

OPERA IN ENGLISH: CLASS AND CULTURE IN AMERICA, 1878–1910

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ABSTRACT

Kristen M. Turner: Opera in English: Class and Culture in America, 1878–1910
(Under the direction of Annegret Fauser)

European grand opera performed in English translation was a potent cultural force in the United States at the end of the long nineteenth century. Analysis of business correspondence, theater records, advertisements, reviews, and social commentaries, reveals that rhetoric about opera engaged with issues of class, race, gender, and nationalism. Critics identified foreign-language grand opera as a high art, suitable primarily for the upper class and educated listeners. In contrast, writers viewed the same operas sung in English as entertainment for a middle-class audience who wished to enjoy opera in the vernacular performed by American singers. Southern small towns, such as Raleigh, North Carolina, used English-language opera and art music to reinforce racial boundaries and to project a civic identity as a refined, middle-class city. The African American community, as a result of segregation and oppression, had different conceptions about art, class, and culture than the white majority. African American writers framed English-language performances by the all-black Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company as a way to resist racial tyranny by emphasizing the skill of the troupe's singers and the sophistication of its educated black audience. The operatic marketplace was shaped by the same issues that influenced the discourses about opera. Advertisements and other types of marketing referred to class, race, and nationalism, while performers and impresarios created public personae that transgressed and reified nineteenth-century conceptions of gender. The critical reception and American performance traditions of Georges Bizet's *Carmen* were also influenced by the ideas that affected the reception, production, and marketing of opera as a whole.

Pantomimes and crucial cuts recorded in scores used by English-language troupes at the time served to manipulate the audience's perceptions of *Carmen's* main characters to support the critics' reactions to the work, which were colored by contemporary political and social conditions. By 1910, when it had become clear that grand opera sung in English could not move into the high-art sphere occupied by foreign-language grand opera, the cultural niche for English-language opera closed, and its performers and impresarios transferred their energy and business savvy to middle-class entertainments such as vaudeville, Broadway musicals, and silent film.

To Greg, Adam, Hannah, and Jacob
The reason for being

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in the United States have found themselves in unusual demand. Politicians, social commentators, and historians have noted that many of today's political debate can be interpreted as re-arguing the great controversies from the 1890s to the 1920s, with disturbingly similar rhetoric. While these disputes are largely centered on political and economic issues, many of today's controversies and challenges in the classical-music industry are not all that different from those of the late nineteenth century. Then, too, critics interrogated who should listen to art music, how it should be funded, and what repertoire should be performed. The ways opera companies and orchestras of the early twentieth century responded to these questions profoundly influenced the development of the American cultural hierarchy and are directly relevant to the artistic life of the United States in 2015.¹ Today, most opera companies are struggling, with their financial troubles often attributed to the fact that the genre is so far at the periphery of American culture that it has lost its social significance and thus its audience.² In the 1880s, however, many critics were arguing that art music such as opera was complex and primarily appropriate for the educated elite. For these writers, opera could claim its proper status as "important" music only if it was confined to a small set of devoted listeners

¹For the purposes of this dissertation I will use "America" as a synonym for United States.

²The San Diego Opera almost closed at the end of the 2013–14 season citing declining audiences and rising costs. James Chute, "San Diego Opera Votes to Fold," *U-T San Diego*, 19 March 2014, <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2014/mar/19/san-diego-opera-fold/> (accessed 10 November 2014). In a surprise move, after an outcry from the community and a reorganization both of the season's offerings and of the Board of Directors, the Opera announced they would return for the 2015–16 season. Angela Carone, "San Diego Opera Will Not Close, Announces 2015 Season," *KPBS Radio News* (San Diego, CA), 19 May 2014, <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2014/may/19/san-diego-opera-will-not-close-announces-2015-seas/> (accessed 10 November 2014). Perhaps opera is not as dead as some might believe.

who understood the works properly. The wealthy patrons who provided much of the financial support for opera companies were grudgingly admitted to the opera house as well. Today, singers, opera troupe managers, and critics complain that this elitist attitude has sucked the life and vitality from opera, and many now seek to convince listeners that an aria can be as emotionally powerful as a pop ballad and as accessible as a Disney movie turned into a hit musical. Peter Gelb, the manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company, the country's oldest and most prestigious opera troupe, has sought to bring new listeners to opera through live international simulcasts and avant-garde productions by hip directors, even though he is presenting basically the same nineteenth-century repertoire that the Met has always sung.³ Recently composer Suby Raman analyzed the Metropolitan's repertoire since 1905 and found that 1870 was the median year of composition. Indeed, the works the Metropolitan performs today are very similar to the operas they sang in 1890.

How did American opera get into this mess—with a repertoire stuck in the 1870s and a reputation for a wealthy, snobbish audience? The answer lies, in large part, in the development of the American cultural hierarchy during the crucial period around the turn of the twentieth century. This dissertation addresses the role of opera in the cultural life of the United States between 1878 and 1910. I concentrate on European grand opera sung in English translation often by casts of primarily American-born singers. Historians such as Lawrence Levine and Bruce A. McConachie would have their readers believe that the American upper class all but stole opera from the middle class after the Civil War and locked it away in a sacralized space—one of the symbols of wealth and prestige that they needed to differentiate and protect

³ “10 Graphs to Explain the Metropolitan Opera,” last modified 26 October 2014, <http://subyraman.tumblr.com/post/101048131983/10-graphs-to-explain-the-metropolitan-opera> (accessed 12 November 2015).

themselves from the masses.⁴ This interpretation privileges foreign-language opera in New York without properly considering opera outside of New York City, English-language opera performances, opera among African Americans, or broader aesthetic issues related to the genre. I join with Karen Ahlquist, Joseph Horowitz, Ralph P. Locke, Katherine K. Preston, and others to argue that the change in opera's place in the cultural hierarchy happened late in the nineteenth century and involved many social, cultural, and political influences in addition to the class pressures cited by Levine.⁵

By concentrating on English-language opera, I necessarily omit a close consideration of the Metropolitan Opera, established in 1883, because the troupe did not perform operas in English translation during this period.⁶ Because of its central position in American operatic culture, more research has been done on this organization than any other opera company in the U. S., and scholars tend to accord it pride of place in histories of opera in America. The viewpoint from the periphery can provide insights that are impossible to access when looking from a central position, however. Opera in English had a different audience and cultural valence than the Metropolitan, leading to conclusions about opera's place in American life that might be hidden otherwise.

⁴Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Bruce A. McConachie, "New York Operagoing, 1825–50: Creating an Elite Social Ritual," *American Music* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 181–92.

⁵Responses to Levine include Karen Ahlquist, "Musical Assimilation and 'the German Element' at the Cincinnati Sangerfest, 1879," *Musical Quarterly* 94, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 381–416; Steven Baur, "Music, Morals, and Social Management: Mendelssohn in Post-Civil War America," *American Music* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 64–130; Joseph Horowitz, "'Sermons in Tones': Sacralization as a Theme in American Classical Music," *American Music* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 311–40; Joseph Horowitz, "Music and the Gilded Age: Social Control and Sacralization Revisited," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 3, no. 3 (July 2004): 227–45; Steven Ledbetter, "Higginson and Chadwick: Non-Brahmins in Boston," *American Music* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 51–63; Ralph P. Locke, "Music Lovers, Patrons, and the 'Sacralization' of Culture in America," *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 149–73.

⁶I will use the phrases "English-language opera" and "European opera performed in English translation" interchangeably as they did in the period I study.

My focus on English-language opera allowed me to discover not only an overlooked discourse on opera in America at the turn of the century, but also a network of performers and impresarios whose operatic activities had been forgotten once musicologists, singers, and conductors had discredited the use of translated libretti. It was easy for some scholars to overlook the significance of English-language opera because American opera companies today rarely perform opera in English translation, nor have they been successful in maintaining a large middle-class audience. Right now many Americans believe that opera is for rich, snobby, white, old people with a dead, boring repertoire. Even though musicologists know that most of that stereotype is incorrect, it infects the way that many writers and readers think about opera in the nineteenth century when the situation was much different.

Most opera companies performed in only one language during the nineteenth century. Thus, most operas in the United States were performed in some sort of translation. It was not unusual for *Carmen* to be performed in Italian or *Faust* to be sung in German. Opera performed in English translation was not identical to opera performed in a foreign-language translation, however. The lack of amplification, as well as the difficulty in understanding the diction of some singers, meant that in reality many audience members probably could not understand the words even if they were sung in English. This did not stop critics from treating the English-language lyrics more seriously and with more emphasis on comprehensibility than foreign-language translations. Commentators allowed distorted lyrics and awkward text settings in foreign-language translations to pass largely unnoticed, but roundly criticized similar lapses in English translations—much to the frustration of English-language supporters. Just as importantly, by the early 1880s, opera in English was aimed at a middle-class audience who could not afford high-priced tickets. Thus opera companies had to economize on production quality and singers' salaries to make ends meet. This reality meant that their performances eventually earned the

reputation for relatively low quality. Even if this stereotype was more perception than reality, English-language performers and impresarios had to battle this opinion.

Musical and theatrical life in the United States at this time was dominated by professional touring companies. Smaller troupes (often performing in English) primarily traveled along regional theatrical circuits, while larger foreign-language troupes usually visited only more populous cities that had bigger theaters and more people who could pay high ticket prices.⁷ By 1910, there were few traveling opera companies left. Foreign-language troupes had become so large that transportation costs made it prohibitively expensive to tour. Only a few companies, including the Metropolitan, attempted substantial tours as a supplement to a long residency in one city. Smaller opera companies were forced out of the business by the Theatrical Syndicate's stranglehold on the booking for smaller houses, and the advent of the silent film which encouraged many theaters to discontinue live performances. This dissertation begins around the time many of the largest English-language opera troupes were still active (such as the Hess Opera Company and the Clara Louise Kellogg Company) and ends when the last of the successful English-language troupes managed by Henry W. Savage folded.

Opera and Class in America

Because class is a key aspect of my interpretation of American operatic culture, it is important to define the composition of different classes in the United States during this period. For the purposes of this study, I will often interchange the terms “wealthy” and “upper class.” When I refer to the white upper-class, I mean people who either inherited substantial wealth or made a significant income primarily through business ventures and chose to spend their money to

⁷The Metropolitan Opera Company stayed in New York for up to six months at a time before traveling, which made it the troupe with the longest residency in one city during this period. Other large troupes might stay as long as one month in a big city like Chicago or New York City before moving on to the next destination. Smaller troupes generally never stayed in one place for more than a week.

maintain a lavish lifestyle.⁸ The term “middle class” is particularly hard to delineate in this period as its composition and formation differed substantially depending upon factors such as race, ethnicity, and location (urban or rural, South, North or West). I define the white middle class as consisting of people who were part of professional households (doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, businessmen, etc.), who had enough disposable income to spend on leisure activities, but were not wealthy and did not consider themselves part of the upper class, even if they sometimes crossed paths at entertainment events—the elite usually in the boxes, and the middle-class in moderately-priced mezzanine seats.⁹

Among the African American upper class of the nineteenth century, educational achievement and descent from free blacks rather than enslaved peoples were more important markers of social class than profession or income levels. Those people who could claim free black ancestry and were well educated often considered themselves to be part of the colored aristocracy or the top of the black cultural hierarchy. Many scholars argue that there was no black middle class, although there were African Americans who made a comfortable income through professional employment and could be identified on that basis as “middle class.” The significant hardships caused by segregation and racism in this period kept African Americans from identifying as part of the middle class which they saw as reserved for whites.¹⁰

⁸See Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) for a discussion of elite upper class and the process of its formation during the second half of the nineteenth century.

⁹For a variety of perspectives and methodological approaches on the development of the middle class in the U. S. see Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston, eds., *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Andrew P. Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Jonathan Daniel Wells and Jennifer R. Green, eds., *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

¹⁰See Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., “The African-American Experience,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (New York: Roman and Littlefield, 2007), 143–65; and Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

Finally, the idea of the “educated elite” is also important when considering the formation of the American cultural hierarchy around 1900. By this term, I mean a set of people who were educated in the arts (either through formal schooling or self-taught) and prided themselves on their good taste and refinement, which they demonstrated, in part, through attendance at high-art events. People in this group could be of any socio-economic class, though they had the time and money to devote to going to concerts, plays, art galleries, and museums, which probably placed many of them at least in the middle class.

The working class will enter this study less often, given that its members usually did not have the resources to attend opera. As is true for the middle class, historians disagree as to how to describe this socio-economic set. The definition I use is a group in which the family’s income was derived from skilled or unskilled labor often performed by as many people (men, women, and children) who were old enough to work, and whose standard of living ranged from so minimal they could not afford basic necessities to those who could purchase the essentials and had a limited discretionary income.¹¹

Recently Gayle Sherwood Magee and Dale Cockrell charged that musicologists have ignored or minimized the importance of class as an element of U. S. musical life during the nineteenth century.¹² They apparently discounted researchers such as Karen Ahlquist, Steven Baur, Michael Broyles, Ralph P. Locke, and Katherine K. Preston who recognize in their work

¹¹See John F. McClymer, “Late Nineteenth-Century American Working-Class Living Standards,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1986): 379–98; Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880 to 1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Gillian M. Rodger, *Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

¹²Gayle Sherwood Magee, “Rethinking Social Class and American Music,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 696–99; Dale Cockrell, “William Johnson: Barber, Musician, Parable,” *American Music* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 1–23.

that class helped to determine the development of cultural life in the United States.¹³ Cultural historians such as Daniel Cavicchi, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Joseph Horowitz, and Kathy Peiss also position class as a central issue in nineteenth-century American musical life.¹⁴ Moreover, Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, with its class-based interpretation of American culture, is one of the most important secondary sources on the development of the cultural landscape in the United States during the nineteenth century. Although musicologists have disputed many of Levine's conclusions, because he begins from a position that American culture was shaped by elite-class formation, it is difficult for succeeding scholars to ignore the issue.

I consider many other topics besides class in this dissertation, but the discourse about opera, the audiences for different types of opera, and the reception of specific works were all fundamentally influenced by the assumptions and behaviors fostered by the socio-economic conditions associated with different classes. As far back as at least the 1840s, social commentators argued that opera should properly be enjoyed only by the wealthy and the musically educated. Preston points out that for many years these pronouncements were more aspirational than anything else.¹⁵ Opera companies had to appeal to a large and heterogeneous

¹³Examples include Karen Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Steven Baur, “‘Let Me Make the Ballads of a Nation and I Care Not Who Makes its Laws’: Music, Culture, and Social Politics in the United States, c. 1860–1890,” (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2001); Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Ralph P. Locke, “Paradoxes of the Woman Music Patron in America,” *Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 798–825; Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

¹⁴See Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011); Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights: An American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*.

¹⁵Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 136–39. In one example, the Astor Place Opera House built in New York in 1847, only about twenty years after the first operas in Italian were performed in the city, was designed to make the theater inaccessible to those who lived in lower-class areas of town, and the cheap seats had obstructed sight lines making it inhospitable to patrons on a budget. The various impresarios who produced opera at Astor Place quickly learned that their companies failed if they did not fill the gallery and balcony seats, however.

audience in order to survive, because revenue from ticket sales was their only source of financial support. As a result, a wide cross-section of the American population enthusiastically attended opera at least until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. According to Preston, “the ubiquity of operatic music in the United States ... demonstrate[s] clearly that most Americans did not consider it as the chosen preserve of the musical and social elite.”¹⁶

Complete operas performed in foreign languages eventually became dependent upon the patronage of elite society, however. The transformation from aspirational social discourse to fact happened over the decades from the late 1870s until the early twentieth century. Of course, this change occurred slowly and inconsistently. Looking at the development of the cultural hierarchy from the perspective of opera performed in English, it is clear that foreign-language opera was not simply appropriated by the upper class; it was also an art form rejected by the middle class.

As part of the formation of an elite social class, the wealthy, especially in New York, turned to the European aristocracy (primarily in Britain) for models of the sort of lifestyle they wished to achieve. Attendance at foreign-language opera performances was one of the social rituals that marked the English elite. Naturally, those people who wanted to be part of the American aristocracy followed suit. The Panic of 1873 and the depression that followed led many in the middle class to turn to English-language opera and to abandon foreign-language opera, in part because it was associated with the European upper social classes that many blamed for the catastrophic failure of the economy, but also because of the high cost of foreign-language tickets.¹⁷ Foreign-language opera impresarios lured audiences by creating lavish spectacles with the best singers in the world, causing their productions to become more and more expensive.

¹⁶Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 316.

¹⁷Katherine K. Preston, “Opera is Elite/Opera is Nationalist: Cosmopolitan Views of Opera Reception in the United States, 1870–90,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 536.

This priced the middle class out of foreign-language opera and, for some, bred resentment against grand opera in general, while simultaneously making it more attractive to the wealthy who wanted to attend the best performances and to exclude a less privileged audience. Foreign-language grand opera companies active near the end of the century such as the Abbey-Grau Grand Opera Company, the Damrosch German Opera Company or the Ellis Grand Opera Company became so large that smaller towns and mid-sized cities could no longer support them. Thus the place in the cultural hierarchy that opera in foreign languages once inhabited outside of large cities was taken over by the cheaper English-language opera troupes, and later by comic opera, and then musical comedies.¹⁸ By the 1890s, for most people in the United States who did not live in or near a really large metropolis such as New York or Chicago, foreign-language grand opera became a big-city luxury—something that touched their lives only peripherally, and for which they had to make a significant expenditure of time and money to attend.

The failure of several large English-language opera companies in the 1880s also contributed to the change in the cultural hierarchy. The American Opera Company (AOC), its successor company, the National Opera Company (NOC), and the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company attempted to educate the public and provide English-language opera at the same production levels as the Metropolitan. Had the key figures in these troupes—the manager of the three companies, Charles E. Locke, the founder of the AOC and NOC, Jeannette Thurber, the AOC and NOC’s conductor, Theodore Thomas, and soprano Emma Juch—been better money managers and more pragmatic, they might have made their enterprises work. Yet

¹⁸I will use the terminology of the time period when referring to different types of opera. Grand opera connoted nineteenth-century standard operas still performed by opera troupes today such as works by Bellini, Gounod, Verdi, and Wagner—not specifically French grand opera by composers such as Meyerbeer. Comic opera, as understood by nineteenth-century Americans, also originated in Europe and would be called operetta today. These works have some spoken dialogue and are by composers such as Gilbert and Sullivan, Richard Genée, Jacques Offenbach, and Johann Strauss II. The term “musical comedy” was first used around 1900 and seemed to be interchangeable with “comic opera by American composers.”

by misreading their audiences and through a lack of business acumen, these prominent and large English-language troupes failed spectacularly, leaving a lasting legacy in the minds of potential operagoers and (more importantly) the critics, that English-language opera could not survive in the United States.¹⁹ Some English-language companies thrived in the same period—particularly the Emma Abbott Company (1879–1891) and the opera troupes managed by Henry W. Savage (1895–1911). Their marketing tactics, unfortunately, had the unintended effect of reinforcing the view that English-language opera was a second-class entertainment for the middle class and not “real” opera, which over the long term damaged its audience appeal and was a key factor in the demise of widespread English-language grand-opera productions in the United States.

Throughout this period, opera performed in full (no matter the language) was declining. As it became more expensive to tour with bigger and more elaborate companies, fewer impresarios even attempted it. Fewer companies were founded, and by 1900, their touring schedule was less ambitious.²⁰ It is tempting to interpret this development to mean that opera was no longer important in popular culture, but this assumption would be wrong. Opera was everywhere—just not in the form of complete works performed from start to finish. Minstrel shows offered opera burlesques, vaudeville troupes featured opera singers and adaptations of popular works, arias were published in sheet music, opera plots and narratives were appropriated by other artists (such as *Carmen* in a play version or in the shows given by the dancer Carmencita), opera excerpts were so common on band and orchestral programs they were

¹⁹Katherine K. Preston makes this argument in her forthcoming monograph on opera in English translation from the Civil War until 1900, *Opera for the American People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in the Late Nineteenth Century*. I thank her for the opportunity to read much of the draft manuscript of her book.

²⁰It is notoriously difficult to determine accurate numbers of opera companies in any given season because there is no “master” list from the time period, and companies popped up and folded with little notice taken in the press. It is clear from newspapers, theatrical guides, and other printed sources that overall the number of grand opera companies had begun to decline prior to 1870 and that there were fewer grand opera companies in 1878 than in 1910.

practically mandatory, and even Tin Pan Alley songs referred to opera stories, tunes, and performers.²¹ Opera was not sacralized. Rather different types of operatic performance practices took on different social valences. Only opera staged in full and sung in a foreign language with expensive tickets was sacralized by World War I. It was a high-art, high-class event that was geared towards, and attended by, the upper class and the educated elite. The middle and lower classes, however, had ample access to opera in other forms in their own homes through sheet music and (later) recorded arias, as well as in performance in many different theatrical contexts. If the definition of opera is extended to include excerpts, adaptations, and re-interpretations, then it is clear that opera was ubiquitous in American culture.

Opera and the Historiography of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

The events discussed in this dissertation took place in the historical periods now called the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Although periodization is almost always controversial, at least since the 1980s historians have debated the dating of these two eras and the historical forces that hold them together. The *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* has printed no less than three roundtables recently in which some of the participants have proposed abolishing the designation of the Gilded Age entirely, usually in favor of a “long Progressive Era” from Reconstruction to the 1920s.²² At its most conservative, the Gilded Age is dated from around 1877 (the end of

²¹Much research still needs to be done to understand why and how opera was appropriated by popular culture in this period. Larry Hamberlin’s monograph *Tin Pan Opera: Operatic Novelty Songs in the Ragtime Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) is one of the best initial studies of this phenomenon. Other sources include: Nicole N. Aljoe, “Aria for Ethiopia: The Operatic Aesthetic of Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood*,” *African American Review* 45, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 277–90; George W. Martin, *Opera at the Bandstand Then and Now* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2014), Renee Lapp Norris, “Opera and the Mainstreaming of Blackface Minstrelsy,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 1, no. 3 (August 2007): 341–65; and Katherine K. Preston, “A Rarefied Art? Opera and Operatic Music as Popular Entertainment in Late Nineteenth-Century Washington City,” in *Music, American Made: Essays in Honor of John Graziano*, ed. John Koegel (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2011), 3–46.

²²Richard Schneirov, “Thoughts on Periodizing the Gilded Age: Capital Accumulation, Society, and Politics, 1873–1898,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 5, no. 3 (July 2006): 189–224; Alan Lessoff, “Forum: Should We Abolish the ‘Gilded Age?’” *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 8, no. 4 (October 2009): 461–85; Daniel T.

Reconstruction) until 1900 and Theodore Roosevelt's rise to Presidential power. In general the Gilded Age has a negative connotation as explained by historian Rebecca Edwards,

this was the era when capital and labor fought their first pitched battles on a national scale, and capital won. Wealth became far more concentrated; the super-rich turned their backs callously on the poor, lavishing millions on banquets and Worth ball gowns. Multinational corporations arose to exercise untrammelled power, while government stood by passively.²³

Some scholars have tried to rehabilitate the Gilded Age's bad reputation. In the pages of Joseph Horowitz's most recent book, *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's fin de siècle*, he portrays the Gilded Age as a time of unbridled passion, when people were not afraid to show their enthusiasm for art music (standing on chairs to cheer Wagner for instance), instead of a period of snobbish sacralization.²⁴

The Progressive Era (conservatively dated between the 1890s and the 1920s) was characterized by reform movements that swept the United States. Activists in grassroots political and social movements worked to regulate business practices that were dangerous or abusive to workers, protect children, abolish vices such as gambling, drinking, and prostitution, allow women to vote, and improve or establish government services from public schools to mass transit. The country moved away from *laissez-faire* ideals in political, economic, and social institutions which caused the relationship between citizens and the government to change

Rodgers, "Capitalism and Politics in the Progressive Era and in Ours," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 3 (July 2014): 379–86.

²³Rebecca Edwards, "Politics, Social Movements, and the Periodization of U. S. History," *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 8, no. 4 (October 2009): 464.

²⁴Joseph Horowitz, *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's fin de siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1–17.

fundamentally. People began to look to the government to protect them from forces over which they had little or no control.²⁵

Historians who want to abandon the term the “Gilded Age” generally point out that the influential reform movements that characterized the Progressive Era had their roots in the Gilded Age with some organizations having begun their activities before the 1890s. In addition, scholars claim that the “vulgar, materialistic, and corrupt” behavior that is so often ascribed to Gilded-Age businesspeople is far from unique in American history. Rather than focusing on a few wealthy Robber Barons, these scholars think it would be better to regard the period between the Civil War and the 1920s as years when industrialization and modernization gave birth to governmental and social reforms, as well as to many of our current ideas about democracy within a market-based economy.²⁶

In an essay titled “Men are from the Gilded Age, Women are from the Progressive Era,” Elisabeth Israels Perry argues that adding women and their accomplishments into the historical narrative in such diverse areas as the suffrage movement, the Social Gospel movement, the labor movement, and women’s clubs rendered older conceptions about the timing and development of reform movements so inaccurate as to bring down the idea of a “Gilded Age.” It was only when the focus of historiography was on men and their accomplishments that dividing the time period into the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era made sense.²⁷

I might suggest something along the same lines when thinking about musical culture. That is, foreign-language opera is from the Gilded Age, English-language opera is from the

²⁵Maureen Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s–1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), vi.

²⁶Quotation from Richard R. John, “Who were the Gilders? And Other Seldom-Asked Questions about Business, Technology, and Political Economy in the United States, 1877–1900,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8, no. 4 (October 2009): 476.

²⁷Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Men are from the Gilded Age, Women are from the Progressive Era,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1, no. 1 (January 2002): 25–48.

Progressive Era. The story that opera moved into the realm of uplifting high art and into the ballrooms and expensive theaters of Gilded-Age business tycoons works as long as scholars privilege elite culture and modern stereotypes about opera. This narrative is called into question when English-language opera is added to the mix. The impresarios, critics, and singers who advocated for English-language opera used the rhetoric of wholesome entertainment, democratization, uplift, and salvation through education and moral behavior that is reminiscent of the Progressive Era anti-vice campaigns and the “applied Christianity” of the Social Gospel Movement. I would not want to push this metaphor too far. The Wagnerites in Brooklyn’s Seidl Society genuinely seemed to want to share their adoration for the German composer’s music as part of an impulse to pursue activities for the collective good, not to create an exclusive space for the super wealthy and educated elite. The hard-nosed English-language impresario Henry W. Savage was certainly primarily interested in his companies’ financial success and used idealistic language about democratizing American operatic culture for the benefit of the middle class as a means to that end. Yet, the fact remains that the agendas of the audience and producers of English-language opera were in many respects quite different from that of many who supported foreign-language opera.

Operatic Geography

The transnational relationship between the American musical scene and that in Europe is another issue that merits consideration. Singers, impresarios, and entire companies criss-crossed the Atlantic in a constant exchange between Europe and the United States. European models provided examples for many elements of American musical life including performance practices, musical institutions, and music criticism. Americans interested in music could easily keep abreast of developments in Europe as U. S. newspapers and journals frequently published

reviews, gossip items, and cultural news from across the Atlantic. British musical culture was a particularly strong influence, and there was extensive coverage of music in London and the British Isles in many American publications.

The hold Europe had on American cultural life began to lessen slightly in the early twentieth century. For instance, the column on London musical news in the *American Art Journal* ended in the late 1890s, replaced by one that covered all of Western Europe. By 1900, items about European music were only included as the editor decided, instead of being a regular feature in every issue. Despite the importance of European music and cultural life to the United States, surprisingly few studies on nineteenth-century music concentrate on comparing artistic cultures or detailing exactly how a particular concept was translated from Europe to the United States.²⁸ Fewer still investigate ways that the reception of musical works differed between the two continents.²⁹ This is understandable because comparisons between two vast geographical areas with many national and regional differences is a difficult undertaking and tends to oversimplify and erase important concepts and events. On occasion, I will compare European and American musical cultures, but for the most part, I will concentrate on the United States alone.

In a recent colloquy on the study of American music published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, several scholars (Robert Fink, George Lewis, and Alejandro L. Madrid) cautioned against the trap of American exceptionalism and advocated in one way or

²⁸Exceptions to this statement include Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy*; John Graziano, ed., *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840–1900* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006); Ora Frishberg Saloman, *On Beethoven, Berlioz, and Other Music Criticism in Paris, Boston, and New York, 1764–1890* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); and Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁹See Robert L. A. Clark, “Local Color: The Representation of Race in *Carmen* and *Carmen Jones*,” in *Operatic Migrations: Transforming Works and Crossing Boundaries*, eds. Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 217–39; and Michael Broyles, *Beethoven in America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2011) for two examples.

another for a musicological and pedagogical approach that removes the nation-state from the foreground of studies on music in the United States.³⁰ All three were writing primarily about music from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the late nineteenth century, however, the United States was becoming a world power within a global context in which the nation-state was a fundamental organizing principle. Therefore, American national style in all the arts was a vital concern of most critics and composers as well as many performers. These musicians struggled to find a way to construct a uniquely American mode of artistic expression while still remaining true to ways of thinking about, performing, and composing music that were familiar to them. Thus, making nationalism one of the central concerns of this dissertation is appropriate.

Fink also suggested that Americanists need to determine the influence of both “*place* (the physical environment through which we move) and *space* (the practice and lived experience of place),” and certainly this is true in the nineteenth century.³¹ Opera companies were constantly on the move, performing the same works many times in a season, traveling from place to place, but more importantly, visiting new spaces. Where people attended an opera helped to determine what they heard, the cultural context of that performance, and how an individual work was received. Of course, it is possible to make generalizations about the American musical landscape, and I make them. It is also important to remember that there is a specificity to localized performance and reception. Issues of *place*—big city or small town, rural or urban, and region of the country—controlled many aspects of operatic culture because the *space* changed. An opera performance, for example, that was just one within a long season in a large urban area had a very different meaning than a performance by the same troupe in a smaller town that might not host

³⁰Charles Hiroshi Garrett and others, “Studying U. S. Music in the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 689–719.

³¹Robert Fink, “File Under: American Spaces,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 709. [Italics in original.]

a full grand opera again for years. Even among the biggest metropolises, the way opera was received differed between New York (a city with a thriving musical-theater scene where opera companies went to establish their reputations), Boston (which supported orchestral music more vigorously and heard opera less often), and San Francisco (a frontier boom town that was home to an active operatic scene quite early in its history), to name just a few.³² Because local newspapers reprinted many articles and musical criticisms from New York publications, it is tempting to assume that attitudes about music expressed by New York-based writers were universal. The extent to which their opinions were really shared across the country is often difficult to discern. In order to widen the geographic scope of my work, I use commentaries and reviews from a variety of places around the country, as well as focus on Raleigh, North Carolina, as an example of a mid-sized, growing city in the South. It will take many more studies before scholars have a more complete picture of the ways that opera was received and performed throughout the nation.

The language of opera performance took on much more importance in the United States than in Europe where most opera was performed in the vernacular. From an American perspective, German was the language of depth and artistic worth, while Italian meant frothy theater with a connotation of effeminate, snobbish luxury, and English was for middle-class, middlebrow entertainment.³³ Companies that performed entirely in one language took on a

³²Studies that focus on the musical or operatic life of individual cities include Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class*; Gavin James Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); John Frederick Cone, *Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera Company* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theater: New York City, 1840–1940* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009); George W. Martin, *Verdi at the Golden Gate: Opera and San Francisco in the Gold Rush Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Catherine Parsons Smith, *Making Music in Los Angeles: Transforming the Popular* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

³³Although *Carmen* and *Faust* were both very popular operas in nineteenth-century America, French opera was rarely performed in the original language outside of New Orleans. A few French-language opera companies toured the United States in the nineteenth century, but the sort of essentializing stereotypes that were common for English, German, and Italian opera never developed with respect to French-language opera.

reputation consistent with that language, no matter the repertoire. For instance, the Metropolitan performed only in German from 1884 to 1891. Although Wagner dominated their repertoire, they performed other operas in German translation, such as Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and Gounod's *Faust*. The fact that they performed everything in German gave the company a certain artistic heft and intellectual credibility. When the troupe switched to Italian, some critics lamented that the move signaled the victory of style over substance (even though they continued to perform essentially the same operas—just in Italian translation). In disgust, critic George William Curtis slammed the Metropolitan for abandoning German-language performance. He interpreted the change to Italian as bowing to the wealthy and shallow box holders. “Nothing has seemed more natural than the precedence of German opera at a time in which the German musical genius and cultivation are dominant, and in a city in which the German audience abounds...[but now] the lovely Danaïdes of the boxes, in the shining garments of Worth, with soft disdain of difficulty,” would dominate the Metropolitan.³⁴

The production language signaled to the audience the type of performance and atmosphere they could anticipate. Italian opera companies such as Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company, for example, were known for high-quality singers and expensive, excellent production values which necessitated costly tickets. Critics, however, stereotyped Italian opera's audiences as social-climbing wealthy listeners more interested in being seen in their boxes than in the music itself. German companies, so the conventional wisdom went, also charged high ticket prices because they had to pay elevated salaries for the singers, but the premium was worth it to their educated listeners because of the artistic value attributed to the works themselves. English, on the other hand, indicated that the middle class was the target audience and that patrons should expect lesser quality to go with the lower ticket price. Therefore, it was not so much that

³⁴[George William Curtis], “Editor's Easy Chair,” *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 82, no. 491 (April 1891): 798.

Wagner's operas suddenly lost all their artistic depth when they were sung in Italian or English, but that the audience's expectations of the performance were affected by the language.

According to these prejudices, audiences and critics would have expected Wagner performed in Italian to be produced in a luxurious manner that de-emphasized the deeper meaning of the opera in favor of spectacle.

These stereotypes were so strong that in the 1890s, when some foreign-language companies began to sing works in their original languages, impresarios portrayed the move as an attempt to broaden the appeal of a company beyond a single-language cohort. In 1897, when conductor Walter Damrosch switched his company from an entirely German-language repertoire (including operas in German translation) to one that included operas sung in the original French and Italian as well, he explained, "my enlargement of the operatic scope of my company so as to include opera in Italian and French, as well as in German, is the natural result of my desire to please all tastes. All classes of the public have supported me, though I have more specially given Wagnerian music-drama, and I should try to please all classes in return."³⁵

Damrosch also hired new singers to perform the non-German operas. Although this was in part because he needed performers who knew the roles in the appropriate language, it was also because audiences and critics believed that there were national styles of singing. Writers thought that a singer who was a native Italian and trained in Italy was uniquely suited to sing the Italian repertoire, but might not be able to sing in French or German.

Opera and Identity

Issues of identity affected operatic performers, audiences, reception, and the development of the American cultural hierarchy profoundly, and so this dissertation crosses disciplinary boundaries

³⁵"Damroschiana," *American Art Journal* 69, no. 1 (10 April 1897): 5.

into Gender, Immigration, and African American Studies. For women, opera (and the arts in general) was a relatively welcoming professional space.³⁶ Because music was already feminized by the late nineteenth century in the United States, professional singers could justify their career choices as an extension of respectable female behavior. This was also a time period when many women entered the workforce as small business owners in addition to taking on a variety of blue-collar jobs. In music, besides singers, some women became agents or managers.³⁷ With the advent of important social and political movements that included women (such as the suffrage and labor movements along with anti-vice campaigns), many middle-class women challenged notions of Victorian respectability and “separate spheres” for men and women.³⁸ Meanwhile, men involved in the arts had to find ways to preserve their masculine identity while working within a largely feminized space.³⁹

³⁶See Adrienne Fried Block, “Matinee Mania, or the Regendering of Nineteenth-Century Audiences in New York City,” *19th-Century Music* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 193–216; Linda Whitesitt, “Women as ‘Keepers of Culture’: Music Clubs, Community Concert Series, and Symphony Orchestras,” in *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists Since 1860*, eds. Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 65–86.

³⁷Sources on women and the arts in this period include Mary Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss, eds., *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); M. Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895–1915* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Katherine K. Preston, “‘Dear Miss Ober’: Music Management and the Interconnections of Musical Culture in the U. S., 1876–1883,” in *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840–1900*, ed. John Graziano (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 273–315; Preston, *Opera for the American People*; Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁸See Jane Kathleen Curry, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Theatre Managers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994); Wendy Gamber, “A Gendered Enterprise: Placing Nineteenth-Century Businesswomen in History,” *Business History Review* 72, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 188–217; Barbara J. Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); Angel Kowlek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998).

³⁹Studies of masculinity in this period includes Stephen Garton, “The Scales of Suffering: Love, Death and Victorian Masculinity,” *Social History* 27, no. 1 (January 2002): 40–58; J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds. *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

In a nation so heavily reliant on immigration, opera inevitably found itself in a contested position. German immigrants dominated the music profession, bringing ideas of *Kultur* and the conviction of the superiority of the Austro-German repertoire with them. Opera, in part because it was originally composed in a foreign language, was a European import. Indeed, some critics such as Arthur Weld argued that there might never be an American opera tradition. Critics and performers agreed that even if there might someday be a vibrant opera scene dominated by American compositions, that time had not yet come, nor was it likely to occur any time soon. For some people, opera's European association was an advantage—the wealthy were interested in emulating European behaviors and would support imported operas. Moreover, a widespread bias against locally-trained performers and composers made opera more appealing precisely *because* it was identifiably from Europe. In this cultural milieu, opera in English translation occupied a “no man's land” between American and European music. Not really American because it was not originally written by a composer who identified as American, but also not really European because it was performed in English often by American singers.

This did not keep some people from using opera to help construct an American musical identity. Some critics used the essential foreignness of the genre and its performers in foreign-language opera to help define American music by contrasting European opera with music they could label “American” such as African American folk music or orchestral music by American composers.⁴⁰ On the other hand, many English-language opera supporters created a dichotomy between foreign-language opera and their supposedly American product. Even though the operas English-language troupes performed were by European composers, impresarios and

⁴⁰See Katie J. Graber, “American Dreams: Opera and Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Chicago,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010).

singers privileged the language of performance to the extent that the presence of English was all that they required to designate an opera “American.”⁴¹

During this period, immigration patterns also changed with more people arriving from Southern Europe. Americans generally thought these new arrivals were poor, badly educated, and a potential drain on the nation. Europeans and Americans based ideas about race and cultural difference more upon national origin than upon appearance. Thus many Americans thought that Anglo-Saxons were purely white, with other northern European immigrants (particularly those from Germany) also accorded high social status as part of a white set. Southern Europeans were “blackened” and placed in the racial hierarchy closer to African Americans, which affected how other people treated them.⁴² These stereotypes, in turn, affected the reception of compositions and the reputation of performers and composers associated with Southern Europe.

Legal restrictions as well as custom limited access by African Americans to opera as performers and as audience members. Sissieretta Jones, for instance, began her career singing opera arias in recitals, but turned to vaudeville in the late 1890s, in part, because she could no longer secure the financial backing or attract the white audience she needed to perform art music in a mixed-race touring company.⁴³ Opera was one of many ways that whites enforced racial boundaries by refusing blacks entrée to opera performances. Therefore, whites constructed the art form itself as created *for* whites *by* whites, which, in turn, helped to define whiteness.⁴⁴ The exception that proves this rule is the remarkable Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company, the

⁴¹Katherine K. Preston, “Opera is Elite,” 535–39.

⁴²Peter Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002): 154–73.

⁴³See John Graziano, “The Early Life and Career of the ‘Black Patti’: The Odyssey of an African American Singer in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 543–96.

⁴⁴See Campbell, *Music and the Making of the New South*.

first long-running African American opera troupe in the United States active between 1900 and 1907. The company did not exactly thrive, but its challenge to white domination of opera performance and its audience's reception of the troupe not only provided a space for African Americans to access grand opera, but also (in a perverse way) emphasized racial separation. Unable to perform opera with whites, blacks had to have their own isolated company.

Sources

Much of the primary source material for this dissertation comes from reviews and critical commentaries published by major newspapers, general-interest magazines, and music journals in the United States. The late nineteenth century was a very active time in journalism. Even small towns often had multiple newspapers, and a large city like New York had scores of them, from specialized publications to general-interest papers to the basest sorts of gossip sheets. Mainstays such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Harper's*, and the *Atlantic Monthly* enjoyed nation-wide distribution and were some of the most important general-interest periodicals. Monthly or weekly journals devoted to the arts were also common, from primarily trade publications such as the *Musical Courier* to journals devoted to in-depth criticism and contemplation of American musical life such as W. S. B. Matthews's *Music*. Many of these publications are available through online, searchable databases.

Gossip dominated newspaper coverage with some industry news, reviews of specific performances, and sometimes commentary on artistic culture. Journals, on the other hand, carried more comprehensive treatment of the entertainment business, thoughtful pieces about opera and American culture, as well as reviews and gossip. I rely particularly heavily on two journals. *The American Art Journal*, a New-York based weekly publication edited by William Thoms, combined extensive coverage of the business of music with reviews and commentary

about music and other art forms. *Music*, a monthly magazine out of Chicago edited by W. S. B. Mathews, printed long, often intellectual articles about music and culture and paid significant attention to pedagogy, including many pieces designed for piano teachers and content for music-club lectures.

There are few secondary sources devoted to an investigation of American critics and nineteenth-century musical thought. Mark N. Grant's *Maestro of the Pen*, as well as a few articles about individual critics and journals active at the end of the century cover this topic, but there is still much work to be done to understand the nuances and complexity of American musical criticism.⁴⁵ Drawing on the theories of Pierre Bordieu, James Deaville positions the music critic as a "cultural businessman." Deaville sees the critic as an intermediary exploiting the symbolic capital he accumulated in the cultural arena and then using his power to consecrate particular cultural products by assigning them value.⁴⁶ Indeed, critics' evaluations of art, institutions, and performers helped boost (or lessen) not only the symbolic capital of the specific subject of their critique, but also the symbolic capital of the writers themselves.

Sociologist Gary Alan Fine focuses on "reputational entrepreneurs:" people who seek to control the ways that others think of historical figures.⁴⁷ He posits that historians, journalists, and others confirm or challenge their readers' assumptions to influence the public's perceptions

⁴⁵Secondary sources on the American musical press, as well as the role of critics and newspapers in the formation of the U. S. cultural landscape include J. Heywood Alexander, "Brainard's (Western) Musical World," *Notes* 36, no. 3 (March 1980): 601–14; Mark N. Grant, *Maestros of the Pen: A History of Classical Music Criticism in America* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998); Joseph Horowitz, "Henry Krehbiel: German American, Music Critic," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8, no. 2 (April 2009): 165–87; and William E. Terry, "The Negro Music Journal: An Appraisal," *Black Perspective in Music* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1977): 146–60.

⁴⁶James Deaville, "Critic and Conductor in 1860s Chicago: George Upton, Hans Balatka, and Cultural Capitalism," in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spitzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 176.

⁴⁷Gary Alan Fine, "Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Memory of Incompetence: Melting Supporters, Partisan Warriors, and Images of President Harding," *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 5 (March 1996): 1159–93. Fine argues that a reputational entrepreneur "depends upon the presence of three elements: motivation, narrative facility, and institutional placement," criteria met by critics and many other cultural figures such as singers, impresarios, and conductors. (p. 1162)

of people or events. Critics and tastemakers in the nineteenth century performed much the same function as Fine's reputational entrepreneurs as they sought to shape musical culture by manipulating how Americans thought about particular composers, performers, genres, and even individual pieces.⁴⁸ Fine's concept is attractive because prominent nineteenth-century music critics saw themselves as the arbiters of musical taste, educators of the American population, and the logical people to influence the future of culture in the United States. To that end they wrote, lectured, and worked with performers behind the scenes, to create an artistic landscape that met their idealistic visions, all the while burnishing their own reputations. While critics functioned as reputational entrepreneurs, many other people also had multiple motivations to frame music and culture in ways that benefited their interests. Presidents of Women's Clubs, for instance, who arranged countless concerts, lectures, and other events worked not only for the good of their communities, but also to establish the reputations and influence of their organizations and themselves through supporting specific types of "uplifting" music.

In addition to newspaper and journal articles, I also draw upon a diverse set of primary documents from a variety of libraries and archives in the United States. I have examined box office receipts and other financial documents from Ford's Opera House in Baltimore (partial records 1885, 1894–95, 1899, 1901, 1903) the Lafayette Square Opera House in Washington, DC (partial records 1896–98, 1899–1900, 1902) and the Chestnut Street Opera House in Philadelphia (partial records 1887–88, 1893–96). The Lafayette Square Opera House records are the most complete of the theatrical records and include business correspondence as well as financial information. I have also studied the personal financial records of Augustin Daly, an important theater owner, playwright, and impresario, Francis Wilson, a comic opera singer and

⁴⁸Some critics did the opposite, and suggested they were in favor of democratizing art by endorsing popular entertainment.

impresario, Walter Damrosch, conductor and impresario, as well as Marcella Sembrich and Louise Homer (both foreign-language opera singers). Finally, I examined the papers of David Blakely, a prominent touring manager and agent. The Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin at Madison holds an enormous collection of scores and other performing materials once owned by the Tams-Witmark lending library. Although I examined sources from over fifteen operas and operettas, in this dissertation I focus only on the performing materials for *Carmen* by Georges Bizet.

Chapter Overview

I have organized this dissertation from a general, macro view of operatic culture in the United States through the lens of English-language opera to a set of case studies, and then to a narrow focus on one opera—Bizet's *Carmen*. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the discourses about opera in the United States centered on four areas: beliefs about high and low art; social class; the political and cultural relationship between America and Europe; and operatic aesthetics. In each area of discourse, opera in English translation ended up occupying a liminal space that left it vulnerable to the changes in the cultural hierarchy at the time. Opera in foreign languages moved into the realm of high art, but opera in English was neither high art (because it was in English) nor low art (because it was opera). Rather than being an activity for the upper class, it was associated with the middle class. Some critics presented opera in English as a possible avenue for the construction of an American musical culture, but this often worked against it because there was no generally recognized American operatic style yet, and many audience members and critics actually preferred European music and performers. Finally, numerous critics and opera patrons thought that opera sung in foreign languages was not only performed at a higher level, but also that the English translations were so horrible they potentially damaged the operas beyond repair.

Chapter 2 is on the business of opera and fulfills two purposes. First, by exploring how the opera and theater businesses worked, I can contextualize and explain the constraints under which all opera companies functioned. Business and artistic decisions were (and are still) intertwined. This fundamental truth is something that musicologists sometimes overlook, or at least deemphasize, because it can be uncomfortable to acknowledge the significant influence of commerce upon art. Second, I argue that opera in English lost its cultural niche because its audience preferred other types of entertainment. This contention is based not only upon artistic and cultural reasoning, but also business realities such as ticket cost and the financial agenda of the Theatrical Syndicate which became active beginning in the late 1890s.

Chapter 3 explores gender roles in the United States and how they influenced the lived experience of the men and women who worked in opera. Women who led public lives faced criticism for flouting traditional assumptions about femininity and respectability. This was particularly true for opera singers because the genre is staged and depends upon spectacle to attract audiences. Yet, many prima donnas (as was the case in Europe) took command of their careers and directed their professional lives in a way that many women in other circumstances could not. I use the life and career of a popular English-language singer, Emma Juch, as a case study to examine the women of opera. Men, too, faced challenges because theatrical display often contradicted masculine gender roles. Whether they tried to shape a public image that took advantage of discourses of virile manliness or to become part of the counterculture of the Aesthetics Movement before 1895, men had to conduct themselves within masculine gender norms to maintain their financial and artistic viability. Similar to women, they employed the press to maintain their artistic and public personae.

Although critics debated the relative merits of English-language opera, it was still an important cultural force. During this time, many Americans believed that one of humanity's

primary goals should be the search for personal and societal uplift whether through religion, the arts, or philanthropy. In Chapter 4, I rely on two case studies to examine the uplifting cultural work done by English-language opera. The first case study is on the Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company and its reception in the African American and white communities. Treated as a curiosity by the white press, for African American elites the company was a key element of upper-class formation and racial uplift in the black community in New York City and even throughout the East Coast. The second case study utilizes the cultural landscape of Raleigh, North Carolina, as an example of the role of opera in the life and civic identity of a small to mid-sized Southern town after Reconstruction.

The final two chapters build upon the broader context presented in Chapters 1 through 4 for a close examination of *Carmen* by Georges Bizet. In Chapter 5, I investigate the practicalities of singing *Carmen* and partially reconstruct how English-language companies performed the work relying on five marked-up scores from the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection located in the Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as other production materials, publicity resources, and reviews. The study of opera performance in the nineteenth century is a growing field and one that needs attention by Americanists. Work by researchers such as H. Robert Cohen, Arnold Jacobshagen, Gundula Kreuzer, Hilary Poriss, and Mary Ann Smart have helped uncover some aspects of nineteenth-century opera performance, but none of these scholars has delved into opera in the United States.⁴⁹ Close scrutiny of the

⁴⁹H. Robert Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals for Twelve Parisian Operatic Premières* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1991); Arnold Jacobshagen, "Staging at the Opéra-Comique in Nineteenth-Century Paris: Auber's *Fra Diavolo* and the *Livrets de Mise-en-Scène*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13, no. 3 (November 2001): 329–60; Gundula Kreuzer, "Wagner-Dampf: Steam in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Operatic Production," *Opera Quarterly* 27, nos. 2–3 (Spring–Summer 2011): 179–218; Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Americanists who have worked on opera performance in the United States include Martin, *Verdi at the Golden Gate*; Katherine K. Preston, "'The People's Prima Donna': Emma Abbott and Opera for the People," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 1 (January 2014): 56–79; and Preston, *Opera for the American People*, forthcoming.

Carmen scores shows that English-language companies cut the printed music substantially while still maintaining the score's musical integrity and a coherent story line.

By the 1890s, a performance tradition evolved such that cuts and other modifications to the score served to foreground an interpretation of the work that portrayed Carmen as more violent and Don José as more typically masculine than the unaltered printed score does. This version of *Carmen* was consistent with the reception of the work that I detail in Chapter 6. Although some of the broad themes in the American responses to the work were similar to criticisms in Europe, in other aspects the opera's reception in the United States was closely tied to a set of unique circumstances. Issues of gender, class, race, immigration, imperialism, changing conceptions of masculinity, and the feminization of countries the United States went to war with at the turn of the century, all contributed to the way that American critics understood this perennially popular work.

Charles Hiroshi Garrett and Carol J. Oja wrote in the *JAMS* colloquy on American Music, "an extraordinary amount of work...needs to be done in exploring American music before 1900, a vast terrain that calls out for substantially greater attention."⁵⁰ This dissertation is my contribution to the study of this undiscovered country.

⁵⁰Charles Hiroshi Garrett and Carol J. Oja, "Reflections: American Studies in 2011," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 714.

CHAPTER 1: “NO *REAL* OPERA HERE”: AMERICAN DISCOURSES ABOUT OPERA IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION, 1878–1910

In 1875, opera impresario Clarence D. Hess brought the Clara Louise Kellogg English Grand Opera Company to New York. It was the only grand-opera troupe performing in the city that season. The company included a large chorus (up to 200 people), featured one of the biggest opera stars in the U. S. (Clara Kellogg), and the costumes and scenery were luxurious and beautiful—in short, everything that grand opera should be. Yet the *New York Herald* repeatedly insisted that no opera was being produced in New York that year. Finally Hess went to the newspaper’s offices to confront the editor, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., about the error. Bennett replied

I have no doubt, Mr. Hess, that all you claim for your performances is true, and they should be, as I hope they are, liberally attended; you are mistaken if you entertain the thought that the *Herald* in expressing a regret that there is no opera in New York this season intends to cast the least reflection on your English opera company. The *Herald* in this expression simply means that there is no *real* opera here, such as the patrons of the Academy of Music are accustomed to enjoy.¹

The readers of the article in which Hess told this story would have understood exactly what Bennett meant. No matter how well Hess’s company might have performed and no matter how high the production values, “*real* opera” meant opera sung in a foreign language for an elite audience. Bennett did not care about fidelity to the score or the authority of the composer, for the Academy of Music was routinely the site of foreign-language performances in translation (Italian to German or French to Italian, for instance). Foreign-language productions marked opera as *real* opera because it attracted the “patrons of the Academy of Music;” that is the

¹Clarence D. Hess, “English Opera in America,” *The Philharmonic* 1, no. 3 (July 1901): 131. [Italics in the original]

wealthy, upper-crust families of New York City. English-language opera, associated with the middle class, did not appeal to this elite audience. It was opera, but not really.

My task in this chapter is to explain why Bennett so casually dismissed the Clara Kellogg Company by analyzing the discourses about opera in English translation published in the daily and musical presses in the United States between approximately 1878 and 1910 within the context of the American cultural, social, and political landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The conversation about opera centered on four topics: the difference between so-called high and low art; social class; America's cultural and political relationship to Europe; and operatic and musical aesthetics. In the post-Reconstruction decades straddling the year 1900, American exceptionalism flared up, leading to political expansionism and a rethinking of U. S. civic and social values. These shifts affected not only governmental agendas from the disenfranchisement of African Americans to domestic economic policy, but also found its echoes in opera houses and theaters across the country. Indeed, thinking about opera led critics and performers into a debate on the future of American culture and its dependence upon European models, as well as to question the extent to which art should be shaped by economics, class, and aesthetics. Although American musical figures had long debated many of these issues, the political and cultural conditions at the end of the century lent new urgency to these enduring concerns.

Scholarship on the American musical landscape of this period has tended to overlook opera's important place in U. S. culture and to focus instead on instrumental music. For example, Jessica Gienow-Hecht argues in her monograph, *Sound Diplomacy*, that, "save for the works of Richard Wagner and selected concertized versions of opera excerpts, opera did not

feature prominently in the debate on the social and political meaning of music at large.”²

Instrumental music was undoubtedly vital to the conversations about the future of American music, but opera was also important to this discourse. Critics, composers, pedagogues, and performers saw opera as a key component in the development of both an American musical style and a unique national musical culture. Indeed, music writers consistently lamented that there was no identifiable American style and often included the lack of operas written by American composers as one of the most important reasons why a national musical style had not developed.

The extensive discourse about opera reflects how high the stakes were around 1900. Impresarios, critics, and performers expressed concern that opera could not survive in the United States. Everyone recognized that if grand opera was to remain a viable enterprise, it must find a permanent cultural niche that made sense within the American artistic landscape. These writers’ worries reflected the new reality at the beginning of the twentieth century that opera audiences seemed to be falling as foreign-language opera became more expensive, and English-language opera was losing its appeal. For some, opera’s move from popular entertainment to high art risked alienating opera’s traditional middle-class audience. As early as 1887, baritone William T. Carleton charged that the “American appreciation of classic music is in a somnolent state.”³ Others saw a different problem and worried that opera was too much about commerce and social class rather than art. In 1908, *New York Tribune* critic Henry Krehbiel produced a laundry list of reasons why opera was not a secure part of the national musical life. He believed operatic impresarios and performers were too focused on business to the exclusion of art.

²Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 18.

³“Matters Musical: A Talk with Carleton, the Famous Singer,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 November 1887.

Audiences, in his opinion, were also to blame as they were more interested in spectacle than beauty.

The fickleness of the public taste, the popular craving for sensation, the egotism and rapacity of the artists, the lack of high purpose in the promoters, the domination of fashion instead of love for art, the lack of real artistic culture—all these things have stood from the beginning, as they still stand...⁴

Moreover, he labeled opera “exotic” because it was not sung in the vernacular and did not give “utterance to national ideals.”⁵ These anxieties were hardly abstract. They had real world implications that directly affected opera’s financial and artistic viability as we shall see in Chapter 2.

The strands that bound the different discursive categories about opera were closely interwoven. As critics, performers, and impresarios struggled to define the future of American musical culture, opera in English became an important focus of discussion because the genre was clearly changing. It enjoyed a period of popularity after the Panic of 1873, but by the beginning of the 1880s, foreign-language troupes, led by Her Majesty’s Italian Opera Company and the Metropolitan Opera Company, were regaining market share and threatening the existence of grand-opera English-language companies. As critics debated the merits of opera in English translation, singers and producers worked to keep the performance practice alive within a dynamic marketplace.

High Art or Low Art?

Critic James Huneker once called English-language opera impresario Henry W. Savage a “shrewd Yankee speculator” who cared “more for the ethics of the box-office than for the

⁴Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera: Being Historical and Critical Observations and Records Concerning the Lyric Drama in New York from Its Earliest Days down to the Present Time* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 207.

⁵Ibid.

aesthetics of the music-drama.”⁶ His criticism of Savage, who produced English-language opera longer and more successfully than most other impresarios, highlights the first conflict over opera I will consider. Was opera high art or low art? Where did opera, and English-language opera specifically, fit in the cultural hierarchy of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era? Critics defined high art as any cultural production which could educate and uplift its audience—as more concerned with artistic inspiration than commercial success. Low art, on the other hand, was pure entertainment with few redeeming qualities, put on stage solely to make money for its performers and producers. Of course, this much-used dichotomy obscured the very real economic motivations of those performers and impresarios who produced so-called “high art,” on the one hand, and the ways that “low art” could and did uplift its audience, on the other.

Prior to the 1880s, Americans thought opera was popular entertainment, not high art.

Katherine K. Preston explains that

staged operatic productions were a staple of the American popular stage. Americans of most economic classes were attracted to the melodrama of operatic stories; they whistled and hummed the tunes; they attended performances in droves—not as ‘high art’ or as a source of edification but rather (as far as we can tell) for the simple joy of theatrical spectacle, tuneful melodies, and popular entertainment.⁷

Beginning in the 1880s, some critics began to write about foreign-language opera as if it was high art rather than just a pleasant diversion. Based upon our present cultural hierarchy it is tempting to conclude, as Lawrence Levine did in *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, that as opera became a high art, it also slipped into cultural irrelevancy. During the late nineteenth century, however, associations between high art, elitism, and the cultural periphery were not as firmly established as they are today.⁸ Recent scholarship has shown that opera permeated popular culture until at least

⁶James Huneker, “Grand Opera in American,” *Harper’s Bazaar* 33, no. 39 (20 September 1900): 1357–58.

⁷Katherine K. Preston, “To the Opera House? The Trials and Tribulations of Operatic Production in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 39.

⁸Joseph Horowitz took Lawrence Levine to task for just this assumption in his article “‘Sermons in Tones’: Sacralization as a Theme in American Classical Music,” *American Music* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 311–40.

World War I. From sheet music arrangements of arias to popular concert-band performances of operatic excerpts to operatic references in Tin Pan Alley songs, average Americans were familiar with at least some music from canonic works such as *Il trovatore*, *Carmen*, and *Die Meistersinger* as well as plots and operatic performers.⁹ As critic Nym Crinkel noted in 1886, “New York is Wagner-mad this winter...Talk about Americans not appreciating high art!...Things have got to that pass...[that] there is a certain set of fashionable young women who select their gentlemen acquaintances by the simple ordeal: ‘Do you belong to the Italian or the German school?’”¹⁰ The answer to that question indicated the gentleman’s priorities—was he interested in an aristocratic pastime (as represented by Italian opera) or an uplifting musical experience (provided by German opera)? Notice that Crinkel identified Wagner as high art. Opera’s transition from entertainment to high art (at least as far as Wagner was concerned) had been accomplished, but it was still so popular that Crinkel could joke about the cultural meaning of specific composers’ work. Not until after World War I did opera become so unfamiliar to most audiences that allusions to it became a joke about its elite connotations and incomprehensibility, rather than more sophisticated references that relied on the listeners’ knowledge of the repertoire and its performers.¹¹

⁹See Katherine K. Preston’s work, particularly “A Rarefied Art?, Opera and Operatic Music as Popular Entertainment in Late Nineteenth-Century Washington City,” in *Music, American Made: Essays in Honor of John Graziano*, ed. John Koegel (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2011), 3–46; Catherine Parsons Smith, “Inventing Tradition: Symphony and Opera in Progressive-Era Los Angeles,” in *Music and Culture in America, 1861–1918*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 299–322; Charles A. Kennedy, “When Cairo Met Main Street: Little Egypt, Salome Dancers, and the World’s Fairs of 1893 and 1904,” in *Music and Culture in America*, 271–98; and Larry Hamberlin, *Tin Pan Opera: Operatic Novelty Songs in the Ragtime Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰Nym Crinkel, “Things in New York,” *Washington Post*, 31 January 1886. See Appendix for more information on Crinkel.

¹¹Although both Preston and Horowitz present this argument in their work, Larry Hamberlin is especially convincing on this point in *Tin Pan Opera*.

A complete consideration of the reasons for opera's transition to high art would be a study of its own because of the many cultural forces that pushed foreign-language grand opera into that category. A brief overview of the phenomenon will have to suffice for now. Probably the most important reason that critics reconsidered opera's aesthetic character was the Wagner craze of the 1880s and 1890s which prompted authors to find uplifting characteristics in opera for the first time.¹² Speaking of *Parsifal*, Louis Russell wrote in 1892 that "there is a wonderful dignity in the drama from first to last, and no one can listen and look upon it without realizing in it a splendid influence for good."¹³ At first, however, critics attributed dignity and uplifting power only to German operas (especially those by Wagner). When the Metropolitan announced in 1891 that they would sing in Italian rather than German the following season, some critics positioned the switch as abandoning uplifting, intellectually challenging music for the more frivolous Italian repertoire suitable merely as background noise to accompany the chatter of wealthy box holders. Sarcastically, George William Curtis explained the decision: "the argument is that these devotees of the intellect hold that nothing is lost by not hearing the Italian and French music, and that the time can be much more profitably devoted to the stimulating conversation which takes place in an opera box."¹⁴

The country's most prestigious conductors positioned both the Austro-German orchestral literature and German opera as uplifting high art. Anton Seidl conducted the New

¹²The most extensive consideration of the Wagner Craze is in Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights: An American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). As Horowitz admits, his text relies primarily on New York sources and it seems that the Wagner Craze was strongest in the Northeast among middle- and upper-class opera goers. Nationally, though many people certainly loved Wagner and there are many references to his music and the craze for his works in the papers, many critics and opera goers also found his music boring and even incomprehensible.

¹³Louis S. Russell, "Wagner's *Parsifal*: A Picture of the Bayeuth [*sic*] Performance, and a Reflection on Ethics," *Music* 3, no. 1 (November 1892): 61.

¹⁴[George William Curtis], "Editor's Easy Chair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 82, no. 491 (April 1891): 797. In reality, the Metropolitan kept singing Wagner but in Italian translation. By the late 1890s, the company was performing operas in the original language rather than limiting themselves to a single language.

York Philharmonic and was the most famous Wagner disciple in the country after Theodore Thomas. Walter Damrosch directed orchestras based in New York, founded his own German-language opera troupe, and was a sought-after lecturer on Wagner operas. Theodore Thomas regularly programmed Wagner with his orchestras and also conducted the American and National Opera Companies in the mid 1880s. These men transferred their cultural capital derived from their European pedigrees and skill as conductors from the world of instrumental music to the opera house.

The high ticket price of foreign-language opera encouraged people to connect the genre with high art, out of reach for normal individuals who could not afford the admission fee. As W. S. B. Mathews noted in connection with music at the 1893 Columbia Exposition, there was an unfortunate history of hampering “culture by affixing a fee to the very music which is offered as the highest example of the art.”¹⁵ He argued that, instead, the music committee should have charged more for popular music and encouraged as many people as possible to attend the more uplifting classical-music concerts by making them cheaper or even free. Thus, a larger audience would have been exposed to the “best” music. As it was, the more expensive foreign-language opera became, the less regular people were exposed to it, and the more exclusive it became, and the easier it was to believe rhetoric that suggested foreign-language opera was best understood by the educated elite.

The cost difference between English-language and foreign-language opera grew substantially during this period. In 1878, the Strakosch Italian Opera Company’s admission was \$1 with reserved seats costing 50 cents or \$1 extra depending upon where the seats were

¹⁵W. S. B. Mathews, “End of Art Music at the Fair,” *Music* 4, no. 5 (September 1893): 534.

located.¹⁶ The Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company, meanwhile, charged 25, 50, 75 cents or \$1 per seat.¹⁷ By 1909, tickets for the Metropolitan Opera Company cost \$2, \$3, \$5, and \$7.¹⁸ The English Opera Company managed by Henry W. Savage, in contrast, only charged between 50 cents and \$2 per ticket.¹⁹ Thus, while the price for English-language opera increased by 100 percent in thirty years, tickets for foreign-language opera shot up as much as seven times. The price differential encouraged people to think that English-language opera was not performed as well as its foreign-language counterpart. James Huneker scoffed that the typical English-language impresario's "response to the bad reviews and disgruntled press was 'What do you expect for half a dollar—Jean de Reszke?' So the money standard ruled..."²⁰ With the discourse already in the air that foreign-language opera was high art, the premium ticket price encouraged audiences to assume that foreign-language troupes were not only better than English-language companies, but also that the music itself was of higher artistic quality.

At the same time the Wagner Craze swept the nation, the Aesthetics Movement also made its way to the United States via a lecture tour, in 1882, by its chief British exponent, Oscar Wilde. Built on the idea that beauty itself was an uplifting force for good, aestheticism found ready adherents among intellectuals, artists, and even interior designers who wanted to surround

¹⁶Advertisement, *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 23 October 1878. \$1 in 1878 is worth about \$24.00 in 2013. To be fair, that same season Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company was the most expensive entertainment option in the nation, charging between 50 cents and \$3 per seat. Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 January 1879. I calculated all relative values in this dissertation using the Purchasing Power Calculator at measuringworth.com. 2013 is the most recent year for which information was available.

¹⁷Advertisement, *New York Times*, 6 September 1879.

¹⁸Advertisement, *New York Times*, 24 January 1909. \$2 in 1909 is worth about \$52.80 in 2013 currency, while \$7 equates to approximately \$185.

¹⁹Advertisement, *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 19 November 1909.

²⁰Huneker, "Grand Opera in American," 1358.

people with beauty in their homes.²¹ These ideas transferred to music. William Sufferin, for instance, defended the importance of vocal training, reasoning that it was a path to moral uplift since an appreciation of beauty could be cultivated through musical education. He described the singing of Adelina Patti (a soprano known primarily for Italian opera) by using language deeply influenced by the Aesthetics Movement.

We know their tones are not fragrant like the breath of roses, nor bedecked with striking colors that can be imitated by the plastic artist. But the tones, like the beautiful flowers, have forms—forms that have the most delicate outlines; forms, too that are endowed with life...Here we see music entering into our *physical development*, lending its aid in the growth and discipline of our *mental faculties*, her hand stretched wide in broad casting *moral seed*, drawing us into closer harmony socially, giving us enlarged views and uses of the beautiful. Music stands as the language of emotion; through it we can give more potency to spiritual expression...²²

Earlier in the nineteenth century, critics routinely celebrated the virtues of instrumental music with this sort of rhetoric, but writers only began to attribute such power to Italian opera at the end of the nineteenth century.

While at first critics only deemed German opera worthy of the title “high art,” factors including the high ticket prices for all foreign-language opera and the emphasis on beauty as artistically uplifting by proponents of the Aesthetics Movement eventually pushed all opera performed in a foreign language into this aesthetic category. For instance, in an article about the New England Conservatory’s new course of study in grand opera, John A. Offord told his readers in 1908 that there would be “an uplift of the musical spirit and atmosphere in cities and towns outside of our large centers, as well within them” when the Conservatory’s opera students scattered around the U. S. after their training was complete. He went on to celebrate Boston’s

²¹See Mary Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). For more about Wilde’s visit and its impact on images of masculinity in the United States, see Chapter 3.

²²William Sufferin, “Is a Knowledge of Singing of Vital Importance?” *Music* 3, no. 1 (November 1892): 75–76. [Italics in the original]

“atmosphere that fosters literary and musical development to the highest degree” using its opera house as an example of a “shrine where they [opera lovers] may worship in peace secure from invasion by the despised producers of what a great portion of the public is pleased to call music.”²³ Offard’s depiction of the opera house as a refuge from popular music is quite different from the way that a critic in the 1870s would have characterized that space. At the same time as Offard valorized the Boston Opera House as a haven for international opera, Savage’s Castle Square Company was performing opera in English at the American Theatre in Boston; yet Offard ignored the troupe in his essay.

Opera sung in English translation came to inhabit an unstable middle ground in the cultural hierarchy between grand opera in foreign languages and comic opera. As foreign-language opera became confirmed as high art and comic opera as low art in the minds of American audiences and critics, it was harder for English-language opera to maintain its cultural niche as it did not fit easily into either category. English-language companies performed the same grand-opera repertoire as foreign-language companies. Some companies (such as the AOC and the Castle Square companies) marketed their performances as musically and culturally uplifting for their audiences. Because English-language opera was in the vernacular like most comic opera, however, it could be classified similarly to that genre. The audience could also understand the nuances of the plot more easily, making it painfully obvious that many opera libretti were not very uplifting. An anonymous writer in *Music*, for example, pointed out that the Bostonians (an English-language company) stopped singing grand opera and went to comic opera because their listeners could understand the plot and realized that works such as *Il*

²³John A. Offard, “The New England Conservatory and Grand Opera,” *New York Observer and Chronicle* 86, no. 31 (30 July 1908): 145.

Trovatore were “contrary to American ideas.”²⁴ In addition, the middle-class audience for English-language opera was associated more with comic opera (and thus entertainment) than art forms that connoted social or cultural uplift. William T. Carleton left the Grau-Strakosch Grand Opera Company in 1881 to sing comic opera because (he explained later) the “public” did not want to go to grand opera anymore; they wanted to be entertained by comic opera.²⁵ Finally, Emma Abbott was successful precisely because she overtly appealed to the middle class by taking their likes and dislikes very seriously. In a letter to the *New York Times* she explained that “it frequently occurs that at the special request of managers, gentlemen of the press, singing societies, and the general public that I consent to sing an aria not contained in the opera being performed...As I always try to please my audiences, is it to be wondered at that I should have complied with these requests?”²⁶ Abbott’s financial success based on pleasing her audience encouraged critics to see opera in English as a commercial art form achieved by modifying opera to appeal to the audience and therefore, for them, lowering its artistic value. Critics who wanted to identify opera as high art wanted the music to be unchanging, appealing to the intellect, not to the vagaries of popular whim. Of course, all grand-opera companies routinely modified the score for performance during this time period, but critics tended to ignore this inconvenient truth when it suited them.

²⁴“The Bostonians,” *Music* 5, no. 3 (January 1894): 244. Although this explanation is a convenient excuse for the Bostonians’ change in repertoire (and may be true in part), other considerations were equally important. The Bostonians succeeded the Boston Ideal Opera Company. After Effie Ober stopped managing the Ideals in 1887, three of the performers from the troupe, including Henry Clay Barnabee, took over the troupe and formed the Bostonians. The press described the Bostonians as a “happy combination of popular singers” indicating that many in the troupe were more comfortable performing comic opera. “The Bostonians,” *American Art Journal* 47, no. 23 (24 September 1887): 358.

²⁵“William T. Carleton,” *Morning Herald* (Lexington, KY), 17 June 1896.

²⁶“Honest Little Emma,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1886.

Bringing Opera to the Middle Class

It is hard to assess exactly who attended operas in this period, but two sources from around 1910 provide some hints. In a book on recreation in New York published around 1911, Michael M. Davis, Jr., described attendance at the theater, at least for that city. He wrote that the “fashionable, the literary, and the professional sets” went to events at standard theaters (by which he meant plays and operas) and some middle-class people went to the theater though they could not afford to go often.²⁷ Robert Coit Chapin concluded in 1909 that whereas only a quarter of families earning \$600–\$700 a year (such as janitors, waiters, and teamsters) bought theater tickets, just over half of those with annual earnings of \$900–\$1000 (tailors or railroad operators) went to the theater.²⁸ Unfortunately, it is impossible to know how many of these theater tickets were for opera performances. What comes through, however, is that people could afford to attend theatrical performances even at a very modest income level (\$26,400 in today’s economy).

