

BEYOND PRIMA DONNA: PAULINE VIARDOT'S COLLABORATION ON
MEYERBEER'S *LE PROPHÈTE*, GOUNOD'S *SAPHO*,
AND BERLIOZ'S ARRANGEMENT OF *ORPHÉE*

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ABSTRACT

Prima donnas of the nineteenth century enjoyed celebrity status and were the wealthiest women of their time. Mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot's (1821–1910) diva status provided her with a platform from which to share the full extent of her musical abilities. Viardot's capabilities as a performer are widely acknowledged and reviewed throughout history; however, her contributions to French music beyond simply singing are only beginning to be understood. Her Thursday night salon promoted the music of both established and unknown composers, and hosted important guests, including Alfred de Musset, George Sand, Charles Dickens, Charles Gounod, Frédéric Chopin, and Franz Liszt. Viardot's musical talents were respected and utilized in the premieres of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* (1849), Charles Gounod's *Sapho* (1851), and Hector Berlioz's revision of Gluck's *Orphée* (1859). Through her salon and collaboration with composers, Viardot shaped the careers of others, contributing in a broader sense to the trajectory of French music of the nineteenth century.

This thesis uses manuscript scores, musical analyses of the operas, letters, and other primary source documents to argue that Viardot was an essential collaborator in her

relationships with Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Berlioz, and that she was integral to their various successes as opera composers. Chapter One surveys the relevant literature used for researching this thesis. Chapter Two provides a biographical sketch of Viardot which contextualizes how she learned collaboration from her family, and then used her salon as a way to implement this skill through the promotion of young composers. Chapters Three, Four, and Five turn to an analyses of her roles in *Le prophète* (Fidès), *Sapho* (Sapho), and *Orphée* (Orphée) in order to establish her relationship to the composers, how plot adaptations were devised to highlight her acting abilities, and how musical adaptations featured her vocal talents. These chapters will show how Viardot played a role in the musical alterations of these works. Through this analysis, this thesis highlights Viardot's contributions to the careers of these men and ultimately the musical life of nineteenth-century France.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the UMKC Conservatory, have examined a thesis titled “Beyond Prima Donna: Pauline Viardot’s Collaboration on Meyerbeer’s *Le Prophète*, Gounod’s *Sapho*, and Berlioz’s Arrangement of *Orphée*,” presented by Lydia Bechtel-Edmonson, candidate for the Master of Music degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

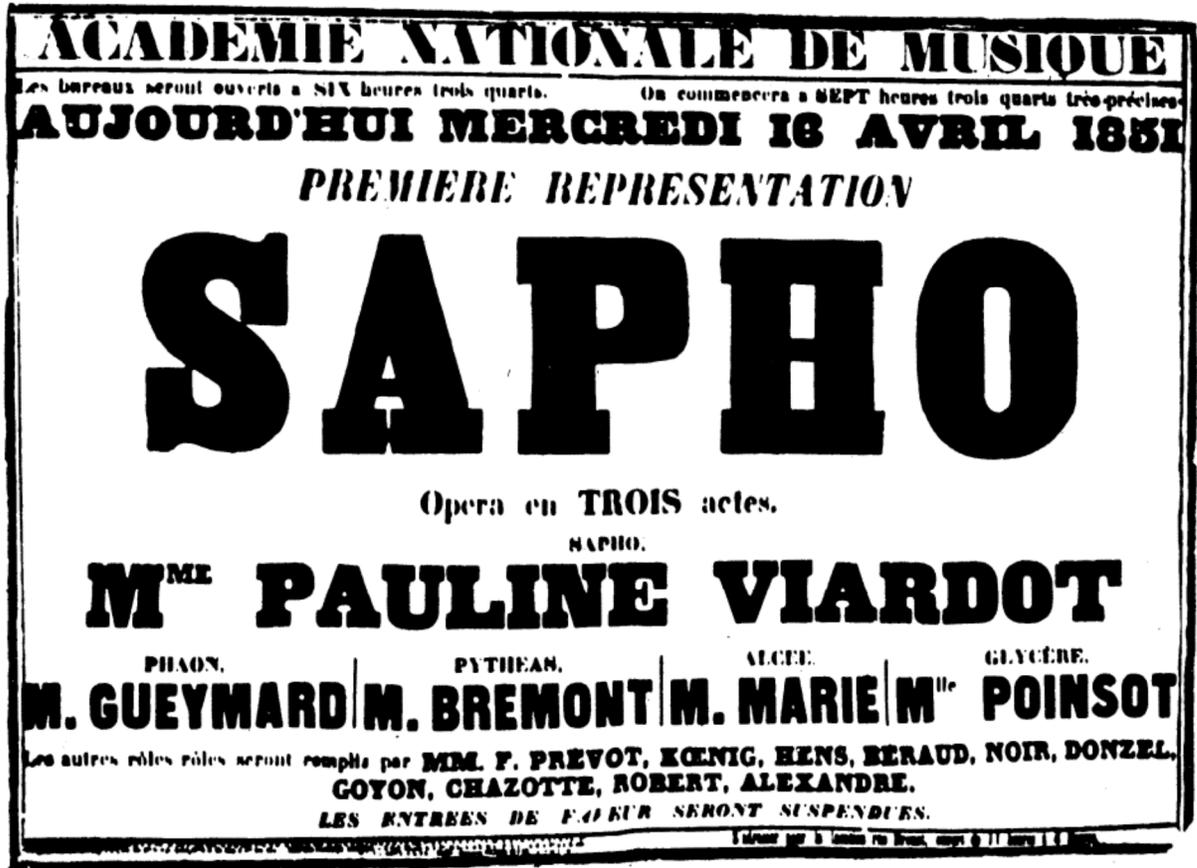


Figure 1.1. “Affiche de la Première Représentation de *Sapho*.”¹

The announcement above, for Charles Gounod’s first opera, *Sapho*, appeared in a Paris newspaper the day of its premiere, April 16, 1851 (Figure 1.1). The ad reserves the largest font size for the title of the opera, followed by the star singer in a slightly smaller size; the supporting roles appear in a smaller but still legible size, and even performers of

¹ J.G. Prod’homme and A. Dandelot, *Gounod: Sa Vie et ses Oeuvres* (Genève: Minkoff Reprint, 1973), 120. This poster is held in the Bibliothèque-Musée de l’Opéra National de Paris.

comprimario roles are given space on the advertisement. The poster also provides the date of the performance and location. While this advertisement provides all of the specifics of the performance (the date, the time, and the venue), an important detail is missing: nowhere does the composer's name appear in the notice. Instead, Pauline Viardot stands out as the largest name on the poster.

Just a year earlier, on April 1, 1850, the final performance of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* featured famed mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot. Throughout the opera's performance run, the star singer brought in unprecedented crowds. Her final performance of the role of Fidès at the Théâtre de la Nation was the second highest grossing performance in the 1850–51 opera season.² Such high receipts, so unusual for the time, demonstrate the level of Viardot's star power which attracted the nineteenth century's greatest French opera composers. Yet, this has not been enough to sustain her in the annals of music history, as her impact on French music of the nineteenth century is largely forgotten and neglected by historians in music history textbooks.³ Academic writings recognize her performance influence and even some of her relationships with contemporary composers, but those scholars do not comprehensively investigate her role in nineteenth-century music.

This thesis will explore Viardot, her musical upbringing and connections, her salon, and her relationships with Giacomo Meyerbeer, Charles Gounod, and Hector Berlioz. Each

² Alan Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's 'Le Prophète': A History of its Composition and Early Performances" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1990), 393.

³ Viardot is not mentioned in Walter Frisch, *Music in the Nineteenth Century: Western Music in Context* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012); or J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 10th Edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014), two widely used texts for undergraduate and graduate music history courses.

composer wrote or adapted specific opera roles for Viardot: Meyerbeer wrote Fidès in *Le prophète* (1849) with Viardot in mind, Gounod composed the title role of *Sapho* (1851) for Viardot, and Berlioz adapted the role of Orfeo from Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orphée* (1859) for Viardot's voice. In order to reveal Viardot's working relationships with these composers, I will analyze letters, manuscript scores, and memoirs, among other types of primary sources. These documents show patterns emerging through Viardot's collaborations with each composer. Her relationship with Meyerbeer was highly professional and business oriented, which facilitated the successful premiere of his new opera. In contrast, Viardot and Gounod had a more personal relationship with a wealth of correspondence revealing mutual respect and admiration, as well as the professionalism of helping him begin his career as an opera composer. Her relationship with Berlioz was the most personal as his notoriously passionate personality steered his affections toward Viardot during their collaboration. The differences in these relationships highlight the varying ways in which Viardot interacted with contemporary composers, and how these interactions impacted her career and that of the collaborating composer.

Review of the Literature

To date, few scholars have considered Viardot's influence on how these composers adapted their works to her operatic talents. Existing secondary scholarship aids in understanding Viardot's relationships with these composers, but most are brief and not entirely comprehensive. This thesis will expand upon research by providing specific musical examples of her contributions to the operas on which she collaborated, as well as an

assessment of her working/personal relationship with each composer. The following literature review divides the literature into sections addressing the relevant research on Pauline Viardot, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Charles Gounod, and Hector Berlioz to help future scholars easily locate resources for their own Viardot studies.

Pauline Viardot

Pauline Viardot's life and legacy cycles through the interest of musicologists every few decades, providing further insight into her life, but also leaving researchers with more unanswered questions. The last English language scholarly biography of Viardot was published in 1964.⁴ Its narrative provides a fairly detailed account of Viardot's life, but given the number of primary sources which are now available to researchers, the biography lacks emphasis on her legacies surrounding teaching, composition, and her salon, and focuses more on her performances throughout her life. *Pauline Viardot: Au Miroir de sa Correspondance* is a biography which frames Viardot's life story through the lens of her correspondence.⁵ Using

⁴ April Fitzlyon, *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* (London: John Calder Publishers, 1964). More recently there exists *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot Garcia* by Barbara Kendall-Davies from 2012 and *The Enchantress of Nations: Pauline Viardot: Soprano, Muse and Lover* by Michael Steen from 2004. Both of these biographies are viewed as speculative and lacking detailed scholarly analysis of Viardot's life and resources relating to it. Dr. Hilary Poriss has been working on a biography of Viardot since 2014, but it has not yet been published. Barbara Kendall-Davies, *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot Garcia*, 2 vols. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012); Hilary Poriss, "Review: *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot Garcia*, 2 vols.," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68 no. 3 (Fall 2015): 692–8; and Michael Steen, *The Enchantress of Nations: Pauline Viardot: Soprano, Muse, and Lover* (London: Icon Books, 2004).

⁵ Michèle Friang, *Pauline Viardot: Au Miroir de sa Correspondance* (Paris, France: Hermann, 2008).

Viardot's letters along with freely written prose, Michèle Friang brings Viardot to life in a new way. The biography contains chapters such as "Vienne, l'Allemagne et Meyerbeer," "Heurs et malheurs de Sapho," and "Berlioz, *Orphée*, *Alceste* et *Les Troyens*," each of which describe her life during these productions. The sections on *Le prophète* and *Orphée* are brief and contain only a few letters between the composers and Viardot, but the *Sapho* section and chapter on Gounod is far more developed, likely because of their substantial amount of extant correspondence. This biography is unlike any other source on Viardot because it gives her a voice through her letters, better contextualizing her role in nineteenth-century music.⁶

Nineteenth-century musical salons provided outlets for hosts, guests, and participants to engage with other intellectuals. Salons brought together literarians, artists, musicians, politicians, and members of the aristocracy to promote new musical works and musicians, and to facilitate discourse between intersecting societal circles.⁷ Viardot established a salon to promote her music and the works of other composers, and brought together Paris's social

⁶ As Viardot's letters are spread between a number of archives and private collections, both published and unpublished, and her journals remain unpublished in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, this biography is one of the best resources available with Viardot's own words readily accessible to the researcher.

⁷ It should be noted that not all salons were devoted to music; some focused on visual art, literature, or a combination of artistic and intellectual subjects. For information on the development of the French salon, and its shifting role in empowering aristocratic women see: Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). Viardot is not specifically mentioned, but it does provide historical context for the changing role of the salon in the nineteenth century. For additional information on the role of the salon in nineteenth-century Europe see: Fae Brauer, *Rivals and Conspirators: The Paris Salons and the Modern Art Centre* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013); Halina Goldberg, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Duncan McColl Chesney "The History of the History of the Salon," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 36 nos. 1/2 (Fall/Winter 2007–8): 94–108.

elite. A variety of sources exist which examine Viardot's musical salon in Paris.⁸ She also ran the salon while living in Baden-Baden and London from 1863 to 1871. Letters from Charles Gounod and Camille Saint-Saëns offer insight into the salon, and their experiences attending it.⁹ The most comprehensive examination of Viardot's salon is a dissertation by Melinda Anna-Regina Johnson.¹⁰ Johnson's research demonstrates how Viardot's salons were created in response to her attendance at other society salon events, and shows her recognition of how salon culture could shape careers. In a chapter solely dedicated to her salons, Johnson describes the concerts at Viardot's Paris, Baden-Baden, Courtavenel, and Bougival salons. One of her chapters also briefly identifies and discusses attendees of the salon, and how their inclusion in salon programs influenced their careers. Johnson includes Hector Berlioz, Charles Gounod, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Gabriel Fauré, Franz Liszt, and Nicolas Rubinstein in her discussion. Viardot's influential salon positions her as a leader in the European music scene during the end of the nineteenth century.

In order to contextualize Viardot as a female performer in the nineteenth century, scholarship on other female composers and performers of this period are invaluable. The

⁸ Joseph Bennett, "Gounod: The Man and the Master," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 34, no. 610 (Dec. 1, 1893): 713–16; Rachel Harris, "The Music Salon of Pauline Viardot: Featuring her Salon Opera 'Cendrillon'" (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2005); Zoltan Roman, "Gradus ad Parnassum: Selected Early Songs of Gabriel Fauré in the Socio-Cultural Context of His Time," *Studia Musicologica* 48 nos. 1/2 (Mar., 2007): 5–44; David Tunley, *Music in the 19th-Century Parisian Salon* (Armidale, Australia: University of New England, 1997).

⁹ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Camille Saint-Saëns on Music and Musicians*, ed. Roger Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, ed. Melanie Von Goldbeck (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2015).

¹⁰ Melinda Anna-Regina Johnson, "The Creative Spirit: A Study of Pauline Viardot-Garcia's Salons" (DMA diss., Indiana University, 2004).

culture of the prima donna is well documented and analyzed, but one must be careful not to view the prima donna as a pejorative term. Understanding the prima donna and her varying roles on-and offstage is particularly important to Viardot in demonstrating that she was more than a great performer, and that her musical opinions, and those of other prima donnas, were valued during their careers. Paula Gillet's book, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: Encroaching on All Man's Privileges*, applies a gender studies perspective to women in music, but it gives readers insight into the opinions of citizens in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ It shows how and why women were viewed as inferior citizens and musicians, and raises the question: if these were the types of ideas circulating at the time, how did Viardot manage to be successful?

Rebecca Fairbank begins to answer this question in her thesis, "Devastating Diva: Pauline Viardot and Rewriting the Image of Women in Nineteenth-Century French Opera Culture," which focuses on how Viardot redefined the prima donna as a successful performer, mother, composer, and teacher.¹² Fairbank demonstrates that through her work ethic and musical aptitude, Viardot earned the title of "grand artist" in letters from Europe's greatest composers.¹³ In her book, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance*, Hilary Poriss describes the process of aria insertion and the input prima donnas were allowed in the first half of the nineteenth century. She describes the

¹¹ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: Encroaching on All Man's Privileges* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

¹² Rebecca Fairbank, "Devastating Diva: Pauline Viardot and Rewriting the Image of Women in Nineteenth-Century French Opera Culture" (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2013).

¹³ Fairbank, 125.

period of 1800–40 as “their most powerful moment in operatic history.”¹⁴ Therefore, she sets a precedent for how Viardot was able to provide her musical feedback in the works of Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Berlioz. These resources provide context to begin understanding Viardot’s success and how she garnered respect from male composers, when other women were pushed aside.¹⁵

Recently, musicologists have been looking to the history of specific opera singers, analyzing the music composed for them, and revealing the collaborative process between composer and performer. An unlikely source provided understanding for how composers wrote for Viardot, and why specific changes might have been made for her. Steven C. LaRue’s book, *Handel and His Singers: The Creation of the Royal Academy Operas 1720-1728*, looks at an alternative historical period in order to address how Handel collaborated with his singers to best highlight a performer’s talents.¹⁶ The ideas presented in this resource guided my analysis of Viardot, and caused me to ask the following questions. How do plot changes affect characterization and the central themes of the opera? How does the music influence characterization? How does the music show off Viardot’s musical and dramatic talents? Were the roles originally intended for Viardot? If not, did these composers alter them for her?¹⁷ How did Viardot communicate with composers about changes to her part? In

¹⁴ Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

¹⁵ Poriss’s book, along with Gillet’s, provides additional context for the role of the performer and contextualizes women’s role in music in the nineteenth century.

¹⁶ C. Steven LaRue, *Handel and His Singers: The Creation of the Royal Academy Operas 1720-1728* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Orphée were transpositions and changes made for technical or aesthetic purposes? What musical/compositional techniques are common when writing for Viardot? Ultimately, these questions frame my musical analysis of Viardot's roles in *Sapho*, *Le prophète*, and, *Orphée*.

Viardot's dramatic input on the roles she performed helps scholars understand how her musical ideas in operas often related to how she interpreted her role dramatically. Angela Faith Cofer, another scholar interested in Viardot's roles in the aforementioned operas, explores Viardot's dramatic interpretations of *Fidés*, *Sapho*, and *Orphée* in her dissertation, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia: The Influence of the Performer on Nineteenth Century Opera." Viardot's interpretations shaped the theatrical side of operatic singing in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Cofer writes about the roles written for Viardot and how she presented them vocally and dramatically, but she does not address the compositional input she provided to the composers, nor her relationships with them. She sees Viardot's role as shaping the repertoire and role of the mezzo-soprano at this time, but leaves room for future researchers to determine how her influence on nineteenth century went beyond performance practice issues.

My thesis will demonstrate that Viardot's prima donna status was not the only contributing factor to her musical success. From a young age she crafted meaningful musical relationships with composers, which eventually led her to establish a prominent salon that reached musicians, artists, and literary figures from Paris to Russia. The connections she made with these artists influenced the trajectory of her career through collaborations on their

¹⁷ This is particularly important when looking at Meyerbeer's *Le prophète*, because of the intense negotiations required to arrange Viardot's contract.

¹⁸ Angela Faith Cofer, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia: The Influence of the Performer on Nineteenth Century Opera" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1988).

works, but she also influenced the composers themselves. New works were performed at Viardot's salon, and she introduced composers to critics and other artists who could aid in the advancement of their own careers. There is substantial evidence to support that when Viardot worked with Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Berlioz, she contributed to their compositional processes, and that her input, along with her stunning performances, defined the success of these works and the futures of these composers. As pointed out in the writings of Beatrix Borchard, "her participation in the composition of various scores, by Meyerbeer, Gounod, Massenet and Saint-Saëns," has not yet been investigated.¹⁹ Thus, my thesis specifically fills a research gap recognized by a prominent Viardot scholar and assesses her contribution to the scores of *Le prophète* by Meyerbeer and *Sapho* by Gounod.²⁰

Giacomo Meyerbeer

Similarly to Viardot, interest in Giacomo Meyerbeer vacillates, and has only recently gained traction in English publications. One scholar in particular, Robert Letellier, has contributed extensively to our understanding of Meyerbeer through his numerous publications on the composer. His books *An Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Giacomo Meyerbeer: Operas, Ballets, Cantatas, Plays* and *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* provide

¹⁹ Beatrix Borchard, "Pauline Viardot," *Musik und Gender im Internet*, last modified August 2013, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/en/artikel/Pauline_Viardot.

²⁰ For Borchard's German language research on Viardot see Beatrix Borchard, *Pauline Viardot-Garcia: Fülle des Lebens (Europäische Komponistinnen)* (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2016).

an overview of the writing of *Le prophète*, from its libretto to the final score revisions.²¹ He includes sections on its reception history, and brief analysis of the plot, characters, and music. The books are not particularly insightful into Viardot's influence, and she is only briefly mentioned in a quote from Meyerbeer's diary in which he admits he has "her to thank in large measure for my success."²² Despite lack of reference to Viardot, Letellier's books are valuable resources for initial research on the history and music of *Le prophète*. Letellier's most useful publication for my thesis is his facsimile edition of *Le prophète*.²³ In the notes to the edition he provides specific commentary on which music was altered for Fidès, and in some cases how it was altered.

The most extensive research on Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* is Alan Armstrong's dissertation, "Meyerbeer's 'Le Prophète': A History of its Composition and Early Performances."²⁴ This document thoroughly analyzes the history of the opera's production, from its initial inception in 1838 through its premiere in 1849 and later performances. Armstrong's history of the work details Meyerbeer's search for the ideal singer to play Fidès. This information, largely pulled from Meyerbeer's letters, gives great insight into his compositional process for the role and how he adapted Fidès once he knew Pauline Viardot would be singing the role. Additionally, Armstrong's dissertation gives important

²¹ Robert Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006); *An Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Giacomo Meyerbeer: Operas, Ballets, Cantatas, Plays* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008).

²² Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer*, 197. Diary entry from Tuesday April 10 until Sunday June 3, 1849.

²³ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Le Prophète: The Manuscript Facsimiles*, ed. Robert Letellier (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006).

²⁴ Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's 'Le Prophète': ..."

information on reception history, which specifically addresses how crucial Viardot was to the success of *Le prophète*. This information informs my discussion of how Viardot contributed to the compositional process and success of *Le prophète* through her collaboration with Meyerbeer.

A number of primary source documents exist in English translations which supply a glimpse into the professional relationship between Viardot and Meyerbeer. In letters to his mother and colleagues Meyerbeer praises Viardot's performance in *Le prophète*, and her consummate skills as an actress.²⁵ Writing to Viardot he applauds her dramatic abilities, and admits he was so engaged in her performance he forgot he wrote the opera.²⁶ His letters are evidence that he took Viardot's advice in revising the "sainte phalange" section of *Le prophète*.²⁷ These documents primarily support Meyerbeer's love for Viardot's work in his opera; however, they also demonstrate his respect for her as an artist from whom he could gain insight and inspiration.

Most of Viardot's letters are held privately, and her personal journals have only recently been added to the archival collection at the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Thus, it is more difficult to uncover her own thoughts on her relationships with Meyerbeer and other composers. Viardot's few letters regarding *Le prophète* in *Pauline Viardot: Au Miroir de sa Correspondance*, illustrate Viardot's immense respect while working with

²⁵ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Life in Letters*, trans. Mark Violette (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1989).

²⁶ Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Joseph Bennett, "The Great Composers. No. XIV. Meyerbeer (Continued)," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 25, no. 495 (May 1, 1884): 260.

²⁷ Friang, 89.

Meyerbeer. She repeatedly refers to him as the “Grand Maestro” in her letters to friends at this time, and appears wholly invested in the artistic process of this work.²⁸ Fortunately, her daughter Louise Hérítte-Viardot wrote a memoir which provides further insight into the singer’s influence on the composers assessed in this paper. For example, Hérítte-Viardot recounts that when writing the role of Fidès for her mother, Meyerbeer would seek Viardot’s opinion on the arias he composed. If she did not like an aria, he would bring two or three versions, and she would pick her favorite. Hérítte-Viardot believes “if she had not done this, the part of Fidès would have been very insipid” and perhaps the opera not as successful.²⁹ I will use these letters and recollections as evidence for their mutual respect and admiration in working with one another.

Only a few recent, English-language articles exist that discuss Meyerbeer and Viardot. Two of them briefly mention that Viardot created the role of Fidès, but neither contains depth in describing their relationship.³⁰ Laura Protano-Biggs’s article, “An Earnest Meyerbeer: *Le Prophète* at London's Royal Italian Opera, 1849,” focuses on Viardot’s role as a great actress in her creation of the role of Fidès, but offers little detail on her musical influences on Meyerbeer. Still, it does provide a few thoughts and sources to be further researched and developed. Protano-Biggs presents the idea that Viardot was able to give such an outstanding performance in the role of Fidès because Meyerbeer supplied her with great

²⁸ Friang, 89–96.

²⁹ Louise Hérítte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, trans. E.S. Buchheim (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 19.

³⁰ Jamée Ard, “The Eternal Diva,” *Opera News* 72, no. 4 (Oct. 2007): 51; Katherine LaPorta Jessensky, “The Life of Pauline Viardot: Her Influence on the Music and Musicians of Nineteenth Century Europe,” *The Journal of Singing* 67, no. 3, (Jan 2011): 269.

music.³¹ This idea works both ways and one can also argue, especially because of the multiple positive reviews of Viardot's performance, that Meyerbeer owed much of *Le prophète*'s success to Viardot. Additionally, in a footnote Protano-Biggs mentions articles in German and French that describe how Viardot helped direct the London premiere of the opera, by rehearsing other singers at the piano and with the orchestra.³² Assuming these foreign-language articles are accurate, they show that Meyerbeer trusted Viardot and valued her input in many ways, an idea to receive further inspection in my thesis.

There is still much work to be done in assessing and demonstrating how Viardot influenced Meyerbeer as a composer. My thesis will continue to focus on primary sources, including letters, diary entries, and the score, to define in exact terms how Viardot contributed to *Le prophète*. Viardot and Meyerbeer's mutually beneficial professional relationship will be revealed through this analysis. Additionally, my thesis will show how the success of this opera, largely due to Viardot's involvement, sustained Meyerbeer's career after he established the genre of French Grand Opera in *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*, but before he wrote his next great work, *L'Africaine*.

Charles Gounod

Only a few biographies and journal articles document the life of Charles Gounod. These biographies focus more on his later operas, *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*, giving *Sapho*

³¹ Laura Protano-Biggs, "An Earnest Meyerbeer: *Le Prophète* at London's Royal Italian Opera, 1849," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 29, no. 1 (Mar 2017): 72.

³² Protano-Biggs, 61.

only a cursory mention.³³ Typically these references to *Sapho*, which might contain a brief reference to Viardot, exist to state two facts: that it was his first opera, and that it kept him from becoming a priest. Gounod's biographies mention Viardot as if she existed only to encourage his career as an operatic composer, in the context of her performance in *Sapho*, but after that little attention is given to her, despite their close friendship for many years. Even Gounod, in his autobiography, devotes little time to describing his relationship with Viardot, and perhaps this is why scholars today have ignored their relationship.³⁴

Steven Huebner's *The Operas of Charles Gounod* is a useful resource in beginning studies on Gounod, Viardot, and *Sapho*.³⁵ In this book Huebner provides readers with a detailed description of *Sapho*'s inception and compositional history. He pays particular attention to the friendship between the Viardot family and Gounod, and the falling out which occurred after the composer's marriage to Anna Zimmerman. Huebner's valuable book gives researchers a more up-to-date look at the life and operas of Gounod; it looks beyond biographies that are over 100 years old, and does not rely on Gounod's memoirs which may be biased, in order to give a more balanced account of his life.

Because of Gounod's popularity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of contemporary articles explore, or at least acknowledge, Viardot's influence on Gounod's music. Within Gounod and Viardot's lifetimes, journalist Joseph Bennett writes of

³³ Marie Anne de Bovet, *Charles Gounod, His Life and His Works* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1891); Steven Huebner, "Gounod, Charles-François," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed April 4, 2018; James Harding, *Gounod* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1973).

³⁴ Charles Gounod, *Autobiographical Reminiscences with Family Letters and Notes on Music*, trans. W. Hely Hutchinson (London: Ballantyne Press, 1896).

³⁵ Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

her influence and calls him her “protégé” on two occasions in *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, although he does not discuss their relationship in depth.³⁶ Similar to Bennett’s writings, many articles describe Viardot’s role in introducing Gounod to the head of the Paris Opéra, Nestor Roqueplan.³⁷ Discovery of these articles is positive because they began the narrative of how impactful she was on his career, a narrative continued by more contemporary researchers.

Scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries continue to explore Viardot and Gounod’s relationship. An article from 1952 describes how Gounod was introduced to Berlioz and Bizet because of Viardot’s involvement in *Sapho*.³⁸ In 1850 Viardot also introduced Gounod to the great English critic Henry F. Chorley. This proved an advantageous introduction as he went on to become a huge proponent of Gounod’s compositions.³⁹ Melina Esse’s 2016 article, “The Sexual Politics of Operatic Collaboration Gounod, ‘Ô ma lyre immortelle’ (Sapho), *Sapho*, Act III,” examines more fully Viardot’s role in preparing *Sapho* and her help in reworking the final scene. Esse’s research shows that Gounod was unhappy with the scene, and when Viardot returned to Courtavenel they were

³⁶ Joseph Bennett, “Gounod: The Man and the Master,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 34, no. 610 (Dec. 1, 1893): 713–16; and Bennett, “Some Recent Music in Paris,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 25, no. 495 (May 1, 1884), 254–6.

³⁷ Jamée Ard, “The Eternal Diva,” 52; Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod*; Katherina LaPorta Jessensky, “The Life of Pauline Viardot...,” 269; Sophia Lambton, “The Great Prima Donnas IV: Pauline Viardot—the “intellectual” prima donna,” *Musical Opinion* 136 (Sep 2012): 22–6.

³⁸ Mina Curtiss, “Gounod before ‘Faust,’” *Musical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Jan. 1952): 48–67.

³⁹ James Harding, *Gounod* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1973), 64.

able to find a solution which pleased everyone.⁴⁰ Even though these articles are brief, they contribute additional evidence about how Viardot impacted Gounod's career.

Perhaps the most valuable resource to my thesis, Melanie von Goldbeck's collection of Gounod's letters to Viardot provides an abundance of information on their working relationship, and also on Viardot's salon, her personality, her relationships with Meyerbeer and Berlioz.⁴¹ The bulk of the correspondences occur from 1849–52 when she and Gounod were working closely together on *Sapho*. However, von Goldbeck also masterfully frames the letters with historical context, and informative footnotes throughout the edition. Most notably, von Goldbeck introduces the idea of the "solitary genius," a prominent narrative surrounding composers of the nineteenth century.⁴² Composers did not want the public to know their work was edited or was not the result of an extensive stream of consciousness to maintain the illusion that they alone could compose these brilliant works.⁴³ This idea is perpetuated in Berlioz's writings and will be discussed in relationship to Viardot, and is perhaps why her compositional input has taken so long to be recognized.

⁴⁰ Melina Esse, "The Sexual Politics of Operatic Collaboration Gounod, 'Ô ma lyre immortelle' (Sapho), *Sapho*, Act III," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28, no. 2 (Jul 2016): 172.

⁴¹ Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, ed. Melanie Von Goldbeck, (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2015).

⁴² Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod...*, 27.

⁴³ Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Robert Nisbet, "Genius," *The Wilson Quarterly* 6, no. 5 (1982): 98–107; Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and James O. Young, "On the Enshrinement of Musical Genius," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 45, no. 1 (June 2014): 47–62.

Unfortunately, von Goldbeck's compilation mostly features letters from Gounod to Viardot, and only a few which he received from her. Even the letters surrounding *Sapho* in *Pauline Viardot: Au Miroir de sa Correspondance* are mostly from Gounod to Viardot, or from Viardot to her other friends concerning the opera's production. Nevertheless, it is clear from the letters Viardot wrote about Gounod that she had an immense admiration for him, and perceived he would go on to become a great composer. These letters lack specific references concerning how the two collaborated, but they do provide insight into how Viardot constantly promoted the young Gounod and how this endorsement would impact his career.⁴⁴

In her memoir, Louise Hérítte-Viardot makes clear the professional relationship and friendship between Gounod and her family. She recalls that Gounod would often visit to ask her mother about his compositions and what steps he should take in developing his career.⁴⁵ Gounod was also a frequent guest at their country home, Courtavenel. She remembers him playing and singing, "whatever he had composed that day."⁴⁶ This level of friendship and camaraderie was important to Viardot and Gounod, and it allowed them to openly share musical ideas.

As personal correspondences reveal, Pauline Viardot and Charles Gounod had more than a professional relationship when they collaborated on *Sapho*; the two became close friends. This friendship allowed for a meaningful collaboration between the two musicians, which scholars have not fully realized. My thesis will assess Viardot and Gounod's musical

⁴⁴ Friang, 98, 99, 109

⁴⁵ Hérítte-Viardot, 42.

⁴⁶ Hérítte-Viardot, 70.

partnership, how *Sapho* was crafted to highlight her talents, and how it also created the foundation of his operatic career. I will explore Gounod's relationships with directors, critics, and other musicians facilitated by Viardot's introductions, ultimately demonstrating her impact on the trajectory of his celebrated career.

Hector Berlioz

Since he loved to write about himself and others, Hector Berlioz's life has been well documented both through his own writing as well as in secondary scholarship. The numerous biographies written about Berlioz provide accurate and thorough detail because of the wealth of information he left behind. Despite this, those biographies also tend to gloss over his relationship with Viardot; perhaps this is because Berlioz himself only briefly mentioned her in his own memoir.⁴⁷ Most biographies mention Viardot multiple times throughout, referencing that she and Berlioz occupied the same artistic circle. At some point the biographies also address Berlioz's *Orphée*, Viardot's interpretation of the role, and their falling out over *Alceste* and *Les Troyens*.⁴⁸ Because these are biographies, many details are left out for the sake of brevity, and the relationship between Viardot and Berlioz can only be seen as a surface level artistic friendship. Even David Cairn's massive two volume work, *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness*, fails to fully describe the friendship and creative

⁴⁷ Hector Berlioz, *Memoirs*, trans. Ernest Newman (New York: Dover, 1966), 506.

⁴⁸ Jacques Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950); D. Kern Holoman, *Berlioz*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

partnership between Viardot and Berlioz, in spite of its length.⁴⁹ However, scholar Hugh Macdonald recognizes that Viardot, “sustained him [Berlioz] through a critical period” while they worked together on *Orphée*, and Patrick Waddington later echoes this sentiment.⁵⁰ Ultimately, these resources are not ideal in assessing Berlioz and Viardot’s collaboration, so a more thorough examination of essays and primary sources must be completed.

Joël-Marie Fauquet’s article “Berlioz’s Version of Gluck’s *Orphée*” is the most useful resource in understanding the collaboration between Berlioz and Viardot.⁵¹ In his article, Fauquet describes how the new arrangement of *Orphée* developed out of a growing need for the part to be sung by a contralto *en travesti*, as opposed to a tenor as was common at the time. Eventually this gave Léon Carvalho, director of the Théâtre Lyrique, the impetus to resurrect Gluck’s famous work. As Fauquet describes, Berlioz was the obvious choice for arranging this revival because of his admiration for Gluck, and his insistence on maintaining the integrity of the original opera. Fauquet describes how Berlioz rewrote the opera for Viardot, and provides evidence for Viardot’s involvement in the revisions wherever possible. At the end of the article he provides excerpts from the original score and an annotated version by Viardot to compare the works.⁵² His analysis provides a foundation for understanding how Viardot edited works to suit her voice, and even briefly compares how

⁴⁹ David Cairns, *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵⁰ Hugh Macdonald, *Berlioz* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1982), 62.

⁵¹ Joël-Marie Fauquet, “Berlioz’s Version of Gluck’s *Orphée*,” in *Berlioz Studies*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 189–253.

