Images of Jenny Lind and the Construction of Identity for the Nineteenth-Century Female Performer

Joanna Elizabeth Penick

Virginia Commonwealth University

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Images of Jenny Lind and the Construction of Identity for the Nineteenth-Century Female Performer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

Joanna Elizabeth Penick
Bachelor of Arts, Elon University, 2003
Master of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

Director: Eric Garberson, Assistant Professor
Director of Graduate Studies
Department of Art History

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
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Abstract

IMAGES OF JENNY LIND AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY FOR THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY FEMALE PERFORMER

Joanna E. Penick, Master of Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

Director: Eric Garberson, Assistant Professor, Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Art History

This thesis examines how images of the Swedish singer Jenny Lind worked to distance her from the typical nineteenth-century view. Because of their position within the public sphere, female performers were thought to be sexually available and often had the reputation of prostitute. Lind achieved a level of success that made her one of the most famous women of the mid-nineteenth-century. She was known not only for her talent as a performer but also for her morality and piety. Examining the Lind images in the context of nineteenth-century social codes and feminist theatre history, it becomes evident that Lind was a different type of female performer. This thesis will also discuss
how photographic portraits of Lind adhered to codes for proper bourgeois portraits of
women in the nineteenth century, thus distancing her from the stigma that was attached to
stage performers.
In nineteenth-century European and American societies, the female performer was often likened to the prostitute. Many viewed society as divided into the public sphere and the private sphere. The public sphere was considered masculine and the private, domestic sphere was considered feminine. This demarcation of public and private complicated the role female performers played within nineteenth-century society. Their profession required them to be within the public sphere, yet the socially constructed codes of conduct mandated that because of their sex they were to remain in the private sphere. These women were viewed as immoral women who did not abide by the strict codes set in place. Despite this deeply entrenched ideology, one performer, Swedish singer Jenny Lind, operated within both the public and private spheres and was viewed not as a prostitute, but as the opposite, a highly moral and pious woman. Through a carefully executed publicity campaign, P.T. Barnum, the well-known American showman,
along with Lind, maintained Lind's reputation as a woman of the highest moral character throughout her tour of America. This persona, by most accounts accurate, was, for the most part, left unchallenged by the American public and differed greatly from the general view of female performers both before and after Lind.

This difference in projected persona can be observed in a comparison of images of Lind with images of other prominent female performers in the nineteenth century. The images to be examined include daguerreotypes and photographs as well as illustrations, engravings and paintings of the singer created during her stay in America. This thesis will also engage the argument presented by Susan A. Glenn in Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism. Glenn argues that female performers in the nineteenth century were exercising agency over their public image by the method of self-promotion. This thesis will argue that Lind was also exhibiting control over her public image, but in a manner that differed greatly from that of other female performers of the time. Many feminist authors, like Glenn, have positioned female performers of the nineteenth century as early feminists who created a space for sexual agency and created a position for women to act within both the public and the private sphere. Though these theories may be valid, female performers were still considered to be on the same level as prostitutes. Through an examination and comparison of images of Jenny Lind and well-known female performers such as Sarah Bernhardt, this thesis will argue that Lind positioned herself as a moral woman operating within the public sphere, a role left empty for years after Lind's tour of America during the middle of the nineteenth century.
Literature Review

Previous literature on Jenny Lind consists primarily of biographical studies of the singer. Biographies of Jenny Lind and her published letters give accounts of Lind’s personal life and her reactions to her popularity. While Lind did not specifically comment on the creation of her own images, she did discuss her self-perception. *The Memoirs of Jenny Lind,* published by G.G. Foster, and *The Memoirs of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt: Her Early Art, Life and Dramatic Career* (translated and edited by Henry Scott Holland and W.S. Rockstro) include Lind’s private letters.

Many texts have been dedicated to the life of P.T. Barnum, and while most accounts devote a chapter to Lind, it is only her American tour that is accounted for. Barnum’s personal letters and his autobiography, *The Life of P.T. Barnum,* offer insight into how he perceived Lind and the methods he utilized to promote the singer. *The Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum,* edited by A.H. Saxon, is one of the most valuable sources for the private writings of Barnum.

Most scholarship regarding the Lind images consists of brief citations in the literature on famous portraitists such as Matthew Brady and Marcus Aurelius Root, two of the more famous artists who took photographs of Lind. There are no texts devoted to the creation or reception of the Lind images, despite their great number. A strictly art-historical reading of the images does not exist and there is no mention of the Lind images in scholarship regarding nineteenth-century portraiture or photography. Lind has been omitted from all art-historical texts relating to the nineteenth century.
Theatre and music history texts provide an overview of the state of the theatre in
nineteenth-century Europe and America. Dorothy Jean Taylor’s *The American Theatre
During the Nineteenth Century* and Ron Engle and Tice L. Miller’s *The American Stage:
Social and Economic Issues From the Colonial Period to the Present*, both offer insight
into the general societal perception of the theatre in America in the nineteenth century.
More specifically, a wide variety of literature has been dedicated to the role the female
performer played on and off the stage. *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and
Audiences 1790-1870* by Faye E. Dudden and *Women in American Theatre, 1850-1870:
A Study in Professional Equity* by Edna Hammer Cooley both present an outline of the
position of the female performer in American theatre. Within the scholarship on women
in nineteenth-century theatre, a number of authors have studied the dominant view of
actress as prostitute. In *Bernhardt, Terry, Duse: The Actress in Her Time*, John Stokes,
Michael R. Booth and Susan Bassnett summarize this perception utilizing individual
actresses as case studies. *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in
Victorian Culture* by Tracy C. Davis focuses on the role of female performers as
prostitutes. *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* by Kirsten Pullen also
utilizes case studies of individual performers ranging from the seventeenth to the
twentieth century to provide a timeline of the equation of actress and prostitute. Like
Susan A. Glenn in *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*, Pullen
also assigns early female performers agency in redefining gender identity and female
sexuality.
Though Pullen addresses this issue, there are many studies solely devoted to a feminist reading of female performers and the role they played in advancing the position of women in the nineteenth century. In a dissertation from Ohio State University titled *From “Wax-Doll Prettiness” to “Lifeless Doughdoll”: The Actress in Relation to the Images of Woman in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Theatre*, Mardia J. Bishop discusses the manner in which actresses negotiated the public sphere. Other texts such as *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* and *Feminism in Theatre*, both by Sue-Ellen Case, and *Representations of Gender on the Nineteenth-Century American Stage*, a collection of papers presented at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in 2001 and subsequently published, offer a more specific account of feminist issues within the discourse on nineteenth-century female performers. Though an extensive collection of texts has been written on these issues, very few make any mention of Jenny Lind. In the few instances where Lind is cited, she is only used as a comparison to other performers, most often, Sarah Bernhardt. Lind’s moral character is placed in opposition to the way in which Bernhardt and others were viewed by the public in the nineteenth-century. The majority of the texts give full credit to Barnum in the creation of Lind’s public persona.

**Biography**

On October 6, 1820, Johanna Maria Lind was born to an unmarried mother in the parish of Klara in Stockholm, Sweden. Her father was Niclas Jonas Lind and her mother was Anna Maria Fellborg Rådberg and though the two lived together, they were not
married until Jenny was fifteen. Lind spent the first years of her life living with various families in Stockholm and moving frequently with her mother. Lind’s mother eventually moved back to Stockholm and Jenny began living with her permanently. She was enrolled at the Royal Opera in Stockholm at the age of nine where she was given lessons in dancing, theatre and singing. Lind began as an actress and appeared in minor roles as a child at the Royal Opera. It was on March 7, 1838, that Lind appeared for the first time in the role of Agathe in Carl Maria von Weber’s opera Der Freischütz. She received rave reviews and performed the opera nine times during 1838, all while also acting in other plays. Soon after, Lind decided to leave the theatre and devote herself entirely to opera and music.

During the next ten years she toured Europe and visited Paris, Berlin, Vienna and London numerous times. In London particularly, an initial “Lindomania” took place. A number of objects with Jenny Lind’s portrait were made available for sale: snuffboxes, matchboxes, boxes of chocolates and other candies, tea trays, handkerchiefs and figurines. The name “Jenny Lind” was given to every conceivable type of animal or pet and was especially popular for songbirds. Children named their dolls “Jenny.” It was an epidemic that swept the nation and reportedly men and women alike would faint if they were lucky enough to catch sight of her off the stage.