If people with approximately the same amount of discretionary income designated for leisure activities in 1878 spent money in approximately the same ways (if not on the same artistic genres) as in 1910, then people in the middle class and even those in the working class could afford tickets to hear opera in English. In order to attend opera in foreign languages, however, these same people would have had to be willing to spend a significant portion of their leisure budget on just one event. This conclusion is borne out by anecdotal evidence from press reports and memoirs by singers and impresarios, which reveal that the audience for opera in English translation was primarily from the middle class and rarely overlapped with wealthier people who

²⁷Michael M. Davis, Jr. *The Exploitation of Pleasure: A Study of Commercial Recreations in New York City* (New York: Department of Child Hygiene of the Russell Sage Foundation, [c. 1911]), 37.

²⁸Robert Coit Chapin, *The Standard of Living Among Workingmen’s Families in New York City* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1909), 210–11.

attended foreign-language performances. In 1874, for instance, the Clara Louise Kellogg English Opera Company's repertoire contained works that had been done many times in New York by foreign-language companies. Yet according to one critic, such repetition did not matter "as the patrons of English opera are not those of Italian opera."²⁹ Just over twenty years later, in a review of the English-language Castle Square Company, another writer observed "my point is that opera can be given successfully in these United States of America by ordinarily good singers using the language of the people, provided that the enterprise invites the patronage of the common people and leaves 'society' out of its calculations."³⁰ The classism implicit in these comments is explicit in HHH's description of the audience for the American Opera Company in 1886:

The people who can afford to pay \$3 a seat, which is the price of the parquette at the American Opera company, present almost invariably a different appearance as a class, and to the most casual observer, from those who pay 50 cents and usually sit in the gallery. It must have been evident to any one glancing around the Academy of late that the gallery constituency had by some means got down to the parquette, and the inference was that a great many free tickets had been given away.³¹

Big-city critics who supported opera in English did not want the genre to be pushed into the preserve of the wealthy just because it was too expensive for anyone else to attend. Critics often interpreted English-language opera as the best hope for the genre to remain accessible to average Americans because it was in the vernacular and the tickets were cheaper than those for foreign-language opera. If the middle class was only interested in, or could only afford, opera if it was sung in English translation, this could be cast either as the lesser evil (better opera in

²⁹"Amusements," *New York Times*, 22 January 1874. Only the biggest cities in the U. S. had access to grand opera in English and foreign languages on a regular basis. In smaller places, the audience for any kind of opera performance would have been too small to segment in the ways that it was in larger places. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the ways that opera functioned differently in the cultural life of smaller towns than in large cities.

³⁰"Music," *New York Times*, 30 May 1897.

³¹HHH, "The New York Stage," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 31 January 1886.

translation than no opera at all) or as an added value in the dissemination of the music (opera should be easily understood by everyone).

Musical uplift was a powerful concept throughout this time period and affected critical views of opera as well as the way it was marketed.³² For many critics, “great” music had to be uplifting. It followed that for opera to enter the pantheon of “great” music, the music had to be constructed as uplifting or at least educational, despite the sometimes risqué subject matter and stage spectacle. Some English-language impresarios and performers appropriated the language of uplift to legitimize their performance practice and to equate their product with foreign-language opera, which was already identified as uplifting by critics and audiences. Thus, English-language opera was marketed as high art at the people’s prices. As William T. Carleton noted in an 1896 article, “there are thousands of people everywhere who cannot afford to patronize high priced performances, but who would gladly patronize operatic productions at popular prices.”³³ Henry W. Savage, the manager of the Castle Square Opera Companies, declared in 1900 that

it is because the pleasure, the refinement, and the educational force of the opera are being “democratized”—taken from the few and given to the many—that the progress of opera in English is worth recounting...That which gives to the masses a luxury of unquestioned refinement and ethical value that has long been tenaciously held as an indulgence peculiar to the wealthy inhabitant of the metropolis must certainly be accounted an agent of civilization.³⁴

Positioning himself as the Robin Hood of opera, ready to bring the music of the wealthy to the poor, Savage crystalized many of the reasons critics had developed in defense of English-language opera, when he wrote that it had extraordinary traits that made it desirable for all audiences. Savage argued that unlike musical theater attended by the lower classes, grand opera

³²Uplift is addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.

³³“William T. Carleton,” *Morning Herald* (Lexington, KY), 17 June 1896.

³⁴Henry W. Savage, “Opera in English for America,” *The Independent* 52, no. 2684 (10 May 1900): 1110.

was neither vapid comic opera nor the pointless spectacle of vaudeville—and certainly not the sexual depravity of burlesque or variety. Rather it was a sophisticated, advanced art form that would educate, not corrupt its audience, all at an affordable price. Soprano Emma Abbott, another populist, made similar arguments when promoting her opera company in the 1880s. In the long run, as I will explain in more depth in Chapter 2, this strategy was harmful because it sent the message that English-language opera was a second choice to the better, more desirable, even more uplifting, foreign-language productions.

Singers and critics claimed for many years that one way to help the so-called “common people” appreciate great works of art was to perform opera in English translation so the audience could understand the plot. “Opera, to be thoroughly enjoyed by the masses and to appeal specially to the popular taste, must of necessity be rendered in English, the language of the country,” asserted soprano Marie Roze in 1881.³⁵ For people like Roze, opera was primarily a story set to music, so the power of the work was significantly diminished if the audience could not understand every word. Chicago singer and critic, Karleton Hackett, maintained that “the very essence of opera is in the force of the dramatic situation, and to appreciate that demands that the audience understand each word as the singer gives it.”³⁶ Hackett and Roze (and many others) thought that the reason more people did not go to grand opera was because they could not comprehend the story since it was in a foreign language. Therefore, translation into English would not only enhance the audience’s appreciation of the dramatic impact of the work, but also encourage more people to attend.³⁷

³⁵“Music,” *Daily Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 1 January 1881.

³⁶Karleton Hackett, “To Singers,” *Music* 8, no. 2 (June 1895): 141.

³⁷The New Jersey-based voice teacher, Louis Arthur Russell, even linked the popularity of comic opera to its use of English. “Listeners to an opera sung in a language which they do not understand, lose much of the delight which should accompany the performance. Opera without intelligible speech, is the most exasperating of pantomimes...”Tis this defect which drives many music lovers from the opera to the theatre in America, and which

In truth, it was not so much that English-language opera needed to be rescued for the middle class from the wealthy, as that the middle class needed to be lured to opera over the many other middlebrow entertainments such as vaudeville, minstrel shows, concerts, and plays. Wealthy arts patron Jeannette Thurber was particularly passionate about exposing American audiences to the uplifting and educational aspects of English-language opera.³⁸ She explained in 1886 that she founded the American Opera Company (AOC) not as “an ordinary amusement venture” but “to promote higher musical education in the United States by establishing a national opera.”³⁹ To that end she established the largest traveling opera company up to that point (with over 300 members) to perform opera in English translation with top quality *mise-en-scène*, a full ballet company, and a large orchestra. She thought that English-language opera was distinctively American and using the vernacular would allow her listeners to understand, and therefore be uplifted, by the operas.

The high ticket prices the AOC had to charge in order to achieve Thurber’s lofty goal proved to be a tough sell to the middle-class audience that usually frequented English-language opera. “W” in the *American Art Journal*, quoted an audience member growling about “the idea of three dollars for *American* opera!” When W pointed out that it was unlikely the company could produce such impressive performances for less, the man replied “perhaps not, but there is too much pretention. We don’t want such a big chorus, so many instruments, or so much show.

makes or allows intelligent people to prefer the light comic opera to the sterner stuff known as Grand Opera.” “Our Mother Tongue: A Symposium,” *Music* 9, no. 4 (February 1896): 401.

³⁸See Emanuel Rubin, “American Opera in the Gilded Age: America’s First Professional Touring Company,” in *Opera and the Golden West: The Past, Present, and Future of Opera in the U. S. A.*, ed. John L. DiGaetani and Josef P. Sirefman (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), 78–93 for more information about the American Opera Company and Jeannette Thurber.

³⁹“Mrs. Thurber on the Shortcomings and Future Prospects of American Opera,” *American Art Journal* 45, no. 18 (21 August 1886): 291.

Give us greater soloists.”⁴⁰ Thurber herself lamented that “the greatest difficulty has been to get the public to comprehend the scope, purpose, and difficulties of the work [of the company].”⁴¹ Her explanation that the productions were for edification not enjoyment alienated the audience. The AOC’s ticket price, which was comparable to foreign-language opera, but without star singers to justify the price also kept people away. These problems as well as the inept business decisions by the troupe’s manager, Charles E. Locke, all contributed to the demise of the AOC. By 1887, the AOC and its successor troupe, the National Opera Company, had failed.⁴²

Opera, Democracy, and the Quest for Government Support

In 1896, Tom Karl, a tenor with the Bostonians, stated forthrightly that “by all means we ought to have a national opera in the *English language* and I hope some musically inclined millionaire may help this along and establish a fund to give us good opera in English with English speaking singers, not Germans or other foreigners.”⁴³ Clarence D. Hess cast doubt on the idea that such patrons could be found, writing in 1901 that

Grand Opera in English has not attained a footing, no matter how great its *ensemble*, or how magnificent its *mise en scène*, which on its merits alone will bring to its support the essential recognition of that element of society which with its millions, its superb toilets and its irresistible prestige, bestows success on all its functions, be they “star” nights of Italian opera, charity balls or horse shows.⁴⁴

⁴⁰W, “The American Opera from a Boston Point of View,” *American Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (1 May 1886): 24.

⁴¹“Mrs. Thurber on the Shortcomings,” 291.

⁴²My own views on the AOC have been influenced by Katherine K. Preston’s arguments in *Opera for the American People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in the Late Nineteenth Century*. The failure of the AOC showed that the middle class was not particularly interested in uplifting opera and the troupe’s demise represented a serious blow to the long term viability of English-language opera.

⁴³“Our Mother Tongue: A Symposium,” *Music* 9, no. 5 (March 1896): 512. [Italics in the original]

⁴⁴Hess, “English Opera in America,” 129

Hess identified the problem as one of class not of artistic worth. As long as opera in English was associated with the middle class, no matter how similar the productions were to foreign-language opera, the upper class would never support it at the same level as they patronized other events connected to the elite lifestyle. Some critics encouraged the wealthy to fund opera in English as their patriotic duty in order to establish an American operatic style. A writer in the *American Art Journal* (probably its editor William Thoms) declared that “if only some rich merchant, capitalist, business man, or other friend of music (not necessarily manager or vocalist), shall come forward and say, ‘I will honor my country by honoring her productions,’ we shall still rejoice.”⁴⁵ Absent wealthy backers, Minna Thomas Antrim wrote in 1910, regular opera goers “must be willing to pay the same prices as to hear the most lauded foreign artists. Should we not be more willing we who are loyalists? Not the boxes, but the box office, will decide whether or not the heart’s desire of hundreds of thousands of Americans, to whom music is second only to their religion shall come true.”⁴⁶ She imagined a large patriotic audience who was longing to hear great music, but simply needed to be encouraged to spend enough money to make their dreams come true.

Karleton Hackett, among other writers, pointed out that opera in Europe thrived because of governmental funding. Using Germany as an example, Hackett asserted that because most mid-sized towns boasted a subsidized opera house, everyone could afford to go to the opera. Eventually people became so fond of the art form that it became integral to the artistic lives of most citizens.⁴⁷ An enthusiastic opera supporter, Hackett was particularly interested in making the form accessible to the average concert-goer and imagined that opera could one day be vital to cultural life in the U. S. in the same ways that opera was important to European

⁴⁵[William Thoms], “Where are we as to Original Operas?” *American Art Journal* 30, no. 20 (15 March 1897): 307.

⁴⁶Minna Thomas Antrim, “Grand Opera in English,” *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* 85, no. 507 (March 1910): 383–84.

⁴⁷Karleton Hackett, “Opera for American Singers,” *Music* 10, no. 6 (October 1896): 549.

audiences and musicians. He declared that “opera cannot reach the mass except at such prices as the mass can afford. Opera cannot be made to pay except at such prices as debar the mass. Opera has become a permanent, active force in daily life, only where it has been brought within the reach of the mass. This has only been done by subsidy.”⁴⁸ Hackett believed (as did seemingly every other critic) that the U. S. government would never support opera. “Since we live under a government as little paternal as we can make it,” wrote an unnamed critic in 1887, “it is from the people as a community that help for a republican opera must come.”⁴⁹ Critics and other commentators took for granted that despite the obvious need, the government would never fund cultural projects. The Progressive-Era impulse to look to the government to solve social problems apparently had its limits.

As an alternative, Hackett suggested that a group of wealthy music-lovers should cover the expenses of a medium-sized English-language opera company for at least three to five years (much as Henry Lee Higginson had underwritten the Boston Symphony). Comparing opera companies to other cultural and educational institutions, Hackett argued, “the value of a public library or a gallery is never reckoned by the amount of money it makes, but by the number of people it reaches. So, too, should the value of an orchestra or an opera house be estimated.”⁵⁰ Hackett’s shrewd comparison of opera with other institutions that were routinely sustained by business magnates (such as J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie) was designed to attract the same sort of philanthropic support for opera that businessmen provided to uplift a community and to reinforce their own images as generous cultural benefactors. Essentially Hackett tried to

⁴⁸Ibid., 554.

⁴⁹The Contributor’s Club: Republican Opera,” *Atlantic Monthly* 59 (April 1887): 568.

⁵⁰Karleton Hackett, “Subsidized Opera in America,” *Music* 11, no. 1 (November 1896): 57. These are the same sacralized institutions that Lawrence Levine identified in *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

appropriate the sacralization process by suggesting that opera in English was just as worthy (and had the capability of carrying the same cultural capital) as other elite cultural activities.

Other commentators regarded the effort to democratize opera as a threat to the future of grand opera in the U. S. Because tickets to English-language opera cost less, these writers assumed that the singers were not as skilled and that the production values were lower than in the more expensive foreign-language productions. Critics worried that opera would die without the support of the wealthy. They believed it was vital that all productions meet the exacting standards of audience members accustomed to the very best of everything, lest opera suffer a catastrophic loss of symbolic capital and its cultural allure for rich patrons. If the price of this support was the exclusion of the middle and lower classes, who, in these critics' thinking, probably did not appreciate or understand opera anyway, then so be it. It was better to have opera performed in a foreign language than allow English-language opera to sabotage the whole industry. Critic James Huneker was certain that "your regular opera-goer will refuse to sit in the orchestra of an opera that is neither fish, nor flesh, nor fashionable...It is fashion in New York that rules opera, and will continue to rule until the government grants opera a subvention."⁵¹ Here Huneker drew upon several tropes in operatic discourse: the idea that English-language opera did not belong in the cultural hierarchy, that only the wealthy could effectively support opera, and that government subsidies were the only way to break the control the wealthy had over the development of opera in the United States.

In fact, Emma Abbott's company, as well as Henry W. Savage's troupes, thrived for decades by purposely marketing to the middle class, rather than trying to attract the wealthy. Abbott's overtly populist sentiments and the performance practices she adopted to appeal to the

⁵¹Huneker, "Grand Opera in American," 1358.

middle class alienated many big-city music critics but made her a star in the rest of the country.⁵² Abbott cut her productions and even changed translations to make some operas less shocking to the moral views of middle-class and conservative Christian audience members who were still leery of theatrical performances of any kind.⁵³ Savage often used overtly patriotic and moralistic language to describe his productions in a bid to attract the straight-laced and conservative portion of the middle-class audience.

I do not hesitate to declare my Puritanism altho [*sic*] this is contrary to operatic traditions. The costumer who sends a single pair of ‘fleshings’ or flesh-colored tights, to one of my companies will have his contract instantly canceled, according to a standing order. It is my conviction that nothing should be offered to eye or ear, at an operatic performance, which a parent of sound New England traditions and good sense would exclude if the production were prepared especially for his own family.⁵⁴

Although musicologists can see in hindsight that Abbott’s and Savage’s business model of playing to the middle class was successful, the situation was not as clear cut for people at the time. In a recent essay on Chicago orchestras in the nineteenth century, Mark Clague points out that the city had

at least five separate musical publics: professional musicians, amateur singers who wished to participate in music making, casual listeners who desired familiar and functional light classics such as opera arrangements and dances, aspiring connoisseurs of classical or ‘scientific’ music such as complete symphonies, and a ‘fashionable’ public that sought events at which it could display its wealth and standing...⁵⁵

The Chicago Philharmonic, organized in the 1860s by Hans Balatka, remained viable only as long as it attracted a fashionable audience along with the aficionados and passionate devotees of

⁵²Katherine K. Preston, “‘The People’s Prima Donna’: Emma Abbott and Opera for the People,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 1 (January 2014): 56–79.

⁵³Abbott commissioned a new version of *La traviata* titled *Cecilia’s Love, or A Woman’s Sacrifice*, which changed the plot substantially, but retained Verdi’s music.

⁵⁴Savage, “Opera in English for America,” 1111.

⁵⁵Mark Clague, “Building the American Symphony Orchestra: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of a Twenty-First Century Musical Institution,” in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spritzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 38.

professionally-performed music. As soon as the wealthy switched their allegiance to opera, the orchestra folded.⁵⁶ In light of this cautionary tale, Huneker's anxiety about the future of opera is understandable.

Most critics also maintained that the way opera companies were funded hurt opera as a whole because impresarios were afraid to program unfamiliar works, English-language opera, or operas by American composers. Writers generally agreed that impresarios' conservative repertoire choices were stifling American compositional innovation as well as discouraging audience engagement with opera. "All this bondage to foreign tongues and to American singers under foreign aliases is unworthy of a great nation and absurd," opined one unnamed critic.⁵⁷ The writer went on to inquire "why must American singers sing to American audiences always in Italian?"⁵⁸ Without a safety net provided by government support or even significant private patronage, impresarios could not risk alienating their best customers with new repertoire or by producing opera in English.⁵⁹

Not everyone supported the call for governmental subventions. In 1887, Carl Rosa, a British impresario who managed a successful English-language company that toured the United Kingdom and the United States for many years, thought that government subsidies were unnecessary and, worse, could subject a businessman to unwanted governmental interference.⁶⁰ Even Rosa admitted, however, that it was very hard to make opera pay in America and that

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷"The Operatic Season as a Whole," *Music* 1, no. 3 (January 1892), 294.

⁵⁸Ibid., 293.

⁵⁹"The American Stage," *The Philharmonic* 1, no. 3 (July 1901): 190–95.

⁶⁰Carl Rosa, "English Opera," *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature* 45, no. 6 (June 1887): 739.

people needed to have as much exposure to the genre as possible in order to develop a large enough audience to support opera in the long term.⁶¹

Opera and the Formation of the American Bourgeoisie

With opera often framed as an art form that could uplift and educate its audience (particularly after 1900), critics felt it appropriate to launch frequent attacks on “fashionable people” or the “smart set” who went to the opera because it was the socially acceptable thing to do or because of the allure of celebrity and spectacle. They wanted the audience to attend for the love of the music and often ridiculed anyone they thought was going to the opera for the “wrong reasons.” This sort of attack against wealthy, but shallow, opera goers was typically only launched against foreign-language opera audiences. The same critics assumed that middle-class audiences either could not afford to go to opera in a foreign language or did not attend opera to garner prestige. While the former assumption may have been true on occasion, the latter (see more in Chapter 4) was often not true.

Journalist Montgomery Schuyler declared in 1883 when the Metropolitan Opera House opened that “the interest in opera is at least three parts social to one part musical.”⁶² Star opera performers were celebrities as well known and as pursued by their fans as famous pop singers today. In an 1884 article about a lawsuit that required four popular singers to testify, the reporter wrote that the gallery was filled with “unmusical spirits who pay large sums for seats in the opera in order that they may gaze upon the personal charms of world-renowned songstresses” who wore expressions of “wistful pleasure...[on] their features, presumably called forth by the fact

⁶¹Ibid., 743.

⁶²Montgomery Schuyler, “The Metropolitan Opera House,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 67, no. 42 (November 1883): 877.

that they could see all they required without the boredom of listening to music.”⁶³ In 1887, William T. Carleton complained about “the swells [at the Metropolitan Opera] occupying boxes and chatting all the while during the performance, as though they came there only for social intercourse, and the audience paying as little attention to the singers. The falling of the curtain is regarded as a God-send, and its rising a positive nuisance.”⁶⁴ Indeed, even people who were box holders at the Metropolitan sometimes protested against the social agendas of the Opera House’s stockholders and management. After the announcement that every box holder would be assessed \$3,200 in 1888, the *American Art Journal* quoted an anonymous Metropolitan stockholder complaining that

the management might successfully cater a little more than they do to the musical patrons of moderate means. The prices charged for admission are altogether too high, and ought to be reduced to something like the standard New York rate. Four dollars for a seat down stairs is too much for the salaried class, and it is not to be wondered at that crowded houses are not the rule with us as at other first-class places of amusement in the city.⁶⁵

The discourse that the upper class attended opera for social reasons alone, with the music being a secondary nuisance, has convinced some historians such as Lawrence Levine and Bruce A. McConachie that soon after the Civil War, grand opera became a marker of wealth and status. According to their interpretation, the middle class stopped attending opera because of barriers such as expensive tickets, expectations that the audience would wear costly formal clothes, and a generally unwelcoming attitude towards anyone who was not part of the elite.⁶⁶

⁶³“Mme. Scalchi’s Breakfast,” *New York Times*, 18 December 1884.

⁶⁴“Musical Matters: A Talk with Carleton, the Famous Singer,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 November 1887.

⁶⁵“The Question before the Metropolitan Stockholders,” *American Art Journal* 58, no. 5 (28 January 1888), 226–27. \$3,200 is equivalent to approximately \$81,000 in 2013.

⁶⁶See Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*; Bruce A. McConachie, “New York Operagoing, 1825–50: Creating an Elite Social Ritual,” *American Music* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 181–92. Paul DiMaggio makes a similar argument for sacralization of high art in his article, “Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America,” *Media Culture Society* 4 (1982): 33–50, though he dates the process

Further investigation by other scholars has demonstrated that the audience for opera was more heterogeneous for far longer than it might sometimes appear from contemporary press accounts, which were often written by critics who wanted to emphasize the audience's wealth. There were simply not enough rich people to support opera by themselves prior to the 1870s.⁶⁷ Moreover, as musicologist Ralph P. Locke notes, it is too limiting a perspective and not plausible that opera was solely a social exercise for everyone in attendance—surely some audience members derived aesthetic pleasure from the performance as well.⁶⁸

Even if the rhetoric about the unique connection between wealth and opera was more fiction than fact for many years, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, foreign-language opera was used in elite class formation in the white community.⁶⁹ Historians of American capitalism maintain that beginning in the 1880s, some very wealthy businesspeople used cultural consumption to engage in an active, self-conscious project of elite class formation. Historian Sven Beckert defines this class as the “American bourgeoisie.” Although the term bourgeois is most often used to denote the materialistic middle class, in Marxist theory bourgeois denotes someone who is a member of the property-owning class who does not work for wages, but instead hires others to work for him, and they are often the richest members of a society. The American bourgeoisie were the wealthiest people in the United States and they promoted a

of sacralization to later in the century. Similarly to Levine and McConachie, however, he posits class as the only reason for the separation of popular and high culture and discounts any aesthetic or artistic motivations.

⁶⁷Preston, “To the Opera House?” 53. Even as late as 1900, writer Gustav Kobbé asserted that the Metropolitan could not survive without the “parquet and galleries [the cheaper seats]” and that “opera is not a social function; it is a public institution and without the public's support would collapse like a house of cards.” Gustav Kobbé, “The Business Side of Grand Opera,” *Ainslee's Magazine* 5 (March 1900): 163.

⁶⁸Ralph P. Locke, “Music Lovers, Patrons, and the ‘Sacralization’ of Culture in America,” *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 149–73.

⁶⁹See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for an example of a similar phenomenon in English-language opera in the African American community after 1900.

lifestyle that valued the “art of life” over commerce.⁷⁰ They emulated the British aristocracy in the design of their homes, love of luxury products, the art and music they favored, and in their social manners.⁷¹ Indeed, many of these families sent their daughters to marry into prominent but impoverished aristocratic families in the United Kingdom, creating transnational connections that bound the two classes together ever more tightly. In this climate, the activities that defined “good taste” also defined class.⁷²

It is all but impossible to disentangle the support for foreign-language opera by the American bourgeoisie from its identification with aristocratic British culture. In this time period, when the United States was becoming a world power, Americans looked to Europe for models of imperial culture. Of these examples, however, the bourgeoisie were most fascinated by that of English society. Singers often pointed out that, except in Great Britain, opera was performed in the vernacular in Europe. As soprano Minnie Hauk explained, “I was always a partisan of opera in English, and wondered why London society had such a partiality for opera in foreign languages. There is no country in Europe, except England, where grand opera is not performed in its own language.”⁷³ Hauk’s observation that London “society” preferred opera in foreign languages provides a persuasive answer as to why the elite chose to support foreign-language opera rather than the vernacular.

⁷⁰Alide Cagidemetro, “Henry James and the American Evolution of the Snob,” in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 46.

⁷¹Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6–9.

⁷²Ruth C. Crocker, “Cultural and Intellectual Life in the Gilded Age,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 216.

⁷³Minnie Hauk, *Memories of a Singer* (1925, repr. New York: Arno Press, 1977), 177.

The Star System and Social Class

The spectacle of wealth enacted in the audience at the Metropolitan was matched by the spectacle of the star system that was a large part of the marketing strategy for foreign-language opera companies. Managers exploited famous singers to sell seats, and audience members in turn began to demand celebrities, or they would not buy tickets. Many writers (and musicians) despised the star system that had dominated the operatic market place for much of the nineteenth century. In 1896, Karleton Hackett complained that “the ‘star system’ is opposed to every principle of art,” and many other critics agreed with him.⁷⁴

Writers had complained for decades that the star system had become so ubiquitous that the public would only go to the opera if famous singers dominated the cast. Henry Finck, for instance, wrote of the Metropolitan Opera’s manager Maurice Grau, “he has so spoiled his public that...an opera must be given with at least two or three singers of the first rank, to afford satisfaction. This comes high, and therefore the prices of seats are high. Experience has shown abundantly that New Yorkers would rather pay five dollars to hear three or four great singers than pay two dollars and fifty cents, or one dollar and fifty cents, to hear only one...”⁷⁵ Baritone John K. Murray blamed the star system for many of the financial and managerial woes experienced by foreign-language companies. Because the stars were so expensive, few troupes could afford to employ them every night of a run, causing low ticket sales for the performances in which no stars were singing.⁷⁶ Murray also depicted stars as high-handed divas who refused to

⁷⁴Hackett, “Opera for American Singers,” 550.

⁷⁵Henry T. Finck, “The Opera in America and Europe,” *International Monthly* 1 (February 1900): 193.

⁷⁶John K. Murray, “Opera in English at the Castle Square,” *Music* 11, no. 4 (March 1897): 494. Murray’s complaints echoed similar comments that had been made since the star system became an important part of marketing opera troupes before the Civil War.

go on stage for even the silliest reasons (such as if “mademoiselle’s pet dog is sick”) leading to managers who “have become slaves to the whims of the grand opera singers.”⁷⁷

Critics’ disgust for those who attended opera solely to see celebrities led some writers to valorize English-language opera and its middle-class patrons, whom they portrayed as attending opera simply because they loved the music. In an article about the Castle Square Opera Company, a writer for the *New York Times* noted in 1897 that for the “unfashionable people” who could not afford a \$5 ticket to the Metropolitan Opera, “Faust is Faust—not Jean de Reszke; Carmen is Carmen—not Emma Calvé. They do not go to the opera simply to hear the singer, and as long as the music is sung in tune and with passable voices, they are satisfied.”⁷⁸ On the other hand, many writers insisted that opera was so expensive to produce that it could only succeed if the wealthy could be induced to attend, justifying whatever needed to be done in order to attract this elite audience. As one anonymous reviewer claimed in 1893, “opera is a luxury; opera needs gorgeous trappings, good singers, a large orchestra, and, alas, that it must be written, it needs the patronage of the fashionable world.”⁷⁹ Thus, this writer positioned the star system and other markers of excellence such as a “large orchestra” and “gorgeous trappings” as the price that had to be paid to ensure opera’s continued existence.

Teacher Arthur J. Hubbard linked the popularity of the star system to the practice of singing opera in foreign languages. In response to an 1896 survey of singers and vocal teachers located primarily in the Northeast conducted by *Music*, Hubbard argued that “at present when we have opera the question invariably is, ‘who is going to sing?’...if the time ever comes when our good old mother tongue is in vogue, there will be more chance for the question, ‘what is the

⁷⁷Ibid., 495.

⁷⁸“Music,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1897.

⁷⁹“Popular Opera in New York,” *Musical Record* 383 (December 1893): 3. This comment comes from a review of the English-language Hinrichs Grand Opera Company.

opera?’ A very desirable thing in my opinion.’⁸⁰ Some critics agreed with Hubbard and thought that the remedy for the star system was to adopt opera in English. If people could understand the story then they would have a reason to go to the opera other than to hear a star.

Additionally, a company that did not have to bear the expense of stars could use their resources to produce a more balanced performance with good artists in all the parts, as well as in the orchestra. In a commentary looking back at a visit to Chicago by the Metropolitan Opera Company, W. S. B. Mathews reflected that

it is a great pity that Mrs. Thurber’s American opera could not have been managed a little more judiciously, for that was really the kind of thing we ought to have; and a better thing educationally and artistically than this splendid grand opera of Manager Grau [Metropolitan Opera], because in the Thurber American opera the emphasis was put upon the drama and the singing and music all together in equal poise; whereas here we have a few great artists, and never a really fine ensemble—or but rarely and by accident.⁸¹

Because English-language opera did not have any celebrity singers as famous or important as their foreign-language counterparts, critics and impresarios also appealed to the audiences’ patriotism to encourage them to attend opera in translation and to reject the star system. Impresario Henry W. Savage represented his use of regular singers (some even promoted from the chorus to principal roles) as “the American spirit of operatic management” as opposed to the hierarchical practices of European companies.⁸² Savage positioned his business strategies as part of a nationalist project that critiqued the inequalities of European culture by creating a more democratic corporate structure. The star system, under this reasoning, became an indication of a hierarchy within opera companies that was essentially un-American.⁸³

⁸⁰“Our Mother Tongue: A Symposium,” (February 1896), 393–94.

⁸¹W. S. B. Mathews, “Editorial Bric-a-Brac,” *Music* 15, no. 3 (January 1899): 333.

⁸²Savage, “Opera in English for America,” 1111.

⁸³American audiences certainly loved stars, and were willing to pay high prices to hear them. It was possible, however, for English-language opera companies to survive without them as long as they did not charge more than Americans were willing to pay for a production without a celebrity singer. Savage’s companies included singers with

The argument over the star system was really about what critics and others thought the appropriate priorities of the audience and opera companies should be. The star system, for many writers, implied that a troupe's priority was commercial display, rather than commitment to "True Art." It is in this debate that the irony of the development of the American cultural hierarchy becomes apparent. Commentators accused English-language opera of being low art, too focused on appealing to the audience and commercial success to be high art. Thus it was shut out from the resources and prestige available to foreign-language opera. At the very same time, writers accused foreign-language opera of using the star system to gratify their select audience in a way that was antithetical to Romantic ideas about high art. Even so, it was foreign-language opera that eventually won the title of "high art," with all the financial and social advantages that designation implied in early twentieth-century cultural landscape.

The Upper Class and Opera in English Translation

Although critics rarely suggested that opera should be limited to the upper class (perhaps this was just too undemocratic to admit in a widely-distributed publication like a newspaper or magazine), they questioned whether the middle class wanted to go to the opera. James Huneker, probably the most influential music critic of this period, wrote "English opera has always been sporadic in this country, also in England. Being a luxury, the opera is either too high priced or too exotic to make the appeal popular."⁸⁴ Referring to the failure of the American Opera Company in 1886 he declared that, "this public [the middle class], made for comic opera of the crudest sort—the Gilbert and Sullivan furore was fading—refused to listen to opera in

good nationwide reputations, but they were not stars in the same pantheon as the Metropolitan's celebrities. Savage did not promote his companies based on the reputations of single singers, either.

⁸⁴Huneker, "Grand Opera in American," 1356.

English...The chorus was admirable, the *mise en scène* unexampled, and the orchestra—the Thomas orchestra. *N'importe!* The enterprise died a slow death.”⁸⁵ James Huneker and critics like him laid the failure of the American Opera Company at the feet of the middle class which they thought refused to attend grand opera despite its obvious musical and cultural advantages. I contend that Huneker’s analysis is incorrect. People in the middle class did not abandon the American Opera Company because they did not appreciate grand opera; if that were the case then the Emma Abbott Company would not have thrived at the same time. Instead, Jeannette Thurber and her conductor Theodore Thomas misjudged their audience, and the company was financially mismanaged. Huneker knew Thurber well and was both a piano teacher at the National Conservatory (founded by Thurber) and her secretary in the 1890s. Perhaps Huneker’s account of the demise of the American Opera Company was influenced by Thurber’s ideas about what led to the troupe’s bankruptcy.

Huneker’s distaste for opera aimed at the middle class was on full display in 1900 in a commentary on the upcoming season of English-language opera to be performed at the Metropolitan Opera. Maurice Grau (the manager of the Metropolitan Opera that year) and Henry W. Savage partnered to produce this experiment in opera in English translation at the most important opera house in the United States. Huneker questioned whether such a venture would be successful. Grudgingly he conceded that opera in the vernacular might be a worthy goal, but “the genuine opera-going class does not care a fig whether opera is sung in Zulu or German—I think Zulu would be preferred...everybody can understand English, and at a blow one of the main underpinnings of opera is knocked out—its exclusiveness.”⁸⁶ Here, Huneker revealed what he thought was the real reason for opera’s appeal to the upper class. It was not the

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., 1357.

music but opera's social status that attracted the American bourgeoisie. As long as opera was not sung in English, it retained a certain degree of exclusivity. In fact, the more esoteric the language the better, as even fewer people would be able to understand the work. The price of a ticket was not the only method for keeping the riff-raff out, Huneker implied, it was also the use of a foreign language. By alienating the audience in two ways (price and language), the "genuine opera-going class" could maintain its social standing and create barriers to keep others from joining them.

Unlike those critics who valorized the middle class for going to English-language opera even though there were no celebrity singers in the cast, Huneker excoriated them for their social aspirations:

Here a girl, gallantly escorted by a young man with a real opera hat—*grace à dieu!*—feasted her eyes on the slender-voiced and fat-waisted pet tenor, or giggled convulsively at the comic bass with the big nose. Before her eyes, as in a magic concave mirror, distorting the music and manners of every composer, passed the masterworks, foreshortened, swollen, curtailed, snipped, and ruthlessly maltreated...She was at "grand opera," in an orchestra seat, and after her—the deluge! The language might have been Choctaw, if the general effect were but fashionable.⁸⁷

Huneker turned the usual criticism that the wealthy only attended the opera for social display on its head, and accused the middle class of the same thing. For him, they were there only to copy their social betters. The use of scare quotes to refer to grand opera demonstrates that Huneker thought the discount productions performed by Savage's companies were not even true grand opera, but rather a grotesque distortion of the real thing.

Savage managed many opera troupes that specialized in opera sung in English translation between 1895 and 1911. His first company was a residential troupe based at the Castle Square Theatre in Boston, but he soon founded several others and usually managed at least three opera companies simultaneously, along with groups specializing in other genres such as musical

⁸⁷Ibid.

comedies or plays. His companies were successful generally. The Grau-Savage English Grand Opera Company, however, failed quickly. Playwright A.E. Thomas explained several years later that "... [Savage's] company was not first-class nor was fashionable New York ready for grand opera in English under any conditions..."⁸⁸ Critic Henry Krehbiel agreed, writing the company failed "because of the air of aristocracy which it wore, without being able to assume the social importance which belonged only to the foreign exotic."⁸⁹ When Savage targeted a middle-class audience, his companies did well, but with the Grau-Savage Company, he and Maurice Grau tried to attract a wealthier audience. Just as Huneker predicted, it failed and the two impresarios never repeated the attempt.

Opera became a site of contestation between two different visions of American culture: one that catered to the upper class's perceived need for sophisticated and costly display in order to ensure patronage in an uncertain financial environment, and another that sought to engage as broad an audience as possible by appealing to a simpler vision of art and beauty that eschewed the trappings of wealth and luxury. The very American conflict between reverence for economic success and distrust of anything symbolizing elitism played itself out in the opera house throughout this period. An 1897 *New York Times* article about the Castle Square Opera Company questioned the received wisdom that opera could succeed only if it appealed to the upper class. The author wrote that "pretty much everything that is good, beautiful, and true in art, science, industry, politics, literature, and morals is accomplished without the assistance of 'society,' perhaps its absence would not kill an operatic enterprise which addressed itself to the less

⁸⁸A. E. Thomas, "A Strictly American Manager," *Leslie's Monthly Magazine* (January 1905): 304, found in HTC Clippings 14 (Henry W. Savage), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁸⁹Krehbiel, *Chapters of Opera*, 298.

pretentious and more active part of humanity.”⁹⁰ In the end, a more elitist vision of American operatic culture won out, and English-language opera lost its social and cultural relevance.

Cultural Ambition, Opera in English, and the Question of an American National Style

America’s connection with Europe in the late nineteenth century was contentious and complex.⁹¹ Modern literary critic William Spengemann describes it as a “love-hate relation[ship] with... all its attendant feelings of cultural inferiority and moral superiority, of parricidal guilt and newborn innocence, of nostalgia for the old home and the urge to destroy it.”⁹² Opera was caught up in this difficult relationship because it was a European cultural product that nevertheless was very popular in the United States. Critics grappled with whether opera could or even should be an American art form. Musicologist Lydia Goehr described the dilemma of 19th century commentators in a 2008 essay. Is “the political ideal of being American...so out of sync with the specific form of cultural production—with a serious or elite production of works—that the very concept of American opera...[was] a contradiction in terms?”⁹³

Nineteenth-century writers who supported English-language opera often viewed it as a necessary intermediate step between foreign-language opera and an American operatic style. *Appleton’s Journal*, for example, justified its support for English-language opera companies because the troupes would be a “stimulus to the creative faculties of American musicians, which

⁹⁰“Music,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1897.

⁹¹For more information on how the relationship with Europe affected the development of the distinction between high and low culture, and the concepts of popular and classical music prior to 1878, see Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁹²William Spengemann, introduction to *The American* by Henry James, 9, as quoted in Larry Hamberlin, *Tin Pan Opera*, 7.

⁹³Lydia Goehr, *Elective Affinities: Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 262.

now lie latent or only feebly exhibited for want of a field.”⁹⁴ To raise the stakes higher, these same critics sought to establish that without opera in the vernacular there could be no national style in any type of art music. As the conductor Anton Seidl explained, “no satisfactory artistic results can be achieved here, nor can America produce any national music, until opera is given in English.”⁹⁵

The notion that English-language opera could be a stepping-stone to an American compositional style was not a new idea. Instead it was part of an ongoing debate about how musicians based in the United States should construct an American musical identity. One faction argued that composers should emulate European compositional models first in order to hone their skills in order to found a national school. Another cohort, meanwhile, maintained that a native musical identity could only be created when composers absorbed uniquely American characteristics, such as its political system and vigorous national spirit, into their music.⁹⁶ Writers who favored English-language opera often straddled these schools of thought. Critics contended that on the one hand, the performance of European opera in English translation would help familiarize American composers with the genre, while, on the other, America’s exceptional qualities could best be expressed in opera performed in English. “We will never have a national school of our own, resting upon rational thinking and intelligent hearing until we have opera in the English language as a common form of entertainment.”⁹⁷ In this anonymous critic’s view “rational thinking and intelligent hearing” were characteristics that could define American style, but first opera in English had to be more firmly established in the cultural landscape. Composer

⁹⁴“Music and the Drama,” *Appleton’s Journal* 13, no. 325 (12 June 1875): 762.

⁹⁵Anton Seidl, “The Development of Music in America,” quoted in Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, 70.

⁹⁶Douglas Shadle, “Music of a More Perfect Union: Symphonic Constructions of American National Identity, 1840–1870” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010), 3.

⁹⁷“The Operatic Season as a Whole,” 294.

and pianist Francis Korbay claimed in 1891 that “it is a nation’s language which generates its musical rhythm; its poetry which creates its melody; and its temperament, the spirit of its dignity, tenderness, mirth, sadness, or flightiness, whichever may express the respective people’s national character.”⁹⁸ At the end of the nineteenth century, the anxiety that the United States would never develop a national musical style was so acute that Jeanette Thurber hired Antonín Dvořák to lead the National Conservatory in part to help guide young composers towards a distinctively American style of musical expression.⁹⁹

Opera in the vernacular, when coupled with the long-term goal of establishing a national musical style, was another step towards forging an American cultural and political character distinct from that of Europe. Although the term “American exceptionalism” did not gain wide currency until later, many people already felt that the United States was unique among the world’s nations. But even as the U. S. sought to differentiate itself from Europe, its imperial ambitions and greater participation in the world economy made it more similar to Europe than it had been at any time in its history.¹⁰⁰ Events like the Spanish-American War and the creation of the first American colony in the Philippines, as well as the annexation of Hawaii (all in 1898), solidified U. S. ambitions to redefine the country as a leader in the international community rather than a former British colony. As the U. S. pursued expansionist political actions, the country also started to export culture. Wild West and minstrel shows became very popular

⁹⁸Francis Korbay, “Nationality in Music,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 82, no. 490 (March 1891): 564.

⁹⁹For more on Dvořák’s years in the U. S. and his influence on American musical style see Michael B. Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer’s Inner Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003); and John C. Tibbetts, ed., *Dvořák in America, 1892–1895* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993). For more on the National Conservatory of Music see Emanuel Rubin, “Jeannette Meyers Thurber and the National Conservatory of Music,” *American Music* 8, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 294–325.

¹⁰⁰Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 63.

across the Atlantic, spawning European versions of these entertainments even after the American touring groups returned home.¹⁰¹

Popular cultural productions such as Wild West or minstrel shows—though American—were not the sort of artistic entertainment that highbrow critics at the big-city newspapers wanted to represent U. S. musical identity. They desired an American form of art music. These critics were frustrated that classical music was one of the few areas of American cultural life that was almost completely ruled by European modes of production. “We make our own clothes and furniture. We read American books by a very large majority...Why is it not so with music?” demanded W. S. B. Mathews in 1893.¹⁰² The United States was becoming a world player by competing on the same territorial and economic fields as Europe, and in the cultural arena music needed to do the same thing. American composers were left with the difficult task of sounding “American” with no clear idea of what that meant, while trying to please critics who were seemingly never satisfied with their work but had little useful advice. William Thoms, editor of the *American Art Journal*, published many articles advocating for an American musical style and criticizing European influences on American composers. Yet, he rarely had constructive guidance for U. S. artists trying to write the elusive “true” American composition.

People who advocated for opera in English translation as a way to promote American music and break from European musical domination, never seemed to have considered whether, in a polyglot, multi-lingual nation, English really was the vernacular. All those surveyed by *Music* in 1896 agreed that only a very few listeners could understand opera in Italian or German (the

¹⁰¹See Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 53, for more on the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show's French tour, and Derek Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The Nineteenth-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 144–70, for more on minstrel shows in Europe, particularly in England.

¹⁰²W. S. B. Mathews, “The Case of the American Composer,” *Musical Record* 372 (January 1893): 12.

most common foreign languages used in opera performance).¹⁰³ Composer Louis Campbell-Tipton quickly dismissed the idea that English might not be America's language with the somewhat cavalier remark, "I am aware that America being a composite nation, there is a large element of citizens to whom English is not the mother-tongue; but, nevertheless, at any average recital, concert or soiree, the English-speaking predominate. And to others, most of them, it has become, at any rate, second-nature."¹⁰⁴ Some reviews obliquely considered whether an English-language operatic production made sense in an "American" project in the context of the multinational character of a large city like New York. In a piece on tenor Carl Streitmann's performance at New York's Terrace Garden, the reviewer noted that Streitmann's appearance had caused "much rejoicing among German audiences."¹⁰⁵ A comment like this shows how different ethnic constituencies within New York advocated for opera in their native language, complicating the search for an American musical style and any idea of language-based patriotism. It is unclear exactly to what imagined community Streitmann's fans belonged—Germany, the United States, or a German diaspora in the United States.¹⁰⁶

In 1885, tenor Anton Schott recommended that the Metropolitan Opera Company sing German operas in English translation. Historian Joseph Horowitz claims that management rejected this idea because German speakers were so common in New York that it was effectively

¹⁰³Only Louis Arthur Russell conceded that there were a few regions in the U. S. where there might be a large enough native German- or Italian-speaking population that English was not the preferred language for most inhabitants.

¹⁰⁴Louis Campbell-Tipton, "Snobbery in Music," *The Philharmonic* 1, no. 2 (April 1901): 91.

¹⁰⁵"The World of Music," *The World* (New York City), 19 (or 10) August 1890. Streitmann specialized in comic opera and began singing in English with the Lillian Russell Comic Opera Company in 1891. The fact that Streitmann was popular with a German constituency and then switched to English-language comic opera further complicates the situation, with the national identities of both performers and audiences often in flux.

¹⁰⁶See Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006) for more on the concept of the imagined community.

the vernacular.¹⁰⁷ While this was true, it is just as likely that the German-born conductor, Leopold Damrosch, was more comfortable working in his native language and the stockholders preferred foreign-language opera for social reasons. As E. C. Stanton, a later manager of the Metropolitan Opera House noted in 1892, “audiences at the Metropolitan are essentially cosmopolitan. They have heard all that is best in the great opera-houses of the world.”¹⁰⁸

The German influence on American musical culture was welcomed by some writers, deplored by others. Orchestras were dominated by native German conductors and instrumentalists, and many opera companies hosted a large German contingent of singers. Indeed, William Thoms’s greatest objection to the American Opera Company was not its high ticket costs, sub-par principal singers, or educational mission, but its many European performers and what he considered the malignant influence of the German musicians who dominated the cast and orchestra, including and especially the conductor, Theodore Thomas. In September 1886 Thoms declared angrily “let us see the truth, as it stares up impudently in the face...the ‘National Opera’ is German. All those *national* things did not originate in a truly patriotic devotion to American art, but in a love, fonder than wise, of foreign institutions and a snobbish imitation of European manners.”¹⁰⁹ A few weeks later he accused Thomas of attempting to control American musical culture through the AOC and his many orchestral and festival tours. “Of late years Mr. Thomas and his advisers and manipulators have shown such a lack of discretion, and so openly exhibited their resolution to remain the masters of the situation, at the sacrifice of art itself, that their object and means of proceeding being now known, American

¹⁰⁷Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2005), 146.

¹⁰⁸E. C. Stanton, “Opera in America,” *North American Review* 154 (February 1892): 211.

¹⁰⁹[William M. Thoms], “Some Wholesome Truths about the ‘American Opera,’ the ‘National Conservatory,’ etc.,” *American Art Journal* 45, no. 22 (18 September 1886): 371.

pluck, we hope, will accept the challenge, and come to the front, soon to conquer its due place.”¹¹⁰

Thoms was not the only person frustrated by the European influence on American music. In 1897, Frederic Grant Gleason and Winfield Blake published the “Declaration of Principles” for “The American Patriotic Musical League” in an issue of *Music*. Complaining that current entertainment was immoral, not educational, and overly dominated by European styles, the League’s principles stated that censorship should be employed to clean up popular entertainment and that measures should be put in place that would protect and encourage “American native or resident students, artists, composers and teachers.”¹¹¹ Even as staunch a supporter of American music as *Music*’s editor, W. S. B. Mathews, thought this idea was going a little too far. Although he published the League’s manifesto in his journal, in the same issue he ridiculed the censorship proposal, asking “where, then, is our American Patriotic Musical League to make its stand to stem this tide? The broom may indeed be wide enough; but can our Mrs. Partington find footing solid enough to hold her while she sweeps back the waves?”¹¹² He also pointed out that “our great army of German musicians” had made immeasurable contributions to the musical life of the nation.¹¹³

The influence of successive waves of immigrants throughout the nineteenth century meant that people in the United States struggled to establish a national identity at all. New residents might profess an allegiance to America, but they still maintained profound ties with

¹¹⁰[William M. Thoms], “The Operatic Ring under American Colors,” *American Art Journal* 45, no. 24 (2 October 1886): 386.

¹¹¹Frederic Grant Gleason and Winfield Blake, “The American Patriotic Musical League: Declaration of Principles,” *Music* 13, no. 2 (December 1897): 243–45. Apart from some press coverage in 1897, the League seems to have sunk quickly into obscurity.

¹¹²W. S. B. Mathews, “Editorial Bric-a-Brac,” *Music* 13, no. 2 (December 1897): 220.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

their countries of origin. Music was one way that immigrants could ease the transition from their old home to their new homes. Even though they might live in a world dominated by English, immigrants could retreat to musical productions in their native languages for a taste of the old country.¹¹⁴ For some, attending a foreign-language opera production could have been a welcome reminder of their cultural origins. Insistence on English as the language of opera in America became another way of enforcing not only boundaries with Europe, but also assimilation of foreign-born music lovers into an Anglo-dominated culture.¹¹⁵

Many commentators recognized that recent immigrants looked to foreign-language opera (and other types of entertainment) as a way to bridge the gap between their pasts and their futures, and to shape their new homes in familiar ways. For some critics, European influences provided a starting point for American culture and musical institutions. George William Curtis stated that the singers participating in the first German season at the Metropolitan Opera in 1885 had a “certain national pride in the performance. They felt evidently that the cause of German music had been intrusted [*sic*] to them. They were here as missionaries among unbelievers, who, without much knowledge, had been bred in the Italian tradition.”¹¹⁶ Nationalism was a concern for these singers, according to Curtis, just not American musical nationalism. Instead of appealing to his readers’ sense of patriotic pride, Curtis argued that Wagner’s “music of the future” presented at the Metropolitan Opera, and also by Theodore Thomas in concert form, satisfied the American audience’s desire for the new and the modern in

¹¹⁴Big cities with large immigrant populations, such as New York City, often had theaters which specialized in foreign-language performances of many different types of entertainments, from German-language comic opera to Yiddish theater.

¹¹⁵A similar cultural process was at work when opera was used to enforce conceptions of whiteness when African Americans were prevented from performing or attending opera (see Chapter 4).

¹¹⁶[George William Curtis], “Editor’s Easy Chair,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 70, no. 419 (April 1885): 807.

music. Curtis saw no need to assimilate the singers and the repertoire into an American nationalist project as did so many of the critics who supported opera in English translation.

Commentators agreed that opera written by American composers did not yet exist in any meaningful way. Americans composed operas during this period, but critics universally dismissed them. The first grand opera in English written by a U. S.-based composer was William Henry Fry's, *Leonora*, which received its world premiere Philadelphia in 1845. Other operas followed, such as George Bristow's *Rip Van Winkle* (1855), Silas Pratt's *Zenobia* (1885), and Walter Damrosch's *The Scarlet Letter* (1896), but none made a lasting impact. Reviewers usually panned these operas as derivative and lacking a distinctive American flavor. Indeed, critics routinely insisted "America has no opera of its own."¹¹⁷ In a short profile of John Philip Sousa, W. S. B. Mathews commented that he hoped Sousa would continue to compose comic operas because

then he will naturally write some more, and later tend more and more towards the type of grand opera, and so at length, twenty years from now, when we have found out the truth which all other nations have found out long and long ago, namely that opera in a foreign tongue is merely a stage play with libretto accompaniment,—*then* we may have the real American opera, written by a master experienced, with light and firm touch; and with practiced ear, and not afraid of the deepest and most serious in music.¹¹⁸

The five comic operas Sousa had already written, in Mathews' estimation, were important only as precursors for the crucial work of "real American opera"—that is an American national style in grand opera, not the popular entertainment of operetta.

Grand Opera and American Patriotism

Much of the rhetoric about English-language opera was couched in patriotic and political terms, drawing comparisons between America's political maturation (as symbolized by its imperialist

¹¹⁷Homer Moore, "Mr. Abbey's Chestnut Tree," *Music* 5, no. 4 (February 1894): 425.

¹¹⁸W. S. B. Mathews, "Editorial Bric-a-Brac," *Music* 7, no. 2 (December 1894): 195.

ambitions and protectionist policies that favored American industry) and its cultural maturation. In an article written during the AOC's first season in 1886, George William Curtis stated confidently that the company was "another warble of American independence. Ever since our declaration of political independence we have been asserting it in other forms and relations, until this last and most melodious protest, which is the latest proof that [we have] come of age."¹¹⁹ Minna Thomas Antrim echoed this language fifteen years later when she wrote, "as a nation, we may lack old world 'culture' in spots, but we are adults—at last." She called on the "native-born American audience" to attend performances of "Grand Opera in English whenever it is given," as a civic duty so that they could influence the course of American musical life through their box-office muscle.¹²⁰

Conversely, critics presented the audience's preference for European operas and European-trained singers as a sign of national immaturity, as in an essay in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1879 when Curtis portrayed Americans' habit of looking to Europe to establish the quality of a particular singer or opera (rather than using their own judgment) as a sign that "we reckon musically from London."¹²¹ The situation had changed little fourteen years later when composer Gerritt Smith complained in 1893 that "in this country we accept everything which bears the stamp of a foreign indorsement [*sic*]. We are as children who don't want 'home-made dolls.'"¹²² As they had earlier in the century, commentators charged that singers and teachers who first heard and learned opera in foreign languages were likely to continue with what they knew.

¹¹⁹[George William Curtis], "Editor's Easy Chair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 72, no. 432 (May 1886): 970.

¹²⁰Antrim, "Grand Opera in English," 383–84.

¹²¹[George William Curtis], "Editor's Easy Chair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 59, no. 352 (September 1879): 620.

¹²²Gerritt Smith, "Coming American Composers," *Musical Record* 381 (October 1893): 15.

In 1894, Karleton Hackett drew a comparison between opera attendance and national economic policy. Noting that American audiences were always enthusiastic about foreign singers, he asked: “should we not give proportionate meed [*sic*] to our people? Surely, in a year of such overwhelming republican victories we ought to begin to recognize the principle of protection for home industries.”¹²³ Hackett’s comments reflected the concern at the time over the economic consequences of the Panic of 1893 and of immigration on the employment opportunities of people already in the United States.

Critics also believed that the reliance on European operas in the United States was caused, in part, by the immigrants who dominated the American performing and teaching ranks. Besides being the editor of *Music*, W. S. B. Mathews was a pedagogue, and he filled the journal with articles about music education. He was convinced that foreign teachers were either unable or unwilling to teach young Americans how to sing in English. As Mathews explained in an 1893 article, “the great majority of our conductors are foreigners; Germans believing that only a German can write music...Moreover, all our teachers, with few exceptions, acquire an anti-American bias in their education.”¹²⁴ Prominent vocal teacher Clara Brinkerhoff believed that “foreigners can not teach English-speaking people to sing correctly” because they could not pronounce English vowels properly.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, native-born composers, instrumentalists,

¹²³Karleton Hackett, “Word to the American Audience,” *Music* 5, no. 4 (February 1894): 282. Although the landslide victories by Congressional Republican candidates were still some months in the future, Hackett refers here to the devastating economic consequences of the Panic of 1893 which not only focused Americans’ attention on the needs of their own citizens, but also resulted in heavy Democratic electoral losses at every level of government as they were blamed for the downturn.

¹²⁴Mathews, “The Case of the American Composer,” 12. In a profile of the famous Paris-based teacher Mme. Marchesi, her American student Fatmah Diard said that Marchesi refused to allow anyone to sing in English—only French or Italian. John Lathrop Mathews, “A Pupil of Marchesi,” *Music* 9, no. 6 (April 1896): 641.

¹²⁵“Nationality in Vocalism,” *Werner’s Magazine* 23, no. 8 (May 1899): 239.

and singers usually went to Europe to study.¹²⁶ The most famous early example was Louis Moreau Gottschalk who left New Orleans for Paris to study piano in 1841.

Very few American musicians during the nineteenth century could hope to achieve success without going to Europe. Indeed, even at the end of the century, those few performers who were educated only in the States generally underplayed or hid that fact because audiences tended to assume that only artists trained in Europe were skilled musicians. Mathews's remedy for the exodus of young musicians overseas was to encourage better music education in the United States so aspiring performers and composers would be able to stay in the country to study. To that end, *Music* published numerous stories praising the quality of music schools and teachers across the country, as well as essays on how to regulate and raise the quality of musical instruction in the United States. Jeannette Thurber's National Conservatory, which she founded in 1885, was one of the most ambitious attempts to improve American musical training in the late nineteenth century.¹²⁷

Even staunch supporters of American music found it difficult to divorce themselves from the authority of European examples. Some writers argued that opera should be sung in English because Europeans sang opera in the vernacular and Americans should as well. Hackett wrote

we applaud Wagner for demanding German for the Germans. France demands French for her children, Italy, Italian for hers. But we, we young giants of the New World that are destined one day to be the law givers of the Nations, we must humbly accept whatever polyglot performance that lord of creation the Manager sees fit to give us...¹²⁸

¹²⁶For more information on foreign training of American musicians, especially in Germany, see: Douglas E. Bomberger, "The German Musical Training of American Students, 1850–1900" (PhD diss., University of Maryland at College Park, 1991).

¹²⁷The school came under attack, however, because the majority of the faculty was born in Europe and many did not even speak English. Commentators such as William Thoms questioned if the students were really receiving an American education.

¹²⁸Karleton Hackett, "The English Language in Singing," *Music* 7, no. 3 (January 1895): 276.

Here he managed to combine American imperialist ambitions with a call to follow the lead of the European imperialist powers—a neat rhetorical trick. Hackett also pointed out that

the disciples of Wagner in particular are paying but scant respect to his theories of art in decrying the English language in singing, for one of the fundamental principles on which he based his life work was a national opera sung in the language of the country. Are his principles to hold good for Germany alone? Certainly when he began writing, Germany was not so thoroughly in subjugation to the “barbarian foreigner” as is our own country today.¹²⁹

In essence Hackett reasoned, as did many other critics, that what was good enough for Europe—opera in the vernacular—should certainly be good enough for the United States, a nation destined to dominate the world. He appealed to Wagner, whom Hackett cast as the ultimate authority on musical thought, to bolster his argument, while at the same time lamenting that the country was oppressed by “barbarian foreigners”—a category that logically should have included Wagner. Six months later, Hackett went so far as to compare the use of foreign languages to colonialism, writing “are we an inferior race mentally and physically, to be held in subjection as a handful of Englishmen hold the millions of India?”¹³⁰ Hackett’s use of European examples to justify the use of English translations was not a new argument, but his rhetoric grew noticeably more heated during the 1890s.

Soprano Emma Juch also connected support for English-language opera with national loyalty. Juch portrayed audiences’ unwillingness to financially subsidize or attend English-language opera as a lack of patriotism and an unwillingness to break free from European musical influences. Noting Chicago’s enthusiasm for Italian- and German-language opera, and the poor turnout for English-language companies, she complained that

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Karleton Hackett, “Music in the Language of the People,” *Music* 10, no. 2 (June 1896): 130.

it is a queer sort of patriotism that supports foreign importations and gives no encouragement to that of its own nation...Although I am Austrian by birth and only American by adoption, I have given everything to try to make American opera a prosperous issue, but I am thoroughly discouraged, and unless the good godfather [a wealthy individual or the government that will underwrite opera] does appear I am afraid American opera will have to wait until Americans become ashamed of their lack of national pride.¹³¹

In order to promote opera in English, critics and impresarios often insisted that attending vernacular productions was a patriotic duty. In 1910, Minna Thomas Antrim wrote, “gifted musicians not of our blood will, of course, covenant together to pooh-pooh such a monstrous innovation as the substituting of American opera, or singers, for the old favorites, or foreign idols. The appeal for musical emancipation is made to the native-born American audience.”¹³² Her statement is provocative on at least two counts. Her nativist evocation of “musicians not of our blood” suggests the idea that Americans were a separate race from other ethnic groups. The nineteenth-century understanding of race privileged ethnic identity over physical attributes such as skin color, so that Italian, German, and French people were all considered different races.¹³³ Because of the effects of immigration, however, it was harder to define Americans as a specific race because individuals’ ethnic heritage often quickly led back to another country or was confused due to intermarriage. Antrim ignored this, defining a foreigner as anyone not “of our blood.” Conveniently, she did not try to define who might be of “our

¹³¹“Emma Juch on Opera,” *Washington Post*, 6 December 1891. Juch was a former member of the AOC. Many of the singers in her company, her manager, and their sets and costumes all came from the AOC and her viewpoint was heavily influenced by the rhetoric surrounding that company. Juch’s frustration is understandable since her own English-language company was about to fold.

¹³²Antrim, “Grand Opera in English,” 383.

¹³³For a contemporary example of concepts of race and ethnicity see William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociologic Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899). Modern scholarship on the subject of ethnic identity in nineteenth-century America includes Stephen A. Roys, *Eccentric Nation: Irish Performance in Nineteenth-Century New York City* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009); Margaret M. Mulrooney, *Black Powder, White Lace: The Du Pont Irish and Cultural Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover, NH: University of Press of New England, 2002); and Michael Miller Topp, “Racial and Ethnic Identity in the United States, 1837–1877,” in *Race and Ethnicity in America*, ed. Ronald H. Bayor (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 63–95.

blood,” as that would have been rather more difficult. She also proposed that performing American opera or using American singers would allow “native-born Americans” to enjoy “musical emancipation,” likening the oppression suffered by African American slaves to the domination of European music and musicians over American music. While obviously an overstatement, Antrim’s rhetoric draws upon anger in the United States about Europe’s continued influence over American cultural life.

Almost fifteen years earlier in 1896, Hackett went even further and explicitly compared the use of a foreign-language in opera with slavery.

The negro all over our land is today a free man because of the “senseless and criminal fanaticism” of Garrison, Phillips, Lovejoy and that noble band. We are too proud and great a nation to long remain in this bondage.¹³⁴

In 1896, when Hackett wrote these words, the Castle Square Company based in Boston was the only large troupe producing grand opera in English. Hackett felt that the progress towards what he called a healthy “national opera” had stopped and was even backsliding, and his rhetoric grew more impassioned as he became more pessimistic about the prospects for English-language opera.¹³⁵

Although writers like Hackett, Antrim, and Mathews seemed to have some idea—however vaguely defined—of an American national character which could be expressed musically, critics who rejected opera in English based some of their arguments on a different understanding of American identity. While most critics held out hope that there would be an American artistic style in the future, some commentators argued that the polyglot nature of the United States precluded any chance of a coherent musical identity. Comic-opera conductor Arthur Weld argued “indeed these ardent enthusiasts [for American music] would seem either

¹³⁴Hackett, “Music in the Language of the People,” 130.

¹³⁵Hackett, “Opera for American Singers,” 546.

totally ignorant of the influence of racial peculiarities upon the growth of schools of art and thought, or else they deliberately disregard this all-important factor, in their loud-mouthed and ill-judged patriotism.”¹³⁶ Weld’s comments in 1894 preceded Antrim’s essay by sixteen years, but both authors agreed that “racial” identity was important in determining national musical culture, even though they came to vastly different conclusions. For Antrim, Americans were a racially identifiable group (though she sidestepped how to define it), whereas for Weld, Americans could never forge a unified racial identity. The appeal to patriotism in connection to opera or any other genre was beside the point then for Weld, because he believed that the United States could never have a cohesive identity.

Musical Aesthetics and Opera in English Translation

The discourses about opera in the vernacular were not grounded in non-musical issues entirely. Critics also expressed aesthetic concerns about English-language opera. Many writers claimed that English was such a difficult language to sing that performers would never be able to execute the music adequately. This was not a new concern as it had been raised for decades, and it was not resolved at the end of the nineteenth century.

Critics sometimes noted that singers’ accents got in the way of their diction, such as when Theodore Hablemann’s thick German accent marred his otherwise good performance of Edgardo in *Lucy of Lammermoor* produced by the Clara Louise Kellogg English Opera Company in 1874.¹³⁷ In an 1881 review of the Strakosch-Hess Opera Company’s performance of *Faust*, the

¹³⁶Arthur Weld, “A Contribution to the Discussion of ‘Americanism’ in *Music*,” *Music* 5, no. 6 (April 1894): 633. *Music* published a rebuttal to this essay in September 1894. Herbert J. Krum denounced Weld’s argument and suggested the problem was that America had no native folk tunes yet, but in time America’s “distinct and unique” national spirit would produce a compositional genius who would find a way to write truly American music. Herbert J. Krum, “Americanism Musically,” *Music* 6, no. 5 (September 1894): 545–47.

¹³⁷“Amusements,” *New York Times*, 22 January 1874.

New York Times reviewer griped “despite his name, [tenor Giovanni Perugini] is an American, who ought to pronounce his native language with more distinctness.”¹³⁸ The majority of the respondents to *Music’s* survey thought it would be better for American audiences to hear opera in English, but many agreed with teacher Florenz D’Arona, that “ninety-nine artists out of a hundred” did not have perfect diction and so “the majority of the hearers cannot tell what language they are singing; even those familiar with it can only pick up a word here and there.”¹³⁹ Bad diction seemed to have been a common problem for all singers, because critics complained about it no matter the language of performance.

Also going back to at least the 1870s, critics asserted that English was such an unmusical language that no one could sing it well. “It is almost unnecessary to say that English does not lend itself to the purposes of vocalization as readily as Italian does” was a common sentiment.¹⁴⁰ While singers sometimes acknowledged that English was an awkward language, they pointed out that with proper training, a good vocalist should be able to perform in any language. Soprano Marie Roze said in 1881 that “many may say that the Italian language is much softer and sweeter for singing in. This I grant you, but with proper care and study English can be sung in a manner equally attractive. See what the Germans accomplish with their language, which is far more difficult to sing in than English.”¹⁴¹ The debate over English’s merits continued to the end of the century. Each of the respondents in *Music’s* survey answered the question “Is there any real reason why English words cannot be well sung as well as the German or French?” by reporting that English was no harder to sing than other languages, and some people thought it was easier

¹³⁸“Fifth-Avenue Theatre,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1881.

¹³⁹“Our Mother Tongue: A Symposium,” (February 1896), 391.

¹⁴⁰“Opera in English,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 22 October 1875.

¹⁴¹“Music,” *Daily Inter Ocean* (Chicago, IL), 1 January 1881.

to perform than most. Several teachers attributed singers' difficulties with English diction to their training by European teachers. Louis Arthur Russell, who published a book on English diction in 1905, was particularly outraged when he denounced "false teaching by foreigners, here in America, who failing to master English have declared it 'too savage for song;' 'tis these things which have un-Americanized our singers, and it long ago became the duty of every honest singing master to preach 'English, and that of the best,' to all pupils."¹⁴² As I have shown earlier in this chapter, the use of English was one way that critics (or in this case a singing teacher) promoted American nationalism. For Russell, it was foreigners who denounced the language, and their pernicious influence was so powerful that these teachers were actually able to denationalize the singers they instructed.

Despite performers' agreement that English was not an especially difficult language to master, the idea that the language itself was a problem persisted throughout the period. Clues as to why critics continued to feel this way may be found in a defense of English written by Karleton Hackett in 1896. "It seems to be considered a mark of artistic education among a certain class of people to decry our language as unvocal, hard, unsympathetic, the language of business, etc.—*ad nauseum*."¹⁴³ According to Hackett, English was a mark of provincialism and also of a practical, even commercial outlook instead of an artistic one. Apparently this attitude was long standing because Hackett's charge was also made by an anonymous critic in Akron, Ohio almost fifteen years earlier. In a review of the Strakosch-Hess Opera Company, the author complained that though the impresarios were associated with opera produced in its "native Italian...the impression was fostered that it was only by an act of very great condescension that

¹⁴²"Our Mother Tongue: A Symposium," (February 1896), 401.

¹⁴³Hackett, "The English Language in Singing," 271.

our ‘provincial’ audience were permitted to enjoy the musical masterpieces in the vernacular.”¹⁴⁴ The writer called all the company’s productions “disappointing,” but his only specific complaint was the choice of language and the insult he found to his town’s honor that the managers assumed Akron’s population was not educated enough to enjoy “real” opera.¹⁴⁵

Stereotypes about Americans’ obsession with business were so strong that they implicated the nation’s language as well as its music.¹⁴⁶ *Philharmonic* quoted Edward Strauss, composer Johann Strauss’s son, expressing a typical European attitude about American music and musicians: “America has no music...Someday, when the American forgets business, he will be able to produce music.”¹⁴⁷ Many commentators agreed with Strauss’s stance that U. S. composers would never be able to develop a national style because the country’s fixation with business meant that the inhabitants were incapable of true artistic expression. American writer Ada Sterling, too, picked up on the association between English and business when she complained that “bigly gifted foreign singers...disdain the English language except as a convenient vehicle of commerce...”¹⁴⁸ Even Hackett excused America’s lack of a national style on the grounds that “we have been too busy making money to have had either time or inclination to cultivate the arts.”¹⁴⁹ Hackett’s explanation that business had preempted art, along with a promise to devote more time to the arts now that the country was economically successful, was a rationale offered by many people to explain America’s slow development of a

¹⁴⁴“Last Night’s Disappointment,” *Summit County Beacon* (Akron, OH), 11 May 1881.

¹⁴⁵Town pride and civic identity were influenced by the kinds of entertainments available to citizens (see Chapter 4).

¹⁴⁶See Chapter 6 for ways this stereotype affected the reception of individual operas.

¹⁴⁷“Musical Mélange,” *The Philharmonic* 1, no. 1 (January 1901): 60. This quotation is reminiscent of the famous story that Louis Moreau Gottschalk was rejected from the Paris Conservatoire by Pierre Zimmerman because he thought America was a land of steam engines.

¹⁴⁸Ada Sterling, “Singers in Our English Opera,” *Harper’s Bazaar* 33, no. 42 (20 October 1900): 1558.

¹⁴⁹Hackett, “To Singers,” 140.

national musical style. Critics did not address how business-obsessed artists were able to develop an American style in literature and other arts but not one in music.

