

Title and Abstract:

*Public Scenes*

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In the years immediately following the Unification, the official discourse surrounding the production and performance of opera manifests a renewed preoccupation with the audience. As if to signal the growing obsolescence of any previous pact between stage and auditorium, critics, composers, and intellectuals often comment on the attitude of “the public” in the theatre.

In an attempt to expand on a view that tends to confine mid-century Italian opera to the ritual theatricalization of Risorgimento politics, this paper proposes to focus on spectatorship. What emerges in most pressing terms from a variety of sources (operas, reviews, staging manuals) is the very question of how the public can be addressed, entertained, and ultimately interpellated.