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Rossini's Vocal Chamber Music: Form, Motivic Cohesion, and Text–Music Relationships in *La regata veneziana*

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Abstract Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) occupies a prominent place in nineteenth-century Italian vocal music, yet the interpretative and compositional importance of his post-operatic songs merits sustained attention alongside his celebrated operas. This study examines the three-song vocal cycle *La regata veneziana* (“The Venetian Regatta”), comprising *Anzoleta avanti la regata*, *Anzoleta co passa la regata*, and *Anzoleta dopo la regata*. Setting Venetian-dialect poetry by Francesco Maria Piave, the songs depict successive moments in a rowing competition through the changing emotional perspective of Anzoleta, who watches and encourages her beloved, Momolo. The article investigates how Rossini coordinates sectional design, recurring melodic motives, rhythmic figures, tonal movement, chromatic inflection, and piano accompaniment to connect three contrasting dramatic situations. Through comparative examination of the songs and selected notated excerpts, the discussion identifies relationships between formal continuity and expressive differentiation, particularly the recurrence and transformation of descending figures, repeated notes, and melodic leaps. Attention is also given to vocal phrasing, the articulation of Venetian words, and the collaborative responsibilities of singer and pianist. Placing the cycle in the context of Rossini’s later vocal output clarifies its distinction from the separate regatta-themed duet included in *Soirées musicales*. The study argues that the cycle’s artistic coherence emerges from an interaction of dramatic progression and recurring musical material rather than from surface similarity alone. Its findings offer a score-oriented basis for the interpretation and teaching of Rossini’s chamber vocal repertoire.

Index Terms Gioachino Rossini; vocal chamber music; *La regata veneziana*; formal analysis; musical motives; *bel canto*; text setting

1. Introduction

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) is widely associated with the extraordinary popularity of Italian opera during the early nineteenth century. His surviving operatic catalog is conventionally counted as 39 works, a figure reflected in programs devoted to his complete stage output [1]. His theatrical works consolidated an expressive vocabulary in which agile vocal writing, sharply articulated rhythmic patterns, and carefully controlled dramatic pacing work together to characterize action and emotion. Nevertheless, an understanding of Rossini solely through the operatic repertoire offers an incomplete account of his artistic development. After withdrawing from the regular composition of new operas, he continued to write music for voices and instruments, including pieces associated with intimate musical gatherings and with the collections later known as *Péchés de vieillesse* (“Sins of Old Age”). These smaller-scale compositions provide an important setting in which to consider the relationship between musical structure, verbal expression, and performance practice [2], [3].

Rossini’s contribution to nineteenth-century vocal composition is also connected with the development of *bel canto*, a term commonly used to describe a tradition of singing that

values flexibility, sustained legato, clarity of articulation, and expressive command. His writing frequently integrates these qualities into a strongly characterized dramatic framework. In the chamber repertoire, however, the absence of a full theatrical apparatus places particular responsibility on the individual singer and pianist. The articulation of a consonant, a change in rhythmic emphasis, or a subtle adjustment of phrasing may assume a narrative significance comparable to the movement of a character on an operatic stage. This difference of scale makes the study of vocal chamber music relevant not only to music history but also to the interpretation and pedagogy of nineteenth-century Italian song [4], [5].

The three *canzonettas* of *La regata veneziana* offer a particularly revealing example. The songs form part of Volume I, *Album italiano*, of *Péchés de vieillesse* and were first published together in 1878, after Rossini’s death. The collection places the same female character, Anzoleta, at the center of three connected scenes: anticipation before the race, excitement as the competitors pass, and celebration after her lover Momolo’s victory. The Venetian-dialect texts are attributed to Francesco Maria Piave, and the music sets them for solo voice and piano [3], [6]. Although the sequence can be appreciated

as three individual songs, the continuity of character, setting, and narrative invites interpretation of the group as a coherent vocal cycle.

The distinction between this cycle and another Rossini work called *La regata veneziana* is especially important for historical accuracy. The earlier work in *Soirées musicales* is a duet; it is not the same composition as the three songs beginning with *Anzoleta avanti la regata*. Conflating the two can lead to errors regarding authorship of the text, chronology, performing forces, and the musical evidence used in formal analysis. A reliable contextual account must therefore identify the particular work under discussion before interpreting its style and place in Rossini's output [6], [7].

