

## THE INESCAPABLE SIREN, THE CRY FROM THE STAGE

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### **ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION**

Both water and music call to the human race: one as an option for transport, the other as a means of mental escape. With the aim of music metaphorically to transport, it would be logical to connect the metaphorical action to something concrete, such as a boat on a river or even a fish-tailed maiden, a siren. She is not only seen on the stage as the prima donna in operas, but also in the salon; she materializes in any performance setting where a sounding female body is the object of attention. What signifies her is the virtuosic otherworldly call composers have written for her via charming melodies and rolling, water-illustrating accompaniments.

### **BARCAROLES AND ISSUES OF PRESENCE IN TEXT**

It is little wonder that a genre evolved in the Western world for this theoretically powerful music. The catchall classification that has come to encapsulate any and all music that was written as an imitation of water is known as the "barcarole." It is a genre of the salon, an intimate music meant to figuratively transport a small audience to another time and place. For these songs' backdrop, composers and scholars chose the picturesque waterscape of Renaissance Venice: the boats, the architecture, the image of the gondolier, and of course, the beautiful sounds of voices and instruments that wafted from the salons of the wealthy. It is an image that makes for very pretty, yet passive, picture, and like the Venetian image, the barcarole has become, or perhaps was always a type of sonic wallpaper.

The idea of this passivity is perpetuated by the traditional definitions of the genre. Barcaroles, as defined by *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, are "pieces that imitate or suggest the songs (barcarole) sung by Venetian gondoliers as they propel their boats through the water....A basic feature of the barcarolle is the time signature, 6/8, with a marked lilting rhythm depicting the movement of the boat."<sup>1</sup> This is a supposedly clear definition, though a literal one. However, it does not take into account the performance element in these songs, or what might be called, as scholar and professor Carolyn Abbate states, "the human element."<sup>2</sup> It is the complexities that emerge once a performer interprets the written music and a piece sounds. This sounding is not passive; the active performer is there.

Certainly, upon further investigation the analyst begins to slosh against the music versus effortlessly gliding through it. For example, it is worthy to note that *Grove* uses the French spelling of the word "barcarole," as opposed to the Italian spelling, regardless of its definition implying that the barcarole originated in an Italian city. The discrepancies do not stop there. There are times when a barcarole is not in 6/8, or when the air of passivity so celebrated in past scholarship on the barcarole is markedly absent from a tune. Additionally, the Western canon includes vocal barcaroles and instrumental barcaroles, but these seem to not be distinguished or separated in the limited scholarship that mentions the boat song. Nevertheless, this separation is necessary, for the singer is not the entity mimicking the movement of the boat on the water: the accompanying piano or orchestra imitates the water. More complications arise when these traditional "salon songs" begin to be performed on the stage. A stage performance creates a different atmosphere, almost a different intention or a different goal than one in a more intimate setting. Over and over, the traditional system of classification begins to unravel in the wake of the ever-looming specter of performance, and that shadow certainly appears to be fishtailed.

What resonates in the concert hall is the sound of the siren. Because the presence of the singer onstage disrupts the barcarole's "inherent passivity," the new image begs a patron. In the act of performance, the vocal barcarole is not alluding to the image of a gondolier or a passive boat ride, but rather the active image of a siren. This is seen in European countries' song genres with which the barcarole fuses, namely those of Italy, Germany, and France. The songs' texts also point to more than a Venetian boat image as well as the history of the barcarole's performance environment. Even the standard vocal practices that are inevitably employed in the presentation of any song the active siren intrudes.

