous *primadonna* of her generation, projecting the image of a seductive siren. Catalani was also often criticized for her excesses, including the huge sums she was paid, to the extent that interest in her private persona tended to prevail over discussion of her talent.¹⁴ However, despite deprecating her “exorbitant” financial requests, reviewers of the time also praised her “most heroic” acting and even used to compare her style to that of the distinguished 18th-century tragedienne Sarah Siddons.¹⁵ Furthermore, when Catalani performed alongside the English soprano Caroline Dickons in *Figaro* in 1812, reviewers

¹⁰ Buonanno 2013, 77–78.

¹¹ On the international touring circuit see Buonanno 2002 and 2013, on print culture and opera see Fuhrmann/Mero 2023.

¹² See Cloutier 2018.

¹³ Nigro/Cawelti 2016.

¹⁴ See Cowgill 2012.

¹⁵ Fenner 1984, 2012–13.

stressed her superiority over the English singer.¹⁶ However, beyond this rivalry between performers, there is evidence of a kind of intercultural cooperation between divas, a trait that also defines the reception of subsequent international opera singers. As an artist, Catalani navigated a period of geopolitical unrest with the Napoleonic Wars and the Continental Blockade (1806–1814); and while most Italian artists were prevented from travelling to England, she was one of the very few exceptions, which is a testimony to her prestige. Although her last London engagement took place in 1813, she continued to be described in later years as “heavenly, matchless, and irresistible”, due to her “impassioned grandeur, and vocal magnificence.”¹⁷

4 Giulia Grisi

As the century progressed, the musical world began to make its way into English drawing rooms, as testified by Jane Austen’s novels, especially *Emma* (1815), that pay tribute to music and opera by inserting musically inclined characters that were no longer portrayed merely as objects of criticism or satire.¹⁸ Similarly, tragediennes also inspired writers, as seen, for example, in the fictional tragedienne Vashti in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* (1853), modelled on the French international actress Rachel Félix. The virago-like figure of Angelica Catalani in Regency London, gradually began to be contrasted with the romantic and more intimate figures of succeeding *primadonnas*, such as Giuditta Pasta and Giulia Grisi, whose image seemed more attuned to the ideal of domesticity championed during the reign of Queen Victoria and associated with the Monarch herself. The young princess Victoria’s fascination for music and opera emerges in her diaries and albums of sketches. Music held a special place in her life, as both she and Prince Albert were pianists and she also received singing lessons from the renowned Neapolitan baritone Luigi Lablache who performed regularly in London.¹⁹ In Victoria’s own writings and drawings, Italian singers feature prominently, including an ample collection of sketches by young Victoria that portray Giulia Grisi, who, along with Giuditta Pasta, was the foremost Italian singer in mid-19th-century Britain. In Victoria’s drawings Grisi is portrayed in numerous roles, especially in celebrated works by Donizetti and

¹⁶ Fenner 1984, 215.

¹⁷ Fenner 1984, 214.

¹⁸ Nigro/Cawelti 2016.

¹⁹ Hibberd 2019.

Bellini.²⁰ The seal of approval bestowed on Italian divas by the Queen herself boosted their fame and the interest taken in their private lives. After seeing Grisi in the title role of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*, in London in 1834, Victoria described her as "a most beautiful singer and actress and [...] likewise very young and pretty". She goes on to praise her singing, especially in the last scene in which Grisi acted "beautifully".²¹ Victoria also considered Grisi to be superior to the renowned Spanish soprano Maria Malibran, thanks to her sweet notes, and "exquisite" execution – an indication, as Cloutier suggests, of the "proclivity for the gentle, the domestic, the sweet and the conventionally bounded feminine that is not altogether surprising in the future monarch".²²

Born in 1811 into a Milanese musical family, Grisi was one of the leading sopranos of mid-19th century London opera, after her international career was launched in 1834, when she left La Scala in Milan to join the Théâtre-Italien in Paris, under Rossini's patronage. This move propelled her into the foremost operatic circles of Europe, and she made her London debut in 1835 at the King's Theatre performing the role of Ninetta in Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra*. Grisi can be considered part of a nascent celebrity culture in the 1830s "that grew with mass consumption of print culture and commodities"²³ and her reception also shows how throughout the century "the spread of the popular press and an obsession with discovering the particularities of private life gave rise to a plethora of details about celebrities that made them accessible in new ways to their public."²⁴ The contemporary critic Henry Chorley commented on how Grisi would draw attention to her appearance by shunning exaggerated artifice and flirtatious attitudes, in ways that suggested a low-key and domesticated image of singers:

Never has so beautiful a woman as Madame Grisi been so little coquettish on the stage. I remember no solitary instance of smile or sign which could betray to the closest observer that she was attempting any of those artifices.²⁵

One of her most renowned interpretations was as Norma in Bellini's eponymous opera, in which she rivalled other interpreters, such as Giuditta Pasta and later

²⁰ Many of the sketches are available as part of the digital archive of the Royal Collection Trust: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/6/collection/816142/scene-from-norma>.