⁵² According to Fauquet’s article, the 1872 published Heugel edition score of *Orphée* with Viardot’s annotations is in the private collection of mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne. Fauquet, 231.

the changes to the role of Orphée are similar to Fidès's music in *Le prophète*. This analysis gives researchers the grounds for continuing exploration into how Viardot worked with composers on their works. Notably, Fauquet states that Berlioz never mentioned how Viardot and Camille Saint-Saëns contributed to the revisions of the *Orphée* score, emphasizing the idea that he felt himself the best interpreter of Gluck.⁵³

Research concerning the relationship between Viardot and Berlioz is not as thorough as that of Meyerbeer and Gounod. This might be because he did not write a specific role for her to premiere in an opera. Patrick Waddington's article "Pauline Viardot-Garcia as Berlioz's Counselor and Physician" is a perceptive look at how Viardot helped Berlioz through a difficult period in his life.⁵⁴ Defining their relationship as one in which Viardot constantly eased his troubled mind, Waddington demonstrates the deep connection Berlioz felt to Viardot, which was then violently shattered when he refused to rewrite *Alceste* for her as he did *Orphée*.⁵⁵ Understanding the Berlioz-Viardot relationship in these terms illustrates the varied roles Viardot took on when working with composers; for example, this relationship greatly contrasts the all-business partnership she had with Meyerbeer. Thus, this article lays the groundwork for arguing that Viardot had a profound impact on Berlioz's mental health at this time, and sustained him so he could continue his work for another ten years.

⁵³ Fauquet, 220.

⁵⁴ Patrick Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia as Berlioz's Counselor and Physician," *Musical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July 1973): 382–98.

⁵⁵ Despite his initial refusals Berlioz eventually begrudgingly rewrote the role for her in 1861.

Viardot and Berlioz lived close to each other in Paris, and as early as 1849 there is evidence they sought artistic advice from one another. From 1849 until their friendship became closer in 1859, Berlioz's letters mention visits between the two.⁵⁶ These letters do not specifically mention what transpired during their visits, but later letters suggest that an artistic exchange occurred. In a letter to his son dated September 23, 1859, Berlioz described how Viardot provided him with advice on *Les Troyens* and suggesting Cassandra and Dido be played by the same person (she hoped herself).⁵⁷ Berlioz's letters also indicate that the two worked on *Orphée* revisions together at Courtavenel.⁵⁸ Together these references provide a framework which supports the argument that Viardot influenced Berlioz compositionally.

Sentiments of Viardot's artistic influence on Berlioz are echoed in her daughter's memoir. Hérítte-Viardot remembers Berlioz as a frequent guest in their home, and recalls the happy times they spent together working on his music.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, few of Viardot's letters provide the same sense of their friendship also being an artistic partnership. In her letters concerning Berlioz and their work together on *Orphée*, she is either terribly worried about the state of his mental health, or reveling in *Orphée's* "succès énorme."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, these details still support the idea that Viardot helped Berlioz remain mentally stable, so that he could continue to be a successful composer.

⁵⁶ Hector Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, trans. Roger Nichols (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 271, 350; and Hector Berlioz, *New Letters of Berlioz: 1830-1868*, trans. Jacques Barzun (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 183.

⁵⁷ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 382.

⁵⁸ Waddington, 391.

⁵⁹ Hérítte-Viardot, 50.

⁶⁰ Waddington, 387–389; Friang, 194.

Besides his memoirs and correspondences Berlioz provides a very useful resource in understanding his outlook on his *Orphée* edition through his essays, *Gluck and His Operas: With an Account of Their Relation to Musical Art*.⁶¹ The essays discuss *Orphée* and *Alceste* from their inception and how Berlioz felt about their adaptation for modern audiences through his arrangements. Throughout his assessment of *Orphée*, Berlioz constantly praises Gluck for his compositional mastery, and indicates he only changed things when absolutely necessary to maintain the integrity of Gluck's original.⁶² With this in mind he frequently praises Viardot for her superb skill in this role, but chastises her for adding in a cadenza at the end of "J'ai perdu mon Euridice."⁶³ Ultimately, these observations demonstrate that Berlioz regarded Gluck as the authority in his edition of *Orphée*, and he felt all persons involved in its reproduction—singers, director, set designers, and even the composer—should always respect Gluck's original work when making musico-dramatic interpretative choices.

Music scholars and Hector Berlioz thoroughly documented the history of his version of *Orphée*. However, because Berlioz was so adamant that he be seen as the supreme interpreter of Gluck, it has been harder for scholars to fully comprehend Pauline Viardot's contribution to this work, and to Berlioz's life at the time. Although the groundwork has already been laid by Waddington and Fauquet, there is still work to be done. My thesis will draw from Waddington's idea that Viardot worked as his "counselor and physician" and will

⁶¹ Hector Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas: With an Account of their Relation to Musical Art*, trans. Edwin Evans (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973).

⁶² Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas*, 13.

⁶³ Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas*, 21.

also demonstrate how their relationship helped him get to the next step in his career and eventually to the premiere of *Les Troyens*. Building upon Fauquet, my thesis will analyze Viardot's compositional role in *Orphée*, showing how she made these changes, and also examining the reasons behind why Berlioz wanted the world to think he was the "solitary genius" behind the revisions. Ultimately, my thesis will comprehensively describe the complex personal and working relationship between Pauline Viardot and Hector Berlioz and will shed new light on the revisions made to Gluck's *Orphée*.

Conclusion

Research of Pauline Viardot continues to be necessary because she is such a complex figure in music history that not every facet of her career has been fully investigated. Examinations of Viardot often begin with evaluating the vital role she played as a dramatic interpreter of operatic heroines, especially when examining her relationships with Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Berlioz. However, she was also a composer, pianist, salon hostess, and proponent of new artists (literary, musical, and visual). Thus, the full extent of her contribution to the arts in nineteenth-century Europe will take a long time to fully assess. In my thesis I choose to focus not on Viardot the superb actress and diva, but instead on Viardot the consummate musician, salon hostess, and composer. In this way I demonstrate that through her salon and collaboration with composers, Viardot shaped the careers of these composers, contributing in a broader sense to the trajectory of French music of the nineteenth-century.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC NETWORKS OF PAULINE VIARDOT

“That child is someone who will eclipse us all. It is my little sister, Pauline.”¹ In the nineteenth century if a woman desired a career in music her options for a path to success included: being born into a musical family or developing a large artistic circle. A woman was especially poised for success if she pursued a career in opera (instead of a career as a composer or instrumentalist). Also integral to achieving success was the choice to collaborate with composers, which then created opportunities for future musical connections. If a woman achieved upward mobility in music, her subsequently stronger social position allowed her to develop a salon which could promote her own social agendas, shape society, and in Pauline Viardot’s case, impact the trajectory of French music in the nineteenth century.

Pauline Viardot’s life followed the artistic path to success described above; from her birth through her opera career she established and maintained connections with composers, musicians, and society figures all over Europe, developing a wide artistic circle. In establishing these connections she learned the value of collaboration, and sustained a well-respected salon.

This chapter explores how her family connections with Europe’s greatest musicians allowed her to learn at a young age how to collaborate with the best artists. As a result, when she started her singing career she knew how to work with composers in a cooperative way, and this carried into her salon later in life. This discussion of her salon demonstrates how her

¹April Fitzlyon, *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* (London: John Calder Publishers, 1964), 33. Referring to her young sister in a conversation with a friend, Maria Malibran knew early on that Pauline Viardot was a consummate artist and musician.

musical relationships and collaborations were mutually beneficial, and that her salon reflected a lifetime of networking, promoting young artists, and partnering with composers.

Viardot's Biography and Composer Collaboration

Viardot first learned the value of collaboration through her father's relationship with Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868). As an operatic tenor, Manuel Garcia (1775–1832) performed all over Europe in the early nineteenth century, singing the roles of Otello and Don Giovanni in those eponymous operas. When Garcia became close friends with Rossini, Rossini's respect for Garcia's performances inspired him to write the role of Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for the tenor.² This friendship lasted the entirety of Garcia's life, and extended to the entire Garcia family. Viardot's sister, Maria Malibran (1808–36) frequently performed Rossini's works up to her death, and Viardot herself performed a number of Rossini's heroines, as well as singing in the premiere of his *Stabat Mater* in 1841.³ Through her family's collaborations with Rossini, Viardot learned that a healthy connection made could last not only the entirety of one's life, but it could also extend to future generations.

Another one of her father's relationships and musical experiences which had a profound impact on Viardot was with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838). In 1825, da Ponte encouraged the Garcia family to travel to the United States to give the American premiere of *Don Giovanni*. Additionally, they performed Rossini's *Otello*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *La Cenerentola*, and some of Manuel Garcia's own compositions. The casts for

² Fitzlyon, 17.

³ Fitzlyon, 109. This was a private salon performance. The larger premiere did not include Viardot.

the operas included Manuel Garcia (tenor), Joaquina Sitches Garcia (soprano), Maria Malibran (soprano), and Manuel Garcia II (baritone).⁴ Only age four at the time of the trip, Viardot was not yet old enough to participate in the performances. From the United States they traveled on to Mexico to continue performing, and returned to Paris in 1829.⁵ This trip to America and Mexico was one of many experiences at a young age that likely influenced her desire to promote new music and music from other cultures for the rest of her life.

Viardot's early musical studies in piano and composition led to valuable connections with famous male composers with whom she collaborated throughout the rest of her life.⁶ She first studied piano with Charles Meysenberg and composition with Anton Reicha.⁷ From Reicha, Viardot learned contemporary compositional techniques—primarily related to counterpoint—which were also the same techniques he taught to his other students, Hector Berlioz and Charles Gounod. All three composers focused on writing creative contrapuntal lines, and have been recognized for their attention to craftsmanship in their compositions.⁸

⁴ Fitzlyon, 20–3.

⁵ Fitzlyon, 26.

⁶ As will be discussed throughout this thesis, Viardot's collaborations were significant as fewer composers worked openly with their singers in the compositional process during the nineteenth century. Meyerbeer frequently collaborated with his singers, as discussed in Chapter 3, but Gounod and Berlioz worked harder to conceal her input as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. This concealment of her collaboration was partially the result of her gender, but also a shift in how composers wanted to be seen as the sole genius behind their creative work, a topic which will be addressed throughout the thesis.

⁷ Fitzlyon, 31.

⁸ Hector Berlioz, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. Hugh Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Timothy Flynn, *Charles François Gounod: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Rachel Harris, "The Music Salon of Pauline Viardot: Featuring her Salon Opera

As a result, when Viardot later collaborated with Berlioz and Gounod on their operas, she was already trained in a similar compositional aesthetic, which aided in the ease of their collaboration.

Pianist and virtuoso Franz Liszt (1811–86) possessed a haughty personality that sometimes made him difficult to deal with, so in some ways Viardot’s early interactions with him prepared her for collaborations with similarly tempered composers (like Berlioz) later in her career.⁹ However, not all of her interactions with Liszt were tempestuous; through Liszt she gained a valuable artistic ally who recognized the extent of her talents throughout her life. Viardot loved the piano, and planned to pursue a professional career after she began her studies with him at age fifteen. He remarked to her father “soon I will be the pupil and she the teacher.”¹⁰ Viardot’s lessons with Liszt taught her the value of artistic playing, and she was also introduced to his compositional style through these lessons where he composed

‘Cendrillon’” (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2005), 22–37; Christin Heitmann, “Anton Reicha,” *Musik und Gender im Internet*. last modified April 10, 2013, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/en/artikel/Anton_Reicha.pdf; “Amy Jo Hunsaker, Pauline Viardot's Russian Compositions” (DMA diss., University of Nevada-Las Vegas, 2010), 46–7; Peter Eliot Stone, “Reicha, Antoine,” *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed December 17, 2019; and Patrick Waddington and Nicholas Žekulin. *The Musical Works Of Pauline Viardot-Garcia (1821-1910) A Chronological Catalogue, with an Index of Titles and a List of Writers Set, Composers Arranged, & Translators and Arrangers* (Calgary: University of Calgary, 2011), iii.

⁹ Viardot recognized Liszt’s arrogance and described it in a letter to Julius Rietz. “His personal vanity is far too great for that. He would think it a downfall from his rank as an exceptional man, towering above all others.” Theodore Baker, “Pauline Viardot-Garcia to Julius Rietz (Letters of Friendship),” *Musical Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Jul., 1915): 360.

¹⁰ Anna Eugénie Schoen-René, *America’s Musical Heritage: Memories and Reminiscences* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1941), 122.

pieces on the spot.¹¹ The two developed a mutual respect for each other as musicians, frequently attending each other's salons later in their lives, and promoting each other in writing. In 1881, Liszt remarked that Viardot was a composer "of the most delicate and lively intelligence," and in a letter to Julius Rietz, Viardot stated "no one plays like he [Liszt] does."¹² This mutual respect is presented in their greatest collaboration, her operetta *Le dernier sorcier* (1869), for which Liszt provided support with orchestration and organized its premiere at the court of the Grand Duke of Weimar.¹³ From her early interactions with Liszt as a teen, Viardot learned how to work with this imposing man, which allowed their friendship to last the entirety of their lives.

Liszt also contributed to the expansion of Viardot's artistic circle; through her studies with Liszt she met Frédéric Chopin (1810–49) and Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), both of whom became her great friends and collaborative partners.¹⁴ Saint-Saëns described Viardot as a "great talent" at the piano who played with "equal virtuosity" to Clara Schumann.¹⁵ Throughout Viardot's life Saint-Saëns remained a confidante, salon attendee, and musical collaborator. When she began her work on Berlioz's setting of *Orphée*, Saint-Saëns also

¹¹ The only Liszt piece discovered in the twentieth century was a waltz found in an autograph book of Pauline Viardot's, which he most likely wrote for her during a lesson or visit to her home. Frank Magiera, "Franz Liszt Piece will Premiere Here," *Telegram and Gazette; Worcester, Massachusetts* (October 4, 1996): A1.

¹² Nicholas Zekulin, *The Story of an Operetta: Le dernier sorcier by Pauline Viardot and Ivan Turgenev*, vol. I (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1989), 30. Fitzlyon, 337.

¹³ For a comprehensive look at their collaboration on *Le dernier sorcier* see Zekulin, *The Story of an Operetta*.

¹⁴ Fitzlyon, 37.

¹⁵ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Camille Saint-Saëns on Music and Musicians*, ed. Roger Nichols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 170.

contributed to the revival of the work, providing his own input on the new arrangement.¹⁶ However, his contributions are perhaps even less recognized than Viardot's, and his calm demeanor alongside Berlioz's more electric personality perhaps kept the three composers at ease while they worked on the project. Their friendship remained intact after *Orphée*, and Saint-Saëns held her in such high esteem that he dedicated *Samson et Dalila* (1877) to her, even though she could no longer sing Dalila by the time he completed it.¹⁷ Thus Saint-Saëns, whose unyielding support of her career spanned decades, and whose gentle personality never coaxed a disagreement, came to be "one of the longest lasting, satisfying, and profitable relationships," that Viardot developed in her lifetime.¹⁸

Viardot's collaborative spirit can be seen prominently through her relationship with Frédéric Chopin; even drawings from George Sand's children demonstrate their work together at the piano (Figure 2.1). Viardot and Chopin became close because of his relationship with her friend Sand (1804–76), and their collaboration on her vocal settings of his mazurkas. The two frequently played piano together and shared compositions at George Sand's home in Nohant.

¹⁶ Joël-Marie Fauquet, "Berlioz's Version of Gluck's *Orphée*," in *Berlioz Studies*, ed. Peter Bloom, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 220. This chapter provides further information on Saint-Saëns's role in revising *Orphée*, which as Fauquet notes, is not revealed by Berlioz in his writings on the revival's genesis.

¹⁷ Fitzlyon, 458.

¹⁸ Melinda Anna-Regina Johnson, "The Creative Spirit: A Study of Pauline Viardot-Garcia's Salons" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004), 120.



Figure 2.1. “Chopin Gives a Lesson to Pauline Viardot” Drawing by Maurice Sand, 1844.¹⁹

During these artistic exchanges Viardot learned his playing style, which later allowed her to provide “invaluable advice” on “the secrets of the true *tempo rubato*” and how Chopin’s music should be played to other pianists.²⁰ Viardot also undertook an extensive collaboration with Chopin in transcribing a twelve of his mazurkas for the voice from 1836–88. In these works, she asked French poet Louis Pomey to create a newly written texts to relate to each piece, which she then set to Chopin’s melodies. These transcriptions allowed her to demonstrate the natural vocality of Chopin’s piano music, which was not particularly evident in his few vocal works. Ultimately, she used the transcriptions as a way to showcase his

¹⁹ Maurice Sand, *Chopin Gives a Lesson to Pauline Viardot*, 1844, sketch, [http://www.musicksmonument.com/Madame_Edouard_Manet_\(Suzanne_Leenhoff,_18301906\)/Chopin_-_Viardot.html](http://www.musicksmonument.com/Madame_Edouard_Manet_(Suzanne_Leenhoff,_18301906)/Chopin_-_Viardot.html).

²⁰ Saint-Saëns, 170.

music in a number of her recitals, promoting his music across Europe.²¹ Viardot and Chopin's friendship lasted until his death in 1849, upon which she performed movements from Mozart's *Requiem* at his funeral.²² Because of its impact on her pianistic skills, her compositional output, and Chopin's recognition across Europe, Viardot's association with Chopin has become one of her strongest relationships acknowledged by scholars.²³

The deaths of Viardot's father and sister played a pivotal role in the trajectory of her career, and ultimately the connections she established in the musical world. After her father's death in 1832, Viardot's mother, Joaquina, took over her musical education. Upon Maria's death in 1836, Joaquina insisted Viardot pursue singing as a career and give up piano.²⁴ Thus, she began singing publicly and her first public performance was with her brother-in-law in 1837.²⁵ After this performance she toured Europe and broadened her social network to include respected German Romantic composers. On this tour she met Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, and Clara Wieck (not yet Schumann). Robert Schumann later dedicated his op. 24 (*Liederkreis*) to Viardot, and published her song "Die Kapelle" in the *Neue*

²¹ Michael Aspinall, "Mr. Chorley on M. Chopin –First-hand reports on Chopin's concerts in London in 1848," *Musical Opinion* 133, no. 1477 (July/August 2010): 24.

²² Fitzlyon, 257.

²³ My own research on this topic explores the artistic merit of these transcriptions, and was presented at the 2018 College Music Society National Conference, "Pauline Viardot's Transcriptions of Chopin's Mazurkas: A Study in Artistry."

²⁴ Fitzlyon, 37.

²⁵ Fitzlyon, 43.

Zeitschrift für Musik, promoting her music as she began her compositional career.²⁶ Clara Schumann and Viardot developed a mutual respect for one another, and Clara even remarked that Viardot was, “the most gifted woman I have ever known.”²⁷ The relationship she established with the Schumann’s lasted throughout her life, and she and Clara became especially fond promoters of each other. In this way they navigated the man’s world of classical music composition together, in a time when women were discouraged from participation.

During her European tour she also interacted with Giacomo Meyerbeer, establishing the nature of their collaborative relationship. While their relationship fully came to fruition in *Le prophète*, it began as one that operated on introductions to new artists.²⁸ In 1839, Meyerbeer sent a letter of introduction to Viardot on behalf of Richard Wagner (1813–83) and the two met shortly after. Although Viardot never performed in his operas, a number of her students performed his roles because Wagner believed Viardot and her brother’s students were the best singers of the era.²⁹ Thus, through her relationship with Wagner she demonstrated a different perspective on her ideas of how collaboration could function. Instead of promoting his music through performance or compositional collaboration, she promoted it through encouraging her students to sing in his operas.

²⁶ Beatrix Borchard, “Pauline Viardot,” *Musik und Gender im Internet*, last modified August 2013, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/en/artikel/Pauline_Viardot.html. Robert Schumann published “Die Kapelle” in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1838.

²⁷ Fitzlyon, 380.

²⁸ Viardot’s collaborative relationship with Meyerbeer will be discussed in depth in the following chapter. It should be noted here that Meyerbeer had a great respect for her sister as well, which perhaps aided in his eagerness to work with Viardot.

²⁹ Johnson, 126.

Pauline Viardot first learned the value of collaboration from observing her father's relationship with Rossini, and she continued this practice with Rossini as she established her own performance career, using it as a model for her later collaborations with other composers. When the time came for Viardot's operatic debut in 1839, she sang the heroine Desdemona in *Otello*.³⁰ Her early repertoire also included the leads of Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and the title role in *La Cenerentola*. Throughout her life she maintained a similar pattern of working with other composers on several of their works, and not simply limiting collaboration to a single work or performance. She first performed in Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* to great acclaim, before he engaged her to sing the premiere of *Le prophète*. Similarly, she collaborated with Berlioz on his setting of *Orphée*, then on his rendition of *Alceste*, and finally on *Les Troyens*, which he originally intended for her to perform, but they had a falling out before its completion and premiere. Thus, although Rossini never specifically wrote a role for her, she had seen this process in action in his work with her father, and she learned how to specialize in performing multiple works by a single composer.

On April 18, 1840 Pauline Garcia married Louis Viardot (1800–83), beginning an advantageous marriage which provided Viardot with new opportunities to expand her performing career, as well as new musical connections. As Viardot gained renown as a singer, her mother and close friend George Sand realized she would need a manager and a husband to shape her career.³¹ The women believed Louis Viardot, a journalist, attorney, and

³⁰ Fitzlyon, 62.

³¹ For more information on Sand's and Viardot's relationship see Rebecca Fairbank, "Devastating Diva: Pauline Viardot and Rewriting the Image of Women in Nineteenth-Century French Opera Culture" (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2013); see also

director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris, the obvious choice for her husband.³² The Garcia family became acquainted with Louis Viardot in 1836, while he counseled Maria Malibran during her divorce from Eugene Malibran.³³ Following their marriage, Louis gave up his position at the Théâtre Italien to manage Pauline's engagements while she was on tour.³⁴ As her husband and manager, Louis garnered and negotiated Pauline's contracts. From 1841–3 she performed in Paris, Spain, London, and Vienna, and was extensively contracted to perform in St. Petersburg from 1843–6.³⁵

Pauline Viardot was born into a highly connected musical family, a network she continuously expanded and utilized throughout her entire career. Her early studies in piano and composition not only introduced her to a number of musicians with whom she collaborated, but they taught her essential skills of musicianship. Thus, when she began her salon she held the wide respect of her peers, which encouraged their participation in her events. Her performance career began with a tour of Europe, introducing her to musicians in Paris, Germany, and Russia. As a result, when she began her salon, it gathered an international pool of attendees. Under the guidance of her mother and best friend she married a man who wholly devoted himself to promoting her career, connecting her with a number of

George Sand and Pauline Viardot, *Lettres inédites de George Sand et de Pauline Viardot: 1839–1849*, ed. Thérèse Marix-Spire, (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 2002).

³² Fitzlyon, 79–86.

³³ Fitzlyon, 36.

³⁴ Fitzlyon, 88.

³⁵ Rebecca Fairbank, “Devastating Diva: Pauline Viardot and Rewriting the Image of Women in Nineteenth-Century French Opera Culture” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2013), 181–3.

opera companies, negotiating her contracts, and broadening her artistic circle. At every point in her early life Viardot connected with people who could take her to the next step in her career. However, Viardot never saw these connections as one-sided; she developed mutually beneficial relationships as demonstrated by her work in her salon.

Viardot's Salon

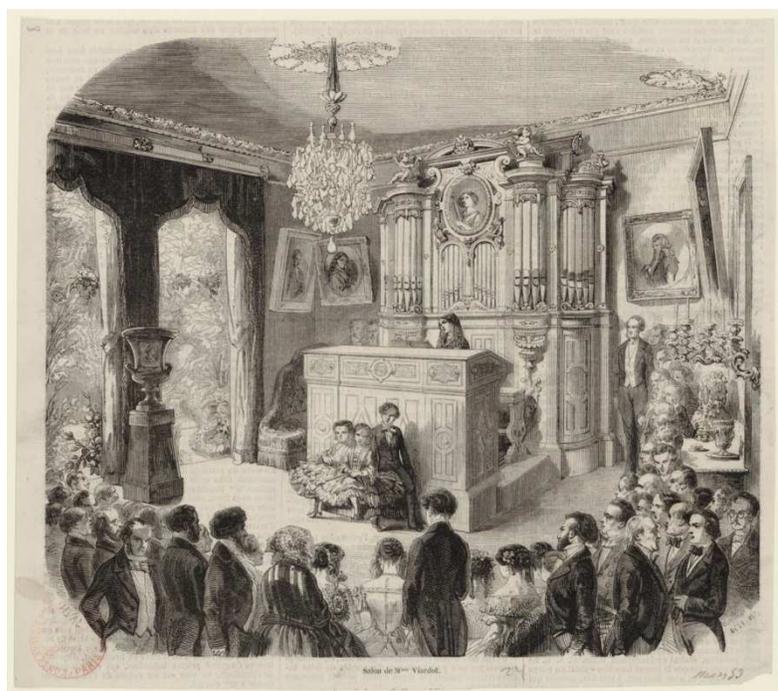
During her career onstage a number of mentors influenced Viardot's career trajectory; she recognized this, and wanted to pay it forward in her own way through her salon. After a successful career, she retired from the stage in 1863. This allowed her to use her collaborative prowess to begin a salon which purposefully guided and promoted the careers of young musicians. Viardot began her salon in Paris in the 1840s, and even hosted while she toured Russia from 1842–3. She maintained her salon from 1863–71 while the family lived in Baden-Baden during the political upheaval preceding the Franco-Prussian War. She continued it when they returned to Paris, also holding summer events at Courtavenel and their home at Bougival.³⁶ The Thursday soirées and Sunday matinées hosted Europe's greatest intellects: Charles Dickens, Alfred de Musset, Honoré de Balzac, Johannes Brahms, Anton Rubinstein, Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, Gabriel Fauré, Eugène Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, Paul Dubois, and scores of others.³⁷ Camille Saint-Saëns, a frequent salon guest, recalled:

They were superb festivals of art, those Thursday evening parties that some survivors still remember, given by the Viardots in the days of the Empire in their house on the

³⁶ Johnson, 56–7.

³⁷ Johnson, 160–7. For a comprehensive look at the Viardot artistic circle please see Appendix A in Johnson's dissertation.

rue de Douai, splendidly adapted to its aesthetic destiny. From the reception rooms, where Ary Scheffer's famous portrait was displayed and where secular instrumental and vocal music was performed, you went down a few steps to a gallery of fine paintings, at the end of which was a marvelous organ, a masterpiece by Cavaillé-Coll; this was the temple of sacred music, there resounded arias from the oratorios of Handel and Mendelssohn that the singer gave in London during the season and that she could not programme in Paris concerts, which refused to entertain these vast compositions. On the organ, as on the piano, I had the honour of being her regular accompanist.³⁸ (See Figure 2.2)



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 2.2. An 1853 image of the Viardot salon at their home on the Rue de Douai in Paris.³⁹

From Saint-Saëns's description, one begins to understand the reputation of Viardot's salon during her lifetime. Prominent features of French society since the seventeenth century,

³⁸ Saint-Saëns, 169. The organ was relocated to Notre-Dame de Melun in 1885, where it still is housed.

³⁹ H. Val, *Salon de Mme Viardot*, 1853, photograph, 21.5 cm x 24.5 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb39627195j>.

salons were, “well-established institutions of aristocratic life,” which allowed women the opportunity to expand their role within the home.⁴⁰ This in turn allowed them to be more involved in politics, giving them the opportunity to promote their political agendas (although many were often dictated by their husbands). Additionally, as demonstrated by Viardot, the salon allowed for personal and professional gain of the hostess, and those attending the salon.

Gender and Political Influences

After the French Revolution when King Louis-Phillipe became the constitutional monarch of France, the French economy grew alongside industrialization. This economic growth resulted in a burgeoning middle-class, which became more involved in the salon culture of France at the time.⁴¹ Pauline Viardot and her family benefited financially from this economic expansion and lived in the culturally vibrant and “flashy” Chaussée d’Antin district, the nouveau riche area of Paris also home to Eugène Delacroix, George Sand, Gilbert Duprez, and Frédéric Chopin.⁴² Her affluent status in society allowed Viardot, like many upper-class Parisian women, to host a salon focused on musical and artistic culture.

Despite the financial gains Viardot experienced, things were not as positive for women. After the Revolution, a woman’s space became the home, and men became the heads of household in charge of all matters. This was of course true to society before the

⁴⁰ Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 17.

⁴¹ David Tunley, *Music in the 19th-Century Parisian Salon* (Armidale, Australia: University of New England, 1997), 6.

⁴² Tunley, 11.

Revolution, but during the Revolution the lines between the private and public spheres of family life were ambiguous.⁴³ Thus, after the Revolution ended, society shifted and more firmly placed women in the private sphere and men in the public sphere. Viewed as fragile beings that needed protection from the outside world, society delegated women to the private sphere of the home to keep them safe.⁴⁴ As a result men took on political discussions and women handled domestic matters.⁴⁵ Thus, Viardot and other *salonnières* (salon hostesses) redefined the role of the salon in the nineteenth century to allow their own agendas to be heard and understood.

As a woman who established her performing career using family connections, colleague's introductions, and her talents as a musician, Pauline Viardot understood how to achieve success in any venture (performing, teaching, or building a salon), and how to ensure that her gender never left her out of the conversation. As Nancy Knieff points out:

The leader of a salon was almost without exception, a woman of the social and intellectual elite of her time. She attained her position because of her interest in the discussion of ideas and her ability to direct such a discussion ... The intellectual abilities and achievements of their leader [the *salonnière*] and her appreciation of such abilities in others were the essential factors that determined the success of a *salonnière* of the nineteenth century.⁴⁶

⁴³ Johnson, 2.

⁴⁴ Michelle Perrot ed., *A History of Private Life, Volume IV: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 44.

⁴⁵ Johnson, 1–2.

⁴⁶ Nancy Jane Shumate Knieff, "The Parisian Salon of the Second Empire: A French Cultural Institution in Historical Perspective" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Dallas, 1982), 271.

As a respected musician, Pauline Viardot rejected the idea that her opinions did not hold value, as evinced in the following letters to Julius Rietz.⁴⁷

In Paris it is impossible for me to do anything satisfactory-I should have to sing bad music prettily (I hate prettiness in art), and do other things that honorable women ought not to do. Ah, dearest friend, you have no idea of the baseness which rules here now in art and in every sphere of public life- I cannot see it without feeling heavy at heart.⁴⁸

In this letter she described herself as an “honorable” woman, and rejected the “baseness” which was defiling art in Paris. Her specific use of language demonstrates not only her opinion of herself, but her opinions on the world around her. She continued to express this disdain for diminishing art in a later letter, in which she described a party where:

A bad singer of comic chansonettes regaled us with the Lord knows what disgusting platitudes, intended to excite laughter. Yes, my friend, just imagine that in Paris there are people who have no other trade, who are paid for that, and who often win a larger audience and greater applause than serious artists. I felt affronted at meeting and hearing a creature like that at Rossini's! Mind you, while I was almost in tears with vexation, they were laughing and applauding frantically. Ah, it is hardly necessary to say that I felt outraged-I could not stand it any longer, and departed, so as not to witness further such an abasement of art.⁴⁹

This anecdote clearly shows that she was not going to sit around and support the mistreatment of music. She could have stayed for the performance, quietly accepting what was happening, but instead she actively chose to leave, which signified to her peers her lack of approval for the charade.

⁴⁷ As Rietz was a close friend and confidante of Viardot these examples were used because she wrote freely her opinions to him. However, she also shared her opinions openly with Ary Scheffer, George Sand, Charles Gounod, and others in her letters, reinforcing the idea she valued her own opinions.

⁴⁸ Baker, 366.

⁴⁹ Baker, 378.

Through these letters it is evident that Viardot knew her intellectual worth, which allowed her to use her skills and domestic role to bring together society's brilliant minds to take part in her salon and hold meaningful discussions. Her peers recognized her intellect as well, discussing her brilliance with Viardot's student Anna Schoen-René, Johannes Brahms remarked:

You are a very lucky girl and should be grateful at having the opportunity to study with Pauline Viardot, a most remarkable and superior woman and the greatest artist of the century. Give her my most heartfelt greetings, and assure her that I am still devoted to her, and shall be loyal and grateful to my last breath. She has advised and guided me wisely; and to you, I would say, "Open your ears to all she tells you and retain and cherish every word, for everything that she utters is of the value of pure gold."⁵⁰

Brahms's obvious respect for Viardot as a musician and intellectual demonstrate that Viardot did not allow her peers to judge her solely as a woman. Thus, as a woman who knew her own self-worth, the fact that her intelligence was recognized by a prominent male colleague of her day, further speaks to the influence of this incredible woman.

In nineteenth-century France politics was a topic reserved for men. However, this did not prevent Viardot from using the politics at play in her home country to promote her personal agenda of widening her salon network to include more musicians, artists, and dignitaries with whom she could collaborate. In the years leading up to the Franco-Prussian War, the Viardot family's political beliefs forced them to leave Paris and they did not return until it ended. This allowed the reputation of her salon to cross borders as the family moved to Baden-Baden to avoid the conflict growing in Paris.

Although the Franco-Prussian War devastated southern Germany and northern France, it played a major role in expanding her musical reputation from performer, to

⁵⁰ Schoen-René, 22.

salonnière, respected intellectual, and member of the social elite. Through her salon in Baden-Baden she made the acquaintance of Emperor Wilhem I (King of Prussia) and his wife Augusta, as well as Grand Duchess Louise of Baden-Baden, all of whom attended her gatherings. She also made the acquaintance of the Grand Duke of Weimar, and Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein (Liszt's lover).⁵¹ This in turn "gained her entry into a society as exclusive as any in Europe."⁵²

Viardot's awareness to her role as a *salonnière* is made clear in how she used these various connections with the nobility, for as Nancy Knieff notes:

The salon's purpose was to introduce writers and philosophers to powerful members of the upper ranks of society; the salons brought together members of distinct social classes which had not heretofore mingled: aristocrats, writers, artists, members of the professions, and certain rich and powerful bourgeois ... The salon made some positive contributions to society of the eighteenth century by serving as a forum for philosophical thought and by bringing together men of like minds who might have otherwise been separated by social status.⁵³

In Baden-Baden she hosted the nobility alongside Johannes Brahms, Ivan Turgenev, Clara Schumann, and Anton Rubinstein.⁵⁴ Thus, when she premiered her operettas *Le Dernier Sorcier*, *Trop de Femmes*, and *L'Ogre*, they were well attended and supported by the aristocracy, allowing her to promote her own musical career and collaborations with Ivan Turgenev.⁵⁵ Viardot's penchant for making acquaintances allowed her to mingle different classes of society, and to premiere her own works in elite social settings.

⁵¹ Johnson, 72.

⁵² Fitzlyon, 379.

⁵³ Knieff, 44–5.

⁵⁴ Johnson, 72.

Although the Viardots spent the majority of their time in Baden-Baden, they eventually moved to London as the conflict followed them to Germany. In London, Viardot maintained her salon with the continued patronage of Charles Gounod, Camille Saint-Saëns, and others seeking refuge from the conflict. Violinist Leopold Auer (1845–1930) wrote in his memoirs: “During the siege, which lasted for several months, many people left Paris and took up their residence in London ... thanks to her personal charm, and to her standing as a great artist in the musical world, she became the leading spirit of the little circle of French refugee artists.”⁵⁶ Thus through her time in Baden-Baden and London, Viardot proved she would not let political upheaval at home destroy the artistic network she worked so hard to create; furthermore, she would use it to expand her artistic possible when possible.

Artistic Promotion

“I love my friends with a sacred flame of passion, and could not live without them. To ... help my young friends and pupils over the rough path of struggle to recognition is ... the warming ray of my existence.”⁵⁷ In a letter to Julius Rietz, Pauline Viardot described what is now clear from her artistic legacy; she tirelessly worked to connect her friends with opportunities, and provided them herself whenever possible. Introductions in her salon were one such way of developing a young artist’s social network, for as Steven Kale points out in his book on French salons, “the power to invite was also the power to arrange,” and for

⁵⁵ Turgenev wrote the libretti for these operettas.