The Challenges and Advantages of Translation

Critics raised the issue of the quality of English translations in many reviews of English-language opera companies. Everyone seemed to agree that the vast majority of translations were awful. Sometimes the English version grossly mischaracterized the meaning of the source text, but more often, the subtle connotations present in the original language were lost in translation. Even if the translation rendered the content accurately, the English version often did not fit the melodic contour of the music because of the language's grammatical structure and pronunciation. Words that were properly emphasized in the original might be glossed over in the new language, or unimportant English words ended up in musically prominent positions. In an 1895 article appropriately titled "Sins of the Translator," W. H. Neidlinger provided the example below from Léo Delibes's song *Eglogue*.¹⁵⁰



The word "the" is overly emphasized in the third measure of the example because it is sung on the longest-held note of the measure, while in the original French, the accented "pi" syllable of "Soupire" is appropriately stressed. J. H. Wiggins complained in *American Art Journal* about awkward or silly English translations in *Das Rheingold*. It is hard to disagree with him when Wiggins points out what he characterizes as "awkward phrases" such as "Ye dove to the

¹⁵⁰W. H. Neidlinger, "The Sins of the Translator," *Music* 8, no. 3 (July 1895): 238.

depths;’ ‘gruesomey greasiness,’ as applied to the slippery rocks of the river; [or] ‘fickle frostiest fish!’” He also singled out misleading translations such as “Woglinda watches alone” for “Woglinde wachst du allein?”¹⁵¹

Although many authors acknowledged that translating an opera libretto well was almost impossible, they did not have a problem criticizing the people who did the work. “It would actually appear as if our publishing houses...simply hire some muscular day laborer to come in, and with a shovel, to cast the words, each nicely furnished with glue, against the paper, and allow them to stick wherever the spirit of chaos may direct.”¹⁵² W. H. Neidlinger, along with other critics, suggested that musicians should do their own translations so they could account for the musical issues involved, and asserted that he never relied on commercially available translations when reviewing a work.¹⁵³ Indeed, opera companies sometimes commissioned new translations or, as Clara Louise Kellogg did, made their own. Scores from the period also sometimes contain new handwritten translations (presumably by the singers) replacing the printed text. These modifications were sometimes extensive, though at other times only affected a few words in an aria or recitative.¹⁵⁴

Even writers who were the most strident in their denunciation of English translations did not have a problem with the idea of translation *per se*. Indeed, more operas in the United States during this era were likely to be sung in translation than in the original language. *Carmen* and *Faust* were two of the most-performed works in the United States, but they were usually

¹⁵¹J. H. Wiggins, “Through the Bogs of Wagner Librettos,” *American Art Journal* 54, no. 8 (7 September 1889): 116.

¹⁵²J. S. Van Cleve, “The Influence of Richard Wagner upon Vocal Art,” *Music* 2, no. 2 (June 1892): 177. This harsh assessment of translators appeared in an essay that actually advocated *for* opera in English!

¹⁵³Neidlinger, “The Sins of the Translator,” 237.

¹⁵⁴The Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection at the Mill Music Library in the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which I will return to in Chapter 5, contains thousands of marked-up scores used before the 1920s. Translations were more likely to be altered in comic opera than in grand opera in the scores I examined.

sung in Italian and sometimes in German, but rarely in French. It was only in the late 1890s that the Metropolitan Opera Company abandoned opera in translation and began using the original language in all its productions.

How well a critic tolerated the shortcomings of English translation depended upon his support of opera in English and his opinion regarding the relationship between the drama and the music in an opera. Writers who preferred foreign-language performances tended to value the music over the drama. They felt that the audience did not need to understand every word to comprehend the piece since the beauty and power of the music was of paramount importance. These commentators tended to argue either that English translations ruined the music or that English-language opera's lower performance standards spoiled the music's power.

Opera's status as high art for the educated also played into some critics' preference for foreign-language performance. Although some commentators cared about fidelity to the score, most writers were more concerned that high art should involve some effort on the part of the audience or at least stand apart from ordinary experiences. Prominent Boston-based critic William Apthorp believed that "we have been accustomed to hear operas in some foreign tongue, Italian, German or French, and the sudden eruption of everyday vernacular into an opera which we have heard before in a less familiar language seems to efface all the poetic remoteness of the work, and bring it into too prosaic propinquity to us."¹⁵⁵ Moreover, some writers felt it was not too much to expect the audience to arrive at the opera prepared for the experience by studying the work in advance. As Lawrence Gilman asked, "would it not be better to encourage the hearer to acquire a working knowledge of the few languages in which opera is usually sung...Or he might resort to the simpler expedient of familiarizing himself with a

¹⁵⁵William Apthorp, "Theaters and Concerts," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 December 1889 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

translation of the libretto in advance.”¹⁵⁶ The idea that listeners should learn three foreign languages in order to enjoy opera underscores the obstacles that some critics wanted to enact against working- and middle-class opera goers. In Gilman’s ideal world, true opera lovers would be conversant with three languages (French, German, and Italian), or at least take the time, and spend the money, to buy a libretto in translation and read it prior to attending the opera. Although a wealthy music lover might have the funds and, more importantly, the time to purchase and study a libretto, less affluent audience member would be unlikely to overcome such hurdles.

Supporters of English-language opera often pointed out that many of the Italian and German translations used by the Metropolitan Opera and other similar companies were just as bad as the English translations, but writers were willing to forgive those versions while they were much more critical of English ones. As Karleton Hackett protested, “now by what principle of art or common sense is a French opera sung in bad Italian better than the same opera sung in good English?”¹⁵⁷ Some writers even speculated that critics did not like English-language performances because they could understand the words and realized that the opera was not as uplifting or erudite as they thought. As John Lathrop Mathews pointed out when criticizing Ben Woolf’s negative review of the Boston-based Castle Square Company in the *Herald*, “it is possible and indeed even probable that when he heard in English the reason for so much excitement on the stage, Mr. Woolf did not enjoy them so much as he did his own imaginings from the pantomime of the Italians.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Lawrence Gilman, “Opera in English,” *The North American Review* 193, no. 666 (May 1911): 749–50.

¹⁵⁷Hackett, “The English Language in Singing,” 275.

¹⁵⁸John Lathrop Mathews, “*Les Huguenots* at the Castle Square,” *Music* 10, no. 2 (June 1896): 210.

Hackett and others who supported English-language opera believed the art form was primarily a drama that happened to be set to music, and that the whole point of the work was lost if the audience and performers did not understand the intricacies of the plot. “The word is the key to the whole business, and where this is lacking as it is in effect when the performance is not given in the native tongue of the people, the dramatic work is presented through a veil, which leaves many of the beauties and refinements of the original unrecognized.”¹⁵⁹ Moreover, writers felt that singers were unable to express the emotional impact of the text properly if they did not understand the lyrics they were performing. Many of the teachers who participated in *Music’s* symposium agreed. “Every singer who is worthy of the name sings best in his native tongue” is how Arthur J. Hubbard explained it.¹⁶⁰

Even if the translation was not very good, it was better than nothing. Confronted with the options of singing in the original language or using a bad translation, teacher Perley Aldrich said “as a choice of two evils I should choose the lesser and use the translation.”¹⁶¹ Hackett was even more direct than Aldrich. Although Hackett asserted in an 1896 essay that the available English translations were inadequate, he likened the refusal to use them to declaring that anyone who could not read Greek should “never know a word of Homer since you may not read him in his own tongue.”¹⁶² In the same essay, he quoted singer Victor Maurel who had just finished a series of concerts with Clara Schumann of her husband’s *Lieder* translated into French. According to Maurel, Clara told him that “to sustain that Schumann cannot be sung except by a German, and consequently that he cannot be understood by any but a German, is to condemn

¹⁵⁹“Music in the Columbian Fair,” *Music* 1, no. 1 (November 1891): 50.

¹⁶⁰“Our Mother Tongue: A Symposium,” (February 1896), 393. Hubbard was a voice teacher in Boston.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 403.

¹⁶²Hackett, “Music in the Language of the People,” 132.

him to the limits of Germany itself.”¹⁶³ It was this exclusion from great music that seemed to upset supporters of English-language opera the most. Believing that English translations would soon improve, Hackett predicted that “the rising generation...so far from missing any of the beauty, will wonder that their fathers so long denied themselves their full portion of the feast.”¹⁶⁴ As long as opera was performed in a foreign language, these writers believed that Americans were effectively shut out of the full aesthetic experience of listening to opera.

The Castle Square English Opera Companies and Critical Reception of English-Language Troupes

Most writers agreed that artists who specialized in English were simply not as good as their foreign-language counterparts. Perhaps there is no better example of the critical unease over the aesthetics of opera performed in English at the turn of the century than the reception of the Castle Square English Opera Companies. Henry W. Savage, a successful real estate businessman turned entertainment mogul, founded his first opera company in Boston in 1895. An innovative and savvy entrepreneur, Savage responded to changes in the operatic marketplace by having his companies tour less aggressively (which was cheaper) or even stay in residence permanently in one city such as Philadelphia, St. Louis, or New York.¹⁶⁵ Unusually most of his troupes performed a combination of comic and grand operas, as most companies specialized in one or the other. He managed successful one-season tours of English-language versions of *Parsifal* (1904), *Madame Butterfly* (1906), and *La fanciulla del West* (1911) as well.¹⁶⁶ After 1911, Savage

¹⁶³Ibid., 133.

¹⁶⁴Hackett, “The English Language in Singing,” 276.

¹⁶⁵See Chapter 2 for more information about the business of opera production as well Savage’s companies.

¹⁶⁶Many comic-opera companies, as well as other types of entertainments such as plays and musical comedies only toured with one work, but it was unusual for a troupe to travel with only one grand opera. Despite Cosima Wagner’s ban on performances outside of Bayreuth until the end of 1913, *Parsifal*’s American premiere was on 24

stopped producing grand operas and concentrated on operettas, musical comedies, and, finally, silent films.

Despite Savage's financial success, his companies had a decidedly mixed, sometimes tepid, critical reception. The writer's opinion on the use of English in operatic performance was an important factor in reviews of his troupes.¹⁶⁷ In general, supporters of English-language opera were inclined to be more kind to English-language companies, while its opponents were much more critical. In an admiring article in 1896, journalist John Latham Mathews hailed the Castle Square Company for finally attracting people to opera in English, but at the same time, he had some reservations about the troupe's quality.

The company is not the best in the world; the individual artists are not the best in the world; but it is a good company of good artists, making a very good endeavor to attain a noble ideal, and as such we can but hope that the gods will grant them all the success and good fortune that lie in their power.¹⁶⁸

In an interview with John Mathews, composer Edward MacDowell said he was pleased that the company's admission prices were low enough to draw the middle class to English-language opera, which was (in his opinion) becoming integrated into the Boston artistic landscape in a way that had not happened in any other city. He added that "there is no attempt to get the greatest artists," though "good singers are obtained."¹⁶⁹ In 1900, James Huneker conceded that Savage was so successful charging 25 cents for opera tickets that "the police had to send up a battalion every night to preserve order and safely usher the enthusiastic mobs to their seats."¹⁷⁰

December 1903 at the Metropolitan Opera House. The company's manager, Heinrich Conried, was able to convince an American court that the legal restriction against producing *Parsifal* only applied to Europe. Daniela Smolov Levy, "Parsifal in Yiddish? Why Not?," *Musical Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 140–41.

¹⁶⁷Preston, "The People's Prima Donna," 57; Turner, "A Joyous Star-Spangled-Bannerism," 247.

¹⁶⁸John Lathrop Mathews, "English Opera in Boston," *Music* 9, no. 5 (March 1896): 557.

¹⁶⁹John Lathrop Mathews, "Mr. Edward MacDowell," *Music* 10, no. 1 (May 1896): 35.

¹⁷⁰Huneker, "Grand Opera in American," 1356.

Popularity was all that Huneker would grant Savage, however, as he blasted the troupe's quality. "These performances were not mediocre; they were downright bad, ludicrously bad, bad in a side-splitting fashion. If you have ever seen a company of desperate amateurs slay Shakespeare you may form some notion of the ridiculous and vicious attempts at music a world too great for a wretched company."¹⁷¹ He goes on to allege that a few of the singers were sufficient to perform comic opera, but none were capable of the grand operas in Castle Square's repertoire such as *Lohengrin* or *Faust*. Huneker attributed the company's success not to quality or even good marketing, but to a "public sick of comic opera, emulative of 'swelldom,' and enticed by the bargain-counter prices."¹⁷²

When Henry W. Savage left the opera business in 1911 he did so because he could not make opera in English pay. The fickle theater audience became infatuated with a different musical style, and it was simply too costly to mount the sort of spectacle that listeners had come to expect, with the famous singers they wanted to hear, without many of the tickets being prohibitively expensive for the average concert goer. If Savage could have attracted a wealthier audience, he might have been able to produce English-language opera a little longer, but the rich seemed to have little interest in opera in English translation and the question that must be asked is why? So, at last, I have come full circle. This chapter opened with the editor of the *New York Herald's* explanation to Clarence D. Hess about why he believed, despite the presence of the Clara Louise Kellogg English Grand Opera Company, that there was no opera in the city that year. James Bennett's deceptively simple phrase that there was "no *real* opera" in New York City

¹⁷¹Ibid., 1357.

¹⁷²Ibid.

hid a wealth of musical, social, and cultural assumptions. For him, “real opera” carried specific cultural connotations that meant it was a work in a foreign language, by a European composer, in a production featuring famous singers with foreign-sounding names, and located in an opera house that catered to a wealthy clientele, charged high ticket prices, and discouraged the lower and middle classes from attending. As early as 1875, Bennett may not have conceived of opera as high art, but that aesthetic development only reinforced class-based prejudices against English-language opera. Try as they might, supporters of English-language opera could never overcome the American bias against opera performed in English translation. For Bennett, and for so many others like him, opera stood at the center of a matrix of associations that had little to do with the music, but everything to do with the world that opera had come to represent.

Many critics cast opera as luxurious, aristocratic, refined, and European. It was far from the rough-and-tumble world of business and the American agricultural heartland that had come to represent an idealized United States that was at once alluring and frightening to the elite. An America that embraced opera in English would have been one that valued its own cultural productions and was attempting to break free from the last vestiges of European influence. That kind of America would have wanted to throw open the doors of all its elite institutions to welcome everyone, and it would have been truly classless. But the United States was not really like that. The country was, and remains to this day, a mass of contradictions. On the one hand, the nation valued its exceptionalism, but on the other, its upper class defined themselves in relation to British aristocracy. Americans valued their business acumen and technical expertise, but rejected opera in English because its practitioners were too obviously interested in commercial reward. Although there were many philanthropists who wanted to open the doors to high art to as many Americans as possible, there were many people who fought just as hard to shut that door to preserve a class-based definition of high culture. In the end, opera in English

slowly faded away as an important cultural force because it did not fit neatly into the cultural categories of the day. It was too American and too middle class for the wealthy audience, but too European and too suffocating for everyone else.

CHAPTER 2: THE BUSINESS OF OPERA

The discourses about opera in the United States reverberated throughout the business of opera. The methods impresarios and singers used to market their companies, where they chose to travel, and which repertoire they produced were fundamentally influenced by the ways that Americans understood and interpreted the role of opera in their lives. The financial pressures on everyone involved in the entertainment business, whether they managed a traveling opera company, oversaw a local theater, or sang every night, were important in shaping the choices these people made about their careers and thus what Americans saw and heard on stage. The Gilded Age and Progressive Era saw important changes in copyright laws and business practices that also influenced the music industry. In a time when Americans were entertained by live performances from grand opera to professional whistlers, opera was a business like any other and had to exist in a capitalist marketplace. This truth can be uncomfortable for musicologists who prefer to focus on opera's artistic merits, but an investigation of the business of opera allows for a new understanding of the ways that Romantic ideals about art and the pragmatic realities of commerce intertwined in the world of opera.

The business practices of foreign-language and English-language opera impresarios were not substantially different, as they faced similar pressures. Impresarios looked to offer the best product possible at the lowest possible cost, while the performers and off-stage personnel tried to make a living wage (or more) while pursuing their chosen professions. Indeed, some individuals moved easily between the two types of opera, whether as singers (such as Emma Juch or Zélie de Lussan), stage managers (for example, Thomas Hablemann), conductors (such

as Adolph Neuendorff or Felix Jaeger), or producers (including Maurice Grau and Max Strakosch). Others, such as musicians' agents, booking agents, and theater managers, worked with any type of performer or company that was within their business purview from opera to minstrel shows. A large but closely connected network of people, venues, and institutions controlled the entertainment industry. Throughout this period, however, the divide between those who worked in foreign-language and English-language opera became wider. Fewer singers and producers made the leap between the two forms of opera after 1900 and their audiences became ever more separated as well. Once grand opera sung in foreign languages was firmly entrenched as a high art for the educated elite and the wealthy, the networks that produced English-language opera both abandoned and were shut out of foreign-language opera. The cultural connotations of high and low art produced a barrier between foreign-language and English-language opera that became harder, though not impossible, to overcome.

In many respects, business structures that control opera have changed little from the early nineteenth century until the present. Expenses must be controlled, profits made (or at least losses avoided), and audiences captured through relevant and alluring marketing. Many of the financial practices in this period were similar to those used in Europe at the same time, as well as those used by opera companies before the Civil War, or those still employed today.¹ The purpose of this chapter is not to suggest that many of the procedures used in the opera industry between 1878 and 1910 were revolutionary, but rather to demonstrate how the business worked within the context of a dynamic marketplace and changing attitudes about art and opera at the time. In addition, some aspects of the opera industry were influenced by new legislation and

¹Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

business models that were specific to this era, particularly the passage of the United States Copyright Act of 1891 and the establishment of the Theatrical Syndicate in 1896.

Music was a big business in the United States. In 1913, the *Cincinnati Times Star* reported that Americans spent more than \$600 million per year on music—a sum that translates into slightly more than \$14 billion in today’s currency.² With so much money at stake, it is not surprising that newspapers and general-interest journals followed the business closely. Opera singers were often famous celebrities, and impresarios raised their profiles in this period too, especially if their companies had few stars. Many entertainers wrote about their lives and careers in memoirs and magazines articles. These popular sources are typically unreliable for accurate financial information, as industry insiders often had reasons to exaggerate salary and revenue figures (whether lower or higher) to support whatever narrative served their purposes. Records such as contracts, business letters, box office receipts, expense records, bills, and the like are more trustworthy but harder to locate. Most impresarios worked on their own in relatively small businesses, and their records often disappeared after they died. The same is true of singers. Even records from large institutions such as opera companies or theaters have largely disappeared, and material from troupes, singers, or impresarios that specialized in opera in English translation are virtually non-existent for this era. More records have survived from foreign-language troupes because the people involved were much more prominent. When English-language singers and impresarios died, there was no constituency that cared about conserving their papers.

In the pages that follow, I explain the life cycle of a hypothetical English-language opera company in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from establishment until demise. Not enough archival records exist to track a specific troupe through all the different phases of its

²Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 130.

life, but it is possible to generate a picture of the challenges that most, if not all, troupes faced, and how producers and performers overcame, or were overwhelmed by, those difficulties.

The typical company was founded by an impresario (sometimes in partnership with a prima donna) who had to raise capital to hire singers, buy or rent costumes and scenery, book performing spaces, generate marketing materials, and handle the logistics required to move people and a large amount of baggage around the country. All attractions had to tour in order to function financially. Outside of New York City, there was not enough demand in any one town to support a large entertainment organization for a full year. During the tour, star singers were expected to promote the troupe, while press agents, managers, and impresarios made sure the company's run went smoothly. A successful season meant that the troupe met its expenses with enough left over for a nice profit for the impresario, but this happy result seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. Impresarios often complained that "opera cannot be adequately given at a profit in America. Indeed, first-class music is a very expensive luxury."³ Sometimes companies limped along until the end of the season, barely breaking even or losing money. If things went very badly, an opera troupe collapsed during its tour, unable to generate enough revenue to fund their travel to the next performance.⁴ No matter how the season ended, though, many people would come back for more the next year, hoping for a big hit and the attendant financial rewards.

³"Salaries of Singers," *Washington Post*, 1 January 1894.

⁴Contracts often stipulated that if a tour ended prematurely the manager had to provide train fare back to New York City for all the players. Newspaper stories about hapless chorus girls stuck in small towns when the company with which they were employed collapsed were all too common.

Organizing the Company

The first step for our imaginary opera company is its founding, probably by an impresario who risked at least some of his own money on the venture. There are indications that a few companies received backing from investors, but with little private patronage and no government support, opera impresarios (or producers as we might call them today) shouldered the bulk of the financial burden. Historian Nicholas Payne identifies several different business structures in opera companies' administration in the nineteenth century. In Europe, absolute monarchs sometimes funded and controlled national opera companies. Impresarios, composers, interpreters (that is, composers who produced other people's operas), trustees of the state, artistic managers, and business managers also led opera troupes.⁵ Between 1878 and 1910, very few American composers wrote operas, but those who did almost always had to produce their work themselves.⁶ In the United States, male impresarios raised the money for an entertainment venture and may have served as the business manager for the troupe as well, or they sometimes turned that task over to someone else. The artistic management of the troupe could fall to the impresario or the business manager, but it was not uncommon for a prima donna to shoulder the artistic direction of her troupe. Needless to say most impresarios and business managers were men, but there were important exceptions. For instance, Caroline Richings and Euphrosyne Parepa-Rosa, both sopranos active in the 1860s, controlled the artistic and business aspects of their troupes.

⁵Nicholas Payne, "The Business of Opera," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 53–69.

⁶Walter Damrosch composed and then produced *The Scarlett Letter* during the 1895–96 season with his Damrosch Opera Company. It was the only English-language opera the troupe sang, as they performed the rest of the repertoire (operas such as *Die Walküre*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Fidelio*) in German that season.

Most impresarios began their careers as theater managers, tour managers, or musicians' agents. Few had extensive music or acting credentials.⁷ Two of the most important operatic impresarios of the time, however, came to the theater after making a fortune in other fields. Oscar Hammerstein I started out in the cigar business and Henry W. Savage built a successful business in real estate. Others such as Col. John A. McCaull, William T. Carleton, or Clarence D. Hess started their professional lives in the theater. Impresarios frequently managed more than one company, often in different entertainment fields. At the same time in the early 1890s, for example, Charles E. Locke and his brother Seymour owned or managed the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company, a touring magician, a traveling troupe performing the play *The Shatchen*, and De Wolf Hopper's Opera Bouffe Company.

No matter the scale of an impresario's operation, in order to start an opera company, he needed money up front because there were significant start-up costs. By the first performance, impresarios had already paid for music, costumes, scenery, marketing, salaries for singers and orchestra members, conductors, press agents, a manager if the impresario was not going to travel with the company, and (sometimes) royalties for the works the company would perform. Successful impresarios could use money earned during the previous season to fund the next season's tour, but someone who was not that lucky normally turned to investors and loans. According to some newspaper accounts, theatrical impresarios tended to borrow from each other, and often put scenery and costumes up as collateral.⁸ Unfortunately, it is very difficult to

⁷I agree with Nicolas Payne's characterization that "a theatre manager operates a building, whereas an impresario presents a programme, though the functions can overlap." (Payne, "The Business of Opera," 57) In the United States, theater managers who created stock companies often took those troupes on the road after a run in their own theaters, unless the troupe only performed in the summer.

⁸The Emma Juch Opera Company was in financial trouble almost from the beginning of its existence in part because of the loans its manager, Charles E. Locke, took out to establish the troupe. Newspapers reported that fellow manager H. C. Miner attached a lien against the company's scenery and costumes to recoup a \$3,500 loan he made to Locke to help with the group's start-up costs. "Attachment Against Manager Locke," *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 19 December 1889.

ascertain the identity of investors, since opera companies had neither boards of directors, nor organized fund raising.⁹ Piano companies were an important source of financing for concert artists and tours, and presumably opera troupes as well. The Haines Grand Piano Company, for instance, underwrote Adelina Patti's concert tour in 1893.¹⁰ Famous singers and pianists endorsed Steinway pianos, and in return the company paid some portion of these artists' touring expenses.¹¹ Many opera troupes prominently featured large advertisements for Steinway pianos in their programs and other promotional materials, so it is very likely that Steinway helped cover the cost of the programs and possibly other expenses as well.

There were ways to save money when starting a company. Rather than buying or renting a set of orchestral parts, for example, an impresario might hire someone to orchestrate the piano-vocal score instead. Before 1891, impresarios were rarely under a legal obligation to pay copyright fees to a foreign publisher, although it was considered bad form not to get permission.¹² Sometimes impresarios advertised they were performing an "authorized"

⁹One of the very few examples of an operatic patron outside of the members of New York's wealthiest "400" families I located was a wealthy, music-loving St. Peter, Minnesota, resident named Johnnie Colson who provided initial funding for the Andrews Opera Company. This small family-owned English-language company based in Minnesota traveled primarily in the Midwest, but existed for an impressive nineteen years from 1882 until 1901. Cornelia Andrews Du Bois, "Operatic Pioneers: The Story of the Andrews Family," *Minnesota History* 33, no. 8 (Winter 1953): 321.

¹⁰"Patti's Tour with the Haines Grand Piano," *American Art Journal* 62, no. 8 (9 December 1892): 174.

¹¹William Weber has shown that piano companies sponsored tours by traveling piano virtuosi in Europe in the late nineteenth century. William Weber, "From the Self-Managing Musician to the Independent Concert Agent," in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914: Managers, Charlatans, and Idealists*, ed. William Weber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 123. The New York Public Library holds documents that detail negotiations between the Steinway Piano Company and Walter Damrosch for funding for a New York Symphony Society tour in the fall of 1905 which featured one of Steinway's most important artists, Rafael Joseffy. In a series of letters Steinway agreed to give the Symphony \$2,650 to help fund the venture. In spring 1906, Steinway paid for all the advertising for a short Southern tour by the Symphony, which featured various Steinway artists. Correspondence, Walter Damrosch Papers, Box 5, Music Division, New York Public Library. See also Allen R. Lott, *From Paris to Peoria: How European Piano Virtuosos Brought Classical Music to the American Heartland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹²Foreign publishers received the same legal copyright protections as American citizens after the passage of the United States Copyright Act of 1891 if they followed the proper protocol. E. Douglas Bomberger, "The Kindness of Strangers: Edward MacDowell and Breslau," *American Music* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 40. See Dave Laing, "Copyright as a Component of the Music Industry," in *The Business of Music*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 171–94 for more information on the effect of copyright on musical performance.

production to establish a kind of credibility with the audience, and to criticize competing opera companies for neglecting to gain permission, as happened in the case of *Carmen* during the 1878-79 season.¹³ Especially in the case of hit operettas, however, impresarios sometimes rushed to get a production on stage without paying for the privilege or even purchasing a proper score. *H.M.S. Pinafore* was such a sensation that about 150 different companies, large and small, sang unauthorized versions of the comic opera in 1878 and 1879.¹⁴ The practice was common enough that impresarios sometimes used the fact that they were performing an authorized version as a marketing ploy. Rudolph Aronson, Gustav Hinrichs, and Oscar Hammerstein I conducted a very public battle over who would give the American premiere of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Hammerstein claimed he had purchased the rights from the composer to perform the work in German and English and sued to prevent Aronson from producing the opera.¹⁵ Hinrichs, who probably did not have permission to conduct the piece either, beat Hammerstein and premiered the work in Philadelphia on 9 September 1891.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, singers owned their own costumes, and opera companies used backdrops and scenery that theaters supplied to anyone who performed in their facility, saving impresarios the considerable cost of buying and transporting their own costumes and sets.¹⁶ By the late nineteenth century, American audiences expected better production values than prima donnas wearing more or less the same costumes, no matter the opera, and threadbare backdrops that served as the settings for every

¹³See Chapter 6 for more about the dispute between Col. James H. Mapleson and Max Strakosch over their competing productions of *Carmen*.

¹⁴Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From H. M. S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 18–22.

¹⁵"Managers Go to Law," *New York Times*, 19 September 1891.

¹⁶Mercedes Viale Ferrero, "Stage and Set," in *Opera on Stage*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, trans. Kate Singleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 20.

opera and play they saw at their local opera house. Impresarios responded to this demand by investing in elaborate sets and costumes for the chorus and minor characters.¹⁷

The wealthiest prima donnas maintained their own wardrobe. Sometimes they were willing to buy new designer costumes in order to match a new production, even if they already owned clothes for a role. In other instances the prima donna's costumes would not have matched the sets or the clothes worn by the chorus.¹⁸ It was to a prima donna's advantage to have beautiful and fashionable costumes because the spectacle of stunning clothing drew audiences and enhanced her public image. As actress Hortense Rhea explained, "people...are hungry for the latest fashions, and the actress who can get a reputation for displaying the latest and most expensive costumes is sure of full houses."¹⁹ Press accounts often highlighted the prima donna's costumes and sometimes her off-stage attire as well, even including drawings of especially impressive dresses or hats.²⁰ For example, the *Grand Forks Herald* urged its readers to hear the Emma Abbott Opera Company because it had "more money invested in costumes than has any similar organization traveling."²¹

Visual spectacle played a vital role in the marketing of opera productions. By the late nineteenth century, impresarios traveled with their own sets, and rarely used theater-owned

¹⁷George Martin states that even when impresarios or opera houses invested in new sets, they would have been used in multiple operas if possible in order to save money (and I would add transportation costs). A castle exterior, for instance, might be used in many of the works for which such a backdrop would be appropriate. *Verdi at the Golden Gate: Opera and San Francisco in the Gold Rush Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 154–56.

¹⁸Marcella Sembrich, for example, agreed to supply her own costumes in a contract she signed with the Metropolitan Opera Company in 1903. Contract between Marcella Sembrich and Heinrich Conried, 27 April 1903, Marcella Sembrich Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 32, Music Division, New York Public Library.

¹⁹H. H. Soule, "On and Off the Stage," *Washington Post*, 11 January 1885.

²⁰Marlis Scheweitzer explains women saw actresses and singers as style icons and copied distinctive looks in their regular fashion in "Darn that Merry Widow Hat: The On-and Offstage Life of a Theatrical Commodity, Circa 1907–1908," *Theatre Survey* 50, no. 2 (November 2009): 189–221.

²¹"Amusement Notes," *Grand Forks Herald* (ND), 18 October 1890. American companies exploited their leading ladies' costumes in their marketing at least as far as back as Anna Bishop's Opera Company in the 1840s.

backdrops. Newspapers were filled with stories about the money impresarios spent for lavish sets and costumes, and most reviewers commented upon the look of a production even before the quality of the singers. As early as 1877, some of the most highly-paid backstage personnel in the business were scene painters who earned as much as \$100 per week according to a Chicago newspaper article.²² As in Europe, refreshing a familiar opera by commissioning new sets or purchasing new costumes for the chorus was a common marketing ploy to bring people back to a work that might have visited a town before or that had run for a long time. An advertisement in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company, for instance, encouraged people to attend an upcoming performance to see the “startling novel and electrical effects in the Wolf’s Glen” in *Der Friesbüttz* (Figure 2.1).

Amusements.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC—OCTOBER 21.

THE GRAND OPERA SEASON.

EMMA JUCH

GRAND ENGLISH OPERA COMPANY.

REPERTOIRE:

Monday, October 21, FAUST.

MISS JUCH in her famous impersonation of
“MARGUERITE.”

Tuesday, Oct. 22, TRUMPETER OF SEKKINGEN
(First time in English).

Wednesday, Oct. 23, CARMEN. (Miss Juch’s first
appearance in any city as Carmen.)

Thursday, Oct. 24, DER FREYSCHUTZ.
(Introducing startling and novel electrical effects in the
“Wolf’s Glen.”)

Friday, Oct. 25, MIGNON. (Miss Juch’s first appear-
ance in any city as Mignon.)

Saturday Afternoon, Oct. 26, Grand Spectacular Pro-
duction of THE BOHEMIAN GIRL.
(Miss Juch’s first appearance in any city as Arline.)

POPULAR SCALE OF PRICES:

Reserved seats according to location, \$1.00, \$1.50 and
\$2.00. Sale of seats for single nights or Saturday mat-
inee begins next Monday morning, October 14, at Bis-
sins & Sons’, 1119 Chestnut Street. Prospectuses of
season can be had at 1119 Chestnut St.

Figure 2.1 Advertisement for the Emma Juch Grand Opera Company at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, featuring the “startling and novel electrical effects in the ‘Wolf’s Glen.’”
Philadelphia Inquirer, 10 October 1889

²²“How Actors are Paid,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 27 October 1877.

It is hard to establish exactly how much costumes and sets would have cost. Although newspapers might have reported numbers accurately sometimes, impresarios anxious to advertise the quality of their productions had an incentive to exaggerate the figures they reported to the press. The *American Art Journal* in 1891 reported that “every company carries from \$2,000 to \$10,000 worth of scenery and properties.”²³ When Emma Juch and Charles E. Locke organized the Emma Juch Grand Opera Company, a Philadelphia paper stated that in addition to using old sets and costumes from the National Opera Company, “\$30,000 has been expended for additional costumes, scenery, and properties, and that Miss Juch has made an outlay of \$10,000 on her wardrobe.”²⁴ Records from Francis Wilson’s production of the comic opera *Erminie* indicate that he spent \$103.50 (\$2,670 in modern currency) for two dresses for an 1893 production at the Casino Theatre in New York City.²⁵ Because most women’s clothes were still hand-made in 1893, the price of an average dress from that time is almost impossible to determine. In the 1897 *Sears Roebuck and Company Catalog*, however, a woman’s tailor-made suit cost between \$4.50 and \$18.00, and the most expensive silk they carried went for 98 cents per yard.²⁶ Thus, Wilson’s costumes seem to have cost considerably more than regular women’s clothing. Prima donnas often purchased clothes from famous European dress designers such as Charles Worth, increasing both the price and the prestige of their costumes.

Although impresarios bought sets that traveled with their companies, some productions were not completely self-sufficient. Records from the Lafayette Square Opera House in Washington, DC often include small charges for scenery and props. When the Milton Aborn

²³“Flickers,” *American Art Journal* 58, no. 6 (21 November 1891): 118. \$10,000 is worth about \$264,000 today.

²⁴“Gossip of the Day,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 October 1889.

²⁵Account Book, Francis Wilson Collection, Series III, Box 4, *T-Mss, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

²⁶*Sears, Roebuck & Company Catalog* (1897; repr. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, Inc., 2007), 274, 297–98.

Opera Company performed at Lafayette Square in 1899, the house paid \$25 to paint scenery and 90 cents for “perishable props.”²⁷

Performer Networks and Staffing an Opera Company

One of the most important tasks when founding an opera company was, of course, to engage singers, orchestra members, and a conductor. Some English-language opera companies were organized around one or two star singers, while others eschewed celebrities. In contrast, foreign-language companies often staffed every principal role with a famous artist. American opera troupes that specialized in English were more often named after a prima donna than foreign-language companies or those based in Europe. These women generally exercised a fair amount of artistic control over the company, though they were rarely in charge of daily financial decisions (see Chapter 3).²⁸ Usually when a company was named after a man, he was either an impresario or a singer/producer. Star singers wielded considerable control over the staffs of their companies, sometimes even refusing to sign their own contracts unless certain people were added to the troupe. When Colonel John H. Mapleson hired Minnie Hauk to sing with Her Majesty’s Italian Opera Company in tours of England and the United States during the 1878–79 season, she insisted Mapleson engage a stage manager she liked from Brussels. In addition, she selected the performers who would sing the principal parts in *Carmen* with her.²⁹ Other prima donnas who headlined their own troupes, such as Clara Louise Kellogg and Emma Juch, also chose the members of their companies.

²⁷House Expense Book, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Folder 34, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

²⁸Katherine K. Preston, “Between the Cracks: The Performance of English-Language Opera in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” *American Music* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 362.

²⁹Minnie Hauk, *Memories of a Singer* (1925, repr. New York: Arno Press, 1977), 157–58.

Singers, teachers, conductors, managers, and agents communicated with each other in a large network that facilitated staffing each new entertainment venture. Singers without representation reached out to teachers and colleagues to help them find work, or they simply acted as their own managers and contacted prospective employers on their own. The records of agent and manager David Blakely contain several such letters. Marie Godini wrote on 23 January [no year given, probably 1890] “if you have no prima donna engaged for the spring tour of Gilmore’s Band, I would like to meet you in regard to arranging.” She listed the opera companies she performed with in the past and explained she had been unable to sing for the last two seasons because she was nursing her sick mother.³⁰ In 1890, Adelina Murio-Celli, one of the most important voice teachers in New York, wrote to Blakely to recommend her student Anna Russell.³¹ Artists served as sources of information for conductors or managers looking for performers. Theodore Thomas apparently used contralto Annie Louise Cary as a go-between to ascertain the availability of tenor Italo Campanini, baritone Antonio Galassi, and conductor S. Behrens, probably for the 1880 Cincinnati Music Festival. On 20 November 1879 she reported to Thomas that Campanini and Galassi were both free over the summer (though she thought Campanini’s initial demand of a \$400 salary could be negotiated down to a “fair rate”). Behrens, however, was already under contract with Col. Mapleson.³²

³⁰Marie Godini to David Blakely, 23 January [no year, probably 1890], David Blakely Papers, Box 1, General Correspondence Folder, 1890, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

³¹Adelina Murio-Celli to David Blakely, 19 January 1890, David Blakely Papers, Box 1, General Correspondence Folder, 1890, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

³²Annie Louise Cary to Theodore Thomas, 20 November 1879, Theodore Thomas Papers, Box 1, Folder 18, Newberry Library, Chicago, microfilm copy in the Ezra Schabas Collection, University of Toronto. Cary and Campanini both performed in the 1880 Cincinnati Music Festival, but Galassi and Behrens are not mentioned in the program. Cary performed with Thomas many times. Ezra Schabas owned microfilm copies of several letters in which Cary negotiates for concert dates and fees with Thomas or a manager named Mr. Elwell. She was probably represented by Effie Ober as she refers to her female agent in Boston in a letter to Elwell dated 8 July 1881.

Artists had to publicize themselves in order to establish and maintain their careers. In Chapter 3, I will discuss some of the ways that male and female singers shaped their public images, but here I will focus on the methods singers used to sustain a professional presence within the industry. Agents ran advertisements in music trade journals such as the *Musical Courier* to publicize the vocalists they represented should potential employers wish to engage one of their clients. Even if they did not have an agent, many singers also bought advertising space to promote themselves. For instance, in every 1901 issue of the *Musical Courier*, tenor Tom Karl declared that he was available for concerts, recitals, and vocal instruction.³³ In 1893, Leon Margulies' Concert Bureau advertised in the *American Art Journal* that the company was the sole manager for soprano Lillian Nordica, pianist Richard Burmeister, along with other performers. They also represented the "principal artists of Messrs. Abbey & Grau's Opera Company" (then in residence at the Metropolitan Opera House) and violinist Henri Marteau "for private musicales only."³⁴

Young singers gained valuable publicity when they performed in private recitals sponsored by their teachers. Although they often took place in private homes in New York City, critics, managers, and other singers attended these concerts to find out which performers were ready to embark on their careers and to keep tabs on the competition. The *American Art Journal* regularly carried reports on the recitals that sometimes ran for several columns.³⁵ Established performers, meanwhile, produced publicity booklets (similar to a press kit today), which they sent to prospective employers, theater owners, newspapers, and press agents to market

³³One example can be found in Advertisement, *Musical Courier* 42, no. 18 (1 May 1901): 2.

³⁴Advertisement, *American Art Journal* 62, no. 9 (16 December 1893): 208.

³⁵One unusually long example is a three-page review of a recital hosted by Adelina Murio-Celli written by the editor of the *American Art Journal*, William Thoms, "Mme. Murio-Celli's Soirée Musicale," 74, no. 15 (13 January 1900): 227–30.

themselves. These pamphlets could be lengthy and quite detailed, and may have been paid for by sponsors such as piano companies who also advertised in them. Soprano Marie Roze's publicity material ran for ten pages and included a biography, excerpts from reviews of her singing from various prominent newspapers, and a repertoire list. The New York Public Library holds two different versions of Roze's pamphlet, both of which contain two full-page advertisements for Weber Pianos (Figure 2.2).

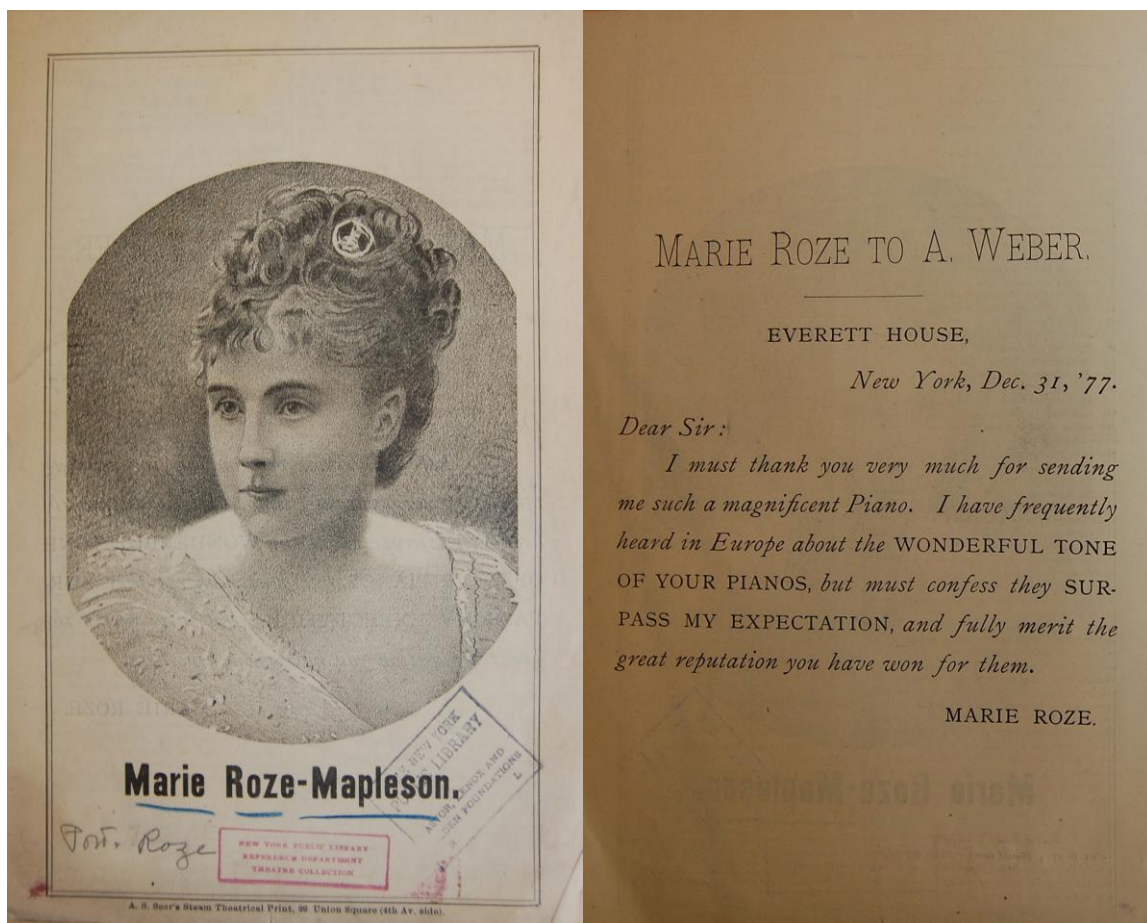


Figure 2.2: Cover and inside of the front cover of a publicity pamphlet for Marie Roze, date unknown. Roze's endorsement of Weber Pianos is one of two full-page advertisements for the company in the pamphlet.
Clipping File (Roze, Marie), Music Division, New York Public Library

Historian William Weber notes that musicians began using agents in the mid-nineteenth century because their business lives became too difficult for one person to handle, as the concert industry became larger in terms of the number of commitments and of the complexity of travel and other arrangements.³⁶ Men and women in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century generally used agents or managers, though the performers had the final say in the direction of the careers. A prima donna's first manager was often her mother. Married prima donnas were so often managed by their husbands that a stereotype developed depicting these men as emasculated handmaidens of their overly-powerful wives.³⁷ If they did not have a family member to assist them, many younger prima donnas sought out more experienced female colleagues to help guide their careers.³⁸ Although it was often not visible to the public, women were involved in the financial side of the entertainment business behind the scenes.³⁹ A remarkable set of letters, now housed at the Newberry Library, preserve contralto Annie Louise Cary's negotiations with Theodore Thomas for different concert engagements and her fees. On 8 February 1881, Cary wrote Thomas that "I think for two concerts (which it really amounts to) \$300 is too little, but, I will make a compromise from the old [word illegible—demand?] and say \$400. And don't you think Orpheus is enough to sing?"⁴⁰

Several documents also indicate that sometimes singers' wives functioned as something like an agent or personal assistant for their husbands. Newspapers rarely acknowledged that

³⁶Weber, "From the Self-Managing Musician to the Independent Concert Agent," 105–29.

³⁷Chapter 3 of this dissertation contains more information about this stereotype.

³⁸For more information about how prima donnas managed their careers, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation and Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁹I will return to this subject in Chapter 3.

⁴⁰Annie Louise Cary to Theodore Thomas, 8 February 1881, Theodore Thomas Papers, Box 1, Folder 18, Newberry Library, Chicago, microfilm copy in the Ezra Schabas Collection, University of Toronto. They were negotiating about two concerts with the Brooklyn Philharmonic on 22 and 23 April 1881. Cary only sang scenes from *Orpheus* by Gluck. Advertisement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 19 April 1881.

singers employed people to help manage their careers, but I have never seen an article from this period that recognized that wives were sometimes involved in their husbands' professional lives. Correspondence between English-language bass Myron Whitney and George Blakely or his subordinate, Mr. Christianer, survives from the summer of 1889 when Blakely was arranging a concert tour for the 1889–90 season. Although Whitney sometimes wrote letters to Blakely, at other times his wife wrote them for him. On 13 August 1889, she told Blakely's assistant that, "Mr. Whitney wishes me to say that he has heard nothing from Mr. Blakely yet, and engagements are constantly coming in, and it will be impossible to have this state of things continue. Managers are making their engagements for announcements and conditional acceptance on his part are hardly satisfactory."⁴¹ In another example, baritone David Bispham wrote Anton Seidl's wife Auguste, turning down a concert appearance with her husband on 23 March 1899.⁴²

It would be an over-reading of these documents to suggest that either Eleanor Whitney or Auguste Seidl functioned as full-time managers or agents, as both their husbands also conducted business transactions independently of their wives. These documents demonstrate, however, that some women functioned as partners with, or at least intermediaries for, their husbands in professional situations, out of the public's sight. These women's roles in their husbands' careers may be analogous to female theater managers. Although the majority of theater managers were men, there were prominent female managers as well, many of whom inherited their businesses from their husbands. It would make sense that prior to their husbands' deaths, these women had been involved in theatrical management, but took on a public role only

⁴¹E[leanor] B[reasha] W[hitney] to Mr. Christianer, 13 August 1889, David Blakely Papers, Box 1, Correspondence Folder, 1889–1890, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

⁴²David Bispham to August Seidl, 17 March 1899, Collection of Musical Autographs, 1870–1943, Anton Seidl, 1850–1898, Series 1: Catalogued Correspondence, Box 1, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

after being widowed.⁴³ Indeed, women in many fields were able to operate businesses because they were the widows, wives, or mothers of men who founded an enterprise over which women later assumed control.⁴⁴

The professional activities of women such as Eleanor Whitney are a powerful example of the permeability of the barrier between the public and private spheres during the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵ According to historian Jane Curry, there is no evidence that men resisted working with female managers. She speculates this was because men in the entertainment industry were used to dealing with actresses and female singers in a professional capacity.⁴⁶ The evidence indicates that some women maintained robust but informal business relationships within the entertainment industry by serving as intermediaries for their husbands, helping where needed, but without necessarily working in a full-time or public role. Their involvement was not acknowledged outside of the world of music, but seems to have been taken for granted within it. These women functioned in a professional capacity, rather than being ensconced at home

⁴³See Jane Kathleen Curry, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Theatre Managers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994) for more information about female theatrical managers in the United States, and Susan Rutherford, "The Prima Donna as Opera Impresario," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 272–89, for information about a similar phenomenon in Europe. There are examples later in the twentieth century of women who served as their husbands' public managers such as Paul Robeson's wife, Eslanda.

⁴⁴Angel Kowlek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 9.

⁴⁵Historians and sociologists have long studied the idea that men and women inhabited separate spheres after the Industrial Revolution. Men did business in the public sphere, while women were in charge of the home in the private sphere. This strict division of labor broke down in many circumstances during the nineteenth century. Poor urban women often did not have the luxury of staying home or conducted business out of their homes in jobs such as piece-meal textile work. In the middle and upper classes, women found ways to intrude upon the public sphere or relocate the public sphere into their homes. By hosting musical salons, for example, women brought the best musicians in the area to their drawing rooms for prestigious private concerts. For more information on the complexities of women's private and public roles see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); Barbara J. Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); and Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007).

⁴⁶Curry, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Theatre Managers*, 132.

entirely unaware of the world outside their doors, as printed materials tended to portray respectable women. Their husbands' careers became, in effect, the family business.

Once a manager located performers, the two sides negotiated the terms of employment. Contracts between singers and impresarios regulated the number of services per week, the amount of time the performer rested between shows, the billing and marketing materials, the repertoire, travel arrangements, under what circumstances the vocalist could take outside work and, of course, payment. I have been unable to locate any contracts between English-language impresarios and singers, but there are extant contracts for foreign-language performers. Almost all the agreements from this period are pre-printed with blanks left for specific salary or repertoire requirements, which suggests that the basic contracts were the same no matter who the parties to the agreement were. Whether impresarios were organizing an English- or foreign-language troupe, their basic challenges and motivations were the same. Impresarios wanted to get the most out of singers for the smallest salaries possible, while singers wanted to protect their voices and negotiate lucrative contracts.

The Marcella Sembrich Collection housed at the New York Public Library contains several folders of contracts. In each, Sembrich was hired for a particular number of performances within a set period of time. Generally she was paid per performance with no extra remuneration for rehearsals (though there was a limit to the number of times per week she was required to sing). Contingencies were arranged in case Sembrich became ill and could not perform, the company folded before the end of the contract, or a disaster forced cancellation of some performances. Each contract differed as to who would pay Sembrich's transportation and hotel costs, and if the company would also cover the expenses for Sembrich's husband and/or maid. During the height of her career, Sembrich was the lead singer in the Metropolitan Opera Company, and her contract stipulated that, "no other Artist shall be advertised in larger letters,

nor in a more prominent manner than MADAME SEMBRICH.”⁴⁷ Billing was very important to performers, because it demonstrated their prestige and accomplishments to the public and displayed their value to the company. Sembrich also agreed, under certain conditions, to sing extra concerts as booked by the opera company. Sometimes she reserved the right to arrange her own engagements as long as they did not interfere with her commitment to the opera troupe and she received permission from the company’s management.⁴⁸ Other printed evidence suggests that the terms and content of Sembrich’s contracts were typical for the entire industry. For instance, newspaper advertisements for individual English- and foreign-language opera troupes maintained the same billing hierarchy throughout the country for the entire season. In addition, members of English- and foreign-language companies routinely performed extra concerts while on tour such as benefit performances or as soloists with local orchestras.

Although the contracts for singers were probably similar no matter what the language of performance, the amount of money paid to these artists seems to have differed considerably. Newspaper accounts of singers’ salaries may be inaccurate, but there was universal agreement that foreign-language singers earned much more than their English-language counterparts. Information from more reliable sources such as contracts and accounts of legal disputes confirm the press’s generalizations. In 1883, the Metropolitan Opera paid Marcella Sembrich £300 per performance (or about \$1,450 at the 1883 exchange rate) for 58 performances—a total of £17,400 for the 1883–84 season—as well as travel and other expenses for Sembrich, her husband, and her maid. Excluding expenses, her salary was \$84,440 for the season or the

⁴⁷Contract between Marcella Sembrich and Heinrich Conried, 27 April 1903, Marcella Sembrich Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 33, Music Division, New York Public Library.

⁴⁸Sembrich’s contracts are located in the Marcella Sembrich Papers, Series 2, Box, 2, Folders 32–34, Music Division, New York Public Library.

equivalent of approximately \$1.9 million.⁴⁹ As the *prima donna assoluta* of the company that year, Sembrich would have been one of the highest, if not the highest, paid singer in the organization. The American Opera Company portrayed itself as the English-language alternative to foreign-language companies. They eschewed the star system and thus did not have a singer in a similar position to Sembrich's, but they employed some of the most prominent English-language sopranos in the country. According to reports of a lawsuit Emma Juch filed in 1893 for back pay against the founder of the company, Jeanette Thurber, Juch was supposed to be compensated \$350 per week for a 25-week season in 1885. At a total of \$8,750 for the season (or \$205,000 in modern currency), this was a substantial amount of money but was far below Sembrich's honorarium.⁵⁰ Another leading soprano in the AOC, Emmy Fursch-Madi was contracted to receive \$400 per performance in 1886.⁵¹ Since she probably sang at least two or three times per week, conservatively Fursch-Madi should have been paid at least \$20,000 (or \$511,000) for the season, assuming she performed twice a week for 25 weeks.

Chorus members and secondary singers would have been paid less, of course, though again it is difficult to determine their pay scales. An obscure soprano in the AOC named Carlotta Pinner sued that company alleging she had not been paid her contracted wage of \$125 per week for a 25-week contract in 1886, less than half Juch's wage.⁵² In 1889, two chorus members sued English-language comic opera singer and manager William T. Carleton for back pay. Testimony

⁴⁹Contract between Marcella Sembrich and Henry Abbey, 29 May 1883, Marcella Sembrich Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 32, Music Division, New York Public Library. Sembrich's payments were recorded in pounds instead of dollars in this contract. Just for the sake of comparison, the *New York Times* reported on 12 November 2014 that a top artist at the Metropolitan Opera such as Renée Fleming earned \$17,000 per performance.

⁵⁰"Miss Juch Sues Mrs. Thurber," *New York Times*, 24 January 1893. Exchange rate and relative value information supplied by calculators on www.measuringworth.com; annual wage information from Historical Statistics of the United States: Millennial Edition Online.

⁵¹"Managers Parry's Suit," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 January 1887.

⁵²"Carlotta Pinner's Case Against the American Opera Company," *American Art Journal* 46, no. 11 (1 January 1887): 168.

from the trial revealed that John F. Fisher made \$16 per week, and his wife, Annie, was paid \$14.⁵³ By way of comparison, the average *yearly* salary for a non-farm worker in 1889 was \$471.⁵⁴ The Carleton Company toured for the entire season, so John Fisher probably made at least \$570 even if he did not find work during the summer.

Orchestra conductors were important figures in an opera troupe, but I have found no primary documentation indicating what they were paid. Press reports suggest that conductors were not compensated nearly as well as the star singers, but still made a good salary. Herman Perlet, for example, claimed he was paid \$85 per week by the Strakosch Opera Company in 1886 (about \$2,000 in modern currency).⁵⁵ Theodore Thomas, on the other hand, reportedly earned \$1,000 per week with the AOC.⁵⁶

It is unclear who engaged the orchestra members, though presumably the conductors had at least some control over who was hired. David Blakely managed tours for band conductors John Philip Sousa and Patrick Gilmore as well as for Theodore Thomas. It is clear from Blakely's papers that he hired the band members for Sousa and Gilmore, but the orchestra seems to have been organized before Blakely and Charles E. Locke became Thomas's tour managers.⁵⁷ A typical traveling opera orchestra, according to press reports, seems to have numbered between 15 and 50 people, usually on the lower end of the scale. Of English-language companies only the AOC and the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Companies claimed in

⁵³"Suit Against Singer Carleton," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 May 1889. \$16 is equivalent to approximately \$418, which is far above the average non-farm worker's salary in 1889

⁵⁴Table Ba4280-4282 from "Wages, Series Ba4214-4544," in Historical Statistics of the United States: Millennial Edition Online, <http://hsus.cambridge.org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/HSUSWeb/toc/showTable.do?id=Ba4214-4544> (accessed 12 November 2014).

⁵⁵"The Inside of Atlanta," *Macon Telegraph*, 18 February 1886.

⁵⁶"Manager Parry's Suit," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 January 1887.

⁵⁷David Blakely Papers, Boxes 1, 6, and 12, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

advertisements to have an orchestra as large as 50 artists.⁵⁸ Following a practice that stretched back before the Civil War, many troupes traveled with a core group of players, which they supplemented with local musicians supplied by the theaters, so that between the two groups the orchestra was large enough to perform the operatic repertoire.

I have been unable to determine how much an orchestra player in a traveling troupe earned, but the Lafayette Square Opera House in Washington, DC paid \$165 whenever the entire house orchestra performed for the week. A contract from 1900 indicates that the orchestra regularly employed ten members, suggesting each member made about \$16 per week.⁵⁹ The orchestra's letterhead from 1902 features a photograph of the group. There were twelve musicians in all: three violins, one viola, one cello, one double bass, one percussionist, and five wind players (Figure 2.3).⁶⁰ The Lafayette Square records also reveal that some attractions were charged between \$20 and \$50 for extra musicians to supplement the house orchestra. During the one-week run of the Milton Aborn Opera Company in October 1899, for example, the expense sheets show \$165 for the orchestra and \$20 for additional personnel, implying that Aborn traveled with a very small orchestra that had to be supplemented not only by the theater's house

⁵⁸Savage's *Parsifal* touring company had the biggest English-language opera orchestra during this period. They reportedly had 70 members. That tour was a special case and the orchestra was much bigger than in Savage's other troupes.

⁵⁹House Expense Book, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 8, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. Unfortunately no financial records survive between the orchestra and an outside group. This assumption is further confirmed by Katherine K. Preston who found that Washington theater musicians generally earned \$12 to \$15 per week. Katherine K. Preston, *Music for Hire: A Study of Professional Musicians in Washington, 1877–1900* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 87.

⁶⁰Victor H. Johnson to James Cunningham, 2 April 1902, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 11, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

ensemble, but also outside players.⁶¹ Critics sometimes complained that traveling opera companies employed orchestras that were too small for the works they performed.



Figure 2.3: Detail of the Lafayette Theater Band and Orchestra Letterhead showing a picture of the orchestra, Lafayette Square Opera House Papers, Container 1, Folder 11, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC

Arranging a Tour

By the end of the nineteenth century, if an impresario wanted to run his opera company year round, the group had to tour at least part of the year. A few of Henry W. Savage's companies maintained long residencies in one theater, and the Metropolitan spent about half the year in New York every season, but even they toured. By the 1890s, some cities, such as Milwaukee, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, hosted an opera company for the summer, but depended upon traveling troupes to supply opera during the regular season. Companies generally performed their first engagements in New York City or possibly another large New England metropolis

⁶¹House Expense Book, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 34, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. See Chapter 5 for more information on how small opera orchestras affected English-language troupes' performances.

such as Philadelphia or Boston. After touring the East Coast, companies left for California, stopping at larger cities along the way. Opera troupes always went as far South as Washington, DC or Baltimore, but with few large cities until the 1890s, some of the biggest companies avoided the South until the end of the century.⁶² On the return journey, groups traced a different route home, before ending up back in New York City. Smaller regional companies, such as the Andrews Opera Company or the Wilbur Opera Company, restricted their touring to one area of the country. Even if they were quite successful, some troupes, such as the Emma Abbott Grand Opera Company, avoided New York because it was so expensive to operate there.

Managers had many parameters to consider when booking a tour, all of which were essential to a company's viability. Most importantly, they had to book an efficient tour that minimized travel between engagements. According to Augustin Daly's records for the comedy company performing *The Passing Regiment*, among his fixed costs, only salaries exceeded transportation.⁶³ Newspaper accounts confirm that excessive spending on transportation often caused financial problems for traveling companies. William T. Carleton, a singer who also managed his own comic-opera troupe, encountered financial difficulties during his first season when he traveled from Philadelphia to San Francisco without stopping. The cost to transport his company across the country was so high that a successful run in San Francisco did not net him enough money to recoup his railroad expenses.⁶⁴

Sometimes the theater would cover a troupe's transportation costs. Only the most successful companies had enough market power to obtain such a concession, however. In an

⁶²Smaller troupes (such as comic-opera troupes with less than 60 people or so) and operatic concert companies that could make a profit in small houses usually traveled through the South.

⁶³Augustin Daly's Road Company Expenses, 1882–83, Brander Mathews Dramatic Museum Records, 1864–1911, Ms. 8, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University.

⁶⁴"Gossip of the Theatres," *New York Times*, 5 March 1885; "The Carleton Brothers," *New York Times*, 19 November 1885.

1899 letter, Harrison Grey Fiske reported to Uriah Painter (at the time the owner of the Lafayette Square Opera House) that the manager of the musical comedy, *The Three Little Lambs*, would only agree to perform in Washington, DC if the Opera House paid for the 73-member troupe to travel there from New York City. Fiske thought this idea so ridiculous that initially he did not even tell Painter about the proposal.⁶⁵

Managers needed to ensure their troupes played in the correct theaters in each city. First, the theater had to seat enough people for the company to turn a profit. Therefore, a large company with high costs needed a larger theater. Second, the theater had to be able to accommodate the production. Third, in towns with more than one venue, the reputation of the theater needed to coincide with the reputation of the attraction. In larger cities with multiple theaters, each house served a niche market signaled by the ticket price the space typically charged, and the type of entertainment usually booked there. Touring managers had access to a wealth of information about theaters around the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, through theatrical guides which listed details such as a theater's stage dimensions, types of illumination, customary ticket prices, number of seats, and contact names and addresses. These guides also included other helpful data such as the local papers' theater critics, city populations, railroads that served each area, and the names of the railroad agents who worked with theater companies.

Booking with the wrong theater could cause problems for both the theater and the troupe. In several letters from 1900, Uriah Painter gloated over the misfortune of the foreign-language Grau Opera Company, which was doing poorly at the National Theater in Washington, D.C. He noted that the "society people who will pay big money for boxes at the Lafayette cut it

⁶⁵Harrison Grey Fiske to Uriah Painter, 9 November 1899, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 5, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. Fiske was the owner and editor of the *New York Dramatic Mirror* but also functioned as a middleman between touring companies and theater managers. In a letter dated 11 November 1899, Painter informed Fiske that it would cost \$600 to transport the *Little Lambs* Company, which was so expensive that he could not afford to engage the troupe.

[the Grau company] dead, and the lower floor which the *Post* says was two thirds full was not half full.” He went on to write, “Madame [Lillian] Nordica came up last night and spent the evening at the Lafayette, and admitted that the Opera got into the wrong place.”⁶⁶ Some of Painter’s attitude was wishful thinking. He was seeking to revitalize the Lafayette after a major renovation, but in the early 1900s, the house was much more likely to host vaudeville than opera.

Theaters were classified based upon their usual ticket prices because this became an easy short hand to indicate what entertainments generally played there, and the type of clientele that typically attended events at the house.⁶⁷ A theater that charged \$1.50 for the most expensive seats (like Lafayette Square) booked mostly attractions aimed at the middle class such as vaudeville, plays, comic opera, and occasionally grand opera. This was the kind of theater where English-language companies did best. Their middle-class audience was used to attending performances at such theaters and might have been inclined to try anything that played there.

The Syndicate’s Effect on Opera

Creating independent national tours became harder for opera managers after 1896 when six prominent theater owners, producers, and booking agents—Charles Frohman, Al Hayman, A. L. Erlanger, Marc Klaw, Samuel Nixon, and Frederick Zimmerman—joined together to form the

⁶⁶Uriah Painter to Samuel Nixon, 20 April 1900, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 7, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. Newspaper articles also talk about this phenomenon, warning that some cities were “indifferent show towns” because the local economy was not doing well (causing people to slash their discretionary spending), or some places were just not receptive to staged entertainment. For instance an article entitled “Stage Tones,” from the *Los Angeles Times* on 4 August 1890 warns that some towns such as Gilroy, Red Bluff, Seattle, and San Diego were not kind to traveling troupes.

⁶⁷A document from 1900 in the Lafayette Square Opera House papers contains a letterhead that reads “Lafayette Square Opera House, Washington, D. C. Now booking first-class \$1.50 and \$1 attractions for this and next season.” Bill for Advertising, 9 June 1900, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 8, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

Syndicate.⁶⁸ Individually these six men owned some theaters, but together they booked attractions for as many as seven hundred other houses at their height of their influence in the early 1900s. The Syndicate directly controlled theaters in big cities through agreements with the local managers. Smaller provincial theaters such as those in the South or Midwest formed circuits that contracted with the Syndicate to book all their houses. The Syndicate's consolidation of the entertainment business was typical of the financial practices of the time. It controlled the theatrical industry through merging the activities of most aspects of that economic sector either directly or through surrogates, similarly to Standard Oil's command of the petroleum industry or the major railroad companies' domination of transportation. As historian Daniel T. Rodgers explains, Gilded Age "corporate giants, sprawling across state lines, commanding unprecedented power and resources; and organizing labor, capital, and production on a massive scale...[overwhelmed] the system of partner-owned ventures that had dominated the nineteenth-century economy."⁶⁹

Legitimate theatrical entertainments started their runs in New York City, and if an attraction was successful, the Syndicate would put it on the road, booking the show in all their theaters.⁷⁰ Some members of the Syndicate were producers, so the group not only shared the booking fees but also the profits generated by the shows they controlled. Independent producers who wished to tour their shows had to book through the Syndicate. If a producer tried to book around the Syndicate, the group would blacklist not only that show, but all the producer's

⁶⁸For more information on the Syndicate see Alfred L. Bernheim, *The Business of the Theatre* (New York: Actors' Equity Association, 1932); Andrew Davis, *America's Longest Run: A History of the Walnut Street Theatre* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 182–200; and Stephen Burge Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres, 1883–1942* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 108–15. The Syndicate maintained its hold on theatrical entertainment in the U. S. until 1908, when the Shubert Organization mounted a successful challenge to the Syndicate's monopoly and created a competing network that eventually broke the Syndicate in 1910.

⁶⁹Daniel T. Rodgers, "Capitalism and Politics in the Progressive Era and in Ours," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 3 (July 2014): 382.

⁷⁰Legitimate theater referred to mainstream plays and musical theater as opposed to lowbrow burlesque or variety.

subsequent productions and every person who worked for him on stage or off.⁷¹ Prior to the Syndicate, theater owners came to New York once a year and attempted to schedule the following season's attractions at a series of huge meetings with booking agents in which everyone was trying to schedule their year at the same time. By 1896, the industry was too large for this process to work. The Syndicate brought order to the chaotic booking system, but did so by ruthlessly enforcing a near monopoly that reduced the power of theater managers to such an extent that one historian characterized them as little more than "janitors."⁷²

The Syndicate handled primarily comedies, plays, and musical comedies—entertainments that included music, but did not require large orchestras or highly trained singers. They had to provide so many theaters with attractions that sometimes they even cloned a popular show and put several identical versions on the road at the same time. Most of the Syndicate's offerings followed a formula that had proven successful in the past. Similarly to today's movie studios, the Syndicate often commissioned sequels to popular shows and looked for copycat productions. At first the Syndicate booked and produced comic operas that required a larger touring orchestra and better-trained singers than simpler musical comedies. On the scale they needed, however, the Syndicate's casting agents had a difficult time finding enough singers and instrumentalists to staff grand- or comic-opera companies. This encouraged the Syndicate to drop opera troupes from their roster at the turn of the century. Fewer people heard the genre, making it less familiar and less attractive to many audience members, which only encouraged the Syndicate to resist presenting opera troupes even more.⁷³

⁷¹Writer and producer Harrison Grey Fiske fought against the Syndicate for many years, and his wife, Minnie Maddern Fiske, paid a huge professional price. She was forced to play small, so-called "third-class" theaters for many years, and had difficulty accessing the most lucrative theatrical markets or hiring good actors to work with her.

⁷²Bernheim, *The Business of the Theatre*, 30.

⁷³Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres*, 106.

By 1900, the Syndicate represented few entertainments that required the level of musical skill typical of a European comic opera. Troupes that performed comic or grand opera had to book outside of the Syndicate system, which made it hard to locate theaters with open weeks that were big enough to accommodate their needs. Syndicate theatres could only accept reservations for the few times left free by the centralized system.⁷⁴ When many theaters converted to cinemas and stopped booking live shows, space became even scarcer. Musicologist Larry Stempel argues that the Bostonians closed in 1904 because they could no longer find performing venues.⁷⁵ Cornelia Andrews Du Bois also reports that the Andrews Opera Company ceased operating after almost 20 years in 1901 because they, too, had trouble booking space.⁷⁶

Ticket Prices

In addition to controlling travel costs and booking the right theaters, managers also had to decide on the perfect price for tickets that would earn the most revenue without alienating their core audience. Although venues always had a customary price point, sometimes ticket charges were raised or lowered based upon the visiting attraction. The wrong price could be disastrous. Cheap tickets might drive away a well-heeled audience who worried the crowd would not be of their social status, or might be interpreted by the audience as a sign the performance would be substandard. High ticket prices, on the other hand, might put the attraction out of financial reach for too many patrons. A letter in the Lafayette Square records indicates that managers

⁷⁴Since they did not represent opera companies, the Syndicate did not retaliate against theatres that booked them for their free weeks.

⁷⁵Larry Stempel, *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010), 124. Other factors may have played into the Bostonians' closing. Impresario Robert Grau pointed out in his memoirs that when the Bostonians disbanded many of the most famous members were at retirement age and had been performing steadily for over twenty-five years. Robert Grau, *Forty Years Observation of Music and the Drama*, (New York: Broadway Publishing Co., 1909), 174. The Syndicate's influence may help explain why some of Savage's Castle Square companies functioned as stock theaters in one opera house and traveled very little. Savage founded his first company in Boston in 1895 right around the time the Syndicate took control.

⁷⁶Du Bois, "Operatic Pioneers," 325.

evaluated ticket sales closely before deciding on a fee structure. In a letter from James R. Ash, Lafayette Square's treasurer, to a Mr. Berger of an unnamed opera company, Ash explained:

When you, Mrs. Berger, and myself went through the thing, it was her idea and I think you thought so too, that the best way was to retain a row or so or half a dozen or so at 75 [cents], which could be moved back if it was desirable without attracting any particular attention, and that if we once fix it at 50 we cannot raise the price; that was 25, 50 and 75, then seats in the boxes at \$1.00. If you make a bargain counter of it will it not appear to the public that it is too cheap to be good.

If you will go through the reports of the *Faust*, you will find that on the first floor it run [*sic*] this way, and it strikes me that this is a pretty good indication of what we might expect. Think it over and see what you and Mrs. Berger think about it. Of course I know that you are wanting to do what will bring in the most money, and that you have as big interest in so doing as we have, and whatever you decide is for the best, but if it is a success we can't get the prices raised again. One or two rows in the first floor would save us from the necessity of raising prices, and I earnestly hope that the demand will be so great as to make such a course desirable if not advisable."⁷⁷

Notice that both Mr. and Mrs. Berger are involved in these discussions—another indication that women were part of management decisions.

The mix of ticket prices was important because simply selling the most tickets would not necessarily guarantee the most revenue. The goal was always to sell the most possible tickets at the highest possible price. For example, *El Capitan* by John Philip Sousa played for a week in October 1896 at Lafayette Square. The ticket price structure was similar to Lafayette Square's usual charges (Table 2.1). Hopper split the balcony between cheaper back seats for \$.75 and front balcony tickets for \$1, though normally the house charged \$.75 for the entire balcony. They also added a first floor admissions category for these performances. The house did not reduce the ticket prices for the *matinée*.

⁷⁷James R. Ash to Mr. Berger, 12 October 1900, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 9, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

Table 2.1: Ticket prices for Lafayette Square Opera House versus typical charges, week of 5 October 1896

<u>5 October 1896</u>		<u>Typical</u>	
Seat Location	Ticket Price	Seat Location	Ticket Price
Mezzanine Box Seats	\$1.50	Mezzanine Box Seats	\$1.50
Orchestra	\$1.50	Orchestra	\$1.50
Balcony	\$1	Parquette	\$1
Balcony	\$.75	Balcony	\$.75
1 st floor admission	\$.75		
General Admission	\$.50	General Admission	\$.50
Family Circle	\$.25	Family Circle	\$.25

The most profitable night of the run brought in \$1,375.25 on the sale of 1,468 tickets. During the matinée slightly more tickets were sold (1,474), but revenue was down to \$1,134.50, only the fourth highest total and \$240.75 less than the best night. Table 2.2 provides a breakdown of the entire week.