The present study focuses on three mutually related aspects of the *Anzoleta* songs. The first concerns formal organization: the degree to which introductory figures, internal contrasts, returns, and concluding passages contribute to the distinct dramatic identity of each song. The second concerns motivic and harmonic relationships across the set, including stepwise movement, repeated notes, characteristic leaps, the treatment of the tonic–dominant relationship, and passages of chromatic or intensified harmonic motion. The third concerns text–music interaction and its implications for performance. Because the narrative is communicated through a single observer, changes in vocal pacing, accompaniment texture, and articulation can convey shifts from anticipation to uncertainty and, finally, to exhilaration.

Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative, score-oriented comparative approach. Each song is considered individually with reference to its sectional plan, melodic features, rhythmic activity, and harmonic direction. Representative musical excerpts are then compared across the three songs to examine whether the apparent contrasts conceal recurring compositional procedures. This approach seeks to distinguish observations supported by the notated material from interpretative associations about mood, movement, and characterization. It does not assume that a melodic resemblance by itself establishes a strict large-scale form; rather, such resemblances are examined alongside the continuity of text and dramatic situation.

The contribution of this examination lies in connecting close musical analysis with the practical questions facing performers and teachers. A singer approaching the cycle must shape the three emotional situations without treating them as disconnected miniatures, while the pianist must establish rhythmic momentum and respond to the voice's changing narrative emphasis. Reading the pieces together helps clarify how Rossini sustains continuity through melodic recurrence while allowing each song to develop its own local expressive profile. The discussion that follows first places the composer and the cycle in context, then examines formal design and musical motives, and finally considers harmonic language and the expressive implications of the analysis.

II. Compositional Characteristics of Rossini's Vocal Works and Their Influence on *Bel Canto*

Rossini's vocal writing occupies an important position at the intersection of inherited eighteenth-century Italian operatic conventions and the expressive priorities of the nineteenth century. His theatrical compositions combine memorable melody with detailed rhythmic organization, conspicuous changes of texture, and a remarkable responsiveness to dramatic situations. These qualities are particularly evident in the alternation between broad cantabile lines and more rapid, agile passages. Rossini's compositional approach contributed to an understanding of vocal virtuosity as an expressive resource rather than merely a display of technical accomplishment [2].

One important feature of his mature operatic practice was his increasing attention to the written specification of vocal ornamentation. In works such as *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra*, notated embellishments and passagework can be understood as part of the composer's efforts to coordinate vocal delivery with characterization and dramatic form. Such writing reduced some of the uncertainty associated with unrestricted improvisation, although it should not be interpreted as having eliminated the performer's artistic judgment or all traditions of ornamentation. The relationship between compositional control and singerly freedom remained a central issue in nineteenth-century Italian vocal practice [4].

Rossini's energetic use of repetition and dynamic accumulation is conventionally associated with the phrase "Rossini crescendo." Repeated patterns, progressively enriched orchestration, and mounting rhythmic insistence can intensify a dramatic episode even when the underlying melodic or harmonic material changes only gradually. These techniques demonstrate that musical effect may depend as much on the timing and transformation of a gesture as on the introduction of entirely new thematic ideas. In more intimate vocal pieces, related methods are adapted to smaller forces: the piano may sustain rhythmic energy while the vocal line develops the psychological implications of a word or phrase [8].

The composer's contribution to *bel canto* also requires attention to vocal characterization. Rossini composed demanding roles for varied voice types and helped redefine the expressive possibilities of male and female singers within the changing institution of nineteenth-century opera. His writing belongs to a broader history of changing casting practices and should not, however, be credited with single-handedly ending the use of castrato singers. The gradual development of new vocal expectations involved performers, theatres, institutions, and other composers as well as Rossini [9].

Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti are frequently discussed together as leading figures in the Italian *bel canto* tradition. Their works do not exhibit a uniform style, yet they share a concern with the expressive potential of the singing voice, the relationship between melody and poetic text, and the dramatic organization of vocal forms. Rossini's particular contribution is recognizable in his capacity to combine formal discipline with rhythmic animation

and vivid theatrical characterization. In his chamber vocal music, these characteristics often appear in concentrated form. Rather than treating chamber song as necessarily restrained or lacking dramatic contrasts, it is more accurate to recognize that intimate performing forces permit considerable emotional intensity through articulation, tonal color, phrasing, and carefully shaped dynamics.