⁵⁶ Leopold Auer, *My Long Life in Music* (London: Duckworth, 1924), 165.

⁵⁷ Schoen-René, 143.

Viardot her choices in who to invite and who to program were integral to their future success as composers.⁵⁸

The young Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) is an example of a composer who Pauline Viardot made her protégé and who went on to musical prominence.⁵⁹ Fauré’s teacher, Camille Saint-Saëns, introduced him to Viardot in 1872 at one of her salons.⁶⁰ After this initial meeting Fauré became close with the Viardot family, frequently attending the salon, and he was even engaged to Viardot’s daughter Marianne until she broke it off in 1877. Fauré felt such a closeness to the family he dedicated a number of works to its members: to Pauline—songs Op. 4 (“Lydia” and “La chanson du pêcheur (Lamento)” and Op. 7 (“Après un rêve,” “Hymne,” and “Barcarolle), to Claudie and Marianne—Op. 8 (“Au bord de l’eau,” “La rançon,” and “Ici-bas”) and Op. 10 (“Tarentelle,” and “Puisqu’ici-bas”), and to Paul Viardot, an accomplished violinist, he dedicated his first sonata for violin and piano Op. 13.⁶¹ Viardot’s equal affection for Fauré led her to help find him gainful employment, which she did by working with her network of artists, more specifically, Charles Gounod. In a letter to Viardot from April 6, 1877 Gounod writes “I will do better, (or, at least, more than you ask of me) for you and also for that dear and good boy to the person and the talent in whom I am

⁵⁸ Kale, 22.

⁵⁹ It is important to note that Fauré was a student of Saint-Saëns who of course was already a strong musical connection, so it is not my goal to argue that Viardot was the only reason Fauré was successful. Rather, she was another connection who aided in his success.

⁶⁰ Zoltan Roman, “Gradus ad Parnassum: Selected Early Songs of Gabriel Fauré in the Socio Cultural Context of His Time,” *Studia Musicologica* 48, nos. 1/2 (Mar., 2007): 18.

⁶¹ Fitzlyon, 435.

interested with all my heart as well as all of yours.”⁶² In this letter Gounod discussed how he and Viardot supported Fauré for the position of *maître de chapelle* at the Madeleine Church in Paris, which Fauré became at the end of July. Thus, it is clear that Viardot and her circle eagerly helped young artists in whom they saw promise. Despite the broken engagement between Fauré and Marianne, Fauré remained an admirer of Pauline until her death. His *Pie Jesu* was performed at her funeral and he wrote a tribute to her in the *Figaro* upon her death.⁶³

Beyond Fauré, many other composers benefited from their associations with Viardot and their frequent programming in her salon. After her tour of Russia in the 1840s Viardot made it a point to continue programming Russian music when she returned to Paris. She frequently performed the music of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, promoting his music across Europe.⁶⁴ Anton and Nicolas Rubinstein were fixtures of the salon, and Viardot endorsed and programmed their music as well.⁶⁵ She even referred to Anton Rubinstein as “the greatest pianist of our time” in a journal entry from July 12, 1863 describing a salon in which he played a Beethoven sonata.⁶⁶ This promotion extended into Viardot’s years as a teacher at the

⁶² Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, ed. Melanie Von Goldbeck, (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2015), 390. “Je ferai mieux, (ou, du moins, plus que vous ne me demandez) pour vous et aussi pour ce cher et bon garçon à la personne et au talent de qui je m’intéresse de tout mon coeur comme de tout le vôtre.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁶³ Fitzlyon, 465.

⁶⁴ Johnson, 101.

⁶⁵ Johnson, 117–8.

⁶⁶ US-CAh, MS Mus 264, (365). [Rubinstein me paraît le plus grand pianiste de notre temps.] It should be noted that she may have been referring to Nicolas Rubinstein as no first

Paris Conservatory and her assignment of Russian music to her vocal students helped establish it into the Western musical canon.⁶⁷ Thus, when Sergei Diaghilev brought a season of Russian music to Paris in 1907, and the Russian ballet in 1909, Viardot saw her own work in supporting these artists come to fruition.⁶⁸

A look at Viardot's extant salon programs shows that although she certainly promoted contemporary musicians and composers, she also saw the need to preserve the music of composers of the past. In a single program, the works of J.S. Bach, Robert von Hornstein, G.F. Handel, Ludwig von Beethoven, Claudio Monteverdi, and Franz Schubert could be heard; while a few days earlier she organized a program of Frédéric Chopin, Gaetano Donizetti, Joseph Haydn, Luigi Venzano, and Giuseppe Verdi.⁶⁹ Viardot respected the music of the past, but used her programming to promote the music and musicians of the future.

Conclusion

Pauline Viardot's early life, with her infinitely connected musical family, set her on the course to develop one of the nineteenth century's largest musical-social networks. Her already extensive network grew larger with the onset of her singing career in 1839, and it continued to expand throughout her life. As she developed these connections, she maintained

name is given. However, given Anton's more extensive touring career it is more likely to be in reference to Anton.

⁶⁷ Robyn A. Stevens, "The Garcia Family: The Pedagogic Legacy of Romanticism's Premiere Musical Dynasty," *Journal of Singing* 65, no. 5 (May 2009): 535.

⁶⁸ Fitzlyon, 461.

⁶⁹ US-CAh, MS Mus 264, (365). Taken from programs she wrote down in her journal for August 2nd and August 9th.

awareness for who she had met, why they were important, and how they might be influential in her future life. However, her insistence on developing and maintaining professional relationships was not only for personal gain, she also used it to help young musicians on their paths to success.

Nineteenth-century women relied on salons to escape and elevate their domestic roles through promoting their personal and professional agendas, and despite her already musically influential status, Pauline Viardot saw the potential managing her own salon would have for her career. Building on her already expansive network from her performance career, Viardot created a salon that invited Paris and Europe's greatest intellectuals, artists, writers, politicians, and musicians. She brought all of these people together to create a societal discourse, with musical performances that encouraged expressionism and discussion of how to elevate music of the past, present, and future. Young musicians like Gabriel Fauré and Charles Gounod who were invited to the salon and thus into Viardot's social circle made valuable connections that helped their careers. When she collaborated on new operas with composers she used her network to help all parties involved with the project; this will be demonstrated in the discussions of her collaborations with Giacomo Meyerbeer (*Le prophète*), Charles Gounod (*Sapho*), and Hector Berlioz (*Orphée*), in the following chapters. Ultimately, Pauline Viardot established a salon with a broad network that developed the musical culture of Paris, and centered her as a nineteenth-century kingmaker.

CHAPTER 3

GIACOMO MEYERBEER AND *LE PROPHÈTE*:

VIARDOT'S CONSTRUCTIVE COLLABORATION

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864) established a relationship with the Garcia family in 1825 when Maria Malibran performed the role of Felicia in *Il crociato in Egitto* in London.¹ Several years later, after Malibran's unexpected death and Pauline Viardot's entrance into the opera world, Meyerbeer expressed his, "admiration for [Viardot's] admirable talent," and eagerly assisted her in finding work in Berlin during her 1845 season.² His role as *Generalmusikdirektor* of Prussia allowed him to introduce her to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV through a concert he organized at Stolzenfels Castle, near Cologne.³ However, Viardot's forthcoming engagements in St. Petersburg did not allow for a lengthy stay in Berlin, so it was not until 1847 that their professional relationship fully developed.⁴ In the 1847 season, Meyerbeer engaged her to sing his operas *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots* at the Royal Opera House Berlin (*Königliches Opernhaus*), and his operas received continuous positive

¹ Elizabeth Forbes, "Malibran, Maria," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2009), accessed December 17, 2019.

² Michèle Friang, *Pauline Viardot au miroir de sa correspondance* (Paris, France: Hermann, 2008), 72–3. "Vous connaissez assez mon admiration pour votre admirable talent..." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

³ Alexander von Humboldt appointed Meyerbeer to the position of *Generalmusikdirektor*. For Meyerbeer's correspondence with Viardot regarding this concert, see Friang, 73.

⁴ For more details on Viardot's desire to return to Berlin, see April Fitzlyon, *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* (London: John Calder Publishers, 1964), 202–6.

press with her in the leading roles.⁵ She achieved her most famous performance of this period singing both leading roles in *Robert le diable*, because the other soprano singing the role of Isabella fell ill. Fortunately, Alice (Viardot's role) and Isabella never appear in the same scenes, so Viardot performed both roles to rapturous approval.⁶ Viardot's stellar performances in Meyerbeer's works at this time solidified her reputation as a consummate singing-actress which provided her with her Paris Opéra debut, revealed the range of her acting abilities, and positioned her as a collaborative singer with valuable musical input.

Even in the beginning of Viardot and Meyerbeer's working relationship, the two collaborated constructively. Meyerbeer often cast Viardot in his operas, which gave her opportunities to succeed as a performer, and Viardot brought vibrancy to his characters which encouraged audiences to continue seeing his operas. This chapter focuses on their mutually beneficial relationship by analyzing their collaboration on *Le prophète* (1849). At the time of its genesis Viardot had not yet debuted at the Paris Opéra, and Meyerbeer needed his next operatic success. First, this chapter will explore Meyerbeer's difficulty completing the opera. Then, I turn to the changes in the libretto and music, in part prompted by Meyerbeer, and in part by Viardot's involvement. Finally, this chapter demonstrates that *Le prophète* provided both artists with the next steps of their careers, and it allowed Viardot to validate her artistic worth beyond prima donna.

⁵ Friang, 268; Fitzlyon, 204.

⁶ Fitzlyon, 204.

Cast a Diva...as Fidès

After the success of *Les Huguenots* in 1836, it took Meyerbeer thirteen years to complete his next opera, *Le prophète*. As he prepared the opera, he revealed:

One of the three primary roles of the piece, and possibly the most interesting, is that of the mother. There is no one at the moment at the Opéra for this post, and it appears to me that before all else it would be necessary to know from the director of the Opéra if he can and if he will engage an artist of talent for this role: this is a vital question.⁷

Meyerbeer knew how vital the role of Fidès (Jean's mother) would be to the opera, and his earliest sketches continually reiterate his belief that Fidès should be "a character of unctious, religious maternal love, and resignation, and finally, was always sweet ..."⁸ Meyerbeer knew as early as 1841 that Viardot possessed the vocal and dramatic talents to perform Fidès successfully; in a letter to his agent, Louis Gouin, dated January 11, he wrote, "the woman who would be admirable in this role [Fidès], and who would increase the chances of success of this work tenfold is Pauline Garcia-Viardot."⁹ However, despite his initial confidence in whom to cast, the act of actually engaging Viardot for the role was far more problematic.

⁷ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, ed. Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker, 8 vols. (Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1959–2006), 3: 19. Translation by Alan Armstrong. For further information, see Alan Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's 'Le Prophète': A History of its Composition and Early Performances" (PhD diss. The Ohio State University, 1990), 10. Armstrong's dissertation is a thorough analysis of the compositional history of Meyerbeer's *Le prophète*, but he does not address how casting Viardot contributed to the success of *Le prophète*, Viardot's collaborative role in the opera, and the mutually beneficial relationship Viardot and Meyerbeer established. This chapter will address these ideas by interpreting the information provided by the primary sources Armstrong consulted and translated into English. While Armstrong cites many of the letters/primary sources below in his dissertation, I am using these sources to prove how Viardot contributed to the compositional process and success of *Le prophète*.

⁸ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3: 311. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

⁹ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3: 312. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

Léon Pillet, the Paris Opéra's artistic director, stood in the way of hiring Viardot for *Le prophète*. At the time of the opera's inception, Pillet was engaged in an affair with Rosine Stolz, one of the Opéra's leading ladies, and he desperately wanted her to sing a role in Meyerbeer's newest opera.¹⁰ However, Meyerbeer felt that Stolz did not fit his vision for *Fidès*, and fought Pillet for years, stalwartly rejecting contracts which included Stolz in the leading role. After an 1840 visit to Paris to search for singers, he later wrote to Gouin:

I found that one of the greatest difficulties was in the casting of the role of the mother. For musical reasons I had decided to write the part for a true contralto ... I had noticed some low notes in Madame Stolz's voice, it is true, but of the sort merely to touch on, not the sort able to bear the weight of sustained song, as contraltos must have ... In addition, Madame Stolz's talent, which I nevertheless highly esteem, is constituted essentially for things of great strength and sweet songs, she no longer made an impression and sang falsely. This role of the mother always bore a character of uncton, religious maternal love, and resignation, and finally, was always sweet, and there was only a single moment of soaring strength in the entire role, that of the finale of the fourth act: for all of these reasons I did not think Madame Stolz right for the part, on which depended a good portion of the success of the work.¹¹

Meyerbeer carefully considered his casting of *Fidès* because he knew it required a specific type of singing-actress to bring this character, and thus the opera, to life. In the same letter he professed his preference for Viardot, recognizing that her weaknesses would be strengths in this role:

Her defects are not defects for this role: she is not pretty, but she does not need to be since she must represent an old woman. One may believe that her voice will possibly not have all the energy necessary for the Opéra, but in this role energy is isolated to one sole instant. Instead of that her beautiful and impressive contralto voice, her big sound, sweet and suave, these are the required qualities the role of *Fidès* demands.¹²

¹⁰ Robert Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Teaneck, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 185.

¹¹ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3: 311. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

¹² Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3: 312. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

Meyerbeer respected Viardot as an artist, and although he recognized that she did not meet the physical standards of the Opéra's other leading ladies, he also knew that she would bring every ounce of artistry she possessed to this performance to elevate the production.

Despite Meyerbeer's clear vision in whom he wanted to cast from the earliest stages of the opera's inception, it still took years to finalize Viardot's contract. Initially, Pillet's unreliability in securing Viardot for the role of Fidès caused the delay. Meyerbeer believed he could convince Pillet to offer the role to Viardot:

I see only Madame Pauline Garcia-Viardot as being able to fulfill the part worthily...As for Monsieur Pillet, since he does not like her but adores Madame Stolz, I believe that he will sulk at first; but if he will see that I hold firm and that I will not release my score without that, I believe that he will give in later.¹³

Unfortunately, Pillet never gave in to Meyerbeer's request, but it did not matter; in 1847, negative press from his poor financial management of the Opéra forced him to resign, at which point Louis Nestor Roqueplan and Charles Duponchel replaced him.¹⁴ Although intense negotiations still took place regarding Viardot's contract, her contract was finalized in August 1848.¹⁵ This final contract included, at Meyerbeer's insistence, a clause that guaranteed Viardot's performance in the opera from March to July of 1849, as he felt that anything less than a four month engagement would be an insufficient use of her talents.¹⁶

Meyerbeer knew that Viardot was the appropriate singer to cast in the role of Fidès, as he had worked with her previously, understood the scope of her talents and had even

¹³ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 3: 315. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

¹⁴ Armstrong, 161.

¹⁵ Armstrong, 179.

¹⁶ Armstrong, 168, 177, 181. For more information concerning final contract negotiations of *Le prophète* see Armstrong, 167–185.

promised her a role in 1843.¹⁷ However, the politics of her casting and contract details proved far more tedious and problematic than Meyerbeer anticipated. Nevertheless, without such a struggle the opera may not have been as successful, not only because of the vocal and dramatic talents Viardot brought to the role, but also because of the changes to the opera which were made as a result of her casting.

Changing the Libretto

Once contract negotiations were finalized and Meyerbeer knew who would be playing his leading characters, he asked librettist Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) to revise the libretto to expand the role of Fidès and minimize the role of Jean (the false prophet).¹⁸ He also switched the importance of the female leads within the show, to place more emphasis on Fidès, the mother, and to reduce the role of Jean's betrothed, Berthe. This type of a reversal meant that a mezzo-soprano would play the female lead; this was virtually unheard of at the time. As London music critic Henry Chorley noted:

Le prophète—again—is peculiar, as being the first serious opera relying for its principal female interest on the character of the Mother.—The Wife reigns as Queen in *Alceste* and *Fidelio*; —the outraged revengeful woman, in *Medea* and *Norma*; but the pathos of maternal tenderness and devotion, pure of all passion, had been hitherto unattempted, till it was tried in this opera.—This selection even in this case largely arose from chance. In the first draft of the drama, it has been said, the Prophet's love, wrested from him by the Despot, was destined to be the heroine, —and, as the drama stands, she still awkwardly crosses the impassioned scenes of its fourth and fifth acts with the purpose of retribution. But the character was virtually effaced from the moment that Madame Viardot was associated with the production of the tragedy;

¹⁷ Fitzlyon, 223.

¹⁸ Armstrong, 186.

since it was felt by author and musician how admirably she was fitted by Nature to add to the Gallery of Portraits a figure which as yet did not exist there.¹⁹

Chorley's recollection of the revision history of *Le prophète*, especially his understanding of how Viardot's casting affected the final version of the show, support her reputation as a well-respected artist of the time period whose involvement in this production altered the whole opera. Chorley recognized what Meyerbeer also knew: that in expanding Viardot's role, she would have more opportunities to improve her dramatic performance, and ultimately the entire opera.

One scene that Meyerbeer and Scribe revised to expand Viardot's role was Fidès's aria at the beginning of Act V. The scene had already been revised in 1842 when Meyerbeer believed Rosine Stolz might be cast as Fidès, so he planned an aria to replace Berthe's opening aria. However, once Viardot was contracted he decided to expand the aria and give Fidès the first solo scene of the act to "take advantage of her dramatic and vocal capabilities," as Armstrong notes.²⁰ Meyerbeer provided Scribe with a clear outline of the dramatic content in the scene in the following letter from February 8, 1848:

Very passionate recitative. Terror that they are going to assassinate Jean without her being able to warn him of the danger that threatens him. Anger against Jean who renounced her... The anguish and anger render her almost insane. She is on the point of cursing. "Ah, no," she cries, "God will not hear this sacrilegious word. Me, curse the dear adored child for whom I would give all my blood?" Very sweet Cavatine. Return of tenderness; she remembers Jean's childhood, his innocence and love for his mother, what happiness in that simple abode. (This piece could have an almost pastoral character.) [marginal note: "Refrain: 'my beloved, be forgiven'"] Then a short Agitato. "But time presses on: danger approaches. Do I not hear footsteps? It is

¹⁹ Henry Fothergill Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862), 2: 93–4.

²⁰ Armstrong, 188–189. Meyerbeer partially made this decision after discovering Gustave Roger, the tenor engaged to sing Jean, did not have the stamina required to sing the role.

Berthe with the murder weapon.” (The door opens.) “It is finished, he succumbed, I am dying.” (She falls almost in a faint on a beam.) An officer appears in the opened door. “Woman, prostrate yourself, the prophet is about to appear.” Cabaletta (with great elation). “He is coming! He is coming! God lend me your voice that the rays of your heavenly grace strike the errors of this wayward heart, that repentance penetrate a soul and that he renounce his criminal grandeur, that he return to you; and an entire life will be a hymn of gratitude for your heavenly grace.”²¹

Scribe followed Meyerbeer’s instructions in writing the libretto and scene, and the final result was the aria, “O prêtres de Baal.” The aria is a ten-minute-long tour de force, in which Fidès explores an extreme range of human emotions with great sincerity (Figure 3.1)

FIDÈS

Ô prêtres de Baal, où m’avez-vous conduite?
 Quoi! les murs d’un cachot!...
 Ah! l’on retient mes pas?
 Quand, de mon fils, Berthe a juré la mort!
 Laissez-moi! laissez-moi!
 Du complot qu’on médite
 Je veux le préserver!
 C’est mon fils, c’est mon sang! Non, non!...
 Il ne l’est plus!... Il renia sa mère!
 Et devant tes autels, devant toi,
 Dieu puissant, Peut-être même...
 affreux mystère!
 A-t-il résolu mon trépas pour cacher
 Qu’il est né Dans une humble chaumière?
 Que sur son front coupable éclate ta colère!
 Frappe toi qui punis tous les enfants ingrats!
 Non, non !... grâce pour lui!
 Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,
 Mon cœur est désarmé!
 Ta mère te pardonne; Adieu!
 Mon pauvre enfant,
 Mon bien aimé, sois pardonné!
 Je t’ai donné mon cœur,
 Je t’ai donné mes vœux,
 Et maintenant, pour que tu sois heureux,
 Pour que le grand destin
 dont ton âme est ravie
 Puisse, hélas! te couronner!

FIDÈS

O priests of Baal, where have you led me?
 What! the walls of a dungeon!
 Ah! do I remember my steps?
 When Berthe swore to kill my son!
 Leave me! leave me!
 The conspiracy we discussed
 I want to carry out!
 It is my son, it is my blood! No, no!
 He is that no longer! He denied his mother!
 And before your altars, in front of you,
 Mighty God, maybe even ...
 awful mystery!
 Has he decided on my death
 To hide that he was born in a humble cottage?
 That on his guilty face your anger burst!
 Strike, you who punish all ungrateful children!
 No, no! ... mercy for him!
 O you who forsake me,
 My heart is disarmed!
 Your mother forgives you; farewell!
 My poor child,
 By beloved, be forgiven!
 I have given you my heart,
 I have given you my vows,
 And now, so that you may be happy,
 So that the great destiny
 Which delights your soul
 May, alas! I crown you!

²¹ F-Pnm, NAF 22504, f. 30r. Translation by Armstrong.

S'il te faut ma vie, Eh bien!
 Je viens te la donner,
 Mon cher enfant, mon bien aimé!
 Ô toi qui m'abandonnes,
 Mon cœur est désarmé!
 Ta mère te pardonne ; Adieu!
 Mon pauvre enfant,
 Mon bien aimé, sois pardonné!
 Adieu, mon cœur te pardonne!
L'OFFICIER
 Femme, prosterne-toi devant ton divin maître!
 Le roi prophète à tes yeux va paraître!
FIDÈS (d'une voix suffoquée par l'émotion)
 Il va venir!... je vais le voir!... Hélas!
 Bien coupable peut-être!
 Dieu! Dieu!
 Comme un éclair précipité dans son âme,
 Frappe mon fils, ô vérité, de ta flamme!
 Qu'il soit dompté comme l'airain par le feu!
 Ah! céleste grâce, touche enfin son âme!
 Sainte phalange, rends-lui son ange!
 Esprit divin, descend vainqueur;
 De tes rayons perce son cœur.
 Que du crime Sous ses pas
 L'abîme noir ne s'ouvre pas!
 Comme un éclair précipité Dans son âme,
 Frappe mon fils, ô vérité, de ta flamme!
 Qu'il soit dompté comme l'airain par le feu!
 Et qu'il remonte au sein de Dieu!
 Céleste phalange, rends-lui son ange!
 Esprit de Dieu, descend vainqueur;
 de tes rayons perce son cœur.
 Je ramène mon enfant au Dieu sauveur!

If you need my life, well!
 I come to give it to you,
 My dear child, my beloved!
 O you who forsake me,
 My heart is disarmed!
 Your mother forgives you; farewell!
 My poor child,
 My beloved, be forgiven!
 Farewell, my heart forgives you!
OFFICER
 Woman, bow down to your divine master!
 The prophet king will appear to you!
FIDÈS (in a voice suffocated by emotion)
 He's coming! ... I'm going to see him! ... Alas!
 Well he is guilty perhaps!
 God! God!
 Like lightning to his soul,
 Strike my son, O truth, from your flame!
 Let him be tamed like brass by fire!
 Ah! Heavenly grace, finally touch his soul!
 Holy phalanx, Give him his angel!
 Divine Spirit, descend victorious;
 Your rays pierce his heart.
 What crime under his steps
 The black abyss does not open!
 Like lightning to his soul,
 Strike my son, O truth, from your flame!
 Let him be tamed like brass by fire!
 And let him go back to God!
 Celestial phalanx, Give him his angel!
 Spirit of God, descend victorious;
 Your rays pierce his heart.
 I bring my child back to the Savior God!

Figure 3.1. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m'abandonnes.” Libretto translation by Lydia Bechtel.

At the beginning of her aria, Fidès is overwhelmed by anxiety and unsure of what fate awaits her son. She wants God to strike down Jean, and punish him for his behavior of acting as a false prophet, but she is also conflicted, because she wishes death upon her own son. Meyerbeer allowed Fidès to voice her confusion clearly by limiting the use of

accompaniment during this opening recitative. The orchestra interjects between her sung lines, but when she sings they drop out; this underscores her anxiety and gives the performer the room to dramatically interpret the text (Figure 3.2).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. It is divided into three sections: **Récitatif.**, **Andantino.**, and **Allegro moderato**. The lyrics are: "O prêtres de Baal... où m'avez vous conduit?" and "Quoi! les murs d'un cahot! Ah! l'on retient mes pas". The score includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment with dynamic markings like *f* and *p*.

Figure 3.2. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 8–15 (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 319.

As the recitative continues, and as her anger at Jean grows, Meyerbeer filled out the accompanying texture, so that when Fidès asks God to strike down her son (“Frappe toi qui punis tous les enfants ingrats!”), the density of the musical texture reflects her growing resentment. However, her immediate call for God to forgive him and subsequent return to the thinner texture used previously quickly resolve her growing anxiety (Figure 3.3).

As the aria proper begins, Fidès resolves to forgive her son, and desires only his happiness. A tender vocal line that gently rocks within the 3/4 time signature characterizes the “very sweet cavatine” that Meyerbeer desired (Figure 3.4).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Andantino cantabile.' with the instruction '(CON FORZAMENTO)'. The piece is identified as a 'Cavatine.' and includes a 'TREMOLO.' marking. The lyrics are 'O toi qui m'abandonnes, mon cœur mon cœur est dé-sar-mé, est dé-sar-mé'. The piano part is marked 'SOSTENUTO E BEN LEGATO.' and 'p' (piano). The score concludes with a 'CRESCENDO.' marking.

Figure 3.4. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 39–42 (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 321.

Meyerbeer’s choice to double much of the vocal melody in the accompaniment highlights the delicate nature of this section. This emphasizes the sweetness of the mother’s character and shows her softer side, in contrast to the seething recitative that precedes the aria. Vocally this section was less challenging for Viardot, but it did highlight her ability to sing beautiful legato lines, despite the syllabic nature of the text setting. Ultimately, the simplicity of this section provides a necessary vocal resting point for the singer before the ensuing cabaletta that requires virtuosity of the highest level.

After the officer reveals that Jean is still alive, Fidès is overcome with happiness. In the span of under ten minutes she has gone from detesting her son and wishing for his death, to forgiving him and accepting that she will never see him again, to exaltation at the thought she might see him again, and possibly save him. In the first half of the cabaletta she begs God to bring her son back to the way of the Lord. Musically, Meyerbeer used this section to

highlight the highs and lows Fidès has experienced in this aria by giving each phrase a range that quickly spans an octave. He also creates a breathlessness through the rapid text declamation with short rests in between, a way for Fidès to catch her breath amongst her excitement (Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 101–5 (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 325.

By the final section of the aria, she is so euphoric that not only is she praising God, but she also recognizes that she might be able to save her son. In the final display of fioratura, Fidès reaches a jubilation that can only be expressed through virtuosic vocal writing (Figure 3.6). These melismatic passages require a level of vocal technique that only the highest quality singer could execute successfully, especially after the preceding eight minutes of continuous solo singing and dramatic turmoil. Meyerbeer knew when he originally created the dramatic sketch of the aria for Scribe that this aria would not be easily performed by any mezzo-soprano, but with the knowledge that Viardot would sing the role, he could write this dramatically and vocally intricate aria.

Figure 3.6. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 144–54 (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 329.

Along with the aria, Meyerbeer also requested that Scribe revise the libretto for the Act V duet between Jean and Fidès, because he now wanted Fidès to sing the cavatina imbedded within the duet, instead of Jean.²² Thus, the cavatina required a new text from her perspective:

A la voix de ta mère
 Le ciel peut se rouvrir!
 Dieu n’a plus de colère
 Devant le repentir!
 Par lui... Je te l’atteste
 Tes crimes s’effaçeront
 Et le pardons celeste
 Descendra sur ton front!²³

At the voice of your mother
 The sky can reopen!
 God no longer has anger
 In the face of repentance!
 Through him... I say to you
 Your crimes will fade
 And heaven’s pardon
 Will descend over your face!²⁴

²² Armstrong, 192.

²³ F-Pnm, NAF 22567, p. 464.

This final version differed from Jean's original, which began "O vous ange tutelaire," [Oh you guardian angel]. Here, Jean speaks of his mother as a guiding light, a characterization that Meyerbeer maintained even after the revisions. Assigning this text to Fidès not only demonstrates her role as Jean's moral compass, but also her ability to assert strength over her son, who spent months living his life as a false prophet. Depicting Fidès as a mother who changes her fanatical son's heart provided depth for the mother's character. This layer of depth elevated Fidès's position in the opera's plot, and provided Viardot with the opportunity to stretch her acting abilities.

Meyerbeer went to great lengths to expand the role of Fidès by depicting her as a woman of moral fortitude, more capable than his love interest of saving her son. This presented a marked difference in how composers approached soprano and mezzo-soprano roles in the nineteenth century. As Chorley noted in the quote above, and as Naomi André has written, early nineteenth-century operas tended to have two leading women: a soprano and a mezzo-soprano. Typically, the soprano served as the leading romantic interest often characterized by hopelessness and the sense of being a damsel in distress. The mezzo-soprano existed as a lesser character who exhibited the qualities of strength and determination.²⁵ In *Le prophète*, the archetypal character qualities remained the same, but the role of the mezzo-soprano was made to surpass the role of the soprano, as a deeper, more extensive role and character study.

²⁴ English translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²⁵ Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 7.

Musical Collaboration

Once Scribe completed the libretto changes to Meyerbeer's satisfaction, Meyerbeer set out to complete the musical revisions he began after the finalization of the cast. During the revision process Pauline Viardot presented her opinion frequently, and Meyerbeer utilized her suggestions. In 1867, a column in *Watson's Art Journal* noted that during rehearsals Meyerbeer was, "always seeking the opinion of someone in whose judgment he had confidence, generally Madame Viardot, before deciding which scoring should be adopted."²⁶ Thus, journalists and fellow musicians recognized the collaborative nature of Viardot and Meyerbeer during her lifetime.²⁷

Within Meyerbeer's journals, a number of references discuss his collaboration with Viardot on *Le prophète*, as well as her providing him with input for the opera. Meyerbeer's entries from November 1848 to January 1849 include:

November

Wednesday, 15. Conference with the opera directors with whom Scribe left the libretto for *Le prophète* for the scene-painters. In the evening, played through the part of Fidès, which I shall play for Viardot in the morning.

Saturday, 18. To Madame Viardot, and played for her the first time the musical pieces of her role in *Le prophète*.²⁸

December

Wednesday, 27. Worked on the changes in the stretta of the cabaletta of Fidès's aria. Worked with Émile Deschamps concerning important word changes in Jonas' *couplets*. Rehearsed with Madame Viardot.

²⁶ "Meyerbeer's Rehearsals," *Watson's Art Journal* 8, no. 4 (November 16, 1867): 60.

²⁷ Meyerbeer died in 1864; however, given the relatively close date of this article's publication the author clearly knew of this relationship while the composer was living.

²⁸ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 455. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

Saturday, 30. Worked on the last tempo of Fidès's aria...²⁹

January

Tuesday, 2. The idea for yet another fortunate change occurred to me...for the last tempo of Viardot's Aria. I wrote it out.³⁰

These entries provide insight into their collaborative relationship. It is clear that Meyerbeer visited Viardot to play through the score with her before rehearsals began.³¹ The December entries show that three days after he met with Viardot to rehearse, he worked on the tempo of Fidès's aria.³² He does not state why he decided to alter the tempo; however, given his recent rehearsal with Viardot, it is likely that she suggested the change in tempo, and he chose to pursue her request. Furthermore, the language of the January 2nd entry demonstrates that while he composed and worked on Fidès's aria, he constantly had Viardot and her suggestions in mind; in this entry he referred to the aria not as "Fidès's aria" but as "Viardot's Aria." This subtle change indicates that Meyerbeer might have considered the aria "Viardot's" own because of the input she provided on its composition.

²⁹ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 465. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

³⁰ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 466. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

³¹ Journal entries also show that Meyerbeer played through other leading cast member's roles with them before rehearsals began. He was a collaborative composer in nature; however, in an exploration of his journal, Viardot emerges as the cast member from whom he more often sought advice. He met with Viardot on multiple occasions for rehearsals, and mentions having dinner with her multiple times. He met with Roger rather frequently, but met only a few times with Castellán. Additionally, Elliott notes that "because composers now had less to do with the performances of their works, they began to mark their scores more carefully, aiming to ensure a reasonable performance without their presence." This presents a marked contrast to Meyerbeer's collaborative nature. Martha Elliott, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 128.

³² See Saturday, December 30th and Tuesday, January 2nd.

Later in January, Meyerbeer more specifically noted working with Viardot on changes made at her request.

January

Saturday, 13. To Madame Viardot and worked on the cadenzas, as well as the general color of both of the women's duets combined.³³

This entry likely refers to the two duets between Berthe and Fidès, which occur in Acts I and IV. The cadenzas to which Meyerbeer was referring may have been Viardot's own cadenzas in her arias, although common practice at this time was for performers to develop their own cadenzas. However, it is also possible that he was referring to the cadenzas which Fidès and Berthe perform together in their duets. The Act I duet, "Un jour dans les flots" ends with an extensive cadenza between Berthe and Fidès (Figure 3.7). Given its length, and the difficulty aligning it between the two voices might have posed, it is likely Viardot might have requested to work on it with Meyerbeer, to make sure she felt comfortable with the final product.

³³ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 467. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

B. *cadenza ad libitum.*
 permettez - le mon doux seigneur ah! ah!
 F. permettez - le mon doux seigneur ah! ah!
 permettez-le mon bon
 permettez-le mon bon
 mon doux sei - gneur
 mon doux sei - gneur
 Ped.

Figure 3.7. *Le prophète*, Act I, “Un jour dans les flots,” mm. 118–30 (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 46.

In the Act IV duet, “Un pauvre pèlerin” there is also an extensive cadenza between the leading ladies in the middle of the duet. However, discrepancies appear between the final

published version of the score, and an 1849 manuscript.³⁴ In the manuscript score, Meyerbeer did not notate the exact cadenza; instead, only fermatas indicate that a cadenza would have been performed (Figure 3.8). In the published score, however, there is a completely notated cadenza, which could have been the same cadenza used by Viardot and Jeanne-Anaïs Castellan in the premiere (Figure 3.9).

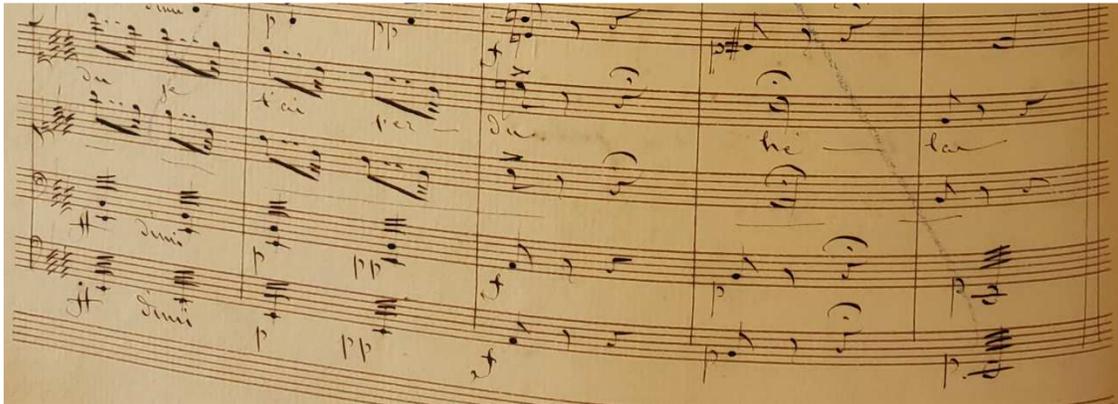


Figure 3.8. Manuscript score for *Le prophète*, Act IV Scene I, “Un pauvre pèlerin,” mm. 172–6. F-Po, Add. A-566 (A,4) < Vol. 4 >, p. 78.

