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978-0-521-17237-0 - Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life

Benjamin Walton

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| ROSSINI IN RESTORATION PARIS

When Gioachino Rossini moved to Paris in 1824, he was the most celebrated composer in Europe. But why was he so famous, and how did his musical style resonate with its time so well? In this ground-breaking study, Benjamin Walton argues that the operas Rossini produced and adapted for Paris overwhelmed audiences with their musical power, but also responded in a wide variety of ways to the complex social and political dynamics of the French Restoration. To demonstrate the centrality of Rossini to the Restoration, Walton turns away from a traditional account of Rossini's life and works, tracing instead the shifting patterns of Rossinian criticism from before the composer's arrival in Paris to the end of the 1820s, outlining a type of musical history that uses immersion in a narrow time period as a way to reconceive the relationships between opera and the wider currents of life outside the opera house. In place of the light-hearted and comic Rossini of later memory, this book argues for a composer whose music articulated the experience of modern life, and was integrally bound up in the struggle to define French romanticism at the time.

Benjamin Walton is University Lecturer in Music at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Jesus College. His work centres on the cultural history of music in the first half of the nineteenth century, and in 2004 he was awarded the Jerome Roche Prize from the Royal Musical Association for his article in the *Cambridge Opera Journal* on Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Alongside his scholarly publications, he regularly writes programme notes for the Royal Opera House and for other European opera houses and music festivals.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico CityCambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.orgInformation on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521172370

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First published 2007

First paperback edition 2010

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library**Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Walton, Benjamin, 1972–

Rossini in restoration Paris: the sound of modern life/Benjamin Walton.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in opera)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-521-87060-3 (hardback)

I. Rossini, Gioacchino, 1792–1868 – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Opera – France – Paris – 19th century. 3. Opera – Italy – 19th century. I. Title. II. Series.

ML410.R8W25 2007

782.1092–dc22 2007033209

ISBN 978-0-521-87060-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-17237-0 Paperback

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To Bettina

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NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. The spelling of the original texts has been left intact; hence, for instance, 'changemens' rather than 'changements'.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A recent review of a book about the 1950s complained of the inexorable spread of ‘decaditis’: the compulsion to break up history into ten-year chunks. At this point, I might personally defend succumbing to such a condition on the grounds of letting the time spent researching the topic dictate the timespan studied, year for year. In the decade of my interest in the irrepressible Parisian 1820s, I have benefited from the support of many people and organisations, and I can only acknowledge a small selection of them here. I would like to thank the Music Department at the University of Bristol for offering me research leave in the autumn of 2004, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for granting me matching leave through the following spring. The staff of the Bibliothèque-Musée de l’Opéra provided gracious help at various times, as did the librarians in other parts of the Bibliothèque nationale, the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris and the Archives nationales. An earlier version of Chapter 2 appeared in *19th-Century Music* 26 (Summer 2002), and an earlier version of Chapter 6 was published in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15 (July 2003); I acknowledge the University of California Press and Cambridge University Press for granting authorisation to reproduce that material.

It was Roger Parker who devised the project with me over lunch one day that would transform itself several times before settling into its current form; he has remained unfailingly supportive through every later stage. Sarah Hibberd has always added immeasurably to the pleasure of studying Restoration Paris and was consistently generous in sharing her ideas. At Bristol, I was fortunate to come into contact with the nineteenth-century expertise of two eminent Stephens, Banfield and Bann; to the latter I am also grateful for his

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help in searching for Restoration imagery. Arthur Groos and my anonymous readers offered well-targeted criticisms in the book's final stages, and I am particularly indebted to Emanuele Senici for his detailed and insightful comments, in combination with our ongoing discussions on matters Rossinian. My thanks to Guillermo Brachetta for setting the music examples, and to Victoria Cooper and Rebecca Jones at Cambridge University Press for their skilful and efficient assistance, and their constant goodwill.

Other debts are harder to quantify; Rachel Beckles Willson, Francesca Brittan, James Q. Davies, Martin Deasy, Melina Esse, Andy Fry, Matthew Gelbart, Daniel Grimley, Jacob Hosler, Gundula Kreuzer, Nicholas Mathew, Delphine Mordey, Roger Moseley and Holly Watkins all provided thought-provoking discussion, vital feedback or (equally vital) distraction at important times. Especially warm thanks, meanwhile, are due to Mary Ann Smart, who has seen this book develop for longer than anyone else. She shaped and reshaped my initial research, supervised my Ph.D. with a perfect balance of rigour and care, and has remained an inspiring mentor, enthusiastically engaging with all the new material I have continued to send her. Finally, Bettina Varwig made no effort to attend my paper on *Guillaume Tell* at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society in Houston in 2003; she has since read, thought and talked more about Rossini and the 1820s than she ever intended. To her I dedicate this book with love and gratitude.

Cambridge, January 2007

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ABBREVIATIONS

- GRLD* Bruno Cagli and Sergio Ragni, eds., *Gioachino Rossini. Lettere e documenti*, 4 vols. to date, Pesaro: Fondazione G. Rossini, 1992–
- Pan* Archives nationales, Paris
- Po* Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra, Paris