Table 2.2: Ticket Sales and Gross Ticket Revenue, Lafayette Square Opera House, 5–10 October 1896.

Attraction: De Wolf Hopper starring in *El Capitan* by John Philip Sousa

Date	No. of tickets sold	Gross Ticket Revenue	Tickets sold rank	Ticket revenue rank
5 Oct. 1896	1,346	\$1,179.50	4	3
6 Oct.	1,239	\$1,033.55	6	6
7 Oct.	1,227	\$1,117.25	7	5
8 Oct.	1,349	\$1,254.00	3	2
9 Oct.	1,468	\$1,375.25	2	1
10 Oct. (Matinée)	1,474	\$1,134.50	1	4
10 Oct. (Evening)	1,269	\$996.00	5	7

Repertoire and Revenue

English-language companies were divided into two broad categories—those that specialized in grand operas and those that performed only comic opera. Bizet's *Carmen* was the only work that both grand- and comic-opera troupes routine performed. The Castle Square Companies were unusual because many of them split their repertoire between both camps, and in Boston the

troupe actually divided into two different companies that alternated singing in the same theater.⁷⁸ Before the early 1890s, comic-opera companies performed primarily European operettas in English translation by composers such as Jacques Offenbach or Johann Strauss II as well as British works by Gilbert and Sullivan. Troupes began to perform comic operas by American composers such as Reginald DeKoven or Victor Herbert during the 1890–91 season, and within a few years, these American works displaced many of the older European ones.⁷⁹ By the late 1890s, some companies even began to tour with single works the way that plays did. De Wolf Hopper and his company, for example, traveled throughout the country during the 1896–97 season with Sousa’s *El Capitan*.

Late nineteenth-century English-language grand-opera troupes had a limited repertoire, but it was similar to what foreign-language troupes were performing at the same time. Companies sang *Carmen* (Bizet), *La traviata*, *Il trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida* (all by Verdi), *Martha* (Flotow), *Bohemian Girl* (Balfe), *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Mascagni), *Mignon* (Thomas), and *Faust* (Gounod). Slightly less often companies also staged *Der Freischütz* (Weber), *Mefistofele* (Boito), and *The Huguenots* (Meyerbeer). Beginning in the late 1880s, large troupes such as the American Opera Company or some of the Savage companies tackled Wagner—usually *Lobengrin*, *Tannhauser*, and *The Flying Dutchman*.⁸⁰ In keeping with its educational focus, the American Opera

⁷⁸“First Nights Thursday,” *Boston Herald*, 16 November 1907. Savage also toured single grand operas on three different occasions between 1906 and 1911.

⁷⁹Bordman, *American Operetta*, 39. By 1900, many of the newer American works might be categorized today as early musical comedies rather than operettas, as their plots were not as satirical or grounded in romance as a traditional European operetta. The terminology at the time was very fluid, however, and there seems to have been little consistency in how works were categorized. In this dissertation, I will call any light musical theatrical work with more than a revue’s gossamer-thin plot a comic opera as this was usually the term used at the time. See Bordman, *American Operetta*, 43, for a short discussion on genre categorization in this period. Smaller comic opera companies that usually performed outside of the bigger cities kept performing the older European repertoire much longer than the larger, more fashionable, troupes (see Chapter 4).

⁸⁰All the titles I use are consistent with those employed by English-language companies. Some titles (such as *La traviata*) stayed in the original language, while the titles of other operas (such as *The Flying Dutchman*) were always translated into English.

Company presented a very different repertoire during its first season, including Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Taming of the Shrew* by Goetz, and Rubenstein's *Nero*. After their disastrous first season, the leaders of that company changed course, and for the rest of the brief life of the troupe, they produced more familiar works, suggesting that the audience rejected their attempt to move outside of the canon.

In examining the financial records of Ford's Opera House (Baltimore), the Lafayette Square Opera House (Washington, DC), and the Chestnut Street Opera House (Philadelphia), I have discerned a few trends.⁸¹ First, in a multi-week run, the first week was always the most profitable, presumably because the novelty of the company excited the audience. Second, matinée performances usually had lighter attendance when compared with the business for that week (although not across the board). Ford's Opera House did not reduce the ticket charge for matinées when the Gustav Hinrichs English Grand Opera spent six weeks there in the summer of 1894, which helped the company maintain its revenue. Nor did it seem to hurt Hinrichs's attendance, compared to Lafayette Square, when the Castle Square English Opera Company spent ten weeks at that theater in the spring and summer of 1897. Castle Square reduced its ticket prices for matinées, and that decision cut into its revenue substantially for those performances. For instance, during the first week of the engagement, the company performed the comic opera *The Gypsy Baron*. The troupe sold 370 tickets to the Wednesday matinée raising \$145. On Saturday night, it sold 381 tickets but took in \$282.75. In other words, Castle Square earned \$137.75 more on Saturday for a performance in which they sold only eleven additional tickets. Third, well into the beginning of the twentieth century, *Faust* and *Carmen* were reliable money makers for almost every company that presented these two works. The two war horses

⁸¹Significantly more records for comic- and grand-opera companies exist for Ford's and Lafayette Square in the period after 1878 than for the Chestnut Street Opera House, so my conclusions are primarily based on these two theaters records. Ford's and Lafayette Square were about the same size and attracted similar types of entertainments.

were not always the top sellers in a run, but grand-opera troupes could count on them to provide above average revenue year after year. This explains why they were invariably in every opera company's repertoire, and why comic-opera troupes often chose to perform *Carmen*, even if they did not sing other grand operas.

The foreign-language Damrosch Opera Company performed at Lafayette Square during the week of 15 January 1897 (the 1896–97 season) and the week of 13 December 1897 (1897–98 season). It is impossible to know how much profit the Damrosch Company actually made, but the troupe sold far fewer seats during their engagements than many of the other companies who visited the theater. Out of all the attractions for which there are records at Lafayette Square, the Damrosch Opera Company made the most in gross ticket sales at \$10,773.10 on four performances during the week of 15 January 1897 and \$13,292 on four nights during the for the week of 13 December 1897.⁸² The troupe made so much in gross sales because its ticket prices were significantly higher than any other attraction the house booked during the 1890s (Table 2.3). The Damrosch Company's expenses were probably also much higher than that of an English-language troupe because of the singers' high salaries, and the transportation costs of his large (at least 100 people) troupe. Despite the troupe's sizeable sales revenue, it is likely that the company's profits were not correspondingly high.

⁸²During the 1896–97 season, Damrosch performed only Wagner operas in German at Lafayette Square: *Lohengrin*, *Die Walküre*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Siegfried*. During the 1897–98 season the company performed in the original language. At Lafayette Square, the troupe stayed four nights and did *La traviata*, *Lohengrin*, *Carmen*, and *Faust*.

Table 2.3: Comparison of Ticket Prices charged by the Damrosch Opera Company and typical fees for the Lafayette Square Opera House, week of 14 January 1897

<u>14 January 1897</u>		<u>Typical</u>	
Seat Location	Ticket Price	Seat Location	Ticket Price
Orchestra	\$5	Orchestra	\$1.50
Balcony	\$4	Parquette	\$1
Balcony	\$3	Balcony	\$.75
General Admission	\$2	General Admission	\$.50
Family Circle Reserved	\$2	Family Circle	\$.25
Family Circle Reserved	\$1.50		
Family Circle Admission	\$1		

It is hard to determine the exact number of tickets the Damrosch Company sold each evening because the theater did not record how many four-night subscription tickets were sold; it only added the revenue total to that night's sales. Based upon single night sales, the \$1,664.15 the theater logged each night of the January run for subscription tickets probably represented about 550 tickets. This means, that on average, in January the company probably sold less than 1,000 of the 1,800 seats, which may explain why Lafayette Square gave away an unusually large number of complimentary seats during Damrosch's run—the management did not want the house to look empty. On the first night of the January run when Damrosch performed *Die Walküre*, for instance, the according to the theater's records, the house gave away 240 tickets and sold 243 single-night tickets.⁸³ In comparison, De Wolf Hopper was one of the most successful acts during the 1896–97 season, making \$8,090.05 for the week he was at Lafayette Square in October 1896 compared to Damrosch's \$10,773.10. Hopper probably sold about twice as many tickets as the Damrosch Company and the theater did not distribute any complimentary tickets. Although this is just a snapshot of two weeks in the life of one house, it is typical of the reduced popular demand for grand opera in foreign languages compared to other types of entertainment. The figures also demonstrate that as long as the market would bear very high ticket prices,

⁸³There are no records for the number of complimentary tickets given away during the week in December 1897 the Damrosch Company played Lafayette Square.

foreign-language companies could still generate a significant amount of gross revenue so that the relatively small audiences may not have seemed particularly problematic to foreign-language impresarios.

The longest continuous run for a grand- or comic-opera company in the Lafayette Square records was a ten-week stand by the Castle Square Opera Company between April and June 1897. The records for that engagement reveal that Castle Square's business model seemed to depend upon consistent sales with full houses making up for the low ticket prices they charged. The troupe performed a different work each week mixing comic- and grand-opera repertoire. Castle Square's ticket prices were significantly below Lafayette's average ticket prices (Table 2.4). For matinées, Castle Square reduced the mezzanine box and orchestra seats to \$.50, and all the balcony seats cost \$.25.

Table 2.4: Comparison of Ticket Prices charged by the Castle Square Company and typical fees for the Lafayette Square Opera House between April and June 1897

<u>Castle Square</u>		<u>Typical</u>	
Seat Location	Ticket Price	Seat Location	Ticket Price
Mezzanine Box Seats	\$.75	Mezzanine Box Seats	\$1.50
Orchestra	\$.75	Orchestra	\$1.50
Parquette	\$.50	Parquette	\$1
Balcony	\$.50	Balcony	\$.75
Balcony	\$.25		
General Admission	\$.25	General Admission	\$.50
		Family Circle	\$.25

Castle Square's first week's sales were the best: *The Gypsy Baron* (Johann Strauss II) brought in \$2,864 in ticket sales. Sales tumbled the following week when *The Queen's Lace Handkerchief* (Strauss II) was on the bill. The company had its worst week of the run despite clear weather

and not especially strong competition. *Faust* earned the second highest total ticket sales while *Carmen* was in the seventh spot, but only trailing *Faust* by \$421.75 (Table 2.5).⁸⁴

Table 2.5: Lafayette Square Opera House, Castle Square Opera Company, operas and weekly ticket revenue between April and June 1897

Week	Opera	Gross Revenue	Revenue Rank
1	<i>The Gypsy Baron</i>	\$2,864	1
2	<i>The Queen's Lace Handkerchief</i>	\$1,657.75	10
3	<i>Faust</i>	\$2,640	2
4	<i>Erminie</i>	\$2,440.50	5
5	<i>Carmen</i>	\$2,218.25	7
6	<i>Mikado</i>	\$2,454	4
7	<i>Paul Jones</i>	\$2,630.25 (1 extra performance that week)	3
8	<i>The Little Tycoon</i>	\$2,013 (1 less performance that week)	8
9	<i>Gondoliers</i>	\$2,005.50	9
10	<i>Cavalleria Rusticana & HMS Pinafore</i>	\$2,406.75	6

Dividing the Spoils

Traveling troupes did not pay rent for the theaters in which they performed. Instead, company managers drew up agreements with individual theaters to split the ticket sales with the house. The company always got at least 50% of the gross ticket receipts—the more popular the troupe, the higher its percentage. The discussions between theater and company managers over the split could become intense, with both sides accusing the other of destroying their ability to make a living. A negotiation in 1906 between Walter Damrosch and F. Wight Neumann (an impresario and agent based in Chicago) is a good example. Damrosch apparently wanted the same terms that Neumann had granted him on an earlier visit. Neumann's position was that he had only agreed to take a small percentage of the ticket sales (25%) in the earlier engagement because Rafael Joseffy, one of the era's most popular pianists, was the soloist and his presence

⁸⁴*Carmen's* sales were probably hurt by the very strong competition that week—the Columbia Stock Company opened, and Julia Marlowe, one of the most famous actresses in the U.S., was also in town.

presumably ensured sell-out crowds. Neumann wrote Damrosch: “in reply I wish to say that it will be impossible for me to allow you 75% of the gross receipts. This is the amount I paid you with Joseffy as solo and [Felix von] Weingartner as conductor. You know that I like you as an artist and as a man and I am your sincere friend, but you cannot expect me to lose money.” He goes on to write “but to show you how fair I wish to be with you I will allow you 60% of gross receipts with the understanding that you get one or more engagements for New York and other cities for Mr. Rudolph Gans which you promised him last year. I will make his fee reasonable.”⁸⁵ In this letter, Neumann attempted to convince Damrosch to take a smaller portion of the ticket receipts by sweetening the deal with a promise of future engagements with Gans.⁸⁶

English-language opera companies generally took somewhere between 60% and 75% of the ticket revenues depending upon the prominence of the company. The more the theater owner wanted a company, the more he would give the troupe in the split. The most disproportionate split in the theatrical records I have examined is the 85%-15% split John Albaugh gave to the German-language Damrosch Opera Company in 1897 at the Lafayette Square Opera House.⁸⁷ Sometimes contracts called for a company to get a larger share of the ticket receipts if the gross sales passed a pre-determined level during the run. For example in

⁸⁵F. Wight Neumann to Walter Damrosch, 3 May 1906, Walter Damrosch Papers, Box 4, Music Division, New York Public Library.

⁸⁶Unfortunately, I have found no document that records their final agreement.

⁸⁷Box Office Receipts, 1896–97, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 29, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. The night the company performed *Tannhäuser* they actually had a 90%–10% split, but the rest of the run it was 85%–15%. Presumably Albaugh was willing to negotiate such a lopsided split because he anticipated that the company would bring in much more money than the theater usually earned in a week because their ticket prices were so high. He was right and the house made a profit even with a small percentage of the ticket revenue.

October 1896, the De Wolf Comic Opera Company performing *El Capitan* by Sousa at Lafayette Square got a 65%–35% split up to gross ticket sales of \$4,000 and a 70%–30% split thereafter.⁸⁸

To minimize the risk that a company would not generate enough revenue to cover its expenses, a tour manager could demand a fixed payment from a theater rather than a split of the receipts. For the week of 23 October 1899, Lafayette Square agreed to pay the Milton Aborn English Opera Company \$1,200. All ticket revenues would then go to the house. The deal was a shrewd move on Aborn's part since the gross ticket sales were only \$1,036.25. With a regular split, Aborn would have made much less than \$1,200. The theater manager paid for his generosity, however, because the low ticket sales resulted in a loss of \$524.89 for Lafayette Square after the week's expenses had been paid.⁸⁹ This was not a common practice in big-city theaters, as the flat fee generally would be lower than a solid week of ticket sales. In small towns, on the other hand, most opera companies would not book even one evening until the theater came up with a guaranteed amount. In 1890, in Helena, Montana, a real estate firm took out a large advertisement in the local paper announcing they had raised the \$4,500 needed to bring the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company to town.⁹⁰

Theater managers were generally at a disadvantage when negotiating splits with artists, as very often they needed the company more than the company needed them. If the house was dark then the manager would lose money. It was imperative, therefore, that the theater remained filled as many weeks of the year as possible. Many houses closed in the summer because, before

⁸⁸Box Office Receipts, 1896–97, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 29, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. The company reached the \$4,000 threshold on the fourth performance of the seven the company gave that week.

⁸⁹House Expense Book, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 34, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

⁹⁰Advertisement, *Helena Independent*, 28 February 1890. Chapter 3 discusses this practice in more detail. See Chapter 4 for more on the business arrangements smaller towns made to attract art-music performers.

the advent of reliable air conditioning, the summer months were often too hot to book anything unless the theater had an outside space, making the pressure to be filled the rest of the year even more acute.⁹¹

The Lafayette Square records also indicate that, though it was important that each show have good ticket sales for the house to make money, it was the split that was the crucial metric for a theater's profitability. According to the expense sheets for the 1899–1900 season, absent unusual costs, Lafayette Square generally had expenses of between \$480 and \$580 per week. Even if a show did only moderately well, as long as the house received 35% or 40% of the ticket sales, they usually made a profit for the week.

Given the importance of the split to the theater's survival, it is no wonder that opera-house managers did not want anyone to know the terms they negotiated with each act. Lafayette Square's Uriah Painter accused Hurtig & Seamon, a company that represented Williams & Walker and four other shows, of divulging their split agreement to another attraction in a letter dated 4 June 1900. "Do you consider that it is a fair thing to us for you to show contracts that you have made with us to another attractions [*sic*]? We got a letter from another party who said that he was shown the contract and wanted the same terms; he said he had a more expensive show and that yours only cost \$900 a week."⁹² The accusations in Painter's letter were obviously incendiary because the company replied forcefully the next day: "your favor of June 4th received: in reply to same would say, we are more than surprised at its contents. We have always done business on a strictly business principal [*sic*], and you are the first manager who has ever

⁹¹In an effort to attract visitors during the summer months, some theaters in the 1890s installed electric fans that blew air over huge blocks of ice in a primitive air conditioning system.

⁹²Uriah Painter to Hurtig & Seamon, 4 June 1900, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 8, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

insinuated that we have shown any one a contract that we have ever signed. We have got enough to do to attend [*sic*] to our own business without interfering with others.”⁹³

Lafayette’s business correspondence also reveals the terms upon which theater owners and managers negotiated the split. There seems to have been an informal understanding that an attractions could assume it would receive a generally accepted split based on their projected revenue—the higher the revenue, the higher the company’s side of the split. The sticking point came when the parties could not agree on a fair split. Williams & Walker was arguably the most important African American vaudeville act in the country. In the 5 June letter, Hurtig & Seamon asserted that the vaudeville duo could earn \$5,000 in one week in Washington and demanded a 75%–25% split. If Williams & Walker really could bring in \$5,000 per week, which according to the Lafayette Square records was a very good total, then they had grounds to negotiate for a 75%–25% split. There were, however, other attractions that made more than \$5,000 in a week that were playing for a 70%–30% split, or even a 65%–35% split at that time. The best example is the De Wolf Hopper Comic Opera Company, which visited Lafayette Square for a week in October 1896 and November 1897, made over \$5,000 both visits, but was always paid a 65%–35% split until \$4,000 in gross receipts had been reached, and thereafter a 70%–30% split.⁹⁴ Therefore, Hartig & Seamon could take the negotiating stance that they deserved 75% of the receipts, but based on the other attractions that visited Lafayette Square, a 65% or 70% share would have been in line with other successful shows. Unfortunately, there are no extant records from April 1901 that show Williams & Walker’s ticket sales when they came to Washington or what their split was.

⁹³Hurtig & Seamon to Uriah Painter, 5 June 1900, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 8, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

⁹⁴Box Office Receipts 1896–97, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 29, and Box Office Receipts, 1897–98, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 31, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

The Process of Advertising a Company

Once the troupe was on the road, it was the touring manager's job to keep everything running smoothly and generate as much profit as possible. His most important assistant in this task was the advance man, usually an ex-journalist hired to stay one step ahead of the troupe and to make all the arrangements for the company's upcoming visit. Large touring attractions had used advance men since at least the 1830s. H. H. Soule described the hard life of these men in 1884.

He rises at four of the morning and runs breakfastless to catch the early train; arriving at his next town betimes, he calls on the local manager; unpacks his 'paper,' sees the bill-poster and instructs him; bones [*sic*] the hotel keeper, the ticket agent and the baggage-man for special rates; writes advertisements for the newspapers; works the editors for free notices (if he can); telegraphs back to his company; receives a letter full of swear-words from his manager, because he forgot to invite the mayor of the last town to drink with him; answers the manager's letter with more and choicer swear-words; pays for no end of drinks and cigars for everybody he meets; goes to bed with his clothes on at an hour or two after midnight and rises at 4 to go through the same round again; with [all] he has to be pleasant, agreeable and cheerful to everybody.⁹⁵

As is clear from this humorous description, advance men had many different responsibilities. In addition to arranging marketing for the company, they had to facilitate last-minute travel arrangements, charm prominent figures in each new town, and serve as the public face of the company.

Even before he arrived in town, the advance man made preparations via mail or telegraph for the attraction's engagement. In September and early October 1908, Andre Tridon, Walter Damrosch's press agent, exchanged several letters with Frank A. Gould about a forthcoming concert in Reading, Pennsylvania. I have been unable to find much information about Gould, but the *Reading Eagle* described him as a former member of their staff in an article

⁹⁵H. H. Soule, "On and Off the Stage," *Washington Post*, 21 December 1884.

about his motion-picture theater in 1913.⁹⁶ Gould depicted himself in the letters as a journalist and musician who once studied with many of the local music dignitaries, which gave him access to the arts community in the area. Although Gould corresponded on *Reading Eagle* stationery, the contents of the letters indicated that he had relationships with all the local papers. He assured Mr. Tridon that he would “write something different for each paper, although on the same day they will all have the same bearing.”⁹⁷ It is impossible to determine how and why Gould had access to all the area papers, some of which would surely have been in competition with the *Reading Eagle*.

In today’s terms, Gould was in charge of the social-media campaign while Tridon concentrated on the paid marketing. On 13 September, Gould wrote to Tridon, “I suppose that you will tend to all the paid advertisements.” Gould explained on 16 September that “it is the custom here to just scatter your notices here and there about this far ahead of a concert and then in the last week, nail it on the head, I will have no trouble in having something in the four (4) papers every night, for about a week preceeding.”⁹⁸ By “scattering” articles in the paper for several weeks before the concert, Gould was obviously trying to build excitement in the area about the concert without overwhelming readers with notices. Writing slightly different articles on a similar theme each day, allowed Gould to hide the fact that the items came from one source while still coordinating the “message” for the day. Gould asked Tridon for publicity material and pictures of Damrosch to include in his stories, and in October he requested circulars to

⁹⁶The concert probably took place in mid-October because Damrosch and the New York Symphony performed at the Pittsburgh Exposition between 19 and 24 October 1908. Unfortunately, no papers from the area are available on line from October and November 1908.

⁹⁷Frank A. Gould to Andre Tridon, 13 September 1908, Walter Damrosch Papers, Box 4, Music Division, New York Public Library.

⁹⁸Frank A. Gould to Andre Tridon, 16 September 1908, Walter Damrosch Papers, Box 4, Music Division, New York Public Library.

distribute around town. It is very unusual to find evidence of this sort of stealth publicity campaign, but the tone of the letters suggests that Gould did this for many events and, significantly, he had no problem directing the marketing operation for a musical event through pieces that would resemble news stories to his unsuspecting readers.

Under Tridon's direction, Gould also contacted local female tastemakers and encouraged them to attend the concert or even to have their names listed in the program as a supporter.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, Tridon's side of this correspondence has not survived, but Gould initially seemed puzzled by Tridon's request to contact what Gould termed "patronesses" about the concert, because he wrote on 16 September 1908, "I am in the dark as to the gender of your patrons. Now if you want ONLY patronesses I can get as many as you desire, but I think it would be better to have both male and female."¹⁰⁰ Tridon apparently explained himself more fully, because in his next letter Gould assured Tridon that he would "use the list of patronesses in the papers about the latter part of the week."¹⁰¹ There is no hint in the letters why Gould was initially reluctant to contact only women or why Tridon was interested primarily in women. Perhaps Gould did not want to emphasize the feminine aspects of music-making too much, or maybe Tridon wanted him to contact men too, but had special instructions for any women with whom Gould communicated.

In any event, this exchange is significant because it demonstrates yet again that the wall between the public and private spheres was more like a sheer curtain. In this case, Tridon and Gould planned to exploit prominent women's influence in the community in an area already

⁹⁹All the letters are Frank A. Gould to Andre Tridon, 13 September, 1908; 16 September 1908; 21 September 1908; 3 October 1908; 5 October 1908, Walter Damrosch Papers, Box 4, Music Division, New York Public Library.

¹⁰⁰Frank Gould to Andre Tridon, 16 September 1908, Walter Damrosch Papers, Box 4, Music Division, New York Public Library. *Italics in the original*

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

associated with feminine respectability to promote their business venture. At the end of the century, there was what historian Kathy Peiss describes as a “flowering of public activities” that allowed middle-class women to participate in many areas from which they were once barred such as “club and church work, higher education, reform, and political activism.”¹⁰² The letters between Tridon and Gould imply that the pathways by which women entered into public activities were not just opened at their own instigation through such institutions as a women’s club but also at the invitation of men who recognized their usefulness. Encouraging women to attend, talk about, and endorse the New York Symphony concert through the list of patronesses in the paper was a constructive marketing technique because their recommendation effectively but subtly communicated what type of music would be played and the social class that would feel most comfortable at the event. Possible audience members would interpret the concert as dignified and genteel.¹⁰³ Although Gould did not name any of the “patronesses” he recruited, the general tenor of the letters suggests that he called on women who were well known in local society as well as on music teachers.¹⁰⁴ Thus music, which a woman learned about as a child to prove her refinement and suitability as a housewife became, when she was an adult, an entrée into the cultural and economic life of her community and a way to exercise a meaningful influence outside her home.

One of the press agent’s most important duties was to court the local music critics, as Grace Alexander explained in an 1895 article in *Music*:

¹⁰²Kathy Peiss, “Commercial Leisure and the ‘Woman Question,’” in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption* ed. Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1990), 107–08.

¹⁰³See Adrienne Fried Block, “Matinee Mania, or the Regendering of Audiences in Nineteenth-Century New York,” *19th-Century Music* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 193–216, for more on the cultural results of women becoming an important part of art-music audiences.

¹⁰⁴See Chapter 3 for more about the feminization of music and Chapter 4 about the influence of women on a city’s cultural life.

For more than a month before the time announced the music critics of all the papers in the town have received from the press agent of the company or star, glowing accounts of concerts which have been given elsewhere. These accounts often consist of isolated sentences taken from the leading newspapers of cities previously visited, and skillfully put together in a way to lead all but the most skeptical into thinking that the singer has really received favorable and extended notices.¹⁰⁵

Alexander went on to describe the typical agent as “usually a rather small, quick-moving and glib spoken man who is abashed at nothing short of violent removal from the office. Long experience has taught him how to penetrate the armor of icy politeness in which the critic instinctively incases himself.” The agents promised “as a sort of reward that ‘any little pleasant thing he may have to say about Madame’ will be placed prominently in future collections of press notices.” Then he might invite the critic back to meet the star of the show after the performance. By the time the critic met the prima donna, he was thoroughly compromised by all this attention and “comes out next day with the usual amount of lavish praise.”¹⁰⁶ Alexander’s article was a rather naïve call for critics to resist such transparent attempts at bribery. As had been true for decades, it was an open secret that critics could be induced, with the proper incentives, to write a good review. Alexander’s concern about the harm done to the musical public when critics did not write accurate reviews is understandable, but from the show’s vantage point, a good review was vital to a company’s success, and any efforts a press agent made to influence a critic were justified.

Gould’s work for Damrosch and a press agent’s courting of local music critics were part of the underground marketing activities for an attraction that, while effective, would not have always been obvious to the public. The other way that opera companies (and all entertainments) reached the public was through a paid advertising campaign coordinated between the troupe’s

¹⁰⁵Grace Alexander, “The Music Critic,” *Music* 8, no. 4 (August 1895): 341–42.

¹⁰⁶All quotations in this paragraph from Alexander, “The Music Critic.”

advance man and the theater. Opera house financial records provide clues as to the financial aspects of the entertainment publicity machine during this period.

Opera troupes (and other attractions) generated their own marketing materials: information on the star singers and the company for the press; pictures to be reproduced in the local media; posters; playbills; and other promotional information. In general, local theaters seem to have taken the materials the troupes gave them, paid for a portion of the cost to duplicate posters, hired a company to hang handbills around town, and paid for advertisements in local papers. Records for the 1894–95 season at Ford’s Opera House and the 1899–1900 season at the Lafayette Square Opera House contain entries for the expenditures each week for advertisements in the local papers, as well as for the cost to distribute posters. During the week of 16 March 1895, for instance, when the Tavery English Opera Company sang nine grand-opera performances at Ford’s, the theater spent \$118.92 on advertising in five papers and \$31.52 on the “bill poster.”¹⁰⁷ At Ford’s, the average outlay for advertising for comic- or grand-opera companies was \$129.85, while at Lafayette Square it was \$80.42. Lafayette Square must have had an arrangement with a bill-posting company because they always spent \$30 to hang posters, while at Ford’s the charges fluctuated between \$27.50 and \$57.55.

The Strakosch English Grand Opera Company’s four-week engagement at Lafayette Square in February and March 1900 is the only extended run for an opera company for which advertising costs are extant. The English-language troupe was similar to the Castle Square Company in size and repertoire. The manager, Edgar Strakosch charged a little more than Castle Square for tickets: \$1 for orchestra and mezzanine seats, \$.75 for the Parquet, \$.50 for the balcony and \$.25 in the gallery. During the week of 1 January 1900, the Strakosch Company

¹⁰⁷Daily Journal, Ford’s Grand Opera House, Ford’s Theatre Collection, 1880–1917, Box 1, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland Historical Society. The gross ticket receipts for the Tavery Opera Company were \$4,288.50 which netted the house \$1,336.56. The company sang nine performances of grand opera in one week. The split was 70%–30% for the first seven shows, and 66%–33% for the last two.

performed successfully at Lafayette Square, bringing in \$2,418.25 (around the same amount Castle Square generated each week three years earlier). The troupe's strong showing in January may have prompted the management to bring them back for four weeks beginning on 26 February. Unfortunately, the troupe's sales were weak for the entire month. The first, and strongest, week only brought in \$829.75. With a 70%–30% split, the theater earned a paltry \$277.52, far under their expenses of \$650.75 for the week. Most of a theater's costs were taxes, utilities, and salaries, so managers had limited options to economize when an attraction was not doing well. Theater managers could cut advertising expenses, though this was risky because it meant that an already weak show would lose market exposure. Lafayette Square paid \$74.35 for the Strakosch Company's first week's advertising (the second highest amount they spent the entire season on opera advertising), but slashed the marketing budget by \$20 for the following week. By the last week, with sales sluggish and falling all the time, the theater only spent \$31.20 for advertising (the lowest amount that season for an opera company).

Ford's records show that the opera house bore the full cost for all advertising, but Lafayette Square shared a portion of the expenses with the visiting company. In addition to the regular expenditure for advertising in each of the two papers Lafayette Square worked with, the *Washington Post* and the *Evening Star*, there was also an extra charge that the attraction helped to pay. The purpose for the additional charge is not clear—perhaps it was for an insert, or maybe since Lafayette Square advertised every week they had negotiated a special price for a regular ad which was increased if the management wanted something extra. The Strakosch Opera Company, for example, opened their run at Lafayette Square the week of 26 February 1900. The theater paid \$62.86 to advertise in the two newspapers. The *Washington Post* added an extra fee of \$13.40, and the *Evening Star* charged an additional \$20. The theater only covered 30% of the

added charges or \$9.99.¹⁰⁸ During the last week of the Strakosch Opera Company's run, when the marketing budget had dropped significantly, there were no additional fees from either paper.

Marketing the Company

The rhetoric used by impresarios and press agents to market opera companies was affected by, and in turn shaped, the rhetoric about opera in English discussed in Chapter 1. According to John Spitzer, nineteenth-century U. S. orchestras used five basic approaches to market themselves: selling spectacle, the soloist, the conductor, novelty, or culture.¹⁰⁹ Opera impresarios also used these strategies to advertise their productions. In addition, many troupes that specialized in opera in English translation, as they had been doing for decades, capitalized on the idea of American national identity.

“Selling the conductor” was the marketing tactic used least often by opera companies. With the exception of a few very famous conductors, singers were much bigger stars than orchestra directors. Even when a company hired a prominent conductor, troupes did not focus the bulk of their marketing attention on him. Anton Seidl, Walter Damrosch, and Theodore Thomas, however, were exceptions to this rule. All three were extremely well known and used their celebrity to market their companies. Damrosch sometimes gave lectures in cities where his company was performing, and all three gave interviews and were the subject of press speculation about their lives and musical identities. Their press exposure meant that these conductors also became lightning rods for criticism about their companies in ways that less prominent conductors did not. Thomas's leadership of the AOC was particularly controversial. Critics, led

¹⁰⁸House Expense Book, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 35, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

¹⁰⁹John Spitzer, “Marketing the American Orchestra,” in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spitzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 219–24.

by William Thoms at the *American Art Journal*, accused him of choosing a mediocre cast with few Americans that was overplayed and overshadowed by the orchestra, which he favored in a manner bordering on incompetence.

Instead of conductors, opera troupes marketed their prima donnas. Predictably, advertisements and stories about opera often emphasized the spectacle of the beautiful costumes and elaborate scenery, as well as the prima donna's physical charms, just as they had since opera was invented. For prima donnas, costume costs were just the price of doing business. One 1894 newspaper article maintained that a solo soprano could make \$20,000 to \$50,000 per year but "their expenses are very heavy. They must live well and dress handsomely. [Lillian] Nordica, for example, spends a small fortune on her dresses. She is probably the best dressed woman on the concert stage."¹¹⁰ In an 1890 article the *New York World* reported that Emma Juch "is a firm believer in the skill and good taste of American modistes, and most of her dresses have been made here by Mme. Verhaeren. One of the dresses which Miss Juch will wear as Juliet cost \$3,000, of which \$2,500 is represented by the rare and beautiful lace with which it is adorned."¹¹¹ This quotation is instructive for at least two reasons. Faust's *Romeo and Juliet* had been performed in the U.S. for many years. Anyone who regularly attended the opera probably would have known the work. The description of the lovely and expensive costume was designed to appeal to potential audience members who were drawn to opera for the novelty of a new production rather than to the opera itself. Second, Juch was able to reinforce her commitment to America by highlighting that the costumes were designed by a U. S. dressmaker and sewn in New York. Emphasizing that her clothes were "made in America" was in keeping with Juch's overall

¹¹⁰"Salaries of Singers," *Washington Post*, 1 January 1894. Of course, the costs of prima donnas' costumes, as well as their salaries, probably were inflated in many of the articles published at this time. The larger point, however, that opera companies marketed their divas as expensive, well-dressed, and sophisticated women remains.

¹¹¹"Grand Opera in English," *The World* (New York City), 10 or 19 August 1890. The date on the copy of the newspaper I examined was unclear. A modiste is a fashion designer.

marketing strategy to promote herself and her company as American and as involved in the development of a national artistic culture.

Impresarios presented comic opera as an entertaining genre, without even the pretense of promoting cultural or social uplift. Therefore, the beauty of the chorus girls and the amusing nature of the works were stressed more in comic-opera publicity than in the marketing for grand opera. Sometimes comic-opera troupes even gave door prizes to audience members. During the last week of a run of the *Mikado* at the Fifth Avenue Theater in New York—when attendance was presumably down—ladies with seats in the orchestra or the first four rows in the balcony could choose between a Japanese fan, a ladies' hair ornament, or a satin book mark. Every woman in the first balcony received a “lace toilet mat.”¹¹² The nicer gifts, of course, were offered to the women sitting in the more expensive seats. Since women rarely went to the theater alone, but came with a male companion or a female friend, gifting the ladies meant the potential for two ticket sales for each woman who attended.

A newer way of selling spectacle was through production stills. Rather than describing the costumes or scenery, a picture gave the viewer a sense of the scale of the production and the kind of work being promoted. A full-page advertisement, published on 18 December 1904, for all of Henry Savage's companies performing in New York and Chicago featured large photographs of scenes from *Parsifal*, *Aida*, and other works adorning the center and bottom of the page—right where the reader's eye would be drawn first, with cast lists for each show ringing the pictures (Figure 2.4). The large advertisement for *Parsifal* on the upper-left corner boasted that it was “the largest and most expensive opera production ever sent on tour in the United

¹¹²“Advertisement,” *New York World*, 19 November 1886. Although this practice was also common in straight plays, it was rare in English-language grand-opera companies, and never used by foreign-language troupes.

States. Every Flower Maiden a Prima Donna, Every Grail Knight a Soloist.”¹¹³ Each principal singer was listed, along with his or her most prestigious engagement prior to working for Savage (Figure 2.5). Since Savage produced entertainment in different genres—grand opera, comedies, plays, etc—one of the key uses for this advertisement was to notify the audience of the genre, as well as to promote the quality of the artists in each attraction.¹¹⁴

New York, December 18, 1904

HENRY W. SAVAGE'S ATTRACTIONS

GARDEN THEATRE NEW YORK CITY AND THEATRES STUDEBAKER THEATRE CHICAGO

A Complete Production of Wagner's Great Consecrating Play

PARSIFAL

in ENGLISH

The largest and most expensive opera production ever sent on tour in the United States. Every Flower Maiden a Prima Donna, Every Grail Knight a Soloist.

Only Stage Presentation to Visit All Principal United States Cities

The Specially Selected Cast Includes:

ALOIS PENNARINI . . . Principal Tenor Stadt Theatre, Hamburg
 FRANCIS MACLENNAN . . . Moody-Manners Grand Opera Co., England
 JOHANNES BISCHOFF . . . Principal Baritone Stadt Theatre, Cologne
 PUTNAM GRISWOLD . . . Principal Bass Frankfurt-a-M.
 FRANZ EGENIEFF . . . Principal Baritone Theatre des Westens, Berlin
 HOMER LIND . . . Carl Rosa Opera Co., London
 MME. KIRKBY LUNN . . . Principal Dramatic Soprano Covent Garden, London
 HANNA MARA . . . Principal Dramatic Soprano Stadt Theatre, Berlin
 FLORENCE WICKHAM . . . Hof Theatre, Munich
 CHRISTIAN de VOSS . . . Principal Tenor Netherlands Royal Opera, Amsterdam
 J. PARKER COOMES
 OTTLEY CRANSTON
 ROBERT KENT PARKER

RAYMOND HITCHCOCK

in the COMIC OPERA

THE YANKEE CONSUL

By HENRY M. BLOSSOM, JR., and ALFRED G. ROBYN

"Parsifal"

"Aida." Grand Opera in English.

Now on a Transcontinental Tour of 10,000 Miles

HENRY W. SAVAGE'S Famous Company

Presenting

GRAND OPERA IN ENGLISH

110 Artists in Chorus
40 in Orchestra

Best English Singing Company in the World in Brilliant Repertory

Now Running at WALLACK'S Theatre, New York
The New Korean Comic Opera

THE SHO-GUN

The First Joint Work of
GEORGE ADE and GUSTAV LUDERS

Figure 2.4: Excerpt from a full-page advertisement for Henry W. Savage's productions, publicity stills for *Parsifal* and *Aida*, unknown New York newspaper, 18 December 1904, Clipping file (Savage, Henry W.), Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library.

¹¹³Advertisement, unidentified newspaper, 18 December 1904, Clipping file (Savage, Henry W.), Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library.

¹¹⁴Savage aggressively promoted his company as an American product using American singers for American audiences. Only a handful of the principal cast members of *Parsifal* were from the United States, and at least four were not native English speakers.

A Complete Production of Wagner's
Great Consecrating Play

PARSIFAL

in ENGLISH

The largest and most expensive opera production ever sent on tour
in the United States.
Every Flower Maiden a Prima Donna. Every Grail Knight a Soloist.

**Only Stage Presentation to Visit
All Principal United States Cities**

The Specially Selected Cast Includes:

ALOIS PENNARINI . . .	Principal Tenor Stadt Theatre, Hamburg.
FRANCIS MACLENNAN	Moody-Manners Grand Opera Co., England.
JOHANNES BISCHOFF .	Principal Baritone Stadt Theatre, Cologne.
PUTNAM GRISWOLD . .	Principal Bass Frankfurt-a-M.
FRANZ EGENIEFF . . .	Principal Baritone Theatre des Westens, Berlin.
HOMER LIND	Carl Rosa Opera Co., London.
Mme. KIRKBY LUNN .	Principal Dramatic Soprano Cov- ent Garden, London.
HANNA MARA	Principal Dramatic Soprano Stadt Theatre, Breslau.
FLORENCE WICKHAM .	Hof Theatre, Munich.
CHRISTIAN de VOSS . .	Principal Tenor Netherlands Royal Opera, Amsterdam.
J. PARKER COOMBS	
OTTLEY CRANSTON	
ROBERT KENT PARKER	

Figure 2.5: Excerpt from a full-page advertisement for Henry W. Savage's productions, cast list for Savage's English-language *Parsifal*, unknown New York newspaper, 18 December 1904, Clipping file (Savage, Henry W.), Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library.

Print advertisements also conveyed whether the troupe or individual singers were the focus of the marketing campaign for the attraction. In an 1880 announcement for the Emma Abbott Grand Opera Company, Abbott's name is in the largest type, but the company is described as "The Most Popular and Successful Operatic Organization in America" COMPLETE AND PERFECT IN EVERY DETAIL. Artists, Choruses and Grand Orchestra. Forming an Ensemble which for Magnitude and Merit has never been equaled on the English

Lyric Stage” (Figure 2.6).¹¹⁵ Abbott was clearly the heart of the company, since she was featured in its very name and articles about the troupe often focused on her, but the advertisements also emphasized the quality of the entire operation. During the three nights the company performed in Nashville, Abbott sang in two of the three productions.

MASONIC THEATER.

Grand Inauguration of the English Opera Season!

Friday Evening, Nov. 12.

Three Grand Performances of English Opera by
the renowned

EMMA ABBOTT

Grand English Opera Company.

"The Most Popular and Successful Operatic Organization in America."

COMPLETE AND PERFECT IN EVERY DETAIL.

Artists, Chorus and Grand Orchestra.

Forming an Ensemble which for Magnitude and Merit has never been equalled on the English Lyric Stage.

The most Melodious Operas and the most brilliant casts ever presented here

FRIDAY, Nov. 12, Wallace's most exquisite opera,
"MARITANA."

Abbott as Maritana, Maurel Marcy, James Stoddard, and Wm. Castle as Don Cesar de Bazan.

SATURDAY. GRAND MATINEE.

"BOHEMIAN GIRL."

Julia Rosewald as Arline. Maurel Marcy, Stoddard, James and Signor Brignoli as Thaddeus.

SATURDAY NIGHT Farewell Gounod's grand opera
"ROMEO AND JULIET."

Abbott as Juliet. Maurel Marcy, Stoddard, James and Wm. Castle as Romeo.

THE SALE OF SEATS will begin on Monday Morning, Nov. 8, at Wheeler & Osborn's.

PRICES—Reserved Seats, \$1.25; Admission, \$1; Balcony, 75c. Matinee prices, 75c and 50c.

COMING—Nell Burgess' "Widow Bedott."

Figure 2.6: Advertisement for the Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company, *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 9 November 1880

Advertisements often highlighted singers by describing their past affiliations with other leading troupes, explaining whether it was their first time in a certain city, quoting extracts from a positive review, or asserting their fame. For instance, the Emma Abbott Grand Opera Company brought attention to their lead singer in a variety of ways. In an 1882 advertisement, Abbott's name was printed three times in a row, probably because the newspaper had old

¹¹⁵"Classified Ad," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 9 November 1880.

printing technology and was unable to vary the size or bold the print. Under the name of each opera, Abbott's name is printed again so the audience would know she would be singing. Finally, praise for her performances was incorporated in the announcement of the title of the work. For example, audiences were informed of "Abbott's brilliant role, Princess Namea" in *King for a Day*. Instead of listing *Lucia*, *Bride of Lammermoor* and an act from *Elixir of Love* as Friday's attractions, this advertisement instead promoted "Abbott's Realistic Mad Scene" and put the name of the opera in a less conspicuous spot.¹¹⁶ The message of the advertisement is that Abbott's celebrity was more important than the music she would be singing (Figure 2.7). In the two years since the 1880 performances in Nashville, Abbott had become a bigger star, and the marketing for her company had noticeably shifted to focus more on her. She sang every day that week in Baltimore, though she performed only once on the days when there were both matinée and evening productions. The more a company relied on the celebrity of just one or two singers in their advertising, the more the burden fell on those performers to be on stage as much as possible. Anytime Abbott did not perform, her company's revenues were in danger of falling.

¹¹⁶"Classified Ad," *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 25 November 1882. Featured singers were usually women, though that was not always the case, particularly if the opera troupe was being run by a male singer turned producer such as in the case of the William T. Carleton Comic Opera Company, active in the 1880s and 1890s.

Academy of Music.....Emma Abbott.

Nov. 27. one week, with Thanksgiving
and Saturday Matinees,

The Famous

EMMA ABBOTT

EMMA ABBOTT

EMMA ABBOTT

GRAND OPERA COMPANY.

Abbott, Rosewald, Annandale,

Fabrini, Stoddard, Gilbert, Hall and Castle.

REPERTORY:

Monday.....Martha.

Abbott's "Last Rose of Summer."

Tuesday.....Fra Diavolo.

Abbott as Zerlina.

Wednesday.....Lily of Killarney.

Abbott, Rosewald, Annandale.

Thanksgiving Mat.....Chimes of Normandy.

Thanksgiving Eve.....King for a Day.

Abbott's brilliant role, Princess Veinea.

Friday.....Abbott's Realistic Mad Scene.

Lucia, Bride of Lammermoor, and an

act from Elixir of Love.

Saturday Matinee.....Romeo and Juliet.

Emma Abbott and William Castle.

Saturday Evening.....Bohemian Girl.

Emma Abbott Company.

Figure 2.7: Advertisement for the Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company, *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 25 November 1882

Structuring a company around a star had its pitfalls, as English-language baritone J. K. Murray explained in 1897, when airing his opinion on the reasons for a foreign-language opera company's financial problems. He explained that elevating one or two singers above everyone else was a

detriment of all the rest. For instance, they announce a grand 'De Reszke or 'Melba' night, and then have two or three 'off' nights between. The cast the first night in Mr. Mapleson's venture was an excellent one, and the singers were well received by the public. They had a tenor in the company who, in my opinion, is as great as De Reszke, and he, with the prima donna, might have saved the company from failure if things had been managed right. After giving the company a good start on the opening night, then, he should have made sure of the public attending the second night by giving the new opera, *Andrea Chenier*, and after that he would not have had to worry regarding the patronage for the remainder of the week. It was the principle of having an 'off' night between that started the ball of failure rolling.¹¹⁷

If audience members became too fixated on hearing one star, something celebrity marketing encouraged, the receipts were all too often very low for the nights when the featured person did not sing. Although a major company such as the Metropolitan could absorb or mitigate this

¹¹⁷John K. Murray, "Opera in English at the Castle Square," *Music* 11, no. 4 (March 1897): 494.

problem by having so many big names that there was always someone familiar to hear, a smaller company could run into trouble if its star could not or would not sing every night. The Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company, for instance, relied heavily on Juch's fame, and suffered persistent financial problems, in part because of the irregularity of their receipts. She did not sing every performance, and when Juch did not appear, ticket sales dropped.¹¹⁸

As I noted in Chapter 1, foreign-language companies were very likely to be star driven, but some English-language troupes like the AOC or the Savage companies tried to promote the entire group. In this case, the critical dialogue about the proper cultural relationship between Europe and America was part of the marketing discourse for these English-language companies. Critics and impresarios sometimes framed the elevation of one singer over all others as inherently undemocratic and a legacy of European performance traditions. When an English-language company chose to forgo big stars, then they could portray themselves as having a democratic structure in which no one was elevated above everyone else.¹¹⁹

Henry W. Savage was committed to marketing his companies and himself, rather than a celebrity singer. His emphasis on the quality of the work and the company, rather than on star singers, may have helped him maintain his sales over the course of a run. The box-office receipts from the Castle Square Company's run at Lafayette Square in Washington, DC in the spring of 1897 show that the company negotiated a favorable but not spectacular split with the theater (66 2/3%–33 1/3%), and posted solid, consistent sales throughout the season. During the nine weeks the troupe performed in Washington, the gross receipts fluctuated between \$2,005 and \$2,864 for the week, with the exception of one outlier, when *The Queen's Lace Handkerchief* only

¹¹⁸See Chapter 3 for more information.

¹¹⁹The effectiveness of this strategy varied according to the company. Savage's troupes were successful, while Emma Juch's company failed. Abandoning the star system was risky, but good management (especially keeping firm control on costs) could overcome the American public's reluctance to go to operas without celebrity singers.

earned \$1,657.75.¹²⁰ If that pattern was generally repeated everywhere, Savage would have known approximately what his revenue would be every week and could plan accordingly—a significant financial advantage over troupes with less consistent receipts.

Savage wrote several articles (discussed in Chapter 1) in which he extolled his English-language companies and portrayed them as uniquely American and different from European models because of his business practices. These articles not only publicized his troupes and himself, but defended all of them from the harsh criticism he and the Castle Square Companies endured from some critics like Huneker who thought Savage's entertainment-oriented approach and other popular theatrical projects tainted his grand-opera productions. A 1903 playbill for the Savage Grand Opera Company, which contains several short essays about the troupe, is an excellent example of Savage's marketing strategy.¹²¹ Savage repeated the themes he addressed in each article of the playbill in other contexts, and other English-language companies used many of the same ideas in their advertising. This text is unusual because Savage highlights all the most common arguments in support of opera performed in English translation in just one document (Figure 2.8).

¹²⁰Box Office Receipts, 1897–98, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 2, Folder 31, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC. See earlier in this chapter for a more information on the Castle Square's engagement in 1897.

¹²¹Program, Savage English Grand Opera Company, 23 May–4 June 1903, Pittsburgh, PA, Clip file (Savage English Grand Opera Company), Music Division, New York Public Library.



Figure 2.8: Cover of the Playbill/Program for Savage Grand Opera Company, 23 May–4 June 1903, Pittsburgh, PA, Clip file (Savage English Grand Opera Company), Music Division, New York Public Library.

The first essay, titled “Superb Grand Opera in Your Own Tongue,” opened with a familiar complaint that American audiences did not appreciate native singers as they should, instead looking to Europe to validate a performer’s skill. Rather than praising any individual

singer, however, the focus in this essay is on Savage, the impresario. Indeed it was not unusual for an impresario to name an opera company after himself, and some, as Savage did, raised their own profile to market their troupes. Other impresarios, most notably Oscar Hammerstein I and P. T. Barnum, followed a similar strategy. For Savage, this tactic made sense because he managed multiple companies in different genres. He was the only tie that bound these disparate enterprises together, and his celebrity and reputation allowed him to cross-promote each company between different audiences. Moreover, in the age of robber barons such as Andrew Carnegie or John D. Rockefeller, it is not surprising that the business of opera—and its practitioners—were as interesting to the American public as the performers on stage. While Savage hardly measured up to the titans of industry in terms of wealth or prestige, the businessman was a valorized figure in the early twentieth century, and business acumen was a desirable masculine quality. The text of the first essay praised Savage as if he were the only person who believed in the concept of opera in English sung by American singers.

To Henry W. Savage all credit! His was staunchest possible in the potency of AMERICAN talent, both vocal and dramatic. His was the ambition to give freedom and opportunity of development to these wonderful powers and abilities. To-day his is the reward in presenting the most powerful combination of English tongued artists the world knows of.

He has had faith in his countrymen's artistic gifts, why should not yours be equally strong?¹²²

The closing challenge to his audience's patriotism came up repeatedly in the discourse about opera in English. It is echoed in many texts as far back as the 1860s, including Emma Juch's complaint that Chicagoans were willing to support opera in other languages, but not her troupe in the 1880s, and in Minna Antrim's 1910 essay on Opera in English.¹²³

¹²²Program, Savage English Grand Opera Company, 23 May–4 June 1903, Pittsburgh, PA, Clip file (Savage English Grand Opera Company), Music Division, New York Public Library.

¹²³See Chapter 1 for more information on Emma Juch's and Minna Antrim's appeals to patriotism.

The 1903 playbill did not focus on any particular singer, but in the second essay Savage shined the spotlight on the operas themselves. This essay, called “A Repertoire Calculated to Please All,” let the reader know that “Mr. Savage has selected with exceeding care and discrimination, and with [the] sole view of appealing to the largest possible number of lovers of music. Particularly eager was he to give abundant opportunity for display of his magnificently trained chorus of true, pure *American* voices.”¹²⁴ Notice he took credit for selecting the operas, even though he was not a musician, and he explicitly evoked the popularity of the works as the main criteria he used to determine the company’s repertoire. In addition, he shifted the attention away from star singers by claiming that he chose operas that would highlight his “American” chorus. Besides appealing to his audience’s patriotism, this comment suggested that the chorus represented the strength of the American people.¹²⁵ With foreign-language opera so tightly associated with the upper class, Savage championed opera in English as an attractive alternative for a larger, more heterogeneous audience, but first he had to convince them that opera was exciting and appropriate for the middle class. Indeed, all of Savage’s attractions were geared towards the middle class, and he did not change that orientation for his opera companies. In 1903, the company premiered Verdi’s *Otello* in English. Although the rest of the company’s repertoire was rooted firmly in the canon, a bit of novelty might have been a welcome change for those audience members tired of the same old chestnuts.¹²⁶

¹²⁴Program, Savage English Grand Opera Company, 23 May–4 June 1903, Pittsburgh, PA, Clip file (Savage English Grand Opera Company), Music Division, New York Public Library. [Emphasis in original]

¹²⁵See Chapter 1 for more on Savage’s ideas about the chorus and American democratic principles. See Preston, *Opera on the Road* for more on the enduring popularity of works with prominent chorus parts in the United States.

¹²⁶The repertoire in the 1903 playbill is *Otello*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhauser*, *Carmen*, *Il trovatore*, and *Bohemian Girl*. With the exception of *Otello*, each of the other operas had been done many times by English- and foreign-language companies.

The third essay, “The Secret of the Savage Operatic Success,” continued the theme that opera should be about the company and not the star (Figure 2.9). He did this by evoking the most famous foreign-language company in the U.S.—the Metropolitan. Since the Metropolitan was the gold standard by which all other opera companies were judged in the U. S., even though that company was connected to Europe and the upper class through its management, singers, and audience, Savage still felt compelled to look to the Met for validation. This was a fundamental problem with the discourse about opera in English, too. For the most part, English-language opera’s backers portrayed it as significantly different in ideology and audience from foreign-language language opera and asserted that they had the superior approach to opera. Turning around and looking to the Met for support does not really make sense and implies that the English-language opera was actually a second-class genre incapable of standing on its own, yet this is exactly what Savage does in this essay. Savage wrote “close observation of revolutionary changes being wrought in the great operatic scheme as it obtains in the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, indicates unmistakably that hereafter ‘The Opera’ is to be ‘The Thing,’ not a few favorite vocal stars.”¹²⁷ This assertion was questionable at best, since the Met was completely dependent upon a stable of celebrity singers, but it was Savage’s preferred approach, and he used the comparison to the Met for support.

The essay goes on to praise the company using typical marketing hyperbole,

this, the only and ‘true way’ has unquestionably been pointed out by Henry W. Savage who from the moment of his Company’s inception has *insisted* that there must be EXCELLENCE IN EVERY PART.

And the public has not been backward in appreciation of the merits of this plan which is bringing Grand opera performances perilously near the point called PERFECT.¹²⁸

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

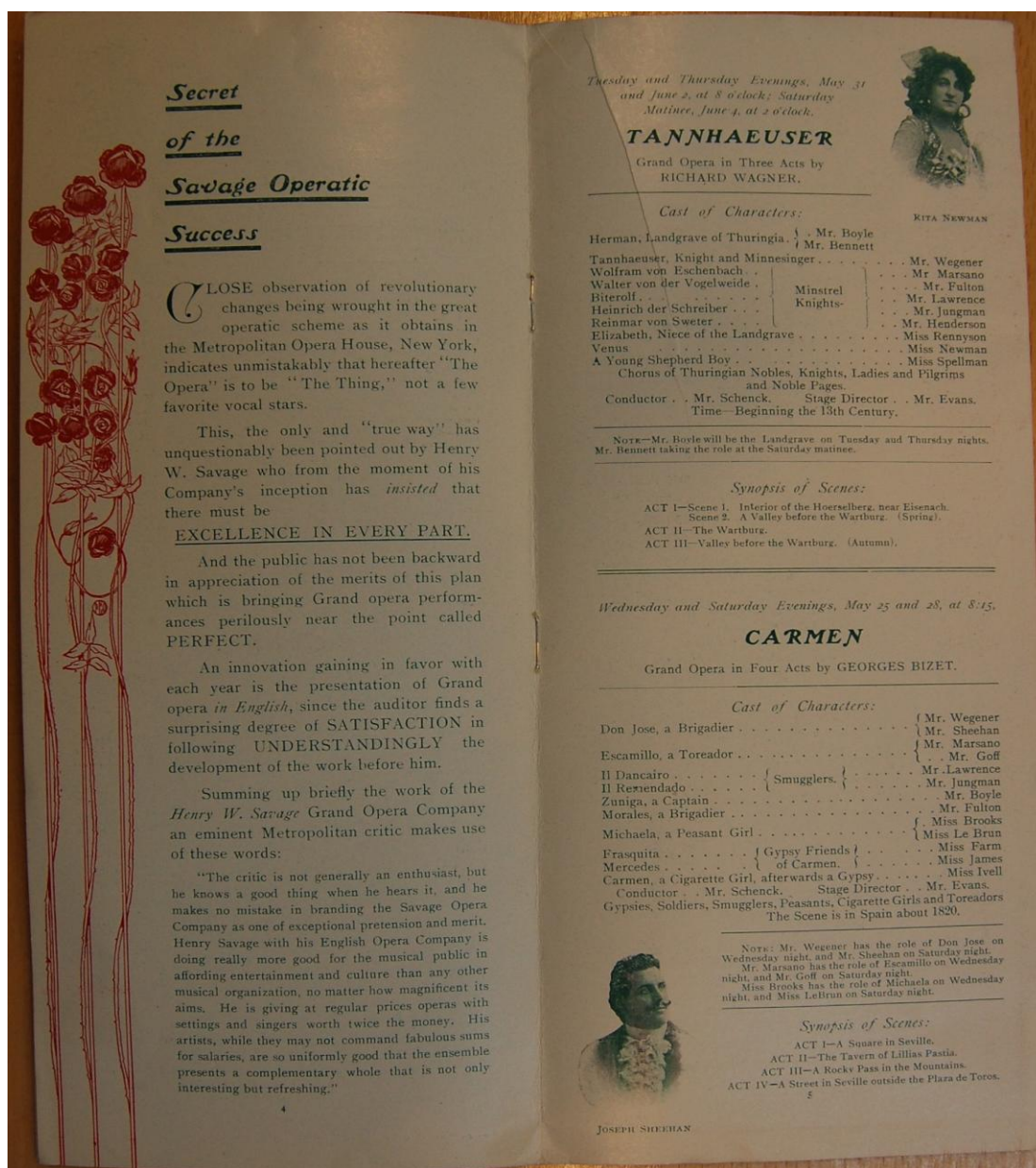


Figure 2.9: Inner page of Playbill/Program for Savage Grand Opera Company, 23 May–4 June 1903, Pittsburgh, PA, Clip file (Savage English Grand Opera Company), Music Division, New York Public Library.

Given the entire playbill’s positioning of the company as American, and the widely-held belief that foreign-language companies were better than English-language troupes, the exaggeration in the last statement that the ensemble is “PERFECT” reads as an almost pathetic attempt to raise the symbolic capital of the entire group. The essay even ends with a quotation from an unnamed

“eminent Metropolitan critic” who declared that Savage “is giving at regular prices operas with settings and singers worth twice the money.”¹²⁹ Twice Savage’s ticket prices was still below the Met’s \$5 seats, but the idea that opera in English was high art for bargain prices was invoked often by impresarios seeking to appeal to the thrifty American public.¹³⁰

Savage addressed the use of English in the same essay. “An innovation gaining in favor with each year is the presentation of Grand opera *in English*, since the auditor finds a surprising degree of SATISFACTION in following UNDERSTANDINGLY the development of the work before him.”¹³¹ Despite the mangling of the English language in this sentence, the point that audiences would enjoy the work more in the vernacular was one that had been made often by critics and everyone else involved in English-language opera for many years.

The rhetoric Savage used in the program was not unprecedented, nor was it new. It was steeped in the discourses about opera in English that Savage’s audience had read, heard, and lived with for decades. English-language opera’s most successful companies, such as the Clara Louise Kellogg Company, the Emma Abbott Company, or Savage’s own troupes, were those that managed to attract a middle-class audience through a complex combination of business, musical, and marketing tactics that correctly caught the mood of the audience. It was difficult to produce opera on the cheap while still maintaining a high standard of quality, reassure your audience that the operas were produced in the proper high-art manner, while appealing to popular taste and asserting that the opera was a “real” American product even though most people thought it was a European import.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰This strategy ultimately backfired because it gave opera in English a reputation as a bargain basement alternative to “real” opera which many people found unappealing.

¹³¹Program, Savage English Grand Opera Company, 23 May–4 June 1903, Pittsburgh, PA, Clip file (Savage English Grand Opera Company), Music Division, New York Public Library.

The End of the Season

Eventually the long opera season came to a close, and we turn now to this final chapter of our hypothetical English-language company. The most common reason for a tour to fall apart during the season was that the ticket sales did not generate enough money for the company to pay its transportation costs to the next city. Artists were willing to work for free for a short time in hopes that they would be reimbursed later, but the railroads insisted on being paid on time. Typically when an opera company was in trouble, the railroads demanded payment up front, and the singers refused to go onstage without at least some of their wages in hand. Leo Stormont, a singer with the Emma Juch Opera Company, claimed that by the time that troupe disbanded the manager, Charles E. Locke, owed “every singer outside of the chorus five weeks’ salary. He has only paid the chorus and musicians. Mr. Locke is in debt to the company at least \$15,000. I am better off than a good many others, as I got \$100 from Locke yesterday by refusing to go on at the afternoon performance until he paid me that sum. Miss Meislinger and Mrs. Macorda [*sic*] also struck for \$100 at the same time and got it.”¹³² Managers tried to keep their companies afloat by borrowing money where they could, often from other theater men, but that would only work for a short time.¹³³

The financial records at the Lafayette Square Opera House tell the story of the end of the Strakosch Opera Company in 1900. Edgar Strakosch, nephew to Maurice and Max Strakosch, who were also important American impresarios, managed the company. Edgar had extensive experience as an impresario. He worked as Maurice Grau’s assistant for nine years, and

¹³²“The Stranded Juch Company: Charles R. [*sic*] Locke’s Latest Exploit in Operatic Wrecking,” *New York Times*, 19 May 1891.

¹³³“Hearts of Gold,” *Variety*, 13 December 1920, 149, is a retrospective story about the generosity of theatrical managers to each other before World War I that provides a lot of information about the private financial network that propped up insolvent entertainment companies.

managed multiple concert tours by singers and instrumentalists.¹³⁴ In January 1900, he took over the Aborn Opera Company and announced that he would keep most of the original singers but add his wife, Harriet Avery Strakosch, to the roster. The Aborn Company was a regional troupe that performed in the Baltimore area and had played Lafayette Square in October 1899 to poor ticket sales. The house lost a substantial amount of money that week because they paid the company a flat \$1,200 fee, which the ticket receipts did not cover. When the troupe came back in January 1900, reborn as the Strakosch Company, management did not make the same mistake and negotiated a 70%–30% split.

At the end of February the company returned for an extended run which was not successful. They started with a week of *Faust* that only took in \$829. With such disappointing results, the company switched gears, lowered its ticket prices, and tried comic opera the next week with *Amorita* and *Mikado*, but did only slightly better at \$861.¹³⁵ Strakosch cut the top ticket price and seemed to be trying to re-position the company as a comic-opera troupe, probably in a bid to appeal to a broader audience. The following week, the company tried *Il trovatore* (another old favorite that generally did very well) and *Nanon* (a popular comic opera) but to no avail, as they only made \$659. The opera house's records show that by this time the theater had cut back significantly on marketing, as there was no way they could turn a profit on the Strakosch Company's slow sales.

By March 4, Lafayette Square's manager Uriah Painter was trying to find a new act to replace Strakosch in April. In one letter to an agent who sometimes recruited attractions for the house, Painter revealed that the Strakosch Company would not last the month, and that he was

¹³⁴"Strakosch Opera Company," *Sum* (Baltimore, MD), 8 January 1900.

¹³⁵The prices went from the house's usual ticket prices—between 25 cents and \$1.50—to a spread between 25 cents and \$1.

looking for something else to fill the rest of March and part of April.¹³⁶ Painter was never able to find another group to replace Strakosch, and, in an unusual move, decided to let the house go dark for three weeks. He may have reasoned that anything was better than bleeding money as the company's sales grew more anemic no matter what they did. The last week the Strakosch Company performed at Lafayette Square, there was almost no effort to market the performances. The papers announced that the troupe was going on tour, and "as no suitable attraction was forthcoming the management decided to close the theater in preference to booking an inferior organization."¹³⁷ Meanwhile, the Strakosch Company "toured" back to Baltimore to play at the Music Hall, which Strakosch managed though it was not, according to *The Sun*, really suitable for opera.¹³⁸ By October, Strakosch had declared bankruptcy, telling the court that he had accrued \$8,029 in debt between January and March. He owed thirty-three members of his company money, and Painter had loaned him \$1,500.¹³⁹

The story of the demise of Strakosch's company may seem depressing, but it was far from uncommon. Most opera companies were short lived and spent the majority of their existences on shaky financial ground. Only the most skillful impresarios, who understood the market they worked within, were successful in the long term. Indeed, it is a mystery why some impresarios continued to return to opera year after year.¹⁴⁰ As this chapter demonstrates, the business of opera was complex, requiring great organizational skills as well as a feeling for talent

¹³⁶Uriah Painter to Gardiner, 4 March 1900, Lafayette Square Opera House Records, Container 1, Folder 7, Archives and Manuscripts Collection, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

¹³⁷"At the Theaters," *Washington Post*, 22 March 1900.

¹³⁸"Manager Strakosch's Benefit," *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 2 May 1900.

¹³⁹"Business Troubles," *New York Times*, 24 October 1900.

¹⁴⁰Perhaps the most famous example of pure stubbornness on the part of an impresario is that of Oscar Hammerstein I who lost several fortunes producing grand opera. His family still insists that, despite the financial risks, Hammerstein loved opera and could not stay away from the genre. See Oscar Andrew Hammerstein, *The Hammersteins: A Musical Theater Family* (New York: Blackdog & Leventhal, 2010) for more information.

and a sharp eye for what would sell and how to sell it. Companies specializing in opera in English translation worked in an especially challenging marketplace. They had to provide the best quality product they could while keeping expenses as low as possible to avoid pricing themselves out of the market.

The entertainment trends were against opera in English, however. The elite, who could afford foreign-language opera and saw the performances as a way to reinforce codes of gentility and sophistication that helped maintain their position atop the social hierarchy, were content to return to the same operas, performed by the same big stars. The essential conservatism of high art and high culture was enshrined in the canonic repertoire of the Metropolitan. By 1900, the troupe was singing basically the same operas they sing today—the works of Wagner, mid- and late-century Italians such as Verdi and Puccini, with a sprinkling of French composers—that it still relies upon today. But middle-class audiences wanted to be entertained when they were out. Impresarios for attractions such as high-class vaudeville, comedies, and musical plays told audiences through their marketing that they were the best in their styles and that a night out at one of their performances would be fun but respectable. As a result of some companies' marketing strategies as well as the critical discourse, audiences and critics increasingly perceived opera in English as a “knock-off”—a cheap alternative to the “real thing.” For the middle-class audiences who wanted an uplifting aesthetic experience, opera in English no longer fit the bill, whereas for those who just wanted a night out at a great performance, a production that had already sold itself short could not have been an inviting prospect. Even Savage, who had managed to survive in this difficult environment since 1895, finally left opera in 1911. He and the network of people who worked in opera in English increasingly focused on Broadway productions of musical comedies, operettas, plays, and eventually silent films. The niche that his companies had occupied for fifteen years had closed.

CHAPTER 3: GENDER AND OPERA IN THE UNITED STATES

The discourses about opera I have examined thus far have been influenced primarily by political and cultural conditions in the United States. Conceptions about gender were another important influence on the ways people thought and talked about music and musicians. Gendered language crept into opera reviews, cultural commentaries, and profiles of important musical figures. Ideas about sexuality and gender roles shaped the lives of the artists who worked in opera and affected how they presented themselves to the public. These ideologies influenced not only the lived experiences of the people who worked in opera, but also the ways that the art works they sang were received and produced. In the final two chapters of this dissertation, I will return to gender when I undertake a detailed examination of the performance and reception of Bizet's *Carmen*. This chapter examines the real men and women whose daily professional lives reified and challenged widely-held conceptions about femininity and masculinity.

During the period between 1878 and 1910, traditional notions about women's roles were increasingly under pressure, as more women entered the workforce and the controversy over extending voting rights to women stimulated public discussions about a wide range of issues related to gender. "New Women" embarked on education and careers that not only challenged earlier conceptions of the appropriate spaces and activities for women, but also forced men to react to women who were straying into territory once reserved for men. Although most people believed there were biologically-based fundamental differences between men and women, the corollary to this idea—that men and women should lead separate lives, men in the public sphere

and women in the private—was breaking down, as we have seen in the preceding chapters.¹ At this time, actresses and prima donnas struggled with a deeply engrained distrust of women who displayed themselves on stage and worked with men openly in the public sphere. Prima donnas had to find ways to create an alluring image that flirted with the danger of spectacle and the sexual frisson of unruly women, but still stayed far enough within gender norms that they maintained a certain level of middle-class respectability.

The stress men experienced because women seemed to be changing the rules by going to work or demanding the vote only added to other developments that forced men to reconceive ideas of manhood common earlier in the nineteenth century. Before the Civil War, the economy was organized around small businesses and farms through which men earned a living by their own labor. Conceptions of manliness were bound up with the ability to be successful as a “Self-Made Man.” The consolidation of industries during the Gilded Age meant that for many men this dream became unattainable; instead they became one more face in a sea of bureaucrats or factory workers feeding the American monopolies. This fundamental economic change, along with the huge loss of life during the Civil War, gave rise to several, almost contradictory societal responses. Among some men, especially in New York and other large cities, behavior associated more typically with women became acceptable for a short time as signifiers for cultured pursuits and a passion for beauty. Leisure activities, including music and the arts, became a place where men could achieve the success they might not be able to find elsewhere. Many other men, however, feared that urban life was too civilized (by which they meant feminized). With their chance at business success in serious jeopardy because of a weak and increasingly centralized

¹For more on women and gender roles in this period see Barbara J. Harris, *Beyond her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers), 1998.

economy during the Gilded Age, they felt manhood must be revitalized through the celebration of powerful men's bodies engaged in sport, the frontier life, or other virile and aggressive activities. For many men, this went no further than attending prize fights and joining fraternal orders, but the discourse about manly power, fed by an overt connection to the ideology of white supremacy, came to dominate ideas of masculinity by the turn of the century.² Because music was part of the highly "civilized," feminized world that many men came to distrust, if not despise, male operatic performers had to construct public images that did not undermine their skill as musicians, but also celebrated their masculinity.