On all these trips, Lind always traveled with a female companion and stayed with well-to-do and highly respected families. Her virtue and innocence were emphasized in Europe to avoid the ill repute that was associated with theatrical professions. These facts point to Lind possessing a social intelligence that allowed her to create for herself the
right kind of reputation and avoid the reputation given to most actresses in the nineteenth century. The steps Lind took to distance herself from the reputation of actresses, singers and dancers show that the singer understood the social minutiae of the time and that she was tenaciously taking steps to overcome this reputation. Though most, if not all female performers in the nineteenth-century understood the risks of participation in the performing arts, none worked as hard as Lind to maintain the reputation of proper woman. She was invited by the Queen Mother for a private social gathering in London, and the Duke of Wellington invited her to his country estate with a promise that his guests would not talk about music. Perhaps most unusual, while in England, she was invited for a social call at the Bishop’s residence in Norwich. It was incredibly rare for any performer, male or female, to be invited to the Bishop’s private residence. These invitations from highly respected individuals give further evidence that Lind was able to overcome the generally accepted idea that female performers were immoral women. Still, Lind was concerned with her involvement in the theatre and eventually stopped performing in operas altogether. Lind would only give strictly musical performances, and though she performed songs from various operas, she did not take on any specific role or character. Lind was aware of the stigma associated with actresses and early in her career wished to distance herself from the profession. M.R. Werner in his book Barnum discusses Lind’s decision:

In 1849 she was at the height of her popularity, and in that year she had abandoned forever the medium through which she had gained that

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popularity, the opera. After much profound feeling rather than thought on the subject she had come to the conclusion, induced by the influences surrounding her throughout her life, that to sing in opera was immoral, that the stage was immoral, and that opera was merely drama set to music. ²

She was twenty-eight-years-old when she made this decision and her career included 677 opera performances: 418 appearances in Stockholm and 259 abroad. Though Lind was a huge success in Europe, she was still unknown in America, where, with the help of P.T. Barnum, she became the most well known female celebrity of her time.

In December of 1849 Lind was first approached by one of P.T. Barnum’s agents, John Hall Wilton, with the proposal for an American tour with Barnum as her manager. Lind, at first, refused the generous offer presented to her, but after seeing a picture of Barnum’s mansion, Iranistan, the singer took notice. Barnum had designed elaborate stationary, which featured pictures of Iranistan as well as his American Museum in New York. Lind had never seen a building like Iranistan and the image persuaded her to reconsider the offer.

Her final contract committed her to sing 150 concerts over, at the most, eighteen months. Barnum would pay the living and travel expenses for Lind, as well as a maid and a servant and provide a coach and horses that would be available at all times. Under the contract, Lind had control over how many times she would appear each week, how many songs she would sing at each performance and that she could sing for charity whenever she chose. Lind’s payment would be $150,000 for a guarantee of 150 concerts.

² M.R. Werner, Barnum (New York: Garden City Publishing Inc., 1926), 117.
Also included in the contract was the condition that Lind, under no circumstances, would appear in any operatic production. This is further support that she was attempting to distance herself from the stage and the reputation that went along with being an actress in the nineteenth century. The final amount deposited into a London bank before Lind’s departure was $187,500, which would equal approximately four million dollars today.

Barnum had to supply much of Lind’s salary on his own, selling real estate, the contents of his museum and mortgaging his mansion. He borrowed what money he could, but since many had never heard of Lind, much less heard her sing, she was a hard sell and Barnum came up $5000 short. It was words published in the New York Commercial Advertiser on February 22, 1850, that moved an American minister to write Barnum a check for the entire $5000 that he needed:

Perhaps I may not make any money by this enterprise but I assure you that if I knew I should not make a farthing profit, I would ratify the engagement, so anxious am I that the United States should be visited by a lady whose vocal powers have never been approached by any other human being, and whose character is charity, simplicity and goodness personified.3

It was this characterization of Lind and of his own altruistic motives that Barnum utilized to promote the singer over the months to come spanning 1850-1852. This presentation of

Lind struck a chord with the American audiences and would lay the groundwork for what was to become the American version of "Lindomania."
Chapter One:
The Female Performer in Nineteenth-Century Society

The female performer has long been associated with the prostitute. Many scholars place the connection between actress and prostitute within the foundations of Western society dating back to the “flute girls” in ancient Greece.\(^1\) It was not until the twentieth century that this stigma gradually disappeared and these performers began to earn respect from both male and female audiences. However, throughout the nineteenth century, especially in Europe and America, this association was further complicated by the social position assigned to women, which was one of domesticity and modesty, a position in direct conflict with the position of female performer. The actresses and singers were publicly performing for audiences, often times audiences of men only. These performers violated existing expectations of modern conduct and therefore did not conform to the ideal of proper womanhood in nineteenth-century society.

What Jenny Lind accomplished in America in 1850 is remarkable because of this belief system. Lind was popularized as a uniquely talented singer and performer as well as a woman of high moral and ethical character, which was representative of the ideology of proper womanhood in nineteenth-century American society. This chapter will provide a context for the discussion of the images of female performers by presenting the social

environment as well as, on a smaller scale, the environment surrounding women in the theatre, as it existed in the nineteenth century. This chapter will also provide a brief overview of the career of Sarah Bernhardt, who provides the most appropriate comparison to Lind due to the level of success and popularity that both women achieved.

Female Performers in the Public Sphere

Both Bernhardt and Lind were hugely popular, but in very different ways. Lind triumphed as the ideal nineteenth-century woman, a paragon of morality and piety. Bernhardt, on the other hand, was successful in large part because of her “well publicized shenanigans”\(^5\) and the outlandish way she lived her life. She was a curiosity to much of her audience and well known for her dramatic flair both on and off the stage. Also important to this argument is the fact that Lind set the standard for what the American public could expect from a female performer; and did so nearly thirty years before Bernhardt toured the United States. Though Lind was able to overcome the theatre’s association with prostitution, this idea held firm for the remainder of the nineteenth century, even the Divine Sarah could not overcome it. In *Seven Daughters of the Theatre*, by Edward Wagenknecht, published in 1964, the author discusses both Lind and Bernhardt and he describes the differences that separated the two performers:

...two legends could hardly have been more unlike than those of Sarah Bernhardt and Jenny Lind. ‘The Swedish Nightingale’ was almost as

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much Christian and puritan as artist and singer; she had the cool northland behind her. Sarah, too, was a Christian, a Catholic, though of one-quarter Hebrew extraction, but she was a Parisienne, and as such, in her time, she would have carried a different aura than Lind's even if she had lived as a devotee, whereas she lived instead, as she once remarked as...‘one of the grandes amoureuses of my time....’

In *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences 1790-1870*, Faye E. Dudden describes the stigma that plagued the female performer:

> Ever since women first appeared onstage, they have been associated with sexuality and immorality. The actress has been equated with whore so persistently that no amount of clean living and rectitude among actual performers has ever served to cancel the equation.

Though this belief was long-standing, in the nineteenth century the relationship between actress and prostitute was heightened by the social construction of the public and private spheres. In *From “Wax-Doll Prettiness” to a “Lifeless Dough Doll”: The Actress in Relation to the Images of “Woman” in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, Mardia J. Bishop defines the biological foundation behind the division of the public and private spheres:

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the public and the private boundaries dictated the appropriate players/inhabitants of each sphere. This bourgeois conception of life was not only a social division, but a sexual one as well. Women were the ‘natural’ inhabitants of the private sphere due to, among other reasons, their ability to reproduce. As mothers, they were the best candidates to oversee the family which was part of the private sphere. Because men were not tied to the private sphere by such natural activities as bearing and breastfeeding children, they were assumed to be the best inhabitants of the public sphere.  