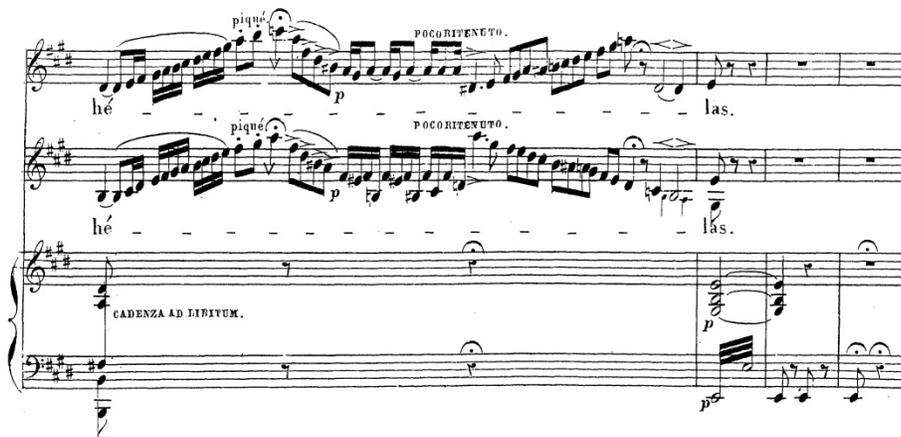


Figure 3.9. *Le prophète*, Act IV Scene I, “Un pauvre pèlerin,” mm. 175–8 (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 255.

³⁴ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Le prophète*, (Paris: Brandus and Company, 1849), 255; F-Po, A-566 (A,4) < Vol. 4 >, p. 78.

The decision to notate the cadenzas fully in the published score shows Meyerbeer, and possibly Viardot, discovered a cadenza that worked well and he wanted to preserve it in the score for future performances.³⁵ As “singers were obliged to choose ornaments suited to an aria’s text and dramatic context,” the complex cadenza Meyerbeer, Viardot, and Castellan created allowed future singers to avoid “generic formulas” in their own ornamentation.³⁶ Although Meyerbeer’s journal entry does not specify the cadenzas he and Viardot revised during their visit, their collaboration on the cadenzas, and duets demonstrate the respect he had for Viardot, and his willingness to accept her ideas.

Meyerbeer continued to implement Viardot’s suggestions throughout the rehearsal process, as his diary indicates:

March

Friday, 2. To Madame Viardot about a small change in orchestration she desires.³⁷

This entry vaguely references an orchestration change that Viardot apparently requested. Considering that she specifically asked for a change in orchestration, it is likely that this might have occurred during one of her arias or solo lines. Later entries from March shed light on rehearsals which took place between Viardot and the instrumentalists:

Wednesday, 14. Rehearsal with Madame Viardot in connection with the bass clarinet.

³⁵ According to Elliott, first edition scores, such as the one consulted above, are “reasonably reliable expressions of the composers’ wishes.” This supports the idea that at the time of publication, Meyerbeer settled on a cadenza he liked and wanted to save it. Elliott, 128. Elliott further supports this idea stating that during this time period, “singers and composers worked closely together on matters of ornamentation.” Elliott, 143–44.

³⁶ Elliott, 143.

³⁷ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 478. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

Thursday, 15. Rehearsed Madame Viardot's aria with her and the four harps. In the evening, tenth orchestra rehearsal.³⁸

The bass clarinet appears in the cavatina to her Act V aria, "O toi, qui m'abandonne," and there are four harps which play during the stretta of the same aria. Thus, it is possible that these were the changes in orchestration that Viardot requested, which she then wanted to rehearse after Meyerbeer finished them.

During the cavatina, the voice and bass clarinet enter together as the bass clarinet doubles the vocal line. The bass clarinet imitates the vocal line, as Meyerbeer indicated in his instructions, "imitez les inflexions de la Chanteuse."³⁹ In this section Meyerbeer created a duet between the voice and bass clarinet, perhaps because of their rich timbres which might have appealed to Viardot (Figures 3.10 and 3.11).

The image shows a musical score for two parts: 'Clarinette basse en si b' and 'Fidès.'. The vocal line is marked 'Solo.' and 'doux'. The bass clarinet part is marked 'con molto portamento.' and 'diminu.'. The lyrics are 'Ô toi, qui m'abandonne mon cœur. mon cœur est de sar - mé. est de sar mé'. The score is in 4/4 time and features a duet between the voice and bass clarinet.

Figure 3.10. *Le prophète*, Act V, "Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m'abandonnes," mm. 39–42 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 654.

³⁸ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 479. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

³⁹ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Le prophète*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 656.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Clarinette basse en Si^b, Fidès, Violoncelles, and Contre-Basses. The Clarinette basse part is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$. It features a melodic line with a slur and a fermata, with the instruction "imitiez les inflexions de la Chanteuse" above it. The Fidès part is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats, containing the lyrics: "né je t'ai donné mon cœur je t'ai donné mes vœux et". It includes the instruction "doux" above the first measure. The Violoncelles part is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats, showing a sustained chord with a fermata and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Contre-Basses part is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats, showing a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *p* and the instruction "arco." below it.

Figure 3.11. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 49–51 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 656.

Later in the aria Meyerbeer paired the voice with four harps, which take on a more accompanimental role than the bass clarinet. Initially the harps provide a chordal accompaniment as Fidès begins her cavatina with rapid sixteenth note figures (Figure 3.12). When the rhythm of Fidès’s line slows to quarter and half note rhythms, the harps play sixteenth note arpeggiations (Figure 3.13).

4 Harpes... *dimin.*

Fidès (*avec exaltation*)
comme un éclair précipité dans son âme, frappe mon fils ô vérité de ta

4 Harpes...

Fidès
flamme, frappe mon fils ô vérité de ta flamme, qu'il soit dompté comme l'airain par le

4 Harpes... *Une Harpe seule. les 4 Harpes unis.*

Fidès *Facilité*
douç. feu! ah! comme un éclair précipité dans son

4 Harpes...

Fidès
âme, frappe mon fils ô vérité de ta flamme, dans sa fierté le rebelle soit dompté ah!

Figure 3.12. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 101–17 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 665–8.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system is labeled '4 Harpes' and 'Fidès'. The harp part consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a melodic line of eighth notes. The vocal part (Fidès) is on a single staff with lyrics: 'je ra - mène mon en - fant mon en -'. The second system also shows '4 Harpes' and 'Fidès'. The harp part continues with a similar melodic line, but includes a section marked 'ff' (fortissimo) with a tremolo effect. The vocal part continues with lyrics: 'fant au Dieu sau - veur' and includes a long note with a tremolo effect.

Figure 3.13. *Le prophète*, Act V, “Ô prêtres de Baal... Ô toi qui m’abandonnes,” mm. 161–6 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 678–9.

The contrast of timbres and rhythmic intensity between the harp and voice balances the musical drama of the aria. Although the bass clarinet amplifies the melody of the voice, and the harps accompany the vocal line, Meyerbeer used both instruments to create meaningful duets with the voice, which is what both he and Viardot desired.

One of the most notable suggestions Viardot requested of Meyerbeer was in her Act V aria, which ultimately provided her with one of her most virtuosic vocal passages in the opera. In a note to Viardot the composer wrote:

You just told me that you find the passage “sainte phalange” too short and that you would like to repeat it. I think I have found the means, and at the same time that of getting rid of the turkey passage.⁴⁰ But I need the start of the aria I gave you the day before yesterday. I do not have a copy. Please send it to me by the porter.⁴¹

In the final version of the aria, the singer performs the “sainte phalange” section twice. The first version is a simpler rendering of the text, whereas the final iteration of the text is a virtuosic display of fioratura and vocal ability. The final repetition required Viardot to sing an A-flat3 to a high C6 within the span of a few measures, providing her with a transcendent finale to her grand aria. This final repetition of the text also allowed Viardot to highlight Fidès’s desire to save her son, and gave her the vocal means through which to build her character into an ecstatic state of euphoria. While this could be interpreted as a prima donna asking a composer for more time to show off, it actually offered Meyerbeer the opportunity to more fully develop Fidès’s character.

Another journal entry provides further evidence of Viardot’s influential nature over the opera, and reveals that her suggestions did not always refer to changes in her own part. An entry from January 1849 shows Meyerbeer’s willingness to make alterations at Viardot’s recommendation.

Saturday, 27. Made a change in the Act III “Prière” to avoid a resemblance that Viardot called my attention to.⁴²

⁴⁰ I am unsure of what Meyerbeer meant here by “passage du dindon.” Perhaps it is an idiomatic expression and reference to something that was problematic in the score, or something that Viardot and Meyerbeer joked sounded like a turkey.

⁴¹ Friang, 89. “Vous venez de me dire tout à l’heure que vous trouvez el passage ‘sainte phalange’ trop court et que vous le voudriez répété. Je crois avoir trouvé le moyen, et en même temps celui de vous débarrasser du passage du dindon. Mais il me faut le lancement de l’air que je vous avais porté avant-hier. Je n’en possède pas la copie. Veuillez me l’envoyer par le porteur.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

Though Viardot suggested an unknown modification, it is still important because Fidès does not appear in the entire third act. Nevertheless, Meyerbeer willingly took her suggestion in a scene, and even in an act, in which she was not involved and revised the score at her recommendation. In the age of composers being considered “solitary geniuses” this would have been a noteworthy occurrence if the request had been made by a male singer, but the fact that a female singer made a suggestion to one of opera’s greatest composers at the time speaks to the level of respect Meyerbeer had for Viardot.⁴³

The extent of Viardot’s musical collaboration with Meyerbeer reveals itself after an assessment of her directorial role in the London staging of *Le prophète*. Rehearsals for the London performance began promptly after the run in Paris, and Meyerbeer entrusted the musical preparation of the soloists to Viardot.⁴⁴ On June 21, 1849 he wrote to London publisher Louis Brandus, who purchased the publishing and performance rights of *Le prophète* in London, “try to get at least some of Beal’s time to allow Viardot to hold a few piano rehearsals, some orchestral rehearsals, and a few mise en scène rehearsals.”⁴⁵

⁴² Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 470–71. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

⁴³ The idea of the “solitary genius” is referenced in Melina Esse, “The Sexual Politics of Operatic Collaboration Gounod, ‘Ô ma lyre immortelle’ (Sapho), *Sapho*, Act III,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28, no. 2 (2016): 174. Esse borrows the term from Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁴⁴ Melanie Stier, “Pauline Viardot Garcia und die Oper *Le Prophète* von Giacomo Meyerbeer,” *Musikgeschichten—Vermittlungsformen*, Musik—Kultur—Gender, no. 9 (2010): 108.

Meyerbeer trusted Viardot to prepare the singers for the London premiere of his newest opera.

Viardot obliged, and immediately took charge of its preparation upon her arrival in London. She wrote to Mathieu Wielhorski on July 17, 1849:

Instead, I find a society in disarray, artists who did not want to work before being paid, nobody to pay them, finally a universal disorder, a general shipwreck. My arrival has given them a little heart, as they say, and the rehearsals of *Prophète* began last Tuesday, under my musical direction, of course. Since that day, we have been working as negroes, me especially.⁴⁶

Viardot took the responsibility of rehearsing seriously. Her colleagues recognized this, and it immediately earned her their respect. Baritone Julius Stockhausen wrote to his father:

But what I admire most is God's work, namely the musical instinct of this woman. For the first four rehearsals of *Le prophète* she sat at the piano and accompanied the large written orchestral score to emulate her comrades Roger, Castellan and Levasseur! Is that not extraordinary? Well, that's how I want to be! It is the noble of art! Every poor executioner can have a mechanism, but very few muses—I pay ten francs to spend an hour a week with Mme. Viardot on the piano in Mozart's and Mendelssohn's scores.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Stier, 108. "Suchen Sie wenigstens von Beal zu erlangen daß so viel Zeit bleibt daß Viardot ein paar Klavierproben ein paar Orchesterproben, und ein paar Mise en Scène Probe halten kann." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁴⁶ Friang, 93. "Au lieu de cela, je trouve une société en désarroi, des artistes qui n'ont pas voulu travailler avant d'être payés, personne pour les payer, enfin un désordre universel, un naufrage général. Mon arrivée leur a un peu remis le coeur au ventre, comme on dit, et les répétitions du *Prophète* ont commencé mardi dernier, sous ma direction musicale, bien entendu. Depuis ce jour nous travaillons comme des nègres, moi surtout." In this letter Viardot also describes Covent Garden as an opera house in disarray that only could be saved by a performance like *Le prophète*. Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁴⁷ Stier, 108–9. "Aber was ich am meisten bewundere, ist Gottes Werk, nämlich den musikalischen Instinkt dieser Frau. Nach den vier ersten Proben des "Propheten" saß sie am Klavier und begleitete die große geschriebene Orchesterpartitur, um es ihren Kameraden Roger, Castellan und Levasseur einzuüben! Ist das nicht merkwürdig? Nun, so will ich auch werden! Es ist das Edle der Kunst! Mechanismus kann jeder arme Henker, aber musikalische Auffassung—das besitzen sehr wenige.—Ich gäbe zehn Francs, um wochentlich eine Stunde

The admiration with which Stockhausen writes of Viardot, is astonishing, and shows that Viardot’s gender did not prevent her from earning the respect of her peers.⁴⁸

Beyond running the general rehearsals for the London performance, Meyerbeer also trusted Viardot to articulate changes in the score he desired. He wrote Viardot on July 11, 1849:

My dear Madame Viardot! I have the honor to send you herewith a change which will cut all the Trio of act 5 until the Stretta (O spectre épouvantable!). The Officer’s Recitative that I send you starts immediately after the Duo & [...] continues with the Trio at the moment

Berthe hears the word “Prophète” cried by the Officer [Note] &c&c.

Please be so kind as to

give this recitative to Monsieur Costa, and explain to him the cut, because I fear it may not be indicated with enough clarity on the attached score.— [...] I am waiting with great impatience my dear Madame Viardot for news of how the rehearsals are going for *Prophète*, how many rehearsals will you have ... I hope you will be allowed at least 10 days after your arrival to be able to rehearse with the singers at the piano and to have some orchestral rehearsals, finally it seems to me impossible to get onstage before the 20th, unless these gentlemen want to rush the effect of the *Prophète*, as they rushed *Robert* ... At the resume of the Cavatine of the 5th act do not forget to hand over the following measures which were cut in Paris ...⁴⁹



mit Mme. Viardot am Klavier in Mozarts und Mendelssohns Partituren zuzubringen.”
Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁴⁸ It should be noted that at this time that Stockhausen was a student of her brother, Manuel Garcia II, so he likely had a great respect for her family in general.

⁴⁹ Stier, 111. “Ma chère Madame Viardot! J’ai l’honneur de Vous envoyer ci-joint une changement qui permettra découper tout le Trio de 5^{ème} acte jusqu’à la Stretta (O spectre épouvantable!). Le Récitatif de l’Officier que je vous envoie commence immédiatement après le Duo & [...] l’enchaîne avec le Trio au moment ou Berthe entendant le mot “Prophète” dans la bouche de l’Officier s’écrie [Noten] &c&c. Veuillez avoir l’extrême bonté de donner ce Récitatif a Monsieur Costa, & de lui explique la coupure, parceque je crains ne l’avoir peut être pas indiqué avec assez de clarté sur la partition ci-jointe.— [...] J’attends avec une bien vive impatience ma chère Madame Viardot les nouvelles comment sont les répétitions du *Prophète*, combien des répétitions on Vous laissera ... J’espère qu’on vous laissera au moins 10 jours après votre arrivée pour pouvoir répéter avec les chanteurs au piano & faire

This letter, in addition to the previous entries discussed above, make evident the faith that Meyerbeer had in Viardot's musical abilities. He trusted her compositional recommendations, he trusted her ability to lead rehearsals on his behalf, and he trusted her to implement changes he desired without being there to oversee her implementation. This level of confidence and respect allowed Viardot to reach her full creative and artistic potential in her performance of *Le prophète*, which ultimately insured the opera's successful premiere.

Reception History

“She is conductor, stage-manager—in a word, the soul of the opera, which owes at least half its success to her.”⁵⁰ Ignaz Moscheles's assessment of Viardot as the heart and soul of *Le prophète* was a sentiment shared by critics, audience members, and Meyerbeer himself. After its premiere on April 16, 1849, *Le prophète* earned a reputation as one of opera's newest triumphs. Reynaldo Hahn later stated, “people of my father's generation would rather have doubted the solar system than the supremacy of *Le prophète* over all other operas.”⁵¹ However, this praise was not fully the result of Meyerbeer's composition, but also due to the adept performances of the singers onstage. As Prosper Pascal recalled from conversations he overheard at intermission:

quelques répétitions d'orchestre, enfin il me paraît impossible d'aller avant le 20 en scène, à moins que ces Messieurs ne veuillent pour précipiter l'effet du *Prophète*, comme ils sont déjà précipité celui de *Robert* ... à la reprise de la Cavatine du 5^{ème} acte ne pas oublier de remettre les mesures suivantes qui sont coupées à Paris ...” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁵⁰ Fitzlyon, 239.

⁵¹ Letellier, 197.

During the entr'acte, they passionately argued. Jules Janin declared that it was “a treatise of theology, without the faith.” Chopin was scandalized. Delacroix affirmed that it was “annihilation of art.” As for Berlioz, he judged that there were great weaknesses, some beautiful things, and others “frankly detestable.” But if the opinions differed on the music, it was unanimous that the interpreters were admirable on all counts.⁵²

Thus, composers recognized the ability of outstanding artists like Viardot to lead a new opera with mixed reviews to prosperity as soon as it premiered. Listeners and critics of the day felt that they could overlook an opera’s compositional faults if the performance moved them emotionally.

Contemporary critics partially credited the veneration of *Le prophète* as the result of Viardot’s brilliant performance, which elevated the opera and her own musical status to a new level. After the premiere, Berlioz wrote in the *Journal des Débats*:

The success of Roger and of Madame Viardot was immense. The latter, in the part of Fidès, displayed a dramatic talent which no one, in France, believed her to possess to such a high degree. All her poses, her gestures, her expressions, even her costume, are studied with profound art. As to the perfection of her singing, the extreme skill of her vocalization, her musical assurance—those are things known and appreciated by everyone, even in Paris. Madame Viardot is one of the greatest artists who comes to mind in the past and present history of music. To be convinced of this it is enough to hear her sing her first aria, “O mon fils, sois béni...”⁵³

Given Berlioz’s often harsh criticism, and his previous animosity toward Viardot, this is an exceptional recognition of her talents coming from one of the era’s most prodigious musical talents and critics.⁵⁴ Berlioz’s description aptly describes what many critics felt about

⁵² Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 621. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

⁵³ Fitzlyon, 245.

⁵⁴ In 1839, Berlioz wrote in the *Journal des Débats* that Viardot gave a performance that, “instead of a creation worthy of the poetry of antiquity, she gave nothing but a modern singer with a voice of very wide compass.” See Fitzlyon, 55. Berlioz’s opinion of Viardot

Viardot's performance, and supported the eventual idea that the success of *Le prophète* was largely due to Viardot's brilliant portrayal of her role.

Henry Chorley, recognized Viardot's musical and dramatic contributions to *Le prophète*, and strongly believed that without Viardot the success of the opera might have been different. In his memoir he wrote, "when the story of Meyerbeer is finally written, it may prove that he was as much indebted to Madame Viardot in suggestion of *Le prophète*, as he was to Nourrit in *Les Huguenots*."⁵⁵ This particular quotation suggests that Chorley, and perhaps others, were aware of Viardot's musical contributions to *Le prophète*, and that her influence on the work earned her respect. Chorley goes on to praise Viardot's dramatic performance noting:

It is not too much to say, that this combination to its utmost force and fineness was wrought out by Madame Viardot, but (the character being an exceptional one) to the disadvantage of every successor.—There *can* be no reading of Fidès save hers; and thus, the opera, compared with *Les Huguenots*, has languished when others have attempted her part—either by copying, as did Mdlle. Wagner and Madame Stoltz—or by attempting, as did Madame Alboni, to carry it through musically, leaving all the dramatic passion and power wisely untouched.⁵⁶

As observed by Chorley, Viardot executed the role of Fidès so masterfully that all other performers after her paled in comparison, which diminished the effectiveness of the entire

changed after *Le prophète* and led to their collaboration on *Orphée*, to be discussed in Chapter Five.

⁵⁵ Chorley, 55. This sentiment of Meyerbeer owing Viardot a "great debt" for her suggestions is further validated in a memoir by Viardot's student, Anna Schoen-René, *America's Musical Inheritance* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), 167.

⁵⁶ Chorley, 94–5.

opera. He recognized that the music in Meyerbeer's work is still masterful, but without masterful performers there existed a "chilled admiration" for the music.⁵⁷

Charles Gounod voiced similar opinions of Viardot's formative performance of the role of Fidès.

As I told you, I did not have the appetite to go see *Le prophète*. After all I know very well who Mlle Alboni is: I hear her from here in *Le prophète*; it is enough for my desire. I do not have the slightest heart for the spectacle; and to tell you the truth, now *Le prophète* without *you* would pass over my ears.⁵⁸

Nearly a year after Viardot's premiere performance, Gounod had no interest in hearing another singer perform the role. For him, as for so many other listeners, Viardot established a standard for the role that could not be matched.⁵⁹ Another year passed and he still found Marietta Alboni's version of Fidès displeasing, stating that in her final performance of the role she was "very fatigued."⁶⁰ Even Meyerbeer's assessment of Alboni's performance lacked enthusiasm. "As an actress, Alboni does not even begin to compare with Viardot. As a result of her natural apathy, she lacks the necessary fire in requiring motherly tenderness or melancholic grief, she sang beautifully."⁶¹ Thus, even though Meyerbeer respected Alboni as

⁵⁷ Chorley, 95.

⁵⁸ Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, ed. Melanie Von Goldbeck, (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2015), 139. March 18, 1850. "Ainsi que je vous l'avais dit, je n'ai pas eu l'appétit d'aller voir *Le prophète*. Après tout je sais très bien ce qu'est Mlle Alboni: je l'entends d'ici dans *Le prophète*; c'est très suffisant pour mon envie. Je n'ai pas le moindre cœur au spectacle; et puis pour dire le vrai, maintenant *Le prophète* sans *vous* me viendrait jusque par-dessus les oreilles." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁵⁹ These other listeners include Henry Chorley, Hector Berlioz, and Ignaz Moscheles.

⁶⁰ Von Goldbeck, 318.

⁶¹ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Life in Letters*, trans. Mark Violette, (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1989), 130.

a musician, he clearly maintained a preference for Viardot. The precedent that Viardot set for the role of Fidès became a measure for how listeners reacted to subsequent performances, and their overall interest in attending a performance of *Le prophète*.⁶²

Critics, composers, and colleagues endlessly praised Viardot's riveting performance, but the most important praise, and further evidence for her profound effect on the opera, came from Meyerbeer himself. Writing to his mother the night of the premiere, he enthusiastically recounts the opera's reception:

God heard your prayers, dearest Nonne, because, as far as one can tell by the first performance, *Le prophète* (cross your fingers and knock on wood) is a brilliant success ... The reception was *very enthusiastic* ... The following pieces made the greatest impression: in the first act ... a two-part romance sung with utmost perfection by Mademoiselle Castellan and Madame Viardot. In the second act ... a simple adagio sung by Viardot with such exquisite perfection and tragic feeling the audience demanded two encores ... The second scene of the fourth act ... is the high point of the opera, both musically and dramatically. You can imagine how anxious I was to see how it would be received. By the grace of God, the response exceeded my expectation; the audience cried during this scene as they would have done during a tragedy. I am greatly indebted to Viardot for the success of this scene for she reached unprecedented tragic heights both as a singer and as an actress ... Miss Viardot's big aria in the act made such a stunning impression that she was greeted with four rounds of applause the likes of which I have experienced only in Vienna. The response was so overwhelming that the performers had to pause before beginning the duet.⁶³

Meyerbeer's retelling of the opera's reception reveals his own reactions to the performances as well. He often referenced his admiration for Viardot's performance, and he even

⁶² The idea that *Le prophète*'s later lack of success related to unmet expectations in the role of Fidès is discussed in Fitzlyon, 245. This author would argue that the next great interpreter of the role came over a century later through Marilyn Horne, who coincidentally holds a deep respect for Viardot, as well as her manuscript of *Orphée*.

⁶³ Meyerbeer, 124–5.

acknowledged his indebtedness to her for her dramatic interpretation.⁶⁴ He continued to reflect on the performance: “The duet between Viardot and Roger created an exceptionally intense tragic effect. After this, the musical effect wanes somewhat. It was only the magnificent fire scene at the end of the opera which came to my rescue and kept the audience’s enthusiasm until the very end.”⁶⁵ Here, Meyerbeer admitted that the music lacks effectiveness towards the end of the opera, but he recognized that Viardot and Gustave Roger sustained the dramatic momentum leading into the final tragic scene.

In his private writings to Viardot, Meyerbeer continued to exemplify the same respect he held for her that he referenced in letters to his mother. In a note to Viardot he wrote, “I stopped for a moment to think that I was the author of the work; you transformed me into a listener palpitating and moved, so passionate and so true.”⁶⁶ Through listening to Viardot in rehearsal and performance, and knowing the collaborative effort this opera required, Meyerbeer easily found himself entranced by Viardot’s performance, ultimately forgetting his role as creator. In a letter from the period he even addressed Viardot as, “my dear and illustrious Fidès!”⁶⁷ These small details contribute to the broader sense of who Meyerbeer considered Viardot as a person, musician, and artist, and demonstrate the profound respect he gained for her during their collaboration.

⁶⁴ In his diary from the same period Meyerbeer states, “among the performers, Madame Viardot deserves the palm, and I have her to thank in large measure for my success.” See Letellier, 197.

⁶⁵ Meyerbeer, 125–6.

⁶⁶ Friang, 91. “J’ai cessé un instant de penser que j’étais l’auteur de l’ouvrage; vous m’aviez transformé en auditeur palpitant et ému, si passionné et si vrai.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁶⁷ US-CAh, Add. MS Mus 232, (10). “Ma chère et illustre Fidès!”

Beyond reviews, recollections, and letters, the financial records of *Le prophète* provide further context for the success of the opera, and Viardot's contribution to that success. According to Meyerbeer's diary, the first ten performances earned between 9,000 and 10,000 francs.⁶⁸ After the premiere he stated:

The price which I have received for the score is the highest yet paid: Brandus has given 19,000 fr. for the rights of publication in France, Delafield & Beale 17,000 fr. for the rights in England and for the exclusive right of production there, Breitkopf & Härtel 8,000 fr. for the publication rights in Germany—44,000 fr. in all.⁶⁹

These figures illustrate that praise for the opera spread quickly, encouraging high attendance, and sparking the interest of publishers to offer high prices for rights to the score. Viardot contributed to interest in *Le prophète*, which she generated through her moving performance. Her final performance was the second highest grossing night at the Théâtre de la Nation during its first three seasons, earning 10,575.46 francs for her April 1, 1850 performance.⁷⁰ The first three months of the opera's performance at the Théâtre de la Nation also brought in record revenue levels, totaling 183,888.95 francs for twenty-five performances from April 16–July 8, 1849.⁷¹ These records reveal not only the overall success of *Le prophète* in its first year of performance, but also how Viardot contributed to that success through initiating conversations about the opera because of her performance.

Although the reception history of *Le prophète* is complex and varied depending on the critic, they did agree on Viardot's triumphant performance as Fidès. Her dramatic and

⁶⁸ Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, 4: 488. Translation by Alan Armstrong.

⁶⁹ Letellier, 198.

⁷⁰ Armstrong, 393.

⁷¹ Armstrong, 393.

vocal performance brought Meyerbeer's vision to life, in a way that he himself never imagined. Without Viardot in the leading role, it is possible the opera might not have reached the same level of renown, and Meyerbeer might not have continued to enjoy the level of celebrity he achieved from previous operas, *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots*. Viardot's performance encouraged large audiences to attend the opera, which further contributed to Meyerbeer's reputation as a prodigious composer.

Conclusion

The collaborative relationship established by Giacomo Meyerbeer and Pauline Viardot profoundly impacted the success of his third grand opera. Although engaging Viardot for the role of Fidès resulted in many levels of contract negotiations and hang-ups in the thirteen year process of getting the opera to the stage, it ultimately proved worth the wait. Through a series of libretto alterations Meyerbeer made the mother the leading role in an opera, downplaying the romantic subplot. This choice provided Viardot with the opportunity to display the full range of her vocal and dramatic talents, which were fully realized through his consideration and implementation of her musical recommendations. As recognized by critics and Meyerbeer himself, the success of *Le prophète* might not have been possible without Pauline Viardot. However, Viardot also recognized that without *Le prophète* she would never have reached her own artistic goals. In a letter to George Sand from December 6, 1848 she shared:

I am already working on *Prophète* that the Grand Maestro makes known to me bite by bite. All these bites will eventually form a big dish, and a good one. It is very simple, very noble, very dramatic, and therefore very beautiful. I am very happy to have such an interesting perspective for my winter. I need work, a lot of work, that's

what saved me so far, it will be, I hope, my safeguard for as long as I have a voice, eyes and arms.⁷²

Thus, as much as Meyerbeer benefited from Viardot's incomparable performance, she too benefited greatly from her involvement in his opera, and their mutually beneficial collaborative relationship resulted in a spectacular production remembered for decades.

⁷² Friang, 89. "Je suis déjà en train de travailler au *Prophète* que le Grand Maestro me fait connaître bouchée par bouchée. Toutes ces bouchées finiront par former un grand plat, et un bon. C'est très simple, très noble, très dramatique, et par conséquent très beau. Je suis très heureuse d'avoir une perspective aussi intéressante pour mon hiver. Il me faut du travail, beaucoup de travail, c'est ce qui m'a sauvée jusqu'à présent, ce sera, je l'espère, ma sauvegarde pendant aussi longtemps que j'aurai une voix, des yeux et des bras." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

CHAPTER 4

CHARLES GOUNOD AND *SAPHO*: COLLABORATION AND FRIENDSHIP

In the mid-nineteenth century, France finally found a native son in Charles Gounod (1818–93). From Lully, to Gluck, to Rossini and Meyerbeer, France was home to a number of composers who wrote successful operas in the French language and style, but none of them had the honor of being native. Pauline Viardot first met Charles Gounod in 1840, while honeymooning in Rome with her husband Louis. Gounod recently received the Prix de Rome, and the couple visited the Villa Medici to see Louis Viardot's friend, the painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. While at the Villa, Ingres asked Viardot to sing an aria from *Der Freischütz*, and Gounod accompanied her at the piano.¹ This interaction proved rather insignificant, in contrast to their reintroduction in 1849, when Belgian violinist François Seghers reintroduced Gounod to Pauline Viardot, who immediately heard his potential and encouraged him to write an opera.² With her help Gounod's first opera, *Sapho*, premiered in 1851. This work, and the relationships he built with composers, impresarios, and critics because of Viardot, set him on the course to achieve great success as a native French opera composer.

This chapter first explores Viardot and Gounod's personal and professional relationship. Unlike Meyerbeer, Viardot and Gounod became very close friends as well as collaborative partners. Next, an analysis of *Sapho*, particularly the final scene will reveal how

¹ April Fitzlyon, *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* (London: John Calder Publishers, 1964), 89.

² James Harding, *Gounod* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1973), 60.

Gounod altered this scene to highlight Viardot's musical and dramatic skills. Despite Viardot's involvement in the opera, *Sapho* remained unsuccessful at the box office, and failed to draw in the large crowds of *Le prophète*. However, even though *Sapho* did not achieve great financial success, critics like Hector Berlioz and Henry Chorley recognized Gounod's talents, as did other artists with whom Gounod later collaborated. The final section of this chapter assesses Gounod's lasting legacy as France's foremost operatic composer after Meyerbeer—given the eleven operas he premiered at the Opéra and Théâtre-Lyrique—by looking at his career after *Sapho*. Ultimately, the examples discussed in this chapter show that Gounod's friendship and professional work with Viardot impacted the trajectory of his career after their collaboration on *Sapho*.

Developing a Friendship

By 1849, Gounod and his musical advocates believed he needed to expand his musical output to include genres outside of church music, particularly opera.³ That same year, his friend François Seghers arranged a meeting between Gounod and the Paris Opéra's newest star, Pauline Viardot. As Viardot continued to receive praise for her starring role in *Le prophète*, Seghers knew that Viardot could be the perfect connection for a budding young opera composer like Gounod. The Parisian public widely recognized her talents, but more

³ Harding, 58. Prior to this point Gounod had been writing primarily for the Catholic Church because of his devout faith. In his life he wrote twenty-one masses, as well as numerous cantatas, motets, and oratorios. For more information on Gounod's church music see Dirk Johnson, "A Conductor's Guide to the Masses of Charles Gounod" (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2009); H.T. Henry, "Gounod and Church Music," *The American Catholic Quarterly Review* 19, no. 74 (April 1894): 320–48; Vaughn Roste, "An Unknown Choral Gem: Charles Gounod's Seven Last Words of Christ," *The Choral Journal* 56, no. 3 (Oct. 2015): 10–33.

importantly her influence over the Opéra's artistic director, Nestor Roqueplan, meant that she guided programming and operational decisions.⁴ Although intended to be a thirty minute meeting, the pair instantly connected, and talked for over two hours.⁵ This immediate kinship established a relationship that lasted well beyond the production of a single opera.

Following their initial meeting, Viardot arranged for Gounod to meet with librettist Émile Augier to discuss writing a new opera together. After Gounod and Augier committed to their collaboration, the trio took their idea to Roqueplan, who agreed to produce the opera if they found, “a subject uniting on three conditions—first, to be short; second to be serious; and third, to have a female role as the principal figure.”⁶ Roqueplan, Gounod, and Augier decided on Sappho, the ancient Greek lyric poet who lived circa 600 BC, as the subject of the opera; *Sappho* premiered the following year with Viardot in the title role. With production plans underway, Viardot took pride in knowing she mentored the career of this young composer. After their first meeting, she excitedly wrote to her friends George Sand and Mathieu Wielhorski of the “genius” she just met. In a letter to Sand from February 16, 1850 she wrote:

I have been very happy for a long time. We have made the acquaintance of a young composer who will be a great man once his music becomes known. He had the *Prix de Rome* 10 years ago, and since then he has worked alone in his study, without seeming to realize that every phrase issuing from his pen is a stroke of genius. In truth, it is a comfort to the art to have before one a great musical future to admire, without always having to give oneself a stiff neck by looking back to the past. I should gladly give something to have you hear the divine music of this man. It would do your heart good. We hammer away at it from morning till night, and we dream of

⁴ Harding, 61.

⁵ Harding, 61.