Men and women in opera used the press to shape and project public images that would be beneficial to their careers. Of course, singers could not completely control the way that they were presented to the public, so they were constantly engaged in a process of responding to the latest articles about them and of trying to manipulate the press coverage they would receive in the future. I will use two different approaches to examine the intersection and interaction between opera and gender. For men, I will take a holistic approach, focusing on general themes in discourses about masculinity and how they appeared in opera and affected men working in entertainment. With respect to women, I will center my discussion on the life and career of English-language soprano Emma Juch as a case study of the experiences of American prima donnas. I use this approach because the public was much more fascinated with female singers, and the overwhelming amount of press coverage about the many celebrity prima donnas from this period made an overview difficult. A close reading of Juch's life and career serves as a way

²See Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) for more information about masculinity and manliness in this period.

for me to create an exemplary narrative out of the reactions and accommodations prima donnas made to nineteenth-century discourses about femininity.

The Musical Man and the Challenge of the Feminine

The shifting conception of American manhood from the myth of the self-made male to what Anthony Rotundo calls the “passionate man” of the late nineteenth century is generally linked to the economic devastation of the Panic of 1873 and the reorganization of the economy under Gilded-Age monopolies.³ According to Mary Warner Blanchard, the passion that Rotundo sees in men’s pursuit of a vigorous life of the body had another dimension, too—the passionate pursuit of beauty and truth in the Aesthetics Movement that was nourished by Oscar Wilde’s visit to the United States in 1882. The D’Oyly Carte Company sponsored his American lecture tour as part of the publicity campaign for their production of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Patience*. The men and women who were part of the Aesthetics Movement challenged traditional gender roles in a counterculture that tolerated transgressive behaviors such as men who wore make up and women who went without corsets in so-called “Aesthetic dress.”⁴

It is important to understand that in the nineteenth century, conceptions of sexuality were tied to the way that people acted and dressed in public, but were not related to their private sexual activities. Men who displayed “womanlike” characteristics, which could mean everything from having an “abnormal fear of dirt” to wearing drag, risked being labeled a homosexual because their feminine behavior caused, for people in the nineteenth century, an inevitable sexual desire for men. Men who accepted traditional masculine conventions of appearance and

³Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 5; Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 12.

⁴Mary Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), xii–xiii.

public physicality, no matter what their private sexual preferences, were not considered homosexual as such.⁵ In other words, “one’s ‘sexuality’...[was] a pattern of practices and desires that followed inevitably from one’s masculinity or femininity. Sexual desire for men was held to be inescapably a woman’s desire, and the inverts’ desire for men was not seen as an indication of their ‘homosexuality’ but as simply one more manifestation of their fundamentally womanlike character.”⁶ At the end of the century, there was a surprisingly public gay subculture, especially in New York. Many men found this subculture appalling and it fueled a deep anxiety that men were destined to become over-civilized “sissies.” At the same time, other men were less threatened and used this subculture to reaffirm gender conventions rendering these effete “fairies” (as they were called), a harmless “third-sex,” almost a “different species of human being.”⁷ Men and women who were part of the Aesthetics Movement were not necessarily part of a gay subculture, but drew upon instability and confusion about gender norms brought on by the cultural and economic volatility of the time period to create a more expansive definition of masculinity and to open doors to women in the arts.⁸

Blanchard argues that the short-lived success of aestheticism, along with the more feminized male behaviors that it implicitly condoned, ended in the 1890s in a repressive middle-

⁵Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 74; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 13.

⁶Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 48. He also argues that the modern homosexual/heterosexual binary developed by the early twentieth century in middle-class culture, but among the working-class this way of thinking was delayed until as late as the middle of the twentieth century.

⁷Quotations in this sentence from Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 57.

⁸For more on the Aesthetics Movement see Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America*. Another influence in a more “feminized” vision of masculinity, especially among white Northern men, was the popularity of Spiritualism and other religious movements after the Civil War. See Bret E. Carroll, “The Religious Construction of Masculinity in Victorian America: The Male Mediumship of John Shoebridge Williams,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 27–60.

class backlash led by men such as Theodore Roosevelt.⁹ Other scholars note that a newly aggressive imperialist political agenda, combined with the unease caused by the increasingly public presence of professional women, also contributed to a reevaluation of concepts of masculinity.¹⁰ Ideologies of masculinity at the turn of the century blended seemingly contradictory ideas of “‘civilized manliness’ and ‘primitive masculinity.’”¹¹ The proper way to express masculinity to many middle-class men in this period was to channel their “natural” aggression into a vigorous and physical lifestyle that allowed them to control their desires so they would not degenerate into barbarism. From the white male’s point of view, non-white men were unevolved and could not reach the epitome of manhood because they were little more than savages. As Bederman explains it, “gender differences among savages seemed to be blurred. Savage women were aggressive, carried heavy burdens, and did all sorts of ‘masculine’ hard labor. Savage men were emotional and lacked a man’s ability to restrain their passions.”¹²

Men who were involved in music (and other arts) were therefore in a difficult position. The act of making music, with its ties to women’s education and the spectacle of the stage, had the potential of being feminized. And by the end of the century, the very act of attending a concert had become such a part of a feminized “civilization” that the image of a hen-pecked husband forced to go to the opera by his social-climbing wife became a popular stereotype by the end of the century.¹³ Articles in the Atlanta papers, for instance, encouraged men to put

⁹Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America*, xiv–xv.

¹⁰Michael S. Kimmel, “Men’s Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century,” *Gender and Society* 1, no. 3 (September 1987), 262–63; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 158.

¹¹Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 23.

¹²Ibid., 25.

¹³See Adrienne Fried Block, “Matinee Mania, or the Regendering of Nineteenth-Century Audiences in New York City,” *19th Century Music* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 193–216 and Richard Butsch, “Bower B’hoys and Matinee Ladies:

aside their business worries and appear at the opera with their wives as a civic and social duty, not because they actually wanted to attend the event, which would have been to acknowledge an unacceptable desire for refinement and gentility.¹⁴

Since acquiring musical proficiency was considered an important component of most middle-class girls' educations, musical skill had become feminized. Accomplished male musicians needed to prove their masculinity within a field that was dominated by amateur and professional women. This task was especially difficult for men in opera. Charismatic female characters often dominate nineteenth-century opera plots, and most celebrity singers were prima donnas. Therefore, men were overshadowed by women potentially twice over—on stage in smaller, weaker roles, and off stage where they were not as famous, as powerful, or as well-paid as prima donnas. Moreover male vocalists did not have an instrument such as a piano to manipulate; nor could they show their manly strength and leadership skills through conducting (and controlling) an orchestra or band. Although the amateur musical ranks were filled with female pianists and, to a lesser extent, violinists, professional male instrumentalists benefited from the obvious mastery they could show over their instrument in ways that singers could not. Conductors, in particular, emphasized their masculinity through equating their leadership of musical groups with the skills needed to lead men in the military or in business. John Philip Sousa, for example, embraced the soldier/hero model of masculinity when he created what Patrick Warfield describes as “a character, one defined by his full-blooded patriotism and masculine virility.”¹⁵

The Re-Gendering of Nineteenth-Century American Theater Audiences,” *American Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (September 1994): 374–405, on the feminization of American audiences and concert life.

¹⁴Gavin James Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 32.

¹⁵Patrick Warfield, “The March as Musical Drama and the Spectacle of John Philip Sousa,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 291.

The sort of myth making that marked Sousa's career was more difficult to manage for a man who spent much of his time in stage make up and flamboyant costumes (Figure 3.1).



Harvard University, Houghton Library, W617892.1

Figure 3.1 William T. Carleton (1859–1922) in costume
Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University

In an 1892 essay titled “Opera in America,” E. C. Stanton depicted women as the ultimate authority on the arts and described refined art music using cultural tropes associated with Victorian-era feminine ideals.

Art to the American, especially to the American woman,—who must always remain the final court of appeal in matters musical and operatic,—is not noise or coarseness, but beauty and chasteness and naturalness; in other words Art in its absolute simplicity beautifies and idealizes all that it touches. It would be quite impossible for us to understand the enthusiasm that greeted the lyrically charming and artistically simple and natural beauties of *Siegfried* or the deep, tender, emotional truth of *Fidelio*, if we did not

admit the intuitive power of artistic appreciation which, if not born with, is at least second nature with, cultured American women.¹⁶

A man who had musical skill then, was intimately connected with an artistic sensibility that was too gentle and tender to be truly masculine. Rotundo notes that “toughness was...admired, tenderness was a cause for scorn.”¹⁷ Celebrated voice-teacher Clara Brinkerhoff equated opera specifically with women when she asserted—drawing upon Richard Wagner’s ideas on music and cultural uplift—that “the opera is to the drama what woman is to man; his higher, better self; his *besser ich*, as the Germans say.”¹⁸ This formulation draws specifically on the Victorian conception of a woman’s role as the moral exemplar who through her purity must help her husband to contain his base instincts to become the perfect male he should aspire to be.¹⁹

Men who were expert musicians sometimes faced derision for their accomplishments in such a feminized arena. In 1880, one author, pushing against the image of the Aestheticized male, decried the “musical man” as a “prig” who performed at salons and pontificated on the arts. He blamed women for creating what he saw as a monster.

Who is responsible for this new and rapidly increasing genius? Sorrowfully it must be admitted that women are the fosterers of this unpleasant type of man. Formerly, in fact quite within the memory of middle-aged men, to be unmusical was not considered a sin. Now, alas, it is. Not to be able at least to talk upon the subject will, if it does not totally extinguish, at least cast a shadow over your conversational powers. And this is the decree of ladies in society.²⁰

¹⁶E. C. Stanton, “Opera in America,” *North American Review* 155 (February 1892): 210–11.

¹⁷Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 6.

¹⁸“Mme. Clara Brinkerhoff on Drama and Opera,” *American Art Journal* 47, no. 8 (11 June 1887): 114.

¹⁹This stereotype, called the “True Woman” in the nineteenth century, is examined in Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151–74.

²⁰“The Musical Man,” *American Art Journal* 33, no. 11 (10 July 1880): 163 [reprinted from *The Saturday Review*].

What this writer disapproved of the most about the musical male, however, was that “his priggishness is combined with a contempt for his sex and a disgusting effeminacy.”²¹ The “priggishness” that the author derides is the over-civilized, overly-mannered behavior and knowledgeable enthusiasm for music that vigorous men (exemplified by someone like Theodore Roosevelt) found particularly unpalatable. The “contempt for his sex and disgusting effeminacy” triggered nineteenth-century images of homosexuality. A gay man—so the argument ran—had contempt for his sex because he did not physically perform masculine gender roles and instead imitated feminine behaviors that this writer found revolting. There is also a class-based element to the author’s attacks, as the salon hostesses he held responsible for creating musical men were concentrated in the highest reaches of the upper-class social sets in such cities as New York. While wealthy women were expected to spend their days arranging social and charity events, urban men expressed their masculinity by working long hours in the office pursuing economic success with an ambitious intensity similar to more physical manifestations of aggression in hunting or sports. Men, especially in New York City, who frequented salons and other high-society parties were often caricatured as wealthy fops who had inherited their money and were more interested in social success than business acumen. Men like this, Theodore Roosevelt wrote, “lead lives which vary from rotten frivolity to rotten vice...they are not serious people.”²² Musical accomplishment, therefore, could be associated with feminine weakness, a class-based suspicion of laziness and inherited wealth, and, most damningly, womanly behaviors and even homosexuality.

²¹Ibid.

²²Nicholas Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: The Man as I Knew Him* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1967), 26 quoted in Frederic Cople Jaher, “Style and Status: High Society in Late Nineteenth-Century New York,” in *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, ed. Frederic Cople Jaher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 282

Men could overcome these stereotypes by performing in a way that critics identified as virile or manly. Even in a frilly costume singing about a silly plot, men could project an impressive stage presence through convincing acting and a powerful voice. In 1907, for instance, Clifford Wiley's performance in *I Pagliacci* was praised as "virile, expressive, manly, and enjoyable. When Wiley sings he commands the situation."²³ Critics sometimes used feminized language for a bad review of a male singer, but described a good performance using masculine tropes as if superior singing overcame the connections between femininity and music. While praising William T. Carleton, one author made his feelings about most male singers plain. "In these days, when manly voices are varieties, and other companies are content with weak, effeminate tenors and baritones, Carleton stands forth preeminent for his rich and thrilling baritone voice, his easy and natural acting, his magnificent bearing and a charming personality, which seems to pervade the work of the entire company."²⁴ In a glowing review of a concert company performance in 1895, another writer described William Stephens, a baritone, as bursting "upon the audience in a voice that filled that audience room with a masculine vociferousness to which it was not accustomed."²⁵ Emma Juch commended, William Lavin, a tenor in one of her concert companies, as someone who "unlike most tenors, has brains and manly carriage."²⁶

Such overtly gendered critiques of individual performances by men were relatively rare. More often, critics simply noted whether a male performer did well or not in much the same manner as they evaluated female singers. "The chief features of the entertainment were the

²³"Greater New York," *Musical Courier* 54, no. 5 (30 January 1907): 34.

²⁴"The Play This Week," *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 November 1887.

²⁵"The Natali Grand Opera Performance," *News-Observer-Chronicle* (Raleigh, NC), 3 February 1894.

²⁶"Miss Emma Juch's Return," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 24 September 1888.

Escamillo of Campanari and the Carmen of Kronold,” noted one typical review of *Carmen* in 1893. “Both gave notably good dramatic pictures of the toreador and cigarette girl, and vocally their portion of the production was simply superb.”²⁷ At times, depending upon the wording, this seemingly gender-neutral language might have been a subtle dig at male performers who were no different from women, or a masculinizing of women who were being praised for competence in the public arena. Although men were sometimes evaluated by the looks alone, women were more likely to be subjected to comments about their bodies. On balance, however, reviewers tended to evaluate operatic performances through a critical lens in which gender did not intrude unless a performance struck a writer as particularly masculine or feminine. Critics were more likely to comment on the masculinity or femininity of the character than the vocalist.

In contrast, critics often used strikingly gendered language when praising male singers for concert performances in public recital halls or in private homes. Recitals, dominated by amateur female performers, society hostesses, and women’s clubs, were more feminized than staged opera. Reviewers seemed to feel that it was important to emphasize a singer’s manliness under these circumstances. In a 1907 review of Harold Witherspoon, a bass recitalist, the *Chicago Journal* noted that “his message is always sincere and manly, free from affectation or undue sentimentality.”²⁸ Affectation and sentimentality were the province of over-emotional women and the type of behavior that would be classified as “womanly,” and thus—by extension—even homosexual. Witherspoon’s singing, then, was sincere—a sentiment that was appropriately masculine—without tipping into the dangerous territory of femininity.

If individual opera performances were often not criticized in a particularly gendered manner, male opera singers themselves were often portrayed in the press as being overly

²⁷“*Carmen* at the Grand,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 August 1893.

²⁸Quoted in “More Glory for Witherspoon,” *Musical Courier* 54, no. 6 (6 February 1907): 52.

demonstrative and too much like female members of opera companies. In particular men with high voices, who could easily be associated with the most negative stereotypes about prima donnas, suffered the most gendered critiques. For instance, in an article that portrayed opera troupes as hotbeds of jealous gossip and the worst kind of catty behavior, the author was careful to distinguish between different voice types. He identified sopranos and tenors as being the most likely to engage in particularly egregious conduct, but declared that sopranos would always be more petulant, flighty, and irresponsible than tenors. “Possibly, a favorite tenor may somehow near this acme of touchiness and self-assertion. But the tenor’s vanity, though prodigious, resembles that of the prima donna only as the mist resembles the rain.” If a tenor felt slighted “he curses the manager and the day in which he was born, and shirks the rehearsals.” But if a soprano felt insulted, “she takes to her bed with an attack of bronchitis, which, under the certificate of two reputable physicians, carries agony and despair into the camp of the manager.”²⁹ Therefore, this author implied, even men who seemed to indulge in womanly behavior were superior to actual women.

In the same article, it was the minstrel-show falsettists in black face who faced the most extreme criticism. The writer claimed he had heard “of an instance of the falsetto soprano of a burnt-cork company who shot dead a jealous tenor who had made remarks derogatory to the falsetto’s manhood.”³⁰ There are many assumptions swirling around in this quotation. Minstrelsy was a lowbrow entertainment with entertainers who might have been very popular, but were often assumed to be from the lower class and were either African American or performed in

²⁹All quotations in this paragraph from “Operatic Discords,” *American Art Journal* 30, no 8 (21 December 1878): 117 [reprint from the *Times*].

³⁰*Ibid.*

blackface. As Bedermen notes, “whiteness was ... a manly ideal.”³¹ Men who were not white, or pretended they were not, could never live up to this idealized masculinity and were, therefore, feminized. Further, “the remarks derogatory to the falsetto’s manhood” points to nineteenth-century understandings of sexuality. The falsetto’s high voice was a womanly biological trait, which was a marker for homosexuality. The writer established early in the article that male singers, in general, were overly emotional and did not fully possess the manly characteristic of self-control, but the male soprano with the highest voice of all (unlike the tenor) seems to have no restraint at all and descended into violence.

In a 1905 essay that can be described only as a rant, William Thoms, the editor of the *American Art Journal*, called for “real men” to return to music. He identified Theodore Thomas and Anton Seidl as true men (both dead and both notably conductors) who supported American composers and did not indulge in petty jealousies with other musicians. He thundered,

Wanted: Men. That is, musicians that are, in music, what Depew and Roosevelt and Hay and Root and Platt are in statesmanship. It should not be true that, whenever a person is spoken of as being a musician, music-teacher, that the listener concludes he is a grinning, viper-tongued, mental nobody, with just brains enough to be a musician—not a man.³²

Only the worst sort of misogynist would relate these “viper-tongued, mental nobodies” directly to female musicians, and Thoms supported women composers and performers in the pages of his journal. Thoms’s anger was directed at those he believed had betrayed the virtues of music (and even America) through their insincere, dishonest behavior.³³ His solution to this problem was to advocate for musicians (without naming anyone in particular) who epitomized a type of

³¹Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 5.

³²[William Thoms], “Wanted: Men,” *American Art Journal* 85, no. 22 (25 February 1905): 338. It is not clear from the article exactly what incident prompted Thoms’s anger, but throughout the essay he condemns unnamed musicians who gossiped about or were disrespectful of other musicians.

³³Rotundo argues that men “doubted female sincerity” and thought young women were vain and selfish. Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 104.

manhood defined by the stridently aggressive yet controlled and morally upright behavior of American loyalists like Theodore Roosevelt.

Even the normally male preserve of business could be feminized in the music industry. The presidents of women's music clubs were often key players in the cultural lives of cities around the nation. They controlled access to concert series and were important taste makers and patrons of the arts, as the example of the patronesses in Reading, Pennsylvania, discussed in Chapter 2, illustrates. Some women parlayed this access and influence into professional careers. Ella May Smith was the professional manager of the Women's Music Club of Columbus, Ohio, and Adella Prentiss Hughes became an independent concert manager in Cleveland after beginning her career with the local music club.³⁴ "It is a great pity that these clubs are nearly all confined to the female sex," one Chicago writer opined, "and thus make the musical culture of America a one-sided affair."³⁵ Opera impresarios were particularly vulnerable to criticism of unmanly behavior because they were frequently beholden to the company's prima donna who usually wielded considerable power. Ernesto Rosnati, upset at his dismissal from the Strakosch Opera Company, complained in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* that he was "not the first artist that Strakosch has left high and dry. Ah, what a man to be tied to the skirts of a woman!"³⁶ He alleged that the prima donna of the company, Clara Louise Kellogg, had ordered his dismissal because his voice was too strong for her and that the impresario, Strakosch, had acquiesced instead of asserting his male authority.

³⁴Linda Whitesitt, "Women as 'Keepers of Culture': Music Clubs, Community Concert Series, and Symphony Orchestras," in *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists Since 1860*, ed. Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 69–71.

³⁵"Music at the Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 June 1893.

³⁶"Rosnati's Infelicities," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 January 1879.

To combat their image problem, operatic men used their press coverage to emphasize their manly qualities. Since they may not have been particularly masculine in their appearance on stage, men emphasized their manliness off stage. The De Reske brothers, for example, let it be known that during the off-season break from their demanding operatic careers, they returned to their Polish estates to pursue the “manly sports of fencing and the chase, they strive to forget the theater and recover again the virile manliness and freshness which is one of their great charms.”³⁷ The theater, in this quotation, becomes almost like an infection that threatened to destroy the brothers’ manhood except for the yearly inoculation provided by hunting and exercise.

Another strategy, used most often by opera company managers, was to depict themselves as something akin to the fathers of their companies—loving but strict disciplinarians. This appropriation of the seemingly feminine pursuit of parenting was actually part of another strand of masculinity in the late nineteenth century called Masculine Domesticity. Men were not interested in taking over feminine duties such as housework or in making the home an egalitarian preserve where the husband and wife were equal. Instead, in the late nineteenth century, some men became more involved parents in order to model and instill respectable behavior in their sons and daughters.³⁸ According to managers, chorus girls in particular needed firm leadership. Otherwise, as single working women, they might be enticed to sin by men or, since they had chosen to leave the confines of their homes, have sinful tendencies of their own

³⁷“Current Topics,” *Music* 1, no. 2 (December 1891): 189. Jean (1850–1925) and Édouard (1853–1917) de Reske were two of the most prominent male singers in the world. They appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as well as with other companies throughout Europe from the 1880s until the early twentieth century.

³⁸Margaret Marsh, “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity,” in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 112. Men were especially interested in making sure that their wives did not overly influence their growing boys and turn them into “sissies.”

that had to be controlled. Charles Ford, manager of an English Opera Company, explained in 1885 that he had

strict rules and [I] enforce them. If a girl is seen to flirt from the stage she is immediately discharged. If a girl goes off with anyone after the performance she is visited with a similar punishment. I have to be severe to protect my reputation and that of the members of my company. The morality of an opera company depends in a great measure upon the wisdom and character of the manager. If he is a strong man of good principles he will impart some of his strength to his company.³⁹

William T. Carleton was reportedly “quite angry” when he learned in 1889 that two principal singers in his company (Clara Lane and J. K. Murray) had secretly married because he did “all in his power to keep his people from falling in love with each other during a season.” He made the couple “send for a priest and be regularly married.”⁴⁰ Carleton found out about Lane and Murray’s relationship because she became pregnant. It is certainly possible that the couple were not married before the pregnancy and that this story was a way to maintain Lane’s, and by extension, the entire company’s respectability. Nonetheless, Carleton, in particular, cultivated an image of the successful businessman who treated his company like a family. An 1890 article praised Carleton for his “unflagging industry. He is the most tireless worker in the profession, a strict disciplinarian, and knowing well how everything should be done, down to the smallest minutiae of stage management.”⁴¹ Unlike many opera impresarios who were singularly unsuccessful businessmen, Carleton was, overall, quite skilled and ran his own company for at least eleven years. The press treated Carleton’s financial success within an industry in which small businesses like his often failed as a major accomplishment that confirmed his masculinity.

³⁹“English Opera,” *Macon Telegraph* (GA), 23 May 1885.

⁴⁰“An Olio,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 1889.

⁴¹“Stage Tones,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1890.

Women and Work at the End of the Long Nineteenth Century

At the same time that men used their accomplishments as businesspeople to establish their manliness, women were steadily invading the public sphere. Between 1880 and 1910, the number of women over ten years of age working for wages exploded. According to census data, about 2.6 million women (or 14.7 per cent of the female population) worked in 1880, but by 1910, that number had jumped to 8 million women (or 23.4 per cent of the female population). At that point, women constituted 20 per cent of the entire workforce.⁴² Most of these women labored in low-wage, low-status jobs such as garment production, light manufacturing, domestic, and clerical work. The census at this time contained a “professional services” category which included teachers, “musicians and teachers of music,” actors, lawyers, clergymen, and engineers. Professional women were most likely to be teachers, but the second largest subgroup within the professions was “musicians and teachers of music.” This category was also one of the few groups with a large number of married women, which was unusual since most women left the workforce after marriage. By 1900, 12 per cent of the 52,405 women of all races who were listed as musicians or teachers of music were married (a far higher percentage than married teachers in other fields, which stood at only 4.5 per cent). Middle-class women began to join the workforce in larger numbers after 1890, in part because more of them had attended universities and then entered professional employment. Many of these women (up to 75 per cent) never married, as their choice to go to college and pursue a career made them unfit for marriage according to the social expectations of their day.⁴³

⁴²Agnes L. Peterson, “What the Wage-Earning Woman Contributes to Family Support,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 143 (1929): 75; Eric Arnesen, “American Workers and the Labor Movement in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (New York: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 59.

⁴³Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 113.

As more and more women worked outside of the home, traditional notions of women's roles and the reality of many women's lives became increasingly out of sync. Indeed, historians now debate whether ideas about the private sphere and female gentility and respectability applied to anyone but middle-class white women.⁴⁴ Yet even if "the cult of womanhood" only reflected the lived experience of a minority of women, those ideas were still powerful and affected women's choices and opportunities. A woman who entered the workforce had to balance several competing problems. Working for wages masculinized her because she was acting in a manly way, which was as damaging for her as it was for a man who acted in a womanly manner. This is why educated women often did not marry, as their college educations drove them so far out of gender norms that they were deemed too "manlike" to marry.⁴⁵ Working-class women who were employed in factories or other wage-earning jobs found little support among middle-class women as they fought for better working conditions and higher pay because of concerns that married workers would neglect their families and single women might be lured into sinful behavior.⁴⁶ Because of the strong connection between the arts and femininity, professional women working as singers, artists, writers, or in other related fields such as editors or theatrical managers, could justify their work as simply an extension of skills that young women were expected to develop as part of their educations. Women who entered fields such as teaching, medicine, and retail sales also benefited from this dynamic as their professions could be seen as

⁴⁴Stacy A. Cordery, "Women in Industrializing America," in *The Gilded Age*, 121.

⁴⁵College-educated women were often nicknamed Amazons because they rebelled, left home, and exhibited an unfeminine strength and ambition. Indeed, the Amazonian backstory for the comic-book heroine, Wonder Woman, specifically traded on Progressive-Era ideas about New Women. Jill Lepore, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

⁴⁶Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 90.

extensions of the female caretaker role.⁴⁷ This did not mean that these women were necessarily free from controversy if they became too public with their professional activities, but only that they had a ready way to refute any criticisms.

Emma Juch: Femininity and the Challenges of the Female Professional Musician

Emma Antonia Joanna Juch (1860–1939) is a good example of the kind of woman who worked as a prima donna and as a cultural entrepreneur at the turn of the century. In many ways, she had an ordinary career. She was successful, but not a super star. Although she was featured in two English-language opera companies, for much of her career she focused on singing in concerts and festivals. By examining the life and career of a figure like Juch—someone who did not transcend other singers, but instead is a good example of other vocalists of her time and cultural context—it is possible to explore the American musical landscape from a perspective less distorted than if she were a more towering performer like Adelina Patti. Women were central to the opera industry, in large part because the roles they sang were crucial to the works in which they performed. The power they accrued through their celebrity and essential roles on stage carried over to their lives off stage. Instrumentalists such as pianist Teresa Carreño or violinist Maud Powell also entered public life via the stage, but without the display of costumes and the taint of acting, they carried with them a certain respectability that singers had to construct purposely. Juch's life shows the power of a musical career to bestow public prestige and economic success on American women, while at the same time demonstrating the limits placed on females in this time period. Even though she was able to maintain a busy professional

⁴⁷Angel Kwolek-Folland argues that many of the entrepreneurship and employment opportunities afforded women developed through a steadily expanding definition of “women’s work.” Thus, once women took over shopping duties for the home, owning or working in a dry goods store became appropriate for women. *Incorporating Women*, 112.

life in the public eye, Juch was frequently disparaged based upon cultural narratives about singers and female musicians.

Although forgotten today, Juch was an American soprano who was most famous for performing opera in English translation in the 1880s and 1890s.⁴⁸ After her operatic debut with Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company in 1881, she was a leading soprano in four English-language troupes: the American Opera Company (January 1886–January 1887), two different companies, both named the National Opera Company (January–June 1887 and November 1887–April 1888), and her own Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company (October 1889–June 1892). She performed with the most important orchestras and conductors of the period including Anton Seidl (with the Seidl Society Orchestra, the New York Metropolitan Orchestra, and the Philharmonic Society of New York), Theodore Thomas (with his Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and William Gericke (with the Boston Symphony Orchestra). In the summers, she often participated as a guest soloist in the music festivals that were such an important part of civic musical life across the nation.⁴⁹ Even after her marriage in 1894 to a New York City attorney named Francis Wellman, she maintained a busy schedule as a concert soloist for approximately a decade before limiting her appearances to private musicales and charity events. In 1911, she divorced Wellman and settled into a comfortable retirement in New York until her death from a cerebral hemorrhage on 6 March 1939.

⁴⁸Contemporaneous accounts give Juch's birth year anywhere between 1860 and 1863. I believe that 1860 is the correct date because of U.S. census records and her obituaries, but I have not been able to locate her birth certificate. Juch kept the German pronunciation of her surname, which apparently confused her audience given that there are several articles about her name. According to a humorous poem published when her company visited Los Angeles in 1890, her name was pronounced to rhyme with "Luke," and another article from 1891 in Atlanta says that the "J" was pronounced like a "Y" as in "Yuke." Hank Wagner, "Emma—?," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 December 1890; "Etched and Sketched," *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 December 1891.

⁴⁹I will talk about music festivals more in Chapter 4.

Men and women had to walk a narrow path during this period if they wanted to have a successful music career. They could not stray too far on one side towards behavior that would have seemed disreputable to the audience, but neither could they go too far into a boring respectability that robbed them of a charismatic off-stage image. Many of the most successful prima donnas were simultaneously the “girl next door” and the girl young men’s mothers did not want them to marry. They had to be at once refined and naughty; highly skilled but with a certain naiveté that hid their ambition and work ethic; weak enough to depend on the men around them for guidance and strong enough to visibly chart their own musical course. As musicologist Susan Rutherford explained it, prima donnas had to negotiate the “fault lines between ‘diva’ and ‘whore’”⁵⁰ (Figure 3.2).

⁵⁰Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32.



Figure 3.2: Emma Juch in costume (probably as Marguerite in *Faust*), 1889
M-Clipping File, (Emma Juch), Music Division, New York Public Library

Prima Donnas and Middle-Class Respectability

Emma Juch sought to appeal to a middle-class audience and combat the suspicions many Americans carried about women on the stage by using many methods to communicate to her audience that she was a strong but respectable American woman who was never overbearing, but still willing to stand up for herself if she felt threatened. She portrayed herself as a member of the respectable middle class who, despite her career and childlessness, never strayed far from the essentially conservative middle-class Victorian values of the United States in the late nineteenth century. The story of her early musical training served, as it did for other singers, as

one of the principal means of sharing her values with her audience. By reaching back to her childhood, Juch could demonstrate the ways her life and attitudes were similar to those of her audience, mitigating the suspicions many Americans had of singers and their supposedly dissolute life styles. Although her father, Justin Juch, was a pianist, Emma Juch always maintained that he was reluctant to allow her to study music and that for several years she had to take her voice lessons in secret.⁵¹ Juch mentioned in interviews that she wished to study music because she wanted to be a “great vocalist as was my grandmother.”⁵² Justin Juch learned about her singing only when he attended one of the student recitals held by her teacher Adelina Murio-Celli in which Juch made her debut.⁵³ His angry expression during the concert, and hasty departure immediately afterwards, convinced Juch that he disapproved of her musical ambitions. She was mistaken, however, and explained “upon reaching him [at home] imagine my joy and surprise at being folded in his arms and hearing him upbraiding himself for his blindness and neglect.”⁵⁴ Juch used the tale, which she retold many times, to deliver a message to the public that she may have been strong willed and independent, but her love of singing grew from her commitment to her family who shared the values of the middle class, as indicated by her father’s

⁵¹I have discovered very little about Justin Juch, who was a pianist, composer, and music teacher. He enjoyed a minor performing career primarily as an accompanist in concerts in the New York City area in the 1870s and early 1880s. According to William Steinway’s diary, Justin Juch died on 6 March 1884 of Bright’s disease when he was about forty-six years old. Whether or not Juch disapproved initially of his daughter’s musical ambitions, he was clearly involved in her career in the 1880s.

⁵²“Emma Juch,” *News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), 6 December 1891.

⁵³Murio-Celli was the most prominent private voice instructor in New York who also taught Juch’s cousin Amanda Fabris and Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s brother Gaston among many others. Murio-Celli’s recitals were important musical events (see Chapter 2). She held them at her spacious home on Gramercy Park, and they were well attended by musicians and music lovers from throughout the city.

⁵⁴“Emma Juch,” *News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), 6 December 1891. Other versions of this story appear in Alan Dale, *Familiar Chats with the Queens of the Stage* (New York: G. W. Dillingham, Publishers, 1890), 199; “Musical Topics,” *Washington Post*, 10 June 1894; Frances Elizabeth Willard and Mary A. Livermore, eds., “Emma Johanna Antonia Juch,” *American Women: Fifteen Hundred Biographies with Over 1,400 Portraits*, vol. 2 (New York: Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1897), 428; “Emma Juch, Noted American Singer,” *New York Times*, 7 March 1939. The *American Women* bibliographic entry lists her name as “Johanna Antonia” rather than “Antonia Joanna,” the order and spelling her obituaries provide and that I follow.

resistance to her performing career. Juch's stated reason for becoming a singer (to be a great vocalist like her grandmother) furthermore suggested that she was drawn to music *per se* and not to the (immoral) stage and that singing was a natural (i.e., God-given) gift inherited from her ancestors. The story that her performance during a single concert had overcome her father's doubts and turned him into her devoted ally helped mythologize the sheer power of her voice and musicality.⁵⁵ Surely, this account implied, readers should pay to hear such an impressive artist.⁵⁶ It was no accident that the story of her struggle to obtain musical training began to circulate when she was headlining her own company—the time when she had the most power, operated the furthest outside of the prevailing social norms, and most needed a narrative that counteracted nineteenth-century negative stereotypes about women on the stage.

Narratives about Juch (and prima donnas in general) often confined her to traditional gender roles. In many cases, Juch was complicit in this process, as a completely masculinized image of strength and freedom would have hurt her career, and may have gone against her own beliefs as well.⁵⁷ For instance, at the end of the standard biography found in the prospectuses for the opera and operatic concert companies she headlined in the late 1880s, Juch is described as

⁵⁵Soprano Minnie Hauk used a different kind of origin story to communicate middle-class values to her audience. She claimed that, as a child, she learned songs from “negroes on the plantation” in New Orleans, played the banjo, and organized amateur theatricals with her school friends. She was supposedly discovered when she was twelve by a music teacher who heard her singing through an open window as he passed by her family's home. (One example of this story is in “Minnie Hauk,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 5 November 1882.) Hauk communicated her typical white, middle-class upbringing by citing her expertise on the banjo (by then a genteel instrument suitable for middle-class young girls), her popularity among her friends as she organized school-girl theatricals, and her benevolence and white privilege as she learned songs from plantation slaves right before the Civil War. As in Juch's story, Hauk's talent could not be denied and was recognized, in her case, by someone who simply overheard her singing. See Katherine K. Preston, *Opera for the American People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in the Late Nineteenth-Century* (forthcoming) for an explanation of Emma Abbott's origin story.

⁵⁶Other prima donnas, too, used anecdotes about overcoming their family's initial disapproval of their musical ambitions in order to signal they were hard working and determined, as well as respectable and drawn to music for artistic reasons instead of a more masculine desire for fame or riches. See Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera* about the various ways that female singers mediated their public images through the press and communicated shared values to their audiences.

⁵⁷Patricia Okker, in her study of Sarah J. Hale and nineteenth-century female editors, argues that many professional women accepted the idea that women were fundamentally different from men, while still fighting against the notion

possessed of the highest artistic temperament, generous to a fault in giving to the unfortunate poor, no young woman needing directions as to whither like the portals of the temple of music, ever yet failed to receive from Emma Juch as much as was in her power to give. To her, beautiful flowers are a mild intoxicant. Hers is literally so Elysian a nature that dumb beasts and children follow with big eyed faith, and are happiest when near her. But so are all who once have come within the spell of her wonderfully sympathetic voice.⁵⁸

This Emma Juch was kind, helpful, beloved by children and animals alike, with a “sympathetic” rather than strong voice.

Juch’s image as constructed in her prospectus owed much to the stereotype of the “True Woman” who was happiest at home providing a nurturing environment for her family. In reality, Juch and other prima donnas had much more in common with the “New Woman” career girls. As busy professionals, some prima donnas put off marriage and many never had children. According to the 1890 U. S. census, on average, women were married by age 22 and had two or three children.⁵⁹ In the late nineteenth century, many people thought that single, childless women were defective in some way. Because they lived and worked away from home, it was hard to see prima donnas as virginal, young girls, so their unmarried status was uncomfortably masculinized. Singers generally tried to neutralize this problem by explaining that, though they wanted to marry, they wished to wait until retirement before settling down with the right man. Soprano Zelig de Lussan made herself sound like a typical middle-class housewife, even though she had a demanding international career, when she observed that

woman’s proper sphere [is]... to shine in the home, to be a conservatory of beautiful flowers, giving forth exquisite fragrance of thought and act to her husband and children. When woman goes into business competition with man she loses her domestic finish, as

that women should be consigned to a private sphere. Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 15.

⁵⁸Prospectus, Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company, 1889–90 season, found on Archive.org https://archive.org/details/cihm_16407 (accessed 2 October 2009).

⁵⁹Carroll D. Wright, “Families and Dwellings: VII.—Lessons from the Census,” *Popular Science Monthly* 41, no. 33 (August 1892): 475.

it were, and is apt to become shrewd, calculating and devoid of sentiment. The professional woman, that is the actress or the singer, should not be married; matrimony ties her down; it causes petty, tiresome and dangerous jealousies, and as the woman usually advances higher than the man, it makes the latter lose his self-respect.⁶⁰

Later in the same article she explained that “she is not married, and does not intend to marry until she leaves the stage.”⁶¹

Unmarried prima donnas often traveled with a chaperone, usually their mothers, in order to maintain their respectability. The chaperone ensured that the prima donna could not be accused of being too available to men and kept her within the most conservative social traditions of the period. Until she married, Juch always traveled with her mother, a fact that often came up in newspaper stories about her. Juch left no doubt that she was an obedient daughter and that her mother took her role as protector seriously, when she told the *Boston Daily Advertiser* that she would like to hear Josef Hofmann play the piano but only if her “dear mother, who by the way is sometimes too careful of me, thinks well of it.”⁶² Beyond serving as chaperones, some mothers also acted as their daughters’ business managers.⁶³ These stage mothers were sometimes depicted admiringly in public, but usually were only barely tolerated by impresarios who saw them as interfering, inexperienced business managers. The press mocked them as masculinized, overly protective, and aggressive harridans who hurt as much as helped their daughters’ careers.

In Juch’s case, her mother’s presence lent her an air of demure respectability, but it also allowed her to lay the responsibility for any unpleasant decisions and business actions onto her mother, while still maintaining her own image as a young (even naïve) woman, much like some

⁶⁰“Music and Drama: Mlle. Zélie de Lussan,” unnamed, undated newspaper found in HTC Clippings 14: Zélie de Lussan, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²“Miss Emma Juch,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 7 January 1888.

⁶³Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 120–60.

of her most famous characters (Figure 3.3). Clara Louise Kellogg's memoirs indicate that she used her mother in much the same way as Juch did.



Figure 3.3: Emma Juch and her mother, Augusta Juch, undated, TCS 2, Box 309, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University

Of course, some singers married and had children during their careers, which protected them from some types of criticisms. Clara Lane, mentioned earlier in the chapter, had a child in her early twenties, but continued her career for many years afterward. Prima donnas who chose to keep working after marriage or even children, sometimes had to contend with suspicions that they were unacceptably selfish by putting their own needs ahead of their natural obligations to their families. The bias against working married women was strong enough that some prima

donnas kept their marriages secret for as long as possible. Soprano Marie Roze, for instance, hid her first marriage from the public, which writer Albert Parkes attributed in 1896 to concerns about her career. As he explained it, though the rumor of her marriage “lacked confirmation, it dampened the ardor of her most feverish admirers.” Perhaps her secrecy was for the best, since Roze quickly divorced. Parkes noted, “although it is the ambition of leading singers to wear a wedding-ring, it is rare that their first hymeneal ventures prove to be satisfactory.”⁶⁴ Roze later married Col. James Mapleson’s son, Henry. She publicized this marriage (even changing her stage name to Roze-Mapleson). The match with the younger Mapleson raised her public image because she was linked to one of the most important opera impresarios in the United States and Britain.

Working prima donnas with children faced harsher disapproval. An article reprinted in the *American Art Journal* but originally in New York’s *Sun* newspaper, criticized Etelka Gerster for losing her focus as a singer because she was passionately devoted to children and to domestic life.⁶⁵ The writer compared her unfavorably to the childless Adelina Patti, writing that Gerster was “lazy” and “has none of the zeal, none of the painstaking care” of the other singer.⁶⁶ On the one hand he praised Gerster for her commitment to her children, but by placing herself firmly into that most sacred of 19th century gender roles (devoted mother), she had, according to this writer, forfeited her professional role. She could not be a good mother and a good singer.

⁶⁴Albert L. Parkes, “Great Singers of this Century: XI,” *Godey’s Magazine* 133, no. 795 (September 1896): 295. When announcing that Clara Lane was about to have a child with her husband, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that few people even knew Lane was married until her pregnancy became obvious. The author suggested that she kept her marriage secret so as not to disappoint “the young dudes around town who sent her costly flowers and sentimental notes.” “An Olio,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 16, 1889.

⁶⁵“Concerning Gerster,” *American Art Journal* 47, no. 22 (17 September 1887): 339 [reprinted from the *Sun* (New York)].

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

Emma Juch waited until she was thirty-four years old to marry and never performed in opera again. Before her June 1894 nuptials, she seemed unsure what she would do professionally after her wedding, telling reporters that “I shall never again sing in opera, perhaps no more in concert, but sometimes I may appear in oratorio.”⁶⁷ In the end, she continued to perform with orchestras, in recitals, and in music festivals until about 1904. She stopped appearing in opera in 1892, and her marriage may have provided a convenient and face-saving excuse for leaving the stage.⁶⁸ More likely, was that Juch’s husband (and maybe Juch herself) did not think it was appropriate for her to appear on the operatic stage. By giving up opera, Juch maintained her respectability as a married woman by shunning the spectacle of the dramatic stage, as well as avoiding such moral pitfalls as physical contact with another man.

The public’s perception of a female concert singer was not nearly as negative as that of an operatic prima donna.⁶⁹ For one thing, a concert soprano performed more demure repertoire such as oratorios (which were often sacred) or sentimental ballads. Juch could wear regular clothing and did not have to pretend to be someone else or act in a potentially unrespectable story. Moreover, Juch and other concert singers performed not only on the concert stage, but also in more intimate venues in private homes such as ballrooms or music rooms. Although men imperiled their gender identities when they sang in private, women were among friends. These spaces teetered between public and private, were mainly controlled by women, and their audiences were primarily female. Performing in these areas protected the prima donna from the

⁶⁷“Miss Emma Juch’s Wedding Day,” *New York Times*, 29 May 1894. It was so common for women to retire from the stage after marriage, that some prima donnas, including Clara Louise Kellogg and Lillian Nordica, were pressured by their families or managers to remain single. Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 127.

⁶⁸Towards the end of her operatic career, some critics complained that Juch’s voice was too soft or light for opera, but other writers did not mention this problem. It is possible that her voice had sustained some damage after years of singing on the road. She admitted to the press that she was tired of the rigors of a traveling life as early as 1891, so she might have been glad to leave opera behind for a more stable, less exhausting lifestyle as well.

⁶⁹Sophie Fuller, “The Finest Voice of the Century,” in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds., Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 316.

gaze of a much more extensive and heterogeneous audience in the opera house and maintained her respectability without compromising her musically. It is no wonder that male concert singers were in such danger of being feminized when they specialized in this sort of career.

Prima Donnas as Strong Americans

Female singers had some leeway to portray themselves in ways that might seem more typically masculinized. For example, like other American English-language singers before her, such as Emma Abbott and Clara Louise Kellogg, Juch emphasized her connections with American nationalist ideologies that stressed self-reliance, strength, and democratic principles.⁷⁰ In some interviews Juch discussed her interest in developing a democratic American operatic culture that welcomed everyone into the audience and valued opera performed in English. She encouraged people to support her troupe as an expression of their loyalty to the United States and the future of American music.⁷¹

In addition to positioning her opera company as an American product, Juch also emphasized her own American roots.⁷² She was so routinely described as the “foremost American soprano upon the operatic and concert stage” that it was probably a phrase suggested by her press agent.⁷³ Moreover, she cast herself as a healthy, active, pioneering American woman.

⁷⁰Most American singers, at some point, drew upon nationalist discourses; Emma Abbott, Caroline Richings, and Minnie Hauk also used this discursive strategy. See Preston, *Opera for the American People*.

⁷¹The ways in which Juch and others advertised their patriotism was very similar to the tactics used by impresarios like Henry W. Savage. See Chapters 1 and 2 for more on patriotism, nationalism, and American musical identity and marketing.

⁷²In reality, she was born in Vienna, and when it suited her she traded on her Austro-German heritage as well.

⁷³Some instances when the phrase appeared are: “Miss Emma Juch’s Return,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 24 September 1888; “The Coming Event,” *News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), 1 March 1889; “At Local Playhouses,” *Washington Post*, 2 November 1890; “The Sale of Seats,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 December 1891; and the biography contained in the prospectus for the 1889–90 season of the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company. Juch was actually born in Vienna, but her parents were naturalized American citizen of Austro-German descent, and she grew up in the U. S.

Juch told young women, in an 1891 article, that in order to become a great singer “one must possess splendid bodily health, and be ambitious and industrious ... one must rise early, take plenty of outdoor exercise and frequent cold baths.” She went on to suggest daily calisthenics through long walks, and “light dumb-bell or indian-club exercise,” though she cautioned against overexertion.⁷⁴ At that time, physicians thought that excessive exercise caused sterility and disease because it made women too much like men, robbing women of their feminine biological characteristics.⁷⁵ Since before the Civil War, however, educators and social reformers had counseled women to keep fit through moderate calisthenics so they would be healthy enough to fulfill their vital duties as wives and mothers.⁷⁶ Therefore, though Juch framed her comments as guidance for potential professional singers, she was echoing advice given to respectable middle-class women for decades. Along with the recommendations to exercise and get plenty of fresh air, Juch discouraged the “muffling-up that is practised by nearly all foreign singers who visit this country. They pass their lives in heated apartments, carefully excluding every draught of fresh air for fear they may take cold and be unable to sing.”⁷⁷ Here she contrasted her vigorous life style (which she claimed was the reason that she never missed a performance due to illness) with the

⁷⁴Emma Juch, “The Girl with a Taste for Music,” *The Youth’s Companion* 64, no. 31 (30 July 1891): 418. Rutherford notes that around this time period some singers began to emphasize the physical strength necessary to perform long and difficult Wagnerian operas. Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 219. Juch seems to have enjoyed physical activity throughout her life as a 1925 gossip item in the *Washington Post* quoted Juch saying that she had only “one ambition in life—to play a good game of golf.” Henry Litchfield West, “From Tee to Green,” *Washington Post*, 27 December 1925.

⁷⁵Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Puberty to Menopause: The Cycle of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Clio’s Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, eds. Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1974), 27–30. Physical activity was not the only potential risk to women’s health, higher education, use of birth control or even a “too fashionable life-style” was also thought to be dangerous.

⁷⁶As early as 1858, educator Catharine Beecher suggested a program of calisthenics to help women stay fit. In addition to specific exercises and outdoor activities such as walking, Beecher suggested two hours of housework per day as an appropriate amount of physical exertion for a woman to maintain good health. Linda J. Borish, “The Robust Woman and the Muscular Christian: Catharine Beecher, Thomas Higginson, and Their Vision of American Society, Health and Physical Activities,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 4, no. 2 (1987): 144.

⁷⁷Juch, “The Girl with a Taste for Music,” 418.

cosseted and confined hothouse life of the stereotypical European singer. The subtext that her healthy American way of life was superior to her foreign rivals was hard to miss.

In another story that showed her strength and determination, Juch was knocked out and her head cut badly by a copper cylinder that contained gas for the calcium stage lights during a performance of *Lohengrin* with the American Opera Company on 20 January 1886 in New York City. Accounts of the incident were printed in papers all over the country. The most sensational version, from Nashville's *Daily American*, quotes from a "New York special" under the headline "A Prima Dona's [*sic*] Fortitude,"

the force of the blow threw her [Juch] from her pose, and she staggered against some of the chorus girls, who supported her. An involuntary scream was uttered by three or four ladies in the box at the left of the stage, where Miss Juch was standing, and there was some commotion in the front rows and excitement in the orchestra. Blood began to flow from the singer's scalp, and five physicians were hastily summoned. Miss Juch was so faint and her head was bleeding so profusely that, for a time, it was thought by those behind the scenes that the opera must end then and there. But Miss Juch insisted in going on with her part, and she appeared on the stage to take her farewell of *Lohengrin*, although suffering much pain and bothered by the blood that flowed from the abrasion. She was obliged to omit some of her part, and at the end of the act fell in a dead faint on the stage.⁷⁸

Bloody but unbowed, Juch continued the performance, and her pluck and tenacity were highlighted in this and all other descriptions of the event. While the writers never explicitly compared Juch to European singers (who were routinely described as inconsistent and quick to cancel performances), this story suggested images of American triumph over adversity that are a central component of the national mythology. The episode remained part of her mystique and

⁷⁸"A Prima Dona's Fortitude," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 24 January 1886. Other accounts of the accident are found in "The Accident to Emma Juch," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 22 January 1886; "General News," *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, 21 January 1886; "Emma Juch Seriously Injured," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 22 January 1886; "Musical Melange," *Daily Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 24 January 1886. Tenor William Candidus was also injured in the mishap, although most accounts do not mention him. The image of the young Emma Juch bleeding while singing Elsa was simply too exciting, perhaps, to add another, distracting, figure to the story—especially one who was supposed to be strong and brave.

was repeated in at least one obituary as a testament to her artistic commitment.⁷⁹ In the prospectus for the Juch Opera Company's first season (1889–90), the story served to show her resolve as well as her connections to rich and important music lovers since the account includes the fact that Mrs. August Belmonte (the wife of a wealthy financier) inquired about her health after the performance.

These stories about Juch's emotional and physical prowess endowed her with an almost masculine strength, as opposed to the typical Victorian stereotypes of women as weak, hysterical creatures best left at home and shielded from life's hardships. Rather than embarrassing her, these anecdotes served to bolster her image and contributed to her prestige. Indeed, in one bizarre anecdote, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that sometime early in her career (it is not clear exactly when), J. Charles Davis, her manager at the time, conspired to have her kill a bear as a publicity stunt. He hired two boys to trap a bear cub and raise it to adulthood when he would bring Juch to the Poconos to do the deed. The paper quoted him exclaiming

She'll send the skin to New York and I'll do the rest!...All I want is somebody to go out and catch me a live bear, fetch it in here, and keep it until the time is ripe for Miss Juch to come up and kill it. Then you simply tie the bear so it can't get away, and give Miss Juch a gun, let her take a rest on something, fire, and blow a hole through the bear bigger than one in a theatrical contract. See? And leave the rest to me. I'll do the roaming after I get to New York and the ear of the press. All I want is somebody to run out, catch me a live bear, and fetch it in. I'll do the hard work.⁸⁰

Apparently the bear did not cooperate, escaped its captors, and the plan fell apart. The tall tale says as much about the absurd lengths operatic managers went to for publicity as it does about prima donnas.⁸¹ In this case, Juch was to be showcased as some kind of operatic Annie

⁷⁹John Alan Haughton, "Emma Juch, Star of Eighties, Dies in New York," *Musical America*, 10 March 1939, found in M-Clipping File (Emma Juch), Music Division, New York Public Library.

⁸⁰"How She Killed a B'AR," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 March 1895.

⁸¹Davis was not the only manager to dream up fantastic tales for publicity purposes. Despite her misgivings, Maurice Strakosch spread a rumor around Paris in 1869 that Minnie Hauk had been kidnapped by "Red Indians"

Oakley—a pioneer in a pioneering country, rather than the domesticated, animal-loving woman that some of her publicity made her out to be.

Both the bear-hunting publicity stunt and the stage accident served to underline her strength of body and character. In other contexts, this image would have been unacceptably manly. Certainly hunting at the turn of the century was one of the key components of the vigorous, outdoor life that Theodore Roosevelt and others advocated to reinvigorate American manhood. For Juch, these stories seem to have served simply to remind the public that she was an exciting woman—her unusual experiences were more titillating than threatening. Perhaps if Juch really hunted bears, she would have had a problem, but the story was obviously just an elaborate joke and she would never *actually* hunt a bear. Juch's life became as much a performance as when she was on stage, which was exhilarating for her audience and safer for her.

Prima Donnas and the Business of Opera

The potential for music to provide an outlet for ambitious young women who wanted a career outside of the home is evident in Juch's life. In many ways her professional career followed the natural progression for a successful opera star. She debuted as a staff singer with a large company, built her reputation and visibility by singing with major orchestras, before joining a series of opera companies. With each move, she became more important to the troupes for which she sang until she had enough experience and name recognition to headline her own projects. Between 1888 and 1892, she teamed with Charles E. Locke, for a series of business ventures. She toured the country first with the Emma Juch Operatic Concert Company (a

but the chief was so captivated by her voice that he let Hauk go. Minnie Hauk, *Memories of a Singer* (1925, repr. New York: Arno Press, 1977), 45.

chamber group that existed for about three months at the end of 1888), the Juch-Perotti Concert Company (performed during spring 1889), and finally the Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company, which began traveling in the fall of 1889.

Many touring companies were named after female singers, including Caroline Richings, Emma Abbott, Clara Louise Kellogg, and Nellie Melba.⁸² A successful singing career gave women the power within the industry to secure management, financial backing, and support among critics to launch their own opera or concert companies.⁸³ Hundreds of books and articles published around the turn of the century advising women how to start their own small businesses indicate that many people outside the arts also saw women as viable entrepreneurs.⁸⁴ Starring in an opera company was similar to other types of businesses women managed at this time because it was a professional extension of something women did for free. Even so, few prima donnas undertook more than the artistic management of the companies that carried their names.⁸⁵ Even if a prima donna's public role was on the musical side of the company that did

⁸²Caroline Richings served as the business manager of her company in the 1860s and 1870s, whereas Abbott, Kellogg, and Melba were artistic directors like Juch. There were also some female concert and theater managers in the nineteenth century. Jane Kathleen Curry, *Nineteenth-Century American Women Theatre Managers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994) is an informative source on female theater managers. For more about female opera managers see Katherine K. Preston, "Dear Miss Ober': Music Management and the Interconnections of Musical Culture in the U. S., 1876–1883," in *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840–1900*, ed. John Graziano (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 273–315; and Preston, *Opera for the American People*.

⁸³Susan Rutherford, "The Prima Donna as Opera Impresario," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna*, 274.

⁸⁴Angel Kowlek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 99.

⁸⁵More than likely each company had a slightly different balance of power depending upon the personalities and contracts involved. Confusion about the role of a singer featured in the title of a company was widespread enough that, in correspondence about whether he would join a concert company being organized by manager David Blakely in 1889, bass Myron Whitney asked not to be named in the troupe's title. He explained that he was concerned this would mean he would bear some financial risk for the tour. Evidently, this would not have been the case, because Giuseppe Campanini, the man for whom the company ultimately was named, later threatened to pull out of the tour unless he was paid \$350 per performance and half of the tour's profits, suggesting that he was functioning as Blakely's employee not partner. David Blakely Papers, General Business Correspondence, Box 1, Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. A contract between Marcella Sembrich and the operatic managers Abbey, Schoeffel and Grau for a tour of forty concerts during the 1895–96 season (signed just eighteen months after the Juch company went bankrupt) stipulated that Sembrich would decide on the program, but that the "direction and business management of the concert tour shall be under

not mean that she did not wield considerable influence on the business matters of the troupe as well. In one interview, Max Strakosch explained that though he was the business manager of the Clara Louise Kellogg Opera Company, the prima donna had significant influence over all facets of the troupe's activities.

You would be surprised to see how good her [Kellogg's] judgment is about business matters. She is very liberal in her dealings with me—lets me do just what I like; still I always consult her before making move, not only because it is proper to do so, but because I wish to have the benefit of her judgment, which is excellent.⁸⁶

The quotation reveals the power dynamics in the Kellogg troupe as Strakosch suggested that had she wanted to, Kellogg could have overruled his business decisions. Rosnati, the tenor who complained that he had been fired from the company by Strakosch to appease Kellogg, was evidently correct in his reading of the power dynamics within the company. Whether or not he was actually fired to mollify Kellogg or for another reason is now impossible to determine. By modern standards close cooperation between a businessman and his most important asset (in this case a famous prima donna) would seem to be the most prudent course, however, business partnerships between men and women were unusual outside of the arts. Men were supposed to be the business leaders and dominate women in that arena. Typical gender roles were often not followed within opera companies, however, which could result in the sort of tensions Rosnati revealed in Kellogg's troupe.

the sole and exclusive direction of Messrs Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau." After expenses, Sembrich received 75 percent of the profits, with the rest going to the managers. Contract between Marcella Sembrich and Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau, 23 October 1894, Marcella Sembrich Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 32, Music Division, New York Public Library. For a discussion of these issues in relation to Caroline Richings' company, see Preston, *Opera for the American People*.

⁸⁶Olive Logan, "Clara Louise Abroad," *Daily Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 28 September 1878.

Men who gave up their own careers in other fields to manage their wives faced considerable disdain.⁸⁷ Unless they proved their business acumen (such as in the case of Abbott's husband/manager Eugene Wetherell), the press often caricatured these men as unambitious, incompetent businessmen living vicariously through their more successful spouses. Married women, unlike when they were single, could not legally sign documents or carry out other financial or business responsibilities until the end of the century. A prima donna's husband gained an automatic job after marriage in which he may not always have been competent. "He gets himself laughed at by running about everywhere, on the occasion of his wife's benefit," mocked one commentator, "soliciting, calling, writing, and squabbling. He sticks to the journalists like a leech, writes articles himself, and insinuates all sorts of reports against his wife's rivals."⁸⁸ In this article, the writer largely absolved prima donnas of blame for many of the actions that could tarnish a female singer's reputation. Instead, this prima donna was portrayed as a dupe of her husband who was actually responsible for fanning jealousies within troupes, leaking unflattering stories about other performers to the press, and, the author alleged, ordering his wife to develop a "cold" and refuse to sing when it was in her best fiduciary interest to sit out a performance. Although laws that made it difficult for married women to work were sometimes ignored, particularly late in the nineteenth century as individual states gave married women more legal rights, a prima donna often needed her husband in order to function professionally. These legal prohibitions put women in a difficult position in which prima donnas often had the cultural capital to wield a certain amount of power, but also had to rely on proxies to accomplish many basic business tasks.

⁸⁷Men who were already managers before they married a musician whom they subsequently managed were largely exempt from these criticisms.

⁸⁸"The Husbands of Prima Donnas," *American Art Journal* 30, no. 5 (30 November 1878): 67.

Like Clara Louise Kellogg and Emma Abbott, Juch clearly was an influential part of the companies that bore her name. The exact nature of her activities within the troupes is not entirely clear because Juch had an important incentive to seem uninvolved in the business management of her companies. Not only would her manager, Charles E. Locke, probably have preferred to be seen in public in the more manly role as head of the business, but Juch also maintained the appearance that she was just a talented singer, not a hard-headed entrepreneur. While some performers, such as Emma Abbott and Caroline Richings, publicized their managerial skills, many others projected a more demure image. Abbott cast herself as a hard-working woman who keenly felt the responsibility of leading an enterprise that provided the livelihood for everyone in her company. Juch, on the other hand was interested in attracting a more upscale audience than Abbott's, who might have been alienated by a woman talking business. In Juch's printed interviews, she consistently indicated that Locke took care of all the financial matters while she controlled artistic decisions. Her opera company was in financial trouble for its entire short life, but contemporary accounts blamed Locke for the dire problems the troupe experienced, not her.⁸⁹

It is possible that Juch was not as detached from the economic realities of running an opera troupe as was generally portrayed in the newspapers. In a typical interview with the *Atlanta Constitution* before a performance, the writer described Juch as chatting "brightly" and then went on to quote her at length.

Yes, our company is an enormous one, organized and equipped for the grandest operas presented in the most perfect manner. We bring our own orchestra of twenty-four able players, a large chorus, an admirable coterie of principal players, a large chorus, and many carloads of appropriate scenery, costumes, properties, etc. Director Locke's

⁸⁹Since Locke was at the helm of several previous disastrous opera company failures (including the American Opera Company's bankruptcy), the press was probably right to assign him much of the blame for the financial missteps of Juch's company.

munificence is the public's gain, and I feel sure so metropolitan and musical a city as Atlanta will do ample justice to the good things set before them.⁹⁰

Thus far, the interview was a typical one with Juch promoting the quality of her troupe and flattering the local townspeople. Uncharacteristically, Juch let slip a business detail—"few cities in the south are large enough or have a theater with seats enough to make a visit by this company profitable"—before going on to talk about how the bad weather was adversely affecting her voice.⁹¹ Juch's comments show her understanding of marketing strategies that would best serve her troupe. She described her large and impressive troupe in ways calculated to pique the interest of the *Atlanta Constitution's* readers, while at the same time positioning her troupe as an excellent way for Atlanta's citizens to prove their gentility and superior taste by attending her performances. She couched these comments, however, in a sort of feminine patter that served to disguise her business instincts.⁹²

She apparently used her contacts in the German-American musical community to try to help her company, as well. Her family had been friends with William Steinway for years, and her father had called on Steinway for help earlier in Juch's career. In 1891, with the Juch company about to collapse for the final time, William Steinway confided to his diary on 20 May 1891 that "old Mrs. [Augusta] Juch and her daughter in law call, and beg me to help Collapsed English Opera Comp [the Juch English Opera Company] which was shipwrecked at St. Louis, but I positively refuse."⁹³ Existing documents do not reveal Juch's level of involvement with the daily

⁹⁰"Miss Juch is Here," *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 December 1891.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²See Chapter 4 for more information on music and civic boosterism.

⁹³William Steinway Diary, 20 May 1891, The William Steinway Diary, 1861–1896, National Museum of American History, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/steinwaydiary/> (accessed 15 November 2013).

operations of the troupes that bore her name, but it is likely that she had more control than she disclosed to the public.

Prima Donnas and Gossip

No woman with as high a profile as Emma Juch was immune from criticism. Female singers during the late nineteenth century were not only the most important symbol of operatic vocal beauty, but also celebrities whose actions were scrutinized and gossiped about in a way very few male singers had to endure. Prima donnas were often portrayed as kind, generous, and supportive of their fellow singers. Just as many articles, however, painted divas as jealous, thoughtless, greedy, and domineering. The so-called “cult of womanhood” put women on a pedestal, propagating the idea that females were saintly, self-sacrificing maternal figures whose only interest in life was taking care of home and family and serving as a moral exemplar for the men in their lives. Professional women threatened this cultural narrative because they were often not mothers or wives, rarely stayed home, and their moral superiority was undermined by their lives on the stage and close contact with men.⁹⁴

Juch’s positive press coverage (no doubt often orchestrated by her or her managers) emphasized her feminine side. In an 1888 profile, for example, her home was described as filled with “bric-a-brac and is a center of a circle of cultured people, among whom are musicians, editors, artists, and a score of the brightest women in New York, who have become attracted and attached to the lovely singer.”⁹⁵ The ideal Victorian home was cluttered with exotic and feminized items (such as Asian *objects d’art* or ruffled fabrics) and visited by interesting people

⁹⁴For more information on the cult of womanhood see Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere*.

⁹⁵“Miss Emma Juch’s Return,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 24 September 1888.

drawn to the house by the genteel qualities of the hostess.⁹⁶ In the same article, the author praised Juch's generosity of spirit by writing that she had traveled all the way from Paris specifically for a large charity concert sponsored by the Aschenbroedel Verein for needy musicians, in which Theodore Thomas conducted an orchestra of three hundred.⁹⁷ As Hilary Poriss points out, prima donnas often publicized their charitable activities to emphasize their adherence to typical female gender roles and to gain symbolic capital by enhancing their reputations through philanthropy.⁹⁸ Male singers also performed in charity events, using them to demonstrate that they were concerned citizens and not self-absorbed and shallow musical men.

Negative stories about Juch, on the other hand, depicted her as temperamental, unsympathetic, greedy, and domineering. One account which circulated around the country, for instance, alleged that Juch stabbed a stage curtain in frustration when she did not get her expected encore during a performance of *Carmen* in Indianapolis.⁹⁹ When the Juch Opera Company collapsed for the first time in May 1891 in St. Louis, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Juch left the city before everyone else "and was the subject of much severe criticism at the hands of her associates, who say she was not at all concerned about their fate, but drew her

⁹⁶For more on Victorian interiors in the 1870s and 1880s see Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde's America*, 85–136. Beverly Gordon explains in her article "Woman's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 281–301, that women were associated so closely with their homes and their decorative style, that "they [women and their homes] became almost interchangeable; symbolically, one could stand for the other" (p. 281). In a similar profile, Lillian Nordica's home, where she "entertains company," was described as "filled with bric-a-brac and ornaments." "Flickers," *American Art Journal* 55, no. 1 (19 April 1890): 7.

⁹⁷"Miss Emma Juch's Return," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 24 September 1888. The Aschenbroedel Verein was a benevolent and social association for German-American musicians. Important conductors such as Carl Bergmann, Theodore Thomas, and Walter Damrosch were all members, as were many of the instrumentalists in their orchestras.

⁹⁸Hilary Poriss, "Prima Donnas and the Performance of Altruism," in *The Arts of the Prima Donnas*, 50.

⁹⁹The story was repeated in many papers. One account can be found in "Stabbed the Drop Curtain," *Grand Forks Herald* (ND), 7 May 1890. Many other sopranos endured unflattering gossip. Minnie Hauk was accused of glaring spitefully at an immensely popular dancer who performed during Act II of the production of *Carmen* in which Hauk was starring at the time. "How They Hate Each Other," *Columbus Daily Enquirer* (GA), 8 November 1878 (and many other iterations).

salary regularly and then left them to get back to New York as best they could, sweetly adding in a note to the company that she hoped to meet them in the metropolis.”¹⁰⁰ A *New York Times* article from this period charged that she did not contribute to a fund raiser for the assistant stage manager even though she was the only member of the company who had been paid. Her fellow singers were particularly unforgiving. “‘Miss Juch’s behavior to us,’ chimed in pretty Louise Meisslinger [contralto with the company] with her piquant accent, ‘I assure you, has been abominable, and we will never forgive it.’”¹⁰¹

If anything, Juch and other prima donnas were more vulnerable to negative gossip as they grew older and lost the power accorded them by their youth and beauty. An especially harsh profile was disseminated widely after 1899 when Juch was in her late thirties. In this story, the author portrayed Juch as almost the opposite of the perfect Victorian woman. The article opened with

I never heard the critics accuse Emma Juch of lacking sympathy or fire in her art, but there must be scores of interviewers in this country ready to swear that she was reared on lemon ice. Upon occasions Mme. Juch appeared the personification of joyousness, the very goddess of mirth, but these occur usually when guarantees look bona fide and when there happens to be no other lady soloist on the bill.

The reporter went on to describe her as “majestic, statuesque, magnificent, if you will, but cold—very cold.”—“I shall never forget the expression of acute nausea that enshrouded the usually immobile countenance of the great artiste,” continued the author, “as she turned, with a cold, stony gaze—a gaze that would freeze liquid air—in the direction of the voice...I saw the other man shrink fearfully” after another journalist involved in the interview volunteered that he

¹⁰⁰“Collapse of the Emma Juch Company,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 May 1891.

¹⁰¹“The Stranded Juch Company: Charles R. [*sic*] Locke’s Latest Exploit in Operatic Wrecking,” *New York Times*, 19 May 1891.

might have known a man who owed Juch money.¹⁰² Here we see an Emma Juch who was not demure, but domineering, “cold as ice” rather than warm and welcoming, greedy instead of generous, and jealous of other female singers rather than self-sacrificing and kind. Although other articles made similar charges, this is the only one I have found that assassinates her character so thoroughly. In 1899, she was nearing the end of her career and was no longer young and powerful. Instead she was older and vulnerable, unable to counter such harsh coverage effectively through publicity of her own making or take retribution against the offending journalist.

Earlier in her career, Juch was not afraid to push back against what she considered to be unfair criticism. On one occasion, a letter to the editor appeared in the Chicago papers in 1886 signed by five of her fellow singers in the American Opera Company refuting charges that Juch was envious of Emmy Fursch-Madi (a more prominent soprano in the troupe) and treated her cruelly. In another instance, she herself wrote a letter to the papers to defend her interpretation of *Carmen*, which had been attacked by a critic in Boston.¹⁰³

These trends in Juch’s press coverage, positive and negative, as well as her responses were not unique. Stereotypes about prima donnas colored journalism about these women at every turn. Divas were cast as grasping and difficult, sometimes in gossip news articles, but just as often by opera impresarios who found it to their advantage to portray their stars (men and women) negatively. If the singers were greedy and imperious, then, in comparison, the impresarios looked like “gallant champions of the operatic enterprise.”¹⁰⁴ Col. Mapleson, for example, complained to a reporter that every lead singer in his 1878 production of *Carmen*,

¹⁰²The interview was reprinted widely. One example is “A Cold, Stony Gaze,” *New Rochelle Pioneer* (NY), 27 May 1899.

¹⁰³See Chapter 5 for more information on, and an analysis of, this episode.

¹⁰⁴Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 188.

except for Minnie Hauk, complained about their parts because they were too small, and it was only through his almost Herculean efforts that the opera ever made it out of rehearsals.

Campanini came to me and asked if the role of the walking gentleman was intended for *him*. Valeria, who played *Michaëla*, thought it was the *seconda donna*'s part, and that it had been sent to her by mistake; while Del Puente, thinking it was a joke, came in smiling, with what he imagined was a chorister's part. Every man Jack of them had some excuse for staying away at rehearsal, and it was by dint almost of sheer force that I pushed the opera to the lights.¹⁰⁵

Every singer created an image that enhanced their careers and took steps to maintain that persona when it was challenged in public. Juch was, perhaps, more aggressive than some in defending herself in the press, but no singer could ignore public relations.

The prima donna was an important symbol of the power of the female voice and personality.¹⁰⁶

By the 1880s, more women were entering the workplace, and many used the arts to become cultural entrepreneurs. Performing on stage as actresses or singers was just one way for women in the arts to gain economic security. Some women who began their careers on stage turned to managing touring attractions (such as Jennie Kimball who ran a juvenile opera company starring her daughter Corinne) or theaters (such as Laura Keane or Mrs. John Drew).¹⁰⁷ In those cases, women leveraged their experiences onstage to become entrepreneurs behind the scenes. For singers like Juch who wanted to perform, becoming involved in the management of their own companies allowed them to have control over their careers that was difficult to achieve in any other way. Because she created an image that was designed, at least in part, to appeal to wealthy

¹⁰⁵“Colonel Henry S. Mapleson,” *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 23 November 23 1878.

¹⁰⁶Rachel Cowgill, “Attitudes with a Shawl,” in *The Arts of the Prima Donna*, 218.