This stylistic background establishes a useful framework for studying *La regata veneziana*. The three songs do not reproduce the structure of a staged opera, but they retain a dramatic progression that depends on changes in vocal character and accompaniment. Their performance therefore calls for both technical security and the ability to communicate a consistent narrative perspective across contrasting musical situations. Scholarship on historically and stylistically informed vocal interpretation provides a broader rationale for examining compositional choices in relation to performing practice [5].

III. Overview of Rossini's Vocal Chamber Music

Rossini's output for solo voice and piano extends across different phases of his creative life. Early pieces associated with his youth include songs such as *Se il vuol la molinara*, *Dolce aurette che spirate*, *La mia pace io già perdei*, *Il trovatore*, and *Beltà crudele*. These examples illustrate his sustained interest in texted melody beyond the requirements of the operatic stage. Their subjects range from personal reflection to forms of light lyric expression, offering a setting for melodic flexibility, transparent accompaniment, and distinctive phrase construction.

A second and particularly significant phase of vocal chamber composition belongs to the period following Rossini's withdrawal from the composition of new operas in 1829. His *Soirées musicales*, associated with the mid-1830s, comprises a collection of twelve vocal pieces, including songs and duets such as *Il rimprovero* and *La partenza*. The later *Péchés de vieillesse* is a separate and much larger body of vocal, piano, and chamber works, arranged in multiple volumes. Although these collections belong to Rossini's non-operatic output, they should not be treated as interchangeable or assigned the same chronology [3], [7].

The three Anzoleta pieces examined here belong to the *Album italiano* within *Péchés de vieillesse*, where they appear as Nos. 8–10. Published catalogs and performance materials associate the canzonettas with 1858, while the posthumous printed edition appeared in 1878. Their Venetian-dialect texts by Francesco Maria Piave unfold as a connected dramatic sequence for voice and piano. Thus, the historical significance of the set lies partly in its transformation of an animated public spectacle into the experience of one character whose emotional responses provide continuity across three short compositions [3], [6], [7].

The distinction between a public event and its chamber-musical representation is central to the cycle's expressive design. The piano can suggest movement on water, competition, and the heightened pulse of anticipation, while the vocal line

communicates Anzoleta's personal reactions. This interaction creates a miniature dramatic world without requiring theatrical staging. The singer's interpretation of the words and the pianist's handling of rhythmic figuration therefore become equally important to an intelligible realization of the scene.

IV. Historical and Poetic Background of *La regata veneziana*

The Regata Storica is an established Venetian celebration of rowing and civic spectacle. Its best-known modern form takes place along the Grand Canal and combines a ceremonial procession with competitive races. Historical accounts trace organized Venetian regattas at least to the medieval period, although a precise origin for the custom cannot be established solely from modern commemorative traditions. The event's visual setting—boats, spectators, prizes, and the movement of rowers through a crowded waterway—offers unusually vivid material for musical representation [10].

The nineteenth-century cultural setting of the songs also warrants consideration. Venice possessed a strongly recognizable local identity, expressed through its language, maritime practices, and urban traditions. By setting poetry in Venetian dialect rather than using standardized literary Italian, Rossini foregrounded the voice of an individual situated within that culture. The songs' texts employ direct address, affectionate expressions, and immediate observations of the race, allowing the singer to convey a personal perspective without the exposition required by a larger stage work. The dialect is therefore not an incidental decorative feature; it contributes to the characterization of Anzoleta and to the rhythmic relationship between speech and melody [3], [6].

The poems follow a simple but dramatically effective sequence. Before the race, Anzoleta urges Momolo to win and reminds him that she is watching. During the competition, she looks for him among the boats, worries about his position, and renews her encouragement. After the race, she congratulates the victorious rower and expresses affection and pride. This progression gives the set a narrative beginning, middle, and conclusion, while also providing distinct emotional situations for musical characterization.