### **THE SIREN IMAGE AND HER HISTORY**

At this juncture, the leading lady should be introduced. She and her consorts first appear for the Western world as hideous bird-maidens with ethereal voices in Homer's epic *The Odyssey*.<sup>3</sup> Terrible temptresses, they lure sailors to their deaths by singing and then shipwreck the men on their rocky shores. Eventually, sirens lost many of their bird-like qualities and began growing tails and displaying characteristics more associated with muses, such as great physical beauty, long hair, and the ability to play instruments. Medieval Venice was one of many cities in Europe where the siren underwent her transformation. The Siren had many forms in Venice: bird, two-tailed fish-maiden, lyre-playing harlot,<sup>4</sup> and these images abound in the architecture of the city's buildings, as is common with Mediterranean cities where the earliest siren images are found.<sup>5</sup> This connects to Alison Luchs' observation that "the sea hybrids flourished especially where they could give form to the festive, sensuous, and poetic qualities of Venetian culture."<sup>6</sup> Of course, Venice was not the only place where the siren image appeared. Beauty and power entwined in single, vocal beings in the folklore of Western Europe, especially that of Italy, and this is how the mythological siren fused with the female vocalist. Love poetry and literature as early as Petrarch in the fourteenth century give evidence of the shift, and the growing social importance of Italy in Renaissance Europe helped to solidify the connection.<sup>7</sup> Even the common instrument of choice for the women who performed in Italian courts was the lyre, the mermaid's preferred instrument.<sup>8</sup> Thus, a more palatable image of the siren is created: one that expounds both the female beauty and the feminine voice; this also further strengthens the ties between what is heard and what is seen, especially once something is placed on the stage.<sup>9</sup> Something positioned there is an invitation meant to be accepted, and the willingness of the audience to acquiesce to the allusion hints at the effectiveness of the siren depiction.

This siren creation by the Western world very much mirrors the creation of the barcarole. Like the water from which both beings are born, their definitions are fluid and change to fit a desired context. Concerning the siren, Linda Austern observes, "Spirit-being or knowing body, [sirens] seem to be everywhere and nowhere at once, dwelling in the liminal spaces between earth, sea, and sky, between life and death, between imagination and the senses."<sup>10</sup> Rodney Stenning Edgecombe also capitalizes on the imaginative qualities and sense-warping capabilities of the barcarole: "Even as one contemplates the barcarole, then, it seems to go in and out of focus, to show elective affinities with other kinds of utterance and other kinds of structure by virtue of the elements it shares with them."<sup>11</sup> In these two definitions, both the siren and the barcarole serve as intermediaries between a concrete world and an imaginary world; they inhabit a place where for one brief, shining moment, all things exist in perpetual suspension. Music seems to exemplify these grand moments of expanse.

### **LINKING THE BARCAROLE AND THE SIREN**

In the navigation of this expanse, it is worthwhile even to be so literal as to capitalize on the boat element of the barcarole, especially because it seems to be such an integral piece of its definition. The genre presents in its name the presence of a boat. Upon further investigation, however, it is quickly realized that the boat need not be present, in the title or on the stage, to imply "barcarole." This is most strikingly seen throughout Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. In their first appearance, the Rhine Maidens circle gracefully around the precious golden treasure to the rhythm of a barcarole.<sup>12</sup> There is no boat, nor even the suggestion of a boat; the sounding bodies are beneath the water's surface rather than atop it. Although the boat element is absent, the illusion of transport still exists, but it is now an aural transport. The vehicle becomes the sounding bodies themselves, and they transport the audience back to an origin

point. The entire ancient story is birthed through the connection made between water and music. The barcarole in this instance is the metaphorical vehicle, not an allusion to one. This is also evidenced by the libretto. The text illustrates the story. The Rhein Maiden Woglinde mentions a cradle in her first line,<sup>13</sup> but this is the only rocking thing in the text other than the names of the swaying Rhein Maidens.

Similarly to birthing, allusions to death and dying are plentiful in both barcaroles and siren song, be they the traditional sirens consuming the flesh of their victims,<sup>14</sup> or the modern sirens causing men to lose their ability to reason and fall asleep forever.<sup>15</sup> In these ways, the seductive elements mirror those of the original bird-sirens, but for the reinvented fish-sirens, the destinations are less concrete. There is a trend in literature of equating the siren song, as Cicero (106 BC–43 BC) states, to the “innate love of learning found in humankind.”<sup>16</sup> This enlightenment might be considered a death or a drowning of sorts: the death of ignorance. There is an unwitting venturing into the unknown once a listener is within earshot of a siren. She reaches for the ears of anyone who dares to listen, entrancing with the inescapable lure of untouchable and uncontainable music.