⁶ Charles Gounod, *Memoirs of an Artist: An Autobiography*, trans. Annette E. Crocker (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company, 1896), 170.

it from night until morning. He will have an opera [performed] next winter, if I am on hand, as is probable. Besides his genius, he is a very distinguished man, a noble nature, lofty and simple. I am certain that he would please you very much.⁷

She continued to praise Gounod in a letter to Wielhorski on March 4:

I am going to tell you in my next letter about a man of genius, whom we have met. A great composer, totally unknown at the moment, but who is called to a great future. I will sing an opera by him next winter. The musicians can rejoice and prepare for great and noble pleasures.⁸

These letters indicate the immediate admiration that Gounod garnered from Viardot as a musician and person, and her excitement about his new opera's premiere. Viardot's letter to Sand also specifically points to collaborations which already took place between the two as they "hammer[ed] away at it from morning till night."⁹

After creating a rapport in their first meeting, a deeper friendship followed—leading to a respectful collaboration. As initial anticipation over their collaboration built, Gounod's family faced unforeseen tragedy when his brother, Urbain, died on April 6, 1850.¹⁰

Consumed by the loss of his brother, settling his estate, and his mother's mental state (she "seemed almost to lose her reason"), Gounod found himself "incapable of devoting [himself]

⁷ Thérèse Marix-Spire and Erminie Huntress, "Gounod and His First Interpreter, Pauline Viardot--Part I," *Musical Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (April 1945): 195–6.

⁸ Michèle Friang, *Pauline Viardot au miroir de sa correspondance* (Paris, France: Hermann, 2008), 99. "Je vous parlerai dans ma prochaine lettre d'un homme de genie, dont nous avons fait la connaissance. Un grand compositeur, totalement inconnu pour le moment, mais qui est appelé à un immense avenir. Je chanterai un opéra de lui l'hiver prochain. Les musiciens peuvent se réjouir et se préparer à de grandes et noble jouissances." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁹ Gounod also refers to this "hammer[ing] away" in his memoir, where he references he "passed several hours with her at the piano," thus demonstrating they were sharing musical thoughts from their first meeting. Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 168.

¹⁰ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 171.

to the work for which [he] already had so little time.”¹¹ When Viardot heard of his loss, she quickly instructed him to take his mother to her family estate, Courtavenel, so the two could grieve.¹² For the first few weeks of their stay at Courtavenel, Viardot toured Germany. However, Gounod quickly found himself able to work as he later recalled: “Immediately upon my arrival here I set to work, and a strange circumstance, instead of being occupied with the sad and mournful accents of the recent experiences, my head was full of bright scenes and happy, melodious thoughts.”¹³ Thus, the distraction of being able to focus on *Sapho* allowed him to heal from the loss of his brother. His spirits were so raised that he drew a caricature of Giacomo Meyerbeer, which he sent in a May 22, 1850 letter to Viardot (Figure 4.1). The lightheartedness he felt during this time, because of Viardot’s invitation to her country estate, points toward a collegial bond that only became deeper upon her return to Courtavenel.

¹¹ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 172.

¹² Friang, 100–1. Leading up to his brother’s passing, Gounod wrote to Viardot frequently detailing his brother’s battle with scarlet fever. On April 9, 1850 he informed Viardot of his brother’s passing, and shortly thereafter she invited him to Courtavenel. For letters from this period see Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, ed. Melanie Von Goldbeck (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2015), 48–58.

¹³ Charles Gounod, “Gounod on his First Opera,” *Musical Standard* 14, no. 343 (Jul 28, 1900): 60.

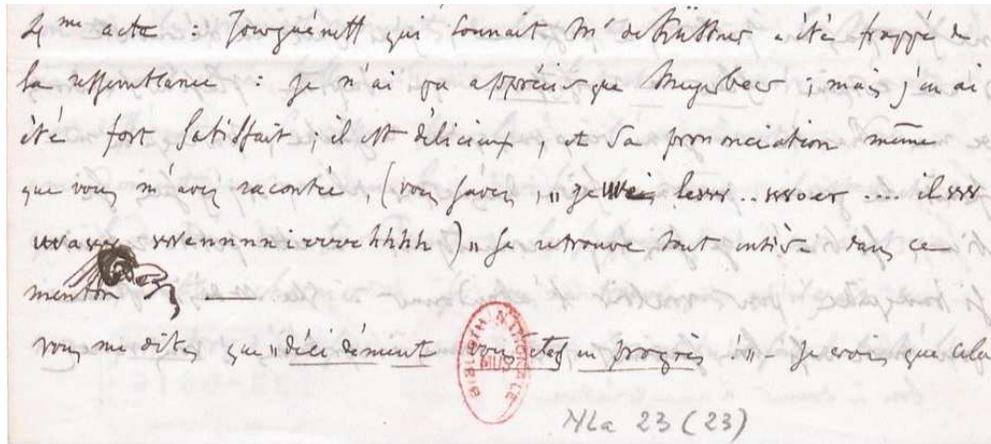


Figure 4.1. Letter from Charles Gounod to Pauline Viardot, May 22, 1850.¹⁴

By the time Viardot returned to Courtavenel in September, Gounod was nearing completion on *Sapho*.¹⁵ Although he sought her opinion upon its completion, he also shared other works with her during this time. As Viardot’s daughter Louise recalled, when they were at Courtavenel, Gounod composed four-voice canons which they sight-sang, and sometimes he played or sang other compositions for them.¹⁶ These new compositions also included pieces which publishers refused to print. “She had an organ in her salon, and there he would sit and accompany his own singing of the songs at which Parisian publishers would not look.”¹⁷ Even beyond Courtavenel, much later in their friendship, Gounod sent Viardot

¹⁴ Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot, 1850*, manuscrit autographe, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53050146g/f93.item>.

¹⁵ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 174.

¹⁶ Louise Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, trans. E.S. Buchheim (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 70.

works to review. In 1875 he wrote to her, “I send to you my *Biondina*: I think that you will still find some engraving errors.”¹⁸ These anecdotes demonstrate Gounod trusted Viardot to hear his new music, and believed she could provide valuable musical input, as well as provide potential connections to have his music heard among more audiences.

Similarly, Viardot also submitted her compositions to Gounod for feedback; on December 30, 1880, he wrote to her:

If I was not very suffering from a chill (which I picked up I don’t know where or how) I would have come to bring you, along with my New Year wishes, my thanks and compliments for the songs that you gave me the pleasure of sending me: unable to move myself to the piano, I had them sung and played yesterday by my daughter, and I took all the interest you can sense; it is always you and your feeling of accent and harmony.¹⁹

His sincere compliments reflect his respect for her as a composer, and his understanding of her strengths as a composer. She continued to send him compositions for review, which he appreciated: “I am coming from Antwerp tonight, and I am leaving tomorrow morning for Rouen—thank you for your *Hermione*, and send at your discretion the orchestral version when it is ready.”²⁰ His praise for her songs continued to the year of his death in 1893; after

¹⁷ Joseph Bennett, “Gounod: The Man and the Master,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 34, no. 610 (Dec. 1, 1893): 714.

¹⁸ F-Pnm, NAF 16272, ff. 219–20.

¹⁹ F-Pnm, NAF 16272, f. 230. Von Goldbeck believes the songs to which Gounod might have been referring were the collection published in 1880: *Six Mélodies et Une Havaniase variée à deux voix*. See Gounod, *Lettres...*, 398. “Si je n’étais tres souffrant d’un refroidissement (que j’ai pris je ne sais où ni comment) je serais allé vous porter, en même temps que mes voeux de nouvel an, mes remerciements et me compliments pour les mélodies que vous m’avez fait le plaisir de m’envoyer: incapable de me mettre au piano, je me les suis fait chanter et jouer hier par ma fille, et j’y ai pris tou l’intérêt que vous devinez; c’est bien toujours vous et votre sentiment de l’accent et de l’harmonie.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

she sent him some of her songs he wrote back, “thank you for your songs; they are delicious; there is one that is exquisite; it is *Premier Trouble*.”²¹ Their continued reliance on one another for musical opinions and judgments demonstrates that Viardot and Gounod’s profound respect for one another as artists did not injure their relationship as friends.

Yours, Mine, and Ours: *Sapho* Collaboration

After Gounod, Viardot, Augier, and Roqueplan settled on the plans to produce *Sapho*, the composer set to work on completing his first opera, and sought Viardot’s opinion on “our oeuvre.”²² Early in his stay at Courtavenel he wrote to Viardot, “Help me then! That I feel it from here, this collaboration of the heart which is as good as any other.”²³ Later in his stay he espoused a similar idea that the work belonged to them both: “I am going to work = you are going to work.”²⁴ At the end of August, as her return to Courtavenel neared, Gounod frantically wrote to her, “I am very annoyed: but if you knew how at present our work absorbs me! with each line of my letters I feel that you will come back, and that it is not

²⁰ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 407. According to Von Goldbeck there exists a version of *Hermione* for voice and piano, and voice and orchestra. Letter from December 13, 1887: “J’arrive d’Anvers ce soir, et je pars demain matin pour Rouen—merci de votre *Hermione*, et à votre discrétion quand votre orchestre sera prêt.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²¹ Gounod, *Lettres...* 414. “Merci pour vos melodies; c’est délicieux; il y en a une qui est exquise de ressemblance; c’est le *Premier Trouble*.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²² Gounod, *Lettres...*, 127. Letter from May 17, 1850: “Je vous quitte pour reprendre notre oeuvre: je veux dire, je vais de vous à nous.”

²³ Friang, 104. Letter from May 1850: “Aidez-moi donc! que je la sente d’ici cette collaboration de coeur qui en vaut bien une autre.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²⁴ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 230. Letter from July 29, 1850: “Je vais travailler = nous allons travailler.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

finished! and I would like to have as many things as possible presentable.”²⁵ These instances reveal that Gounod considered *Sapho* a musical collaboration between himself and Viardot, and that he valued her opinion so highly that he referred to it not as his, but ours.²⁶

Gounod asked Viardot for more specific help in a letter from August 16, 1850:

I think I am obsessed with the end of my trio: I feel the shell of the end, the frame to speak less thinly already formed in a fairly clear way: I keep my rhythms, my movements, several characters in the form; I only have a few verses here and there, five or six no more, to coordinate with the rest: I have a few notes near the phrase of the last ensemble (G minor) set with the accompaniment. I see that this stretta will have to be quick, short, right? What do you think?²⁷

The next day he wrote back to her:

Here is the trio finally finished. Dear, I do not know if it was in the regiment that I found it in the end, but I have always looked for that one: also from “Adieu donc, je vous rends votre foi décevante, et je pars seul pour mon exil” — the whole end came suddenly, so to speak, and the different ideas presented themselves last night (which is a while ago) with their dramatic sequence completed: sometimes this sudden appearance of a clear thing on a previously meditated and thoughtful subject works quite well for me: I am waiting for you to know that this is the case here.²⁸

²⁵ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 263. Letter from August 21, 1850: “J’en suis tout vexé: mais si vous saviez comme à présent notre travail m’absorbe! à chaque ligne de mes lettres je sens que vous allez revenir, et que lui n’est pas fini! et je voudrais avoir le plus de choses possible présentables.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²⁶ This language of “ours” is incredibly significant for the time period considering Viardot’s gender, and the idea of the composer as a “solitary genius.” However, as will be later discussed later in this chapter, Gounod may have privately referred to it as “ours,” but he refused to share Viardot’s contributions publicly.

²⁷ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 255–6. “Je crois que je suis à cheval sur la fin de mon trio: je sens la carcasse de cette fin, la charpente pour parler moins maigrement se former déjà d’une manière assez nette: je tiens mes rythmes, mes mouvements, plusieurs caractères dans la forme; il ne me rest que quelques vers par-ci par-là, cinq ou six pas plus, à agencer avec le reste: j’ai à quelques notes près la phrase du dernier ensemble (sol mineur) avec sa forme d’accompagnement. Je vois qu’il faudra que cette strette soit rapide, courte, n’est-ce pas? Qu’en pensez-vous?” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²⁸ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 256. “Voilà le trio enfin fini. Chère, je ne sais pas si c’est dans le régiment que je l’ai à la fin trouvé, mais je l’ai toujours ben cherché celui-là: aussi depuis

In his first letter Gounod elaborated on the framework for his idea, and sought her opinion before he moved on to the next section, knowing he would not actually receive it in time. Still, this reflects that while he worked on *Sapho* he constantly thought of Viardot and hoped she would commend his work. In the second letter, he revealed that he had finished what he started the day before, and even though he believed he created something worthwhile, he would not believe it until Viardot provided her approval. Their partnership reached its full potential when Viardot returned to Courtavenel in September. As Gounod recalled:

I submitted my work to her with great anxiety; she seemed perfectly satisfied, and in a few days had become so familiar with the orchestral score that she was able to accompany herself by heart upon the pianoforte. It was perhaps the most remarkable musical achievement I have ever witnessed: it gave a measure of the astonishing faculty of this prodigious musician.²⁹

That Gounod, who history reveres as one of the greatest French opera composers of his time, found himself anxious to submit work to Viardot, reflects how strong of an impact she had on musicians with whom she interacted. Gounod knew that when he worked with Viardot, he worked with a musician of the highest caliber, and could trust her opinions as she provided them. Thus, his constant search for admiration from Viardot reveals his respect for her as a collaborative partner and respect for her as a musician.

Many primary sources show that Gounod asked Viardot for her opinion while writing *Sapho*. However, there are fewer instances in which Viardot's advice to him or her thoughts

“Adieu donc, je vous rends votre foi décevante, et je pars seul pour mon exil” — toute la fin est arrivée d'un coup pour ainsi dire, et les différentes idées se sont présentées hier soir (qui est tout à l'heure) avec leur enchaînement dramatique tout fait: quelquefois cette apparition subite d'une chose claire sur un sujet antérieurement médité et réfléchi me réussit assez: je vous attends pour savoir a c'est ici le cas.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²⁹ Gounod, “Gounod on his First Opera,” 60.

on their collaboration have been recorded.³⁰ Viardot gave her own recollection of their collaboration to Ivan Turgenev in a letter from September 1850:

After having heard the entire opera immediately, we found that it was necessary to make other more important changes. Thus, Pythéas, instead of his song which shivers with fear almost painfully, will sing quite simply without any other form of triumphant trials to which Augier will adapt very humorous words. The two [duets] and the trio are perfect. But the whole last scene is going to be reworked. [...] That is it for the 2nd act. In the first, there is part of Alcée's ode to redo — everything that is not the refrain. [...] It is now necessary to trim the satiny and dreamy music of Sapho's ode. Besides that, I ask both of them, the poet and the musician, to make a backdrop of four verses, with a sharp and lively rhythm to separate the end of the ode from "Merci Vénus", which would be sung by four priests who would crown Sapho. This small ceremony perhaps beautiful to do, ends the section well, rests Sapho, rests especially the public — the trio rhythm is similar to the two songs. They accepted my idea, and Augier is in his room already busy doing his text.³¹

³⁰ In reviewing *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, there are hundreds of letters from Gounod to Viardot, but very few of Viardot's replies to his writings, which might more specifically detail the advice she provided to Gounod. In the Preface to this collection of letters Gérard Condé raises the possibility that Gounod may have destroyed the letters to eliminate any evidence of their collaboration, although Condé himself does not believe this is the case. He also questions if Viardot herself may have ordered the letters be destroyed because in this period letters of important people were being collected, and she did not want her private affairs made public: "... si, enfin, Gounod souligne à plaisir, dans ses *Memoires d'un artiste*, l'absence de Pauline pendant son travail qu'elle trouva "presque terminé," on ne peut pas en déduire que le compositeur, jaloux de son hégémonie, aurait détruit sciemment les traces d'une collaboration ... Pour revenir à l'absence des réponses de Pauline, il faut prendre le problème de plus haut: à une époque où l'on commence à publier (voire à vendre) des lettres, parfois sans l'assentiment des auteurs, certaines personnes — et plus particulièrement des femmes? — demandent la destruction des leurs." (Gounod, *Lettres...*, 16–17.)

³¹ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 25–6. "Après avoir fait entendre tout l'opéra de suite, nous avons trouvé qu'il fallait faire d'autres changements plus importants encore. Ainsi, Pythéas, au lieu de sa chanson qui grelotte de peur presque péniblement, chantera tout bonnement sans autre forme de procès trinquons auquel Augier va adapter des paroles très drôles. Les deux [duos] et le trio sont parfaits. Mais toute la dernière scène va être remaniée. [...] Voilà pour le 2^e acte. Au premier, il y a une partie de l'ode d'Alcée à refaire — tout ce qui n'est pas refrain. [...] Il faut maintenant un repoussoir à la musique satinée et rêveuse de l'ode de Sapho. Outre cela, je demande à tous deux, au poète et au musicien, de faire une pétrarque de quatre vers, d'un rythme tranchant et animé pour séparer la fin de l'ode du "Merci Vénus", et qui serait chantée par quatre prêtres qui couronneraient Sapho. Cette petite cérémonie peut être belle à faire, termine bien la séance, repose Sapho, repose surtout le public — trio

This letter shows the many instances in which Viardot asserted her opinion, and that both Gounod and Augier took it seriously. First, Viardot used the word “we” when discussing the decision to make changes, rather than “they” or “the men.” She mentioned that they discussed changes to Pythéas’s solo in act two and Alcée’s ode in act one, scenes in which her character is not even involved.³² This is significant because it shows that she provided input for the opera as a whole, not just the scenes which involved her.³³

Finally, and most musically significant, Viardot stated that she “ask[ed]” Gounod and Augier to make a change at the end of the first act, so that her aria, “Hero sur la tour solitaire...” would be connected to the preceding scene, and they listened to her. The central focus of Act I is a poetry competition between Sapho and Alcée, in which each character sings an aria to prove their musical and poetic skills. After Sapho completes her spirited aria, a brief chorus follows, in which the priests praise her with the text “Bacchus! Glory!” and Phaon proclaims “everyone admires you and I love you.” Then, the finale begins with “Fille d’Appollon,” the small ceremony Viardot requested in which Sapho is crowned victor. Following the crowning, Sapho sings her ode “Merci Vénus,” a hymn of gratitude to the goddess, which is followed by Phaon’s solo professing his love for Sapho, and praise from the people for Sapho’s poetic oration (Figure 4.2).

rythmé semblable dans les deux morceaux. Ils ont accepté mon idée, et Augier est dans sa chambre occupé déjà à faire ses bouts rimés.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

³² In the final version Pythéas does not have a solo ode or aria, but he does sing solo portions in his duet with Glycère, which I believe is where final changes were made.

³³ Viardot also contributed to scenes with which she was not involved in her work with Meyerbeer on *Le prophète*. See Chapter 3 for more details.

Prêtres: Fille d'Apollon
Viens sous la couronne
Que le Dieu te donne
Incliner ton front
Evoë! Gloire!

Priests: Daughter of Apollo
Come under the crown
That God gives you
Bow your head
Bacchus! Glory!

Sapho: Merci, Vénus, ô protectrice!
Tu prends pitié de mon supplice
Tu m'inspires l'accent vainqueur!
Et ta puissance me ramène
Toute ma joie avec son coeur!

Sapho: Thank you, Venus, oh protectress!
You take pity on my torment
You inspire me with winning accents!
And your power brings me back
All of my joy with his heart!

Phaon: Bonheur enivrant et supreme,
Oui, c'est toi, toi seule que j'aime
C'est toi, fille des cieux,
Dont la foule éperdue
Porte jusqu'à la nue
Le nom victorieux.

Phaon: Intoxicating and supreme happiness,
Yes, it is you, you alone who I love
It is you, daughter of heaven
Whose distraught crowd
Gateway to the naked
The name victorious.

Sapho: Dans ce peuple qui me salue,
Phaon, c'est toi seul que je vois!
Dans ces cris de la foule émue,
Phaon, je n'entends que ta voix.

Sapho: It is the people who greet me,
Phaon, it is you alone who I see!
In the cries of the emotional crowd,
Phaon, I only hear your voice.

Le peuple: Que tout un peuple te salue,
Et que, par nous, jusqu'à la nue,
Soit élevé ton nom vainqueur.
Honneur! honneur! honneur!

Le peuple: May a whole people salute you,
And that, through us, to the naked,
Let your victorious name be lifted up.
Honor! honor! honor!

Figure 4.2. *Sapho*, Act I, Scene 5, “Fille d'Apollon viens sous la couronne...” Libretto translation by Lydia Bechtel.

This series of events lessens the emotional impact of Act I's conclusion and allows the performers and audience to “rest” after the excitement that preceded this final scene. Without “Fille d'Apollon,” Sapho would have gone directly from singing her virtuosic aria into praising Venus and accepting the crown, but this twenty-seven measure chorus gives her a moment of repose. Viardot recognized that the audience also needed this dramatic respite, to prepare them for the moment when Sapho and Phaon declare their love for one another.

The slowing down of the dramatic intensity through the inclusion of “Fille d’Apollon” allowed the audience to fully focus on and enjoy the love story being played out on stage, rather than rushing into the love story after the competition. This also allowed Le Peuple (the onstage audience) to react to the romance and praise the victorious Sapho at the end of Act I’s final scene. As a result, this further intensified the feeling that Sapho was a character for whom everyone was rooting (onstage and offstage); thus, when she meets her fate at the end of the opera it is more devastating.

Musically, Viardot requested that the music of the priests’s chorus have, “a sharp and lively rhythm.”³⁴ Gounod used sequences of staccato eighth notes in the violins and violas to create this effect. This complemented the slower motion of quarter and half notes used in the vocal and harp lines. In a manuscript score he marked the tempo *allegro maestoso*, which reflects both a sharp (*maestoso*) and lively (*allegro*) rhythm.³⁵ These musical choices contributed to the overall feeling of slowing down dramatic pacing and bringing down the emotional excitement after “Hero sur la tour solitaire...” (Figure 4.3). The fact that Viardot made this request and Gounod and Augier listened to and incorporated what she suggested further demonstrates her collaborative abilities, and her understanding of what worked dramatically in an opera’s composition.

³⁴ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 25–6.

³⁵ F-Po. A-573 (A,1), p. 275.

76 14 All: Maestoso.

Handwritten musical score for orchestra and voice. The score is written on aged, yellowed paper with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left include Flute, Bassoon, Clarinet in C, Oboe, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Horn, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and Voice. The music is in common time (C) and marked 'All: Maestoso'. The voice part has lyrics: 'D'apout - low vint dans la Couronne'. There are various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'pp' and 'piz'. A blue 'e' is written in the Trombone staff. The number '275' is written in the top right corner, and a '9' is written in the middle right margin.

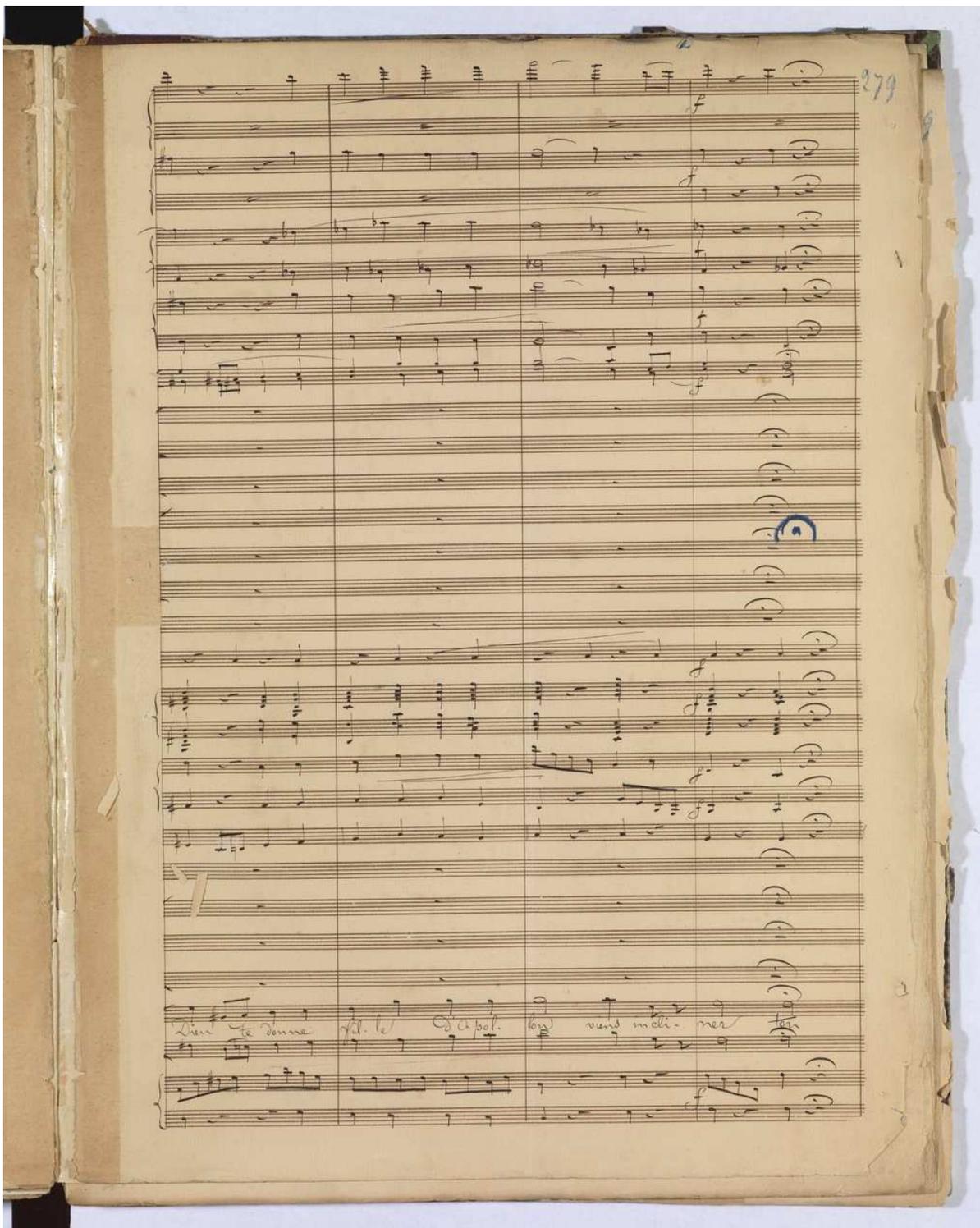
A page of handwritten musical notation on aged, yellowed paper. The score consists of approximately 18 staves. The top staves contain instrumental parts, likely for strings or woodwinds, with various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'pp' (pianissimo). The bottom staves contain a vocal line with lyrics written in French. The lyrics are: "que le Dieu te don-ne in-clin-ner ton front. viens sous". The paper shows signs of wear, including a tear on the left edge and some staining.

Handwritten musical score on aged, yellowed paper. The score consists of multiple staves of music, with lyrics written below the bottom staff. The lyrics are in French and appear to be a religious or liturgical text. The paper shows signs of wear, including a tear on the left side and some foxing. The number '277' is written in the top right corner. The lyrics are: "vans dont la Couronne que le Dieu le donne lui-même le font in-di-".

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

A page of handwritten musical notation on aged, yellowed paper. The score consists of approximately 18 staves. The top section features a vocal line with lyrics: "meu ton vient viens sous la couronne que". The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "pp". The paper shows signs of wear, including a small tear on the left edge and some staining.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 4.3. Manuscript score for *Sapho*, Act I, Scene 5, “Fille d’Apollon viens sous la couronne...,” mm. 1–23. F-Po. A-573 (A,1), pp. 275–9.

The *Sapho* revisions did not discourage Gounod; if anything, he relished the assistance he received throughout the process. Gounod wrote in his own letter to Turgenev in October 1850:

Until now we have only known it piece by piece, arms on one side, legs on the other; now she shows herself as a whole to the intelligent and sure observation of my entourage; and ... Woman! ... This is the moment for amputations, the bleeding, the butts, the ifs, the because of any kind. And the poor creature sometimes feels quite dazed by this very beneficial treatment, besides, to which she is not yet very experienced no more than her father; but patience; all this is for the greater good of the work and its fate ...³⁶

Gounod understood that all of the effort he put into writing *Sapho*, and all the time he and Viardot put into revisions, would be worth it to see the opera's successful premier. He also knew that his career as an operatic composer would probably be determined by the care he demonstrated in writing *Sapho*. Therefore, he encouraged Viardot to share her critiques during the compositional process, and frequently incorporated her revisions.

Despite Gounod's interest in Viardot's input in the compositional process, he still insisted the public not know of her assistance. In a letter to critic Henry Chorley from October 11, 1850 Gounod stated that he and Viardot have decided to rework some parts of *Sapho*:

When we have returned to Paris, I have to get to work on the different passages of *Sapho* that need to be redone. You know that I have to change the second act *Serment*. I also have to make a big change that we just decided with Mme Viardot: it is Sapho's ode in the first act. I think, we think the two of us, she and I, that the effect is not clear as a lyrical ode, as a piece of competition and of ceremonial

³⁶ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 26. "Jusqu'à présent nous ne la connaissons tous que pièce par pièce, bras d'un côté, jambes de l'autre; maintenant elle se montre dans son ensemble à l'observation intelligente et sûre de mon entourage; et ... Dame! ... Voilà le moment des amputations, des saignées, des mais, des si, des car de toute espèce. Et la pauvre créature se sent parfois toute ahurie de ce traitement fort salutaire d'ailleurs auquel elle n'est pas encore très aguerrie non plus que son père; mais patience; tout cela est pour le plus grand bien de l'oeuvre et de son sort..." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

representation. I will try to find something more brilliant. (Keep all of this in confidence for you alone.)³⁷

Gounod said that he and Viardot decided on a “big change” and described why they believe it is necessary. The beginning of “Héro sur la tour solitaire...” alternates between simple lyricism and recitative-like sections (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). However, given that the aria occurs as part of a poetic competition between Sapho and Alcée, Gounod and Viardot decided the song needed to have more brilliancy to add to the air of competition and ceremonial nature of the piece. Therefore, Gounod and Viardot settled on something with more *fioratura* to showcase Viardot’s talents and add to the competitive nature of the aria within the dramatic context of the scene (Figure 4.6). The final version of the aria in Viardot’s score features an elaborate cadenza and sixteenth-note coloratura figures, of which Viardot had proven her mastery in previous operatic roles (Figure 4.6).³⁸ This change provided Viardot with a chance to showcase her vocal abilities, and it helps to build the drama of the competition towards the climax of the first act.

³⁷ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 26–7. “Lorsque nous serons de retour à Paris, je vais me mettre au travail pour les différents passages de *Sapho* qui demandent à être refaits. Tu sais que je dois changer le *Serment* du 2^e acte. Je vais aussi faire un grand changement que nous venons de décider avec Mme Viardot: c’est l’ode de Sapho au 1^{er} acte. Je crois, nous croyons tous deux, elle et moi, que l’effet n’en est pas sûr comme ode lyrique, comme morceau de concours et de représentation d’apparat. Je vais tâcher de trouver quelque chose de plus brillant. (Garde toute cette confiance pour toi seul.)” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

³⁸ These images are from the vocal score for Pauline Viardot held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France-Musée de l’Opéra. The collection includes vocal and orchestral parts for all roles and instruments.

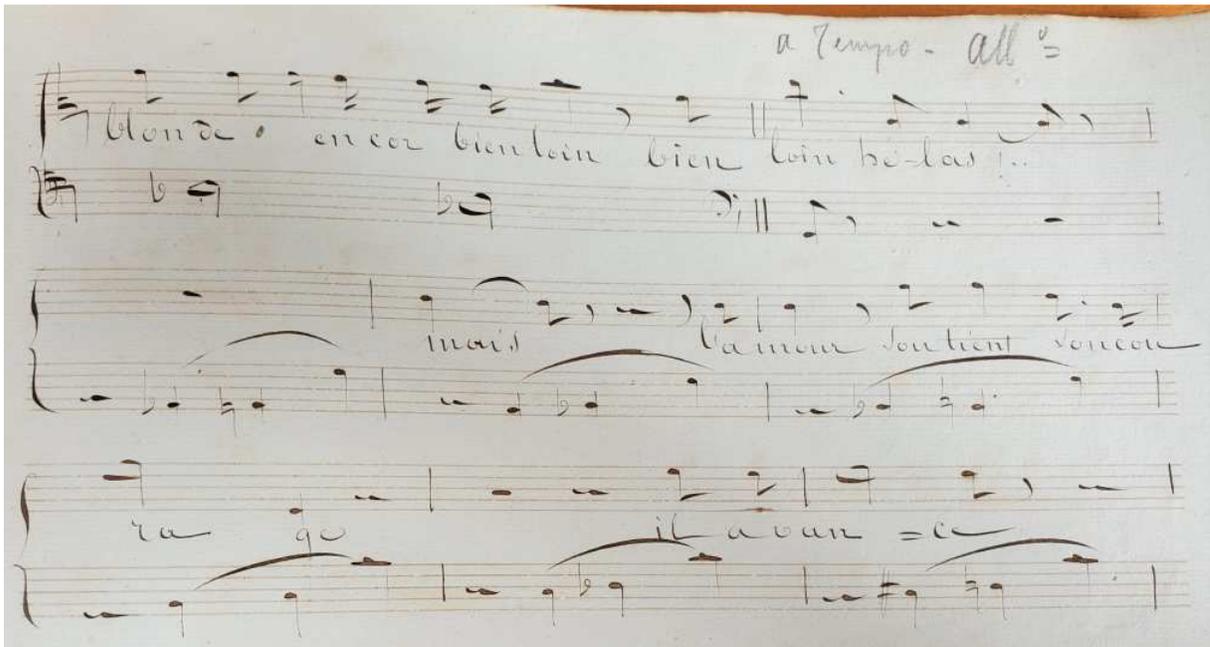
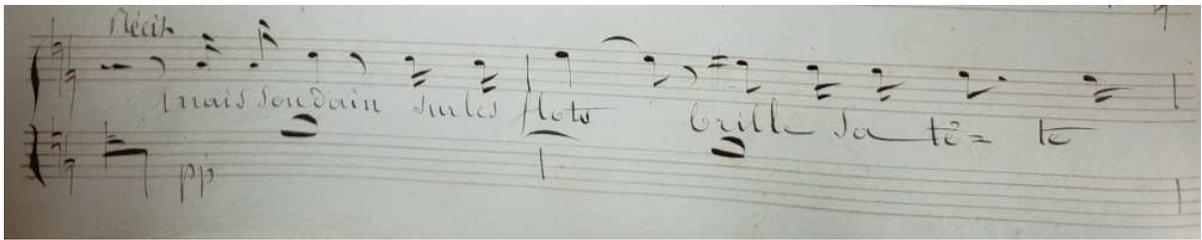


Figure 4.5. Manuscript score for *Sapho*, Act I, Scene 5, “Hero sur la tour solitaire...” mm. 42–51. F-Po, MAT-380.



A handwritten musical score for a vocal line. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is written in a fluid, cursive style. The lyrics are written in French and are placed below the notes. The instruction "all' pomposo" is written at the beginning of the first staff. The lyrics are: "viens dans les bras de ton aman-te", "Des flote vainqueur au da ci-ent", "viens par ta ger la flammes ardente", "qui nous e-le-ve qui nous e-le-ve", and "qui nous ele".

Figure 4.6. Manuscript score for *Sapho*, Act I, Scene 5, “Hero sur la tour solitaire...” mm. 70–81. F-Po, MAT-380.

Despite the positive impact that this musical and dramatic choice had on the opera, Gounod still did not want others to know about Viardot’s input. At the end of the letter he

asks Chorley to “keep all of this in confidence for you alone.” As Von Goldbeck points out, nineteenth-century composers wanted to maintain a sense of genius in their writing and did not want the public to know that their works were edited, and certainly not with the help of a female singer. Composers wanted to give the “illusion” that the ideas just came flowing out of their heads and onto the score.³⁹ Unfortunately, for Viardot this meant that her work with Gounod on *Sapho* went largely unrecognized until scholars began exploring their correspondence.