Rossini's musical treatment of the regatta should be distinguished from an unverified biographical account of its origin. Although the manuscript originally attributed the songs to a personal visit by Rossini to the Venetian festival, the sources consulted for this revision do not independently establish that episode. The more securely documented points are the identity of the three songs, their association with the later *Péchés de vieillesse*, their Venetian texts by Francesco Maria Piave, and their publication history [6], [7]. Focusing on those facts avoids making an unsupported causal claim about the composer's precise inspiration.

The cycle's cultural interest is consequently inseparable from its musical construction. A spectator's excitement can be suggested through changes in tempo, accompaniment texture, dynamic pressure, and melodic register; affection and satisfaction may be represented through the return or relaxation of

those gestures. In this respect, the three settings provide a productive case study of how musical organization transforms a recognizable social event into an intimate, character-centered narrative.

V. Musical Analysis of *La regata veneziana*

Rossini's three canzonettas invite analysis on two complementary levels. Each song is a discrete composition with its own tonal emphasis, phrase structure, and rhythmic profile. At the same time, the continuity of Anzoleta's story raises the question of whether the songs share recurrent melodic patterns or formal strategies that contribute to a coherent larger design. This distinction is essential: narrative continuity is immediately apparent from the texts, whereas claims about precise motivic derivation, formal symmetry, and harmonic function require close attention to the musical notation.

The first song, *Anzoleta avanti la regata* ("Anzoleta Before the Regatta"), presents expectation and encouragement. The second, *Anzoleta co passa la regata* ("Anzoleta During the Regatta"), dramatizes uncertainty and increasingly intense competition. The third, *Anzoleta dopo la regata* ("Anzoleta After the Regatta"), turns to celebration and affectionate recognition. Across the cycle, the singer moves from anticipation through anxiety to elation while retaining the same dramatic identity. In parallel, the piano provides rhythmic movement, harmonic direction, and occasional musical commentary that extends the expressive implications of the text.

The following analysis addresses sectional form, melodic recurrence, and harmonic vocabulary. It also identifies potential consequences for interpretation, including vocal articulation, management of rapidly changing musical character, and balance between singer and accompanist. Formal labels and reported measure numbers are retained as analytical guides, but precise readings of pitches and chord functions must ultimately be confirmed against the edition used for the musical examples.

A. Formal Design and Dramatic Progression

1) First song: *Anzoleta avanti la regata*

The opening song is analyzed here as a contrasting binary design with an introduction, an intervening return of introductory material, and a short coda. Its broad tonal center is A-flat major. The reported succession of sections is Introduction–A(a+b+a+b)–B(c+c+d)–Retransition–A(a+b+a+b)–B(c+c+d)–Coda. The proposed outline marks structural landmarks at measures 1, 11, 30, 46, 52, 73, and 86. These numbers are retained here to preserve the analytical scheme, although the placement of boundaries and the original abbreviated key labels require checking against the complete score.

The first song uses 6/8 meter, which supports its forward-moving yet gently lilting character. The introduction commences with a descending octave melody. Three consecutive descending scales in identical rhythm, marked fortissimo (ff), create a powerful opening, vividly portraying the pre-race tension and rapid heartbeats. The lapping waves of the canal

gently rock the boats. The heroine, like the racers, anxiously watches the official stand, awaiting the start signal.

The exposition comprises two contrasting thematic ideas. The first phrase features a rhythm with forward momentum and predominantly stepwise melodic motion, imbuing the music with a lyrical, song-like quality. The second phrase, characterized by a more syncopated or "off-beat" rhythmic feel, employs repeated notes and descending melodic leaps, giving it a narrative character.

The first idea of the contrasting section appears to transform aspects of the preceding phrase. It retains some of the repeated-note characteristic while altering the rhythm and accompaniment figuration, thereby achieving unity within the contrast.

The interlude reintroduces material from the introduction. Following this, the sections are repeated with new lyrics, resembling a strophic song form. The song closes with a brief two-measure coda, bringing the earlier musical gestures to a compact and decisive conclusion.