²¹ Esher 1912, 93. See also sketches of Grisi as Anna Bolena <https://www.rct.uk/collection/980016-cj/giulia-grisi-as-anna-bolena>.

²² Cloutier 2018, 201.

²³ Cloutier 2018, 195.

²⁴ Cloutier 2018, 192.

²⁵ Chorley 1862, 110–112.

Jenny Lind. Since her London debut in 1835, the role had become a staple of Grisi's repertoire, with critics hailing it as "her grandest performance", a "true reading" of the character, and even "an improvement on the model" created by Pasta.²⁶ Further comparisons were drawn with the celebrated Jenny Lind's performance in the same role, but even then, "audiences continued to prefer the more forceful, imperious characterization of Grisi. They were not accustomed to a ladylike Norma".²⁷ Grisi and Lind also appeared together in a production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, in 1837, as evidence of the cross-cultural nature of Italian opera and artistic cooperation that extended beyond individual rivalries. However, when Lind appeared again as Norma in 1846, the *Musical World*, though praising the Swedish singer's "perfect" execution and conceding that "her dramatic conception and powers are of the highest order", to the extent that she could be compared to the French tragedienne Rachel, she was nonetheless deemed to be inferior to Grisi, because Lind lacked "the softened, voluptuous tenderness of that inimitable artiste".²⁸ In conclusion, thanks to her many seasons in London and her unrivalled interpretations of major roles such as Norma, Grisi ascended to the role of "Queen" of the stage, "carrying on the tale of Foreign Opera in England".²⁹

Giulia Grisi, Giuditta Pasta and the other leading ladies of the mid-19th century played a key role in popularising the works of Italian composers from that period. Although their repertoire was not exclusively Italian, they were instrumental to the transnational reception of Bellini, Rossini and Donizetti. Another famous role associated with Grisi after Norma, for instance, was Norina, in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* in which she made a successful debut in her 1843 London season. The role was tailored specifically for her and offered English audiences the opportunity to see her sharing the stage with her long-time partner, the tenor Giovanni Matteo De Candia (known as Mario). Their onstage and offstage partnership made them the most celebrated operatic couple of their generation. They also became popular through private concerts and singing lessons, which introduced them to upper-class circles and made them more accessible to the public.³⁰ In terms of her public persona, Grisi's fame and popularity can also be assessed within the context of the Italian political turmoil of the 1830s that had brought to London a community of exiles, headed by Giuseppe Mazzini. Grisi and Candia were supporters of Giovine Italia, the political movement founded by Mazzini, as was the baritone Antonio Tamburini, and they

²⁶ Chorley 1862, 113.

²⁷ See Zsovár 2018, 436.

²⁸ *The Musical World*, 1846, 510.

²⁹ Chorley 1862, 116.

³⁰ Cloutier 2018, 195.

frequently appeared in concerts to champion its political cause and local organizations. The success of these events was mainly due to “spectators’ desire to see and hear these singers up close”, and perhaps especially “to see them outside the fictional frames and costumes of the performance of a complete opera”.³¹

5 Giuditta Pasta

Grisi followed in the footsteps of Giuditta Pasta (1797–1865), who is widely regarded as one of the most iconic sopranos of 19th-century Europe, and whose career in London blossomed “in the transition from Rossinian opera to the works of Bellini and Donizetti.”³² Pasta’s reception offers a valuable perspective on the perception of Italian singers in England. It is notable that reviewers frequently made observations about her acting skills, to the extent that Rutherford suggests she provides a sophisticated model of an “*attrice cantante*”³³ and in the monumental work *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Pasta is described as “one of the first [singers] to unite classic acting to fine singing”.³⁴ Her international trajectory evolved in a similar way to other Italian artists, including Grisi: a successful early season at the Théâtre Italien in Paris in 1815, where she appeared in roles such as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, led to an engagement at the King’s Theatre where she appeared in Cimarosa’s *Penelope*, followed also by cross dressing roles, such as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Her initial reception in London was not overly enthusiastic, however, and her breakthrough only came a few years later in 1821, when she sang Desdemona in Rossini’s *Otello* at Paris’s Théâtre Italien, where her performance was widely praised for combining vocal brilliance with dramatic engagement. This success in Paris allowed her to return to the London stage in April 1824 as a more mature singer and to much greater acclaim: *Grove’s Dictionary* observes that with her interpretation of Desdemona in Rossini’s *Otello* she took over London, quickly followed by triumphs in *Tancredi*, *Romeo*, and *Semiramide*, where she was praised by reviewers for her regal presence and vocal depth.³⁵

³¹ Smart 2019, 44.