¹⁰⁷Juvenile opera companies were made up of children who performed comic and even serious operas. Many different kinds of traveling entertainments featured child performers (singers as well as actors) who performed content usually done by adults. Little research has been done on this phenomenon. For an analysis of nineteenth-century attitudes towards childhood as exemplified by juvenile dramatic troupes see Marah Gubar, “Entertaining Children of All Ages: Nineteenth-Century Popular Theater as Children’s Theater,” *American Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (March 2014): 1–34.

women who might have found talk of financial matters indelicate, it was to Juch's advantage to downplay the managerial expertise or knowledge she might have obtained throughout her professional life, no matter how involved she might have been in the business operations of her company. At the same time, opera allowed her to circumvent many of the limits enforced upon other women.

Men, too, challenged traditional ideas about gender when they became musicians. They had to combat suspicions about their sexuality, strength of character, and physical virility. Like their female colleagues, men manipulated their press coverage to highlight the ways in which they conformed to traditional Victorian ideas about manhood. Thus, for everyone in the opera world, the power of the press was a double-edged sword. While they might have to endure attacks by jealous rivals, hostile reviewers, or unfriendly social commentators, the newspapers also provided opportunities for singers and impresarios to shape their images and answer their critics.

CHAPTER 4: UPLIFT AND OPERA

I believe that no matter how a man may sink, or or [*sic*] how debased he may be that he will still love music, and I also believe that music has the power to lift up, to elevate, to refine one, and that it is ...the greatest arts of the world.¹

In Chapter 1, I analyzed the ways that critics came to identify opera specifically and art music in general as uplifting. Indeed, much of the discussion about the distinction between high and low art was predicated on the idea that high art was, by its very nature, uplifting and that opera's move into high art was accomplished only when critics and musicians found musical elements in the genre they understood to be uplifting. However, uplift is an older and more important concept in intellectual history than simply a convenient metric by which to measure high art. Going back to Plato, philosophers have theorized about the role of beauty and art in uplifting the body and soul. In the nineteenth century, uplift was part of the continual striving for improvement in all areas of life that consumed many Americans. These Americans believed in progress and that through uplift U. S. culture and its people would approach an ideal state of civilization. Exactly what that ideal might look like and who could expect to reach it was up for debate, of course.

I argue in this chapter that opera in English translation, even though Americans never accepted it completely as high art, still performed the cultural work of uplift in specific contexts from which opera in foreign languages was absent. Within the African American community, racial uplift was a key concept that was interpreted in a variety of ways by a host of important black leaders. It was impossible at that time for African Americans to perform complete operas

¹"The Opera Joseph," *News-Observer-Chronicle* (Raleigh, NC), 29 April 1894. All newspapers cited in this chapter were located in Raleigh, North Carolina, unless otherwise indicated.

in foreign languages in part because there were not enough black singers trained to perform in other languages given the limited opportunities available to African American music students. Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century, foreign-language opera troupes were too large and too expensive to visit the small towns around the country that once could boast at least some contact with smaller companies. Comic- and grand-opera companies performing in English became the only way that residents of small and mid-sized towns could access opera without spending time and money traveling to a much larger area. In certain circumstances in smaller towns and cities the uplifting qualities generally identified with orchestral music and foreign-language opera were also assigned to other types of music, including English-language opera.

First, I will examine the ways the term “uplift” was used in printed reviews, books, and cultural commentaries in relation to music, culture, society, civic identity, and race. Then, I will use two case studies to analyze uplift and English-language opera. The first case study is of the English-language Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company, the first long-running all-African American opera troupe in the United States. Ideas about racial, social, and musical uplift affected not only the founding, management, and performance choices of the troupe, but also the reception of this company by the white and black press. The second case study examines the ways that music was used in shaping and uplifting the civic identity of post-Reconstruction Raleigh, North Carolina. Between 1880 and 1910, Raleigh grew from about 8,000 residents to close to 20,000. Despite living in an urban area too small to attract the most famous and important organizations, Raleigh’s citizens found ways to hear art music and to benefit from music’s uplifting qualities as individuals and corporately as a city. With no access to complete foreign-language operas during this period, Raleigh residents used English-language opera and occasional professional orchestral concerts to construct a genteel civic identity that also reified

segregation between the races by constructing some art forms as “white” and others as appropriate for African Americans.

Defining Uplift in Nineteenth-Century America

Nineteenth-century writers generally used the term “uplift” as it related to music in one of two ways. White authors wrote of music as an uplifting force in the lives of its performers, listeners, and even the nation. Black writers agreed with this generalization, but also employed the term to mean bettering the social and economic standing of African Americans specifically, with music being just one of many paths to equality in American society. Within these two frameworks, the word “uplift” had a range of connotations. In this chapter, I will untangle the many strands of meaning that nineteenth-century writers invested in the concept of “uplift.” Depending upon the context, uplift could connote moral, cultural, musical, racial, or social change through music. In addition, I will add one more modifier—municipal. This last type of uplift was not named at the time, but the ways in which music served to advance economic and municipal agendas were similar to the social mechanisms at work in other types of uplift.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, critics in Europe and the United States suggested that certain types of instrumental music could induce a morally uplifting experience that could change the lives of its performers and listeners for the better. Although other qualities were ascribed to high art as well (such as transcendence and composer intent for artistic worth not economic gain), for music to be classified as high art it had to be uplifting. As I examined in Chapter 1, for much of the century, high-art status was reserved primarily for instrumental music, often from the Austro-German repertoire. As the century drew to a close, however, critics began to include foreign-language opera in the high-art category. In the United States, musical uplift was one method to improve not just the lives of the people but also the

entire nation, and bring American culture to the point that it was not just on par with Europe but also worthy of the country's wealth, power, and sophistication.

Moral Uplift

Pianist Edward Baxter Perry described the process of musical uplift in an article for *Music* in 1892.

If the artist [is] to be a true one, in spirit, as well as in ability and equipment, his audience will be gradually lifted above these trivial, petty phases of mere sensuous pleasure of superficial enjoyment, to a higher and to many a wholly unwonted plane, of spiritual aesthetic gratification; will be stirred, aroused, quickened to intenser [*sic*] life, by the impetuous fervor of his psychical activity, as the unconscious, sluggish iron is charged by mere contact with the powerful magnet... His hearers will find this new state of magnetized being, this awakening of dormant faculties, this involuntary stretching of untried wings, at first languidly pleasurable, then more and more exhilarating, as the artistic spell deepens, till at last there comes a grateful recognition of a purer, worthier delight than that of the senses, and not less real; a glimpse, however brief and incomplete, of a possible soul-life at a higher altitude, apart from all sordid, material considerations.²

For Perry, a “true artist” was one who was not only an excellent performer and musician, but also one who had felt the life-altering power of music. The audience, by listening to a true artist performing uplifting music, entered into a spiritually uplifting event that separated them from “sordid” every day concerns, including music’s “sensuous pleasure.” Perry did not equate moral uplift with a specific religious tradition. His statement has much in common with Transcendentalist ideas about the soul and the goal of existing in a space where the self is at one with God who embodies the universe. American music critics, especially John Sullivan Dwight (who was a Transcendentalist), argued that music was ennobling and could enrich and purify an

²Edward Baxter Perry, “Mutual Courtesy Between Artist and Audience,” *Music* 2, no. 3 (July 1892): 247.

individual's life and soul. Dwight anointed Beethoven's music, especially his symphonies, as the most profound example of morally uplifting music.³ In 1845, he wrote

the music of Beethoven is...a great hearts' [*sic*]confession of its faith, one of the nearest and clearest echoes of the approaching footsteps for the good genius of Humanity. He is the seventh note in the scale, the note which cries for the completion of the octave, the note whose correspondence is the passion of the soul for Order, the purified ambition, which no longer inverted and seeking only self-aggrandizement, contemplates a glorious hierarchy of all humanity, in which each, feeling his true place, and filling it, and led in it, may in one act help to complete and enjoy the universal accord, and this, in the only conceivable manner, satisfying the craving of each single soul to embrace the infinite at once.⁴

Other writers believed Beethoven's symphonies provided moral uplift because the listener could experience emotions in a way that allowed for spiritual growth. According to the critic A. E. Brand, "in Beethoven there is the uplifting sense of an ideal not bounded by the limitations of this world, nor satisfied by the realization of earthly happiness and beauty; where through the misery and sadness of an unsolved problem, or a broken aspiration, there is ever the note of promise, reaching out to something more satisfying than present delight."⁵

For many writers and performers, moral uplift was related to a specifically Christian understanding of spirituality and ethical behavior. Theodore Thomas famously called orchestral music a "sermon in tones" after all. Rev. H. R. Haweis, for instance, declared that "when you listen to a great symphony of Beethoven you undergo a process of divine restraint...musical sound provides a diagram for the discipline, control and purification of the emotions...we stretch forth the spiritual antennae of our being and touch the invisibles, and in still moments we

³Michael Broyles, *Beethoven in America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2011), 57. Broyles argues that American nineteenth-century Beethoven reception was subtly different from that in Europe because, although European critics revered the composer, they did not share Transcendentalist ideas about nature as an all-encompassing "metaphysical, religious, and aesthetic statement." Europeans found "evidence of God in nature" but Transcendentalists thought God was "actually present in nature." Broyles, *Beethoven in America*, 43.

⁴John S. Dwight, "Music Review: Music in Boston during the Past Winter. No. IV," *Harbinger* 1, no. 12 (August 30, 1845), 194, quoted in Broyles, *Beethoven in America*, 56.

⁵A. E. Brand, "The Emotional Basis of Musical Sensibility," *Music* 5, no. 3 (January 1894): 304.

have the songs of the angels, and at chosen seasons there comes a kind of open vision.”⁶ Thus, for Haweis, music had the ability to discipline and purify disorderly emotions that could lead, if uncontrolled, to sinful behavior. In an article reflecting on his experience directing a large children’s choir during the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, William S. Tomlins connected music’s potential for moral uplift with his students’ religious awakening.

The power of his own voice comes as a revelation to the child. Like the man on the summit of the mountain, he feels some of the greatness of his own nature, and like the complete bell, he has to ring out to voice himself to the world...His ideals, too, are enlarged. He can better understand a being who is all love and all power, who gives to all, who helps every one...This, then, is the object of our work...To ennoble him by contact with the highest in thought and feeling that brain and thought can produce. To have him know that his fellow is his brother, and that God is his Father, and then to send him a missionary to his own home. This is the use to which we put music, and measurably we accomplish our purpose.⁷

According to Tomlins, then, music allowed his charges to experience God in such a profound way, they would be motivated to proselytize to their own families.

Before World War I, there was even a movement to bring music to prisons, because at least some social progressives believed it could rehabilitate criminals. Historian Gavin James Campbell observes “that anyone even cared to bring the luxury of Mozart and Beethoven to such reckless and dangerous members of society proved that music fostered bonds of humanity in ways matched only by Christianity.”⁸ After Geraldine Ferrar gave a recital of parlor songs in a prison, Mary Reynolds Carter of the *Atlanta Constitution* speculated that the “prima donna’s songs [might] have sown within the hearts of some the seed of aspiration that in later years will bear

⁶H. R. Haweis, “Music, Emotion and Morals: An Address at the Parliament of Religions,” *Music* 4, no. 6 (October 1893): 603.

⁷William L. Tomlins, “What Music has Done for Needy Children,” *Music* 5, no. 3 (January 1894): 341–42.

⁸Gavin James Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 40.

the fruit of upright honesty and straightforward integrity.”⁹ Of course, Christian writers had recognized music’s spiritual power for centuries but in the nineteenth century, music’s uplifting qualities were extended to otherwise secular music.

By the 1880s, Wagner’s ideas had become a powerful influence on leading American music critics, and writers began to entertain the notion that opera (or at least Wagner’s works) could provide moral uplift. Many American thinkers were attracted to Wagner’s philosophies, especially to what they perceived as his almost American-like optimism, business acumen, and egalitarian political beliefs.¹⁰ Yet even Wagnerian critics and musicians disagreed as to the type and the source of uplift his operas provided. According to Walter Damrosch, Brünnhilde’s sacrifice at the end of *Götterdämmerung* represented the “close connection which always must exist, directly or indirectly, between art and religion—that the two are inseparable, serving the same purpose and striving for the same ends.”¹¹ For other critics, Wagner’s operas, although not exactly Christian, allowed the listener to improve themselves through exposure to great music. Writing about *Parsifal*, Louis S. Russell declared that “no one will wish to dispute the ethical force of the work, the splendid impulse for good, the correctness of the doctrine it preaches, of final supremacy of good over evil; but how little of true Christian sentiment is contained in the drama after all.”¹² The notion that opera could be uplifting is quite different from earlier

⁹Mary Reynolds Carter, *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 May 1910.

¹⁰Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights: An American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 28–29, 221. As Horowitz points out, many American perceptions of Wagner were distorted at best, completely mistaken at worst. This does not change the profound influence Wagnerism had on American musical thought between 1870 and World War I. For another viewpoint on Wagner’s influence on American culture see Joseph A. Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation: A Social History of Music in America* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 142–68.

¹¹Walter Damrosch, “German Opera and Every Day Life,” *North American Review* 149, no. 397 (1889): 704.

¹²Louis S. Russell, “Wagner’s *Parsifal*: A Picture of the Bayeuth [sic] Performance, and a Reflection on Ethics,” *Music* 3, no. 1 (November 1892): 56. Not everyone fell under Wagner’s spell. Some critics thought the music boring and questioned the spiritual depths of the libretti and scores.

American opinions about the genre, which held that opera was mere entertainment because of its association with the theater, its link to the wealthy, and the artifice of operatic works.¹³

Cultural and Social Uplift

Many American writers and musicians were convinced that culture in the United States was insufficiently developed and not centered on serious artistic products. Authors often criticized audiences for “low-class” taste, which they thought could lead to immoral behavior and disrupt American society’s upward trajectory. For these critics, once the influence of serious music had culturally uplifted American musical life, then listeners would be open to the morally uplifting qualities of art music that would benefit not only individuals but also all of American society. Ideas about music’s potential for moral and cultural uplift circulated throughout the country in textbooks, listening guides, and music-club lectures and concerts, among other means beginning in the 1880s.¹⁴ Educators and critics such as W. S. B. Mathews, the editor of *Music*, advised music-club members on how to bring uplifting music to their meetings and towns. Mathews even devoted an entire section of his journal to music clubs, printing essays and other types of content that could be shared during meetings.

Gilded Age philanthropists attempted to harness the uplifting power of classical music of all types to help the “less fortunate” in projects of social uplift. Members of the white and black middle and upper classes thought they could help the lower classes, minorities, and even criminals through exposure to art music, which could counteract the supposedly negative influences of other types of popular music. People such as conductor Anton Seidl, Laura

¹³Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation*, 52–53. See Chapter 1 for a longer discussion of opera’s move from entertainment to high art in the American cultural hierarchy during this period.

¹⁴For more information on music appreciation as a cultural movement that sought to uplift American society through exposure to classical music see Julia J. Chybowski, “Developing American Taste: A Cultural History of the Early Twentieth-Century Music Appreciation Movement” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008).

Langford, the manager of the Seidl Society, and Henry Higginson, founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, believed that by allowing the working class access to art music, they could not only contribute to their listeners' spiritual enrichment, but also socially uplift the poor by refining their behavior in order to prepare them for a better life.¹⁵

Music was just one aspect of a larger project of social uplift that was part of Gilded Age and Progressive Era public ideology. From Jane Addams's Settlement Houses to the Carnegie Libraries, philanthropists and reformers thought the arts were an important part of an advanced and civilized society. According to Andrew Carnegie, "the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise—parks, and the means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste, and public institutions of various kinds."¹⁶ New musical institutions such as orchestras, music clubs, and concert series were established, in part, to provide this kind of social uplift. Although many of these institutions concentrated on instrumental music, vocal music and opera had its supporters as well. Musical philanthropists served multiple agendas through their activities. On the one hand, providing art music to the poor was a way to improve their lives within a belief system that counted moral and cultural improvement as important (if not more so) than direct financial assistance. On the other hand, by insisting that art music was better than popular music such as ragtime or Tin Pan Alley songs, these philanthropists reinforced and strengthened the existing cultural and social hierarchy.

The People's Singing Classes in New York City founded by Frank Damrosch (Walter's brother), labor leader Edward King, and social worker Charles Stover in 1893 is an example of a

¹⁵Joseph Horowitz, *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's fin de siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁶As quoted in Ruth C. Crocker, "Cultural and Intellectual Life in the Gilded Age," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 217.

philanthropic attempt to give the lower classes access to social and moral uplift through music. Established to give the working classes music instruction, the program was so popular that by June 1894, over 700 people were involved in elementary to advanced singing instruction. The highest-level class quickly became the basis for the People's Union Choir, which performed at Carnegie Hall for many seasons. In 1895, Damrosch wrote that while the musical values of choral singing were important, music's "influence upon character" was also a significant feature of the classes. Choral singing taught "discipline, obedience, subordination, self-reliance, attention, concentration, precision...the larger lessons of unselfishness and cooperation, and points the way to the broader view of human life by its example of fellowship and brotherhood."¹⁷ Conspicuously absent from Damrosch's list of benefits was any mention of leadership skills or encouragement of personal initiative. According to musicologist George Martin, Damrosch's primary goal was to develop an elite, professional-level choir for the Carnegie Hall concerts. He resisted attempts by his co-founders to incorporate opportunities for students to lead the classes and choirs themselves, arguing that this would damage the quality of the upper-level ensemble.¹⁸ Damrosch's dictatorial control over the choir also betrays an attitude that music's uplifting power was best utilized to maintain the social status quo while morally improving the lower classes. He seemed to have had no desire to aid his students in gaining skills and self-confidence that might have helped them better their economic circumstances, instead, such characteristics as "discipline, obedience, subordination...[and] precision" were the perfect skill set for a factory worker.

Many of the musical projects designed for social uplift made art music available to the "masses" by providing cheap or free concerts. For white Americans, the lower class could not be

¹⁷Frank Damrosch, "Influences of Choral Singing," *Harmony* 1, no. 2 (February 1895) as quoted in George Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty: America's First Family of Music* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 153.

¹⁸Ibid.

lifted into a new socio-economic stratum through participation in, or attendance at, classical-music performances, but they could emulate more financially successful individuals through exposure to the best music. Assuming that the “best” people were marked by their genteel behavior and their love of “good” music, philanthropists sought to offer the lower class exposure to the musical repertoire and social rituals of the middle and upper classes. Under this reasoning, not only would the poor have the opportunity to participate in a morally uplifting experience (hearing art music), they could also learn how to act like their social betters through contact with proper concert etiquette. In his broken English, Seidl explained these ideas

We play only good music; we know, the people need it, and this is the cause, that the noble ladies of the Seidl Society don’t spare the large expenses and the terrible difficult and heavy work give the good people, what he needs, and what he must have. It is not only right, to give the poor free music at the different parks, but the Bands must play good music. The people not understand it first, but later he will whistle it with more dash and vigor, as the rich, who sits in his box and chatter, because—he does not understand it. But the low kind of music demoralizes the people. One of the many good works of the Seidl Society is to give good music for the less rich, for the poor, and in the same time enjoys and educates himself.¹⁹

In much the same way that the Society’s yearly Thanksgiving dinners provided nourishment for their bodies, the ladies of the Seidl Society provided nourishment for their audiences’ souls by protecting them (and all of society) from the “demoralizing” effects of “low” music. Seidl Society audiences were expected to participate in the genteel performance etiquette of the concert hall. Notices were posted at Society concerts that “real lovers of fine music are considerate of their neighbors and always thoughtful of the courtesy due to the conductor and the orchestra.”²⁰ This disciplining of the audience was one way that class- and race-based notions

¹⁹Seidl letter in Seidl Society Records, Brooklyn Historical Society, as quoted in Horowitz, *Moral Fire*, 151.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 145.

of decorum and civility were reinforced among a poor, often immigrant or minority, population.²¹

Producers of other types of entertainments appropriated ideas of social and cultural uplift to position their attractions as uplifting as well. The important difference, however, is that these impresarios' motivations were primarily financial. For instance, B. F. Keith used language similar to Seidl's to market vaudeville as a "high-class" entertainment. Advertisements suggested that patrons might, at first, "fidget and squirm" during the classical sections of vaudeville, but once they became accustomed to the "better" acts (such as operatic arias performed by famous singers), they would appreciate the music. The marketing suggested that Keith and other high-class vaudeville producers also encouraged the restrained audience behavior that was more in keeping with art-music concerts than the typically rowdy vaudeville crowds. As historian M. Alison Kibler notes, "the desire to use the art of vaudeville theaters to cultivate highbrow tastes and polite modes of spectatorship among the masses resembled other campaigns to transform immigrants and the working classes through symphony concerts, foreign operas, and art museums."²² Introducing so-called "high-class" music allowed Keith to charge more for admission and opened vaudeville up to a female audience. With a quieter crowd and more genteel music, women could attend vaudeville without fear of compromising their respectability.

²¹Daniel Cavicchi identifies the habit of "attentive" listening as an extension of the ideal of "plain living" popular as early as the 1850s in large northeastern cities. See *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011). Other scholars have interpreted the impulse to discipline audience behavior as a way to mark certain kinds of entertainment as appropriate only for the upper classes. See Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). Sociologist Richard Butsch sees the enforcement of ideas of middle-class decorum in the concert hall as one aspect of a larger project of regulating the lower class's access to certain types of leisure activities (such as drinking or gambling), and thus limiting their disruptive influence on American society. Richard Butsch, "Introduction: Leisure and Hegemony in America," in *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, ed. Richard Butsch (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 3–27. See the second case study in this chapter for a longer discussion of ways that ideas of whiteness were reinforced through access to some kinds of entertainment, particularly opera.

²²M. Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 28–29.

Of course, the concept that classical music was educational as well as musically and socially uplifting for the audience could quickly degenerate into the worst sort of snobbishness as people were implicitly (or even explicitly) told that the music they liked was insipid and foolish. Writer and pianist Edward Baxter Perry highlighted the perils of musical uplift in an article in the July 1892 issue of *Music*:

When a man's whole manner says to his public, "This is something which you ought to understand, but of course you do not, and so you must take it on faith, and duly admire my superior powers," he is naturally and quite pardonably met with indifference, if not with sneers...But he who says to his audience, with the whole concentrated force of his being, "Come let us enjoy together the exquisite beauties, the subtle suggestions and passionate power of these great works. I will do my best to interpret, you to comprehend," may be sure always, even under most inauspicious conditions, if not of full intelligent appreciation, at least of respectful attention and sympathetic interest, and will often be astonished by the spontaneity and profundity of the musical intuitions of many a novice.²³

As Perry shows here, the misrecognition (as Bourdieu would term it) between the classes can either function or misfire. There is a fine line between condescension towards the lower class and their unrefined musical taste, and excitement over sharing beautiful music with others. If members of the lower and middle classes perceive the philanthropist or performer to be patronizing rather than caring then the exchange fails. On the other hand, if the cultural exchange between the two parties remains friendly, then both sides may find the transaction meaningful. Late nineteenth-century cultural philanthropists spent considerable time teetering along the edge of that line as they worked to make art accessible. Jeannette Thurber and Theodore Thomas, for example, used the rhetoric of musical uplift when marketing the American Opera Company. Their troupe failed, in part, because they were unable to translate their idealism into a reality that was appealing to their audience. Explicitly telling potential

²³Perry, "Mutual Courtesy Between Artist and Audience," 247–48.

customers that their musical taste is unrefined and uneducated was not necessarily the best way to encourage them to part with \$2.50 to go to the opera.

Municipal Uplift

Closely related to cultural and social uplift, municipal uplift (my own term) is essentially the use of music to project an image of refinement and civility for an entire city. Although I have never seen a nineteenth-century writer use the term “uplift” when referring to music’s role in boosterism, the processes of social and cultural uplift in one person’s life is played out in very similar ways within a larger community. Critics encouraged individuals to attend concerts in order to demonstrate their good taste and refinement, as well as enact a ritual that confirmed their social class in front of their peers. While only those present at the concert could fully appreciate the performance of gentility going on in the audience, journalists could use descriptions of concerts and their audiences as a way to project a corporate image of sophistication and elegance to their readers. The presence of famous performers or high-art attractions such as symphony orchestras or opera troupes also became a marker of the refinement for an entire city and a way for municipal leaders to demonstrate the area’s economic and cultural vitality. Additionally, the audience at an “uplifting” event like a concert or opera could be morally or musically uplifted by the experience. Journalists extended the benefits of an individual concert to an entire city by implying just the presence of a respected organization somehow uplifted the area. By the late nineteenth century, New York’s image as the cultural and economic center of the United States meant that its newspapers did not necessarily use the language of municipal uplift as often as in other places. New Yorkers already saw their city as the most uplifted place in the nation, so there was little reason to confirm their cultural status in

print. Other cities across the country, no matter their size or location, used (and still use) music in projects of municipal uplift.

Whether it was the opening of a new venue, an amateur performance by the local orchestra or opera company, or a visit by a traveling attraction, local journalists and critics exploited music to bolster local pride, as well as to announce to the world the town's and its citizens' excellent qualities. A performance by the Emma Juch Grand Opera Company in Helena, Montana, occasioned a local writer to reflect on the growing refinement of the area, and the economic implications of the town's evolution from a tiny Western outpost to thriving town of 13,834 people.

Many a night, wrapped in the blankets around the camp-fire, have they [old-timers] been lulled to sleep by the music of the wolf and coyote, and been roused from sweet dreams of sweethearts and home by the war cry of the savage. That was a long time ago, when Helena had only one store and thirteen saloons, and the pop of the revolver and bullwhacker's whip kept the echoes hustling in the surrounding hills. But the memory of those hilarious days is still green in the hearts of the old-timers, and when Juch and her band opened out in grand chorus there was a movement among the veterans—an involuntary reaching around for the hip pocket as suggestive as it was ominous in the days of yore...But they soon realized the change which a third of a century had brought in their homes, and laughed when others laughed and wept at the proper time. They [thought] grand opera, a good thing, and immediately added 10 per cent to the price of town lots.²⁴

In Los Angeles, the simultaneous visits of the Emma Juch and the Emma Abbott Opera Companies in 1890 prompted the observation printed in the *Los Angeles Times* that “we are beginning to establish our claims to be considered a music-loving population, judging by the manner in which our citizens have turned out and patronized the two operatic organizations that

²⁴“Western Musical Criticism,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 21 March 1890. The article in *The Sun* was a reprint of a story first published in Helena. The presence of this piece in a Baltimore paper shows the fascination Eastern cities had with the West, as well as Westerners' desire to play on the mythology of the West while proclaiming their growing urbanity. Montana became a state in 1889 and its capital, Helena, enjoyed an economic boom in the early 1890s because of high silver prices.

have been ministering to our aesthetic natures during the past week.”²⁵ Although Los Angeles and Helena were both Western cities, they were quite different in many other ways. Los Angeles was already one of the biggest cities in the United States and had outgrown its roots as a frontier town. Helena was a much smaller city that was largely dependent upon the local mines for its economic prosperity. Yet, both places used opera to prove that their residents were sufficiently educated and aesthetically advanced to enjoy a cultivated art form like opera, which, in turn, reflected well on the city itself.

Racial Uplift

In the aftermath of Reconstruction and the imposition of Jim Crow laws, politicians and social critics were preoccupied with race. For black authors, the uplifting power of art music was part of racial uplift both within the African American community and in the wider American society.²⁶ By the 1880s, many black intellectuals and members of the educated elite gave up on the dream of equal access to American society that seemed within reach after Emancipation and retreated to a more limited goal. Rather than fighting for equality for all, they focused instead on “deserving” individuals who were well educated, spoke without a trace of dialect, had impeccable manners, dressed well, and, most importantly, proved themselves through hard work. Through their actions, they sought to demonstrate that they were worthy of equal treatment by the white majority. This uplift ideology was not as simple as black people acting white in a desperate attempt to get ahead. It was a strategy born of the pressures of living in a profoundly racist society and implemented by a group of people who were essentially

²⁵“The Emma Juch English Opera Company Tonight,” *Los Angeles Times*, 29 December 1890. Los Angeles’ population in 1890 was 50,395.

²⁶See Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878–1943* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

noncitizens.²⁷ Robert W. Carter, in a 1902 article for *Colored American Magazine*, explained the thinking behind racial uplift when he wrote,

with the art of teaching and of creating institutions and other enterprises wherein the enlightenment of the colored race is promoted, earlier efforts are but the stepping stones leading to grander institutions and greater success in the development of race progress. And as it is with the profession of teaching, so it is with other professions of human development, the higher branches of which the Negro is now endeavoring to enter.²⁸

The arts were an integral part of the construction and perpetuation of the black upper class—people historian Willard Gatewood calls “the colored aristocracy.” Educated blacks used attendance at classical-music concerts as one method to project what Gatewood labels “the genteel performance.”²⁹ The public portrayal of elegance and prestige that was part of going to an art-music performance was crucial in developing and maintaining the sense of class consciousness that was the foundation of the colored aristocracy.³⁰

Black authors had a subtly different conception of moral, cultural, and social uplift than those writing for a white audience. While they accepted that good music could help shape good people, they also saw art music as a way to combat negative stereotypes about African Americans. As Alice Harper explained in the pages of the *Negro Music Journal*,

we know that though the best music may, at times, fail to do us good, it will never do us harm, and we cannot say the same of vulgar music with its low and

²⁷For more information on the concept of uplift in the African American community in this time period please see Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850–1925* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1978).

²⁸Robert W. Carter, “Opera and the Afro-American Artist.” *Colored American Magazine* 5, no. 2 (June 1902): 142.

²⁹See Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*.

³⁰Much of the recent research on art music and racial uplift has concentrated on musical pedagogues who positioned the arts as a vital component of racial progress. See Sarah Schmalenberger, “Shaping Uplift through Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 57–83; and Juanita Karpf’s work on E. Azalia Hackley particularly “Get the Pageant Habit: E. Azalia Hackley’s Festivals and Pageants during the First World War Years, 1914–1918,” *Popular Music and Society* 34, no. 5 (December 2011): 517–56. Lawrence Schenbeck applies notions of uplift as presented by Gaines, Gatewood, and Moses to music in his monograph, *Racial Uplift and American Music*.

sensuous purposes. As long as music has a refining influence upon us, and we feel that our present condition is not high enough, we may rest assured that this music is as far from the vulgar as the electric light is from the candle.³¹

It was the “refining influence”—the ability to confer status and sophistication that was denied blacks by white society that many valued about high art. Given the disapproval of minstrel songs and ragtime reflected in articles published by the *Negro Music Journal*, Harper’s vulgar music almost certainly referred to these popular genres. As another unnamed writer in the *Negro Music Journal* complained,

the colored people are much slandered. White men daub themselves with cork, and give minstrel shows that would make any Negro ashamed of himself. White men also perpetrate so-called music under the name of ‘rag-time’ representing it to be characteristic of the Negro music. This is also a libelous insult. The typical Negro would blush to own acquaintance with the vicious trash that is put forth under Ethiopian titles.³²

Harper, however, warned not only against the perils of vulgar music, but she also spoke about the uplifting qualities of the best music, comparing it to the electric light, a symbol of the scientific progress brought about by the ingenuity of the American inventor. While black writers generally accepted the stereotype that African Americans were naturally musical, many simultaneously fought against the image of the uneducated, spontaneous Negro musician. They emphasized the existence of black composers and performers who functioned in the classical music world primarily due to their exceptional training and personal determination, not simply because of an innate ability.³³

³¹Alice Louise Harper, “Music and Negro Musicians,” *Negro Music Journal* 1, no. 5 (January 1903): 69.

³²“What ‘The Concert-Goer’ says of the ‘The Negro Music Journal,’” *Negro Music Journal* 1, no. 2 (October 1902): 28. For an example of the use of minstrelsy by an African American author as a way to reify class lines within the black community see Kevin Gaines, “Assimilationist Minstrelsy as Racial Uplift Ideology: James D. Corrothers’ Literary Quest for Black Leadership,” *American Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (September 1993): 341–69.

³³Thomas L. Riis makes this point specifically in relation to African American female concert singers in “Concert Singers, Prima Donnas, and Entertainers,” in *Music and Culture in America, 1861–1918*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 69.

The implications of music's power of social uplift were different for African American writers than for white critics. Refinement and gentility, as represented by activities such as attendance at art-music concerts, became a currency as powerful as money in identifying the black middle or upper classes. In the white community, decorous behavior was a marker of class distinction, but it could never move an individual up in the social hierarchy from the lower to the middle or upper classes—only financial resources and (for men) higher-status professions in areas such as business, medicine, or the law could do that.³⁴ Because of the legal and social barriers caused by racism, there was little chance that most African Americans could amass the kind of wealth necessary to equal the net worth of members of the white middle and upper classes, and most were barred from practicing the types of professions that defined the middle class for whites. Instead, for blacks, it was education and social refinement that became primary markers of the elite. In an 1891 article, published in a black newspaper and titled “The Colored Aristocracy,” the author explained the characteristics of the African American elite class.

Besides the personal appearance and character of the man or woman who seeks to enter the best colored social circles, there are certain general principles to be taken into consideration before one of the masses can be reckoned among the chosen few.

In the first place, just as there are certain fashionable resident streets for whites, so are there fashionable colored quarters. It is almost impossible for colored people living in certain parts of cities to rise socially. In colored society money has very little weight, education being the chief requisite.

The dialect of the lower class of colored people, which is supposed by the whites to belong to the colored people in general, is never heard among the ‘400’...The prevalent belief among many of the whites that there is no social distinction among Afro-Americans is erroneous, as they are sticklers for social distinction.³⁵

³⁴In the South, land ownership was also an important component of identification in the middle or upper classes. Johnathan Daniel Wells and Jennifer R. Green, “Introduction,” in *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 1–15.

³⁵“Colored Aristocracy,” *Historic Times* (Lawrence, KS), 29 August 1891.

Members of this upper class were often college-educated but were caterers, barbers, teachers, hotel or postal workers, not the wealthy business titans of their white counterparts. Therefore, going to the opera or symphony was part of a genteel performance that played a crucial part in attaining and maintaining one's place in the black class hierarchy. If anything, the connection between high art and elite status that was such an important part of foreign-language opera's move to the top of the cultural hierarchy in the white community was even stronger among African Americans. In the absence of financial markers, more intangible signifiers of class such as opera attendance became even more vital in elite-class formation.

Case Study No. 1: The Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company: Racial Uplift

For African Americans, art music could represent a pathway to racial, cultural, musical, and social uplift. Beginning with the ground-breaking career of soprano Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield in the years around the Civil War, the black press elevated African Americans who performed art music to status symbols and praised them for achieving the highest level of musical accomplishment. Julia J. Chybowski reveals that white responses to Greenfield included "adulation, benevolence, paternalism, curiosity, confusion, criticism and ridicule."³⁶ These varied reactions set the stage for the reception of African Americans in art music for the remainder of the century. Theodore Drury (1867–1943), a classically-trained African American baritone, enjoyed a lengthy career as an impresario, performer, and teacher. In 1900, he founded the first long-running all-African American opera troupe. Although he is largely unknown today, Drury's accomplishments paved the way for singers such as Marian Anderson and Robert McFerrin, and for important mid-twentieth-century black opera troupes such as the National Negro Opera

³⁶Julia J. Chybowski, "Becoming the 'Black Swan' in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America: Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield's Early Life and Debut Concert Tour," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 126.

Company. At the turn of the twentieth century, attendance at a Drury Opera Company (DOC) production became an important symbol of membership in (or aspiration to) the highest level of the black social hierarchy. The enactment of sophistication and gentility in the audience was echoed on stage by a performance that represented, to the company's singers, the highest level of skill and musical accomplishment.

When Drury began his career in the 1880s, American society was becoming more rigidly segregated, and racialized barriers to economic and social success were becoming ever higher. Immediately after the Civil War, many blacks hoped the obstacles raised by prejudice were beginning to diminish, but by 1910, black leaders were almost frantic in their efforts to reverse the effects of the 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson decision and the newly-enacted Jim Crow laws. The pages of journals such as *The Colored American Magazine* were filled with exhortations to politically-active African Americans to fight against new laws and customs that limited their constitutional freedoms.³⁷ African Americans as young as teenagers who had succeeded in any venue were profiled in the black press as examples of what could be accomplished with enough tenacity, personal commitment, and moral strength.³⁸ It was certainly no coincidence that W. E. B. Du Bois and others established the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 after it became clear that only a sustained effort by African Americans and their allies over many years would begin to reverse segregation in the United States. Many other

³⁷The mission of *Colored American Magazine* spells out the political and social dimensions of many of the public projects undertaken by African Americans at the turn of the century: "to the encouragement of those who faint, or would slavishly bend under the weight of a mistaken popular prejudice; and to the inspiration and aid of all our noble men and women, who are fearlessly and successfully vindicating themselves and our people, THE COLORED AMERICAN MAGAZINE has been and is devoted." R. S. Elliott, "The Story of Our Magazine," *Colored American Magazine* 3, no. 1 (May 1901): 44.

³⁸Success stories of African Americans in all professions were publicized by black publications. A typical example of this sort of article can be found in the January 1903 issue of *Negro Music Journal* when J. Hillary Taylor mentioned as many classically trained musicians as he could in order to demonstrate the accomplishments of African American artists throughout the country. He wrote "we have with us many Negroes who have pursued music seriously and systemically under excellent professional tuition and they are now doing much for the true elevation of the Negro musically." J. Hillary Taylor, "A Musical Retrospection," *Negro Music Journal* 1, no. 5 (January 1903): 67.

organizations and political movements gained momentum at the turn of the twentieth century to fight segregation such as the National Association of Colored Women (founded 1896) or the anti-lynching campaign spearheaded by Ida B. Wells and others. Newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* (founded 1905) and new schools such as the Washington Conservatory of Music (founded 1903) helped open up new opportunities for African Americans during this period. Drury's opera company was another response to the limits being placed around African Americans during the Progressive Era.

The opera house became a site of racial, social, musical, and cultural uplift that carried multiple meanings for African American performers and audience members, which were both different from and similar to the social and cultural connotations of grand opera in the white community. In an extremely segregated world, and with little access to financial wealth or respect within the white community, the theater was one of the few places where African Americans could demonstrate their skills and accomplishments to the majority society. Even in theatrical and musical genres that were not prestigious to whites, some African Americans emphasized the racially uplifting effects of activities by black musicians. Singer and actress Aida Overton Walker praised her fellow vaudeville performers in an article she wrote for *Colored American Magazine* in 1905. She described her fellow entertainers as examples of black achievement and ambassadors to the white world.

I venture to think and dare to state that our profession does more toward the alleviation of color prejudice than any other profession among colored people. The fact of the matter is this, that we come in contact with more white people in a week than other professional colored people meet in a year and more than some meet in a whole decade...It is quite true that God has blessed us with much ability along musical lines, but even genius requires nursing to be used to good advantage. When a large audience leaves a theatre after a creditable two hours and a half performance by negroes, I am sure the Negro race is raised in the estimation of the people.³⁹

³⁹Aida Overton Walker, "Colored Men and Women on the Stage," *Colored American Magazine* 9, no. 4 (October 1905): 571.

Walker concentrated on proving that theatrical performers brought prestige to the African American community and were as skilled as whites in her essay, but she concluded with a plea to her male colleagues. Her statement demonstrates that divas (white or black, in popular or art music) realized the importance of their example as empowered voices, especially within the male-dominated society of the early twentieth century.

My final word is to the men. You have your duties to perform on and off the stage, to women as well as to yourselves. Remember this fact: good men help women to be good; and remember also, that in helping women you are really helping yourselves. We must work together for the uplift of all and for the progress of all that is good and noble in life.⁴⁰

Her remarkable feminist statement, made in the midst of the suffrage movement, reminded African American men that racial uplift would not be successful unless everyone was included.⁴¹ Her declaration also reflected the sentiments of the National Association of Colored Women whose motto was “lifting as we climb.”⁴²

Not all African American musicians agreed with Walker’s defense of popular musicians as agents of uplift. As I noted earlier in this chapter, many black writers condemned ragtime and other popular genres as too close to minstrelsy and a bad influence on blacks’ moral development. Just as white writers encouraged the poor to listen to classical music so that they would learn to love it and could participate in music’s morally uplifting properties, so too did African American authors. J. Hillary Taylor wrote,

[so that] our homes may become cultured ones, we should allow only the purest and best in music....The reason the majority of us do not appreciate the best music is that we do

⁴⁰Ibid., 575.

⁴¹For more on art music, African American women, and feminist thought see Juanita Karpf, “‘As with Words of Fire’: Art Music and Nineteenth-Century African-American Feminist Discourse,” *Signs* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 603–32.

⁴²Walker was not the only prima donna who openly expressed her feminist sympathies. Lillian Nordica, for example, was a well-known suffragette. See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of prima donnas, gender, and nineteenth-century culture.

not hear it often enough. If we could hear the best music as much as we do the common-place, we would soon learn to appreciate and value it, for its own sake. Seek to hear the best music performed as often as you can, then surely as the stars shine on a clear night, you will in time, come to love and cherish it.⁴³

As the most successful black opera singer in the country, Theodore Drury was often called upon to set a good example.⁴⁴ Writers laid on his shoulders an obligation to show not only white listeners the best of black operatic performance, but also to lead the way in musically uplifting the black race. The *Negro Music Journal* commented

the great interest manifested by Prof. Theodore Drury, of New York, toward the Negro embracing Grand Opera is note-worthy. His successful performance of *Faust*, last season, marked an epoch in the classical advancement of the Negro musically. Therefore, it is hoped other musicians in various sections of the country will endeavor to interest their community in both grand opera and oratorio, as both musical forms furnish inexhaustible riches for the musical elevation of a people.⁴⁵

This rather elitist vision of racial and musical uplift was not universally endorsed in the African American community. Even within Drury's own circle of friends and colleagues, some people thought that an opera company was likely to be marginalized by whites and that African Americans could only gain the sort of exposure that might affect long-term change in racist American policies and ideas through popular music.⁴⁶ In 1901, Drury became part of a network of musicians and writers based at the Marshall Hotel on West 53rd Street between Broadway and Seventh Avenue in Manhattan often called "Black Bohemia" or "Black Broadway." Because African Americans could not live near the center of white vaudeville around Union and Madison Squares, when George Walker and Bert Williams moved to an apartment on West 53rd Street in

⁴³J. Hillary Taylor, "Music in the Home," *Negro Music Journal* 1, no. 1 (September 1902): 10.

⁴⁴Sissieretta Jones was more financially successful than Drury and was more famous in the white community, but Drury sang full operas while Jones, who said she wished to sing full opera, never accomplished this goal.

⁴⁵"Musical Notes," *Negro Music Journal* 1, no. 2 (October 1902): 31.

⁴⁶See Karen Sotioropoulos, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) for more information on concepts of uplift in Black Bohemia.

1896, they made their home the intellectual and cultural base for black performers. Soon outgrowing a single apartment, the social and professional center of the group moved to the Marshall Hotel which was a remodeled private home that resembled a rooming house with a dining room more than a regular hotel. Poet and novelist James Weldon Johnson, his brother John Rosamond, and comedian Ernest Hogan actually lived at the hotel, and many others such as the Johnson brothers' songwriting partner Bob Cole, Drury, his manager and agent Thomas Pankey, singers and comedians George and Aida Overton Walker, Bert and Lottie Williams, composer Will Marion Cook, and critic Lester Walton were frequent visitors. Harry T. Burleigh and poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar were participants but less central figures. Whites were not excluded from the Marshall Group, as Florenz Ziegfeld, his common-law wife and performer Anna Held, singer Lillian Russell, and vaudevillians Weber and Fields also frequented the hotel.⁴⁷ The Marshall Hotel's dining room became the gathering place for this network. Sunday night dinners were booked solid days in advance every week.⁴⁸

James and Rosamond Johnson formed the heart of the group. In his memoir, *Along this Way*, James remembered, "our room, particularly of nights, was the scene of many discussions; the main question talked and wrangled over being always the status of the Negro as a writer, composer, and performer in the New York theater and the world of music."⁴⁹ Although most of the members of the Marshall network were active participants in a popular culture that, in the twenty-first century, can seem hopelessly racist, artists such as the Johnson brothers, Cook, and

⁴⁷Lori Lynne Brooks, "The Negro in the New World: The Cultural Politics of Race, Nation, and Empire, 1885–1911" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2011), 167. It is not clear how much interaction whites had with Black Bohemia. Brooks indicates that white actors and managers were frequent guests, while Sotiropoulos presents the Marshall Hotel as primarily a black space where white visitors were relatively rare.

⁴⁸Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 52–55.

⁴⁹James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: The Viking Press, 1933), 172.

others in the group saw their work as a way to improve the public's perception of blacks through a more dignified representation of African Americans on stage than whites in blackface.⁵⁰ As Cook exulted after the premiere of *Clorindy* on Broadway, "negroes were at last on Broadway, and there to stay. Gone was the uff-dah of the minstrel! Gone the Massa Linkum stuff! We were artists and we were going a long, long way."⁵¹ Drury frequently took part in these conversations and was one of James Weldon Johnson's closest friends.⁵² Drury's and Pankey's connection to Black Bohemia shows that they were part of a successful group of African American entertainers, writers, and composers who helped to shape music and theater in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. Black Bohemia was also an important intellectual predecessor of the Harlem Renaissance, as many of this group's ideas about the use of culture to secure equality for African Americans were adopted by black authors and composers in the 1920s.⁵³

Besides offering intellectual nourishment and artistic companionship, this network probably also provided Drury with professional assistance. The Marshall Hotel functioned as something of a theatrical agency as well as a training ground for African American musicians. With so many black artists living and socializing in one place, the Hotel became a key stop for young musicians hoping to find employment.⁵⁴ The network could easily have provided Drury

⁵⁰Marva Griffin Carter, "Removing the 'Minstrel Mask' in the Musicals of Will Marion Cook," *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 208. *Clorindy*, starring Ernest Hogan, was a one-act musical written by Cook and librettist Paul Laurence Dunbar. It premiered on Broadway in 1898.

⁵¹Will Marion Cook, "Clorindy: The Origin of the Cakewalk," *Theatre Arts* (September 1947): 61–65, reprinted in Eileen Southern, ed., *Readings in Black American Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 233.

⁵²Brooks, "The Negro in the New World," 166.

⁵³See Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "Music in the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview," in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 1–28.

⁵⁴Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 55. James Reese Europe, for instance, got his first job after he moved to West 53rd Street.

with a supply of singers hoping to perform in New York, though some of them may not have had the training required to sing opera. At least one person who worked for Ernest Hogan took time away from his commitment to Hogan's company in order to sing with Drury. Moreover, because Johnson was a member of the colored aristocracy of Jacksonville, Florida, and as such had an instant connection with many of the most prominent African American families on the East Coast, Drury's friendship with Johnson could have provided him with contacts among people likely to support opera.⁵⁵

The Beginning of Drury's Career

Although there are hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles about the Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company, very few of them contain information that comes directly from Drury, and I have found, as yet, no personal documents such as letters, diaries, or financial records. He is virtually an archival ghost, so there is much about his life and career we many never know for certain. What we do know is that Theodore Drury was born on 16 July 1867, in Bloomfield, Kentucky, and moved to New York City sometime in the mid-1880s. Once he arrived in the city, he set about improving himself—studying the Delsarte method of movement, learning German and French, and taking voice lessons with a white teacher named John Howard.

In an era when there were few opportunities for classically-trained black performers, Drury aggressively made work for himself. He founded the Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company in 1889, reporting that the troupe planned performances in New York City and perhaps an extensive Western tour. Although he did not fulfill that ambitious plan, the company (which was not an opera troupe but a concert company) gave at least three concert

⁵⁵For more information on James Weldon Johnson see Eugene Levy, *James Weldon Johnson: Black Leader, Black Voice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

performances of the final act of *Il trovatore*.⁵⁶ Throughout the 1890s, Drury sang in recital tours of New England, Texas, the Midwest, and parts of the South. He generally performed in churches, sometimes alone, at other times with a company that included a reader, other singers, and a pianist. Many white vocalists made similar tours, but they generally appeared in theaters that were often closed to black performers or audiences.⁵⁷

It is difficult to determine the racial policies of individual theaters in this period because there were no written policies and Jim Crow legislation mandating segregated seating did not begin to pass until after 1900 in most states. The Metropolitan Opera, for instance, evidently sold tickets to blacks because Drury, Burleigh, and others attended performances there. On the other hand, Broadway theater managers were reluctant to sell tickets to blacks. Even when George Walker performed with the Ziegfeld Follies, tickets were generally not sold to African Americans except at Christmas time when attendance among white patrons was very low.⁵⁸ In the South, advertisements make clear that blacks were consigned to segregated seating, but they were also barred from attending some events. For example, despite repeated requests from black leaders to reverse the policy, African Americans were not allowed to buy tickets to Metropolitan Opera performances in Atlanta.⁵⁹

Drury also made compromises forced on many African American performers in this period. During the summer of 1894, a new singer named Koh-I-Baba enjoyed a successful run

⁵⁶Concert companies often advertised themselves as opera troupes, but they had only a few members, did not stage full operas, and generally performed recitals that began with parlor and art songs followed by a concert or semi-staged rendition of one act from a popular opera.

⁵⁷Sissieretta Jones, the so-called “Black Patti,” was an exception to many generalizations about black art-music performers. Her fame allowed her access to many performance opportunities and venues that were closed to virtually all other black artists. See John Graziano, “The Early Life and Career of the ‘Black Patti’: The Odyssey of an African American Singer in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 543–96.

⁵⁸Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 72.

⁵⁹Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South*, 18.

as the “Hindu baritone,” anchoring the vaudeville show playing at the American Theater Roof Garden in New York City. The *Courier-Journal* out of Louisville, KY, broke the story that Koh-I-baba was actually Theodore Drury in February 1895. According to the article, Drury was unable to find work and sometimes even had to pay to perform with white singers. The manager of the American Roof Garden agreed to hire Drury for the summer, but only on the condition that he conceal his racial identity because “the other performers wouldn’t associate with a negro, nor would an audience listen to one.”⁶⁰ Since Drury had already lost several jobs because whites refused to sing with him, the manager’s fears were realistic. Although a white publication, the *Courier-Journal* was Drury’s hometown newspaper and they reported his predicament sympathetically. The author observed that Drury’s “work was most favorably commented upon by press and public. In none of those cases, however, could he have obtained a hearing had he appeared in his true guise—that of an Afro-American.”⁶¹

Drury comes across as ambitious and industrious in the *Courier-Journal*, but also as someone forced by the realities of the theater business to deny his own identity in order to find work. The journalist described him as “light enough to be taken for a Cuban or Spaniard. His hair, beard and mustache are fine and silky, his figure good, and his general appearance most pleasing. He dresses well, having long ago learned that to be shabbily or badly dressed was quite as great a crime as that of being a negro.”⁶² The article ended by announcing that Drury was “tired of passing himself off in disguise” and had organized another operatic concert company that would begin touring in the spring.

⁶⁰“Woes of Koh-I-Baba: The ‘Hindoo Barytone’ Acknowledges Himself a Kentucky Negro,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 23 February 1895.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

Drury's resolve to help himself by undertaking concert tours, his superior education, his ultimate decision to embrace his racial identity, and his self-presentation—well dressed and sophisticated—are all consistent with a self-conception as a New Negro.⁶³ He was an accomplished man engaged in activities that were designed to uplift himself and others around him. Gail Bederman points out that within the racialized discourse of the Progressive Era, whites contended that true civilization was based on institutions and cultural products associated with whites, but that African Americans “were equally tenacious in insisting that civilization was not necessarily white.”⁶⁴ Drury's determination to perform opera, an art form universally considered part of white civilized society, was his way of proving that African Americans were civilized and were part of the march toward the perfect society that was a goal of so many progressives. Within a male-dominated society that only accorded full status as a man to white males who acted within a rather narrow definition of masculine behavior, Drury's dress, manner, and profession were all ways for him to claim his manhood within a society that persistently denied him that position.

Similarly to many African Americans who thought of themselves as politically progressive and were part of the elite, Drury seems to have walked a middle path between the two dominant conceptions of racial uplift in the late nineteenth century. Due to the inflexible enforcement of segregation practiced at the time, many blacks felt they had only two viable choices to find a dignified place in American society: force white acceptance based upon creating a culture that appropriated the most conservative Progressive-Era values of self-help, hard work,

⁶³The New Negro was an image that signified the idea that African Americans could change notions of blackness from white stereotypes emphasizing poverty, illiteracy, and brokenness with a reality of dignity, education, and perfection. For more information see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” *Representations* 24 (Autumn 1988): 129–55.

⁶⁴Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 38.

respectability, and social uplift (W. E. B. Du Bois's approach), or accept segregation and endeavor to construct something dignified within the strictures imposed by whites (Booker T. Washington's view).⁶⁵ In a 1902 article on the role of opera in black culture, Drury defended the arts as a way to "elevate the race" just as worthy as industrial or agricultural endeavors. Although he took pains to explain that he valued the industrial education Washington promoted, Drury stated "the musical profession is quite as honorable, and presents as many opportunities for solving the Negro problem, as farming or some similar pursuit."⁶⁶ While unwilling to reject Washington completely, Drury advocated for a world in which all African Americans followed their talents and dreams in order to nurture racial progress, even if this meant intruding on areas that were traditionally preserved for whites. Drury ended the article with the optimism characteristic of uplift ideology. "The aim must be to be better than any one on earth in a special line and when you have reached that point, matters of race will be secondary."⁶⁷ Though veiled, here Drury invoked the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois and the talented tenth.

The Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company and the Rhetoric of Uplift

After years of false starts and scaled-down ambitions, Drury finally produced his first full opera, *Carmen*, on 14 May 1900, at the Lexington Avenue Opera House on East 58th Street between Lexington and Third Avenue in New York City with a chorus of forty singers. Everyone on stage was African American, including Drury as Don José, who pushed his baritone voice up in

⁶⁵For more information on the different ideas about the path to racial progress held by Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois that form the intellectual backdrop of this period see Kevern Verney, *The Art of the Possible: Booker T. Washington and Black Leadership in the United States, 1881–1925* (New York: Routledge, 2001); and David L. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993). On the bitter feud between Du Bois and Washington see Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁶⁶Theodore Drury, "The Negro in Classic Music; or, Leading Opera, Oratorio, and Concert Singers," *Colored American Magazine* 5, no. 5 (September 1902): 324.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 335.

order to sing the role, and Desseria Plato as Carmen.⁶⁸ Press accounts differ but the orchestra was either all white, or mostly white, and Drury's friend, Harry T. Burleigh probably conducted. The playbill for the evening lists Burleigh as conductor, but newspaper reports disagree as to the identity of the conductor. Most press accounts name Burleigh, but the *Musical Courier* reported that the orchestra was led by Maestro Paret and, in 1906, Drury claimed he had never been able to hire an African American conductor (Figure 4.1).⁶⁹

⁶⁸For more information on Plato see Darryl Glenn Nettles, *African American Concert Singers Before 1950* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 132; and Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 247.

⁶⁹"*Carmen* by Afro-Americans," *Musical Courier* 40, no. 21 (23 May 1900): 23. It is possible that Burleigh agreed to conduct and then backed out after the playbills were printed, but all the articles that identify Burleigh as the conductor were published after the performance. Even the reviews that reported Burleigh was the conductor, however, never mentioned what must have been a striking visual of a black man conducting a white orchestra. Drury is quoted as saying he had never hired a black conductor in "Black Melbas and de Reskes: Negroes in Grand Opera," *The Sketch* 53, no. 677 (17 January 1906): 30. Perhaps Drury was misquoted in the article or, so many years after the fact, Drury might have forgotten that Burleigh conducted the first performance.



Figure 4.1: Theodore Drury as Faust, Program, Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company, 5 May 1902, bpf TCS 65 (Playbills and Programs from New York City Theaters, ca. 1800–1930, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University)

The reviews of the DOC's performance of *Carmen* in the African American press were very positive. Unlike the white press, which was often not sure whether English-language opera was art or entertainment, black publications always presented Drury's productions as unequivocally high art. Articles in African American publications explained that the DOC's *Carmen* was the first complete performance of a grand "opera ever undertaken by an exclusively negro company."⁷⁰ Critics praised the singing and acting of the cast, as well as the costumes and

⁷⁰"*Carmen* by a Negro Company," *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate* (Milwaukee, WI), 17 May 1900. There were precedents for Drury's troupe. The Original Colored American Opera Company produced several performances of the comic

scenery. The black newspaper *American Citizen* reported that Drury “acted and sang his part in a manner which verified the most sanguine expectations of his friends and received a constant ovation. Mme. Plato as ‘Carmen’ acted and sang superbly” and “at the end of the last act the audience became wild with enthusiasm. Hats were tossed in the air and people yelled themselves hoarse.”⁷¹

The audience was evidently integrated, but dominated by elite African Americans from the colored aristocracy. A reporter for the *Dramatic Mirror* described the scene: “The ‘400’ of the colored population of New York crowded the Lexington Avenue Opera House on Fifty-eighth Street to suffocation on Monday evening of last week. Swells and belles in evening dress and bedecked with diamonds crowded into the hall until breathing room was at a premium.”⁷² The *Musical Courier* reported that *Carmen* “was enjoyed by hundreds, both colored and white, in about equal proportion.”⁷³ Journalists noted that African Americans from the major cities along the East Coast and even the Midwest attended the performance.

The black press framed the production as proof of racial progress. “We are glad to see that the negro is advancing so rapidly,” remarked the *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*.⁷⁴ Drury was the logical person to take such a step, according to a reporter from the *Colored American*, because he was “the first highly cultivated male singer of the Negro race” who had been trained by John

opera *The Doctor of Alcantara* by Julius Eichberg in 1873 and A. Farini’s Grand Creole and Colored Opera Company sang *Il trovatore* in 1891. The nature of Farini’s performance of *Il trovatore* is unclear to me as I can find no contemporary accounts of this production, and Farini himself was Italian, though he was known for teaching black singers such as Flora Batson. There are other reports of African American companies producing single performances of comic operas or touring with other types of musical dramas such as the Hyers’ Sisters *Out of Bondage*. African American performers also sang operatic arias in vaudeville and in recital, but Drury was the first to produce a complete grand opera with a troupe that performed for many years.

⁷¹“Drury Company in Carmen,” *American Citizen* (Kansas City, MO), 25 May 1900.

⁷²“Carmen Sung by Negroes,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, 26 May 1900.

⁷³“Carmen by Afro-Americans,” 23.

⁷⁴“Carmen by a Negro Company,” *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate* (Milwaukee), 17 May 1900.

Howard, “the most scientific teacher of singing, perhaps in the world.”⁷⁵ He was also well acquainted with operatic performance practice because, according to the papers, Drury and his leading lady, Desseria Plato, had attended many performances at the Metropolitan Opera prior to *Carmen*’s premiere.

Journalists were not the only ones who thought of the production of *Carmen* as an example of racial and musical progress. Theodore Drury did as well. In a note printed on the front cover of the playbill for the company’s premiere he wrote (using the third person)

This being the first time in the history of the world that the Negro has ever given a complete performance of Grand Opera, Mr. Drury does not hesitate to ask his former subscribers to lend their moral and financial support in this step forward in the musical world.⁷⁶

Drury announced that with this performance of *Carmen* he hoped “to prove that the colored race are so fully competent to take on the serious works of the great composers” that in the future opera performed by African Americans could be given at the Metropolitan after the regular season was over.⁷⁷ Not even Drury, who was undoubtedly ambitious for his young troupe, seemed to consider the possibility of integrating the Metropolitan’s stage. Instead he hoped for a parallel season—separate but equal in art.

Although many white publications ignored the Drury Company, including the *New York Times*, those that ran articles on the troupe were generally supportive of the idea, if skeptical. The *Nashville American* was, by far, the most excited in its coverage, trumpeting that the production of *Carmen* (scheduled for the next day) promised to be “one of the most remarkable events in

⁷⁵“Theodore Drury as a Dramatic Tenor,” *Colored American* (Washington, DC), 28 July 1900. Riis notes that rhetoric about “scientific” education of African American singers was common as it showed that the artists were both highly trained and trainable—both radical concepts in the late nineteenth century among many in the white majority. Riis, “The Changing Status of Black Women Vocalists,” 68–69.

⁷⁶Playbill, Theodore Drury Grand Opera Company, 14 May 1900, author’s personal collection.

⁷⁷“Greater New York,” *Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), 19 May 1900.

nineteenth century musical annals...This performance will mark an epoch in the musical evolution of the colored race, as well as in the history of opera.”⁷⁸ The writer, Roberta Seawell, quickly pivoted to familiar negative stereotypes. “The gifts of the Afro-American as to voice are supreme, and in respect to the emotional temperament he is certainly lavishly endowed but the development of the first quality and the control of the last is not yet sufficient to make the negro artistically adequate for grand opera.”⁷⁹ Despite the extravagant claims for the historic nature of the performance, Seawell was still held captive by conceptions of race that alleged that blacks could sing but were plagued by their uncontrollable emotions making it impossible for them to be successful at a demanding and complex genre like grand opera.

It is in the social meaning of opera that differences between the attitudes of the white and black press become particularly clear. Some white critics thought art music in general, and opera specifically, could be a site of cultural, social, and moral uplift. Music could soothe the soul, raise the moral standards of the listener, and even provide intellectual challenge. White authors did not talk about attending and appreciating great music as a path to changing a person’s socio-economic status. A genteel person from the lower class was still lower class. Only money, and the prestige and educated behavior that came with money, could gain a white person entrance into the middle or upper classes. For African Americans, art music could be not only a means of cultural and social uplift, but also a marker for refinement and gentility that was so powerful it could raise a person’s class status.

African American newspapers portrayed the audience for DOC productions very much like the white press reported on the opera goers who attended the Metropolitan Opera. In both cases, the operas themselves were treated as but one source of the spectacle for the evening. The

⁷⁸Roberta Seawell, “Opera *Carmen* by Negroes,” *Nashville American*, 13 May 1900.

⁷⁹Ibid.

audience members, with their expensive outfits and their obsession with social status, were as much a part of the theatrical experience as the music. The black papers commented upon the people sitting in the boxes in evening dress and beautiful gowns bedecked with jewels. Sylvester Russell reported in the *Freeman* after a 1902 DOC performance that “every box including the balcony stalls was filled with the wealthiest element of New York, Brooklyn, Newark and Boston society. Prominent people from Providence, Cleveland and Indianapolis were also present. More than half of the audience was in evening dress and many of the ladies wore diamond necklaces.”⁸⁰ It was not uncommon for lists of people who bought boxes to appear in the society columns the day after a performance.⁸¹ The white press, as well, commented upon the spectacle of the DOC’s audience and their efforts to prove their status through their clothing and manners. For instance, the *Sun* reported that “every negro song composer of ragtime fame had a box and the head waiter of a hotel in Cleveland had brought twenty guests to the opera with him...Motor cars were plentiful in the line of vehicles that brought the audience to the doors.”⁸²

There were several important differences between the DOC and the Metropolitan which speak to the very different situations of the audience for each opera troupe. The DOC’s casts included professionals, as well as Drury’s students, and amateurs, while the Metropolitan engaged the best singers in the world. The DOC sang in English and charged between 50 cents and \$1 for tickets, while the Metropolitan charged between \$3 and \$5 for admission and performed in foreign languages. Drury’s ticket price was typical for most types of popular entertainment aimed at the middle class such as comic operas or plays. His target audience,

⁸⁰Sylvester Russell, “*Faust* in New York,” *Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), 24 May 1902.

⁸¹White papers also recorded who went to the opera in their society pages.

⁸²“Negroes Sing Grand Opera,” *The Sun* (New York City), 16 May 1905.

though they were characterized in the papers as the “black 400,” did not have the resources to pay the expensive ticket charges that the Metropolitan’s audience could afford.

The DOC’s marketing was quite different from the tactics used by other English-language troupes discussed in Chapter 2. Drury and African American newspapers emphasized the novelty of an African-American company and the opportunity for racial and cultural uplift inherent in the performance of art music by black artists. The rhetoric about the DOC assumed that grand opera was high art that only the most skilled and well-trained musicians could master and only the most sophisticated audience would enjoy. Whether with exultation (by the black press) or surprise (by the white press) the company was credited with musically “elevating” both the audience and the performers. Drury did not highlight that the productions were in English; he did not suggest that it was the audience’s patriotic duty to attend English-language opera, nor did he emphasize the American origins of the members of his company. Indeed, his rhetoric was more similar to foreign-language opera advertisements than to an English-language company’s marketing. In a typical advertisement for *Aida*, Drury invited the audience to attend the performance using elevated language. He described the work as “one of the greatest of the Italian operas.” The race of the singers only intruded obliquely, when he observed that, “I consider it [*Aida*] to be especially adapted to my use as regards the story as it deals with Ethiopians and Egyptians” (Figure 4.2).⁸³

⁸³Advertisement, *Negro Music Journal* 1, no. 5 (January 1903): n.p.

THE THEODORE DRURY OPERA CO.,

Will produce...

Theodore Drury
Manager
Rudolph-During
Stage Manager

The Grand
Opera ..

AIDA

(IN ENGLISH)

Lexington Opera House,

(TERRACE GARDEN)
58th St., near 3rd Av.

May 11, 1903

I HAVE the pleasure to present to the public this season "Aida," a grand opera in four acts by G. Verdi. This being one of the greatest of the Italian operas I feel that I will have as I have had heretofore, the entire support of the musical public. The opera I consider to be especially adapted to my use as regards the story as it deals with Ethiopians and Egyptians. The story of Aida is supposed to belong to the time of the Pharaohs and its action is located at Memphis and Thebes. The first act begins in the King's palace in the former city. The second act opens in the apartments of Amneris at Thebes; the third takes place on the banks of the River Nile before the temple of Isis; the fourth act opens in a chamber adjoining the court in Memphis.

CAST:

Aida Mrs. Estelle Clough
Amneris Miss Alfrida Wegner
Amonasro Geo. L. Ruffin
Ramses David Manser
The King Francis Van Arsdale
Messenger Oliver Taylor
Radamès Theodore Drury

With priests, priestesses, ministers, captains, soldiers, officials, Ethiopian slaves and prisoners, Egyptian populace, etc.

Orchestra conducted by Dr. Felix Jaeger

Orchestra Seats (Reserved).....\$ 1.00
Proscenium Boxes.....\$25.00
Other Boxes.....\$15.00 to 18.00

All seats numbered and are on sale at:
Marschall & Marco,
W. 58th St., N. Y. City
Chandler's Music Store,
4th Fulton St., Brooklyn

I HAVE been especially fortunate in engaging Mrs. ESTELLE CLOUGH of Worcester, one of the greatest colored prima donnas in the world, who possesses a most beautiful soprano voice that is especially adapted to sing the part AIDA. Also Mr. GEO. L. RUFFIN, Boston's celebrated barytone, and other accomplished artists. Reserved seats, Mr. Drury, 217 E. 59th Street, New York City, and must be paid for before April 1st.

Figure 4.2: Advertisement for Drury Company's Production of *Aida*,
Negro Music Journal 1, no. 5 (January 1903): n.p.

Opera, Race, and Spectacle

Every May until 1907 Drury produced a new opera season. His repertoire included *Carmen*, *Il Guarany*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *I Pagliacci*, and *Cavalleria rusticana*. With the exception of *Il Guarany* by Carlos Gomes, Drury chose operas that were very popular and had been performed many times across the country in English, French, German, and Italian. Indeed, Drury said that he selected *Carmen* as the first opera his new troupe would sing because it was

the great drawing card that year [1900] at the Metropolitan Opera House, with Madame Calvé in the title-rôle, and perhaps it was our admiration for the gifted French artist and her wonderful interpretation of the part that decided me to open with *Carmen*.⁸⁴

Although Drury always tried for an all-black cast, he was rarely able to achieve this goal.

As he noted in 1906

I cannot pay my principals extravagantly, and therefore it is somewhat hard for me to obtain, or rather to keep, the highest class of talent. You see, we give only one performance a year, and though the rehearsing may take from two to three months, I am not able to pay my company during that time.⁸⁵

The most prominent of the African American operatic singers of the day such as Sissieretta Jones (the famous “Black Patti”) or Madame Selika never performed with Drury.⁸⁶ The principal roles were taken by trained singers, though the chorus was often made up of amateurs and students. The chorus was usually integrated and may have been entirely white for some performances.⁸⁷ Robert W. Carter, writing for the *Colored American Magazine*, applauded the integrated stage, casting it as a vehicle for racial uplift writing that Drury

should be well received for many reasons, the chief of which lies in the fact that they are doing much to mitigate the prejudice of the Caucasians against the colored race. In the opera of *Aida* as in that of *Faust*, white and colored performers sang and acted together on the stage, the Afro-American and Caucasian made up the vast audience, and shared refreshments in the same dining room...At these gatherings the refined and cultured of our race assemble, and from them the Caucasian learns that all of the Negro race are not ragtime

⁸⁴“Black Melbas and De Reskes,” 30.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶In 1901, rumors surfaced in the press that Sissieretta Jones might leave her company to sing with Drury, but that never happened and the gossip was quickly put to rest. Herbert Gibson, “Doings on the Stage,” *Colored American* (Washington, DC), 25 May 1901. Drury also knew Madame Selika having sung several concerts with her in 1890.

⁸⁷As with the confusion over Burleigh’s role in the premiere performance, press reports differ as to the racial makeup of the chorus in some productions.

characters, but that a great number of us possess a discriminating and cultivated taste for the fine arts.⁸⁸

For Carter, seeing whites and blacks singing together implied that the white performers were acknowledging the skill of their black colleagues. No one here was refusing to go on stage with an African American, as had happened to Drury earlier in his career. The hope of uplift was embodied up on the stage and down among the audience—a moment when whites could see the sophistication of the black upper class and perhaps begin to break down the barriers caused by prejudice and racist stereotypes.

Drury's company was a primarily African American troupe with some whites on stage in equal roles or in lesser capacities as in the case of chorus members. Although integrated troupes performed popular music, art music organizations were almost always segregated. The first white traveling company that employed black performers was a dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* staged in 1852 (before the book by Harriet Beecher Stowe was published). Not until 1876 were black actors routinely employed along with whites in blackface in minstrel shows. In 1893, *The South Before the War*, a vaudeville production based upon black folk materials, employed only a few white artists in a cast that was mostly African American. *The South Before the War* was an exception, however, and it was much more common for black musicians and actors to be the minority in an otherwise white company.⁸⁹ Only a few, extremely prominent black artists performed with otherwise all-white high-class vaudeville or art-music companies. Sissieretta Jones was the first African American musician to perform with a white art-music troupe when she was hired by Major James B. Pond to sing with Jules Levy (a famous cornet soloist) and his

⁸⁸Robert W. Carter, "The Drury Opera Company in Verdi's *Aida*," *Colored American Magazine* 6, no. 8 (August 1903): 597.

⁸⁹Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 254–55.

brass band in 1892.⁹⁰ She was also the only African American performer that white music journals like the *American Art Journal* covered on a regular, if limited, basis. The white musical press largely ignored other African American concert singers, including Theodore Drury. Coverage of black art musicians in the white community was confined largely to the daily newspapers.