2) Second song: *Anzoleta co passa la regata*

The second song is organized here as a modified contrasting binary design, preceded by an introduction and followed by a coda. Its proposed formal sequence is Introduction–A(a1+a2+a3)–B(b+b)–A'(a3+a4+a5)–B'(b'+b'+c+c)–Coda. The source outline identifies landmarks at measures 1, 19, 44, 59, 79, and 106. The source analysis identifies A minor, C major, D-flat major, and A major as successive tonal regions. This proposed reading differs from the principal key of A-flat major given in a published catalog and therefore requires careful checking against the score and the possible influence of editorial or arrangement differences [7].

The second song shifts to a 2/4 meter, creating a distinct rhythmic profile in comparison with the opening canzonetta. The introduction opens with a syncopated rhythm in the left-hand accompaniment, while the right hand plays rapid sixteenth-note figuration with a wave-like contour, vividly depicting the churning water and the bustling, intense atmosphere as the race commences.

The exposition primarily features fragmented melodic lines. Short notes interspersed with numerous rests create a broken, panting quality in the melody, effectively conveying Anzoleta's nervousness and excitement. The broken phrasing is closely related to the words "Ah! che smania! me confondo" ("Ah! What agitation! I am bewildered!"), through which Anzoleta voices her anxiety as she searches for Momolo. The short utterances and interruptions in the musical line allow the singer to communicate excitement without sacrificing rhythmic clarity. This is an instructive instance of text setting in which the temporal organization of the phrase helps define the character's immediate emotional state.

The contrasting section exhibits wider melodic leaps and incorporates chromatic harmonies, further heightening the musical tension. While the beginning of its melodic material differs from the exposition, its concluding phrases recall

melodic elements from the opening of the exposition, providing a sense of unity.

The subsequent sections are variations of the initial exposition and contrasting sections. Rossini maintains the established accompaniment patterns and core melodic intervals but introduces variations in the melodic notes and incorporates numerous octave leaps. These techniques intensify the dramatic character of the music, building to a powerful climax before the song concludes.

3) Third song: Anzoleta dopo la regata

The final song has a more expansive design than the preceding pair. This analysis proposes a compound ternary organization, Introduction–A(A+A')–Retransition–B(B+C)–A(A+A')–Coda. The recorded landmarks occur at measures 1, 31, 51, 82, 91, 114, 135, 154, and 195. The broad tonal point of return is F major, but the intermediate key indications in the original outline and the claimed total length of 207 measures require verification against the score.

A strongly articulated fortissimo (ff) gesture returns in the final song, contributing to its celebratory character. The introduction reuses the accompaniment figuration from the first song, and the rhythm reverts to a triple meter, creating a relaxed, leisurely, and joyful atmosphere. This thematic recall provides a cyclical connection to the beginning of the set, depicting the post-race scene in contrast to the pre-race anticipation.

The exposition is a developed binary form. Its principal theme features an ascending stepwise melody that moves from the middle to the upper register. This is followed by continuous descending stepwise scales and rapid figuration, imbuing the music with excitement and liveliness, effectively portraying Anzoleta's thrilled and joyous reaction to Momo's victory.

The middle section consists of two contrasting subsections. The first subsection is characterized by melodic leaps of fourths and fifths. The second features more linear melodic motion with repeated notes. The phrasing in both these subsections is notably more compact than in the A section, further conveying Anzoleta's heightened excitement.

The concluding return presents familiar thematic material with relatively limited formal alteration, firmly re-establishing the home key of F major and unifying the piece's tonality. The song, and indeed the entire cycle, concludes with several powerful, homophonic chords, bringing the music to a joyful and exhilarating close.

B. Distinctive Compositional Characteristics and Cyclic Connections

The three songs display pronounced contrasts in rhythmic profile, dramatic temperature, and local melodic character, yet their narrative organization encourages attention to recurring gestures. Stepwise motion, repeated tones, descending leaps, and changes in accompanying figuration provide several points of comparison. Rather than assuming that every

nineteenth-century vocal cycle consists of mutually independent songs, the present discussion examines how these specific compositions establish both differentiation and continuity. The interpretation of their larger design should be regarded as an analytical proposal, supported by the examples discussed below, rather than as a formally proven equivalence to a single instrumental movement.