As part of the public sphere, female performers were often demonized and thought to present a threat to the notion of the two separate spheres of existence. In taking part in both the public and private spheres, the female performer was inadvertently calling attention to the fact that the separate spheres were a social construction. Because there were no physical barriers keeping women within the domestic sphere, these barriers were socially enforced. However the implications for crossing these culturally constructed borderlines were very real. Dudden places the history of American theatre in direct correlation with the history of women and public life and describes the disadvantages women experienced because of the two separate spheres:

9 Bishop, 8.
Theatre is a quintessentially public activity, and traditionally the public sphere belonged to men. In early America, women were confined to the privacy of home and family, and the only ‘public women’ were, as slang neatly indicated, prostitutes. Yet...a few women began to realize that the public realm was where economic resources were divided and decisions about social policy were made: the penalty for failure to present oneself in public was powerlessness, poverty or dependency.10

At the same time, however, the penalty for presenting oneself in public, as Dudden points out, was acquiring the reputation of prostitute, a penalty which, to most women in the nineteenth century, was one of much greater concern than the penalty that Dudden illustrates for not having a public voice.

This was the situation that faced the female performer in the nineteenth century. The majority of these women not only entered the public sphere, but did so demanding recognition for their physical characteristics and their talents. They were placing themselves in the position to see and be seen. Though these performers did have the potential to challenge the belief that proper women were biologically destined to remain within the private sphere, their outspokenness and flamboyance often only reinforced the gender binary and further demonstrated that women should be kept strictly within the domestic space, as this was a way to force them to “behave” and control their carnal desires. Jenny Lind showed that a woman could remain within control and be a part of the public sphere. She was able to demonstrate that a strong enough woman could and

10 Dudden, 3.
would resist the temptations of the public sphere and would remain moral regardless. Bernhardt however, demonstrated to nineteenth-century society the liberties a woman placed in the public sphere could take. She was extravagant in every aspect of her life, from clothing, to furniture to the people she surrounded herself with. Bernhardt had a fascination with the macabre and everything she did was done in excess. Jenny Lind was admired and revered by the public; Bernhardt was admired and feared by them.

In the nineteenth century a wide variety of female performers toured America. However, of these actresses and singers, Sarah Bernhardt provides the most relevant comparison to Jenny Lind. Though Bernhardt toured America nearly thirty years after Lind, the barrier between the public sphere and the private sphere was still rigidly enforced. The comparison between Lind and Bernhardt is fitting for a number of reasons, but largely because of the levels of success each woman achieved. Sarah Bernhardt came closest to the celebrity Lind experienced thirty years earlier. Bernhardt, like Lind, received a massive amount of publicity and while most historians give Bernhardt sole agency over the promotion and creation of her public persona, Lind is often considered an accessory to Barnum’s brilliant campaign. This, as will be shown later, was not the case. Bernhardt, like Lind, was originally a success in Europe. Where Lind was from Sweden, Bernhardt was French and enjoyed celebrity status throughout Europe before she ever toured America. The newspaper and magazine articles discussing Bernhardt and Lind are nearly identical at times. One journalist, in the progressive French paper, *Le Figaro* wrote in August of 1878:
In Paris and in all fashionable circles there is talk only of the actions and gestures of Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt. The chief editors of the Paris papers forget everything, in order to concentrate on Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt.  


The London Athenaeum reported on the American reception of Jenny Lind in 1850:

The papers, as if it were the one important event of the age, have taken to report her minutest movements; and that they may put order into the record—which covers columns upon columns of their space—they have divided it into sections, headed 'First day,' 'Second day,' etc. They had got as far as the tenth day at the last arrivals.

In Seven Daughters of the Theatre Edward Wagenknecht states, “If any theatrical personality since Jenny Lind has achieved a fame or established a legend to equal hers, surely it must be ‘the Divine Sarah.’” In his biography of Lind, published first in 1931, Wagenknecht goes even further, “It was the first such tour ever undertaken by a European celebrity, and it still remains the most spectacular and successful of them all.”

Lind preceded Bernhardt by thirty years and set the standard for the reception of female performer as celebrity, however, this standard was not met by any other female performer in the nineteenth century. Lind’s reputation in America preceded her arrival in large part due to the promotional campaign instituted by Barnum. Before Lind signed with

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12 Quoted in Nathaniel Parker Willis, Memoranda of The Life of Jenny Lind (Philadelphia, Robert E. Peterson, 1851), 95.
13 Wagenknecht, Seven Daughters of the Theatre, 53.
14 Wagenknecht, Jenny Lind, 3.
Barnum, she was well known in Europe but known by few in America. While Bernhardt’s reputation also preceded her American tour, she was already known worldwide and was familiar to most Americans. Bernhardt had been established as an actress for eighteen years before her European tour.

Sarah Bernhardt: Her Life and Career

Sarah Bernhardt was born in Paris in 1844. Her theatrical career began at a relatively young age when she made her debut in 1862 at the Comédie-Française as Iphigénie. Her early career was fraught with broken contracts and behavior that often resulted in being fired. It was at the Odéon where she had her first hit in 1868 as Anna Danby in Kean, a play by Alexandre Dumas. It was said that in 1869 she created a sensation when she played Zanetto in the play Le Passant by François Coppée. While Bernhardt was becoming a darling of the Paris theatrical society, she gave birth to her only child, Maurice, out of wedlock in 1864. In 1872 she received widespread praise for her role as Dona Maria in Victor Hugo’s Ruy Blas and then again five years later in Hernani. It was in 1874 that she played what many consider the role she was born to play, Phèdre in the play of the same name. Six years later, in 1880, she made a trip to the United States, the first of many tours to come.15 She completed her first American tour,

15 Wagenknecht, Seven Daughters of the Theatre, 58.
in 1880-1881, her second in 1887, seven additional tours in 1891-92, 1896, 1900-01, 1905-06, 1910-11, 1912-13 and her final tour in 1916-18.\(^{16}\)

During Bernhardt’s American tours from 1880 until her sixth trip in 1905, the actress performed only on what Glenn calls “the legitimate American dramatic stage.” This stage was one that attracted audiences who were able to pay the, as Glenn states, “exorbitant price” of three dollars a ticket to see Bernhardt perform. Tickets for Lind’s performances, thirty years earlier, were considerably more expensive. It has been documented that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow paid eight dollars and fifty cents for a gallery seat at one of Lind’s performances. Tickets to sit in a livestock stable near the concert hall in Boston where Lind performed went for fifty cents apiece, and there was no guarantee that the “audience” would be able to hear the performance.\(^{17}\) And the record ticket price was six hundred and twenty five dollars, an amount significantly higher than three dollars. Regardless, both performers experienced huge success in America and while Bernhardt made nine tours, Lind made only one, which lasted less than two years. After Bernhardt’s first five tours, she began playing less desirable venues including what were called “tent shows” in the South, West and Midwest. Though these tours were less highbrow than the earlier tours, Bernhardt still drew massive crowds, six thousand at one show in Kansas City.\(^{18}\) These “tent shows” appealed to those who could not afford the


\(^{17}\) Wagenknecht, *Jenny Lind*, 3.

\(^{18}\) Glenn, 17.
ticket prices for the concert hall performances. This increased Bernhardt's accessibility and subsequently increased her popularity in America.

It is undeniable that Bernhardt had an effect on American society. While it is well documented that Americans sought to be more like Jenny Lind and admired the singer for her piety and morality, it is debatable what effect Bernhardt had on America. On the few occasions where Jenny Lind is mentioned in the scholarship on theatre history, she is almost always used as a direct comparison to the way the American public viewed Sarah Bernhardt. The two performers, who rivaled each other in celebrity and success, stand in stark opposition. While Lind rejected celebrity and only humored her fans with public appearances and the few glimpses she allowed from the windows of her hotel rooms, Bernhardt yearned for celebrity status and was determined to achieve it by any means necessary. While Lind was known and revered for her charitable works and virtuous nature, Bernhardt was legendary for her emotional and dramatic outbursts and her investment in self-advancement over all else. Lind was venerated by nineteenth-century audiences because, despite her forays into the public sphere, she was still operating within the established gender ideology. Bernhardt, on the other hand, is admired by authors today, because she was working against that same ideology. In Female Spectacle, Glenn states:

Berhardt exercised a formative impact on the cultural imagination of turn-of-the-century Americans. For those who came of age before 1900, she was not just a revered actress. More than any other figure of the late-nineteenth century stage, Bernhardt symbolized the radical new
possibilities that theatre presented for elaborating new forms of female identity.\textsuperscript{19}