### **THE LURE OF VENICE**

It is no wonder that one city in Europe was unintentionally chosen as the physical representation of these other worlds. Venice, in some ways, was the natural choice for the backdrop of the barcarole, and its draw was quite dependent on the new culture that developed there during the Renaissance. Venice was a city at the forefront of trade and commerce in Renaissance Italy, and as such, it developed a strong connection to the exotic and the fantastic.<sup>17</sup> The increased cash flow enabled Venetians to act as commissioners and patrons, which allowed for an outpouring of art. Music, especially vocal music, became even more a major form of entertainment in the home; in those of wealthy families, the “first room [the primary sitting room, or the place for entertaining guests] was dedicated to music.”<sup>18</sup> This was one of the beginnings of salons and parlor music. Indeed, the rest of Europe would adopt elements of the Renaissance Venetian and Italian sitting room: the rich fabrics, the huge pieces of artwork and tapestries, the musical instruments.<sup>19</sup> There is this overwhelming desire for relaxation and escape; what better place than Venice? Pictures of boats and waterscapes invaded the other countries’ sitting rooms as this show of luxury that started in Italy seeped out to the rest of Europe. Chamber music was now possible as a middle class emerged.<sup>20</sup> This arriviste class was part of an even larger societal transformation.

In Venice, a new social hierarchy began to develop as the courtesan and the court singer ascended to new and more prominent stations as major players in Venetian society. These two female stations were eerily similar. The noblewoman vocalist, or she who might be called the Venetian siren, treaded a fine line between highborn lady and harlot. Male and female listeners alike were suspicious of her charm, her yen for the spotlight, and the dangerously alluring quality of her virtuosic voice.<sup>21</sup> The phenomenon of female vocal performance even prompted notary and poet Francesco da Barberino (1264–1348) to compile a manual that gave specific instructions on how a lady must sing. Sections of note include directions on averting the eyes and the art of only singing upon request.<sup>22</sup> The lady herself became a presence of emblematic transport for the new society, most commonly a transport set in motion by creative or carnal desire. This desire emerges frequently in vocal music. Specifically barcaroles often have texts that pertain to love or nature, especially with the allusions to water in the piano or orchestra accompaniment. The vocal line in these songs would be the boat or the singing gondolier, and the vocal line’s instrument is a living sounding body, as opposed to the literal instrument being inanimate. That living presence sexualizes the sound and makes it more than just a man on a boat.

When not using the women as metaphorical carriage, Venetians relied on harnessing the water for literal transportation. Ruled and inspired by the aquatic, boats were its most frequently used and fastest methods of conveyance before the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> More specifically, the boat of choice was the gondola. A flat-bottomed, occasionally ornately-carved bit of maritime ingenuity, the gondola usually only made an appearance for weddings and funerals,<sup>24</sup> but was eventually used more for the enjoyment of tourists, many of which were composers and artists.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it was the strong artistic lure of Venice coupled with the romantic image of being on the water, or even the early association of the gondola with milestones that spawned the invention of a singing gondolier. The romance of Venice was momentarily forgotten during the Enlightenment in Europe, but it returned with a vengeance in the wake of

Romanticism.<sup>26</sup> The yearning for the fantastic and ethereal was back, and Italian composers catered to this new need. It is important to note that this new musical uprising did not start in Venice and spread out and upwards to the rest of Europe. There also seems to be no way of tracking the evolution of the barcarole, or whatever scholars and composers hold the genre to be. For the purpose of organization, it just seems logical to start in the place that supposedly inspired and propagated the “barcarole myth,” and thus, the image of siren in this salon music.

### ITALIAN, GERMAN, AND FRENCH BARCAROLES: THE MULTI-FACED SIREN

Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) at some unknown time in his life wrote a collection of vocal music for the salon entitled *Le composizioni da camera*. One of these songs, “Il Barcaiolo” or “The Boatman” depicts an unnamed voice, that of the singer, and her desire for the boatman to row, expounding on the calmness of the water and the sky.<sup>27</sup> She assures him that if she was to die, she would die happy. Here is a text that clearly stems from the standard boat song imagery. The music itself is in the expected barcarole 6/8 with a repeating bass line that imitates the rocking of a boat. In this song’s case, the ostinato bass consists of arpeggiated chords in the first section and an oom-pah-pah rhythm in the second section. An andantino tempo marking at the top of the song contributes to the image as one of relaxation. However, the story of this song is not told from the boatman’s point of view. It is an outside feminine entity that commands the boatman to row; the most compelling evidence of the singer being female is that the song is dedicated to *Madame Coussy*. This note points to the composition being one originally intended to be sung by a feminine voice. Additional evocations of the natural siren image are found in virtuosic vocal elements of the song. The original theme is simple enough: the vocal line doubling the ostinato rhythm in the bass, with the range just short of an octave. However, in the second section, elements of the Italian *bel canto* tradition so present in contemporary Italian opera emerge. Measure seventeen unveils the first vocal run that unwinds over a new piano accompaniment that more imitates a waltz than the stroke of a gondolier. The voice part continues this ornamentation, rippling through relatively unexpected accidentals; the section concludes with a cadenza, a musical element that is far from standard in pieces of this length. This song is one example of the new Italian barcarole. It is a piece of vocal music that leans in classification more towards an opera aria than an art song, and as a result, more of the classic diva image is suggested by a vocal line dependent on complicated, fast-moving scalar passages and an unspecified range, as shown in the presence of a cadenza. In this manner, Donizetti brought the siren into the sitting room simply through his manner of composition. This song is merely one example of the false notion that the barcarole is simple or accessible. Other Italian composers also employed these virtuosic vocal techniques in their compositions.