As Gounod and Viardot developed a deep friendship and respect for one another, it seems odd that he chose not to recognize her contributions.⁴⁰ However, when viewed through the nineteenth-century lens of romanticism, Gounod’s decision to put the compositional ownership solely on himself conforms to the period’s desire for works to stem from a singular genius. As Jack Stillinger argues in his book, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius*, the idea of the solitary genius became immensely popular in the nineteenth century as artists, literary figures, and musicians strove for a romantic ideal which was simply unattainable.⁴¹ As he claims, this unattainability is because there are always outside factors influencing a person’s work.⁴² He maintains that the reason authors retain the idea of

³⁹ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 27.

⁴⁰ This directly contrasts Berlioz’s blatant choice to exclude Viardot’s contributions, but it makes sense given his temperament. Berlioz’s opinions on collaboration will be discussed in Chapter 5.

⁴¹ Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 203. For a list of romantic era literary works that were collaborative see Stillinger, 204–13. These include works by Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, John Keats, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

⁴² Stillinger, 186.

the solitary genius, is because it is easier than crediting the multiple persons who might have contributed to a work.⁴³ Furthermore, it is easier for scholars to focus on and credit a singular author or composer of a work than to look at every collaborator and their influence.⁴⁴ In the end, as Stillinger points out, when a single author is credited the idea of intent is also much easier to argue, because one must consider only a single person, rather than multiple contributors.⁴⁵ In nineteenth-century music this is particularly relevant, as the composer's intent became a stronger point of focus in performance practice as the century progressed.

An understanding of Gounod's failure to credit Viardot for her assistance would not be complete without considering how her gender might have contributed to this exclusion. However, as much as one might want to believe Gounod based his omission solely on Viardot's gender, a look at broader scholarship does not support that hypothesis. In the eighteenth century, French society viewed the idea of genius as a "rational, potentially universal faculty," whereas, by the end of the century and in the height of romanticism it became driven by the "intense feeling[s]" of an "enthusiastic, inspired, imaginative artist."⁴⁶ As a result, writers, musicians, and artists from the romantic period did not credit their collaborators as they had previously. In music this is seen in the more openly collaborative nature of composers from the eighteenth century, when composers worked with operatic

⁴³ Stillinger, 186.

⁴⁴ Stillinger, 187.

⁴⁵ Stillinger, 188.

⁴⁶ Kineret S. Jaffe, "The Concept of Genius: Its Changing Role in Eighteenth-Century French Aesthetics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1980): 579, 595, 599; Stillinger, 204–13.

divas to prepare their new works.⁴⁷ In the nineteenth century this process did not disappear, but it went unrecognized. For example, Meyerbeer collaborated with both his male and female singers on his new works and he documented this in his personal journals, but they were not openly discussed or credited partnerships.⁴⁸ In nineteenth-century literature, collaboration existed in male-female, female-female, male-male, and female-male partnerships, and in all cases there existed a single credited author, and an uncredited author(s).⁴⁹ This proves that failing to credit collaborators in the nineteenth century, regardless of discipline, was not solely related to gender, but the pervasive societal ideal that a genius worked alone.

Final Scene: “Ô ma lyre immortelle”

Since 1919 (and as recently as 2016), scholars have agreed that Viardot and Gounod collaborated on Sapho’s final scene and aria. In 1919, Julien Tiersot published the first copies of the manuscript score of Gounod’s song, “La chanson du pêcheur,” confirming that this piece laid the foundation for “Ô ma lyre immortelle.”⁵⁰ According to Melina Esse, when Gounod initially completed the finale of the opera he overconfidently wrote to Viardot with

⁴⁷ Alison Clark DeSimone, “The Myth of the Diva: Female Opera Singers and Collaborative Performance in Early Eighteenth-Century London” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013).

⁴⁸ Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*, ed. Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker, 8 vols. (Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1959–2006).

⁴⁹ Bette London, *Writing Double* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁵⁰ Gounod, “Gounod’s Letters,” 46. This manuscript is held at the Mediathèque Hector Berlioz at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, F-Pmh, Syrtis ID 38838885. The images used in this thesis are those from the article translated by Julien Tiersot and Theodore Baker.

reports of its success in a performance for his mother and Berthe Viardot, her sister-in-law:⁵¹

“Huuuuuuuge success. They found the last number grippingly dramatic and were greatly moved by it. As was I. I can hardly wait to give you all of this: you for whom and a bit by whom [i.e., ‘with whose assistance’] I have made it.”⁵² Unfortunately for Gounod, however, not everyone agreed on its genius, or dramatic merit. As Esse observes:

Despite the composer’s enthusiasm, Louis found Sapho’s final song “had a major defect.” “The song of despair for Sapho must be magnificent and awesome – at least I believe that you will make it have that effect,” he wrote to Pauline. But Gounod, by setting the words “tourments affreux, avec moi finissez” (“horrid torments, have an end with me”) to music that expressed “mad and enraged” despair had evoked not the death of a noble figure but instead “a gambler who is about to commit suicide.” The solution Louis proposed was to make the final scene sound more like Gluck. “Gounod did not hesitate to accept my suggestion,” he reported, “and he is pleased with himself [for having done so].”⁵³

⁵¹ Esse, 171. Esse provides a brief analysis of the final scene of *Sapho*, which focuses on how Gounod made the choice to use “La chanson du pêcheur” and Viardot’s contributions in making that choice. She also focuses on the role of gender and the idea of domesticity being represented in Sapho’s character in the final scene. However, Esse does not fully address the dramatic reasons why Viardot might have desired the aria be in a lament style, or the specific musical features that transform the original song into a tragic aria. This section will address these ideas by interpreting the information provided by the primary sources Esse consulted and translated into English. While Esse cites many of the letters below in her article, I am using these sources to prove how the use of “La chanson du pêcheur” as the basis for “Ô ma lyre immortelle” allowed for the full dramatic development of Viardot’s character Sapho.

⁵² Esse, 171. Letter from June 30, 1850, taken from Gounod, *Lettres...*, 161. “Grrrr’andissime succès. Elles ont trouvé le dernier morceau d’un dramatique saisissant, et en étaient tout émues. Et moi aussi. Il me tarde de vous donner tout cela à vous pour qui et un peu par qui je le fais.” Translation by Melina Esse.

⁵³ Esse, 172. Original letter found in US-CAh, MS Mus 264, (64). “il avait un grand défaut;” “Le chant de désespoir de Sapho doit être d’un grand et terrible effet – je crois du moins que tu le feras ainsi;” “désespoir insensé et furieux;” “un joueur qui se suicide;” “Gounod n’a pas hésité à me croire, et s’en applaudit.” Translation by Melina Esse and Ralph Locke.

Louis expressed his reservations about Gounod's original composition which consisted of passionate musical passages from a character in a wild frenzy. As Gounod himself recounted, "from the last four lines ... to the end, the music becomes turbulent; the roaring of the sea combines with these last expressions of sorrow until the final big orchestral entry, which occurs at the moment when Sapho throws herself into the sea."⁵⁴ However, as Louis and Pauline Viardot observed, this overwrought dramatic scene did not suit the finale of the opera or the end of Sapho's character arc. Although Gounod did not settle on the Gluck-like version for the final score, it did set the composer on another course for revisions, which came to fruition upon Viardot's return to Courtavenel.

Much like her husband, Viardot found the original version of Sapho's final aria to be overly emotional and showy, and she did not feel this suited the dramatic line of her character's story. Sapho begins the opera as a naïve young woman, desperately in love with Phaon, who swears his devotion to her after she won the poetry competition at the end of Act I. In Act II she faced the betrayal of Glycère, who convinces her to tell Phaon he must leave in exile without her, which allows Glycère to leave with him instead. In Act III Phaon departs with Glycère, condemning Sapho, who faints in exhaustion before singing her final aria. Thus, this plot does not allow for an overzealous Sapho throwing herself into the river like a *bel canto* heroine in a mad scene; rather, it is a tragic story of a woman who lost everything and cannot bear to live alone. As such, Viardot asked for changes to "Ô ma lyre immortelle" because she viewed it as standing in direct opposition to Sapho's first-act aria. The first ode

⁵⁴ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 158. Letter from June 28, 1850: "À partir des quatre derniers vers ... la musique se désordonne jusqu'à la fin; le mugissement de la mer se joint à ces derniers accents de douleur jusqu'au dernier grand coup d'orchestre qui a lieu au moment où Sapho se jette dans la mer." Translation by Melina Esse.

ends with a virtuosic display of *fioratura* as Sapho revels in the delightful poem she recites (Figure 4.6). The final aria is a plaintive lament before she drowns herself in the sea.

For Sapho's final lament, Gounod repurposed one of his previous compositions, "La chanson du pêcheur," perhaps upon Viardot's advisement, or perhaps of his volition.⁵⁵ Regardless, it is clear from a letter Viardot wrote to Turgenev that Gounod made the choice to revise the aria again, after Viardot's return to Courtavenel. In her letter she wrote to Turgenev that "the whole last scene is going to be reworked."⁵⁶ Earlier in the same letter she stated "after having heard the entire opera immediately, we found that it was necessary to make other more important changes," and in the middle of the letter she confirmed that Augier and Gounod took her suggestion on a change to the end of Act I. Thus, her statement at the end of this letter confirms the use of "La chanson du pêcheur" could have been at her own suggestion:

... the *Lamento* will be inserted — this has been decided — but only as a purely lyrical number: as the last song of Sapho. Her lyre in her hand, she will bid farewell to Phaon, to the sun, to her lyre, and finally to her life, and she will dive headfirst and drown herself in the tears that she has made the spectator shed.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Esse believes due to their collaborative nature, this being Viardot's character's final scene, and Viardot's familiarity with "La chanson du pêcheur," it is likely Viardot made the suggestion to incorporate this music. Condé believes that since there is not specific evidence to prove Viardot made the suggestion, it is possible Gounod made the choice to use "La chanson du pêcheur" on his own. Esse, 172; Condé, 206.

⁵⁶ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 26. "... toute la dernière scene va être remaniée." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁵⁷ Friang, 108. Letter from September 10, 1850: "Le Lamento sera mis, c'est décidé, mais alors comme morceau purement lyrique, comme dernier chant de Sapho. La lyre en main, elle dira adieu à Phaon, au soleil, à sa lyre, à sa vie enfin, et s'en ira piquer sa tête et se noyer dans les larmes qu'elle aura fait verser au spectateur." Translation by Melina Esse.

Viardot's description of the *Lamento* stands in stark contrast to Gounod's initial depiction of the aria's "turbulent" music when "the roaring of the sea" leads to "the final big orchestral entry ... when Sapho throws herself into the sea."⁵⁸ Viardot, as a musician and actress, understood the journey her character would take throughout the course of this opera, and although Gounod's version would have been highly dramatic, a more mournful version of Sapho's death is far more moving to an audience.

Musically, "Ô ma lyre immortelle" in its final version creates the ideal dramatic counterpart to Sapho's first act aria. Gounod composed "La chanson du pêcheur" sometime during 1841–42, although he did not publish the work during this time.⁵⁹ The song contains flowing arpeggiated chords in sixteenth note figures, against a vocal melody that gently rocks above the piano accompaniment (Figure 4.7). The vocal line is simple in comparison to Sapho's first act aria; instead of rapid vocal leaps, the vocal line is sustained and largely stepwise. The tempi between the two arias are also markedly different. Whereas Gounod marked the up-tempo section of Sapho's first act aria *allegro pomposo*, he marked "Ô ma lyre immortelle" *andante*, which further highlights her altered dramatic state at opera's conclusion.⁶⁰ Additionally, Sapho's final aria is strophic, and therefore more musically

⁵⁸ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 158.

⁵⁹ Gounod, "Gounod's Letters," 46. The piece was finally published in 1895. Charles Gounod, "La chanson du pêcheur," (Paris: Choudens, 1895). Viardot also set her own version of the text used in "La chanson du pêcheur." For her manuscript of this score see Pauline Viardot, "Lamento," US-CAh, MS Mus 264 (101) f. 46–9; or for the published version see Pauline Viardot, "Lamento" (Paris: Enoch Frères and Costallat, 1886).

⁶⁰ *Allegro pomposo*: See Gounod, *Sapho*, F-Po, A-573 (A,1), p. 260, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525073304/f326.item>. *Andante*: See Gounod, *Sapho*, F-Po, A-573 (A,3), p. 92, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52507333g/f102.item>. The editors of the published score marked *allegro pomposo* at quarter note equals 104, and

simplistic; in this final aria Sapho does not need the same flashy music that she sang to win the poetry contest. Instead, she needs musical clarity so that the focus is on her text and emotional pain. When applied to Sapho's final scene, the lyricism and clarity of "La chanson du pêcheur" creates the perfect atmosphere for her acceptance of her fate, her feeling that all hope is lost, and that the only comfort she will find is in the waves of the ocean after they consume her.



andante at quarter note equals 60, although Gounod did not specify metronome markings in his manuscript score.

Sur moi la nuit im-
 ma belle a mi- - - est

mon - - - se s'entend com- - - me un lip-
 mor - - - te je pleure rai tou-

-ceul je chan - - te ma ro -
 -jours tout la tom - - belle em-

man - - ce que le ciel entend
 por - - te mon â - - met mes a -

Soul
mours

ah comme il t'a
dans le ciel sans mat-

bil - le et comme je t'ai mais Je n'ai même ja -
ten - dre elle s'en retour na l'ange qui l'emme -

mais
na

une femme au tant qu'elle
ne voulait pas me pend - dre qui mon sort est a -

ma - ah sans a - mour s'en al -



Figure 4.7. Manuscript score for “La chanson du pêcheur,” mm. 1–45. F-Pmhb, Syrtis ID 38838885.⁶¹

Viardot understood that her character needed a well-crafted lament for her final aria, which is why she advocated for its revisions, and its adaptation from “La chanson du pêcheur.” After Gounod settled on a slow buildup of dramatic effect, Augier altered the text to better suit the emotional needs of the opera’s heroine (Figures 4.8 and 4.9). First, Augier added a recitative to the beginning of the aria, so that Sapho could voice her confusion and remind herself of the misery that awaits her. In the verses of the aria, Augier borrowed sentiments from Théophile Gautier’s original text as they relate to Sapho’s despair.

⁶¹ Charles Gounod, trans. Julien Tiersot and Theodore Baker, “Gounod’s Letters,” *Musical Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (Jan., 1919): 46.

Ma belle amie est morte:
Je pleurerai toujours;
Sous la tombe elle emporte
Mon âme et mes amours.
Dans le ciel, sans m'attendre,
Elle s'en retourna;
L'ange qui l'emmena
Ne voulut pas me prendre.
Que mon sort est amer!
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!

My beautiful love is dead,
I shall weep always;
Into the tomb, she has taken
My soul and my love.
Without waiting for me,
She has returned to heaven.
The angel which took her there
Did not want to take me.
How bitter is my fate!
Ah! without love, to go to sea!

La blanche créature
Est couchée au cercueil.
Comme dans la nature
Tout me paraît en deuil!
La colombe oubliée
Pleure et songe à l'absent;
Mon âme pleure et sent
Qu'elle est dépareillée.
Que mon sort est amer!
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!

The white creature
Is lying in the coffin;
How all in Nature
Seems bereaved to me!
The forgotten dove
Weeps and dreams of the one who is absent;
My soul cries and feels
That it has been abandoned.
How bitter is my fate,
Ah! without love, to go to sea!

Sur moi la nuit immense
S'étend comme un linceul;
Je chante ma romance
Que le ciel entend seul.
Ah! comme elle était belle,
Et comme je l'aimais!
Je n'aimerai jamais
Une femme autant qu'elle.
Que mon sort est amer!
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!

Above me the immense night
Spreads itself like a shroud;
I sing my romanza
That heaven alone hears.
Ah! how beautiful she was,
And how I loved her!
I will never love
Another woman as much as I loved her;
How bitter is my fate!
ah! without love, to go to sea!

Figure 4.8. “Ma belle amie est morte” by Théophile Gautier, text for “La chanson du pêcheur” by Charles Gounod. Translation by Emily Ezust.⁶²

⁶² Théophile Gautier, “Ma belle amie est morte,” trans. Emily Ezust. Lieder.net, accessed March 1, 2020, https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=5949.

Sapho:

Où suis-je?
Ah! oui ...
Je me rappelle
Tout ce qui ma'attachait à la vie est brisé
Il ne me reste plus que la nuit éternelle
Pour reposer mon coeur de douleur épuisé

Ô ma lyre immortelle
Qui dans les tristes jour
A tous mes maux fidèle
Les consolais toujours
En vain ton doux murmure
Veut m'aider a souffrir
Non tu ne peux guérir
Ma dernière blessure
Ma blessure est au coeur
Seul le trépas peut finir ma douleur

Adieu flambeau du monde
Descends au sein des flots
Moi je descends sous l'onde
Dans l'Eternel repos
Le jour qui doit éclore
Phaon luira pour toi
Mais sans penser à moi
Tu reverras l'aurore
Ouvre toi gouffre amer
Je vais dormir pour toujours dans la mer

Sapho:

Where am I?
Ah! yes ...
I remember
Everything that attached me to life is broken
I only have left the eternal night
To rest my heart of exhausted pain

Oh my immortal lyre
Who in the sad day
To all my faithful evils
Always consoled them
In vain your sweet whisper
Wants to help me suffer
You cannot heal
My last wound
My wound is in the heart
Only death can end my pain

Goodbye light of the world
Descend into the wave
Me I descend under the waves
In the Eternal rest
The day that is to come
Shines for you Phaon
But without thinking of me
You will see the dawn again
Open you waves a bitter chasm
I am going to sleep forever in the sea

Figure 4.9. *Sapho*, Act III, Scene 5, “Où suis-je? ... Ô ma lyre immortelle” Libretto translation by Lydia Bechtel.

In the first strophe, Sapho remembers the joy her lyre once brought her, but recognizes that “in vain your sweet whisper wants to help me suffer.” This relates to how Gautier used the text “I sing my romanza that heaven alone hears,” in his poem, and reinforces the idea that Sapho is now alone in the world and nothing can help her. At the end of the first strophe Sapho sings “you cannot heal my last wound my wound is in the heart only death can end my pain,” which shows that she acknowledges that no one can help her, and that she has only

one path to take. Gautier wrote a similar sentiment in the second strophe of his poem: “My soul cries and feels that it has been abandoned. How bitter is my fate...” Augier borrowed this emotional idea to bolster Sapho’s resolve to take her own life. In the final strophe Sapho remembers Phaon “the day that is to come shines for you Phaon but without thinking of me you will see the dawn again,” and knows that he will experience happiness without her, whereas she will never know happiness without him. In strophe one of Gautier’s poem, the narrator expresses his sorrow at being left without his love “into the tomb, she has taken my soul and my love. Without waiting for me, she has returned to heaven. The angel which took her there did not want to take me.” Augier understood that, much like Sapho, Gautier’s narrator knew that happiness without their beloved was impossible, and while the narrator’s love would experience happiness in heaven, Phaon could experience happiness with Glycère.

The final concept Augier borrowed from Gautier’s poetry was how Sapho met her fate, by drowning in the waves of the sea. Throughout his poem Gautier repeats the text “ah! without love, to go to sea!” and in the final line of Sapho’s aria she sings “I am going to sleep forever in the sea.” At the beginning of the aria Sapho states that she knows her fate is death, but unlike Gautier’s narrator, she does not explicitly state how she will meet this fate until the final line. This delay of telling the audience how she will die allows the drama to build until she finally commits suicide at the end of the aria and the opera ends. Augier’s changes to the song text reflected many of the original lamenting features of Gautier’s original, but allowed Gounod to musically enhance the drama of this scene for Viardot’s interpretation.

Although Gounod wrote “La chanson du pêcheur” as a lament, he recognized that the original version of the song did not fully meet the emotional needs of the revised aria. In the

original song, Gounod set the word “morte” as a descending octave to reflect the deep pain of death (Figure 4.7, p. 2). In “Ô ma lyre immortelle,” Gounod changed the descending interval from an octave to a sixth and Augier supplied the text “immortelle” for this moment.

Gounod’s choice to alter the descending interval to a sixth demonstrates, unlike his song, which from the beginning gives the firm resolution of death (thus leaping an octave to end on tonic) that Sapho’s fate in her aria is not immediately resolved. She knows in her heart that “only death can end [her] pain,” but she is not ready to face death at the beginning of the aria. Thus, Gounod prevented the resolution to tonic, using the leap of a sixth (Figure 4.10). The aria uses this same intervallic leap multiple times on the text, “fidèle,” “monde,” and “l’onde,” each avoiding a final resolution to tonic. This delayed use of a leap to tonic makes the final leap of the aria—a fourth from F to a high B-flat, on the words “dans la mer” as Sapho casts herself into the ocean—more dramatic than if Gounod used leaps to tonic throughout the piece (Figure 4.11).

dolce. espress.

Ô ma ly - re im - mor - tel - le
Ô mi - ni - ra im - mor - ta - le

Figure 4.10. *Sapho*, Act III, Scene 5, “Où suis-je? ... Ô ma lyre immortelle,” mm. 22–5 (Paris: Choudens, n.d.), 193–4.



Figure 4.11. *Sapho*, Act III, Scene 5, “Où suis-je? ... Ô ma lyre immortelle,” mm. 116–19 (Paris: Choudens, n.d.), 199.

Dramatically, Viardot recognized that Sapho could not end the opera the same way she began it, in a flamboyant display of capriciousness; rather, Sapho needed to show herself that she possessed the emotional strength to make her own choices. In the recitative, Sapho acknowledges the exhaustion she feels after losing the love of her life to another. She does this in a series of broken phrases, reflecting her exhaustion; thus, the twenty-one measure introduction to the aria that follows allows her to regain strength. Sapho begins the aria proper thanking her lyre, which at the beginning of the opera brought her great happiness and victory, but now symbolizes her lost love. She recognizes that poetry and music can ease her pain, but knows that the only way to end her suffering is death. In the final verse of the aria, Sapho accepts her fate and descends into the waves of the sea. This textual restraint and lack of exaggerated emotion matches the simplicity of the vocal line, which does not exceed the range of a tenth until the final note of the piece (Figure 4.11). Gounod and Augier’s changes to the words and music allowed Viardot to portray Sapho as a dramatic heroine, able to express herself with musical and textual clarity.

Gounod and Viardot worked tirelessly to revise *Sapho* and bring it to a level appropriate for an Opéra premiere. They focused on the opera in different ways: first, by considering the overall structure, then by focusing on individual scenes, and finally, transforming the development of Sapho's character—all to create what they believed would be a successful operatic debut for Gounod. Although these revisions did not prove enough to prevent negative critical reception, their work together did give him the introduction to Parisian musical life that he desperately needed.

Facilitating Introductions

Despite negative press, and a very short theatrical run, Gounod recognized *Sapho* as a foundational composition to his career.⁶³ An 1851 review of the Covent Garden premiere asserted these observations:

On Saturday night a new opera in three acts, entitled *Saffo*, the music by M. Charles Gounod, was produced, with every advantage which the resources of the theatre could bestow, but with a degree of success by no means flattering to the author and composer ... *Sapho* was first represented at the French lyric theatre on the 16th of April, 1851, with how much success may be surmised from the fact that, up to the present moment, nearly four months since, it has been played seven times ... The characteristics of his music are want of melody, indecision of style, ineffective treatment of voices, inexperience in the use of instruments, accompanied by an affectation of originality disclosed in strange and unsuccessful experiments, excess of modulation, monotonous in itself and proceeding from inability to develop phrases, contempt of established forms, and a general absence of continuity, vexing the ear with beginnings that rarely arrive at consummation.⁶⁴

⁶³ For additional negative reviews from the opera's premiere see Maurice Bourges, "Théâtre de l'Opéra," *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* 18, no. 16 (April 20, 1851): 121–3; Gérard Condé, "L'Antiquité dans les opera de Gounod," in *Figures de l'Antiquité dans l'opéra français: des 'Troyens' de Berlioz à 'Œdipe' d'Enesco*, ed. Jean Christophe Branger and Vincent Giroud (Sainte-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Sainte-Étienne, 2008), 104–7.

⁶⁴ "M. Gounod's *Saffo*," *The Musical World* 26, no. 33 (Aug 16, 1851): 517–8.

This scathing review criticized nearly every movement of the entire opera, analyzed each singer's performance, and deemed, "M. Gounod's *Saffo* a failure."⁶⁵ The review of Viardot's performance noted:

We never saw Madame Viardot in a more lengthy or fatiguing part than *Saffo* ... Where the music admitted of expression and true pathos, Madame Viardot sang beautifully; but such moments were rare ... The acting of Madame Viardot exhibited throughout that intelligent and elaborate filling up for which it is always remarkable; but her movements and *poses* were more than usually studied and artificial.⁶⁶

This particular review demonstrates that even Viardot's known acting and musical abilities could not save her or *Sapho* from critics. Box office receipts also reflect that audiences held similar negative opinions of the opera, which Viardot's stardom could not overcome to draw in more ticket sales. The premiere of the opera brought in 2,677 francs, the second night only 1,432, and the third evening a meager 1,177.⁶⁷ However, regardless of his first opera's negative reception, Gounod recognized that composing *Sapho* provided him with many opportunities for learning and development. As he recalled:

It was not a success, and yet this *début* gave me a good place in the estimation of artists. While the work showed inexperience in what is called stage business, a lack of knowledge of dramatic effects, of resources, and of practice in instrumentation, there was, at the same time, a true feeling in expression, an instinct generally correct on the lyric side of the subject, and a tendency to nobility of style.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "M. Gounod's *Saffo*," 519.

⁶⁶ "M. Gounod's *Saffo*," 519.

⁶⁷ Friang, 110. These totals are incredibly low in comparison to Viardot's closing performance of *Le prophète* which earned 10,575.46 francs. The low box office revenue reflects poor audience and critical reception.

⁶⁸ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 175.

Gounod accepted his first opera lacked perfection, but he acknowledged *Sapho* as the stepping stone his career needed.

Although *Sapho* met harsh critical reviews after its premiere, Viardot still played an important role in “open[ing] to Gounod the doors of the Opéra.”⁶⁹

Accepting these remarks, the suggested conclusion is plain enough, and still more plain if we agree with the statement that Gounod’s renunciation of an ecclesiastical career was due to the action of Madame Viardot, who, at a critical moment, opened to him the doors of opera.⁷⁰

Within her lifetime, critic Joseph Bennett and composer Camille Saint-Saëns understood Viardot’s impact on Gounod’s career, and even used the same phrase to describe her influence. Saint-Saëns took his observations one step further, recognizing that not only did Viardot help establish his operatic career with *Sapho*, but Gounod’s frequenting of her salon and his immersion in her musicianship shaped his musical language. In his memoir, *Portraits et Souvenirs*, Saint-Saëns wrote:

The time spent at seminary, frequenting Mme Viardot’s salon, this is what strongly influenced his musical orientation, without forgetting the wonderful gift of a slightly timid, but exquisite voice, which nature had granted him.⁷¹

This idea is further supported in one of his musings on musicians:

With Mme Viardot, we enter a different world. This famous woman was not only a great singer, but a great artist and a living encyclopaedia. She had been a friend of

⁶⁹ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Portraits et Souvenirs* (Paris: Société d’Édition Artistique, 1900), 42.

⁷⁰ Bennett, “Gounod: The Man and the Master,” 714. It should be noted that Gounod had already decided not to fully enter the clergy by the time he met Viardot; however, she still guided his career away from being a church musician.

⁷¹ Saint-Saëns, *Portraits et Souvenirs*, 42. “Le temps passé au séminaire, la fréquentation du salon de Mme Viardot, voilà ce qui aura fortement influé sur son orientation musicale, sans oublier le don merveilleux d’une voix peu timbrée, mais exquise, que la nature lui avait octroyé.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Rossini, George Sand, Ary Scheffer and Eugène Delacroix, she knew everything in literature and art, she had a deep understanding of music, kept up with all the most varied trends and was at the forefront of artistic endeavour; she was a first-class pianist and in her salon used to play Beethoven and Mozart, and Reber whom she greatly admired. It is not hard to imagine how such surroundings would have encouraged the flowering of an emerging talent. Gounod's natural affinity with song developed yet further: and the human voice would always be the primordial element, the sacred temple of his musical city.⁷²

Thus, regardless of *Sapho*'s negative critical reception, Viardot played a pivotal role in shaping Gounod's career through introductions, influencing his musical voice, and advocating the continued performance of his works.

Some critics, like Hector Berlioz and Henry Chorley, saw *Sapho* and recognized Gounod's potential, so they guided the young composer through his first flop to help continue his career.⁷³ Viardot introduced Chorley to Gounod before *Sapho*'s premiere, and thereafter the two began a correspondence.⁷⁴ After Viardot arranged *Sapho* to be performed at Covent Garden as part of her 1851 contract with the company, Chorley made his own arrangements to insure Gounod's positive reception.⁷⁵ Before *Sapho* premiered in London, Chorley organized concerts of Gounod's music in the city, and subsequently published raving reviews of the composer whose newest opera would soon premiere at Covent

⁷² Camille Saint-Saëns, *Camille Saint-Saëns on Music and Musicians*, ed. Roger Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 120–1.

⁷³ It should be noted that Viardot and Chorley were close friends, and when Viardot introduced Gounod to Chorley, he immediately liked the budding composer. Thus, there is bias in Chorley's reviews of Gounod's works, but his reputation still helped young Gounod.

⁷⁴ Patrick Waddington, "Henry Chorley, Pauline Viardot, and Turgenev: A Musical and Literary Friendship," *Musical Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (Apr., 1981): 174.

⁷⁵ Huebner, 34. The London premiere was given in Italian; for Viardot's Italian language manuscript of the score see US-CAh, MS Mus 264 (279).

Garden.⁷⁶ He even described *Sapho* as “the best *first* opera ever written by a composer — Beethoven’s *Fidelio* (his first and last) excepted.”⁷⁷ Unfortunately, Chorley’s efforts proved fruitless, as critics still responded negatively to *Sapho*. However, Chorley’s insistence on praising Gounod eventually paid off, as London critic Joseph Bennett later acknowledged the English critic as one of the first to recognize Gounod’s talent.⁷⁸ Chorley’s affirmations kept critics from viewing Gounod as a complete failure, and provided him with enough praise to sustain his career until his next project. Without Viardot’s introduction, who knows how Chorley might have reviewed the young composer’s first opera.

Hector Berlioz reacted similarly to Chorley, expressing the same sentiments in recognition of Gounod’s talents. In his April 22nd review of *Sapho* in the *Journal des Débats* he wrote:

The faults that shocked me at the dress rehearsal of *Sapho* struck me no less, it is true, at the performance. But the beauties that I had not at first noticed revealed themselves clearly and effortlessly later . . . M. Gounod is a young musician endowed with precious qualities which tend towards the noble and the elevated and which should be encouraged and honored all the more because our musical epoch is so corrupt and corrupting. The splendid pages in his first opera are sufficiently numerous and remarkable to oblige a critic to salute them as manifestations of great art and to authorize him also to speak bluntly of the grave errors that mar such a serious work that has such a fine point of view. That we shall do . . . Most of the choruses I found imposing and simple in accent; the whole third act seemed to me very beautiful, extremely beautiful, at the highest poetic level of drama. But the quartet in the first act, the duet and trio in the second, where the passions of the such force, absolutely revolted me. I find them hideous, unbearable, horrible. I hope the author will not be inclined to hate me for the brutality with which I am expressing myself on the subject. If his work did not reveal such lofty tendencies, if it did not contain so many wholly

⁷⁶ Huebner, 34.

⁷⁷ Henry Fothergill Chorley, *Thirty Years’ Musical Recollections*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862), 2: 153.

⁷⁸ Joseph Bennett, “Some Recent Music in Paris,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 25, no. 495 (May 1, 1884): 254.

beautiful things, if, on the contrary, it belonged to the family of those pale productions where one hears only the feckless echoes of a thousand more or less eloquent voices or were a product of a stupid industrialism, I should not thus have lost my self-control.⁷⁹

Berlioz voiced his admiration for Gounod's first opera, but he also scrutinized its weakest features. Berlioz wanted readers to know that Gounod possessed great talent, and he wanted Gounod to understand that he still had a lot to work on if he desired a future as an operatic composer. As Gounod recalled, following *Sapho*'s premiere, Berlioz approached his mother to offer his praise, "Madame, I do not remember to have felt a similar emotion in twenty years."⁸⁰ Gounod considered Berlioz's review in the *Journal* "assuredly, one of the highest and most flattering tributes that I have had the honor and good fortune to gather in my career."⁸¹ Gounod respected Berlioz's opinions, and knew it provided him with another valuable stepping step in his career. Without Viardot's insistence on Gounod's entrance into the Opéra at this time, he might not have garnered Berlioz's respect. Indeed, it is quite fortunate that Berlioz did not view Gounod as a competitor and chose to abandon his own commission to compose *La Nonne Sanglante*, which allowed Gounod to compose the opera and premiere his second work at the Opéra.⁸²

⁷⁹ Translation by Mina Curtiss, "Gounod before 'Faust,'" *Musical Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Jan., 1952): 59.

⁸⁰ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 177.

⁸¹ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 177.

⁸² When Roqueplan became director of the Opéra he reneged on a promise to give Berlioz a post there, and avoided performances of his works. See Curtiss, 57. In fact, Berlioz received the commission for *La Nonne Sanglante* in 1841, under Léon Pillet's direction of the Opéra. When Roqueplan took over he did everything in his power to antagonize Berlioz in the hopes he would drop the commission. This infuriated Berlioz and left him with an unfavorable opinion of the Opéra. See Curtiss, 62–3.

Even though Viardot did not always introduce Gounod to the artists he met following *Sapho*'s premiere, he found himself beholden to her, for she supplied his first recommendation. In his memoirs, he later reflected: "Although *Sapho* was not fated to be what is called a popular success, it was not without results advantageous to my musical career and to my future."⁸³ Immediately following *Sapho*'s premiere, Gounod met playwright François Ponsard, who asked him to write the choral music for his play *Ulysse*.⁸⁴ In a letter to Viardot the composer wrote: "I am still stretched out over my *Ulysse*, Still difficult, still arduous work, and I think that I will not write incidental music for another tragedy for a long time to come."⁸⁵ Thus, he continued to confide in her after they completed their work on *Sapho*. For this work he also sought Berlioz's guidance, who continued to compliment his "remarkable" music, and gave him advice on how to ask the *Comédie-Française* for money to pay for the chorus and orchestra.⁸⁶ After it premiered on June 18, 1852, Gounod felt his work on *Ulysse* "earned me another good point in the opinion of artists."⁸⁷ A year after Gounod's operatic debut, and two years after his introduction to Viardot, her initial network of opportunities continued to pave his path to success.

Following their falling out in 1852, it took over a decade for Viardot and Gounod to mend their relationship. However, once they did, she continued to try and help him further

⁸³ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 180.

⁸⁴ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 180.

⁸⁵ Huebner, 35. Letter from August 26, 1851. Original letter found in F-Pnm, NAF 16272, ff. 205–6.

⁸⁶ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 219.

⁸⁷ Gounod, *Memoirs...*, 183.

his career. In 1866, while living in Germany, she wrote to Gounod asking him for the piano score, libretto, staging, and German translation of *Sapho*. After she sang the third act for the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenhach, Karl Alexander August Johann, he requested she organize a production with the Weimar Opera.⁸⁸ Viardot wrote to Gounod that “my personal view is that, if *Sapho* was given in a good court theatre, like that of Weimar precisely, it could be as successful as *Faust*.”⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the discussion proved unproductive, as conversations over copyright seemed to hinder the process of having it produced. In the end Viardot told him to, “do what you want ...” and the project was never realized.⁹⁰ Despite *Sapho* not premiering at the Weimar court, Viardot’s intentions to promote Gounod demonstrates her commitment to him as an artist and her respect for their past collaboration.