Glenn represents Bernhardt as having a definitive impact on the deeply embedded gender norms that existed in nineteenth-century America. While Glenn, as a twentieth century author, elevates Bernhardt to the role of a feminist or “new woman,” other authors, like Edward Wagenkecht, make reference to the ways in which Bernhardt was viewed as unacceptable for American society. Wagenknecht in \textit{Seven Daughters of the Theatre}, summarizes Bernhardt’s reputation in America:

\...when she came to America, she not only could not, at the outset, be received in ‘society’ but bishops fulminated against her, and there were grave, soul-searching debates as to whether so dangerous a creature might even be viewed across the footlights without contamination. Worse still, the aura of wickedness was commingled with that of the freakish and fantastic, for everybody knew that this woman traveled with and sometimes slept in a rosewood coffin, kept dangerous beasts as pets, slapped the faces of those who displeased her, violated contracts and paid enormous fines whenever her exuberant temperament got out of bounds, and indeed was reputed to have done a great many other things which nobody ever really did outside a madhouse. \textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Glenn, 10.
\textsuperscript{20} Wagenknecht, \textit{Seven Daughters of the Theatre}, 55.
Glenn is projecting onto Bernhardt what she, as a twentieth-century feminist author, would like Bernhardt to have been. Wagenknecht, who published his biography of Lind in 1931 and his *Seven Daughters of the Theatre* in 1964, gives a more accurate account. Wagenknecht did, for the most part, give a subjective account of the lives of Lind and Bernhardt as performers. However, Glenn and other twentieth-century feminist authors focus on the gender of Bernhardt and early female performers granting these women great credit for changing the sexual politics of the nineteenth century.

By choosing to be a part of the public sphere, female performers did attain a sense of sexual freedom not enjoyed by the majority of women in the nineteenth century. However, this freedom came at a price and it was one that most women were not willing to pay. Female performers, much like prostitutes, achieved sexual freedom above that of the typical nineteenth-century woman, but, at the same time, they were branded as whores and viewed as such within society. So while these actresses, singers and dancers did enjoy sexual freedom, they were not working outside of the social codes, they were merely working against them. And just like any other nineteenth-century woman working against these codes, female performers were castigated with the label of prostitute. What seems much more provocative is what Jenny Lind managed to achieve. Lind became part of the public sphere and did so in a big way, becoming the most well-known celebrity of her time. However, she avoided the label of prostitute and instead was considered to be one of the most moral and pious women in the world, in the public or private sphere. Lind was performer/proper woman not performer/prostitute.
Though admired for her abilities on the stage, Bernhardt was feared by many in her American and European audiences. Where Lind reached a status of celebrity that Americans had not seen before, she was “safe.” The public could admire Lind, not only for her talents, but for her character as well. Jenny Lind was a woman that American audiences could relate to, a woman to be respected and held in the highest esteem, regardless of her abilities as a performer. Washington Irving, best known as author of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, spoke of Lind with much esteem and admiration for her talent and her character:

> As a singer she appears to me of the very first order; as a specimen of womankind, a little more. She is enough of herself to counterbalance all the evil that the world is threatened with by the great convention of women.  

Irving states that Lind was a talented singer, but he focuses on her embodiment of nineteenth-century womanhood and presents her in direct contrast to the “evil” of women. Lind was a singer and regarded as a respectful woman, unlike any other performer in the nineteenth century. These women, despite the private lives they lead could not escape the stigma of actress. Bernhardt, on the other hand, was new and different and possessed characteristics that many in America found improper. To these audiences, Bernhardt was a talented actress, but hardly acceptable within their society as anything other than a curiosity.

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In *Female Spectacle*, Susan A. Glenn compares Bernhardt to both P.T. Barnum and Jenny Lind. Glenn compares Barnum’s promotions of Lind to the revolutionary techniques of promotion employed by Bernhardt and states that Bernhardt was “the very opposite of the womanly simplicity, charity, and self-effacing goodness that Barnum claimed for Jenny Lind.”

Though Glenn grants Lind more credit than most authors, stating that she was “hardly a passive beneficiary of Barnum’s advertising campaigns,” she still undermines the singer’s contribution by presenting Barnum as the one who “fabricated the singer’s reputation.”

This reputation however was not at all “fabricated” as countless of Lind’s charitable acts have been well documented. Glenn states that “Barnum manufactured the singer’s American reputation not ‘by the inch’ but ‘by the cartload,’ and that audiences were as much interested in Lind’s qualities as a super-virtuous female curiosity as in her talents as a singer.”

In comparison to this Glenn states, “Bernhardt and her promoters adopted similar strategies, but with different implications for female identity.” Glenn assigns Bernhardt the role of agent and talent, promoter and actress. Glenn is stating that audiences were interested in Lind for her morality and her talent equally. Though this may have been the case, many in Bernhardt’s audiences were interested in the actress for her outlandish antics, which were well-publicized, often by Bernhardt herself, and she was perhaps more curiosity than talented actress. Certainly, this was part of her appeal. In the exhibition catalog for
Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama, Carol Ockman and Kenneth Silver describe how Bernhardt became more attractive as a performer because of this status:

Bourgeois women were automatically tainted the minute they stepped into the workplace. Earning money, being independent, having multiple careers made Bernhardt suspect from the start. Yet along with the rampant sexuality and skewed religious affiliations, these transgressions of female propriety had the ironic effect of making her more rather than less appealing to a mass audience. 25

So, just as Glenn suggests, Lind’s career was advanced because of her morality and piety, so too was Bernhardt’s for just the opposite. Though both women may have been curiosities, they represented opposite ends of the female spectrum. And Lind was much more successful at overcoming pre-existing belief systems, like actress as prostitute, than Bernhardt. Bernhardt merely took these beliefs to the extreme, and though she was successful as an actress, she was perhaps more successful as a public curiosity.

**Jenny Lind in America**

It was in February of 1850 that P.T. Barnum first announced he would bring Lind to America. Barnum, by then a household name, had previously established a rapport with the American media, and the announcement was covered by every major newspaper in the United States. In the months leading up to Lind’s arrival, countless articles were

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25 Ockman and Silver, 25.
published which examined every aspect of the singer’s life and career in Europe. As a result of Barnum’s massive promotional campaign, when the singer arrived on the first of September in 1850, she was met at the New York Harbor by a crowd of thirty thousand.

In his autobiography, Barnum recounts the day Lind’s ship arrived:

Thousands of persons covered the shippings and piers, and other thousands had congregated on the wharf at Canal Street, to see her. The wildest enthusiasm prevailed as the steamer approached the dock. So great was the rush on a sloop near the steamer’s berth, that a man, in his zeal to obtain a good view, accidentally tumbled overboard, amid the shouts of those near him.26

The widespread promotion Barnum employed was the catalyst for what would become known as “Lindomania.”

Critical to the argument presented in this thesis is an understanding of the role Lind held in American society and the methods by which Barnum capitalized on Lind’s morality to create what many consider the first case of celebrity. The record price for a ticket to one of Lind’s performances was six hundred and twenty-five dollars, sold to Ossian F. Dodge for her Boston performance. When this news was revealed to Lind, she called Dodge a “fool.”27 On September 6, 1850, five days after Lind’s arrival, the New York Herald published the first installment of “The Movements of the Swedish

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27 Werner, 165.
Nightingale,” a daily account of Lind’s activities in New York. The first installment read:

The most popular woman in the world, at this moment-perhaps the most popular that ever was in it-is Jenny Lind. Other women have been favorites with a portion, and even a majority of the public: she appears to be a favorite with all. 28

Lind’s popularity continued to spread with each performance and soon Lindomania became an epidemic. Numerous products were marketed with either her name or image; items including opera glasses, candleholders, riding hats, boots, gloves, robes, chairs and sofas were all associated with the Swedish Nightingale. Lind’s singing abilities were promoted but discussions of her charity and morality often ran alongside praise for her performances. A wide range of memorabilia was developed as a result of Lindomania. These objects, designed for middle-class households, further promoted Lind’s modesty and selflessness. When displayed in the home, these objects communicated the owner’s aspiration to emulate Lind’s moral character. 29 Displaying images of Lind in the home also communicated this same idea. This same sort of veneration did not occur with Sarah Bernhardt. Lind received a vote for Lieutenant Governor in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., and in New York she was named by several voters as their choice for mayor. There was a mining town in California named Jenny Lind. Stories about hotel maids selling strands of Lind’s hair reportedly taken

28 New York Herald 1850.
from her pillowcase and others charging fans to kiss one of Lind’s gloves circulated. The British magazine *Punch* published a cartoon (Figure 1) in October of 1850, one month after Lind’s arrival in the U.S., which satirized the American enthusiasm for Lind. *Punch* even went so far as to bestow upon Lind the title “Queen Jenny I of America.”