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868), like Donizetti, is most famous for his operas, but he did compose a three-song suite entitled *La Regata Veneziana*. One of the more striking elements of the three songs is that they are actually in the Venetian dialect.<sup>28</sup> Like Donizetti’s “Il Barcaiolo,” the voice in the song is not that of the gondolier, but rather, his girlfriend Anzoleta. The piece chronicles Anzoleta’s anxiety, desires, and ultimately unbridled joy as she speaks to her gondolier Momolo before, during, and after the boat race. The frenzy depicted in this piece is completely unaccounted for in the traditional definition of the barcarole, although it is addressed by Edgecombe. *Regata* would be what he refers to as “the vigorous barcarole,”<sup>29</sup> or those “characterized by zest and chirpiness.”<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note here that by describing the barcarole in this way, Edgecombe, perhaps unintentionally, reverts to the sound of this type of barcarole in performance. This “zest and chirpiness” would only be evident when the barcarole sounds, unless the composer consciously, and rather obviously, wrote the exact intention of the piece across the front page. A similar breakdown occurs with Edgecombe’s other barcarole categories. For example, his first category of “the elegiac” barcarole does not “[efface] the division between objective and subjective space”<sup>31</sup> without being heard. It cannot be said to metaphorically transport an audience without an audience.

Rossini does not notate the intention of the piece, aside from providing the performers with the customary Italian barcarole *allegretto moderato* tempo. The first of the three songs is in the standard 6/8, thus, aside from the obvious text, the allusion of the barcarole is established, and Rossini allows deviation from it in his second and third songs. Once again, the vocalist is not the rower, but an outside female

presence that calls to the rower and urges him onward. The collection operates under the premise that the boy rows for Anzoleta and that he is spurred onward by the sound of her voice carrying over the water. In this manner, the siren appears again with the opera techniques Rossini employs, especially in choosing to set a text that has named characters, a conflict, and a resolution. Again, in the *bel canto* style, her vocal line flowers with complicated ornamentation and fast runs more bent on showcasing the singer than mimicking the stroke of the gondolier. The sheer length and range of the piece pays testament to this. By employing techniques used primarily in opera, these two Italian composers change the barcarole into a prima donna-esque aria and fabricate more easily made connection to the siren in performance.

Italy and Italian opera were indeed important influences for Europe and for another prominent musical nationality in the nineteenth century: Germany. A surge of artistic sharing occurred among France, the German states, and the Italian states in the late eighteenth century,<sup>32</sup> and one of the song forms that became popular as a result of this exchange was the barcarole. However, the Germans previously developed a song form similar to that of the barcarole. It was called the *Ständchen* or serenade. Edgcombe affectionately refers to this genre as “a barcarole sans boat.”<sup>33</sup> The *Ständchen* employs similar compositional and performance techniques as the barcarole, such as a lilting melody and a lovesick, pleading text, but German composers had a penchant for infusing the sweetness and calm with elements of the sinister. This fusion not only harkens back to German folklore’s conspicuous Lorelei water maiden, but also standard siren imagery.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) wrote a barcarole which alludes more specifically to Venice. “Venetianisches Gondelied” briefly sets a scene of a serenader calling to his beloved to come down and run away with him. He calls to her, “das Boot ist bereit” (the boat is ready).<sup>34</sup> In this song, an implied male body that calls to an unknown woman named Ninetta assumes the guise of the siren as luring seductress in the same moment that Mendelssohn evokes the Venetian barcarole in his consistent pianistic undercurrent and lilting melody in 6/8. He calls in the same way a siren would; there is in the serenader’s text the wish for the object of the serenade to come away. The lilt is not the only telltale quality of the melody, however. It also evokes that eerie, supernatural quality typical of the *Ständchen*. The ABA song form common for barcaroles begins with a melody in A minor that returns once the singer reiterates his plea.