³² Rutherford 2007, 108.

³³ Rutherford 2007, 108.

³⁴ Blom 1954, 235.

³⁵ Blom 1954, 587.

6 Singers and Actresses Recite

As previously noted with reference to Grisi, critics also highlighted the distinct feminine values projected by Pasta. As *Grove's Dictionary* reports: “The dignity of her face, form and natural gestures fitted her eminently for tragedy, for which she was not wanting in the necessary fire and energy.”³⁶ It is evident that dignity and natural gestures were regarded as hallmarks of her talent and they also appear to have been particularly valuable in creating a progressively more ladylike image of her as a foreign singer, that seemed to be more in tune with the spirit of the time. Critics repeatedly emphasized Pasta’s forceful stage presence and emotional authenticity in her many roles: Henry Fothergill Chorley wrote that audiences were “held in thrall” from her first note and her “riveting” recitative.³⁷ In April 1833, Pasta returned for high-profile engagements including *Medea in Corinto*, *Anna Bolena*, *Norma*, and *Il Pirata*. She premiered *Norma* in London in June 1833, under Bellini’s guidance and provided a blueprint for the role that, as already discussed, would also be a highlight of Grisi’s repertoire. Her last notable visit to London was in 1837 with concerts at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, where despite a weakened voice, she still retained her “unbroken spell” on the audience.³⁸

As Rutherford suggests, Pasta was unique in that she “embodied” her voice through her acting: she created striking living pictures, accompanying her singing with great, plastic gestures, that added a further level of interpretation to her roles.³⁹ Pasta’s ability to develop her acting invites comparisons with 19th-century *tragediennes*, especially Adelaide Ristori, who in her international tours favoured tragic queenly roles such as *Medea* and *Maria Stuarda*; roles which also featured in Pasta’s opera repertoire and brought to foreign audiences the distinct grand manner style of the Italian *grandattore* acting tradition. A comparison between the two performers, albeit only in the form of a fleeting recollection, is tentatively offered by Chorley in his *Musical Recollections* who saw Ristori as *Medea* and was reminded of Pasta’s equally powerful interpretation of the role:

I never thought of the *Medea* of Madame Pasta with greater enthusiasm of regard, than after enjoying, with sensations no less strong, the *Medea*, in spoken drama, of Madame Ristori. Nothing could be more different than the two performances – than the two plays [...] than the

³⁶ Blom 1954, 587.

³⁷ Chorley 1862, 130–131.

³⁸ Chorley 1862, 132.

³⁹ See Rutherford 2007.

two women – than the two conceptions of the character of the magical enchantress. – But the past delight helped the present one, and the present justified the sincerity of the past.⁴⁰

Interesting parallels between international opera singers and actresses can also be found in the recurring modalities that characterised their performances. These reveal how both singers and actresses succeeded in exerting their authority in the choice of repertoire and the creation of their roles. Pasta, for instance, is renowned for her frequent use of insertion arias in her performances: a particularly notable example of this was her rendition of “Il soave e bel contento” from Giovanni Pacini’s *Niobe*, an aria that “was ubiquitous in European theaters”.⁴¹ Similarly, Ristori, in what could be a comparable “ostentatious of display”,⁴² regularly essayed so-called “*parti levate*” as bravura pieces: she selected scenes from plays that were hallmarks of her repertoire and that would best showcase her art. For example, she often performed Lady Macbeth’s famous “sleepwalking scene” and even essayed it in English for English audiences in 1873, towards the end of her long international career.⁴³

In the case of arias, they were often commissioned especially by singers and were intended as a display of vocal prowess. Within the context of the international operatic circuit, arias became immaterial souvenirs, or “musical gems” in favour with the public and were highlights in concerts performed by singers within communities of expatriates. As Cloutier explains, “the aria is almost analogous to the other physical souvenirs of singers [...] such as engraved portraits and commemorative poems, and made its way into the homes of London patrons both as a memory of a performance and as a printed souvenir to be bought and possessed, also almanacs as fashionable commodities and gifts.”⁴⁴ In addition, as Poriss points out, there were practical reasons for the frequent insertion of arias, and arguably, for the reliance on ‘concerts’ and *parti levate* by touring singers and actresses, connected to the way “the operatic marketplace worked, affecting “both sellers (performers) and consumers (audiences)”.⁴⁵ The international touring circuit placed a lot of strain on singers, who were forced to move rapidly from one city or nation to the next, and were required to learn new roles very quickly. Consequently, “a prima donna under pressure to sing well after only a few weeks of rehearsal might ease

⁴⁰ Chorley 1862, 135.