As Lind’s popularity reached a fever pitch, she was consistently adulated not only due to her musical talents but, perhaps even more so, for her high moral character. Barnum extensively promoted Lind’s charitable acts and knew that these characteristics would appeal to American audiences. In his autobiography, Barnum reflected on the appeal of Jenny Lind:

*I may as well state that although I relied prominently upon Jenny Lind’s reputation as a great musical artiste, I also took largely into my estimate of her success with all classes of the American public, her character for extraordinary benevolence and generosity. Without this peculiarity in her disposition, I never would have dared make the engagement which I did, as I felt sure that there were multitudes of individuals in American who would be prompted to attend her concerts by this feeling alone.*

This account is evidence that the American public was searching for a female performer who not only possessed talent, but could be admired for her character, something they had yet to experience.

Before Lind’s arrival in America, no female performer had ever been viewed as such a moral, pious woman. Lind’s reputation was built upon her charitable acts and her

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30 Barnum, 138.
kindness of heart, which, though true, Barnum exploited as much as possible. This promotion of Lind’s character was quickly picked up by the media outlets and became Lind’s “claim to fame.” The public persona that Lind and Barnum created for the American public catered to the belief system of mid-nineteenth-century American society. In P.T. Barnum: America’s Greatest Showman, the situation that was presented to Barnum is further explained. Barnum knew what kind of a performer would appeal to the puritanical American audiences and he used this knowledge fully to his advantage.

Feeling it her duty to use her God-given talent to help those less fortunate, she sang quantities of benefits and gave liberally out of her purses to innumerable charities. It was this unselfish, saintly quality of hers, fused with her peerless singing, that Barnum felt would captivate the American public.  

In “The Movements of the Swedish Nightingale” from the September 6, 1850 edition of the New York Herald, the author presents his ideas on why Lind was more successful than female performers who had come before her:

Women of vast powers of song have arisen before her -- some of them her superiors as general artists, who yet have never obtained a tithe of her popularity. What, then, is the secret of her success in addition to her unique and original warbling, which she spins out from her throat like the attenuated fiber from the silk worm, dying away so sweetly and so gradually till it seems melting into the song of the seraphim, and is lost in

31 Kundhart, 55.
eternity? It is her high moral character—her spotless name, which the
breath of slander has never tainted—her benevolence—her charity—her
amiable temper—the religious sentiment which she so carefully cultivates.
Thousands upon thousands of religious and moral people go to hear her
concerts who would not be found under the same roof with some of the
best Italian singers who have not been equally chary of their reputation. It
is this moral and religious feeling that is her trump card, which has won
and will win golden opinions for her, and gold itself for Barnum, in a
community remarkable for the universal prevalence of piety and churches.

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Even before she arrived, the singer’s charity was being discussed in major newspapers,
by Barnum and others. In his first announcement of plans to bring Lind to America,
published in the New York Commercial Advertiser and the Boston-Semi Weekly
Advertiser, among other prominent papers, Barnum focused on Lind’s charity and
character. It was these words which aroused the public interest in Lind as a moral
woman first and a singer second:

In her engagement with me she expressly reserved for herself the right to
sing for and give charitable concerts whenever she may think proper.
Since her debut in England, she has given to the poor from her own
private purse more than the whole amount which I engaged to give her,

and the proceeds of concerts for charitable purposes in Great Britain, where she has sung gratuitously, have realized more than ten times that amount. During her last eight months she has been singing entirely for charitable purposes, and is now founding a benevolent institution in Stockholm, her native city, at a cost of $350,000. A visit from such a woman, who regards her high artistic powers as a gift from heaven, for the melioration of affliction and distress, and whose every though and deed is philanthropy, I feel persuaded, will provide a blessing to America as it has to every country she has visited, and I feel every confidence that my countrymen and women will join me heartily in saying, ‘God Bless Her!’

In 1890, Barnum reflecting upon the success of Lind’s tour freely admits that it was not on talent alone that Lind reached celebrity:

It is a mistake to say the fame of Jenny Lind rests solely upon her ability to sing. She was a woman who would have been adored if she had had the voice of a crow.

Though Barnum introduced Lind to America, he did not need to do much else. On March 23, 1850, Nathanial Parker Willis, editor of the New York Home Journal, and later author of Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind, published in 1851, wrote about Lind, though he would not see the singer perform for another five months:

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34 Wagenknecht, *Seven Daughters of the Theatre*, 8.
To a mind eminently sensitive, a heart still free from world stains, and the uninterrupted habit of a daily observance of her religious duties, may be more justly ascribed the manifestation of Jenny's humility, tender-heartedness, and sensibility.35

These first-hand accounts serve as testimony to the way in which the public perception of Lind differed from that of other female performers.

Jenny Lind and Sarah Bernhardt offer two very different models of female performer in the nineteenth century. Though a span of thirty years separated their American tours, the same ideals and beliefs remained consistent within American society. Though the two women were presented to the public in very different ways, they were both subjected to the puritanical ideals prevalent in America. Lind came to America as a virtuous woman and a talented singer, and Barnum capitalized on this by promoting the singer's charity and goodness as well as her talent. Though this did not become the norm, it existed as a standard for subsequent singers and actresses to strive towards, at least in the eyes of the American audiences. However, no female performer after Lind reached the same status that the American public afforded the singer and perhaps surprisingly, few attempted such a feat. Sarah Bernhardt came closest to reaching the success of Lind, but she experienced a very different reception than Lind. These differences in public opinion are evidenced in images of Lind and Bernhardt. By comparing images of each woman it becomes obvious that Lind was working within the existing social codes that Bernhardt was working against.

35 Ware and Lockard, 5.
Jenny Lind was a different kind of female performer from the typical nineteenth-century singer, dancer or actress. This difference becomes obvious when looking at images of Lind. In portraits, Lind was presented as an average bourgeois female, not as a world-renowned celebrity. She is Jenny Lind the woman, not Jenny Lind the Swedish Nightingale. There is nothing in her photographic portraits to suggest that the woman sitting before the camera was a household name who reached a celebrity status never seen before. In images of other female performers in the nineteenth century it is more apparent that the women depicted existed outside of proper bourgeois society. There is a sense of theatricality and something a little impudent in the images. Through photographs, the women were not attempting to align themselves with proper society, but almost calling attention to the fact that they were different. Portraits of Jenny Lind present the opposite. If one were to look at the photographs of Lind without knowing her history, it would be assumed that she was a typical nineteenth-century woman, unremarkable in every way. It is when Lind’s images are paired with her celebrity status (which they always will be), that something remarkable is revealed.
This chapter will include a discussion of the Lind images, in their various formats, and the conditions surrounding their creation. Included in this discussion will be a classification of the images into three categories as well as an attempt to date the images by considering the timeline of Lind’s career. Also included will be a discussion of the different types of images of female performers from the nineteenth century, including portraits of the performers in their personal wardrobe and in costume. The focus of the chapter will be on how these images differ from the Lind images and how these differences were perceived by nineteenth-century audiences.

The first category consists of images of Lind made before the start of her American tour in 1850 and most likely before her decision in 1849 to stop performing in theatrical and operatic productions. This group of images includes lithographs of Lind in character from various operas, early paintings and prints that appeared on sheet music or songbooks. The second category is images created during Lind’s tour of America from 1850-1852. This group of images includes mostly daguerreotype and photographic portraits of the singer as well as one painted portrait. The third category is objects of Jenny Lind memorabilia, most likely created for profit during her American tour when the demand for these types of objects would have been high. These objects were either created in the image of Lind or Lind’s image appeared on the object itself.

Jenny Lind played an active role in the shaping of her career. This is evident in Lind’s decision to stop performing in the theatre and opera as well as her involvement in the negotiations of her contract with Barnum. As mentioned earlier, Lind stipulated in her contract that she was not to perform in any operas during her American tour.
Throughout her tour, Lind chose to perform in a simple white dress with flowers in her hair in lieu of the elaborate costumes many female performers wore on stage. This decision made clear that the singer was not in character during her performances. While lithographs of Lind in character do exist, she was never photographed in a costume or even in a white dress. She always sat for the camera as Jenny Lind the woman, not Jenny Lind the performer.