Similarly, “Auf dem Wasser zu singen” by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) employs an F minor melody as a means of seducing an audience. The vocal line more literally mirrors the piano part in this song, as if the vocalist is part of the water.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the mention of the boat in the text serves more as a metaphor for the soul than an actual physical presence. The song is similar in form to “Venetianisches Gondelied,” which again evokes the *Ständchen* ABA form. Thinking back to the siren as intermediary between two worlds, one notices that the text of the song first details a place by the water and then switches to a forest in the second verse. Edgcombe cites in his article this connection between the barcarole and the pastorale, or what he calls “a melding of kinds.”<sup>36</sup> This could be seen as a unification of common folk imagery in music, with a signifier of innocence being the rocking 6/8 rhythm. The rhythm may be deceptive when conjuring the siren through the barcarole, as Schubert’s simple song suggests. The final verse expounds on the fleeting nature of life and the transitory nature of all things, and the siren’s “more gentle power over the soul in transit.”<sup>37</sup>:

Morgen entschwinde mit schimmerndem Flügel  
Wieder wie gestern und heute die Zeit,  
Bis ich auf höherem strahlendem Flügel  
Selber entschwinde der wechselnden Zeit.

[Tomorrow, time will vanish with shimmering wings  
Again, as yesterday and today,  
Until I, on higher more radiant wing,  
Myself vanish to the changing time.]<sup>38</sup>

These sentiments are commonly associated with the golden-haired German sorceress known as the Lorelei, whose voice carries from a rock overlooking the Rhine and causes many a shipwreck in its swirling waters.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, there is something most interesting about this fisherman's daughter, namely the fact that she is a fisherman's daughter. The German barcaroles have a simpler melodic quality and a complete lack of the ornamentation than is found in the Italian barcaroles. This might be traced back to the song form's particular siren origin: "Although in literature and painting we find her [the Lorelei] represented as a *femme fatale*, in music she sings almost like a bourgeois daughter in the parlor."<sup>40</sup> Thus, we come back to the sitting room, the home of the barcarole, yet in the different German style, the barcarole still connects with the siren myth, albeit the peasant daughter rather than the stage diva.

The height of the parlor draw truly manifested itself in post-revolution France, the last of the artistic powerhouses of Europe. Above any other type of music in France was Italian opera. Before the French Revolution (1789-1799), many Italian composers had established themselves in France and were quite popular, as opposed to German composers, who did not gain regular performance venues in France until the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Even then, in the many chamber music societies that abounded in mid-nineteenth-century Paris, mostly Italian works were performed, especially later after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).<sup>42</sup> For France, the barcarole latched onto the existing *berceuse*, or lullaby. These songs capitalized on the steady rocking that alluded to a boat in a barcarole; for the *berceuse*, the rocking became the pulse of a cradle. This two song form connections showcases the maternal qualities of the siren: their frequently depicted exposed breasts,<sup>43</sup> the lulling to sleep of their victims,<sup>44</sup> and their potential for imparting greater knowledge on their listeners.<sup>45</sup>

One of the best French songs to demonstrate this aspect of the siren is "Les Berceaux" by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). The ostinato bass rhythm is certainly reminiscent of the barcarole, as is the *andante* tempo.<sup>46</sup> The text dwells on the mourning of mothers as their sons go off to explore the world, via ship. In this instance, the ships are the means of transport or the gondola boat. The song not only draws the boat-cradle parallel literally, but musically as well. The rocking motion in the piano part more resembles the motion of the sea rather than the rhythm of a mother's arms cradling her child. Juxtaposed, or perhaps more fused, with the text, the rocking wave rhythm ushers in a harmonic template more varied than some of the other previously analyzed songs. Nevertheless, similar to the previous pieces is the demonstrated range and lyrical virtuosity of the voice part. In the song's high key of C minor, the singer scoops down for a low B-flat, only to ring out a G above the staff in the climax of the song. The female voice wails and whispers over the percussive undulations of the piano, and so creates a convincing connections among the lullaby, the barcarole, and the siren.