Beyond promoting *Sapho*, Viardot also continued to champion young musical talent with Gounod throughout her life, in much the same way that she publicized young Gounod amongst established musicians when he started his operatic career. In many instances Viardot sent her students to Gounod which supported her own teaching, their singing careers, and provided him with talented singers to interpret his operatic heroines. She wrote to him to promote soprano, Marie Schroeder, encouraging him to have her sing Marguerite from *Faust* when she came to visit him.⁹¹ Viardot also arranged an introduction for Hungarian soprano

⁸⁸ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 371.

⁸⁹ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 372. Letter from September 2, 1866: “Mon avis personnel est que, si *Sapho* était bien lancé sur un bon théâtre de cour, comme celui de Weimar précisément, elle pourrait avoir autant d’avance que *Faust*.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁹⁰ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 373. Letter from September 27, 1866: “Faites ce que vous voudrez ...” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁹¹ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 372.

Agl e Orgeni who she described as a “charming Juliette” and “Marguerite full of poetry.”⁹² In one instance, Gounod attempted to introduce Viardot to a young mezzo-soprano, Caroline Baldo, who desperately wanted to study with Viardot. Eventually, Baldo did indeed become Viardot’s student and a professor of singing.⁹³ Viardot and Gounod’s deep respect for one another encouraged them to promote young musical talent to each other; which allowed them to use their individual musical strengths to train young artists.

Conclusion

Viardot and Gounod maintained a deep artistic connection from their first meeting. Although their friendship experienced a period of turbulence from 1852–62, when the two reconnected they spoke as if the rift never occurred.⁹⁴ Throughout their lives they trusted each other to provide honest criticism on their works, and their instant friendship laid the foundation for a successful collaboration on *Sapho*. Their work together gave Gounod his start in opera, and provided Viardot with the opportunity to further her status as mentor, prima donna, and esteemed musician. Viardot continued working to elevate her musical status in her collaboration with Hector Berlioz. Although their partnership proved financially

⁹² Gounod, *Lettres...*, 373. Letter from May 3, 1867: “Elle vous sera en Allemagne une Juliette charmante, de m me qu’elle est une Marguerite pleine de po sie.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁹³ Gounod, *Lettres...*, 406. Letter from April 4, 1887.

⁹⁴ Gounod and Viardot had a falling out after Gounod’s sudden engagement and marriage to Anna Zimmermann. Scholars have written about why this immediate break in their friendship occurred, but it is mostly speculative. For more information on this period see Fitzlyon, 284–9; Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 36–7; and Th r se Marix-Spire and Erminie Huntress, “Gounod and His First Interpreter, Pauline Viardot--Part II,” *Musical Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (July 1945): 299–317.

successful, unlike *Sapho*, it did not yield the lasting friendship like that which she built with Gounod.

CHAPTER 5

HECTOR BERLIOZ AND *ORPHÉE*:

COUNSEL, COLLABORATION, AND CONCEALMENT

“My entire life,” he told me, “has been one long, fervent hankering after an ideal of my own creation. In its eagerness to love, my heart would set itself upon a single quality or virtue of this ideal; but disillusionment, alas, would soon show me my mistake. It is in this manner that my life has been passed; and just as I feel that the end is near, the ideal — which I was compelled to renounce as some strange figment of my wild imagining — has suddenly appeared before my dying heart! How can I help adoring it? Let me spend my last remaining days in blessing you, and thanking you for coming as a proof that I was not mad after all.”¹

Hector Berlioz’s impetuous personality is well documented in reference to a number of persons, topics, and compositions, so it is unsurprising that after working with Pauline Viardot he developed a strong emotional attachment, which she recounted above. Berlioz (1803–69) and Viardot became acquainted and ran in similar artistic circles long before their collaboration on a new production of Gluck’s *Orphée*. However, it is during this time that the two began an incredibly close friendship that eventually faded because of Berlioz’s tempestuous nature.² From 1858 to 1859 while Viardot and Berlioz worked on *Orphée*

¹ Patrick Waddington, “Pauline Viardot-Garcia as Berlioz’s Counselor and Physician,” *Musical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July 1973): 389. Waddington’s article analyzes Berlioz and Viardot’s relationship as she helped him through a difficult period in his marriage, and an overly anxious time in his life. He also focuses on Berlioz’s time at Courtavenel in search of recovery, with a brief overview of topics they discussed, including *Orphée*. However, Waddington does not fully address how this period affected their collaborative relationship, nor how it allowed Berlioz to continue his career. This chapter will address this by assessing Waddington’s ideas concerning Viardot’s role as “counselor and physician” and interpreting how they related to their collaboration on *Orphée*. Additionally, it will interpret the primary sources Waddington accessed in the Viardot Family Archive. Ultimately, this analysis will demonstrate that without her kindness at this time, his career and mental health might have taken a very different path.

together, Berlioz experienced physical and mental anguish due to his tumultuous marriage to Marie Recio.³ He constantly sought medical and psychological help, even submitting himself to electroshock therapy.⁴ As a result, Viardot became his “physician”⁵ and their work together on *Orphée* helped him survive this dark time in his life.

This chapter will first assess the personal relationship Viardot and Berlioz created during their work together on *Orphée* by examining the personal problems Berlioz faced, and how Viardot helped him through this exceptionally difficult period in his life. Then, it will turn to a discussion of the music in *Orphée*. As Berlioz rewrote the title role for Viardot’s mezzo-soprano voice, this chapter will evaluate whether these musical rewrites were simply transpositions, actual changes in melodic material, or both, and how these changes affected Viardot’s dramatic interpretation of *Orphée*. Berlioz’s fundamental view that the composer was the main artistic impulse behind the music, and that Viardot should not be aiding in the rewrite process, provides a key discussion point in this analysis. He even made efforts to conceal Viardot’s contributions to the work. This is very different to the more open approach Meyerbeer and Gounod allowed to her collaborative efforts.⁶ Viardot’s presence in his life at this time and their work together uplifted Berlioz’s spirits and encouraged him to continue

² After they completed *Orphée*, Viardot wanted to collaborate on an edition of *Alceste* which Berlioz adamantly refused because he did not want to alter another one of Gluck’s works. Eventually, he relented.

³ Waddington, “Pauline Viardot-Garcia...,” 383.

⁴ Hector Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, trans Roger Nichols (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 383.

⁵ He used this term in reference to her. Hector Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 8 vols. ed. Pierre Citron (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 6: 133.

⁶ I should note that even though they more openly allowed and addressed her input, they also tried to conceal it at times, as addressed in Chapters 3 and 4.

his musical endeavors. However, Berlioz's adversarial personality during their collaboration on *Orphée*, and his subsequent disdain for working with her to revise *Alceste*, unfortunately led to the end of their friendship and professional relationship.

Viardot as Counselor

Although Berlioz eventually sought emotional restoration from Viardot, their relationship was not always one of "true friend[ship]."⁷ Berlioz first heard Viardot perform selections from Gluck's *Orfeo* in 1839 when she sang the role of Euridice in a duet with tenor, Gilbert Duprez. Following the concert he took little time to voice his displeasure at her performance, writing to his friend Victor Schoelcher:

Mlle Pauline Garcia greatly disappointed me: her supposed talent wasn't worth making such a fuss about. She is a *diva manquée*. I detest all *divas* — those creatures are the curse of true music and true musicians. How she ruined for me the sublime duet of *Orpheus* with Duprez. But what an aristocrat! Gluck is a giant who slays them all — every one. Mozart himself, in spite of what is said, is far behind him in dramatic music, unconscionably far. But Gluck needs singers who possess a voice, a soul, and ... genius.⁸

Despite his distaste for this early performance in her career, he eventually came to respect Viardot's abilities as a performer.⁹ He developed this respect as an attendee of her salon, a

⁷ Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia..." 383. She referred to Berlioz as her "true friend" in a letter to Louis Viardot on January 14, 1858.

⁸ Hector Berlioz, *New Letters of Berlioz: 1830-1868*, trans. Jacques Barzun (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 34–7. Letter from February 1, 1839.

⁹ This performance took place three months before her professional operatic debut as Desdemona in *Otello* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London. See April Fitzlyon, *The Price of Genius* (London: John Calder Publishers, 1964), 62.

close neighbor, and a collaborator in performances.¹⁰ They first worked together in London on June 29, 1848 when she performed a new arrangement of his *La captive* for voice and orchestra. Then, in 1856 he invited her to sing in a concert with him in Baden-Baden, and playfully praised the “*prima donna, cantatrice, diva*” who did not get him the music for Gluck’s *Armide* in time to be used in the performance.¹¹ Thus, when Léon Carvalho asked Berlioz to revise *Orphée* in 1859, he already understood Viardot’s mutual passion for Gluck’s music, and their rapport as respected musical colleagues grew.

Because of this collegial relationship, Berlioz sought emotional support from Viardot during a turbulent period in 1859. After the death of his wife Harriet Smithson in 1854, Berlioz married his longtime mistress Marie Recio.¹² From the beginning of his affair with Recio in 1841, Berlioz struggled to balance their artistic and romantic relationship, as Recio insisted on performing in his concerts despite her poor critical reception as a singer.¹³ This, coupled with her combative personality, made for an unhappy union that lasted until her death in 1862.¹⁴ Their relationship was so unhappy that Berlioz completely removed her from

¹⁰ Fitzlyon, 347. In Paris, Viardot and Berlioz lived very close to each other so they could visit each other often to exchange musical ideas and make calls on one another. Berlioz also gave Viardot positive reviews in *Le prophète* (1849) and *Sapho* (1851) which further contributed to their cordiality toward one another. See Chapters 3 and 4.

¹¹ Berlioz, *New Letters...*, 182–3. Letter from July 29, 1856.

¹² Berlioz, *New Letters...*, 128–9.

¹³ Hector Berlioz, *Memoirs*, trans. Ernest Newman (New York: Dover, 1966), 243–4. For an anecdote regarding Recio’s early irritation to Berlioz see Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 273. She performed with him in at least five performances in 1843.

¹⁴ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 483. She directed a lot of hostility at Wagner who she considered Berlioz’s musical rival.

his memoirs, which he wrote during their affair and after their marriage.¹⁵ Although he never directly references her effect on his livelihood in his letters, there is evidence that Recio contributed to his anxiety. In an 1858 letter, he wrote to his sister, Adèle Suat:

As for me, I'm living in hell; my neuralgia doesn't leave me a moment's respite. Every day at nine in the morning I have violent colics which last until two or three in the afternoon; spasms in the chest; in the evening pains in the neck of the bladder and redoubled spasms. And depression to darken the rising sun, disgust with everything!¹⁶

In describing his life as a living hell, Berlioz shared with his sister the depths of his despair, and also revealed that not even his marriage brought him happiness; perhaps, because his marriage was a source of his anxiety. Two weeks before this, he wrote to Suat of his memoirs and specifically asked her not to mention them in her letters, perhaps because he worried that Recio might find out about them, as she often read his letters.¹⁷ He also instructed his son to publish the memoirs without alterations, possibly because he believed Recio would attempt to include herself in the book.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hector Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, trans. Roger Nichols (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 319

¹⁶ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 368. Letter from May 28, 1858.

¹⁷ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 367. Letter from May 10, 1858. Early on in their relationship Berlioz tried to escape from Recio and she found out through the coach office and reading his correspondence. Thus, had she discovered Berlioz excluded her from his memoirs; her retaliatory fury might have driven Berlioz to complete insanity. For a description of her foiling Berlioz's plans of escape, see Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 273.

¹⁸ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 367. Fortunately for Berlioz, Recio preceded him in death on June 13, 1862.

Although Berlioz himself avoided discussing the misery his second wife caused, it did not go unnoticed by the Viardot family.¹⁹ Even Viardot's daughter Louise remembered the "extremes" of his moods during this time, as she recalled:

Berlioz, who suffered much from ill-health, lived quite near to us and came to see us daily, in order to give vent to his feelings and to obtain a little rest from his quarrelsome wife. I often saw him. He was always in extremes, either up in the clouds or in the depth of depression. He had his diabolical moods too, when he fumed with rage and fury against artists, composers, the public, life, and the world in general. At those times no one could manage him.²⁰

This recollection demonstrates that because of the close relationship between Viardot and Berlioz at this time his welfare drew concern from the entire family. Viardot herself wrote to her friend Julius Rietz in January of 1859, "Berlioz came to see me today — he is very sick — body and soul are diseased. His wife is really too disagreeable! how could such a man marry such a woman! better to eat raw lemons all day and drink vinegar all night! dreadful!"²¹ Viardot and her family shared a genuine concern for Berlioz's well-being, and hoped that their presence in his life could ease his spirits.

Berlioz's reliance on the Viardot family, Pauline especially, to heal his afflicted soul is evidenced in his correspondence. In January 1859 Berlioz wrote to his sister:

This evening I'm having dinner with my neighbours M. and Mme Viardot, a charming family with whom I can breathe freely. Both of them are so intelligent and

¹⁹ It is unfair to cite Recio as the only source of Berlioz's unhappiness; in his article Waddington also cites the uncertainty of Berlioz's son Louis's whereabouts, failed attempts to have *Les Troyens* produced, and various events occurring across Europe as contributing to Berlioz's neuralgia at this time. Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia...", 384. However, from Viardot's perspective, his unhappy marriage was the root of his ailments.

²⁰ Louise Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, trans. E.S. Buchheim (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 49–50.

²¹ Theodore Baker, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia to Julius Rietz (Letters of Friendship)," *Musical Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (Jul., 1915): 372. Letter from January 3, 1859.

so good, and their children are so graceful and well brought up! Added to which the flower of art fills the house with its scent. There they love what I love, they admire what I admire in music, in literature and in all matters of the spirit.²²

Here Berlioz indicated the respect he felt for the Viardot family, and described how their presence brought him calm and eased his spirit, which, as Viardot noted was “diseased.” In a letter to Viardot in October he expressed more specifically the full extent of his dependence on her as a confidante:

I am still in bad shape; the electrifying doctor will work on me in a while. A thousand greetings, a thousand affectionate greetings; you are a saint, I told you, two months ago. You are better still. I am only a miserable patient who is devoted to you as much as one can be.²³

Berlioz’s depiction of Viardot as a “saint” who willingly nurses him, a “miserable patient,” reveals his deep trust in her, and how he viewed their relationship as one from which he benefits holistically. Five months later, on March 1, 1859 Berlioz wrote again to Viardot: “This trip damaged me, prepare your whole pharmacy, I have never suffered so much. O my doctor, my doctor, my doctor!! I cry out to you.”²⁴ In these letters, Berlioz revealed his deep commitment to Viardot as his mental, spiritual, and physical healer, even going so far to refer to himself as the “patient” and her as the “doctor.”

²² Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 374. Letter from January 10, 1859.

²³ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 41. “Je vais toujours mal; le docteur électriseur va me travailler tout-à-l’heure. Mille bonjours, mille affectueuses salutations; vous êtes une sainte, vous disais-je, il y a deux mois. Vous êtes bien plus encore. Moi je ne suis qu’un malheureux malade à vous dévoué autant qu’on puisse l’être.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

²⁴ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 133. “Ce voyage m’a abime, préparez toute votre pharmacie, je n’ai jamais tant souffert. O mon médecin, mon médecin, mon docteur!! Je crie ver vous.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel. In this letter Berlioz referred to a trip to Vienna.

Berlioz referred to himself as Viardot's patient because she nurtured his mind and soul for nearly a year. After months of seeing Berlioz in a defeated state, Viardot invited him to Courtavenel to escape Paris and heal emotionally in September of 1859.²⁵ As *Orphée's* premiere was only a few months away, Viardot understood that he needed a retreat from Paris to clear his mind and finish reworking the score. When he arrived at Courtavenel, he brought with him the completed revisions to Act I and his notes for revisions on Acts II and III.²⁶ Although neither Viardot nor Berlioz mention what they worked on during his stay at Courtavenel, Waddington surmises that they revised Orphée's aria, "Amour, viens rendre à mon âme."²⁷ In this aria Berlioz allowed Viardot to take many liberties in ornamenting the vocal melody, of which he later disapproved because of their inauthenticity to the noble nature of Gluck's original.²⁸

Berlioz deeply respected Viardot as a musician, and during his time at Courtavenel he also sought her opinion and collaborative skills for his opera *Les Troyens*. When he traveled to Courtavenel he also brought with him the first two acts of the work he desperately wanted to present in Paris.²⁹ Viardot sang Cassandra's aria with Berlioz in an August concert in Baden-Baden, so she already knew parts of the opera. However, she wanted to sing the roles

²⁵ As early as 1850, Viardot invited Berlioz to Courtavenel, but he expressed a "host of worries, a host of anxieties," which kept him from visiting, and did not accept her invitation until September 1859. Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 271.

²⁶ Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia...", 390.

²⁷ Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia...", 391.

²⁸ For an analysis of Viardot and Berlioz's collaboration on this aria see Angela Faith Cofer, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia: The Influence of the Performer on Nineteenth Century Opera" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1988), 142–8.

²⁹ Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia...", 391.

of both Cassandra and Dido, and hoped Berlioz might cast her in the premiere.³⁰ Likewise, Berlioz, who struggled for years to have his opera produced, hoped that in working with Viardot on *Orphée*, she might help him build a relationship with the Théâtre-Lyrique's director, Léon Carvalho. The ulterior motives Viardot and Berlioz established did not work exactly as planned. Berlioz built a rapport with Carvalho, who felt "enthusiastic about [his] libretto," but the opera did not have its premiere until 1863 and Berlioz did not cast Viardot.³¹ However, they still collaborated on the work in its early versions. As Louise Viardot recalled:

The only instruments he could play were the guitar and flageolet, but he was able to tell every member of the orchestra how he must play his instrument. As he could not play the piano, he used to come to us whenever he had composed something for the orchestra, and my mother and I had to play it as a duet. One took the strings, the other the wind instruments.³²

Thus, Berlioz relied on Viardot and her family for musical assistance in preparing his works. He likely worked in this manner during his stay at Courtavenel, as he wrote to his son Louis that "Mme Viardot, who is also a fine pianist, looked through my first two acts while I was with her."³³ As she played through the work with him, it is likely they exchanged musical ideas; at the very least she suggested she could play both Dido and Cassandra. It is also possible that Berlioz employed the same technique for some of his revisions to *Orphée*,

³⁰ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 381–2. Letter from September 23, 1859.

³¹ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 381. Letter from September 23, 1859. The 1863 premiere only included Acts III–V, and the full opera did not premiere until 1890. Berlioz signed a contract with Carvalho in 1860 to premiere the opera as soon as the new opera house was built, which might partially account for the delay of its premiere. See Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 385. Letter from January 29, 1860.

³² Héritte-Viardot, 50.

³³ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 382. Letter from September 23, 1859.

having Viardot play the piano parts as he re-orchestrated the work. This demonstrates that their collaboration extended beyond one opera, and that Berlioz relied on her for musical support.

Patrick Waddington expertly assessed Viardot's role as a "counselor and physician" to Berlioz during the later years of his tumultuous marriage to Marie Recio.³⁴ However, within this role as counselor, Viardot also fashioned herself as collaborator and musical adviser to Berlioz. Without the companionship of Viardot, and the friendship of her family, it is possible that he would not have succeeded in revising *Orphée*. Without the success of *Orphée*, Berlioz might never have premiered *Les Troyens*, which he started in 1854 and promoted for years before it finally premiered in part in 1863, and then in full posthumously in 1890. The counsel and friendship Viardot provided during this time "sustained him through a critical period," and allowed him to reach the next step of his artistic career.³⁵

Collaboration

In the nineteenth century, opera directors preferred either giving premieres of new operas or mounting productions of recently composed works.³⁶ Thus, in 1859, when Léon Carvalho approached Berlioz about revising Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the project required

³⁴ Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia...", 382–98.

³⁵ Hugh Macdonald, *Berlioz*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1982), 62.

³⁶ For a discussion of how the *Orphée* revival set the stage for opera's future of performing old works rather than premiering new ones, see Flora Willson, "Classic Staging: Pauline Viardot and the 1859 "Orphée" revival," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 22, no. 3 (November 2010): 301–26.

certain insurance policies for a successful run.³⁷ Revising the title role for the female voice of Pauline Viardot provided this insurance policy. Casting her in the role of Orphée ensured large ticket sales, as she had maintained her prima donna status on Parisian stages for years following her starring role in *Le prophète*. Additionally, both Carvalho and Berlioz understood that Viardot was one of the few singers who continued to perform and promote Gluck's works, as she developed an appreciation for his music as a child.³⁸ Thus, they considered her the ideal interpreter of this work, who insured the Théâtre-Lyrique a financially successful venture.³⁹

Despite their strong love for Gluck's music, Berlioz and Viardot did not agree on how his music could be adapted in the new edition. As a child Berlioz possessed an "instinctive love" for Gluck's works.⁴⁰ Thus, he took a staunch, conservative approach to revising the works of the man who wrote "the grandest dramatic music."⁴¹ As a young man, he abhorred when orchestras strayed from Gluck's score markings, as he recalled in his memoirs:

The conductor ought to keep an eye on Guillon, the flute-player, who is just coming in. He takes the strangest liberties with Gluck In the religious march in *Alceste*, for example, the composer has written for the low register of the flutes, so as to obtain the special effect of the deep flute tone. Guillon does not approve of this; he must take the lead; he *will* be heard; and so what does he do but play his part an octave

³⁷ Hector Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas: With an Account of their Relation to Musical Art*, trans. Edwin Evans (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), 2–3.

³⁸ Christoph Willibald Gluck and Hector Berlioz, *Orphée*, ed. Joël-Marie Fauquet (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), XI.

³⁹ Indeed it proved very successful as the revival received over 150 performances. Eve Barsham, "Berlioz and Gluck," in *C.W. Von Gluck: Orfeo*. ed. Patricia Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 96.

⁴⁰ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 22.

⁴¹ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 34.

higher, destroying the author's effect, and turning an ingenious idea into a common and puerile one ... As I was intimately acquainted with every note of the score, the performers, if they were wise, played it as was written; I would have died rather than allow the slightest liberty with the old masters to pass unnoticed.⁴²

In some cases, he went so far as to yell at orchestra members who dared change Gluck's score. To an out of line percussionist in *Iphigénie en Tauride* he shouted "there are no cymbals there; who has dared to correct Gluck?"⁴³ Later, in the third act of the opera, at the absence of trombones during Orestes's monologue he bellowed "not a sign of a trombone; it is intolerable!"⁴⁴ These instances demonstrate not only Berlioz's familiarity with Gluck's scores, but also his deeply held conviction that Gluck's works should not be altered, for "Gluck's fine passages will always be fine."⁴⁵

When it came to the adaptation for Viardot, he maintained his conservative attitude, but had to be more flexible to account for the transpositions required to suit Viardot's voice. However, because Gluck transposed the original, Italian version from castrato to tenor voice, and the libretto from Italian to French, Berlioz felt less hesitant about transposing *Orphée* for Viardot, so long as he preserved the integrity of Gluck's original.⁴⁶ In order to do so, he

⁴² Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 53–4.

⁴³ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 54.

⁴⁴ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 55.

⁴⁵ Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 318. It should be noted that despite his strong belief that Gluck's works not be altered, a few paragraphs later — regarding a change in orchestration — he states that "*such* corrections of Gluck are always permissible." Which he then promptly corrects in a footnote below stating "no, these things ought never to be done. I was wrong to write what I did." See Berlioz, *Memoirs*, 321.

⁴⁶ *Orfeo ed Euridice* premiered in 1762 in Vienna with a castrato, Gaetano Guadagni, playing Orfeo. In 1774 Gluck transposed the opera for tenor, and made revisions for its premiere at the Paris Opéra as *Orphée et Eurydice*. See Joël-Marie Fauquet, "Berlioz's

looked to both the Vienna and Paris scores to make appropriate revisions, often combining the libretto of the Paris version with the original keys of the Vienna version as demonstrated in the chart below (Table 5.1).⁴⁷

Table 5.1. Modifications to the role of Orphée in the Vienna, Paris, and Berlioz revisions.

Vienna Version 1762 (in Italian)	Paris Version 1774 (in French)	Berlioz Version 1859 (in French)
Act I Scene 1 Recitativo (Orfeo) “Basta, basta”	Récitatif “Vos plaintes, vos regrets”: Recomposed	Follows Paris version
Aria and recitative (Orfeo): “Chiamo il ben così” in F major	Orphée “Objet de mon amour...”: The scene is transposed to C major, and the recitative is altered	No. 3 Romance et récitatif: The scene is transposed back to F major, but the Paris version is used
Recitativo (Orfeo) “Numi, barbari numi”	Récitatif “Divinités de l’Achéron”	Récitatif: The Paris version is used and transposed down a fourth
Act I Scene 2 Recitativo (Orfeo): “Che disse?” (with an orchestral conclusion)	Récitatif “Impitoyables dieux”: Recomposed and the orchestral conclusion is omitted to link the piece to the aria	No. 6 Récitatif et air: New words adapted to the Vienna version, and the orchestral conclusion is omitted
	Ariette (Orphée) “L’espoir renaît dans mon âme” in B flat major	Air “Amour, viens rendre à mon âme”: Transposed to C major, orchestrated by Camille Saint-Saëns, with a cadenza by Viardot, Berlioz, and Saint-Saëns

Table 5.1.--Modifications to the role of Orphée in the Vienna, Paris, and Berlioz revisions.

Version of Gluck’s *Orphée*.” in *Berlioz Studies*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 189–253. As Sir Charles Mackerras points out, Gluck’s decision to transpose Orphée from a castrato to a tenor role, “shows that he was less interested in a specific voice-type than in the ability and personality of the singer.” Charles Mackerras, “Berlioz: the best of both worlds,” in *C.W. Von Gluck: Orfeo*. ed. Patricia Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 101.

⁴⁷ This chart is reproduced and adapted from Fauquet, 223–8, to highlight the specific changes made to Orphée for Viardot.

Vienna Version 1762 (in Italian)	Paris Version 1774 (in French)	Berlioz Version 1859 (in French)
Arioso (Orfeo) “Deh placetevi con me” in E flat major	Orphée “Laissez-vous toucher par me pleurs”: Added vocalizes and transposed to B flat major	“Laissez-vous toucher par me pleurs”: The Paris version is used, but it is transposed to the original key of E flat major
Arioso (Orfeo) “Mille pene” in F minor	Orphée “Ah la flame qui me dévore”: Transposed to C minor	“Ah la flame qui me dévore”: Uses Paris version, but transposes it back to F minor
Arioso (Orfeo) “Men tiranne” in F minor	Orphée “La tendresse qui me presse”: Transposed to C minor	“La tendresse qui me presse”: Transposed back to F minor
Act II Scene 2 Arioso (Orfeo) “Che puro ciel”	Récitatif (Orphée) “Quel nouveau ciel”: The vocal line is modified to allow the tenor to sing in the original key of C major	No. 10, Récit et chœur: The vocal line is continually modified
Recitativo (Orfeo) “Anime avventurose”	Récitatif (Orphée): Completely rewritten and ends with chorus	Maintains the rhythmic and harmonic properties of the Paris version, but modifies the vocal line
Act III Scene 1 Duetto (Orfeo ed Euridice) “Vieni, appaga tuo consorte” in G major	Duo (Orphée et Eurydice) “Viens, suis un époux qui t’adore” The melodic line is modified and transposed to F major	No. 12, Duo et air: Uses the Paris version, but transposes it to original key of G major
Recitativo (Orfeo) “Ecco un nuovo tormento	Récitatif (Orphée) “Quelle épreuve cruelle”: Some melodic lines are altered, and some passages are transposed	“Quelle épreuve cruelle”: Some passages are retransposed to the pitches of the Vienna version
Aria (Orfeo) “Che faro senza Euridice” in C major	Air (Orphée) “J’ai perdu mon Eurydice”: Two melodic passages are modified, and the piece is transposed to F major	No. 15 Air. The Paris version is used, but is transposed to the original key of C major
Recitativo (Orfeo) “Ah finisca una volta”	Récitatif (Orphée) “Ah! puisse ma douleur”	“Ah! puisse ma douleur”: The Paris version is used, but is transposed back to the original key

Source: Adapted from Fauquet, 223–8

As demonstrated above, Berlioz methodically relied on Gluck’s original and revised version of *Orphée* to create his version for Viardot. Specifically, he used the Paris version to supply text and melodic material, but returned to the original keys of the Vienna version to maintain

the key structure Gluck originally intended.⁴⁸ Despite Berlioz's intent to keep with Gluck's original, this did not prevent Viardot from inserting her own opinions on the revisions.

Although Berlioz maintained an "almost puritanical zeal" over modifications to the score, Viardot understood that, "dramatic effect is, first and last, the main object of Guck's music..."⁴⁹ Therefore, when Viardot contributed her opinion to modifications in the score she did so with a dramatic purpose in mind.⁵⁰ For example, the virtuosic aria, "Amour, viens rendre à mon âme" became one of the most anticipated arias of the opera, because it allowed for the impressive display of Viardot's vocal and dramatic talents. Although Berlioz grew to detest Viardot's ornamentation of Gluck, her friend Adolphe Brisson, recalled that according to Viardot, Berlioz asked her to perform the aria with added ornaments:⁵¹

In this meeting, she said to me, I would very much like to be washed of a reproach that has often been given to me. It has been claimed that I introduced a change in the first act aria of *Orphée*. If this modification is incorrect, I am not entirely responsible for it; I have an accomplice.⁵²

⁴⁸ As Eve Barsham argues, this allowed Berlioz to balance the "extra-human, mythical quality" of the castrato voice's tone, with the more "human" quality supplied by the tenor voice, because the registration stuck to the original, mythic quality, but the tone of the female voice brought in a more humanistic quality. See Barsham, "Berlioz and Gluck," 93–4.

⁴⁹ Fauquet, 229; Romain Rolland, *Musiciens d'autrefois*, trans. Mary Blaiklock, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1915), 296.

⁵⁰ In Viardot's collaborations with Meyerbeer and Gounod there is a similar pattern.

⁵¹ Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas*, 21.

⁵² Adolphe Brisson, *Portraits intimes* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1901), 132. "A ce propos, me dit-elle, je voudrais bien être lavée d'un reproche qui m'a souvent été fait. On a prétendu que j'avais introduit un changement dans l'air du premier acte d'*Orphée*. Si cette modification est fautive, je n'en suis pas entièrement responsable; j'ai un complice." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

Brisson continued that at this point Viardot showed him a letter from Berlioz where he asked her to write a “stupendous cadenza” for the aria, and said “if need be, we can always say that *this is what Legros did at the fermata* when Gluck put on *Orphée* in Paris. The Parisians won’t have any trouble in swallowing that.”⁵³ This letter, from September 13, 1859 stated:

I forgot to tell you that in you ‘air à roulades’ that concludes the first act, it is absolutely essential to sing an astounding cadenza at the last fermata. Gluck calls for it. So compose a lively mixture of vocalizes for this moment and you will bring down the house as you leave the stage.⁵⁴

Reynaldo Hahn further substantiated this report of their collaboration on the cadenza in his memories of Viardot, “but, I did nothing, she says, which was not absolutely approved by Berlioz and Saint-Saëns. Thus this famous cadenza for which I had the honor of being criticized and that I did in the great aria di bravura, was decided by the three of us!”⁵⁵ These anecdotes show that when Viardot ornamented the aria, she did it with what she believed to be the approval of Gluck and Berlioz, and in service to the drama of the opera.⁵⁶

The cadenza at the end of “Amour, viens rendre à mon âme” stands a testament to Viardot’s brilliant interpretation of the role of Orphée, rather than as a diva’s display of showmanship. This aria occurs at the end of Act 1, after Amour tells Orphée that he can go to the Underworld and rescue Eurydice, as long as he does not look at her until they return to

⁵³ Brisson, 132. Translation by Patrick Waddington.

⁵⁴ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 25. Translation by Joël-Marie Fauquet.

⁵⁵ Reynaldo Hahn, *Notes/Journal d’un musicien* (Paris: Plon Paris, 1933), 7. “Mais, je n’ai rien fait, dit-elle, qui ne fût absolument approuvé par Berlioz et Saint-Saëns. Ainsi cette fameuse cadence qu’on m’a fait l’honneur de me reprocher et que je faisais dans le grand air de bravoure, a été décidée par nous trois!” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁵⁶ Following their collaboration on this opera Berlioz voiced his frustrations over what he believed to be her gross ornamentation of Gluck’s work, which is part of why he did not initially want to adapt *Alceste* for her.

earth. The aria signals Orphée’s decision to rescue his love, and also describes the bravery required to complete such a feat successfully (Figure 5.1).

Amour, viens rendre à mon âme	Love, come return to my soul
Ta plus ardente flamme	Your most ardent flame
Pour celle qui m’enflamme	For the one who inflames me
Je vais braver le trépas.	I will brave death.
L’enfer en vain nous sépare,	Hell in vain separates us,
Les monstres du Tartare	The monsters of Tartarus
Ne m’épouvantent pas,	Do not scare me,
Je sens croître ma flamme,	I feel my flame grow,
Je vais braver le trépas.	I will brave death.

Figure 5.1. *Orphée*, Act I, “Amour, viens rendre à mon âme,” Libretto translation by Lydia Bechtel.

Here, Orphée states he will brave death, the fiery flames of hell, and the monsters that await him, to save Eurydice. This is because Gluck and Berlioz intended the aria to be an *aria di bravura*, which indicated brilliancy and skill.⁵⁷ However, as the etymology of the word implies, it also reflects bravery and a courageous spirit, which is the subject of the aria. Thus, this aria requires a virtuosic display of vocal skill throughout to demonstrate the bravery of Orphée, and the cadenza augments this heroism (Figure 5.2).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Owen Jander, “Bravura,” *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed February 15, 2020.

⁵⁸ Joël-Marie Fauquet published some of the changes Viardot wrote into her 1872 Heugel edition of *Orphée*. Although this was not Viardot’s working score during the opera’s performance, it does give an idea of some of the cadenzas she might have added to the aria. These can also be interpreted as having a dramatic purpose within the context of the aria, but it is not assured that they were performed. See Fauquet, 238–53. The score from which these markings are taken is in the private collection of Marilyn Horne.

143 M

O. Je vais bra-ver le tré-pas. [56]
ich geh' und trot - ze dem Tod.

sf

*) Pauline Viardot (vgl. Vorwort / see Preface)

bra-ver le tré-pas

Figure 5.2. *Orphée*, Act I, “Amour, viens rendre à mon âme,” mm. 143–6 and Viardot cadenza (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), 43.

The final cadenza begins in Viardot’s middle range (earth), and with each sequence dips into her low register (hell), and then back up, with each sequence moving upward until she reaches her high register at an A (successful rescue of Eurydice). Then, after Viardot reaches the height of the cadenza, she proceeds back down to more of her middle range, to show that Orphée will succeed in traveling to the Underworld and back to earth. Viardot could have composed a cadenza which simply showed off her impressive range of F#3 to D6; however, she specifically chose this cadenza to mirror Orphée’s impending journey to the Underworld.⁵⁹

In the chorus and aria, “Laissez-vous toucher par mes pleurs,” Viardot uses a cadenza to develop the persuasive and tender features of Orphée’s character. As Orphée begins his journey into hell, he encounters furies and ghosts who try to keep him from entering the

⁵⁹ Hahn, 7.

Underworld. However, once he sings “the tenderness which pushes me will calm your fury; yes, my tears, my alarms will weaken your rigor,” he placates them, and they proclaim “he is victorious” (Figure 5.3).⁶⁰ In order to placate them, Viardot uses a strategic cadenza at the end of the section “La tendresse qui me presse.”