1) Overall structural layout

Although *La regata veneziana* initially appears as a collection of three separate songs, they are intricately linked by their structure and melodic motives. A comparison of their core musical characteristics, summarized in Table 1, suggests several possible points of connection:

Table 1: Comparative summary of form, meter, melodic gestures, tonal anchors, and proposed dramatic functions in the three songs

	First Song	Second Song	Third Song
Title	Anzoleta Before the Regatta	Anzoleta During the Regatta	Anzoleta After the Regatta
Structure	Simple Binary	Simple Binary	Compound Ternary
Time Signature	6/8	2/4	3/8
Melodic Motives	1. Repeated notes 2. Stepwise ascent/descent 3. Descending wide leap	1. Repeated notes 2. Descending stepwise 3. Descending wide leap	1. Descending stepwise 2. Descending wide leap 3. Repeated notes
Melodic Skeletal Tones	A $\flat$, E $\flat$ (Tonic-Dominant)	A, E (Tonic-Dominant)	F, C (Tonic-Dominant)
Structural Function	Expository	Contrasting	Recapitulatory

Table 1 brings together the manuscript's proposed classification of the three songs by form, meter, motivic content, tonal anchors, and dramatic function. On this reading, the first song establishes the central characters and introduces recurring melodic gestures; the second transforms their expressive setting through heightened urgency and contrasting accompanimental activity; and the third provides a sense of completion through celebratory character and the return of recognizable melodic behavior. This sequence may be understood analogically as an exposition, a contrasting middle, and a concluding return. Nevertheless, the table's large-scale "ternary" interpretation is an interpretative comparison across separate songs rather than proof that Rossini composed a single continuous ternary form. The proposed links gain force from the combination of musical recurrence, shared characterization, and the narrative progression of Piave's poems. The prominence of tonic–dominant melodic relationships may contribute to unity, but such common tonal anchors alone are not sufficient to demonstrate direct thematic derivation.

2) Motivic Design and Transformation

While each of the three songs possesses a distinct overall melodic character, a closer examination of their constituent motives and core intervals reveals clear connections between them. The following analysis organizes the primary melodic material into recurring gestural categories, while recognizing that resemblance in general contour does not necessarily establish an exact motivic transformation:

The opening theme of the first song introduces material discussed here as a potential source of motivic relationships

across the cycle. Figure 1 reproduces the relevant notated excerpt:



Figure 1: Opening motivic material in the first song, illustrating stepwise motion and the gesture used as the basis of the subsequent comparative analysis.

The proposed thematic analysis identifies three recurrent gestural types in this principal theme:

1. **Motive a1:** Features a rhythm with forward momentum and continuous stepwise ascent. This is often subsequently inverted to form Motive a2, characterized by continuous stepwise descent.
2. **Motive b:** A descending leap, typically a fourth, moving from the tonic to the dominant.
3. **Motive c:** Consists of repeated notes, often emphasizing the tonic and dominant.

These three core motives provide a foundational basis for the subsequent musical development throughout the cycle.

For instance, the second phrase of the exposition in Song 1 is interpreted as combining the descending-leap and repeated-note figures, as illustrated in Figure 2:



Figure 2: Combination of descending-leap and repeated-note motives in a subsequent phrase of the first song.

These two thematic ideas help organize the exposition of the first song, although later phrases also depend on their local rhythmic and harmonic settings. Their recurrence is therefore most useful as evidence of a consistent compositional vocabulary rather than as proof that every melodic phrase has an identical origin.

In the contrasting section of Song 1, auxiliary figures are combined with descending leaps and repeated notes. Such combinations create the impression of continuity between contrasting phrases because rhythmic and intervallic features remain recognizable even when their sequence and accompaniment change.

The opening theme of the second song may be compared with the descending stepwise and leaping patterns introduced in Song 1. Figure 3 shows the excerpt used to support the suggested relationship between Motives a2 and b:



Figure 3: Proposed motivic transformation in the second song, relating its opening thematic idea to patterns heard in the first song.

The descending stepwise motion, maintaining its rhythm, develops into a descending arpeggio.

The contrasting section can be approached as a transformation of the descending motive into an arpeggiated figure. In Figure 4, the suggested connection is illustrated by a comparison of stepwise descent, arpeggiation, and a wider melodic leap:

Descending stepwise motion associated with Motive a2:



Figure 4: Descending stepwise and arpeggiated figures in the second song, used to discuss melodic transformation in the contrasting section.