Through these actions, Lind was distancing herself from the stage and therefore distancing herself from the stigma attached to the nineteenth-century female performer. Because she was actively involved in her career and mindful of how she was viewed by audiences, her direct participation can be assumed in the creation of some images while others were likely outside her control. These assumptions prove valuable when attempting to date and identify the images. Though the majority of the Lind images cannot be attributed to a specific artist, and the dates are vague at best, it is possible to establish basic information from what is known about Lind’s life and career.

**Images of Jenny Lind: Her European Career**

Included in the first category of images are a number of lithographs depicting Lind in character. Four of the lithographs are reproduced in Wageknecht’s 1931 biography of Lind and are credited to Leonidas Westervelt’s collection. Westervelt, an avid collector who was first interested in P.T. Barnum, soon began collecting Lind memorabilia and eventually left the collection to the New York Historical Society. Many

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of the other lithographs are part of the New York Public Library's collection of images. These lithographs, much like the other Lind images, have been identified to varying degrees. Though these lithographs show Lind in a variety of roles, Lind stopped performing in the theatre and opera in 1849, even though she was hugely popular and successful in both areas, and she did not reprise any of the roles. Because Lind made this decision, despite the possible consequences for her career, it is not likely that she would jeopardize her place in elite society by posing for or commissioning images that would associate her with the stage. Though many of these lithographs appeared on sheet music before and after Lind's American tour, it can be assumed that the original images depicting Lind in character were created before 1849. These images, including the painted portraits, appeared in various forms before and during her tour of America, but when compared to Lind's photographic portraits of only a few years later, the early images depict a romanticized version of Lind.

In the lithographs of Lind in character, she is shown in a variety of roles: as the title characters in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Figure 2) and *The Daughter of the Regiment* (Figures 3-6); Alice in Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Roberto il Diavol* (Figure 7); Vielka in Meyerbeer's opera of the same name (Figures 8-9); as Amina in Vincenzo Bellini's *La Sonnambula* (Figures 10-11); and as the title character in Bellini's *Norma*. (Figure 12) It is important to note that these images are not portraits of Jenny Lind, but depictions of Jenny Lind in a role. All of these lithographs depict Jenny Lind, performer. These images show Lind in costume and often she is reenacting a scene. For example, in the image of Lind as Alice, she is pictured with a male character
and it is obvious that the image is a scene from the opera. These images are the most theatrical of Lind and differ greatly from photographic portraits of the singer.³⁷

The early painted portraits, though different than the lithographs that show Lind in character, still present Lind as a performer, but not in a specific role. One of the portraits is identified as a portrait by C. Hite and dated 1835.³⁸ (Figure 13) This date is probably too early as Lind would have been only fifteen years old and had not yet become a well-known performer. Lind did not make her operatic debut in a starring role until 1838. Therefore this portrait was likely painted between 1838 and the early 1840’s. No information on the artist is given or can be found. The other portrait is by the German painter Eduard Magnus created in 1846, and one of the few Lind images which have been identified.³⁹ (Figure 14) In both of the painted portraits Lind is wearing a white dress and has flowers in her hair. She is dressed in what would eventually become her costume of choice for the stage. In the Hite portrait Lind is holding a harp, a symbol of music. These portraits of Jenny Lind depict her as a stage performer, but still different from other nineteenth-century female performers. The way Lind is depicted still adheres to her public persona of piety and morality. Lind is not presented as female performer as prostitute, but as female performer as moral woman, following codes for society portraits.

All of these images were created before 1849, when Lind was under contract and not in control over her career. After 1849, no new images of Lind in character exist.

³⁷ In the nineteenth century it was common practice for performers to be depicted in images as specific characters that they played. Though many actresses willingly sat for the camera in costume, a variety of other images of female performers in character, (such as lithographs, engravings and illustrations), were also created for commercial and promotional uses.
³⁸ American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis.
These initial images of Lind in character would still have been in demand by the general public during her American tour. American audiences never saw Lind perform in theatre or opera; they knew her as a singer only. This is evidenced in her photographic portraits. There are no photographic images of Lind in character nor in a white dress with flowers in her hair. When Lind sat for the camera, she sat as Jenny Lind, the woman not as Jenny Lind the Swedish Nightingale.

Images of Jenny Lind: Her American Tour

The second category of images consists of those created during Lind’s American tour. Included in this group are the daguerreotype and photographic portraits of the singer. Many of these images have only been dated circa 1840-1860. By examining Lind’s career it is possible, however, to specify more exact dates. Lind made one tour of America beginning in September 1850 and ending in May 1852. She was at the pinnacle of her popularity during her American tour and therefore the demand for an image of Lind was greater from 1850-1852 than at any other point in her life or career. It is also known that Lind sat for Mathew Brady, Marcus Aurelius Root and the Meade brothers in New York, as well as John Adams Whipple and Southworth and Hawes in Boston and generally one studio on most major stops throughout her tour.

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40 The Harvard Theatre Collection, which holds a number of Jenny Lind daguerreotypes, can be accessed at http://www.via.harvard.edu:9080/via/deliver/executeQuery?collection=via. The date given for many of the images is 1840-1860.

After her decision in 1849 to leave theatre and opera, Lind would not have appeared in front of the camera in character or in costume. In the photographic images, Lind sits in proper bourgeois dress and posture that strictly follows the conventions of portraiture. In the daguerreotype and photographic portraits, Lind is aligning herself with proper society and distancing herself from the stage. It is apparent that this is how Lind wished to be presented to the American audience. Using this reasoning it can be assumed that many, if not all, of the photographic portraits were created in 1850-1852.

Photographic portraits employed many of the long-accepted visual conventions of traditional painted portraiture. The pose, dress and setting were consistent, if not identical, in many nineteenth-century portraits. Conventional codes existed for how the different classes of society were photographed as well as how each gender sat before the camera. Women wore their best dress and would have had a previous understanding of how to pose with the appropriate gestures. If the sitter were unsure of these things, the photographer was there to guide her. The photographer was another important aspect of bourgeois portraiture. The relationship between a portraitist and their well-known clientele was often mutually beneficial. Bourgeois sitters would know which photographers had respected reputations and which photographers to avoid. These conventions were rigidly followed in society portraiture of the mid-nineteenth century and few sitters or photographers strayed from the norm. All of these characteristics of portraiture served as indicators of the sitter’s position in society. It is these same social

codes that Jenny Lind aligned herself with the typical nineteenth-century bourgeois woman and to distance herself from the nineteenth-century female performer.

Lind exerted control over her career prior to coming to America to preserve her moral character and to distance herself from the theatre. Lind was clearly aware of the social implications of photography and the power these images held in nineteenth-century society. In all of the daguerreotype and photographic portraits, Lind is depicted in a very specific manner that adheres to the social codes for bourgeois portraiture. Lind exerted some form of control over these portraits. Through her dress, pose and by attaching herself to respected photographers, Lind positioned herself as a proper bourgeois woman in her portraits during her American tour.

The relationship between portraitists and their clients was often symbiotic. The more well-known and admired the sitter was, the more well-known the portraitist became; and the more well-known the portraitists, the more admired the sitter. In The Portrait Studio and the Celebrity, Barbara McCandless describes the relationship between photographers and the leaders of nineteenth-century society:

These enterprising photographers also exhibited and published photographs of the nation’s leaders to gain public credibility for their own work, to assuage popular anxieties about photography, and to communicate, to socially prominent and ordinary citizens alike, the power and the possibilities of the photographic image.43

Many studios were dedicated to creating reproductions or portraits of celebrities to sell to the public. Often this was how the studio made a profit. Jenny Lind was one of the first examples of modern celebrity, and her images were used by many studios for this purpose. Frederick DeBourg Richards placed an announcement in the Daguerrian Journal of August 1851 that he would sell copies of his image of Lind:

Thinking that perhaps Daguerreotypists in the country would like to have a copy of Jenny Lind, and as it is allowed by all that my picture of her is the best in America, I will sell copies at the following prices: one-sixth, $2; one-fourth, $4; one-half, $6.\(^{44}\)

The portraits of Lind were taken by daguerreotypists with respected reputations and known for photographing well-known Americans and the leaders of nineteenth-century society.