Of course, a discussion of the barcarole would not be complete without the most performed barcarole in a concert setting, a veritable poster-child for the genre. It is the barcarole from *Les Contes D'Hoffmann* by Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880). With its ever-seductive lilt and charming harmonies, this duet for soprano and alto voice has become the quintessence of the boat song genre and is included as an example in a majority of barcarole definitions. The scene is as well-known as the song: the courtesan Guilietta and Offenbach's companion Nicklausse are in Venice, and they are literally on a boat.<sup>47</sup> Guilietta explicitly harkens back to the infamous Venetian courtesan skilled in the art of music, and she intends to use this skill as a means of seduction. Aside from the physical staging of the scene, the music has the traditional barcarole elements, but it is the song's context within the opera that gives the audience insight into the siren elements. There is Guilietta, a courtesan, and the closest siren parallel in the Western world. She is then underscored by Nicklausse, an actual Muse in disguise. Like Nicklausse, the scene and the song are a ruse of sorts, as much as any barcarole is a ruse. It is not so much the means to the end, which is understandably the focus of any method of categorization, but rather the end in itself: the actual act of transcendence. Enter: the crux of the barcarole's analytical dilemma.

### **SIREN METAPHOR AS INESCAPABLE PRESENCE IN PERFORMANCE AND MUSIC ANALYSIS**

The siren image is truly unavoidable, especially for vocalists, in a performance setting. There is very little mediation between the vocalist and the audience aside from the piano. The piano could even be considered a version of the siren harp. It serves to illustrate the movement of the water and to support the singer. In the Western tradition of art song performance, even in the phenomenon of the recital, the

vocalist rarely performs unaccompanied, and the piano is most often the instrument that accompanies barcaroles. Throughout the history of performance, the piano and the singer have melded, yet the singer remains in the spotlight. This physical presence of a singer wrecks the traditional view of the barcarole from the stage. The voice is seen; the illusion is ruined. On paper, the voice is disembodied, but the singer gives the sound a form. It is now impossible for the music to be passive, and so the presence of the form begs a different analytical approach.

The vocalist has similar goals to those of the siren. She seeks to captivate an audience and to hold its attention for the length of a piece. She also pursues virtuosity in her study and opportunities to display her skill. Compare this to the siren myths and the relationship between sounding body and hearing body.<sup>48</sup> There is an inherent gap, a gap that the singer seeks to fill, but to some extent, will never be able to because of the nature of performance. The very concept implies a subject and a listener.

This forces the analyst back to the transcendence issue: the desired bane of the performer, the hopeful wish of the audience, and furthermore, the true goal of the barcarole.

In no way is there an intention to superimpose on this music what scholar Carolyn Abbate calls "the cryptographic sublime," the notion that music has inherent and readable universal secrets,<sup>49</sup> or that these so-called "secrets" might only be truly uncovered and appreciated in performance. Neither is it correct to state that the accepted method of music analysis and classification is worthless. To simplify the complicated relationship between the performance of a musical text and the musical text itself, Abbate provides a fitting analogy:

Consider the seismograph, a suave metaphor. Stethoscopes amplify nearly inaudible sound into louder sound, without crossover from one medium or phenomenon into another. What was sound remains sound, just closer or more clearly heard. Seismographs measure earthquakes, yet also record the earth's murmured groans and imperceptible shifts below the threshold of perception with acuity that far outdoes the human senses. But more than this, their product—the trace they leave on paper, the product perceptible to our senses— is no amplification or direct transportation, not simply motion for motion. The product is motion translated into another medium: graphic inscriptions on paper that will remain abstract or illegible as long as they are taken as themselves.<sup>50</sup>

This is the written music that has become the focus of not just the scrutiny of the barcarole, but that of the entire Western music canon. Scholars have become obsessed with music's representational forms that the phenomena that only translate through performance, such as that of the siren, become lost. The fact that siren imagery runs rampant through art song forces scholars and performers to question the entire established extension of the salon performance system so widely in use. Through it surfaces concerns regarding gender, the expectations placed on vocalists, the importance of an audience, and the reasons why musicians perform. Furthermore, the discrepancy between what is considered the actual and what is deemed the representational form gives a new importance to the role of the performer. The music in a performance context is the authentic piece of music, not the study of a score. This creates a very narrow definition of not only the barcarole, but any type of music. This is not to say that scores are useless, but they are only one part of a whole. Performances should then be considered an active scholarship. It would make conscious passivity in music impossible, even if it has become an accepted part of a genre's definition. Music inevitably has a presence, and this perceived image is the more rounded of definitions.