⁴¹ Poriss 2008, 83.

⁴² Poriss 2008, 75.

⁴³ Buonanno 2013, 84–85. On Ristori’s London career see also Villani 2025 which documents in detail the actress’s first English tour in 1856.

⁴⁴ Cloutier 2018, 202.

⁴⁵ Poriss 2009, 6.

her burden considerably by introducing a familiar aria in place of, or in addition to, music that appeared in the opera she was scheduled to perform”.⁴⁶ Sopranos used the technique of aria insertion as a creative device to enhance their performances, thereby leaving a lasting impact on 19th-century operatic traditions.

Despite the waning popularity of this practice in the latter half of the century, it was still a vehicle in the artistic practice of Adelina Patti, the most celebrated Italian singer of the time. Patti (1843–1919) was born into a genuinely transnational family and elevated the international touring circuit to a global level, with a dazzling career which spanned continents and lasted several decades. She made her debut in England in 1861, at Covent Garden, as Amina in *La Sonnambula* and “reached the highest pinnacle of popularity”.⁴⁷ She then became a regular star at Covent Garden where she also appeared as the first Aida in 1873, and regularly performed there till 1884. One of her most renowned roles was that of Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and she would often deliver her signature aria in the famous “lesson scene” of this opera as an encore, or, along with other arias, as a kind of ‘mini-concert’.⁴⁸

7 Conclusions

Italian divas in 19th-century London perpetuated the allure and mythology of the *primadonna*. The siren-like figure of Angelica Catalani dominated the early years of the century and drew on the archetype depicted in Germaine de Staël’s *Corinne, ou l’Italie* (1807), a work that set the tone for fictional portrayals of performers and opera singers. Shifting perceptions then led to a transformation in the image of the Italian *primadonna*, one that was characterised by a move towards domesticity and propriety, as exemplified by Princess Victoria’s sketches of Grisi in her key interpretations. At the same time, the ready availability of opera sheet music and the dissemination of material and immaterial objects related to these Divas, engendered novel modes of appreciation and consumption and made audiences more familiar with their favourite stars.

The circulation of lithographs and sketches and the use of signature arias in concerts and benefit performances, reinforced the power and appeal of the *primadonna*, thus allowing singers such as Giulia Grisi and Giuditta Pasta to gain entry into English society. In the latter half of the century, *primadonnas* also became

⁴⁶ Poriss 2009, 6–7.

⁴⁷ Cone 1993, 14.

⁴⁸ Poriss 2009, 160.

choice subjects for photographs, typically composed in the style of elegant *cartes de visite*. Finally, Adelina Patti was one of the last divas of the century and became a truly global phenomenon, thus bringing the international touring circuit initiated by earlier touring stars to its utmost development. Patti was able to present a modern image of herself through numerous photographs depicting her in landmark roles: as a young Rosina, she was photographed in London by the renowned celebrity and royal photographer Camille Silvy. These photographs are part of the collection at the National Portrait Gallery and form a series of six *cartes de visite* photographs, each showing a different role performed by Patti.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the advent of early recordings ushered in a new era in terms of how international singers could be ‘possessed’, as well as providing a rival to live performances. Patti was a pioneering figure in this field and early in the 20th century, she made a series of recordings at her stately Welsh home, Craig-y-Nos, including excerpts from *La Sonnambula* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Despite being produced when she was in her sixties, these recordings demonstrate her vocal prowess and technical mastery.⁵⁰

Throughout the long 19th century, the appeal of *primadonnas* was enormous, and their role in disseminating Italian operatic culture crucial. As the century drew to a close, new managerial approaches to devising and presenting opera across nations and cultures were introduced which reinforced the authority of composers and, consequently, redefined that of singers. Nevertheless, the luminous English careers of Italian opera divas which have been retraced here, significantly contributed to the vibrant theatrical culture of the 19th century, bequeathing a profound and enduring legacy to both English and international operatic and dramatic traditions.

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49 The picture portraits by Silvy held at the National Portrait Gallery, London, are available at <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw14621/Adelina-Patti-as-Rosina-in-The-Barber-of-Seville> and <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw144809/Adelina-Patti-in-costume-for-six-different-roles?LinkID=mp03470&role=sit&rNo=5>.

50 Philip 2004, 123–126.

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