P.T. Barnum was familiar with the conventions of portraiture as well as the relationship that existed between portraitists and celebrities. Barnum had used portraiture, not only of himself, but of other clients, both before and after Lind’s tour. Across the street from Barnum’s American Museum in New York stood Mathew Brady’s studio. Brady, who was one of the nineteenth-century’s premiere portraitists, began taking daguerreotypes in 1844 of Barnum’s exhibits and selling them in his studio. These images, along with Barnum’s own keen sense for promotions, gained the American Museum international fame. Brady was also employed to photograph Barnum’s carte-de-visite around 1860 (Figure 15) as well as the official portraits of many of Barnum’s acts

\(^{44}\) [http://www.lostmuseum.cuny.edu/home.html](http://www.lostmuseum.cuny.edu/home.html), February 2003.
Barnum, who was highly successful in utilizing print media to promote Lind’s persona as a moral, pious woman, recognized the opportunity that came with the popularization of photographic portraiture. There are some sources that state Barnum did not want Lind to have her image taken because he believed it would hurt her prospect for success, this does not seem to be the case. The sheer number of photographers that Lind sat for supports the idea that Barnum was shrewdly utilizing the photographic images of Lind to promote her as the ideal woman of the nineteenth century.

Given Barnum’s long-standing relationship with Brady and his understanding of the power of photography, it seems likely that Barnum would have wanted Lind to sit for Brady at the beginning of her tour. The Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia, which holds a copy of Brady’s portrait of Lind, dates the image in 1852. It seems probable that the image was taken when Lind first visited New York on her tour. Though she returned to New York at the end of the tour in 1852, her popularity was already declining and she had ended her contract with Barnum. Therefore the demand for an image of Lind would have been much lower at the time of her second visit to New York than it had been when she first visited the city. Barnum heavily invested in the venture with Lind and his past relationship with Brady had always proved profitable. Barnum emphasized Lind’s charity and piety, perhaps more so than her talents as a singer and he recognized that if he had Lind sit for Brady, this would align her with the other noted dignitaries and well-known American citizens in Brady’s repertoire. Sitting for Mathew

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46 Kundhart, 54.
Brady would have been a sure way to be viewed as a person of a certain stature in society. Regardless of the date, however, Brady’s portrait of Lind would become the quintessential image of “Lindomania.”

In all of the photographic portraits, Lind is presented as a proper woman. There are no visual elements connecting Lind to the life of a female performer. She is never depicted wearing a costume nor did she ever sit in a white dress with flowers in her hair. Lind was never shown with any of accoutrements of the stage in her photographic portraits. The way Lind is presented in these portraits can be seen in countless portraits of bourgeois women from the nineteenth century. The way Lind is dressed is not too extravagant.

Two portraits of Clara Barton, most known as the founder of the Red Cross, exhibit these well established portrait conventions. In the first image, the earliest known photographic portrait of Barton, taken in 1851, (Figure 17) her pose is nearly identical to the manner in which Lind is posed in many of her portraits. Barton is seated, her right arm rests on a table, and her left hand is in her lap. Lind appears in a similar position in at least four of her photographic portraits (Figures 18-21). This same pose is used again in the most famous portrait of Barton, taken around 1865 by Brady. (Figure 22) Barton, who by 1865, was a well-respected woman, and known as a nurse in the Civil War, was clearly adhering to the conventions of portraiture. Again Barton’s arms are placed in the same position as Lind’s are in many of her portraits. When compared to the

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47 Mathew Brady Portfolio of Eminent Americans: Twelve Photographs from the Mathew Brady Collection in the National Archives (Washington: National Archives and Records Services, 1977).
Lind portrait attributed to either Montgomery P. Simons or Frederick DeBoug Richards (Figure 18) it is clear that Barton, in her portrait by Brady, was following the same codes as Lind. The images are nearly identical, the women’s hair is styled similar and their dress is appropriate for the time. They each rest their right arms on a round table with an object, in Lind’s case it is an urn with flowers and in Barton’s case it is an ornate clock. Each woman sits straight up and a chair back can be seen peeking over their left arms. Additionally, both Lind and Barton look into the camera. They do not hide their eyes or look down. Both women were visually positioning themselves as proper woman in the nineteenth century. Throughout her tour of America, Lind was careful to distance herself from her theatrical past and gained acceptance within proper American society, despite the fact that she was a female performer.

In one painted portrait that can be attributed to the period of Lind’s American tour, the singer is again depicted as a bourgeois woman. The portrait, created in 1852 by American painter Francis B. Carpenter, is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery (Figure 23). Though little else is known about the portrait, it is possible that it was painted from a photograph of Lind, a common practice in the nineteenth century. Though Lind is posed as she is in the photographic portraits, she appears in more regal attire. Her dress is simple, but she is draped in an ermine stole. Despite the fact that the portrait may have been painted from a photograph, the painter has idealized the singer in both dress and physical features. This portrait is perhaps an image of how American audiences perceived of Lind as opposed to what the singer actually looked like. The Lind
in Carpenter’s portrait is a more romantic version of the Lind that appears in photographs.

Memorabilia from “Lindomania”

Another product of Lind’s popularity was the many objects of memorabilia that surfaced throughout her tour. The objects make up the third and final category of Lind images. These objects were either created in Lind’s image or her image appeared on the object. Items such as candleholders, pincushions, figurines and figured bottles were created in the likeness of Jenny Lind, where the object is actually in the shape of a human figure. Other items, such as perfume bottles, mugs and fruit dishes were emblazoned with an image of Lind. In some cases, the image can be traced back to an original painting or engraving. In 1950, two years before his death, Westervelt curated an exhibit of his Jenny Lind memorabilia at the New York Historical Society, marking the 100th anniversary of Lind’s initial New York concert. In honor of the 150th anniversary, in 2000, the Historical Society held an exhibition titled *Jenny Lind-The Swedish Nightingale in America*, placing the memorabilia on display once again. It is unfortunate that many of the items are not on permanent display.48

Though these objects offer useful insight into the extent of Lind’s popularity, they were created without her consent of input. Unlike the photographic portraits, where Lind

48 No exhibition catalog was created for either of these exhibits. The New York Historical Society’s website offers a catalog search where many of the items can be viewed. This can be accessed at http://lucweb.nyhistory.org/lucweb/.
was involved in the creation, these were novelty items not intended to accurately represent how Jenny Lind actually looked. Although some of the items resemble Lind more closely than others, they are more caricatures and exaggerations of Jenny Lind the performer. Two figurines from the collection of the New York Historical Society epitomize this type of caricature. (Figure 24) This characterization of the Swedish Nightingale would have been recognizable in the nineteenth century. The maker is unknown and the date is presumed to be mid-nineteenth century.

In another figurine from the Historical Society’s collection, the figure is again not a replica of Lind but more a depiction of a generic female performer (Figure 25). The figurine is identified as Lind from an inscription at the base that reads “The Nightingale.” Other than this, the figurine bears little resemblance to the Lind of the photographic portraits. The figure has blonde hair and Lind’s hair was notably dark. The figurine also has red painted lips and it was well-known that Lind did not wear make-up, on or off the stage. This figure is a nonspecific female singer, again meant to represent Jenny Lind the performer.

**Images of Sarah Bernhardt and other Nineteenth-Century Female Performers**

Though the conventions of portraiture were firmly in place, many nineteenth-century female performers and photographers went against common practice. Rather than attempt to align themselves with bourgeois society, these women chose to visually exploit their identity as female performers. Unlike Lind, who never sat for the camera in costume, many actresses, like Bernhardt, often posed in character; and in doing so,
blurred the lines between the woman and the role that they were playing. Moments from the performances were caught on film and only served to solidify these women as performers. These moments, though created in a photography studio, documented the women as performers and this stigma stayed with them both on the stage and in society.49

These images of actresses highlighted the fact that they were working in the public sphere and called attention to the fact that female performers were working outside of conventional social codes. Being a part of the public sphere, these women were already likened to the prostitute and considered sexually available, and often their images reinforced this idea.50 Female performers, as well as photographers, recognized the potential that photographic images had to market the illusion of sexual availability. By examining how actresses, singers and dancers were utilizing photography in the nineteenth century, it becomes clear that these women were representative of a very different type of performer than Jenny Lind.