The black and white press noted the presence of white performers in Drury's productions. The black press did not dwell on the race mixing on stage. Perhaps they did not dare call attention to such a blatant transgression of the color line in an already audacious project. The white press, on the other hand, seemed uncomfortable with the presence of white performers, and some authors even suggested that whites should "black up" in order to make the singers look uniform. In 1905, the *Sun's* critic told his readers that

the manager discovered only a short time before the performance that Estelle Clough, the negro Carmen, could not possibly take part in the performance, and at the last minute it was necessary to engage a white soprano for the title role. She did not black up, to the damage of the color scheme. This circumstance, combined with the necessity of reinforcing the chorus with some white singers, produced an effect of black and tan rather than negro opera.⁹¹

White publications were willing to acknowledge that the DOC's productions were racially and musically uplifting, and they even praised the singing on occasion, but writers did not approve of the integrated stage. Rather than suggesting that African Americans should not sing opera at all, or expressing displeasure that integrated couples were being depicted on stage, they simply wanted to cover up the truth with burnt cork.

⁹⁰See Graziano "The Early Life and Career of the 'Black Patti.'"

⁹¹"Negroes Sing Grand Opera," *The Sun* (New York City), 16 May 1905.

The End of the Drury Opera Company

By 1903, the white press had begun to grow tired of the novelty of the DOC. Interest had waned, and coverage had become more critical. Even so, 1906 was a big year for the company—they had grown from about 40 to 100 singers, and at nine days the season was the longest to date. Instead of producing just one opera, Drury scheduled three works—*Aida*, *Carmen*, and *Faust*. Even as Drury pushed his troupe to new heights, the white press sought to minimize his accomplishments. White papers that were once relatively respectful, if somewhat dismissive, of the opera's performances criticized them more harshly, focused on spectacle rather than the quality of the performance, or stopped covering them altogether. The *New York Times*, which had completely ignored the company save for a short concert announcement in 1905, printed a review of *Aida* that sought to minimize the importance of the event by treating it as a display devoid of artistic meaning. The article centered on the appearance of the singers. The writer noted that, in his opinion, the chorus had been cast based upon skin color—lighter singers were Ethiopians, while the darker skinned singers were Egyptian.⁹² Other white papers, such as the *Sun*, that had followed the troupe since 1900, did not even mention that year's performances.

Despite the longer season, attendance declined in 1906 and more setbacks followed. A planned tour to Washington, DC never happened; Drury apparently canceled just one day before they were supposed to arrive, and then in December 1906, tragedy struck. The company was going to Providence, Rhode Island, for a performance when they were involved in a horrible train accident. One of Drury's singers, Rosetta Faulk, was injured so badly she probably died, and eleven other people in the troupe were seriously hurt, including Drury.⁹³

⁹²"Colored Opera Stars Produce Verdi's *Aida*," *New York Times*, 29 May 1906.

⁹³"Women Held in Wreck till Fire Kills Them," *New York Times*, 2 December 1906; "In Our Own State," *Vermont Phoenix* (Battleboro, VT), 7 December 1906.

At some point in late 1906 or early 1907 Drury left Manhattan and moved to Boston.⁹⁴ He resurrected the DOC to perform *Carmen* and *Aida* in the New England Conservatory Building, but the momentum that he had built up over the previous six years was gone. He never gave up on producing operas, but he never recaptured the success he found in New York either. Wherever Drury lived—Boston, Philadelphia, and later Providence—he continued to mount opera performances until at least 1938, though often with casts drawn almost exclusively from his private voice students rather than professional singers.

The DOC's performances were uplifting on many levels. News coverage emphasized that the audience was uplifted culturally through watching the production, and socially by enacting their own performance of gentility and sophistication—an experience often denied to African Americans. Because the operas were classified as art music, the productions represented to the musicians and audience an opportunity for what Robert Carter called “progress of civilization” by proving that African Americans could sing in a “high-class performance” with “artistic execution—quite different from the common role played by the Afro-American people in a minstrel show convulsing their audience with ludicrous songs.”⁹⁵ Finally, the very fact of the existence of the DOC and its repeated crossing of the color line was part of a racially uplifting project that sought to push outside of the limits imposed upon African Americans by white society.

⁹⁴By 1908 the Marshall group had begun to fall apart as the more successful members of the network such as George Walker, Bert Williams, Bob Cole, Lester Walton, and Ernest Hogan used their newly-earned wealth to move to Harlem.

⁹⁵Carter, “Opera and the Afro-American Artist,” 143.

Case Study No. 2: Raleigh, NC: Municipal Uplift

Building a town's prestige and national profile is important to most municipal leaders even today, and the avenues by which cities seek to increase their standing have changed little over the last one hundred years. Whether it is by luring an athletic team to town, by establishing civic institutions such as excellent schools, museums, or performance facilities, or by hosting high-profile events, cities have always sought to portray themselves as superior to their peers. In the post-Reconstruction South, this civic project took on new urgency for many cities as they sought to re-enter the national economy and rehabilitate their image after the onslaught of the Civil War and the chaos of the Reconstruction period. Several recent studies have focused on Atlanta as the self-proclaimed capital of the New South.⁹⁶ In this case study, I analyze the role of music and municipal uplift in Raleigh, North Carolina, between 1878 and 1910. While there are studies of music in Southern towns, there are few that concentrate on a place as small as Raleigh.⁹⁷ In addition, these studies lack context and do not address how musical reception differs between their subjects and other municipalities in the United States. My goal is to demonstrate that music played an important role in the creation of Raleigh's civic identity between 1878 and 1910 and

⁹⁶See Campbell, *Music and the Making of the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 2004); N. Lee Orr, *Alfredo Barili and the Rise of Classical Music in Atlanta* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996) and Steve Goodson, *Highbrows, Hillbillies & Hellfire: Public Entertainment in Atlanta, 1880–1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002) for monograph that specifically address the use of music in Atlanta and the establishment of the New South. Other books about Atlanta in the decades around 1900 include William A. Link, *Atlanta, Cradle of the New South: Race and Remembering in the Civil War's Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) and Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890–1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

⁹⁷See Marilyn Dee Casto, *Actors, Audiences, and Historic Theaters of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Elizabeth Cochran, "A History of Opera in Macon, Georgia, 1858–Present" (DMA diss., Florida State University, 1992); Margaret W. Fowler Clark, *The Golden Age of the Performing Arts: A Social History of the Town Hall Levy Opera House, 1852–1912, Charlottesville, Virginia* ([Charlottesville? Va.]: Dietz Press, 1976); and Ben Arnold, "Music in Lancaster, Kentucky, 1885–1910: Local Talent, Touring Artists, and the Opera House," in *Music and Culture in America*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 197–230 for some examples of studies of smaller Southern cities in this time period.

that opera in English specifically served the project of municipal uplift in ways that it did not in larger cities in the South or other areas of the country.

In 1870, Raleigh was the largest town in Wake County (population 7,790) with approximately twenty per cent of the county's population of 35,617. Forty-five percent of Wake County's residents were African American.⁹⁸ By 1890, Raleigh had grown to 12,678 people, half of whom were African American, but by 1910, though Raleigh's population was 19,218, only 38% of the town's residents were black (7,372). Despite being the capital of North Carolina, Raleigh was neither the largest city in population nor the most vibrant area economically in the state—both of those distinctions belonged to Wilmington, an important port city throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹⁹

Raleigh city fathers were ambitious for the town as it emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction. Tucker Hall, dedicated in 1867, was for many years the only theater in Raleigh. It seated around 1,000 and was part of a huge building that contained the largest and most successful department store in the area, owned by brothers William H. and Rufus Sylvester Tucker.¹⁰⁰ Most opera houses in smaller cities were situated in commercial buildings that also

⁹⁸According to the US Census Bureau, New York City was the biggest city in the United States in 1870 with 942,292 people. The biggest city in the South (and the sixth largest in the country) was Baltimore with 306,099 residents. By 1910, New York City had grown to 4,766,883 people and Baltimore was still the biggest Southern city but had fallen to the seventh largest U. S. city with a population of 558,485. Historian William Faricy Condee defines small to mid-sized towns in rural Appalachia during this period as three to ten thousand people, meaning Raleigh had grown to a significant size by 1910, but was still not a large city either. In 1900, Raleigh was the fifth largest city in North Carolina after Wilmington (number 1), Charlotte, Asheville, and Winston & Salem (these towns would shortly merge). North Carolina Business History, <http://www.historync.org/NCCityPopulations1800s.htm> (accessed 14 April 2014)

⁹⁹In 1870, Wilmington had 13,446 inhabitants and by 1910 had grown to 25,748.

¹⁰⁰Elizabeth Culbertson Waugh, *North Carolina's Capital, Raleigh* (Raleigh, N. C.: State Department of Archives and History and North Carolina Museum of Art, 1967), 125. It is difficult to determine exactly how many people Tucker Hall could accommodate. Waugh states Tucker could seat 1,200. *Jno. B. Jeffrey's Guide and Directory to the Opera Houses, 1882–3* says that Tucker Hall sat 1,000. *Harry Miner's American Dramatic Directory, 1884–'85* reports the hall only accommodated 800. I decided to split the difference. John B. Jeffrey, ed., *Jno. B. Jeffrey's Guide and Directory to the Opera Houses, Theatres, Public Halls, Bill Posters, Etc. of the Cities and Towns of America, 1882–3* (Chicago: Jno. B. Jeffreys, 1882), 212; Harry Miner, ed., *Harry Miner's America Dramatic Directory for the Season of 1884–'85* (New York: Wolf & Palmer Dramatic Publishing Company, 1884), 264.

housed other businesses. Today a concert venue that could seat almost thirteen percent of the population of the town would seem much too large but Tucker Hall's size was quite common for the time period. In a survey of opera houses in Appalachian towns, historian William Faricy Condee found that, on average, an opera house's capacity was eleven percent of the town's population, although some theaters could hold up to one third of a city's citizens.¹⁰¹ In 1870, the Market House was built in Raleigh with a performing space on the second floor called the Metropolitan Hall (or Metropolitan Opera House), which also accommodated around 1,000.¹⁰²

The last theater to open in Raleigh before 1910 was the Academy of Music in 1893, also with a capacity of about 1,000.¹⁰³ The Academy quickly became the most important theater in Raleigh. Tucker Hall seems to have closed around 1887.¹⁰⁴ R. C. Rivers, the Academy's manager, bought Metropolitan Hall in 1898 and afterwards kept it closed much of the year, only opening the space for special occasions and during the State Fair week when he booked attractions in both theaters. In the late 1890s, city leaders initiated a scheme to build an even bigger, more impressive hall to be called the "Auditorium" (perhaps in a nod to Chicago's Auditorium), but the plan did not come into fruition until 1910.

¹⁰¹William Faricy Condee, *Coal and Culture: Opera Houses in Appalachia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 9.

¹⁰²Like Tucker Hall, the exact number Metropolitan Hall could accommodate is unclear. *Jno. B. Jeffrey's Guide* says it could seat 1,200, while the *Julius Cahn-Gus Hill Theatrical Guide* says 800. An article on the theater's refurbishment in the *News & Observer* said it sat 1,200. "The Opera House," *News & Observer*, 21 May 1893; Jno. B. Jeffreys, ed., *Jno. B. Jeffrey's Guide and Directory to the Opera Houses, Theatres, Public Halls, Bill Posters, etc. of the Cities and Towns of America*, Eleventh and Revised Edition, (Chicago: Jno. B. Jeffreys, 1889), 254; Julius Cahn and Gus Hill, eds., *Julius Cahn's Official Theatrical Guide 1899-1900* (New York: Publication Office, Empire Theatre Building, 1899), 532.

¹⁰³The *Julius-Cahn Guide* says 1,100 in 1899 and 1903, but in 1906 says 991. Julius Cahn and Gus Hill, eds., *Julius Cahn's Official Theatrical Guide 1899-1900*, 532; Julius Cahn and Gus Hill, eds., *Julius Cahn's Official Theatrical Guide 1903-1904* (New York: Publication Office, Empire Theatre Building, 1903), 585; Julius Cahn and Gus Hill, eds., *Julius Cahn's Official Theatrical Guide 1906-1907* (New York: Publication Office, Empire Theatre Building, 1906), 633.

¹⁰⁴It is unclear when Tucker Hall closed, but there are no concert announcements in the papers for the theater after 1886.

Marilyn Casto's description of opera houses in Kentucky could easily apply to the Academy and other Raleigh theaters:

for the most part [opera houses were] architecturally undistinguished, [but] these structures form an important segment of culture history. They were not elite culture, but they were popular culture in every sense of that term. As architectural artifacts they show the transition of styles from metropolitan areas to small communities. Housing theaters in a commercial building implies that it was an integral part of a town's economic as well as social life.¹⁰⁵

The Academy was a large but architecturally not particularly interesting building, located in the heart of downtown Raleigh, it housed a café on its ground floor (Figure.4.3). The Academy, like the Metropolitan and Tucker Halls, was housed in a multi-purpose structure in a central location that was easy for residents of Raleigh and surrounding towns to reach. Railroad lines connected Raleigh to other, even smaller towns in Wake County such as Apex and Cary, as well as to nearby cities such as Durham or Chapel Hill. Just as Casto described, Raleigh's theaters hosted every kind of traveling attraction imaginable, from operatic concerts to minstrel shows, as well as local events such as political meetings, graduations, and amateur performances. Both whites and African Americans used these venues, though rarely at the same time.

¹⁰⁵Casto, *Actors, Audiences and Historic Theaters of Kentucky*, 54. For more on opera houses in the South see Condee, *Coal and Culture*. For information about small town theatrical life in the Midwest see Jere C. Mickel, *Footlights on the Prairie: The Story of the Repertory Tent Players in the Midwest* (St. Cloud, MN: North Star Press, 1974).



Figure 4.3: Academy of Music, Raleigh, NC, c. 1900,
<http://www.newraleigh.com/articles/archive/know-the-address-win-this-photo/>

The local papers were the primary agents of municipal uplift. They served to publicize the attributes of the town, while downplaying anything negative that might reflect badly on their citizens or municipality. Between 1878 and 1910, a number of newspapers were published in Raleigh. Some were specialized publications such as the Temperance or Labor papers, while others were general-interest newspapers such as the *News and Observer* (N&O) and the *Evening Times*. Several African-American newspapers ran between the 1870s and 1890s, although between 1900 and 1910, there do not seem to have been any black papers in Raleigh.¹⁰⁶ All of the newspapers in Raleigh announced the superior traits of the city and its residents in at least

¹⁰⁶According to information from the North Carolina Collection housed at UNC-Chapel Hill, the following African American newspapers were active in Raleigh during this period: *African Expositor* (1886), *Banner-Enterprise* (1881–unknown), *Gazette* (1890–98), *Journal of Industry* (1879–81), *North Carolina Gazette* (1885–unknown) and the *Weekly Republican* (1867–1870s). <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/ncc/ref/study/africanamericannewspapers.html> (accessed 5 May 2104).

some of their articles, with the *Ne&O*'s coverage the most dedicated to local boosterism. For instance, after an amateur presentation of Edmond Audran's *Olivette* in 1884, the writer gushed that "the opera was beautifully rendered, and the evening was another conspicuous proof of the ability of our amateurs to produce musical and dramatic effects equal to the work of most of the professionals who visit us, and much superior to most of them in the matter of refinement and delicacy."¹⁰⁷

The boosterism that characterized all the papers lessened after 1900. Albeit still a strong undercurrent that affected the tone of the coverage, praise of local residents and their achievements became a little less strident as the city grew into its own. Perhaps as the city developed and became more assured of its place both in North Carolina and in the South, it became less necessary to use every event of any importance to remind the readers of Raleigh's good qualities.

The white publications in Raleigh rarely extended their positive coverage to the black population in the area. African American men and women were routinely disparaged, framed as criminals or lazy, and their activities often ignored. A survey of the entertainment available in the city must take into account the bias in the local press, which rarely included articles about music making by, or directed at, African Americans. Limiting access by African Americans to "higher-class" music and theater was one way that concepts of whiteness were developed and reinforced in Raleigh. Advertisements for attractions like minstrel shows or the Black Patti Troubadours (both entertainments that depicted or employed African Americans) instructed readers that the balcony was reserved for blacks. Reviews of such performances sometimes mentioned the African Americans in attendance. Advertisements for other types of entertainments make no mention of accommodations for black audience members, nor do articles about these

¹⁰⁷"The Opera Last Evening," *News and Observer*, 17 May 1884.

presentations mention African Americans in the audience. Although laws codifying racial segregation were not passed in North Carolina until the early twentieth century, local custom certainly kept African Americans separated from whites as much as possible, and it seems likely that blacks were not only prohibited from buying seats outside of the balcony, but also from buying tickets to many entertainments.

The racism in the local newspapers is striking. To modern eyes, most of the rhetoric in American publications during this time appears prejudiced, but the *N&O*'s racism is shocking even compared to other newspapers in Raleigh and to the nation as a whole. As the black Raleigh newspaper, the *Gazette*, pointed out in 1897, "The *News and Observer* growls because President McKinley shook hands with the colored citizens of Asheville while passing through there this week. But who expects any better from that negro-hating Democratic newspaper? That paper despises recognition of negro manhood."¹⁰⁸ The *N&O*'s editorial slant was so marked because its editor, Josephus Daniels, was active in Democratic party politics and was one of the state's leading segregationists and political enforcers. As the editor of the paper with the largest circulation in North Carolina, Daniels used the pages of the *N&O* as his personal bully pulpit. In 1894, a coalition of white populists and black Republicans (called Fusionists) took control of the North Carolina state government—a feat made even more important because many budget and policy decisions now made by local officials were controlled by the state at that time. The Fusionists were more successful in 1896 when they won every statewide elective office. Daniels and other Democrats were determined to win the government back in the 1898 elections by any means necessary. To achieve this goal, Daniels became involved with the "Red Shirts"—an organization devoted to intimidating black and Fusionist voters—and demonized African Americans in his newspaper. These tactics were repeated throughout the state and

¹⁰⁸"About People You Know," *Gazette*, 19 June 1897.

succeeded in splitting the coalition which had been so successful in 1896. The Democrats swept into power after the election of 1898. Some local contests were tainted by widespread corruption and segregationist Democrats actually staged a coup and overthrew Wilmington's integrated government in a carefully planned "riot" two days after the polls closed on 10 November 1898.¹⁰⁹ After the Democrats were firmly ensconced in power, the extreme rhetoric in the *N&O* softened, though it was by no means free of racial bias.

The local newspapers rarely published substantive music criticism. Without bylines it is impossible to know who wrote the reviews for the *N&O*, *Morning Post*, or the *Raleigh Evening Times* (the three papers with the best arts coverage during this time period), but the articles maintained consistent themes in all three news outlets.¹¹⁰ The papers included a short plot summary before the performance if a work was unfamiliar to Raleigh audiences. After the production, most reviews were basically favorable and saturated with the rhetoric of municipal uplift. The populace was congratulated for having the good taste to attend the performance of such an eminent group (unless the attendance was small, in which case the writer encouraged Raleighites to show their city spirit and go to the attraction). After the MacCollin Opera Company apparently did not have a large audience in November 1887, the writer scolded his readers reminding them that "if the people of Raleigh want good attractions they must patronize them when they come."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹For more information see David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, eds., *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and Leon H. Prather, *We Have Taken a City: The Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Southport, NC: Dram Tree Books, 2006).

¹¹⁰Given the information in the letters between Gould and Tridon about the New York Symphony performance in Reading, PA, it is possible that the same person wrote articles for many outlets (see Chapter 2).

¹¹¹"The Opera," *News and Observer*, 9 November 1887.

Individual singers were mentioned with suitable praise for their voices, acting, or comedic skills. Reviewers rarely commented on the plot of the work. When the Academy Opera Company performed *Fra Diavolo* featuring Jeannie Winston in 1886, the *NeO* reported that “the performance of Miss Jeannie Winston as Fra Diavolo was very fine, and her singing particularly of the serenade, ‘Young Agnes, Beauteous Flower,’ won her admirers by the score.”¹¹² Writers often mentioned the chorus, particularly noting the attractiveness of the women in the ensemble. “No opera with a poor chorus can be a success,” asserted one author, “in this respect the Wilbur Company has been especially fortunate, and when the beautiful Miss Ripley and her companions come trooping out singing some jolly chorus—well, it makes a man forget his troubles for a few minutes.”¹¹³

The Role of Amateur Music Making in Municipal Uplift

Raleigh was home to local amateur and professional musical organizations that provided entertainment to its inhabitants. Indeed, amateur plays, choruses, orchestras, and bands were popular throughout the country. These amateur performances were an important component of municipal uplift because they displayed local residents’ talents, reified the local social hierarchy, and showed the town’s support of philanthropy. Because most amateur presentations benefitted charity, there was a sense that these concerts were somehow “purer” or perhaps more respectable than other types of music making including professional entertainments. The performers were presented as free of ignoble monetary considerations and as interested in art only for its uplifting qualities for the participants and the audience. Depending upon the repertoire, the music itself might be considered morally uplifting, or at least as culturally uplifting

¹¹²“Fra Diavolo,” *News and Observer*, 3 February 1886.

¹¹³“Queen’s Lace Handkerchief,” *News and Observer*, 20 October 1897.

to the listeners and, by extension, the community. Going to the concert allowed the audience to gain from the socially uplifting aspects of charity by demonstrating the listeners' respectability and generosity. In addition, charity performances were feminized because of the association between women and philanthropy, and because many of the artists themselves were women.

Amateur music making often took the place of professional concerts in projects of municipal uplift, as well as provided citizens with creative and artistic opportunities.¹¹⁴

Nonprofessional musical and dramatic performances were held all over the country, and many cities shared Raleigh's rich amateur music scene. In small and mid-sized cities—too small to attract opera troupes or touring orchestras—one of the few ways for citizens to hear the art-music repertoire was to perform it themselves. As composer W. H. Pontius noted in 1893, “the residents in cities varying from twenty to fifty thousand inhabitants are, so far as general education, refinement and what is vaguely but comprehensively known as culture may be concerned, just as far along as the corresponding classes in any great metropolis, but the opportunities for development in certain forms of taste are not so complete.”¹¹⁵ The choirs, orchestras, and musical organizations that performed and sponsored amateur concerts were also important sites of social interaction. “The Rossini Club was a wonderful organization,” recalled a member of that choir, “Atlanta was a small town then and we lived closer to each other, in spirit.”¹¹⁶

Between 1878 and at least 1907, local Raleigh groups produced one or more comic operas per year for charity. By 1900, some professionalization had crept into these amateur performances, as trained conductors were sometimes hired from out of state to work with the

¹¹⁴Casto, *Actors, Audiences, and Historic Theaters*, 81.

¹¹⁵W. H. Pontius, “Music in our Smaller Cities,” *Music* 4, no. 6 (October 1893): 587.

¹¹⁶*Atlanta Constitution*, 9 September 1923, as quoted in Orr, *Alfredo Barili and the Rise of Classical Music in Atlanta*, 79.

local musicians.¹¹⁷ Even though they produced comic opera every year, the marketing and rhetoric surrounding these performances never acknowledged that ticket sales might fund future performances. Instead, the productions were framed as part of the local charitable activities on behalf of a worthy cause such as a hospital or orphanage. For example, the comic opera *Pocahontas, the Indian Queen* by a local composer named Professor A. Pauli premiered in 1886 with multiple performances for the benefit of St. John's Hospital.¹¹⁸ Since many of the performers were women from prominent Raleigh families, the only way for them to maintain their respectability and still appear on stage was to subsume the experience under an eminently respectable philanthropic cover. By 1908, some amateur organizations had become more concerned with perpetuating themselves than with contributions to charity. The Raleigh Choral Society, for example, was dedicated to "providing musical treats" for the citizens of Raleigh and organized a rare performance of Handel's *Messiah* as well as the first North Carolina Music Festival in 1907. This indicates that the music itself and the attendant cultural, social, or musical uplift was now a sufficient reason for the existence of amateur musical organizations.

Raleigh was also home to bands and orchestras, some professional, others amateur. The Raleigh Philharmonic Society played its opening concert on 22 December 1885 and had 40 players by the time it participated in the 1907 North Carolina Music Festival. The Raleigh Orchestra, the Hollowbush Orchestra, and the Third Regiment Band were all professional groups active at some point during this period.¹¹⁹ There was even an amateur minstrel troupe for a short time in 1900. The local women's colleges (the Baptist Female University, Peace Institute,

¹¹⁷For instance, Mr. A. L. Baker from Chicago arrived one month before *Powhatan* was performed in 1900 in order to work with the local musicians. "The Comic Opera *Powhatan*," *News and Observer*, 20 March 1900.

¹¹⁸"The Comic Opera *Pocahontas*," *News and Observer*, 18 February 1886.

¹¹⁹Many small towns throughout the country had at least one band. See Mary DuPree, "Early Bands in an Idaho Railroad Town," in *Vistas of American Music: Essays and Compositions in Honor of William K. Kearns*, eds. Susan L. Porter and John Graziano (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1999), 251–66.

and St. Mary's College) had active music departments which sponsored many concerts, comic operas, musical plays, and recitals by students, music faculty members, local professionals, and occasionally celebrities such as baritone David Bispham or pianist Edward Baxter Perry.¹²⁰ The Kittrell Institute was an African American post-secondary school that included a large music department. Advertisements for the school boasted they offered "superior training in the higher branches of music," marking the education it offered an example of racial uplift through music.¹²¹

One of Raleigh's most ambitious amateur musical undertakings in this period was the North Carolina Music Festival, founded in 1907. Annual multi-day choral festivals held in the summer months were very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many festivals emulated the Cincinnati May Festival, founded in 1873 and conducted by Theodore Thomas until 1904. These festivals offered the host city a chance to show off the musical talents of its citizens, as well as to announce to the world that it had the resources and sophisticated audience to ensure such a major event would be successful. Residents identified civic pride so strongly with music festivals that Roberta Seawell, writing for the *Nashville American*, described their May Festival as the city's "at home" salon and asserted that "the size of the crowds, and a look into the faces of the audience, will convince the most skeptical that it was not the outing, but the music, that the public enjoys and desires."¹²² Emphasizing the audience's musical good taste insulated Nashville residents from the criticism that they were not interested in music, but rather in the social caché of the festival. The *Atlanta Journal* explained that the Great Southern

¹²⁰The Baptist Female University is now known as Meredith College and is still a women's institution, as is St. Mary's College, which is now a boarding high school. Peace Institute survives as William Peace University and became co-educational in 2012.

¹²¹Advertisement, *Gazette*, 24 July 1897.

¹²²Roberta Seawell, "Music," *Nashville American*, 13 May 1900.

Music Festival (the most important such event in the South) demonstrated that Atlanta held “a commanding position over all the cities, which might otherwise wish to rival us.”¹²³ Festivals were also important regional events. The South Atlantic States Music Festival at Converse College in South Carolina, for instance, advertised its sixth annual production in 1900 in the Raleigh papers. Raleigh residents could buy railroad tickets at a reduced rate in order to attend the event.¹²⁴

Some organizations specialized in providing the soloists and orchestras for these festivals, with the host city contributing a large amateur choir to round out the performing forces. The Boston Festival Orchestra (BFO) was one such group. They spent many summers from the late 1890s until the early twentieth century traveling around the country providing the orchestral accompaniment for these festivals, bringing soloists with them such as singers Emma Juch, Myron Whitney, and Max Heinrich, pianist Adele Aus der Ohe, and cellist Victor Herbert. The orchestra and soloists stayed in each city for about a week, rehearsed with a large local amateur choir, and then performed three to four concerts over several days. The repertoire consisted of operatic excerpts, choral pieces such as the Verdi *Requiem* or the *Creation* by Haydn, and solo instrumental works.

Professional festival troupes such as the BFO presented the same program on each stop of that summer’s tour. Local papers, however, covered the event as if the city’s music festival was unique. In an article about Richmond’s 1900 music festival, the writer acknowledged that the BFO toured the country performing similar concerts, but still asserted that “the scheme of the forthcoming festival is the result of unusual care and study” as if Richmond had

¹²³*Atlanta Journal*, 14 February 1909 as quoted in Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South*, 49.

¹²⁴Advertisement, *News and Observer*, 29 April 1900. The festival was 2–4 May 1900.

accomplished something almost unprecedented in their event.¹²⁵ The program was undoubtedly dictated by the BFO, not the sponsors of the festival, but the writer glossed over the fact that Richmond's event was little different from the others the BFO would play that summer. As was typical in articles about music festivals, the *Richmond Dispatch* also celebrated the increasingly cultured Richmond audience and the women of the Wednesday club who organized the concerts.

The cordial reception of the arrangements by the public has demonstrated that in the matter of musical appreciation the city is making great strides, and rather than this, that a striking musical atmosphere has been created by what Matthew Arnold would call 'the remnant,' who have labored unselfishly in the cause of sweetness and light.¹²⁶

Women often, though not exclusively, planned music festivals, which demonstrates the influence they had on local cultural life and also explains the feminization of such events. The author of the article quoted above described music as a "cause of sweetness and light" and characterized the work it took to organize the festival as "unselfish"—both descriptions associated with feminine qualities.

The North Carolina Music Festival featured the newly-founded Raleigh Choral Society, a local orchestra, vocal and instrumental soloists from the area, and a large children's chorus. Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony performed in the final concert. Raleigh newspapers extensively promoted the upcoming festival, particularly highlighting Damrosch's participation. A writer for the *Raleigh Evening Times* declared that Damrosch's visit "may well be looked upon as an event of far more than ordinary significance."¹²⁷ The music festival itself,

¹²⁵"The Music Festival," *Richmond Dispatch*, 22 April 1900.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷"Damrosch at the Music Festival," *Raleigh Evening Times*, 4 April 1907.

according to the *Raleigh Evening Times*, would be “the greatest musical event ever held in Raleigh.”¹²⁸

The ticket prices indicated the status of the festival. Admission fees were different for each concert depending upon the time and performing forces. Tickets for the first and third concerts cost \$1, but the musicians were all local, and the first concert was an organ recital with a boy soprano—an event with low overhead costs. The second presentation was also staffed by local performers, but it was a large concert featuring the Raleigh Choral Society and Orchestra along with five soloists and cost \$1.50 to attend. The closing concert with the New York Symphony was the most expensive costing \$2.50 per ticket. In 1907, most amateur concerts either charged no admission and asked for a donation instead or charged no more than 75 cents per ticket. An admission fee of \$1 to \$2.50 per seat put the New York Symphony tickets in line with the most prestigious and expensive professional attractions that visited the city (Figure 4.4).

¹²⁸“Concert to be Given at May Music Festival,” *Raleigh Evening Times*, 22 April 1907.

North Carolina Musical Festival,
Under the auspices of the Raleigh Choral Society.
FOUR GRAND CONCERTS.
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday Afternoon and Friday Night.
MAY 1st, 2nd and 3d.
The Raleigh Choral Society, Raleigh Children's Chorus
The Raleigh Orchestra, the
New York Symphony Orchestra and Damrosch
and Eight Soloists.

Mrs. Hissem de Moss, Soprano
Master Causey Polk, Soprano
Miss Margaret Keyes, Contralto
Mr. George Hamlin, Tenor
Mr. William Harper, Basso
Mr. Leo Schultz, Violincello
Mr. Edwin Shovert, Pianist
Mr. Loraine Holloway, Organist



Season Ticket Admitting to Four Concerts, \$4.00.
Season Ticket Sale Closes Tonight.
Beginning Monday, April 22, 9 a. m. the Prices Will be \$1.00 Each for First
Night and Afternoon Concert, \$1.50 Second Night, and \$2.50 for the Last Concert.
Box Sheet Open at Tucker Building Pharmacy—For Tickets Write at once
Enclosing Money Order, to J. Early Hughes, Manager, Raleigh, N. C.
For Illustrated Program. Write to Wade Brown, Director of the Festival.

Figure 4.4: Advertisement, *Raleigh Evening Times*, 22 April 1907

Before the festival, the *Raleigh Evening Times* published an extensive profile of Walter Damrosch, crediting him with popularizing Wagner in the United States. Because the project was designed, at least in large part, for municipal uplift, it was the efforts of the local musicians that took precedence in the newspaper coverage after the event. When the local soloists appeared with Damrosch they gained substantial cultural capital from singing with such a famous conductor. The critics with the Raleigh papers, in turn, praised them with the same sort of effusive language

they used for the New York Symphony. The New York Symphony's playing was praised in the *Ne&O's* review, for example, but the bulk of the article was about the soloists, the conductor Wade R. Brown (a Raleigh resident and festival's director), and the children's choir which sang on the third concert. The review opened with the elements that often characterized municipal uplift—the quality of the performance was secondary to praise for the cultured audiences' large size and, to demonstrate the regional appeal of the event, the writer made sure to point out that many people had come to town just to hear the concert.

The Music Festival which has given delight to great crowds of visitors and to the people of Raleigh, came to a close last night with the exquisite rendition of the numbers on the program of the New York Symphony Orchestra, with Walter Damrosch as the conductor...These [pieces] well merited rounds of applause, while the exceedingly large audience in attendance again and again showed its appreciation of the sea of melody which overwhelmed the Academy..."¹²⁹

None of the local groups were equipped to provide music on a regular basis for long. They needed lengthy rehearsal periods for concerts and were, of course, dependent not only on the charity of the local populace for enough money to survive, but also on the interest of the amateur musicians who made up their personnel. Regular performances were given by a dizzying array of traveling troupes who presented attractions ranging from opera to minstrel shows.

Spectacle and Comic Opera in Raleigh

Despite the nation-wide touring schedules of grand-opera troupes such as the Metropolitan Opera, the Damrosch Opera Company, the American Opera Company, or the Savage English Grand Opera Company, many smaller towns at the end of the century had no access to grand opera in their immediate areas. The companies were so big, they could only afford to visit theaters in which the stage was large enough to accommodate their productions, and the local

¹²⁹"A Great Success," *News and Observer*, 5 May 1907.

population was large enough to provide the company with sufficient audience to support their expenses. Small towns had more access to grand opera earlier in the century when opera performances were on a smaller scale and cost less. Moreover, foreign-language grand opera companies did little touring in the mid-1870s when their popularity dipped in the wake of the Panic of 1873. After the economy rebounded in the later 1870s, the troupes were generally quite large with very expensive casts. Even pulling from the surrounding cities, it is doubtful that the Raleigh area could have provided enough people who would have paid the \$2 to \$4 per ticket to make a visit financially feasible. The city certainly did not have a venue with a stage big enough to accommodate the scenery and large casts that companies like the Metropolitan Opera brought with them.¹³⁰

In 1870, Pasquale Brignoli performed a single night of *Il trovatore* in Raleigh with a small company. It was the last time a full foreign-language production of a grand opera visited Raleigh until after 1910. The English-language comic-opera troupe, the Wilbur Opera Company sang *Cavalleria Rusticana* in 1900 on a double bill with the comic opera *Mascotte* by Edmond Audran. The only other grand opera performed in Raleigh between 1878 and 1910 were several performances of *Carmen*. Several companies cancelled performances before they even occurred. Emma Abbot and her company were supposed to come to Raleigh in 1886, but changed their plans one month prior to the appearance.¹³¹ The Emma Juch English Grand Opera Company

¹³⁰I have not been able to find the dimensions of the Academy of Music's stage, but Tucker Hall's stage was 25x30 feet. Given that Tucker Hall and the Academy had about the same number of seats, it is possible that the stages were about the same size. Compared to other North Carolina theaters in the early 1880s, the stage in Tucker Hall was relatively large, but was much smaller than the largest stage in the state at the Wilmington Opera House which was 32x50 feet. In comparison, the Columbia Theatre in Chicago, one of the theaters where foreign-language and large English-language companies performed regularly, featured a 75x60 feet stage.

¹³¹The Abbott Company appeared in Charlotte in February 1886. Abbott performed in many mid-sized towns around the nation because her smaller troupe and productions could fit in, and make a profit in, smaller venues. Raleigh was small location even for the Abbott Company, however.

was scheduled to stop in Raleigh in December 1891, but a railroad accident prevented them from reaching the town on time, and they proceeded to Charlotte.¹³²

Bizet's *Carmen* was the only grand opera that was consistently performed in the Raleigh area at the end of the century—each time by the Wilbur Opera Company.¹³³ They played one-week engagements in Raleigh in October 1897 (no *Carmen* that week), February 1898, October 1898, and January 1900. Founded by impresario A. L. Wilbur in 1881, the Wilbur Opera Company (sometimes called the Wilbur-Kirwin Company in recognition of their prima donna Susie Kirwin) toured continuously for twenty-five years and exemplifies the kind of English-language troupe that survived in the competitive theatrical market in the U. S. around the turn of the century. The company employed between 45 and 70 performers and concentrated on playing smaller, regional theater circuits, although they performed in New York City on occasion either as the resident company in a theater (which guaranteed them more stability than touring), or in a short engagement to kick off a national tour. The repertoire remained constant throughout the life of the troupe and encompassed primarily European comic operas in English translation and Gilbert and Sullivan operettas.¹³⁴ In fact, the addition of *Carmen* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* in 1897 was the only major change to the company's repertoire. Ticket prices were low (between 25 and 50 cents), ensuring that most people could afford their productions

¹³²Untitled, *The Standard*, 2 April 1870, found in Elizabeth Reid Murray Collection, 1965–2007, Box 221, Olivia Raney Local History Library, Raleigh, North Carolina; “Wilbur-Kirwin Opera Company,” *News and Observer*, 21 January 1900; “Observations,” *News and Observer*, 2 February 1886; “A Narrow Escape,” *New York Mirror*, 9 December 1891 found in M-clipping file (Emma Juch), Music Division, New York Public Library.

¹³³*Carmen* was also in the Andrews Opera Company's repertoire. Although they visited Raleigh in 1895, they did not sing *Carmen*.

¹³⁴The company's first engagement was an eighteen-month run of the *Mascot* by Audran in New York City in 1881. Later they went on the road with comic operas such as *Olivette* (Audran), *Fra Diavolo* (Auber), *The Merry War* (Strauss), and *Iolanthe*, *Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Mikado* by Gilbert and Sullivan.

The Wilbur Opera Company probably performed *Carmen* with spoken dialogue since everything else in their repertoire used spoken text.¹³⁵ I can find no reviews or scores to confirm this supposition, however. Although *Carmen*'s plot was quite different from the frothy, unrealistic love stories of the works they usually performed such as *Erminie* (Edward Jackowboski) or *The Queen's Lace Handkerchief* (Johann Strauss II), the use of spoken dialogue would have made *Carmen* resemble the other works produced by the Wilbur Company. Indeed, Raleigh writers never commented that *Carmen* seemed out of place with the other comic operas the troupe presented during their engagements in the city. By performing *Carmen* with comic operas, the company effectively "lowered" the opera from its traditional status of "high art" to that of just another entertaining operetta. While this change in status would have affected the way the opera was received as a culturally or morally uplifting work of art, it did not affect municipal uplift. The Wilbur Company was always enthusiastically welcomed by Raleigh papers, and their performances used to elevate the area's reputation.

Other comic-opera companies that visited Raleigh in the 1890s included the Andrews Opera Company, the Olympia Opera Company, and the Columbia Comic Opera Company. It is clear comic operas were most popular in Raleigh in the late 1880s and 1890s with many troupes visiting for anything from one day to one week. A comic opera company was the featured attraction during the State Fair Week eight times between 1884 and 1900. The State Fair was the most lucrative time of year in Raleigh when thousands of people all over the state descended on the city. After 1901, only one comic-opera company visited Raleigh and that was for just one day. This sudden change probably indicates that the Academy of Music's bookings were taken over by the Syndicate (which was not supporting comic-opera troupes by that time), as well as the genre's diminishing popularity nationwide.

¹³⁵See Chapter 5 for more information on *Carmen* performance traditions.

The comic-opera repertoire that Raleigh residents heard when the Wilburs and other troupes came to town was different than the works that were being performed at the same time in New York and other large cities. After 1890, bigger comic-opera companies and the metropolitan theaters that presented just one comic opera for months at a time, switched from European pieces in English translation to works by American composers. For instance, the Casino Theater in New York City (one of the most important comic-opera venues) did not offer any American works until 1892, after which the house presented primarily repertoire by composers such as Reginald De Koven, Victor Herbert, Julian Edwards, and John Philip Sousa.¹³⁶ Although a few of the biggest hits from Broadway were performed in Raleigh fairly quickly after their premieres as traveling companies spread out throughout the country to take advantage of the buzz created in New York City, most comic operas performed in Raleigh in the 1890s were old-fashioned works that were rarely heard in the larger cities, or received scant notice if they were sung.¹³⁷

By 1897, the Wilbur Company had incorporated “high art living pictures” or tableaux vivants between acts and at the end of each night. Although the Wilburs did not change their core repertoire over the years, use of the “living pictures” (their term) was a way to attract audience members who might have been tired of the same old comic operas by updating their performances with vaudeville-style acts.¹³⁸ The addition of tableaux vivants obscured the difference between plotted musical theater and genres that were made up of continuous, but

¹³⁶Gerald Martin Bordman, *American Operetta: From H.M.S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 39 and 44–64.

¹³⁷For instance, *El Capitan* by Sousa was a smash hit in New York City in 1896, and was first performed in Raleigh on 9 December 1897 by a traveling company that contained many of the singers who originated their roles on Broadway, but the State Fair week attraction in 1897 was the Wilbur Opera Company who performed *Said Pasha* which premiered in 1888, the *Queen’s Lace Handkerchief* (1880), and *Erminie* (1885).

¹³⁸The Wilbur Company performed a sacred tableau called *The Girl with Auburn Locks* between acts of its comic operas when it visited Atlanta in March 1900, but I can find no evidence they performed the work in Raleigh. Orr, *Alfredo Barili and the Rise of Classical Music in Atlanta*, 183.

unrelated acts such as vaudeville. The *N&O* did not provide an account of exactly what the “living pictures” were, but the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* published a description of them when the company visited that city in November 1898.

These [the living pictures] have been given at each opera, and upon a scale never before attempted in Wheeling. They are four in number, a battle scene, a typical New England home in the time of Miles Standish and a reproduction of the famous painting, ‘The Nymphs.’ They are presented with a view to pleasing the artistic taste, and are entirely free from coarseness or vulgarity.¹³⁹

It was important to reassure the Wheeling audience that the living pictures were “free from coarseness or vulgarity,” because tableaux vivants could range from semi-nude women in variety shows to an entirely respectable after-dinner game. Tableaux vivants had been popular in American theaters and homes since the 1830s. Manuals aimed at white, rural middle-class women taught hostesses how to stage tableaux vivants in their parlors. They were designed to fill guests with a love of beauty and truth, while demonstrating the hostess’s refinement and cosmopolitanism.¹⁴⁰ In the theater, tableaux vivants had a much less demure reputation. Often used in burlesque, variety, vaudeville, or as entertainment in concert saloons (rowdy theatrical spaces in which pretty waitresses served alcohol), tableaux vivants were one way to exhibit nearly nude women to a male audience.¹⁴¹

The Wilburs use of the living pictures was fraught, then, with multiple meanings. The company’s publicity sought to assure the audience that the pictures were respectable and within middle-class moral codes, but the troupe and some audience members undoubtedly valued the tableaux vivants’ seedy theatrical reputation as well. Many comic operas, as well as *Carmen*,

¹³⁹“Amusements,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, WV), 17 November 1898.

¹⁴⁰Mary Chapman, “‘Living Pictures’: Women and *Tableaux Vivants* in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Culture,” *Wide Angle* 18, no. 3 (July 1996): 25.

¹⁴¹For more information see Gillian Rodger, “Legislating Amusements: Class Politics and Theater Law in New York City,” *American Music* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 381–98.

existed in a space between middle-class respectability and exciting depictions of romance and even violence, in much the same way that the tableaux were both decorous and improper. A paragraph about the living pictures in a program for the Wilbur Opera Company from an appearance in London, Ontario, disclosed that, “in connection with the Comic Opera, the management realizes that an exhibition of this kind, to attract attention, must be in every way adequate and artistic.” The paragraph continued by emphasizing the care the company had taken in producing high-quality pictures by revealing that “several of the best known American painters have offered artistic suggestions” and “Miss Maud Daniel, of the Wilbur Opera Company, has given personal attention to the drapings and costumes.” The final sentence of the paragraph harkened back to the roots of the tableaux vivants in lowbrow entertainment. “The models have been selected with careful regard for perfection of form and feature from a great number of applicants.” Just as comic-opera chorus girls were objectified and used by their troupes to appeal to male audiences, so too were the living pictures utilized to add shapely female bodies onto the stage while still maintaining a veneer of respectability.¹⁴²

The Wilburs also needed to communicate the nature of their living pictures to the towns they visited because each community enforced their own standards of morality.¹⁴³ In 1906, for instance, the *Raleigh Evening Times* reported the star of the comedy *Not Like Other Girls*, Alyce Kee Nan, modified one scene of the play in order to conform to local morality codes. The article quoted Nan saying, “not wishing to offend him [Raleigh’s mayor] I immediately wired the author of my play to rewrite the scene in which the objectionable words are found...I appreciate the moral desire of your city officials to keep all objectionable and suggestive advertising matter

¹⁴²All quotations in this paragraph from Wilbur Opera Company Programme, Grand Opera House, London, Ontario, 10 September [1896]. Archive.org https://archive.org/stream/cihm_56937#page/n3/mode/2up (accessed 5 April 2014).

¹⁴³Condee, *Coal and Culture*, 24.

from the public eye, and believe it is this care that has placed Raleigh among the ‘morally strict’ cities of the south.”¹⁴⁴ After 1900, Raleigh writers criticized several productions for vulgar language or behavior. In a review of a 1906 production of *The Little Duchess*, for example, the author grouched “somebody ought to remind them that there is nothing very funny in saying ‘damn’ loudly and distinctly, so that it vibrates in the farthest corner of the building. They should cut that out.”¹⁴⁵

Municipal Uplift and the Meanings of Grand and Comic Opera

By the 1890s, in larger areas that had access to more operatic performances, critics often made significant distinctions between the moral, social, and cultural implications of grand and comic opera. As discussed in Chapter 1, English-language performances were treated as entertainment, while foreign-language productions moved into the realm of high art. In big cities, comic opera was most certainly defined as an entertaining, light form of fun never to be taken too seriously and its audiences portrayed as people from the middle and even working classes who were looking for pure enjoyment. Considering their only direct contact with grand opera in this period was with *Carmen*, which big-city critics sometimes criticized because the story was too shocking and the music too exotic for high art, it is perhaps no surprise that Raleigh writers do not talk about grand opera as high art.¹⁴⁶ They reserved rhetoric about musical uplift for orchestral music.

Comic opera, however, was just as effective as grand opera as an opportunity for municipal and social uplift in Raleigh and other smaller towns. Raleigh newspapers treated every

¹⁴⁴“Miss Kee Nan and the Objectionable Bills,” *Raleigh Evening Times*, 19 March 1906.

¹⁴⁵“Theatrical,” *Raleigh Evening Times*, 9 March 1906.

¹⁴⁶See Chapter 5 for more on critical reaction to *Carmen*.

performance by a comic-opera or operatic-concert company as a major social event and an opportunity for municipal uplift. For instance, prior to Lillian Nordica's concert appearance in 1906, the *Raleigh Evening Times* declared that the recital would be "the greatest social gathering North Carolina has witnessed in many years. The list of subscribers tickets for the appearance of Madame Nordica contains the names of the most cultured people from many nearby towns as well as from Raleigh."¹⁴⁷ As they had done for the visit of Damrosch's New York Symphony, the papers emphasized the positive attributes of Nordica's audience and what her concert implied about Raleigh's place in the region. The newspapers were just as enthusiastic over De Wolf Hopper's performance of *The Charlatan* in 1900, declaring that it would be "the crowning theatrical and social event of the best season in the history of the Academy of Music."¹⁴⁸ The Bostonians were the most important comic-opera company in the U. S. when they visited Raleigh for one night in 1901 with their signature production of Reginald De Koven's *Robin Hood*. The *N&O* opined, "no greater opera has ever been written" than *Robin Hood*. Despite the comic opera's popularity at the time, no New York critic would have placed the work above grand or even comic operas by European composers.¹⁴⁹ The front-page review of the production the next morning focused more on the audience than the performance itself. "When the curtain went up on *Robin Hood* last night there was hardly a vacant chair on the floor and the galleries were packed" the writer bragged.¹⁵⁰ There was no recognition that in other places (such as New

¹⁴⁷"Coming for Nordica," *Raleigh Evening Times*, 26 September 1906. Nordica was one of the most famous and accomplished Wagnerian singers in the world at the turn of the twentieth century.

¹⁴⁸"Season's Crowning Event," *Times-Visitor*, 28 April 1900.

¹⁴⁹"Robin Hood," *News and Observer*, 15 February 1901.

¹⁵⁰"The Bostonians Last Night," *News and Observer*, 17 February 1901. The report on the Bostonians' appearance was printed on the front page which was highly uncommon for articles about a musical performance.

York or Chicago) critics categorized comic opera differently from grand opera both musically and in terms of the social implications of attendance.

A good example of the difference between operatic reception in big and small cities is illustrated by the dissimilar coverage afforded the Wilbur Opera Company in Raleigh and Atlanta. Because grand opera was not an option for Raleighites, they used comic-opera performances as opportunities for municipal uplift and private genteel display, though critics did not suggest the music itself was uplifting. When the Wilburs first visited Raleigh in 1897, the *N&O* portrayed the visit as proof of the town's entry into a fraternity of cities with music-loving, sophisticated residents. "Raleigh loves good music and appreciates a first-class presentation of a standard opera by a talented and well equipped troupe. The Wilbur company comes direct from the most discriminating audiences with unstinted praise," one author claimed.¹⁵¹ When the Wilbur Company returned to Raleigh in 1898 and 1900, writers were a bit more subdued, probably because the town's residents were familiar with the troupe already and thus did not need to be convinced to attend. For all three Raleigh engagements, the members of the Wilbur Company were treated like visiting dignitaries. According to an 1898 *N&O* article, "the Wilbur Opera Company gave a splendid rendition of that bright and standard opera, the *Mikado* last night, at the Academy of Music. The splendid choruses and the fine acting were thoroughly appreciated by the immense and cultured audience."¹⁵² The writer obscured the fact that Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* was a comic opera, calling it a "standard" opera instead—terminology generally used for grand opera by big-city music critics. He also emphasized the good qualities of the audience (they are "cultured") and indicated that many such people lived in the area since the crowd was "immense." Thus, at the macro level, the Wilbur Opera Company's

¹⁵¹"The Opera Singers Here," *News and Observer*, 14 October 1897.

¹⁵²"*Fra Diavolo* To-night." *News and Observer*, 27 October 1898.

visits became an opportunity for municipal uplift as the papers highlighted the merits of the town while publicizing the attraction. On the micro level, the performances provided a site for social uplift because Raleigh audience members could exhibit their refinement and sophistication by attending the event.

In Atlanta, a much larger city than Raleigh that attracted more impressive foreign-language traveling grand-opera troupes, the press almost ignored the Wilbur Opera Company's visit in March 1900.¹⁵³ As musicologist N. Lee Orr described,

the Wilbur-Kirwin Opera Company, which presented more works than most prestigious companies, received scant notice in the *Constitution*. Not only was it relegated to an inner page, it barely lasts five paragraphs. The city had already celebrated its culture for the year [when the French Opera Company performed three months earlier] and there was little time left to pay attention to competing events, especially lowbrow ones in the wrong house, in the wrong language, and with the wrong operas.¹⁵⁴

Atlanta had more prestigious events upon which to build its cultural capital, and the same was true of the city's residents. A relatively small comic-opera company with no big stars performing an older repertoire was nothing more than an enjoyable and cheap night out in Atlanta, while it was the social event of the season in Raleigh.

The only time articles in Raleigh newspapers addressed moral uplift was in connection with orchestral music. The Boston Festival Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the New York Symphony all visited Raleigh during the time period of this study. Critics presented orchestral music as morally uplifting and educational, as well as an avenue for increasing the musical and cultural sophistication of Raleigh residents.

The Boston Festival Orchestra performed a concert in Raleigh on 26 April 1898. Prior to the concert, the orchestra's press agent, Horace F. Smith, attended a meeting of the Raleigh

¹⁵³In 1900, 89,872 people lived in Atlanta.

¹⁵⁴Orr, *Alfredo Barili and the Rise of Classical Music in Atlanta*, 183.

Musical Association where he promoted the upcoming event. At the conclusion of the gathering, the association members “adopted [a resolution] by the unanimous vote of the association, endorsing the Boston Festival Orchestra as a well known musical organization worthy of the support and patronage of not only Raleigh, but of the best element of any city, not only the critical musician, the music lover and student but the entire general public.”¹⁵⁵ Smith’s actions confirm how important it was to enlist local music lovers when publicizing concerts.¹⁵⁶ In addition, the day after the concert, the association sponsored a special meeting in which Mr. White (a local music teacher and cellist) read a paper on the “Orchestra” and Professor Albert A. Mack of St. Mary’s College analyzed the entire program presented the evening before. Local musicians (including pupils at the Blind Institution) performed musical examples during White’s lecture, as well as piano reductions of some of the pieces from the concert.¹⁵⁷ The *News and Observer* reported “the young ladies of Peace Institute and of St. Mary’s were present and, with the members of the association, formed a large and interested audience.”¹⁵⁸ The papers often noted the presence of students from Peace and St. Mary’s at performances and lectures in order to emphasize an event’s educational aspects and to signal its respectability. Although these young women seemed only to move in packs, they were unescorted by their parents and thus could only attend the most upstanding events.

The lecture-recital on the Boston Festival Orchestra was the only instance of a music-education program directly tied to a visiting attraction, but it was not the only lecture of this

¹⁵⁵“Musical Association,” *News and Observer*, 11 March 1898.

¹⁵⁶See Chapter 2 for more information on how local tastemakers were used to legitimize and publicize concerts by traveling attractions.

¹⁵⁷I have been unable to ascertain the Boston Festival Orchestra’s entire program but it included the Overture from *Tannhäuser*, a Tchaikovsky Andante, selections from the *Barber of Seville* by Rossini, and “Sewanee River.” The orchestra was conducted by Emil Mollenhauer, and the soloists were Rose Stewart, Giuseppe Del Puente, William Lavin, and Alfonso Rosa.

¹⁵⁸“Raleigh Musical Association,” *News and Observer*, 27 April 1898.

type. Throughout this time period, various organizations, including the Raleigh Musical Association, sponsored lectures and sometimes amateur classical-music performances. The local Women's Club established a "music department" (along with literature and arts departments) early in the twentieth century. The music department functioned similarly to a free-standing music club, routinely sponsoring concerts and lectures by local music professors from St. Mary's or Peace Institute with their students performing musical examples. Raleigh did not organize a branch of the National Federation of Music Clubs until 1927. In some communities, by the end of the nineteenth century, music clubs had already become one of the most important sources of concert sponsorship in town, and the women who managed these performances functioned as local cultural entrepreneurs.¹⁵⁹ At this time in Raleigh, the Women's Club's music department provided some opportunities to hear art music performed by students and local professional musicians, but the organization was small and had not developed into the kind of cultural nerve center that some music clubs were by 1910.

Grand Opera Outside of the Opera Company

Very few comic operas were performed in Raleigh after the Bostonians' visit in 1901. Soon after 1901 the Academy's manager probably entered into a Southern theatrical circuit that contracted with the Syndicate for attractions.¹⁶⁰ The entertainments that Raleigh hosted became dominated by musical comedies, as well as dramatic and comic plays (the life-blood of the Syndicate). The advertisements appeared more regularized in look and content (as if being provided by the same

¹⁵⁹For more information on the importance of music clubs, cultural entrepreneurship, and the cultural life of American cities see Linda Whitesitt, "Women as 'Keepers of Culture': Music Clubs, Community Concert Series, and Symphony Orchestras," in *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists Since 1860*, eds. Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 65–86.

¹⁶⁰I have found references to Southern circuits, but have yet to locate a list of theaters that belonged to such a network.

organization every week), and the city seemed to get more attractions that had played in New York recently. The Syndicate's influence greatly reduced the number of comic-opera companies that were touring the U.S. by the early twentieth century, and many of those that were traveling had switched to an American repertoire such as *Wang* by Woolson Morse or *Dorvas* by Watty Hydes and Clement Locknane that were closer to musical comedy than the European-style comic operas of the mid- to late-nineteenth century.¹⁶¹

Although there were grand-opera troupes traveling throughout the U. S. in the early twentieth century, many companies bypassed Raleigh when they came to the South. The English-language grand opera troupes, the Gordon-Shay Grand Opera Company (in 1902) and the Aborn Opera Company (in 1910) visited Wilmington (the most populous city in North Carolina) but did not play in Raleigh, even though a direct railroad line had connected the two cities since 1840.¹⁶² Macon, Georgia, too, saw a decrease in opera performances in the early twentieth century, but the Gordon-Shay English Grand Opera Company performed *Carmen* and *Il trovatore* in 1902 and 1903, and in 1907 Henry W. Savage's English Grand Opera Company visited with *Madame Butterfly*.¹⁶³ Neither one of these troupes came to Raleigh, presumably because the city was too small to support them.

The only access Raleigh residents had to grand opera in live performance was through concert companies headlined by well-known opera singers of the day. Clara Louise Kellogg (26

¹⁶¹See Chapter 2 for more information on the Syndicate.

¹⁶²Other companies that visited Wilmington but not Raleigh included the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company (1881), Gorman's German Opera Company (1883), the Bijou Opera Company (visited three times between 1885 and 1886, but came only once to Raleigh), Lillian Nordica (1903—did not go to Raleigh until 1906), and the Ethel Morton Opera Company (1907). Other performers chose to play both cities such as the Black Patti Troubadours (multiple times), the John Templeton Company (1886) and pianist Edward Baxter Perry (1905). Information about Wilmington performances from Donald J. Rulfs, "The Professional Theater in Wilmington, 1870–1900," *North Carolina Historical Review* 28, no. 3 (July 1951): 316–31; and "The Professional Theater in Wilmington, 1900–1930," *North Carolina Historical Review* 28, no. 4 (October 1951): 463–85.

¹⁶³Cochran, "A History of Opera in Macon," 188 and 208. Macon's population in 1910 was 40,732 (approximately twice that of Raleigh's).

January 1886), Emma Juch (6 March 1889), Marie Tavary (6 January 1894), Louise Natali (7 February 1894), Lillian Nordica (18 and 19 October 1906), and Giuseppe Campanari (17 October 1907) all passed through Raleigh. In every case, before each concert, writers for the newspapers expressed their delight that such famous singers were coming to Raleigh. As in the reviews of full-opera performances, the performers' talents were extravagantly praised, the audience congratulated for its good taste, but there was very little discussion of the music itself. In a typically effusive review, a critic for the *Raleigh Evening Times* enthused that "the singing of Madame Nordica was of course a delight to all who heard it, but to many it must have been a revelation as well of what is meant by artistic singing, real voice culture and true interpretation of a work of art."¹⁶⁴ The audience for Nordica's last concert was described as the largest and "one of the most brilliant" in Raleigh's history.¹⁶⁵ Ticket charges for many of these recitals were up to three to five times more expensive than other types of entertainments.¹⁶⁶

Because it was a risk for an attraction with expensive tickets to visit such a small place, the local impresario had to provide a guarantee in order to ensure that the concert company would perform. Residents bought tickets in advance until the guarantee was met. The local papers let people know how to purchase tickets and emphasized that without the public's participation, Raleigh would not be able to hear great musical works performed by famous artists. Before the New York Symphony Orchestra and Walter Damrosch agreed to play in Raleigh in 1906, citizens had to meet a large guarantee. In February, before the April 23 concert, the *Raleigh Evening Times* informed its readers that, "many of the citizens of Raleigh and

¹⁶⁴"Nordica Won Big Audience," *Raleigh Evening Times*, 19 October 1906.

¹⁶⁵"Last Night's Concert," *Raleigh Evening Times*, 20 October 1906. Nordica knew how to appeal to the local audience. Along with excerpts from *Tannhäuser* and German Lieder she performed "Way Down Upon De Swanee Ribber" and "Old Folks at Home."

¹⁶⁶Nordica charged \$2.50 or \$3 for tickets in advance and \$5 at the door and Campanari asked \$3. Tickets for other attractions usually ran between \$.50 and \$1.50, with some attractions charging as little as \$.15 or \$.25.

surrounding towns have subscribed liberally but the guarantee is so large that it is necessary that the subscription must be considerably larger before a definite engagement can be made. If you are interested in having this great orchestra come here and expect to attend the concert, send your subscription at once to Wade R. Brown.”¹⁶⁷

With only one active theater in town, the manager of the Academy of Music was one of the most important cultural figures in the area. Several different men oversaw the Academy during this time, but they all seemed to follow the same business strategy. They tried to schedule high-profile concerts during the State Fair to take advantage of the tourists who came to the city for the yearly event. Stores held special sales and bought extra advertising space in the newspapers. Both the Academy of Music and the Metropolitan Hall (which was usually closed) hosted nightly performances. Prior to about 1900, theaters generally hired comic-opera companies for Fair week, but after 1900 the attraction was more likely to be a vaudeville or musical-comedy troupe demonstrating the decline in comic opera’s popularity. During the Fair Weeks of 1906 and 1907, Nordica and Campanari were booked in addition to the popular-music attractions. The concert organizers added extra amenities for these concerts that were not available in other Fair years. The railroad companies added routes specifically to bring out-of-town audience members to Raleigh. Organizers sponsored a dance after both concerts for which the singers were the guests of honor—neatly combining the cultural and the social aspects of the events.¹⁶⁸

Audiences also heard opera arias as part of high-class vaudeville or even minstrel shows (though in that case they were more likely to be burlesques of grand or comic operas). Long

¹⁶⁷“Theatrical,” *Raleigh Evening Times*, 9 February 1906. Although Wade Brown was not the manager of the Academy of Music, he seems to have been in charge of logistics for art-music performances in Raleigh, as he also coordinated the ticket purchases for Nordica’s and Campanari’s concerts.

¹⁶⁸No record remains of Campanari’s repertoire for the Raleigh concert, but Nordica sang a combination of operatic arias (such as the “Elizabeth Aria” from *Tannhäuser*), songs in French and German, as well as parlor songs such as “Way Down Upon De Swanee Ribber” and “The Old Folks at Home.”

after they had passed the zenith of their popularity in big cities and on the Eastern seaboard, minstrel troupes traveled through Raleigh once or twice per year. In 1878, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* pronounced “Negro minstrelsy itself is fast passing away, and it is about time to prepare its obituary.”¹⁶⁹ The reports of minstrelsy’s demise were premature. The *N&O* reported in 1896, for instance, that “minstrel lovers packed the opera house to the doors last night,” when the Barlow Brothers Minstrels appeared in their annual engagement.¹⁷⁰ Invariably the advertisements for minstrel companies noted that the balcony was reserved for the “Colored Population.”

There was no more uplifting operatic experience in Gilded Age America than attending a performance of a Wagner music drama. Although no staged performances of a Wagner opera appeared in Raleigh in this period, a spoken version of *Parsifal* visited in 1907 and again in 1908. The company marketed the show’s special effects and “Wagnerite” music, along with the play’s connection to the opera. Advertisements reminded the audience that due to the length of the play, it would begin at 7:45 pm. The announcements informed readers that at the Metropolitan Opera House, *Parsifal* (the opera) usually began at 5:30 pm with a long break for dinner during the performance, but that “this custom has been altered for the trans-continental tour.”¹⁷¹ Despite Bayreuth’s embargo on *Parsifal* performances, the Metropolitan Opera premiered the work on 24 December 1903 after their manager, Heinrich Conried, convinced an American judge that the ban only applied to European theaters. By the end of 1907, the Metropolitan had performed the work forty-five times.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹“The Decay of Negro Minstrelsy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 April 1878.

¹⁷⁰Untitled, *News and Observer*, 4 August 1896.

¹⁷¹Advertisement, *Raleigh Evening Times*, 2 February 1907. This version of *Parsifal* traveled widely throughout the South. The attraction visited both Wilmington and Macon along with many other towns.

¹⁷²Henry Savage premiered an English-language production of *Parsifal* on 17 October 1904 which also toured the country.

The Wagner craze had reached Raleigh at last, and the play's engagement went well enough that the company played for two nights instead of one during their second visit.¹⁷³ The *Raleigh Evening Times* stated that "whatever so-called message, whatever theory of art or morals it [*Parsifal*] may serve to emphasize, it unquestionably speaks to the soul and sets astir the inner fibres of the being."¹⁷⁴ *Parsifal* cost between 50 cents and \$2.50 to attend—the most expensive show to visit Raleigh during the time period I studied except for the Nordica and Campanari operatic concert companies. Unlike the other plays and comedies that entertained patrons at the Academy of Music, *Parsifal* was treated as high art and a high-society event with a high price to match. It was the closest Raleigh got to a grand-opera performance during this time period.

African Americans and Entertainment in Raleigh

In many areas of the country, large immigrant communities caused cultural divides. The situation was different in the South. The region was home to few immigrants and never experienced the cultural problems that resulted from conflicting religious and social beliefs. According to historian Steve Goodson, in "the South, racial, not ethnic, division was the defining problem of the era."¹⁷⁵ This generalization was true in Raleigh.

It is difficult to find information about the racial compositions of audiences for Raleigh entertainments in this period, but there are hints that indicate that African Americans may have been informally banned from many of the entertainments that came to town. Advertisements for attractions that featured blacks or blackface performers always specify that African Americans

¹⁷³Another example of the Wagner craze's influence in Raleigh was the 1899 publication of a book titled *Parsifal—A Day at the Wagner-Bayreuth Festival* by Mary McKinnon, the piano teacher at Peace Institute. A local business, Edwards & Broughton published the monograph.

¹⁷⁴"The Story of *Parsifal*," *Raleigh Evening Times*, 2 February 1907.

¹⁷⁵Goodson, *Highbrows, Hillbillies & Hellfire*, 6.

were allowed to purchase balcony seats, but no mention was made of provisions for African Americans at other types of entertainments. This omission could mean that blacks were welcome only at events for which advertisements specifically mentioned them. The *Gazette* is the only African American newspaper published in Raleigh with issues that are still extant during the period of this dissertation. It printed arts coverage, but only of events that were specifically for African Americans such as recitals at black churches, meetings of the Violet club (a black social club), or the Great Emancipation Celebration of 1893. The paper did not carry reviews or advertisements for entertainments marked as white such as performances of comic operas or straight plays. Even before the Jim Crow laws were passed in 1899, separate organizations and institutions had already developed in North Carolina so that there was minimal race mixing in public. For instance, a few weeks after the State Fair every year, a Colored Fair was held that drew African American attendees from throughout the State. These clues lead me to conclude that it is very possible that blacks were barred from many attractions at Raleigh theaters.

The Black Patti Troubadours were a high-class vaudeville troupe, and one of the few attractions that featured opera which was definitely open to black audiences. The Troubadours visited Raleigh annually beginning around 1898. Sissieretta Jones ended each Black Patti Troubadour show with an “Operatic Kaleidoscope” that included excerpts from grand and comic operas. The white newspapers recognized Jones’s status as the most famous African American operatic singer in the U. S., and were respectful of her accomplishments, but her visits were neither important social events in the white community nor treated as a source of municipal uplift. On the occasion of her 1900 visit, a writer for the *Raleigh Times* explained that

for an evening of sweet melody, interspersed with the buck dance, the cake walk and genuine ‘coon’ fun, nowhere in the wide world can the amusement seeker find more enjoyment than that offered in the performance of the Black Patti Troubadours. The new operatic kaleidoscope arranged for the final half hour of the stage performance is

prepared with dignified musical taste and is of the same high standard as formerly, excepting that the selections are almost entirely new.¹⁷⁶

Unfortunately, there seems to have been no African American paper in Raleigh after 1898, so it is difficult to determine the black community's reactions to Jones and her company except that they attended in great numbers. The *Raleigh Times* reported in 1900 that the Troubadours drew the best house of that week "with a gallery that was packed to suffocation."¹⁷⁷

The Black Patti Troubadours toured extensively in the United States and sometimes Canada every year between 1896 and 1915, including many cities in the South. Throughout Jones's long career, her reviews in the black press were very favorable, often claiming she was as good as the most famous white sopranos. Audiences loved her beautiful gowns, and both blacks and whites crowded her shows. African American critics credited Jones's performances with raising the cultural knowledge of her audiences with a "clean" show that skillfully combined high and low elements into one presentation.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the New York performances of the Drury Company, African American elites did not use the Troubadours as an opportunity for social and racial uplift in the way they utilized the DOC. The difference in the position in the cultural hierarchy of the two genres was too great to allow the elite to position low-art vaudeville as racially and socially uplifting as the high-art grand opera.

One example that demonstrates the existence of the theatrical color line in Raleigh occurred during the Fair Week in mid-October 1897. Two major attractions visited the city—a large circus that traveled with their own 3,000-person tent as an outdoor performance venue and

¹⁷⁶"Academy Attractions," *Raleigh Times*, 11 December 1900. The *Raleigh Times* often seems to have published copy provided by advance agents verbatim, so it is very possible that this quotation was actually part of the publicity materials provided by Jones's management.

¹⁷⁷"At the Theater," *Raleigh Times*, 15 December 1900.

¹⁷⁸See Maureen D. Lee, *Sissieretta Jones: The Greatest Singer of her Race, 1868–1933* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012) for more information.

the Wilbur Opera Company. The African American paper, the *Gazette*, only advertised the circus, while the *N&O* only promoted the Wilburs. As the financial records referred to in Chapter 2 demonstrate, theater managers maintained relationships with local papers and made decisions about which outlets they routinely advertised in and paid for this marketing either on their own or in conjunction with the attraction. The omissions in the *Gazette* and the *N&O* reveal the racial coding of entertainment genres. African Americans could not participate in events that the white majority marked as uplifting, particularly during the Fair when the attention of the entire state was on Raleigh. Blacks had their own Fair week, complete with separate events (though no concerts) thus keeping the custom of racial separation intact. By controlling access to uplifting experiences, whites in Raleigh reinforced not only their social and political control over blacks, but also their own definitions of whiteness and prestige. In the eyes of white Raleighites, opera was a “white” activity, defined as such by its ability to culturally and socially uplift its listeners and performers in multiple ways that they thought impossible for African American music or performers. Whites tolerated Sissieretta Jones’s operatic arias, adaptations, and burlesques because they were performed within the context of vaudeville, and thus had been stripped of many of the uplifting connotations held by more prestigious attractions such as opera companies or symphony orchestras.¹⁷⁹

As more primary sources have become available to study musical reception outside of the largest American cities, it has become evident that what was true in New York was not always true throughout the country. The reactions of Raleigh’s audiences and critics to comic

¹⁷⁹See Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South*, 14–65 for an example of a similar dynamic at work in Atlanta. Despite repeated requests from prominent African Americans, white organizers of the Metropolitan Opera week refused to sell tickets to blacks.

opera in English translation suggest that even as the genre was losing popularity and social status in big cities, it was still popular and serving an important cultural function in more rural areas. Musical performances were one of the most important activities city leaders used to project an image of refinement and sophistication to the outside world. In the absence of grand-opera performances or regular professional orchestral concerts, Raleigh newspapers encouraged municipal uplift through comic-opera productions, operatic concert companies, and amateur events. In the South, racial tensions replaced the cultural friction between immigrant groups and American citizens that plagued northern cities. By limiting African Americans' access to highbrow entertainment, white residents created and reinforced conceptions of whiteness that included a demonstration of refinement and sophistication through attendance at comic operas, music festivals, and orchestral concerts at the cost of excluding African American citizens.