The example is interpreted as an arpeggiated transformation alongside a recurring descending gesture.

This melody functions as the principal theme of the second section of the second song. Subsequently, the entire section repeats and develops this theme, thereby unifying the motivic material of the second piece.

The third song is substantially more extended than the first two, and the supplied analytical notes report a total length of 207 measures. Its melodic material is interpreted here in relation to the opening motives of the first piece; both the measure count and the exact derivations should be checked against the complete score.

The opening phrase combines ascending and descending stepwise movement that may be heard as rhythmic variants of Motives a1 and a2. The relevant passage appears in Figure 5:



Figure 5: Ascending stepwise motive in the third song, considered in relation to the cycle's earlier thematic material.

Motive a1 is characterized by continuous ascending stepwise motion.

The second phrase directly employs rhythmic diminution of motive a2, with the melody formed by the continuous repetition of descending stepwise motion. Subsequent phrases are interpreted in relation to the same three broad gestural types: descending stepwise motion, repeated notes, and descending leaps.

In summary, the entire work continuously develops the three principal motivic elements introduced in the first phrase.

Throughout the three pieces, Rossini adapts these recurring gestures through rhythmic adjustment, reordering, and changes in their harmonic setting. This approach not only accurately conveys contrasting moods and dramatic circumstances, but also supplies a plausible basis for motivic coherence across the group of songs. The degree of direct thematic derivation should, however, be judged by the pitches and rhythms of each notated example.

C. Harmonic Language and Expressive Contrast

While the harmonic language of the three songs generally adheres to a Classical framework, Rossini enriches it with a diverse vocabulary, as detailed below:

1) Tonal Shifts and Modulations

In the first piece, the prelude modulates once before the main theme, shifting from A-flat major to its parallel minor, a-flat minor. Later, the exposition section modulates through F minor to its relative major, A-flat major, resulting in a total of three modulations within the exposition.

The working harmonic analysis places the opening of the second song in A minor, followed by C major and a contrasting region identified as D-flat major around measure 56. A subsequent return to A minor and a closing A-major coloration are also proposed. This account offers a potential explanation for the tension and eventual release associated with the race, but it remains provisional because the published work catalog identifies A-flat major as the principal key of the canzonetta. Precise tonal boundaries, harmonic spellings, and the possibility of arrangement-specific transpositions must be checked in an identified score before these claims can be presented as established facts [7].

The final song is principally associated with F major. The proposed harmonic outline identifies excursions through D minor and the dominant region of C major before a more remote color is introduced around measure 115, where D-flat major is reported. The return to F major at the conclusion is understood as a tonal counterpart to the narrative's movement from uncertainty toward fulfillment. The precise harmonic rhythm and the designation of individual modulations, however, should be established through a bar-by-bar comparison with the selected edition. This qualification is especially important because brief tonicizations, modal mixture, and sustained changes of key serve different formal purposes and should not automatically be treated as equivalent events.

Taken together, the proposed tonal outlines point toward a varied harmonic vocabulary that includes relationships between parallel major and minor modes, closely related tonal regions, and more remote chromatic shifts. The analytical significance of such changes lies in their placement relative to Anzoleta's developing emotions. A darkened tonal color may intensify hesitation; a return to a stable major-key region may emphasize confidence or triumph. These are interpretative associations rather than automatic meanings inherent in specific keys. Their plausibility depends on melodic context,

the pacing of the accompaniment, and the precise wording of the sung text.

2) Secondary Dominants and Applied Harmonic Functions

According to the manuscript's proposed Roman-numeral reading, the first song contains two applied-dominant functions directed toward the mediant (V/iii), together with a longer succession of applied dominants in a contrasting passage. The analysis also identifies V/V in the second song and a wider group of applied-dominant labels in the third, including V/iii, V/IV, V/ii, V/V, and V/bVII. These labels indicate a possible use of secondary dominants to extend harmonic motion and intensify phrase endings. Their validity depends on the actual chord spelling, the immediate tonal context, and the status of each proposed tonicization, which should be checked against the musical score.