Un peu lent
ORPHÉE

La ten - dres - se Qui me pres - se Cal - me -
Mei - ner Lie - be zar - te Trie - be wer - den

Hrp. (sur le théâtre)
Cordes (pizz.)

219

222

- ra vo - tre fu - reur; Oui, mes lar - mes, Mes a - lar - mes Flé - chi -
stil - len - eu - re Wut, ja, mein Seh - nen, mei - ne Trä - nen stim - men

226

- ront vo - tre ri - gueur. Mes a - lar - mes, mes lar - mes Flé - chi -
euch mir wie - der gut, mei - ne Trä - nen, mein Seh - nen stim - men

230

- ront vo - tre ri - gueur., Flé - chi - ront vo - tre ri - gueur. [86]
euch mir wie - der gut., stim - men euch mir wie - der gut.

Figure 5.3. *Orphée*, Act II, “Laissez-vous toucher par mes pleurs,” mm. 219–33 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), 68.

⁶⁰ Aria text: “La tendresse qui me presse calmera votre fureur; oui, mes larmes, mes alarmes fléchiront votre rigueur.” Chorus text: “Il est vainqueur.” Gluck and Berlioz, *Orphée*, 68, 73.

In this section of the scene Orphée repeats the text “fléchiront votre rigueur” three times to convince the furies that they will yield to his wishes and allow him to pass. The repetition of the phrase aids in the convincing and allows Viardot to sing the phrase in three different manners. On the final repetition Berlioz writes a fermata over “votre,” which likely indicates the insertion of a cadenza. This is supported by manuscript pages that feature a variety of potential cadenzas to be used at this point (Figure 5.4).⁶¹



Figure 5.4. Cadenza sketches for “La tendresse qui me presse.”⁶²

Although the exact source of these cadenza sketches is unknown, it is likely that Viardot and Berlioz created them together, and she used one in performance. A cadenza employed at this

⁶¹ These manuscript pages are located at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, F-Pn, MS 1522. It is unclear whose hand they are in, although Fauquet believes that based on Viardot’s frequent use of cadenzas they were likely sketches shared between herself and Berlioz

⁶² Fauquet, 207.

point allows Orphée to differentiate his final plea for the furies' permission to enter the Underworld and demonstrates that he knew how to use his voice as a tool to get what he wanted. Each cadenza features a vocal line that explores a large vocal range, in singing both high and low Orphée sings in a way that appeals to the entirety of the furies' emotions. Additionally, each cadenza ends with a descending fifth from dominant back to tonic, proving Orphée's resolve to complete his descent into the Underworld. Although it is unclear which, if any of these cadenzas Viardot used, her choice to include one at this moment further reveals her understanding of the varied dramatic uses of a cadenza.

Viardot executed her "culminating triumph" of musical and dramatic skill in Orphée's final aria, "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice."⁶³ However, it did not meet Berlioz's complete approval for venerating Gluck's work. Despite his claims that she "makes of it precisely what it is wanted to be; one of those prodigies of expression," he admonished her for a "deplorable feature of her performance, occurring at the end of this air."⁶⁴ He continued to describe the alteration:

It consists of a change, produced by a holding note which she makes upon the high G, and which obliges the orchestra to stop, instead of proceeding precipitously towards the conclusion, as Gluck had written; and which also leads to a modification of the harmony, as well as to the substitution of the chord of the dominant for that of the sixth upon the subdominant: in short, it is the contrary of what Gluck intended. Why should there also be some textual alterations; and a few misplaced roulades in a recitative to reproach her with?⁶⁵

⁶³ Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas*, 19.

⁶⁴ Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas*, 19, 21.

⁶⁵ Berlioz, *Gluck and His Operas*, 21.

Although this alteration is not found in any of the printed scores or editions, it may have looked similar to the cadenza found in the manuscript sketches (Figures 5.5 and 5.6).⁶⁶



Figure 5.5. Cadenza for “J’ai perdu mon Eurydice.”

Figure 5.6. *Orphée*, Act IV, “J’ai perdu mon Eurydice,” mm. 43–50 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), 132–3.

⁶⁶ Original manuscript sketches found in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, F-Pn, MS 1522. This notated transcription appears in Fauquet, 209.

In the score, Berlioz notated a fermata above “déchire,” indicating the possibility for a cadenza, which did not appear in Gluck’s original (Figure 5.7) but did appear in the 1774 Paris version (Figure 5.8). Given that the cadenza extends up to a G5, as Berlioz described, and that it occurs before the *tempo plus animé* (marked *premier mouvement* in the 1774 Paris score) and returns “precipitously” back to the main aria’s theme, it is probable that this is where Viardot inserted her cadenza.



Figure 5.7. *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Act III, “Che farò senza Euridice,” mm. 46–50 (Paris: Appresso Duchesne, 1764), 132.



Figure 5.8. *Orphée et Eurydice*, Act III, “J’ai perdu mon Eurydice,” mm. 35–9 (Paris: Mr. Lemarchand Editeur, Md. de Musique, rue Fromanteau, Maison du Sellier, 1774), 149.

Viardot’s insertion of the cadenza at this point demonstrated her same rationale for inserting cadenzas throughout the opera: it enhanced the dramatic effect of the aria. At this point in the opera Eurydice just died as Orphée brought her back to earth, because she believed he did not love her anymore as he refused to look at her. When Orphée tried to look at her to reassure her of his devotion, she expires, and Orphée wonders how he can live without her. This aria embodies a breaking point for Orphée. Throughout the course of the opera he bravely travels to the Underworld, masterfully persuades the furies to grant him passage, and rescues his beloved, but in a moment of human weakness all hope is lost when

he looks at her. Thus, Gluck and Berlioz designed this aria as a heart-wrenching expression of hopelessness (Figure 5.9).

J'ai perdu mon Euridice Rien n'égale mon malheur Sort cruel! quelle rigueur! Rien n'égale mon malheur! Je succombe à ma douleur. Euridice, Euridice, réponds. Quel supplice! réponds-moi. C'est ton époux fidèle, entends ma voix qui t'appelle.	I lost my Euridice Nothing equals my grief Cruel fate! what severity! Nothing equals my grief! I succumb to my pain. Euridice, Euridice, answer. What torture! answer me. It is your faithful husband, hear my voice calling you.
J'ai perdu mon Euridice ... Mortel silence! Vaine espérance! Quelle souffrance! Quel tourment déchire mon coeur!	I lost my Euridice... Deadly silence! Vain hope! What suffering! What torment tears my heart apart!
J'ai perdu mon Euridice ...	I lost my Euridice

Figure 5.9. *Orphée*, Act IV, “J’ai perdu mon Euridice,” translation by Lydia Bechtel.

Viardot understood the despair she needed to express, and she found an ideal opportunity to heighten the drama at the text “tears my heart apart.” She inserted the cadenza at this point to convey the suffering Orphée experiences, and chose one made up almost entirely of leaps to portray this tearing apart of his heart. One of the leaps is a descending tritone from F# to C, which represents his pure agony and Eurydice’s return to the Underworld. Berlioz felt that the cadenza slowed the momentum and ruined Gluck’s intention; however, it allows Orphée to pause and reflect on the loss of Eurydice, and the pain he feels, before he finishes the aria. Thus, Viardot’s inclusion of the cadenza is not a “misplaced roulade,” but a well-considered musical-dramatic addition to the score.

Concealment

Despite Viardot's collaborative efforts on *Orphée*, Berlioz maintained the attitude of "solitary genius," refusing to acknowledge her for her contributions, and recognizing only himself and Gluck as authors of the work.⁶⁷ As evinced in his writings, he felt strongly that composers held the supreme role in creating music:

The master is the *Master*; this name was not unjustly given to the composer; it is his thought that must act entirely and freely on the listener, through the intermediary singer; it is he who dispenses light and casts shadows; it is he who is the king and is accountable for his actions; he proposes and disposes; his ministers must have no other purpose, to aspire to any other merits than those of well conceiving his plan, and, by placing himself [the performer] exactly from his [the composer's] point of view, ensuring its realization.⁶⁸

Berlioz referred to the composer as "master" and "king," reducing the singer to the role of "intermediary," and placed all artistic ownership on the composer. Although he wrote this in 1852, seven years before his collaboration with Viardot, he clearly maintained this idea of his superiority as he actively chose to exclude any evidence of her or Saint-Saëns's collaboration from his memoirs.⁶⁹

Despite Berlioz's attempt to omit evidence of Viardot's collaboration, it still exists. In *Orphée*, Viardot's most obvious contribution to the score and performance persists in her

⁶⁷ For further discussion on the "solitary genius" as it relates to Viardot's work with Meyerbeer and Gounod see Chapters 3 and 4.

⁶⁸ Hector Berlioz, *Les Soirées de l'orchestre*, ed. Bruno Messina (Lyon: Symétrie, 2012), 87–8. "Le maître, c'est le *Maître*; ce nom n'a pas injustement été donné au compositeur; c'est sa pensée qui doit agir entire et libre sur l'auditeur, par l'intermédiaire du chanteur; c'est lui qui dispense la lumière et projette les ombres; c'est lui qui est le roi et répond de ses actes; il propose et dispose; ses ministers ne doivent avoir d'autre but, ambitionner d'autres mérites que ceux de bien concevoir ses plan, et, en se plaçant exactement à son point de vue, d'en assurer la réalisation." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁶⁹ Saint-Saëns also contributed to *Orphée* and Berlioz failed to recognize him for his contribution. See Fauquet, 220.

placement and employment of cadenzas. However, as shown in their correspondence, she contributed to sections of music across the work, but their specific location in the score is often unclear. In a letter from September 8, 1859 he wrote to her “everything you say about the first act of *Orphée* is already marked in pencil in my scores and works very well. The other revisions in the second and third acts are also quite feasible, and will be done, don’t you worry.”⁷⁰ Later, Berlioz told her that he and Carvalho have debated the ballets, but that “what I tell you of Carvalho’s intentions is entirely between us.”⁷¹ He wanted to confide in her and trusted her as a confidant, but did not want others to know of this relationship.

Berlioz continued to seek Viardot’s advice as the performance approached. A month before the November 18 premiere of the opera, Berlioz expressed his concern for some of her orchestration recommendations:

How do you want me to allow myself to instrument the song by Gluck, I who have so often exterminated people who took such liberties? Besides, the instruments that we add would do nothing; the aria is ridiculous, the orchestra which accompanies it is laughable, and the basses are comical, the whole would remain grotesque. However, your song will save everything; be on this matter without worry.⁷²

⁷⁰ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 16. “Tout ce que vous indiquez pour le I^{er} acte d’*Orphée* est déjà marqué au crayon sur mes partitions, cela va supérieurement. Les autres arrangements au second et au troisième actes sont très faisable aussi, et cela sera fait, soyez sans inquiétude.” Translation by Joël-Marie Fauquet.

⁷¹ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 31. “Ce que je vous dis des intentions de Carvalho est tout a fait entre nous.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁷² Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 45. “Comment voulez-vous que je me permette d’instrumenter le morceau de Gluck, moi qui ai tant de fois exterminé les gens qui prenaient de telles libertés? D’ailleurs, les instruments qu’on ajouterait ne feraient rien; l’air est ridicule, l’orchestre qui l’accompagne est risible, et les basses en sont cocasses, le tout resterait grotesque. Cependant votre chant sauvera tout; soyez à ce sujet sans inquiétude.” Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

It seems that in his letter Berlioz referred to L'Amour's aria, "Soumis au silence," as the ridiculous aria to which Viardot suggested a change in orchestration.⁷³ The orchestration itself includes bassoon, strings, and oboe, so it is possible Viardot suggested additional instruments to fill out the texture. By rejecting her ideas, Berlioz reminded Viardot that he and Gluck held the final say in revisions, and that in his eyes her role was solely that of performer.

While the previous letters clearly show how Berlioz mentioned and incorporated her suggestions, and confided in her the details of the revisions process, the most telling letter is one from October 1, 1859 which he began, "Chère *collaborateur*." If Berlioz did not actually see Viardot in this light he never would have addressed her in such a manner.⁷⁴ In the body of the letter he further implied their collaborative relationship:

Would you be so kind as to send me back the fourth act? and I will return it to you immediately deprived of one of the arranger's faults. I have just sent my whole world to the Théâtre-Lyrique, I apologize to Carvalho. If you stay at home tonight, are you in great danger of seeing me again?⁷⁵

⁷³ Gluck and Berlioz, *Orphée*, 29–31. "Soumis au silence" also precedes Orphée's aria "Amour, viens rendre à mon âme" which is likely the song Berlioz referred to as Viardot saving the opera. Adding to the ridiculous nature of this aria, as Berlioz describes it, is the shallow text in which L'Amour trivially encourages Orphée to save Eurydice.

⁷⁴ In Berlioz's letters from 1859–63 he did not address any other person in this manner. He also referred to people in the way in which he viewed them and their relationship. For example he referred to Léon Carvalho as "mon cher Directeur," Franz Liszt as "cher ami," Édouard Plouvier as "mon cher poète," and Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein as "chère princesse," which proves that he recognized Viardot as his collaborative partner during this period. Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 79, 57, 168, 543.

⁷⁵ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 37. "Voulez-vous avoir la bonté de me renvoyer le quatrième acte? et je vous le rendrai tout-à-l'heure privé d'une des fautes de l'arrangeur. Je viens d'envoyer tou mon monde au Théâtre-Lyrique, on m'excusera auprès de Carvalho. Si vous restez chez vous ce soir, vous courez grand risque de me revoir?" Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

In this letter he requested that she send him the manuscript of the fourth act she possessed so that he could fix an error, and then he expressed his nervousness at sending his score to Carvalho. In this way he not only revealed their collaboration, but also that he considered her an artistic adviser. Berlioz, who so scrupulously sought to erase her from the work later in life, knew at the time that she contributed a great deal to *Orphée*.

Viardot also served in a collaborative role for Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, which is alluded to in their correspondence and again excluded from his memoirs. On October 11, 1859 he wrote to her: "Here are the five acts, here is the libretto, here is everything. I will bring you the large score of the 4th act myself which you want to reduce a bit for the piano and we will study together the orchestral drawings that must be sacrificed."⁷⁶ This confirms Viardot's role in creating his piano reductions which her daughter Louise alluded to in her memoir.⁷⁷ He continued in a letter from late October: "Thank you, dear critic, for sending me my two scores. They are, on leaving your home, like those flags that come back from wars 'More beautiful when they are mutilated.'"⁷⁸ Here, Berlioz showed that he appreciated Viardot's harsh criticism and edits of his works. However, despite his reliance on her for assistance and

⁷⁶ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 41. "Voilà les cinq actes, voilà le libretto, voilà tout. Je vous porterai moi-même la grande partition du 4ème acte dont vous voulez bien réduire un morceau pour le piano et nous étudierons ensemble les dessins d'orchestre qu'il faut sacrifier." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁷⁷ Héritte-Viardot, 50.

⁷⁸ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 52. "Merci, chère critique, de me renvoyer mes deux partitions. Elles sont, en sortant de chez vous, comme ces drapeaux qui reviennent des guerres 'Plus beaux quand ils sont mutilés.'" Translation by Lydia Bechtel. Although it is possible that he refers to *Orphée* in this letter, it is more likely *Les Troyens* given her recent work on the piano score.

continual reference to her as “ma chère critique collaborateur,” he still failed and refused to recognize her contributions publicly for fear of tarnishing his image as a genius composer.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The process of revising and producing *Orphée* provided Berlioz with an opportunity to focus his creativity, rather than dwell on the instability of his mental health, and it proved a rewarding and successful venture. The production received scores of positive reviews for the revival itself, as well as Pauline Viardot’s performance.⁸⁰ Critic Henry Chorley captured the fervor with which audiences flocked to see the opera and Viardot especially:

This originating faculty, — in spite of many drawbacks, which are never to be lost sight of, by those who admit while they admire, — accompanied by great versatility, give Madame Viardot a place of her own, not to be disputed ... It has been proved, once more, and perhaps most significantly of all in her latest and most arduous undertaking — the revival of Gluck’s *Orphée*, and the triumph of it in modern Paris, as beyond any triumph which the most sanguine and enthusiastic lover of the ancients could have anticipated. It is something to have lived to see such an event, in musical days during which Signor Verdi is King ... Patched, altered, transformed, at first — written (it may be) in haste and carelessness — there is no other opera, in the world’s long list, which with merely three female voices and a chorus, can return to the stage like this, in days like ours, to make the heart throb and the eyes fill.⁸¹

Chorley’s positive critique continued for several more paragraphs, but here he complimented Viardot’s musico-dramatic talents while also pointing out the significance of *Orphée*’s

⁷⁹ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 94. Undated letters from the end of 1859 to early 1860.

⁸⁰ For additional information concerning the opera’s positive reception see Barsham, 96–7; Cofer, 142–59; Fauquet, 200–2. An album containing letters from fans and admirers of Viardot’s performance of *Orphée* is held at Harvard’s Houghton Library. US-CAh, MS Mus 264 (65).

⁸¹ Henry Fothergill Chorley, *Thirty Years’ Musical Recollections*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862), 2: 55–6.

success at a time when Verdi and contemporary composers dominated the opera house. Beyond a positive critical reception, *Orphée* also ran for over 150 performances, 121 of which included Viardot in the title role.⁸² The success of the work continued Berlioz's "diversion" from his troublesome mental state, and set up his next projects with the Théâtre Lyrique, producing *Les Troyens* and *Alceste*.⁸³

Viardot and Berlioz never replicated their artistic partnership established in *Orphée*, and a falling out took place shortly after *Orphée*'s performance run. Despite their being forced to work on *Alceste* together in 1861, they failed to collaborate because Berlioz insisted on "the absolute fidelity of interpretation for Gluck's operas."⁸⁴ In an acrimonious letter to Viardot, he outlined his reasons for refusing to take part in the production of *Alceste*:

Nothing happened and I did not try to dissuade Royer from hiring you, but rather from mounting *Alceste*. I see all the devastation that we are going to make by writing in this poor sublime score, and I foresee those that we will do without writing them; I see that you cannot choose to abstain from making changes in the final cadences of the arias and that you will introduce others in the recitatives and that perhaps you will believe to do nothing but a very simple [change] later, by publishing these variants, as you did for Orphée's aria. These are the only reasons which have led me to refuse three times to entrust me with reviving *Alceste*.⁸⁵

⁸² Fitzlyon, 356.

⁸³ Fitzlyon, 345.

⁸⁴ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 221. Letter from May 31, 1861 to Alphonse Royer. "La fidélité absolue d'interprétation pour les operas de Gluck est aussi necessaire ... " Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁸⁵ Berlioz, *Correspondance Générale*, 6: 223. Letter from June 1861. "Il ne s'est rien passé et je n'ai pas cherché a dissuader Royer de vous engager, mais bien de monter *Alceste*. Je vois tous les ravages qu'on va faire par écrit dans cette pauvre sublime partition, et je prévois ceux qu'on y fera sans les écrire; je vois que vous ne pouvez pas vous décider à vous abstenir de faire des changements dans les cadences finales des airs et que vous en introduirez d'autres dans les récitatifs et que peut-être vous croirez ne rien faire que de fort simple plus tard, en publiant ces *variantes*, comme vous avez fait pour l'air d'Orphée. Voilà

In this letter, Berlioz made clear his resentment over Viardot's interpretation of Orphée, and how she might defile another Gluck work. Despite his animosity toward the task, Berlioz eventually agreed to help mount the production of *Alceste*.⁸⁶ The production proved successful, but not to the same extent of *Orphée*.⁸⁷

Because of the bitterness which plagued their friendship after *Alceste*, when *Les Troyens* finally premiered at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863, he chose not to cast Viardot and she chose not to attend.⁸⁸ This upset Berlioz, who wrote to Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein:

The misery of the human heart! Mme Viardot, who is doing nothing in Baden-Baden, didn't come; Mme Stoltz, who was in Paris, didn't come; neither of them have written to me. *Both* of them wanted to play Dido! They won't forgive me. Roger was furious not to be given the role of Aeneas, but he has only one arm and no voice! At least, after the first performance, Roger wrote me a charming letter (with his left hand, poor boy).⁸⁹

Troubled by her lack of attendance and her apparently conscious decision not to write him a congratulatory letter, Berlioz understood the implications of her choices concerning their friendship. Thus, this letter holds the final evidence of the conclusion of their friendship, and the end of Viardot's role as counselor and physician.

les seules raison qui m'ont amené a refuser par trois fois de me charger de remettre en scène *Alceste*." Translation by Lydia Bechtel.

⁸⁶ Fitzlyon, 360.

⁸⁷ Fitzlyon, 360.

⁸⁸ Fitzlyon, 362.

⁸⁹ Berlioz, *Selected Letters of Berlioz*, 423. Letter from November 19, 1863.

Berlioz's unstable mental condition meant that Viardot sometimes served in an advisory role to the troubled composer. However, despite her attempts to counsel Berlioz, he remained averse to her assisting in the arrangement of Gluck's *Orphée*, as he felt Gluck and himself should be the leading influence in the revision of the work. Berlioz ignored the dramatic impetus of Viardot's musical choices and the resulting enormous success of the work; which illustrated his lack of confidence in her abilities and decision to conceal their collaboration. This, coupled with his temperamental nature, led to the dissolution of their friendship. However, without Viardot's encouragement during this time Berlioz might have experienced a more significant psychological breakdown, which would have hindered his future musical prospects at finally having *Les Troyens* premiered.

CHAPTER 6
REFLECTIONS ON COLLABORATION

“I know that I can bestow as much friendship — unwavering, self-sacrificing, unselfish, firm, tireless friendship — as any human can give. I love more than I can say.”¹ Pauline Viardot placed great value on friendship, an approach that impacted her collaborations with Giacomo Meyerbeer, Charles Gounod, and Hector Berlioz. She emphasized friendship and collaboration with each composer, but the results of their friendship, artistically and personally, varied significantly. Understanding Viardot’s diverse collaborative relationships with Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Berlioz reveals her profound impact on nineteenth-century French opera. This understanding should encourage future research on her artistic endeavors, as well as the role of collaboration between other musicians from the period.

Viardot approached her partnership with Meyerbeer on *Le prophète* as a business endeavor, in which both parties found mutual benefit. Having starred in Meyerbeer’s operas previously, the two had already established a positive working relationship, and their work together on *Le prophète* faced few collaborative complications. In fact, the greatest impediment to their collaboration was in failing to ensure Viardot’s initial casting. As they worked together Viardot openly provided musical and dramatic input, which Meyerbeer often implemented in the score. The final result proved fruitful for both musicians, providing Viardot with her celebrated Paris Opéra debut, and Meyerbeer with another financial and artistic success.

¹ Anna Eugénie Schoen-René, *America’s Musical Heritage: Memories and Reminiscences* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1941), 144.

When Viardot met Charles Gounod she knew that she had made a lifelong friend and a collaborative partner in this talented young composer. Having learned from her collaboration with Meyerbeer Viardot in turn supported the young Gounod to get his own start at the Paris Opéra. Thus, she arranged his operatic premiere with the help of the Opéra's director Nestor Roqueplan and librettist Émile Augier. Unlike Meyerbeer and Viardot's strictly business collaboration, Gounod and Viardot's partnership developed into a sincere friendship, both personal (when Viardot opened her home at Courtavenel to Gounod and his mother after the loss of his brother) and professional, in the revisions of *Sapho*, which Gounod referred to as "our oeuvre."² Unfortunately, their collaboration did not prove financially successful, and the opera received relatively poor reviews. However, some critics like Berlioz and Henry Chorley took note of Gounod's talents, and the artistic introductions he made through Viardot allowed him to continue his path toward operatic success.

In her partnership with Hector Berlioz, Viardot pursued a collaborative relationship that combined a close friendship (as she did with Gounod) and a more professional interaction (as she did with Meyerbeer). She had to combine these two approaches to meet the emotional needs of Berlioz's tempestuous personality. At the beginning of their friendship Viardot served as a "counselor and physician" to Berlioz, and like she did with Gounod, invited him to Courtavenel to rest from his neuralgia and stressful relationship with Marie Recio.³ During this time and in the months that followed, Berlioz and Viardot exchanged musical ideas for *Orphée* and *Les Troyens*. Berlioz's strong opinions on the

² Charles Gounod, *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot*, ed. Melanie Von Goldbeck (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2015), 127.

³ Patrick Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia as Berlioz's Counselor and Physician," *Musical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July 1973): 389.

composer as the sole interpreter of a work, and the singer as an “intermediary” in the artistic process reduced his perception of Viardot’s collaborative role in *Orphée*.⁴ Thus, when the two worked together on *Alceste*, their partnership was far more business oriented and he limited her artistic input. When the time came for Berlioz to write his *Memoirs* he specifically omitted Viardot’s role as a collaborator and mentioned her only once, despite the impact her friendship had on “sustain[ing] him through a critical period.”⁵

Each of these collaborations reveals a great deal about Viardot’s ability to work with composers who had very different personality types at different junctures in their careers. They also point to the relatively unexplored discussion of collaboration in nineteenth-century opera. The idea of works of genius stemming from a singular source pervaded nineteenth-century literature, art, and music; as an idealistic society revered profound intellect.⁶ The genius narrative is evident in studies of Charles Dickens,⁷ Caspar David Friedrich,⁸ and

⁴ Hector Berlioz, *Les Soirées de l’orchestre*, ed. Bruno Messina (Lyon: Symétrie, 2012), 87.

⁵ Hugh Macdonald, *Berlioz*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1982), 62.

⁶ Robert Nisbet, “Genius,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 6, no. 5 (1982): 99.

⁷ *Charles Dickens: A Tale Of Ambition And Genius*, dir. Milton Lage (New York: A & E Network, 1995); Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens: A Life Defined by Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Julian Wolfreys, *Dickens’s London: Perception, Subjectivity and Phenomenal Urban Multiplicity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

⁸ Nina Amstutz, “Caspar David Friedrich and the Aesthetics of Community,” *Studies in Romanticism* 54 (Winter 2015): 447–75; Herman Beenken, “Caspar David Friedrich,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 72, no. 421 (April 1938): 170–5; and Laura Dolp, “Between Pastoral and Nature: Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis and the Landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 27 (2008): 205–25.

Ludwig van Beethoven.⁹ While scholars recognize the importance of the solitary genius ideology to understanding the nineteenth century, literary scholars have completed the most thorough research on the role of collaboration. A number of literary scholars have discussed the mythos of the solitary genius, and the reality of collaboration in nineteenth century literature.¹⁰ Unfortunately, art historians and musicologists have not been so quick commit to this research, which threatens past studies of composers and their assessment of “greatness.” If Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Berlioz were no longer considered solitary creators, the “great” composer narrative perpetuated in musicology shifts.¹¹ This narrative narrowed the

⁹ Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); K.M. Knittel, “Pilgrimages to Beethoven: Reminiscences by His Contemporaries,” *Music & Letters* 84, no. 1 (Feb. 2003): 19–54; Nisbet, 106–7; François Martin Mai, *Diagnosing Genius: The Life and Death of Beethoven* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007); George R. Marek, *Beethoven: Biography of a Genius* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969); and James O. Young, “On the Enshrinement of Musical Genius,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 45, no. 1 (June 2014): 47–62.

¹⁰ Claire Davison, *Translation As Collaboration: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and S.S. Koteliansky* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Christina Haynes, “Reassessing ‘Genius’ in Studies of Authorship: The State of the Discipline,” *Book History* 8 (2005): 287–320; Kineret S. Jaffe, “The Concept of Genius: Its Changing Role in Eighteenth-Century French Aesthetics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1980): 579–99; Bette London, *Writing Double* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Mary Elizabeth McCulley, “A Tasteful Collaboration: Belletristic Rhetoric and Women’s Rhetorical Arts in Nineteenth-Century British Literature” (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2016); Victoria Ford Smith, “Between Generations: Imagination, Collaboration, and the Nineteenth-Century Child” (PhD diss., Rice University, 2010); Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Seth Whidden, “On Poetry and Collaboration in the Nineteenth Century,” *French Forum* 32, nos. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 2007): 73–88; and Heather Bozant Witcher, “Sympathetic Texts: Collaborative Writing in the Long Nineteenth Century (1814–1909)” (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 2017).

¹¹ Musicologists are shifting away from the “great” composer narrative in their studies. However, this idea is still present in many of the biographies of the composers discussed in this thesis. The first chapter of Robert Letellier’s *Meyerbeer Studies* is titled

scope of hundreds of years of potential musicological research, but it also ignored the careers of countless composers who were not fortunate to be labeled “great” at some point in history. Thus, recognition of collaboration and its impact on composers of the nineteenth century humanizes these “great” composers and allows for the discovery of new talented composers.

“Music’s Great Enigma: Giacomo Meyerbeer—Neglected Master of Grand Opéra,” and Letellier opens the chapter with a quote from Paul Bekker who labeled Meyerbeer “one of the ablest composers in the history of music...he was one of the greatest...the Paganini, Liszt and Berlioz of opera, the great composer-virtuoso.” Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Meyerbeer Studies: A Series of Lectures, Essays, and Articles on the Life and Work of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 19–20; Paul Bekker, “National Romanticism,” in *The Story of Music: An Historical Sketch of the Changes in Musical Form*, trans. M.D. Norton and Alice Korschak (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1927), 223–4.

Jennifer Jackson seeks to understand how Meyerbeer’s reception changed throughout history, and discusses the role of musicological hierarchy and how it relates to Meyerbeer. Although she does not specifically aim to elevate Meyerbeer toward genius status, she does position him as “a composer of integrity” and “one of the most forward-looking musicians of his day.” Jennifer Jackson, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: Reputation Without Cause?: A Composer and His Critics* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 276, 282.

James Harding refers to Gounod as, “the incarnation of modern French music,” “the patriarch,” and Harding states that “his musical writings were prolific,” and his oratorio *La rédemption* reflected his “modern genius.” James Harding, *Gounod* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1973), 205, 208.

Steven Huebner actually states that Gounod possessed “an extraordinary talent that we may justly say today fell short of genius,” but that he brought “the restoration of a higher sense of artistic purpose to the French stage.” In this way he is acknowledging and beginning to shift the genius narrative. Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 283.

The title of David Cairns’s biography of Berlioz says everything about how he viewed this composer: *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness*. In discussing the end of Berlioz’s life, Cairns expresses his pity for the “neglected genius,” but states that “he will take his place among the great composers.” David Cairns, *Berlioz: Servitude and Greatness*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2: 709, 779.

Hugh MacDonald’s biography of Berlioz appears in a series titled “The Master Musicians,” which again reinforces the genius narrative. He closes the biography with a striking comparison of Berlioz to Beethoven, and states that Berlioz stands as “the ideal of the romantic artist, an individualist who lived passionately in music against daunting.” Thus, Macdonald isolates Berlioz’s genius and situates him in the ranks of history’s other “great” composers. Hugh Macdonald, *Berlioz* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1982), 205.

Also, it helps us understand how society romanticized genius in a way that led to a dismissal of collaboration as a valued artistic practice.

If scholars recognize the role of collaboration in nineteenth-century opera it will open doors for further exploration of singer/composer relationships from the period. Throughout history when composers knew they were writing a role for a specific voice they often composed the role according to the singer's abilities. In the eighteenth century George Frideric Handel collaborated on operas with Francesca Cuzzoni, Faustina Bordoni, and indeed all the singers with whom he worked.¹² In the twentieth century, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears had a long-lasting artistic partnership explored by numerous musicologists in analyses of Britten's operas and songs.¹³ In the twenty-first century Jake Heggie's work with Frederica von Stade shows that composers still value collaboration.¹⁴ This evidence of collaboration throughout history demonstrates that to believe composers of the nineteenth

¹² Suzanne Aspden, *The Rival Sirens: Performance and Identity on Handel's Operatic Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Donald Burrows, *Handel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alison Clark DeSimone, "The Myth of the Diva: Female Opera Singers and Collaborative Performance in Early Eighteenth-Century London" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013); David Hunter, *The Lives of George Frideric Handel* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015); and C. Steven LaRue, *Handel and His Singers: The Creation of the Royal Academy Operas 1720–1728* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹³ Phillip Brett, Susan McClary, George E. Haggerty, and Jenny Doctor, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); James Conlon, "Message, Meaning and Code in the Operas of Benjamin Britten," *The Hudson Review* 66, no. 3 (Autumn 2013): 447–65; Clifford Hindley, "Britten's Parable Art: A Gay Reading," *History Workshop Journal* no. 40 (Autumn 1995): 62–90; and Lloyd Whitesell, "Love Knots: Britten, Pears, and the Sonnet," in *Rethinking Britten*, ed. Philip Rupprecht, 40–59 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Francisco Salazar, "Frederica von Stade & Her Collaboration with Jake Heggie," *Opera Wire*, June 1, 2017, <https://operawire.com/frederica-von-stade-her-collaboration-with-jake-heggie/>.

century existed in a bubble of singular genius neglects the valuable contributions of the artists with whom they worked. Thus, this thesis hopes to encourage future scholars to search for evidence of collaboration between composers and noted performers such as Rosine Stoltz and Gaetano Donizetti, Jenny Lind and Felix Mendelssohn, Giuditta Pasta and Vincenzo Bellini, Gustave Roger and Giacomo Meyerbeer, Felice Varesi and Giuseppe Verdi, Heinrich Vogl and Richard Wagner, to name a few. This emphasis on collaboration in music of the nineteenth century can be expanded beyond singers and composers to any artistic pair, thus revealing the interconnected nature of musical life in nineteenth century Europe, and a movement beyond the solitary genius narrative.

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VITA

Lydia Bechtel was born and raised on a cattle ranch in Greenwood County, Kansas. She received her Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance, *summa cum laude*, from Oklahoma State University, where she was named the Outstanding Freshman Music Major and earned an Honors College degree. She continued her studies at Colorado State University where she earned a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance. At CSU she served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in Voice and also taught Music Theory Fundamentals. She was named the Outstanding Graduate Student in Music at CSU in 2016, and inducted into Pi Kappa Lambda Honors Society. She began her graduate studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2017 to pursue a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance. In her first year of studies, the musicology faculty at UMKC encouraged her passion for musicology and she began concurrent studies in musicology. In 2019 she was named a P.E.O Scholar, and received a \$15,000 grant to fund her higher education and research projects. At UMKC, Lydia also served as Graduate Teaching Assistant in Voice, teaching music education, music therapy, and general music students. Additionally, she began teaching as an Adjunct Instructor of Applied Voice at Rockhurst University in 2019.

As a scholar and pedagogue Lydia has presented at the national and regional levels. In 2019 she presented a poster at the Association for Technology in Music Instruction national conference, "Projects for the Digital Age: Using Public Musicology and the Digital Humanities to Develop Student Research." Previously, she presented on Pauline Viardot at the 2018 College Music Society national conference in Vancouver with her paper, "Pauline Viardot's Transcriptions of Chopin's Mazurkas: A Study in Artistry," which later served as

the basis for her DMA lecture recital. While in Kansas City she has also adjudicated a number of high school vocal competitions, and been a clinician at several local high schools.

As a performer, Lydia has performed across the U.S. and abroad in operatic performances and recitals. Her operatic repertoire includes: Fanny (*La cambiale di matrimonio*); Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*); Le feu (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*); Lisette (*La rondine*); Mabel (*Pirates of Penzance*); and Ilia (*Idomeneo*). She's also sung the soprano solos in Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Coffee Cantata*, and Beethoven's *Mass in C Major*. Lydia has performed with Wichita Grand Opera, Varna International Opera Academy, the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS), Boulder Opera, SongFest, Opera in the Ozarks, the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, ICon Arts Romania, and the opera programs at her respective universities.

As a scholar, pedagogue, and performer Lydia is grateful that her musical studies have allowed her to pursue all of her passions within the discipline.