There was perhaps no actress more aware of the power of photography than Sarah Bernhardt. Though there exist other photographs far more scandalous than those of Bernhardt, few female performers reached the celebrity status she attained. Bernhardt is comparable to Lind in popularity both in Europe and America. Though Bernhardt was working nearly thirty years after Lind, the role of female performer had not changed, despite Lind’s best efforts. Bernhardt, who was photographed in many different costumes, capitalized on her role as actress in society and made no attempts to be thought

50 Bishop, 15.
of as a proper bourgeois woman. Though there are portraits of Bernhardt in her personal wardrobe, she is still Sarah Bernhardt, world famous actress.

Jenny Lind chose not to sit for portraits in character or in a costume because she wanted to distance herself from the stage. Sarah Bernhardt, on the other hand, often posed in reenactments of scenes from her performances dressed in elaborate costumes. Bernhardt was photographed in crowns of opals, amethysts and turquoise; tunics made with gilt thread and pearls; and embroidered capes sewn with silk thread and adorned with glass beads. In these photographs, there is no doubt that the woman pictured is an actress. Bernhardt also posed in character on many occasions, reenacting scenes from her performances. In two sets of photographs by Paul Nadar, Bernhardt is depicted in a variety of poses, acting out a scene. (Figures 26 and 27) Each set, consisting of sixteen photographs, capture a moment from the play and depict Bernhardt in the act of performing.

Though Bernhardt’s images were not as sexually provocative as some other female performers, there is a sensuality and seductiveness in nearly all of her images. One of the most famous sets of portraits of the actress was taken by Félix Nadar around 1860, when Bernhardt was only twenty years old (Figures 28-29). The actress has been draped in a white burnoose or in black velvet and her shoulder peaks through the heavy fabrics. These images, though taken before Bernhardt was a star, present the actress as sexually available. Regardless of what Bernhardt may have worn under the voluminous fabric, the illusion is that she is naked underneath. And as Carol Ockman writes in the exhibition catalog for Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama:
We can easily imagine the loosely wrapped drapery coming undone, making literal the sexual availability of the model and would-be actress.

Other actresses were far more literal in presenting themselves as sexually available. Famed American actress Adah Isaacs Menken posed for one carte-de-visite on top of a horse wearing nothing but a pink body stocking. In another carte, Menken appears topless. (Figure 30) Though Bernhardt never went as far as this to market herself as a sexual object, the sensuality is still apparent in many of her images, and though Bernhardt herself was not for sale, her images certainly were.

Again, the relationship between the portraitist and the sitter was symbiotic. Just as Brady and other portraitists were known as the photographers for the elite and respectable elements of society, other photographers were known for bypassing the conventions of portraiture. Many photographers made a name for themselves by photographing and marketing images of female performers, artists, writers and other public figures working outside of the social codes. McCandless discusses Sarony, who rose to fame in the 1860’s by taking theatrical portraits, and she gives a description of his approach to portraiture:

He frequently used elaborate backdrops, but he posed his subjects in ways that would bring out their character, rather than utilizing the standardized poses in vogue at the time.52

51 Ockman and Silver, 28.
52 McCandless, 64.
Photographers like Sarony and Nadar were working against the codes for proper portraiture. There was a large market for images of actresses, especially cartes-de-visite, and photographers capitalized on this market. It was reputed that some photographers paid thousands of dollars for the privilege of photographing famous actresses and of course, lifetime rights to the negatives. There were perhaps no images that proved to be more profitable than those of Sarah Bernhardt.

Photographs of Bernhardt, much like those of Lind, would have been in high demand in the late nineteenth century. The sets of Paul Nadar’s photographs of the actress acting out various scenes would have been constructed into an elaborate sample board along with other pictures of Bernhardt. From this catalog of Bernhardt images, the Nadar studio would reproduce prints for the public to buy.

Bernhardt was highly knowledgeable of the advantages and possibilities of the new media. Jenny Lind utilized photography to visually distance herself from the stage. Bernhardt used the new medium to further her career as an actress. Sarah Bernhardt understood the implications of photography in the nineteenth century and used her position as a female performer, as well as the advancing technology of photography to become one of the most famous actresses in history. Bernhardt was marketed as a curiosity and sometimes a threat to decency and morality. She was in control over her career. She decided to pose in character dressed in elaborate costumes. Bernhardt understood the stigma of female performer and instead of working against it, she worked

within the position and carved out her own niche. Bernhardt knew the art of self-promotion, so much so that a novel was published in 1884 titled *The Memoirs of Sarah Barnum*, comparing Bernhardt to the master of publicity, P.T. Barnum.
Conclusion

Through an examination of images of Jenny Lind it becomes obvious that she was inhabiting a different position in society than that occupied by other nineteenth-century female performers. Lind was not only promoted as a moral and pious woman, but she in fact led this life. While Lind maintained her reputation as a proper woman throughout her career, other female performers exploited their status as equals of prostitutes to further their careers. Jenny Lind was able to be perceived as both a proper woman and a talented, successful female performer, a difficult task in the nineteenth century. By relating feminist theatre histories to the status of nineteenth-century female performers, what Jenny Lind was able to accomplish is given new perspective. Feminist theorists give credit to Sarah Bernhardt and other female performers for taking control of their own sexuality and living by their own rules and not accepting those mandated by society. Though this statement may be true, the penalty these female performers faced is often overlooked. These women were able to navigate the public sphere, but at a price. They were likened to prostitutes, which in the nineteenth century, was a thing far worse than occupying the private sphere. Female performers were on the stage to be looked at, often in a sexual way, and they were perceived as sexually available. This ideology had been established long before the nineteenth century and continued until the early
twentieth century. These female performers were not accomplishing anything new or
different than female performers of the past. They were occupying the same social
position as many women before them and just as their predecessors, they experienced the
penalty for being in the public sphere.

In comparison Jenny Lind was a highly successful performer and acquired a fame
that few other women in the nineteenth century could claim. Lind, who is altogether
overlooked in feminist theatre histories, was able to be both proper woman and female
performer. As opposed to other actresses, singers and dancers who simply fell into the
role society created for them, Lind carved out her own position. Jenny Lind was
incredibly successful as a female performer and she did not lower her morals or exploit
her sexuality to do so. She was able to overcome the long-established idea of actress as
prostitute. Lind had a career which earned her large amounts of money; she was able to
support herself and did not marry until the age of 32, which was late for the nineteenth
century. She exerted control over her career and was able to negotiate a contract with
P.T. Barnum, one of the most famous men of the time. Lind was accepted as a proper
woman by all levels of society and many strove to be like her.

When comparing images of Lind to images of other female performers, like
Bernhardt, it becomes obvious that Lind was doing something different. In her images
she adhered to the codes for portraiture. Just as with her public persona and reputation,
Lind controlled her image and she presented herself as a proper nineteenth-century
woman. Bernhardt, who also controlled her public persona, took liberties with the
conventions of proper portraiture and presented herself as a woman outside of social
codes. Through biographies and first-hand accounts it is evident that these two women were very different types of performers, but it is only when we look at images that we realize just how different they were.

Jenny Lind occupied a unique position in the nineteenth century; she was admired for both her talent, like Sarah Bernhardt, as well as her charitable and moral nature, like Clara Barton. Though they may have challenged certain codes of conduct, nineteenth-century female performers were almost expected to do so. The reputation of prostitute came with being a part of the public sphere and this was not challenged by women like Bernhardt. These women accepted the fate that society gave them, Jenny Lind, did not. Lind took on the conventions of the nineteenth century and overcame a long-standing stigma given to women in the public sphere. Perhaps, then, it was Jenny Lind who was truly revolutionary.
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Bibliography


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Vita

Joanna E. Penick was born on 27 August 1981 in Farmville, Virginia. She graduated from Fuqua School in 1999. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in both Studio Art and Communications from Elon University in Elon, North Carolina in 2003. She interned at the United Arts Council of Greensboro in 2001 and completed a curatorial internship at the Greenhill Center for the Arts in Greensboro, North Carolina in 2002. In February of 2005 she was a presenter at the New Scholars, New Ideas Symposium at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.