3) Sequential Dominant-Seventh Progressions

Beginning around measure 35 of the first song, the analytical discussion identifies a sequence of dominant-seventh harmonies that contributes to the forward motion of the phrase. The proposed progression is illustrated in Figure 6; its exact Roman-numeral analysis should be checked against the score before publication:



Figure 6: Notated passage from the first song used to examine the claimed sequential succession of dominant-seventh harmonies.

Proposed Roman-numeral reading: $V^7/ii-V^7/V-V^7-V^7/IV-IV$ (to be checked against the score).

This passage accompanies the continually repeated lyric "In pope, Momolo, no te incantar" (meaning "Momolo, at the stern, do not lose focus!"). Consequently, this sequence of dominant seventh chords creates an unstable and tense atmosphere, enhancing the music's momentum and amplifying the urgency conveyed by the lyrics.

4) Neapolitan and Chromatically Altered Harmonies

As previously discussed, the first piece features a chain progression of dominant seventh chords. Preceding this, in measure 34, the composer introduces a flatted sixth chord (bVI), facilitating a smooth transition into the following section.

The second song is also interpreted as employing a Neapolitan or chromatically lowered supertonic harmony. Figure 7 reproduces the passage near measure 28 cited for this claim. A conclusive functional analysis requires checking the actual chord spelling, bass, and tonal context:



Figure 7: Harmonic excerpt from the second song illustrating the manuscript's discussion of an altered predominant or Neapolitan sonority.

Proposed reading: ii–bII–V⁷–I (to be confirmed).

This harmonic progression is repeated twice subsequently, though with variations in lyrics and melody.

In summary, the harmonic language discussed in this analysis combines conventional dominant–tonic relationships with more chromatically inflected devices commonly encountered in nineteenth-century composition. These include distant modulations, the frequent application of secondary dominants, and the use of modal mixture (borrowed chords). These resources can lend instability, anticipation, or renewed stability to particular phrases, especially when their use corresponds to a change in the narrator's emotional position. For singers and pianists, awareness of these harmonic transitions may inform breath pacing, articulation, dynamic direction, and the relative prominence of accompaniment figures. Such interpretative possibilities must nevertheless be grounded in the details of an identified edition.

VI. Conclusion

The three songs of *La regata veneziana* present a striking example of Rossini's ability to construct a vivid dramatic sequence within the resources of solo voice and piano. Their narrative continuity is immediately apparent in the changing experiences of Anzoleta, while their musical coherence is suggested by recurring stepwise figures, repeated-note patterns, characteristic leaps, and the flexible treatment of accompanimental rhythm. Differences in tempo, meter, local formal design, and harmonic color prevent the songs from becoming interchangeable, yet those differences contribute to the dramatic progression from expectation to anxiety and, ultimately, to celebration.

The comparative discussion also emphasizes the importance of distinguishing analytical observation from musical interpretation. Similar motives may reinforce a sense of connection across songs without proving that the entire set constitutes a single continuous ternary form. Likewise, particular chord successions and tonal shifts may support emotional characterization, but the exact classification of a modulation or altered harmony must be based on the notes of an identified edition. These distinctions do not diminish the expressive interest of the work; rather, they strengthen the methodological foundation on which meaningful interpretation depends.

For performers, the cycle offers an opportunity to integrate vocal technique with dramatic awareness. Breath planning, legato continuity, rapid articulation, and the nuanced treatment of Venetian words must respond to the movement of the narrative. The pianist, meanwhile, helps establish the imag-

inative scene through rhythmic momentum and changes of accompaniment texture. In pedagogical contexts, studying all three songs together can encourage students to connect close reading of the score with questions of character, phrasing, diction, and ensemble coordination.

This study is a qualitative analysis of the cycle's compositional and interpretative features; it does not present new performance experiments or archival discoveries. Further research would benefit from direct comparison of the manuscript's reported measure numbers and harmonic labels with a specified critical or historical score, alongside a systematic examination of vocal recordings and nineteenth-century performance practice. Such work would offer a firmer basis for evaluating the degree of motivic unity and the expressive flexibility that distinguish Rossini's chamber vocal writing.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

The musical examples and score-based observations are described in the article; additional supporting materials may be requested from the author.

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