This generic definition of the barcarole is limited by the standard methods of classification; this is mostly because the image of the siren and other aspects of performance remain absent from the written page. If only the page were to be examined, the gondolier would seem to be the most plausible figure associated with any of the songs, either because of text or preconceived notions about the origin of the genre. Upon investigation, the analyst determines that the barcarole belongs just as much to France and Germany as it does to Venice; Venice and the gondolier were simply the genre's chosen costume.

However, even these are questionable. Once a song is set for a vocalist, the siren's metaphor is the one that dominates, not the gondolier's. It is because a new agency is created in the presence of a sounding body. There is finally a concrete connection between the mysticisms associated with music and the human, or inhuman, voice. It seems rather fitting that the connection be made in the water.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice J.E. Brown and Kenneth L. Hamilton, "Barcarolle," in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02021> (accessed April 6, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Abbate. "Music- Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Spring 2004): 530.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, "Introduction," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Luchs, *The Mermaids of Venice: Fantastic Sea Creatures in Venetian Renaissance Art* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2010), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Austern, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Luchs, 183.

<sup>7</sup> Elena Laura Calogero, "Sweet Aluring Harmony: Heavenly and Earthly Sirens in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Literary and Visual Culture," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 147.

<sup>8</sup> Calogero, 148.

<sup>9</sup> Calogero, 164.

<sup>10</sup> Austern, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, "On the Limits of Genre: Some Nineteenth-Century Barcaroles," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 24, no. 3 (2001): 253.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold, in 4 scenes* (London: E. Eulenburg, 1900).

<sup>13</sup> Wagner, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Kramer, "Longindyingcall: Of Music, Modernity, and the Sirens," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 195.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, "Teach Me to Heare Mermaides Singing: Embodiments of (Acoustic) Pleasure and Danger in the Modern West," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 71.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen M. Buhler, "The Sirens, the Epicurean Boat, and the Poetry of Praise," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 179.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Fortini Brown. *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 34.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, 248.

<sup>19</sup> Brown, 201.

<sup>20</sup> Alec Robertson, *Chamber Music* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Calogero, 150.

<sup>22</sup> Calogero, 142.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Hopkinson Smith, *Gondola Days* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), 24.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Robertson, 349.

<sup>27</sup> Gaetano Donizetti, *Composizioni da camera: per canto e pianoforte* (Milano: Ricordi, 1961), 31-35.

<sup>28</sup> Gioacchino Rossini, *La Regata Veneziana* (Boca Raton, FL: Masters Music Publications Inc., 1989).

<sup>29</sup> Edgecombe, 257.

<sup>30</sup> Edgecombe, 266.

<sup>31</sup> Edgecombe, 258.



- <sup>32</sup> Jean Mongrédien and Reinhard G. Pauly, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism: 1789-1830* (Portland, Or: Amadeus Press, 1996), 72.
- <sup>33</sup> Edgecombe, 265.
- <sup>34</sup> Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, *Seventy-Nine Songs for Voice and Piano (Medium)* (Melville, N.Y.: Belwin Mills, 1980).
- <sup>35</sup> Franz Schubert, "Auf dem Wasser zu singen," in *Schubert-Album Sammlung der Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Pianoforte Begleitung, Bd.1* edited by Max Friedlaender. (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1910).
- <sup>36</sup> Edgecombe, 264.
- <sup>37</sup> Austern, 89.
- <sup>38</sup> Lynn Thompson, 1997. Translation from German to English.
- <sup>39</sup> Annegret Fauser, "Rheinsirenen: Loreley and Other Rhine Maidens," in *Music of the Sirens* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 250.
- <sup>40</sup> Fauser, 266.
- <sup>41</sup> Jean Mongrédien and Reinhard G. Pauly, 109.
- <sup>42</sup> Robertson, 359.
- <sup>43</sup> Luchs, 35.
- <sup>44</sup> Austern, 71.
- <sup>45</sup> Buhler, 179.
- <sup>46</sup> Gabriel Fauré and Sergius Kagen, *30 Songs for Voice and Piano* (New York: International Music Co, 1956).
- <sup>47</sup> Andrew Lamb, "Contes d'Hoffmann, Les," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O008963> (accessed April 15, 2012).
- <sup>48</sup> Austern, 3.
- <sup>49</sup> Abbate, 524.
- <sup>50</sup> Abbate, 527-8.

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