Critics and musicians alike used the term “uplift” frequently in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Music was credited with the power to change the soul (for good or ill), and thus its influence had to be regulated and controlled. For the individual, music could uplift morally or socially. At a larger, societal level, great music could alter the nature of the culture itself, uplift African American society, and raise the prestige of entire cities. The case studies in this chapter reveal how these lofty ideas about music affected the careers and lives of ordinary musicians and citizens.

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMING *CARMEN* IN THE UNITED STATES

The final two chapters of this dissertation focus one iconic work: *Carmen* by Georges Bizet. It premiered in 1875 in Paris, came to the United States in October 1878, and has been performed throughout this country and the world ever since. The work is one of the few late nineteenth-century operas to enter the canon quickly and decisively, and it is the opera's American premiere that first defined the early chronological limit of my dissertation. It turned out to be a happy coincidence that 1878 also marked the beginning of the post-Reconstruction period and was thus an important date historically as well. In a study as sprawling as this one, it is instructive to apply the ideas I have explored thus far to one piece. We have already seen how cultural and historical issues applied to opera in the United States at a macro level, but a close consideration of *Carmen* in America provides a glimpse into the ways that the performance and reception of one work were affected by aesthetic discourses, business methods, uplift, and issues of identity.

Nineteenth-century opera performance practice is one of the newer topics of musicological research. With the re-discovery of nineteenth-century staging manuals—the *livrets de mise en scène* from Paris, the *disposizioni sceniche* from Italy, and the *Regiebücher* from Germany—scholars and performers have access to a wealth of information about how nineteenth-century operas were produced in the leading theaters of France, Germany, and Italy. Up to this point, however, scholarship on opera in nineteenth-century America has rarely addressed how individual works were performed.¹ The Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection held at the Mills

¹Exceptions include George Martin, *Verdi at the Golden Gate: Opera and San Francisco in the Gold Rush Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); *Verdi in America: Oberto through Rigoletto* (Rochester, NY: University of

Music Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison contains many documents that are similar to European production manuals. In this chapter, I use Georges Bizet's *Carmen* as a case study to explore how at least this work was produced by some English-language opera companies between its American premiere in 1878 and the 1909–10 season. The next chapter considers the American reception of *Carmen* during the same time period.

Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company performed *Carmen*'s American premiere in New York City on 23 October 1878, just three years after its world premiere at the Paris Opéra Comique. Two days later, the Strakosch Italian Opera Company sang the opera in Philadelphia for the first time. Both productions were in Italian. The Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company produced the first English-language *Carmen* during the 1879–80 season. Five marked-up *Carmen* scores once used by American English-language companies between 1878 and the 1920s are now part of the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection. Despite the difficulty in deciphering the scores, studied together with other production materials, libretti, reviews, and published plot summaries, these sources offer a window on some of the ways that these companies modified the printed music and staged *Carmen*.

As Nicholas Cook wrote in 2013, scores “define frameworks within which musicians collectively negotiate the fine details of their performance.”² Indeed, in the nineteenth century, opera composers and singers did not regard the score with the same sort of reverence as we do today. As Clive Brown wrote in connection with Verdi, but surely is just as true for Bizet,

the difference between our idea of notation and Verdi's is probably far greater than even the most imaginative of us could easily conceive. And the further we go back in time, the

Rochester Press, 2011); and Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

²Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 235.

bigger the gulf between a mechanistically correct rendition of the notation of a piece and the musical end-product that composers and performers believed to be indicated by it.³

The Tams-Witmark scores certainly reflect this attitude to the notation, with many changes made that reveal the exigencies of the performers' situations, or to further a particular vision of the piece that required modifications to the printed music. The changes and additions to *Carmen's* score, in some cases, seem to have developed quickly into traditions that critics associated so closely with the work that they seem not to have known the difference between what was in the printed score and what had been added later by performers. In effect, these scores prove Philip Gossett's assertion that,

traditions of musical performance refer to places in an opera where conductors or singers at some moment between the composition of the work and the present have altered or modified the printed musical text, for whatever reason, and where the changes introduced have been accepted by other performers.⁴

I do not undertake this analysis to recommend that modern singers try to mimic a nineteenth-century approach to performing *Carmen* (especially in the case of this opera, as the interpretation of the score would run counter to current ideas about the characters and plot), nor do I simply want to explain the sorts of alterations indicated in these sources. Instead, I use these performing materials to show how English-language troupes produced *Carmen*, the traditions that seemed to have been established around how the opera should be presented, the reasons some changes may have been introduced, and the interpretive and musical results of those alterations. Contrary to the stereotype that English-language troupes butchered the works they performed, these scores indicate that the companies sensitively cut *Carmen* so as to shorten

³Clive Brown, "On 'Exactly What is Written,'" in *Verdi in Performance*, eds. Alison Latham and Roger Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 81.

⁴Philip Gossett, "Critical Editions and Performance," in *Verdi in Performance*, 140.

it with as little disruption to the story and music as possible.⁵ The scores also demonstrate that a performing tradition evolved over the first two decades of the work's American performance, which used strategically placed cuts and pantomimes to increase the level of violent conflict on stage and discredit the protagonist in the eyes of the audience. As I will explain in more detail in the next chapter, this tradition both shaped and reflected American critical discourse about the opera.

Producing Opera in Nineteenth-Century Europe

The French began publishing the *livrets de mise en scène* at the end of the eighteenth century, with the Italians following suit with their own performing manuals in the late 1830s. It was not until the 1850s when Giuseppe Verdi and his publisher, Ricordi, began to advocate for the *disposizioni sceniche* that the Italian staging manuals became as thorough as the French manuals had already been for several decades.⁶ Despite Wagner's attempts to control the visual aspects of his operas, German *Regiebücher* were not published until the 1880s. Wagner himself, however, began to issue production guides for his operas by the 1850s.⁷ In all three countries, these documents were addressed to the stage manager and contained detailed instructions, based on the premiere production of a work, for blocking, stage action, lighting, and other technical matters. Until the end of the century, staging manuals typically did not relay information on set or costume designs, which was available instead through illustrations in theatrical magazines and from publishers. Although there were, no doubt, variations among composers and publishing

⁵Katherine K. Preston makes a similar point in "The People's Prima Donna: Emma Abbott and Opera for the People," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 1 (January 2014): 73–76.

⁶Mercedes Viale Ferrero, "Stage and Set," in *Opera on Stage*, eds. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, trans. Kate Singleton (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 96–98.

⁷Patrick Carnegy, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 38.

companies, by the 1890s, the set and costume designs often became the property of the publisher who would distribute them to impresarios undertaking an authorized production.⁸ In addition, some manuals began to include data beyond strictly staging instructions. For instance, the *libri di messa in scena* published by Edoardo Sonzogno after 1894 contained detailed descriptions and even sketches of backdrops, sets, the stage furniture, props, and costumes.⁹

During much of the nineteenth century, no one had complete authority over the direction of an operatic production. French, German, and Italian theaters did not employ a director in the modern sense of the term: rather, the duties of plotting the stage action, overseeing production design elements, and controlling the musical and dramatic interpretation of the work were divided among many people who collaborated without a clear leader. In French theaters, the *régisseur* was in charge of staging and, for a premiere, the composer and librettist shared responsibility for other aspects of the performance. Italian and German theaters were managed somewhat differently, but still distributed the tasks required to stage an opera among several positions.¹⁰ Directors with ultimate responsibility for every aspect of an opera production did not begin to appear in Europe until the end of the nineteenth century, and even then sporadically. Italians did not begin to use a modern-style director until after World War II, much later than in other European countries.¹¹

Singers stepped into the power vacuum created by the lack of a dedicated musical and technical leader, and took responsibility for the musical interpretation and stage actions for their

⁸Ferrero, "Stage and Set," 106.

⁹Laura Citti, "The 'Messa in Scena' of the Casa Musicale Sonzogno: An Iconography of Stage Direction at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Music in Art* 34, nos. 1–2 (Spring/Fall 2009): 245–53.

¹⁰For more information see Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, eds. *Opera on Stage*; Carnegie, *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre*; and H. Robert Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals for Twelve Parisian Operatic Premières* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1991).

¹¹Gerardo Guccini, "Directing Opera," in *Operas on Stage*, 126.

roles. In an 1839 monograph, Giuseppe Rossi-Gallieno observed there was no reason in French theaters for “a particular authority to preside over rehearsals... [because] the artists themselves are so wise, so devoted to their jobs, so exceptionally well trained that such supervision would be superfluous.”¹² Nineteenth-century singers often collaborated with composers and librettists during the composition of an opera, and felt free to modify the music through strategies such as ornamentation, substituting arias, and changing the original key of an aria. They also owned their own costumes so they could greatly affect the look of a production. As the nineteenth century progressed, singers’ power seemed to diminish as the authority of the composer became more dominant.¹³ Still a strong singer with enough power within the opera house could control not only his or her own performance, but also affect the staging of an entire opera. For instance, Victor Maurel (one of the great late-nineteenth-century baritones and a Verdi confidante) wrote a staging manual for *Otello* in 1888 which was, according to Karen Henson, a “‘complement’ and corrective to the 1887 Verdi-authorised volume.”¹⁴ Henson points out as performance conventions and production traditions changed during the nineteenth century, the role of individual singers in the creation or subsequent realization of a character, or even an entire opera, becomes more difficult to ascertain.¹⁵

Scholars debate the authority held by the staging manuals. H. Robert Cohen claims in his extensive work on the *livrets de mise en scène*, that these documents were intended to transmit to

¹²Giuseppe Rossi-Gallieno, *Saggio di economia teatrale dedicato alle melodrammatiche scene italiane* (Milan: Rusconi, 1839), 31n as quoted in Guccini, “Directing Opera,” 144.

¹³Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178.

¹⁴Karen Henson, “Verdi, Victor Maurel and *Fin-de-Siècle* Operatic Performance,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19, no. 1 (March 2007): 65.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 84.

the *régisseurs* of provincial French theaters how they should produce grand and comic operas originally premiered in Paris. According to Cohen,

staging in Paris and the French provinces throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth was an art of preservation rather than creation. *Régisseurs* strove to conserve, to the extent possible, the original *mise en scène* of an opera's première as transcribed in the production. Staging, in a word, was *not* intended to be altered.¹⁶

Arnold Jacobshagen disagrees, however, contending that the *livrets* were neither as authoritative as Cohen believes nor as widely disseminated in France as he suggests. Pointing out that the *livrets* were usually transcribed (and later published) by theatrical agents who typically did not have insider knowledge about productions, and that they were printed as flimsy newspaper inserts or pamphlets, Jacobshagen argues that the *livrets* were “intended primarily for practical and immediate use, not for extended conservation of an immutable production.”¹⁷ Whatever the ultimate authority of the *livrets*, Wagner and Verdi scholars claim that both composers were inspired by the attention to staging at the Paris Opéra to begin asserting their ideas more forcefully about the visual aspect of their opera productions through staging manuals and more precise performance instructions within their scores.¹⁸

Transatlantic Circulation of Staging Manuals

While there were traveling opera troupes in Europe, most operas were performed by resident companies. By contrast, operas in the United States were almost always produced on the road. This meant that productions had to be portable, needed to fit into a variety of theaters, and were

¹⁶Cohen, *The Original Staging Manuals*, xxiii. [Italics in original]

¹⁷Arnold Jacobshagen, “Analyzing *Mise-en-Scène*: Halévy’s *La Juive* at the Salle le Peletier,” in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, eds. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 192. Jacobshagen demonstrates in his article “Staging at the Opéra-Comique in Nineteenth-Century Paris: Auber’s *Fra Diavolo* and the *Livrets de Mise-en-scène*,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13, no. 3 (November 2001): 239–60 that the staging of *Fra Diavolo* changed significantly over time.

¹⁸Jacobshagen, “Analyzing *Mise-en-Scène*,” 177.

staged by people working for a company rather than for an opera house.¹⁹ Similarly to European theaters, American troupes usually did not employ a director in the modern sense. During the 1870s, stage directors started to appear in the United States but they were uncommon for many years. Instead, troupes relied upon a stage manager who ran rehearsals and performing decisions were made through a combination of tradition and choices made by individual singers, the stage manager, or the impresario.²⁰ An American stage manager was almost always a singer with the troupe. He kept his own score marked with all the changes made during rehearsals, including cuts, cues, blocking, and acting instructions.

Grand-opera singers may have retained authority to shape the performances of their roles and the look of productions longer in the United States than in Europe since, until Puccini debuted *La fanciulla del West* at the Metropolitan in 1910, American performers never worked with the composer and librettists in a premiere production. For instance, Emma Abbott was well known for her attention to all aspects of the staging of the operas in her troupe's repertoire. Her biographer, Sadie E. Martin, reported that Abbott "personally superintended all rehearsals, dictated the costumes, properties, etc., and yet never seemed to interfere with the duties she assigned to others."²¹

The Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection contains a large number of staging manuals, though few are as detailed as the French *livrets*. Many promptbooks or stage manager's scores contain blocking instructions, simple stage layouts, performance instructions, and cuts.

Sometimes the promptbooks are entirely handwritten, other times a printed libretto amended by

¹⁹See Chapter 2 for more information on how a typical opera company dealt with the practical issues related to sets and costumes.

²⁰Martin, *Verdi at the Golden Gate*, 153.

²¹Sadie E. Martin, *The Life and Professional Career of Emma Abbott* (Minneapolis, MN: L. Kimball Printing Company, 1891), 45. See also Katherine K. Preston, *Opera for the American People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in the Late Nineteenth Century* (forthcoming) on Abbott's famous work ethic and attention to detail.

handwritten marginalia serves the purpose. The stage manager's scores are always a modified printed piano-vocal score. In many cases blank pages were interwoven between every printed page of the score to provide room for notes. The Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection is enormous. I examined production documents from twenty-one different operas and operettas. Only one score I studied, however, indicated that the staging instructions were derived from a European source. A promptbook for *Maritana* (in this case a printed libretto whose pages were separated and glued onto pages of a blank book) once owned by Anne Seguin carries the designation "marked and corrected as acted at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, June 1846 by George Ellis, prompter for Edward Seguin" (Figure 5.1).²²

²²Anne Childe Seguin (1809/14–1888) was a British soprano who met her husband, Edward Seguin, when she was a student in London. The Seguins toured the United States performing English-language opera throughout the 1840s. After Edward's death in 1852, Anne settled in New York to teach and occasionally perform until she died in 1888. *Maritana* by Vincent Wallace premiered at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane on 15 November 1845. More than likely, George Ellis brought the promptbook with him to the United States when he worked for the Seguins. For more information see Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 216–30.

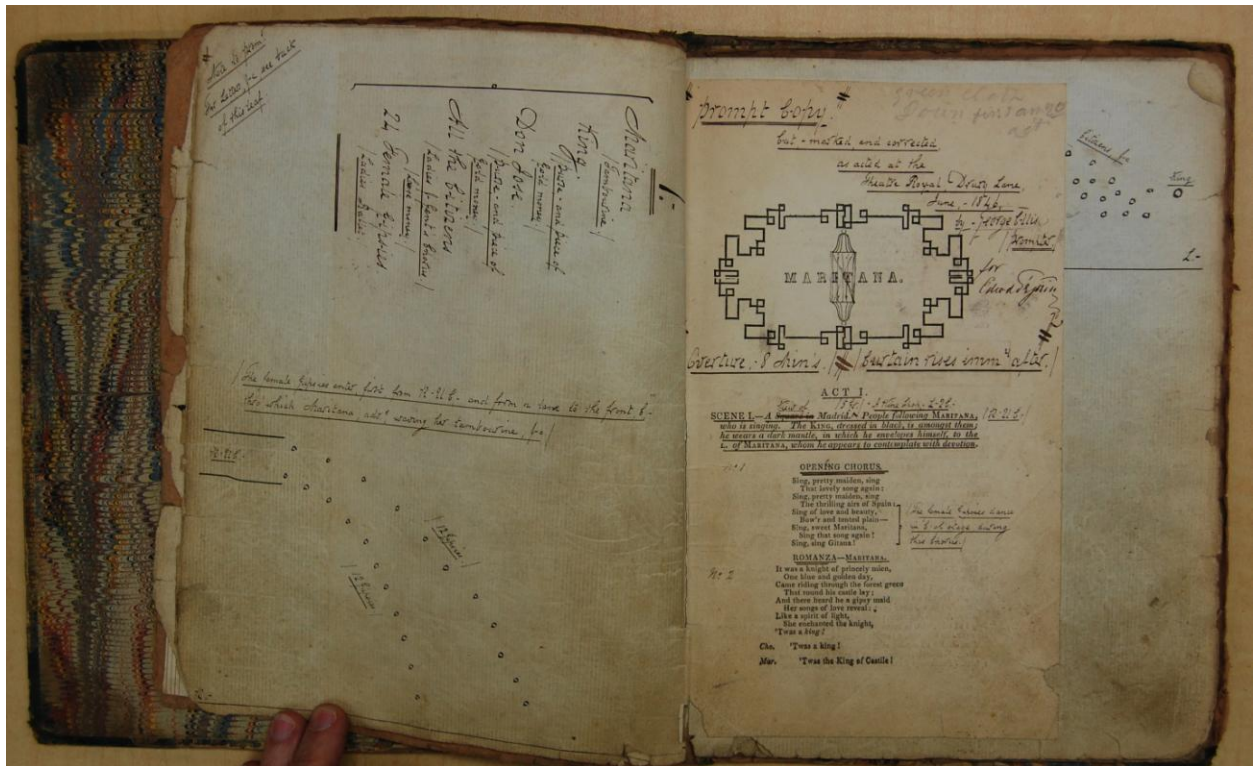


Figure 5.1: Anne Seguin's Promptbook for *Maritana*, Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Considering the close connections between theaters and opera companies in the United States and Britain, it is no surprise that an American troupe would use a staging manual from a British house. A more thorough review of the scores in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection might yield more information about the transatlantic circulation of staging manuals between Europe and the United States. Given that many opera impresarios and singers were trained in Europe and pursued careers on both continents, it is logical to assume that staging conventions and traditions from Europe made their way to the States. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to compare French, Italian, or German staging manuals with similar documents from American productions. No one has, as yet, undertaken such a project, but an examination of these production materials could help determine the authority of European staging manuals outside of their home theaters, the transmission of operatic performance traditions, and the

reach of the networks that controlled grand- and comic-opera productions in America and Europe.

The Tams-Witmark *Carmen* Scores

The *Carmen* scores located at the University of Wisconsin-Madison once belonged to the Tams-Witmark lending library. Arthur Tams (1848–1927) began his career working in English-language companies, including stints as chorus manager for the Clara Louise Kellogg Company and as a singer, stage manager, and chorus director with the Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company.²³ Tams founded his music lending library in 1885, using purchases from opera companies, impresarios, and orchestral musicians as the core of the business's inventory. In 1927, the Tams Company merged with the other large lending library in the U. S., owned by Isadore Witmark. The Tams-Witmark Company cleared out their old scores in the 1960s and donated tens of thousands of items to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Library of Congress, the Eastman School of Music, and the Westminster Choir College. Many of these documents contain the names of the people and companies who once used them or originally owned them.

The lending libraries rebound the scores and assigned names to them that indicated the origin of the interpretation contained in that resource. Comic operas, for example, were often labeled the “Casino Version” or the “McCaull Version.” This method of identifying different iterations of the same work indicates that particular theaters (such as the Casino) or opera companies (such as the McCaull troupe) developed interpretations that, if they did not hold

²³For more information on Arthur Tams see the “History of the Collection” note for the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection at the Mills Music Library, <http://music.library.wisc.edu/collections/Tams-Witmark.html>. Tams joined the Abbott Company in its inaugural 1879–80 season. See also *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd edition, s.v. “Tams, Arthur W.,” (by Katherine K. Preston), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/> (accessed 24 January 2015).

absolute authority over subsequent performances, might have at least gained a reputation among performers and audiences as a common approach to a work.

The Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection includes five scores for *Carmen* that have identifying marginalia (Table 5.1). There are two different types of scores: the conductor's score and the stage manager's score. In both cases, they are printed piano-vocal scores that have been modified for a specific use.²⁴ The conductor's score was used by a conductor. Therefore most of the marginalia is concerned with musical issues such as cuts, whether the dialogue or recitative should be performed, a few stage directions (probably signals for cues), and instrumentation. The stage manager's scores are essentially staging manuals, though the instructions are handwritten additions to the scores, rather than specially-printed documents as many were in Europe.

Table 5.1: *Carmen* scores from the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection

Short Name for the Source	Original Owner of the Source	Type of Source	Publisher of the Score	Approximate Date of First Use
Abbott stage manager's score	Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company	Stage Manager's score	Metzler, c. 1879	1880
Abbott conductor's score	Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company	Conductor's score	Metzler, c. 1879	1880
Liesegang	Adolph Liesegang	Conductor's score	Ditson, 1879	1889–1902
Bostonians	Bostonians Opera Company	Conductor's score	Ditson, 1879	1890
Young	Dan Young or Joseph Guthrie	Stage Manager's score	Ditson, 1879	1901

²⁴I never saw a full conductor's score for the operas I examined in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection.

The scores that once belonged to the Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company are marked with her stamp from the troupe's debut 1879–80 season (Figure 5.2).²⁵ The conductor's score also contains the signature of her conductor, Sig. Antonio Tomasi. The scores used by the Abbott troupe were published in London by the Metzler Company and have lyrics in English only. The Metzler score does not have a copyright date, but it must have been printed by the end of 1879 at the latest. Because the Metzler score contains only recitatives, someone hand-copied the spoken dialogue printed in the musical text published by Ditson on to separate sheets of paper and glued them into the Abbott stage manager's score. The Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection also contains other production materials owned by the Abbott Company including the company's handwritten prompter's book, which uses the Ditson dialogue, and illustrations of the sets probably used in the Parisian premiere.

²⁵The Abbott Company premiered *Carmen* in early 1880, though Abbott herself did not perform in the work that season. An 1890 article describes four different costumes Abbott had made for *Carmen*, however, so it seems that she sang the title role in her final season before her death on 5 January 1891. "Abbott's Dresses," *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 August 1890.



Figure 5.2: Opening of Chorus No. 4 in the Abbott Stage Manager's Score.

Emma Abbott's 1879–80 stamp is on right-hand page.

Blocking, stage directions, and stage placements are indicated on the left-hand page.

Tams-Witmark Collection/Wisconsin, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Liesegang source is a conductor's score almost certainly used by Adolph Liesegang, a conductor and string player. He conducted *Carmen* with the Hess Opera Company in the summer of 1889, the Castle Square Opera Company during the 1898–99 season, and the Morrissey English Opera Company in the summer of 1902. The Massachusetts-based Oliver Ditson and Company, one of the largest and most important American nineteenth-century music publishers, printed this piano-vocal score in 1879. The Ditson score presents an English and Italian translation (without the original French) with recitatives in both languages, as well as spoken dialogue in English. A direction printed at the beginning of the score specifies that the

dialogue should be used when the work was performed in English, and the recitatives when done in Italian. In practice, it is clear from the Tams-Witmark scores that English-language companies performed a combination of recitative and dialogue.

The Bostonians conductor's score probably reflects the modifications performed by that very important comic-opera company. They first produced *Carmen* during the 1890–91 season, but the opera does not seem to have stayed in their repertoire long, as they soon turned to American comic operas.

The Young stage manager's score, labeled "Old Score with Cuts" in its Tams-Witmark binding, contains the signatures of Dan Young on page one and Joseph Guthrie on the fly leaf. Young had a long career primarily in comic opera and later in musical-comedy companies from around 1885 until at least 1913. In most companies he was engaged as a comedian or singer, but in the late 1890s he began stage managing as well. He was with the Boston Lyric Opera Company during the 1901–02 season when they performed *Carmen*.²⁶ A Joseph Guthrie played minor parts in several George M. Cohan productions in the early 1920s and served as stage manager for *The Man in the Making* in the fall of 1921. I am not sure that this Joseph Guthrie is the person who signed the *Carmen* score, but I have been unable to find anyone else with his name who was active in the theater business during the appropriate time period.

English vs. Foreign-Language Performances

It is possible that the original piano-vocal score used by the Strakosch Italian Opera Company, the troupe that performed one of the Italian-language *Carmen* productions during the 1878–79 season, resides in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection. The Abbott Company's conductor's score contains a cast list from the Strakosch Company's production (now partially erased and

²⁶The Boston Lyric Opera Company was an English-language troupe founded in 1897 by J. K. Murray, a veteran of the Castle Square Company.

obscured) written in the front cover along with the cast list from the 1879–80 Emma Abbott performances (Figure 5.3).²⁷ The presence of Strakosch’s cast list in Abbott’s conductor’s score raises the possibility that this copy of the opera was first used by the Strakosch troupe before making its way to Abbott. Although it would have been awkward to conduct from an English translation when the artists were singing in Italian, the score could have served as the basis for the Strakosch orchestration (the source of which, as is discussed in the next chapter, was hotly debated in the press), even if it was not used in performance. Thus, the modifications in the Abbott conductor’s score may also represent how the Strakosch Company sang the opera. As yet, I have not been able to find a member of the Strakosch Italian Opera Company in the 1878–79 season who then sang for Abbott in 1879–80. It is possible that the two companies shared a chorus or orchestra member who brought the score from one company to the other, however.²⁸

²⁷The Metzler score carries no copyright date, but it must have been published by 1878 (if Strakosch used it for his production), or at the very latest by 1879 for Emma Abbott to obtain it for her company.

²⁸C. D. Hess hired Emma Abbott for the 1878–79 season for his Hess English Opera Company. Abbott and her husband then bought Hess out for the following season forming the Emma Abbott Grand English Opera Company with many of the singers from the Hess Company. Hess later teamed with Max Strakosch (impresario of the Strakosch Italian Opera Company) to form an English Opera Company for the 1880–81 season. They all moved in similar circles, and it is very possible that a minor member of the network whom I have been unable to identify went from Strakosch to Abbott in the 1879–80 season. The only singer I have found thus far who performed with both the Strakosch Italian Opera Company and the Emma Abbott Company was George Conly who went from the Strakosch Italian Opera Company (1878–79) to the Carl Rosa English Opera Company performing in Great Britain (1879–80) to the Strakosch-Hess English Opera Company (1880–81) and finally to the Emma Abbott Company (1881–82).

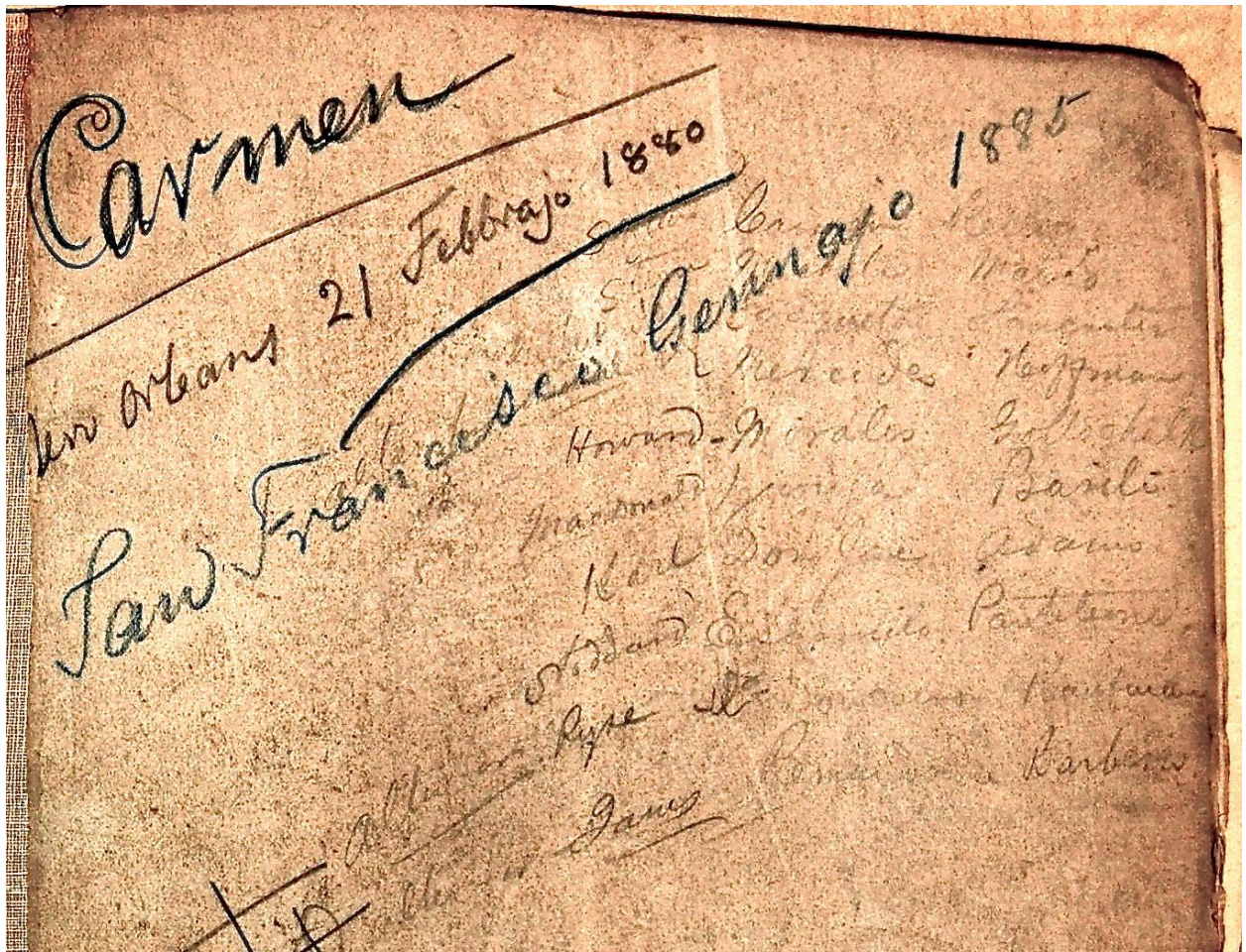


Figure 5.3: Enhanced close-up of the inside cover of the Abbott conductor's score with Strakosch Company's cast (right-hand list), the characters' names (center list), and the Abbott Company's cast (left-hand list).
Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The possibility that Strakosch and Abbott used the same conductor's score raises an intriguing issue. The stereotype of English-language companies was that they cut operas to shreds, sang “dumbed down” versions to audiences that were not interested in full-scale opera performances, and had shabby production values. As the *New York Times* commented in 1881, “English versions of French, German, and Italian operas are, generally speaking, so poorly reproduced that there is some distrust excited on the appearance of the announcement of a

season by some unknown company.”²⁹ If Strakosch and Abbott used the same score, however, this would suggest that there may not have been significant differences between foreign-language and English-language productions at least for this opera.

The possibly-shared score is not the only piece of evidence that hints at similarities between Abbott’s *Carmen* and performances by foreign-language companies. Tucked into the Abbott stage manager’s score are illustrations from a printed source (almost certainly *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*) that depict set designs for *Carmen* with marginalia indicating the scene pictured as well as the names of the characters represented (Figure 5.4).³⁰

²⁹“The Strakosch Opera Season,” *New York Times*, 1 March 1881.

³⁰The illustrations folded into Abbott’s score are identical with those found in “The New Season of Italian Opera: Scenes from *Carmen*,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* 47, no. 1,205 (2 November 1878): 8. For information on how the Choudens sets supported the plot of the opera see Maingueneau Dominique, “Signification du décor; l’exemple de *Carmen*,” *Romantisme* 38 (1982): 87–92. In addition to the illustrations from the newspaper clippings, the Abbott materials include color reproductions of the Choudens set designs.



Figure 5.4: Set Design Illustration Labeled “Scene IV Act II of the Italian Opera of ‘Carmen’”
Found in the Abbott Stage Manager’s Score,
Tams-Witmark Collection/Wisconsin, Mills Music Library, University of Madison-Wisconsin

Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper and the *American Art Journal* carried illustrations in 1878 and early 1879 of the sets for the first American productions of *Carmen*. *Frank Leslie’s* are supposedly from the Mapleson production while the *American Art Journal’s* illustrations were purported to be Strakosch’s sets and costumes.³¹ The illustrations are the same, however, and are identical to the sketches in the Choudens archive in Paris, which Evan Baker argues are the designs for the original 1875 Paris Opéra-Comique production.³² Indeed, as late as 1894, American publications

³¹Ibid.; Untitled, *American Art Journal* 30, no. 13 (25 January 1879): 200–01.

³²See Evan Baker, “The Scene Designs for the First Performances of Bizet’s *Carmen*,” *19th-Century Music* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 230–42.

were still reproducing the same set of engravings.³³ Yet, a review of the Strakosch production in the *American Art Journal* claims they surpassed “in stage setting and picturesque effectiveness that of the Mapleson troupe,” suggesting that the stage designs used by the two companies were not the same.³⁴ It is hard to imagine that both Mapleson and Strakosch copied the Choudens sets and costumes exactly, especially since the principal singers owned their own costumes. What is more likely is that both productions were similar to each other and were modeled on the Opéra-Comique premiere.³⁵ Then, rather than producing their own marketing materials for the press, both impresarios seemed to have turned to pre-existing engravings used in Paris.

Though the set designs slipped into Abbott’s score may not have been accurate reproductions of the sets used by Mapleson or Strakosch, their presence along with the representations of the Choudens set designs in color owned by the Abbott company and now in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection gives credence to the idea that Abbott modeled her production after the Parisian premiere and possibly the previous Italian-language productions in the United States. In fact, the property plot for the Abbott production, which is also located in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection, refers to props that are visible in the Choudens set designs. For instance, a “red + yellow awning over door of barracks” called for in the property plot is depicted in the Choudens set illustration (Figure 5.5). Moreover, the handwritten stage directions refer to a bridge in Act I, which is also part of the original set design.

³³The Act II Choudens set design are in an article by Minnie Hauk, “Carmen, On and Off the Stage,” *Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly* 37, no. 1 (January 1894): 7.

³⁴“Carmen,” *American Art Journal* 30, no. 13 (25 January 1879): 196. The Strakosch Company performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in early January 1879 and from there moved to Booth’s Theater in New York at the end of the month. An article in the *North American* asserts Strakosch ordered new sets for *Carmen* (painted by Russell Smith) “from the original sketches,” which I believe refers to the Choudens sets. What is unclear, however, is how closely Strakosch copied the Opéra-Comique production. “Opera in 1878–9,” *North American* (Philadelphia), 21 September 1878.

³⁵The only set illustrations I have seen for the American productions of *Carmen* are the ones produced by Choudens.



Figure 5.5: Choudens Act I Set Design, owned by the Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company. The bridge and the red-and-yellow awning are visible at the top of the illustration. Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find publicity photographs of the leads in costume that I can definitively date to 1878 or 1879. The George Eastman House holds a photograph of Minnie Hauk as Carmen, which they date to c. 1880 (Figure 5.6).³⁶ Hauk was one of the nineteenth century's most popular Carmens, and she played the role many times from 1878 until

³⁶The photograph can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/1skV5Zz> from the George Eastman House's Flickr account.

her retirement in the early 1890s. The costume is quite ornate and would have belonged to Hauk. It could have been the dress she performed in from the premiere until many years later. The gown is very different from anything in the Choudens illustrations, with elaborate flowers and geometric shapes embroidered onto the full skirt though her arms are bare just as in the Choudens Act II costume. In addition to the intricate dress, Hauk accessorizes with a gold band around her left bicep (evoking something like a harem girl), as well as multiple bracelets and necklaces. Hauk's costume makes Carmen seem exotic and erotic and is more elaborate and sexy than the Choudens dresses, which are more demure and more overtly Spanish in style. Hauk is sitting on a table that looks like it might be placed in a courtyard of some type with a light over her head and vines climbing up a column to a balcony in the background. This set is reminiscent of the Act II Choudens illustration reproduced in Figure 5.4, lending credence to the idea that American set designs were modeled on the original Parisian production.



Figure 5.6: Minnie Hauk as Carmen, c. 1880
George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

Rather than trying to create an experience that was quite different from the Italian companies' *Carmens*, it seems that Abbott tried to copy these earlier performances as much as possible. Although she did not have as many singers as Mapleson (who traveled with at least 100 people while Abbott probably had closer to 70 or 80), Abbott seems to have wanted to uphold similar production standards.³⁷ Certainly, she was credited in the press with devoting her

³⁷It is hard to find out the precise size of an opera company as the press often exaggerated or gave incomplete numbers. During the 1878–79 season, the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* and *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* claimed Mapleson employed 120 people. Preston believes that the Abbott troupe usually traveled with approximately 70 or 80 people. Abbott's background was primarily in Italian opera. She studied with an Italian teacher in New York and then moved to Milan and later Paris to continue her training. In Europe, she performed with Covent Garden Italian Opera Company and Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company before being fired for refusing to sing Violetta.

attention to every performance detail, which resulted in superior productions. Moreover, her scores prove that, while cuts were made in *Carmen*, all the important plot points were retained. Taken together, the *Carmen* materials suggest that, at least in her case, English-language productions had similar production values to the more prestigious foreign-language companies and honored the score with a thoughtful performance. Instead, the biggest difference between the two types of companies may have been primarily the size and reputation of the troupes. As I discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, critics often insisted that English-language performers were inferior to foreign-language singers. In the absence of recordings, and considering the bias some critics had against the Abbott Company and other English-language troupes, it is impossible to determine the quality of English-language singers.³⁸

Practical Cuts

As a whole, the *Carmen* scores reflect that, as is true today, decisions about opera productions were made in a complex, changing environment that had to take into account the capabilities of the company, the wishes of the troupe's members, and the audience's expectations.³⁹ While all the scores contain multiple cuts, there are only a handful of alterations that are the same across all five sources. The Bostonians, Liesegang, and Young scores (hereafter referred to as BLY), however, share several important cuts that do not appear in the Abbott sources, though the BLY scores are not identical to each other. Considering the Abbott Company was one of the first

³⁸See Katherine K. Preston, "The American Jenny Lind' or an 'Unfinished and Inartistic' Singer?: The Perplexing Career of Emma Abbott," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Indianapolis, IN, 8 November 2010; and Kristen M. Turner, "'A Joyous Star-Spangled-Bannerism': Emma Juch, Opera in English Translation, and the American Cultural Landscape in the Gilded Age," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 8, no. 2 (May 2014): 219–52, for a discussion of how critical biases may have reflected and contributed to stereotypes about English-language companies.

³⁹See John Mauceri, "Epilogue: The Art of 'Translation,'" in *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, eds. Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Hilary Poriss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 261–70, for a modern conductor's viewpoint on the challenges of operatic productions.

troupes to produce the work, the other three scores seem to represent a more consistent reading of the opera that developed in the years following the initial productions.

The cuts and other marginalia in the Abbott conductor's and stage manager's scores (as well as the prompter's book) largely match, but they are not identical—perhaps because once they were bought by the lending library they may not always have been used together. Some of the numbers are not cut at all or contain relatively small cuts. Like all the *Carmen* scores, there are some cuts that are erased or modified, and pages that were once folded over or pinned together (as if they were not to be sung at all), which were later unfolded or unpinned. Most cuts are marked in pencil, but some are reinforced with blue pencil. This might mean that for some performances only the cuts in blue were taken. Some marginalia that was never erased in the Abbott scores refer to individual singers by name. If those sources were primarily used by the Abbott Company and were rarely rented, there may never have been a compelling reason to erase the comments that only made sense for Abbott. The BLY sources do not have any directions that include the name of a specific person. Compared to other sources in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection, the Abbott scores do not show signs of substantial wear or significant alterations of the original cuts. Indeed, all the *Carmen* sources are in relatively good shape, with the Young score showing evidence of the most continuous modifications over time and the most wear of the five.

Many cuts in the *Carmen* scores, some of which are quite brief, seem to have been made for logistical or performing reasons. These “practical” cuts accomplished several goals. First they met the audience's demand for operas that did not last too long. In one of the earliest American reviews of *Carmen*, the writer known as Cherubino complained that the “opera is too lengthy—four hours and twenty minutes.”⁴⁰ Preston contends that middle- and working-class audiences

⁴⁰Cherubino, “Musical and Dramatic,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 9 November 1878.

could not stay for long performances because they needed to go to work the next morning.⁴¹ In addition, other entertainments, such as minstrel shows, variety, or vaudeville that middle-class audiences attended may also have been around the length of an Abbott or English-language production.⁴² Second, they reduced the strain on the musicians in the troupe, especially the chorus and orchestra, who had to perform almost every day (sometimes twice when there was a *matinée*). And last, some cuts had to be made due to a company's limited resources. A close reading of *Carmen's* first two numbers from the five scores provides multiple examples of these practical cuts.

⁴¹Katherine K. Preston, "The People's Prima Donna: Emma Abbott and Opera for the People," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 1 (January 2014): 75.

⁴²It is difficult to determine how long one of the *Carmen* performances indicated in the Tams-Witmark scores might have lasted since it is impossible to determine precisely which cuts were taken during any one production. I would not be surprised, however, if 30 to 45 minutes of music was cut, especially counting the excision of the intermezzi.

Table 5.2: Format and Cuts in *Carmen*'s Opening Number
Act 1, Number 2, "Scena and Chorus," [Translations from the Ditson score]

Format

Score	mm. 1–19	mm. 20–32	mm. 33–40	mm. 41–51	mm. 52–59
Text		"See, the square Is like a fair, and high and low, come and go; Droll is the sight, a motley show"	"To the gates of the busy city, Hundreds take their way"	"See, the square Is like a fair, and high and low, come and go; Droll is the sight, a motley show"	
Description	Instrumental Prelude	Soldiers provide exciting opening describing the square	Morales describes the square	Soldiers & Morales continue to describe the square	Instrumental transition
Score	mm. 60–108	mm. 109–111	mm. 112–172	mm. 173–179	
Text	"Behold the lovely maiden yonder,"		"You have still some time to wait,"		
Description	Michaela asks for Don José, Morales says he is not there and invites her to stay (some choral interjections)	Instrumental transition	Michaela wants to leave and the soldiers urge her to stay. She finally exits in m. 172	Instrumental postlude	

Cuts

Abbott Stage Manager's Score	Abbott Conductor's Score	Liesegang	Bostonians	Young
Cut mm. 32–50	Cut mm. 32–50			Cut mm. 32–60 (later erased)
Cut mm. 108–160	Cut mm. 108–160	Cut mm. 101–154 (later erased)	Cut mm. 108–160	Cut mm. 108–160 (later erased)

During *Carmen's* opening scene, the soldiers and their corporal, Morales, meet Michaela, who is looking for Don José. The men try to convince Michaela to stay with them after their shift change, but she refuses and says she will come back later. As indicated in Table 5.2 above, Abbott's first cut (mm. 32–50) omits a repetitive section of the soldier's entrance in which they sing "Droll is the sight, a motley show" several times. The Young score cuts this same section plus ten more measures, but it was later erased. All the scores retain the moment when Morales ascertains who Michaela is looking for, and assures her that Don José is not on duty at the moment. Then all the scores cut a lengthy choral section in which the men beg Michaela to stay and she refuses. The music after the cut is a continuation of the same material. The Liesegang cut (slightly shorter than the others) and the Young cut were both erased, thus at some point this number was performed as written. Despite such lengthy cuts, the audience would still have heard all the music in the chorus, albeit with very little repetition, and could understand the gist of the scene.⁴³ Morales, Michaela, and Don José are introduced, Michaela displays her shyness and virtue when she refuses to stay with the rowdy and rather disrespectful soldiers, and the expository material is retained that establishes the opening scene in a lovely, busy square in Seville. In some libretti sold to opera patrons during performances, the opening scene is omitted entirely suggesting that some companies cut it altogether, but this is not reflected in any of the Tams-Witmark scores.

The next number (3) is the entrance of the boys chorus which serves to provide local color and creates a lively commotion on the stage that almost overwhelms the chorus' important plot point. In the midst of the chorus, in recitative, Morales tells Don José that a "damsel modest and lovely" was looking for him and Don José recognizes that it must be Michaela. This same conversation is also presented in the Ditson dialogue, which is placed at the end of the

⁴³Preston identifies similar practical cuts in *Paul and Virginia* in *Opera for the American People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in the Late Nineteenth Century* (forthcoming).

number before a recitative (number 4) when Zuniga and Don José discuss the cigarette factory and the alluring gypsy workers.

Table 5.3: Format and Cuts in Number 3 of *Carmen*

Act 1, Number 3, “When the Soldiers Mount on Guard,” [Translations from Ditson score]

Format

Score	mm. 1–76	mm. 77–146	mm. 174–155	mm. 156–163	mm. 164–198
Text		“When the soldiers mount on guard, We march with them man for man”	“A damsel modest lovely, A little while ago”		“Plan, ra-ta-plan, plan, ra-ta-plan. Though our country gives no pay”
Description	Instrumental prelude	Boys choir	(recitative) Morales tells Don José that Michaela is looking for him	Instrumental transition	Boys choir
Score	mm. 165–end				
Description	Instrumental postlude				

Cuts

Abbott Stage Manager's Score	Abbott Conductor's Score	Liesegang	Bostonians	Young
		Cut mm. 9–16 (in blue pencil, marked out)		
		Cut mm. 9–64 (lead pencil)		
		Cut mm. 17–64 (lead pencil)	Cut mm. 33–64 (red pencil)	Cut mm. 33–64 (lead pencil)
		Cut mm. 13–76 (blue pencil)	Cut mm. 25–76 (blue pencil)	
Cut mm. 68–138 (lead pencil), mm. 127–138 erased	Cut mm. 68–138 (lead pencil), in blue pencil the cut ends at m 137			
		Cut mm. 93– 108 (blue & lead pencil)	Cut mm. 93–108 (blue pencil)	Cut mm. 93–108 (lead pencil)
Cut mm. 148–165 (lead pencil) erased—notation to “repeat march for Supers to move”	Cut mm. 148–215 (lead pencil)			Cut mm. 136–155 (blue pencil, not always used because stage directions during this cut in pencil)
	Cut mm. 156–163 (lead pencil) suggests that the longer cut (148–215) sometimes abandoned for shorter cut	<i>Possible cut mm. 147–end (lead pencil) later erased</i>		<i>Possible cut mm. 136–end (blue pencil) not always used because of extensive stage instructions during cut</i>
Cut mm. 166–215 (lead pencil)				
		Cut mm. 180– 195 (blue pencil, erased)		
		Cut mm. 180– 199 (lead pencil, erased)		
		Cut mm. 204– end [m. 223] (lead pencil)	Cut mm. 208–217 (red pencil)	

The complexity of these scores is clear in number 3 with overlapping cuts in multiple hands in many of the sources (Table 5.3). The BLY scores cut some portion of the opening instrumental prelude ending either at m. 64 or m. 76. The Liesegang score has evidence of four different cuts during the instrumental prelude in lead and blue pencil (Figure 5.7). Once again the BLY scores have a common cut, mm. 93–108, which is a repetitive section sung by the boys choir. In the Young score, there are some long cuts in blue that are difficult to decipher because they have two endings, parts are erased, and there are stage directions in the omitted musical text in pencil (the cut from mm. 136–155 and the possible cut from m. 136 until the end) (Figure 5.8).⁴⁴ If mm. 139–147 (Morales and Don José’s recitative) were skipped (see the Young score’s cuts), then the spoken dialogue must have been used or the audience would not have heard Morales and Don José’s conversation. The other cuts in the BLY scores omit more of the boys’ music and the instrumental postlude. The cuts only leave out music that the audience heard earlier in the number. In short, even though there are many, and sometimes extensive cuts in the BLY sources, the audience would still have heard all the music, and the plot moved forward at a faster pace by leaving out repetition.

⁴⁴There is also a possible cut from m. 147 to the end in the Liesegang score.

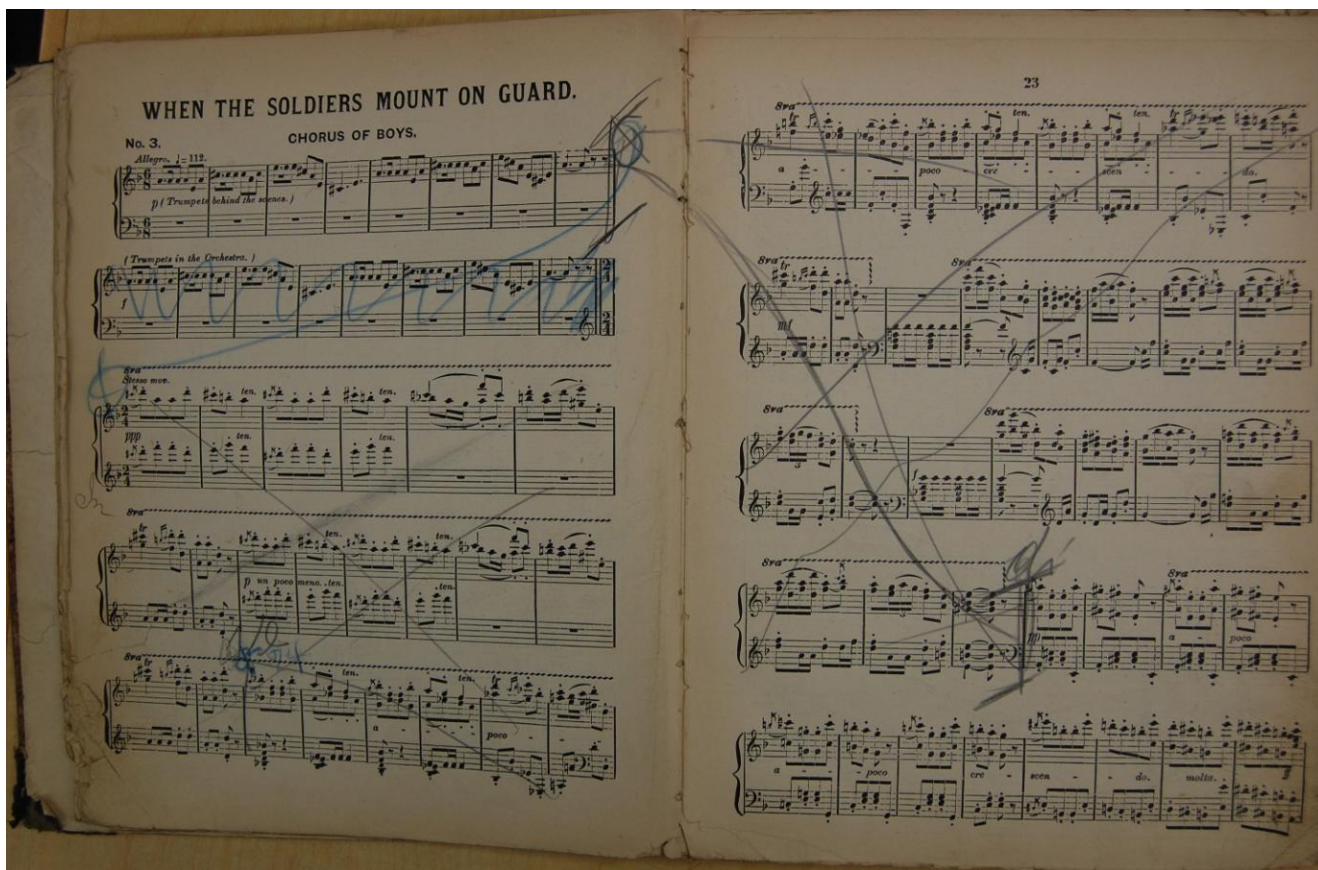


Figure 5.7: Opening of Number 3 from the Liesegang conductor's score with evidence of multiple cuts that were modified and erased.
Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

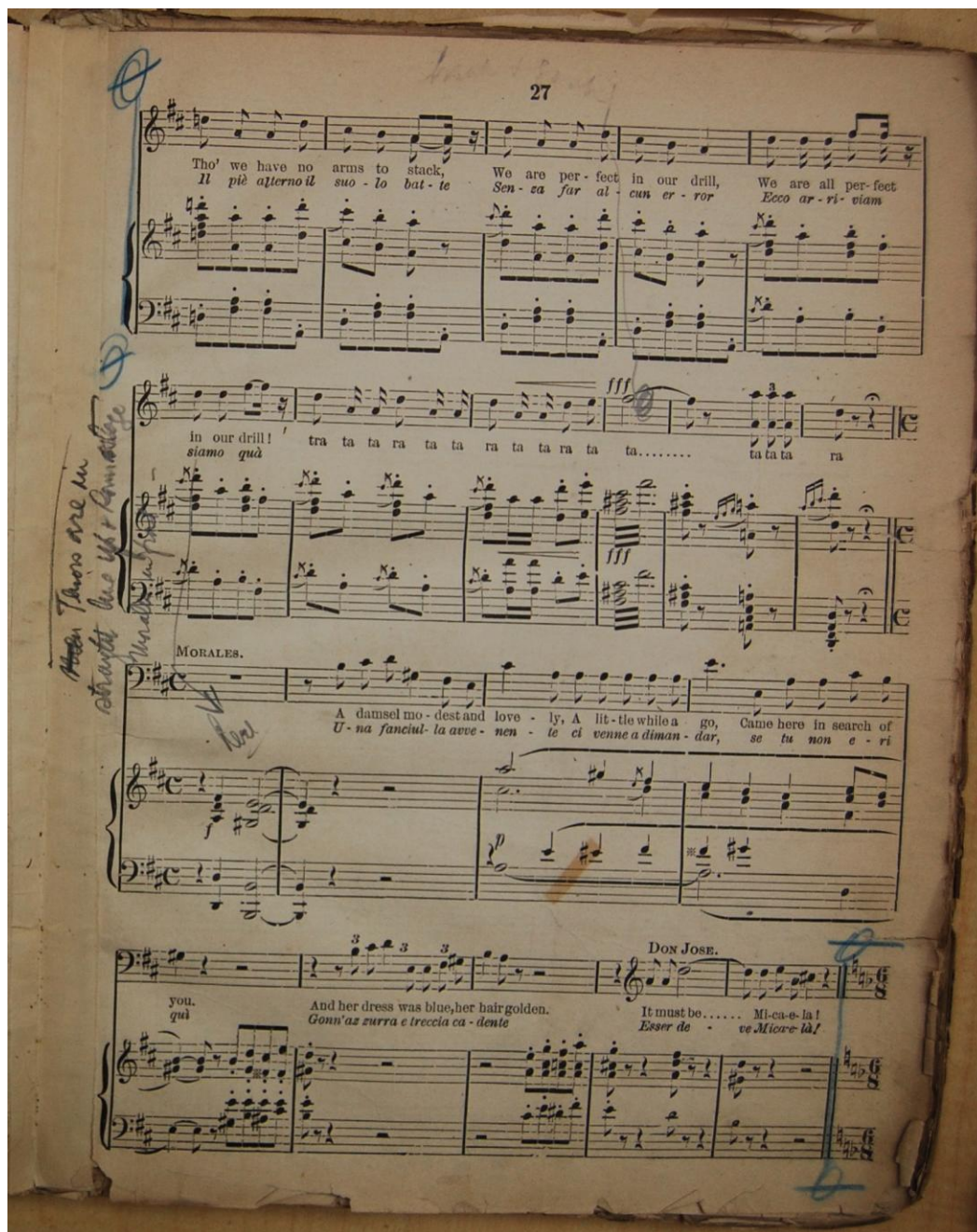


Figure 5.8: Excerpt from Number 3, Young score, showing a cut in blue pencil (mm. 136–155) with added stage directions indicating the cut was not always used.

Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abbott's approach to number 3 was quite different. She kept the whole prelude, but cut the boys' part entirely (mm. 68–138 and mm 148–215). Indeed, the only section Abbott retained was the recitative between Morales and Don José. In her stage manager's score, the Ditson

dialogue was inserted exactly where the recitative occurs, meaning that when all the cuts were taken, this number became an instrumental transition between the opening chorus and the dialogue before Zuniga's recitative. At some point, some of the first cut was reversed, and a small portion of the boys chorus was restored (Figure 5.9). This is one of the largest cuts in the Abbott score and was almost certainly taken because the company did not have a boys chorus and did not want the adult chorus to sing the part. Despite leaving out the vast majority of number 3, the audience would have lost relatively little. By retaining the orchestral part the audience heard the picturesque and martial music later sung by the boys. Although the boys largely provide atmosphere and energy, their lyrics do not contribute to the main story.

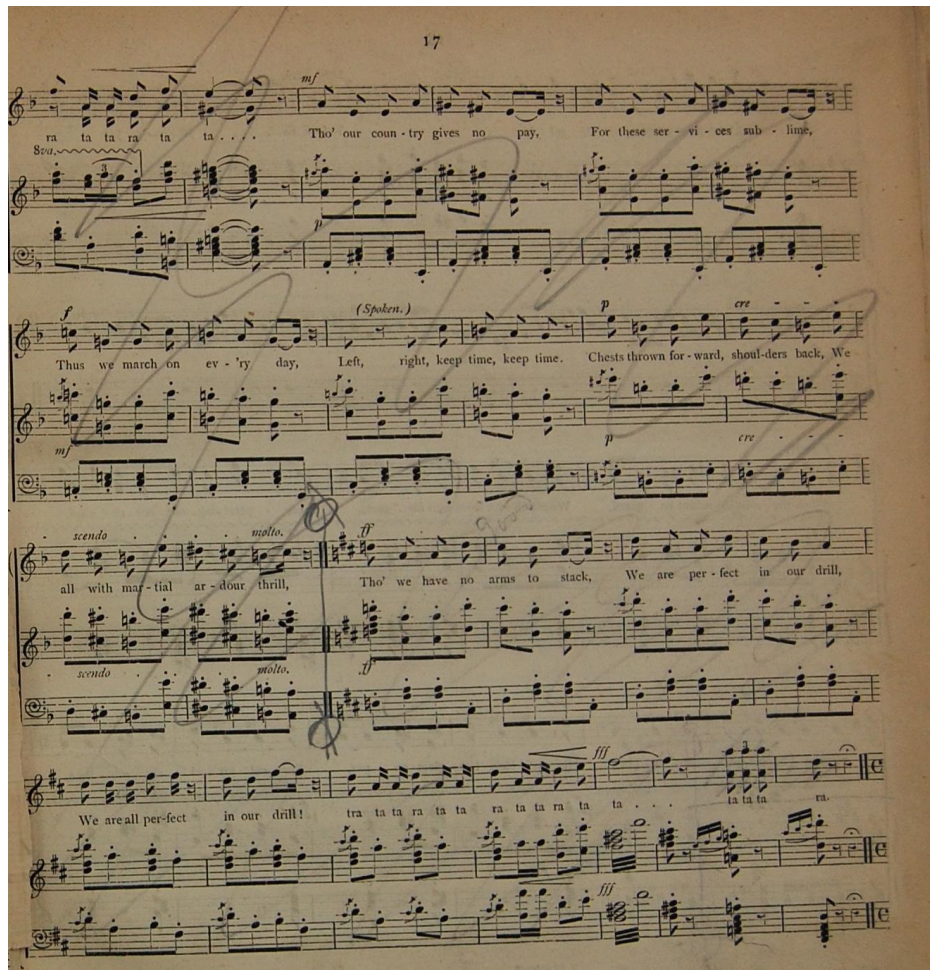


Figure 5.9: Excerpt from Number 3, Abbott conductor's score with erased cut. Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Madison-Wisconsin
Apparently many companies chose to leave out the boys, perhaps because they, like

Abbott, did not employ a boys chorus. In 1891, J. H. W, the *American Art Journal's* Boston correspondent, remarked that "one missed the crowd of street boys" in the Minnie Hauk Grand Opera Company's production of *Carmen*.⁴⁵ An 1897 *Brooklyn Eagle* review noted that the Castle Square Company performed the chorus in Act I even though it was usually left out, which suggests that many troupes chose to cut the part.⁴⁶ The observation also shows that Castle

⁴⁵J. H. W., "Our Boston Budget," *American Art Journal* 58, no. 9 (12 December 1891): 193.

⁴⁶"*Carmen* in English," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 18 May 1897, found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Square, an English-language company, far from butchering the score, performed sections of the opera that were normally omitted. The Castle Square Company was in residence in New York City for the entire 1896–97 season. They would have had to pay the boys a small salary as choristers, but the company did not have to worry about transportation costs for an ensemble that might have only been used in one work. As observed in Chapter 2, traveling companies had to control their transportation expenses for their financial survival, so it was imperative that troupes have as few personnel as possible. Abbott chose to travel without boys and then made the decision not to restage their music in *Carmen* for adults. The boys are cut completely from the opera in her scores, except for a few instances when the first sopranos sing the boys part, but only in the context of a very large choral section where the adults were already singing.

During the Abbott Company's 1879–80 season, contralto Zelda Seguin performed *Carmen*, soprano Marie Stone was Michaela, and soprano Emily Gilbert sang Mercedes. The Abbott conductor's score indicates that Stone played both Michaela and Frasquita, though it is possible this was due to some sort of problem that came up during the course of the season and was not always the case.⁴⁷ A handwritten note in the conductor's score reads "Miss Stone here changes for Frasquita" at the point when Michaela exits (during the recitative after Don José and Michaela's act I duet). For many pages afterward, there are indications whether Gilbert or Stone should sing Frasquita's part. Stone apparently had the higher voice, so when the two characters sing together, Stone was always assigned the upper part such as during the smuggler's quintet. At the end of the card scene, during the instrumental postlude, Stone was directed to change back to her Michaela costume, and Gilbert took Frasquita's dialogue to allow Stone the time to make

⁴⁷Double casting this role remained an option for some companies. Miss Lancaster in the Strakosch Italian Opera Company sang both Michaela and Frasquita when the soprano singing that role was sick. George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 10: 1875–1879 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 571–72. The Shay Opera Company double cast Michaela and Mercedes as well as Morales and Remendado in 1901. "*Carmen* Sung by Shay Opera Company," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 11 December 1901.

her quick costume change. At one point there was a rather substantial cut at the beginning of the ensemble number immediately following the dialogue, but a note in the score says, “restore this to give Stone time to change.” The cut was not erased, however, suggesting that the alteration was followed when Stone was not doubling Michaela’s part.

All the scores also show that the entr’acts (or intermezzos as they are called in the scores) were generally omitted (Table 5.4). No matter which intermezzo they chose to keep, in all five sources, two of them were cut and only one retained. These cuts would have changed or destroyed the musical connections between acts, and denied the audience a chance to hear some of the opera’s most famous tunes without the vocal lines. Thus, these companies’ priorities seem to have been to rest the orchestra and give a shorter performance of *Carmen*.

Table 5.4: Overture and Intermezzos Cut or Kept

Score	Overture	Intermezzo between Acts 1 & 2	Intermezzo between Acts 2 & 3	Intermezzo between Acts 3 & 4
Abbott	Keep	Cut	Keep	Cut
Liesegang	Keep	Keep	Cut	Cut
Bostonians	Keep	Cut	Cut	Shortened
Young	Keep	Cut	Keep	Cut

Cuts made to choral and orchestral parts might have been a way to try to ease the burden on the members of the company who often had to perform at least once, sometimes twice, per day. The chorus and orchestra participated in every opera, unlike the principal singers who carried heavy loads but had some days off because they did not sing in every opera in a troupe’s repertoire. In addition, one method companies used to control costs was to travel with a small orchestra and supplement with local musicians if they could afford it (see Chapter 2). With little chance to practice, companies might have needed to shorten orchestral sections to maximize limited rehearsal time. Finally, those troupes that did not supplement their orchestras might have been motivated to keep the focus off the ensemble if their small numbers might have invited

criticism. In the summer of 1889, the English-language Hess Opera Company was in residence in Milwaukee where a local critic complained that due to the troupe's small orchestra,

recourse was had to the usual expedient of 'adapting' orchestral parts from the piano score, and the latter is all that the conductor had to direct from. This sort of thing has to be resorted to all the time under the limitations of the Hess Company; but *Carmen* suffers from it more than any other opera yet given.⁴⁸

The Aborn English Opera Company in 1908 apparently had few wind or percussion instruments in their orchestra. The critic with the Baltimore *Sun* reported,

Carmen is an opera which demands an orchestra almost as resourceful as those required by the Wagner music dramas, and this Conductor Winne hasn't got. He manages, however, to get through safely, all the same. When there looms up a passage for oboe, French horn, bassoon, English horn, kettle drum or euphonium he plays it on the piano, never missing a cue or misreading a clef or signature.⁴⁹

Sometimes the orchestra had to be jettisoned entirely if a company was in deep financial trouble.

When Col. James H. Mapleson was running out of money in 1886, he used piano accompaniment for a performance of *Carmen* in Chicago.⁵⁰

The Abbott Score's Modifications: An Early Interpretation

Since Emma Abbott's company was the first English-language troupe to perform *Carmen*, a study of the surviving materials suggests how the work was produced when it was first introduced to the United States. Two of the longest and most significant cuts in the Abbott scores were to the quintet in Act II and the sextet that opens Act III.

In the Act II quintet Carmen tells Dancairo, Remendado, Frasquita, and Mercedes that she is thinking of not going with them on a smuggling trip, and the others try to convince her to

⁴⁸"The Hess Opera Company," *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, 24 July 1889.

⁴⁹"*Carmen* at Auditorium," *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 16 June 1908.

⁵⁰"Dramatic and Musical," *Dallas Morning News*, 31 May 1886, reprinted from the *Dramatic News*. The article also noted that Minnie Hauk almost refused to sing that performance because Mapleson owed her substantial back pay.

accompany them. Near the beginning and at the end of the quintet, there is a lengthy section where the group sings that “one thing is clear, clear as the sun, Women can always give good aid, Women are cheats, born to the trade, and without us, Mesdemoiselles, ‘Tis certain things do not go well.” Abbott cut the 77 measures that make up the first time the quintet sings the lyrics. Musically, this large cut destroys the quintet’s ABA’ form by eliminating most of the first A section, but the change does not disrupt the story and the entire text is sung. The “A” music is light and witty and helps to counterbalance the heavier, slower “B” music, but as a small amount of the A section remains at the beginning, some contrast is preserved. The other scores also cut the same section of the quintet, and the Liesegang source omits almost the entire number.

In the opening number of Act III, the chorus enters after an orchestral introduction, followed by a sextet made up of Frasquita, Mercedes, Carmen, Don José, Remendado, and Dancairo. Bizet slowly presents new melodies in the chorus and the sextet. Thereafter, he gradually thickens the texture until the end is a complex polyphony that layers melodies introduced earlier into an exciting conclusion to the scene. The text simply urges the smugglers to be careful on their journey. Abbott cut some of the repetition in the orchestral introduction, although one excision was later reversed. Then she omitted the first choral section and began the vocal part with the sextet and proceeded through the rest of the number with no further cuts. Just as in the Act II quintet, all the music and text were maintained while cutting repetitions. However, just as before, the form is disrupted. In this case, by leaving out the individual entrances of each theme, the polyphonic climax at the end of the number is less effective. The BLY sources indicate that, at one point, the vast majority of this number was cut with only a little of the first choral part or the last (more exciting and larger) choral section preserved. Many of these cuts were reversed. In all five scores, the dialogue after this number (when Carmen tells

Don José he should go back to his mother if she needs him so much) is retained, and all of the recitative is cut.

A Consistent Reading of *Carmen* in the Bostonians, Liesegang, and Young Sources

The cuts in the BLY sources seem directed not just at moving the story forward and minimizing repetition, but also, more importantly, at creating a specific reading of the work in which the character of Carmen looks more violent and immoral, while Don José seems more masculine. Although the cuts would also make *Carmen* shorter, it is striking that each cut is taken in all three sources and that the cuts taken together advance an interpretation of the opera that, as we shall see in Chapter 6, supports the critical opinion of the work. The cuts in the Abbott scores, on the other hand, do not seem tailored to a particular interpretation of the score, but rather seem more directed at solving practical problems and shortening the running time of the piece. Since the BLY scores seem to have been first used at least ten years after the Abbott sources, it makes sense that the version presented in the later sources reflects the most common American critical opinions of the work and its characters. Abbott, on the other hand, probably produced the piece based upon the French premiere and the initial Italian productions in the United States modified by her own particular circumstances.

One of the longest cuts in the opera shared by the BLY scores occurs in the first duet between Michaela and Don José in Act I. (The Abbott scores do not have this modification.) The duet sets up the nature of the relationship between Michaela and Don José. Michaela delivers a heartfelt message to Don José from his mother, he kisses her tenderly on the forehead (according to the staging notes), then they sing a short duet about how much Don José loves his mother followed by a longer arioso section in which Don José reiterates his love for his mother, professes his admiration for Michaela, and voices concern that he has just met someone

(Carmen) who might lead him astray. The arioso concludes with a return to the music heard immediately after the kiss, and Don José once again sings about how much he loves his mother. The BLY sources omit the entire arioso section, skipping from the kiss to Don José's protestation of his love for his mother after embracing Michaela. Thus, the audience does not hear a long, musically meandering arioso section and is spared many repetitions of Don José's love for his mother. This cut leaves intact Michaela's bel canto melody at the beginning of the duet, as well as the idea that Don José is a good man who is close to his mother and is attracted to the saintly Michaela. Omitting Don José's repetitious text about his feelings for his mother, however, makes him seem more typically masculine and not quite so devoted to his mother, which even in the nineteenth century was not an attractive quality.⁵¹

The cut in this duet might have been controversial. In a scathing review from 1890 of the New American Opera Company's English-language performance of *Carmen* conducted by Gustav Hinrichs, Riter Fitzgerald particularly objected to alterations to the Act I duet between Don José and Michaela. "It should have been sung entire, for it is one of the most beautiful numbers in the opera," Fitzgerald insisted, "but it seems that Mr. Hinrichs was born a butcher. He cannot touch anything without hacking at it. There are no excuses to be made for the cutting of the duo." It is not clear in the review exactly how Hinrichs and his company performed the number, but Fitzgerald indicated that in his opinion the duet was ruined. Fitzgerald went on to defend the authority of the composer, which was unusual in American criticism when referring to opera. "What right has the leader of an orchestra to mangle the compositions of a celebrated writer? Is it not an impertinence?"⁵²

⁵¹See Chapter 3 on male gender roles and stereotypes.

⁵²All quotations from Riter Fitzgerald, "Bizet's *Carmen*," *Philadelphia Evening Item*, 26 August 1890, found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. It was not uncommon for writers to criticize long cuts which may have also been a way for the critics to demonstrate their expertise to

Another long cut shared by the BLY scores occurs in the frantic chorus (number 8) after the “Habanera” when the cigarette workers pour out of the factory to report the fight between two of the gypsy women. All three scores cut half of the vocal part (83 measures), leaving out a section when the women are divided over whether Carmen was involved in the altercation. (Abbott only cut eight measures of choral repetition in this number.) The BLY cut ends just before the instrumental postlude, which the Young stage manager’s score indicates was used to allow Don José to drag Carmen from the factory—probably what everyone did during this music, since Carmen must be on stage for the next number. The text in the omitted portion of the chorus casts doubt on Carmen’s guilt in the fight, something that might have undermined the audience’s perception of her evil and violent nature.

The BLY scores also have an important cut in the card scene in Act III. As Bizet composed this famous number, Carmen, Frasquita, and Mercedes bring out the tarot cards; Frasquita and Mercedes read them and then give them to Carmen who foretells her own death. The section in which Frasquita and Mercedes read the cards was cut, which tightens the scene, but also gives the impression that only Carmen has the highly suspect skill of reading tarot cards, which was associated with the occult in the nineteenth century. The music Carmen sings when she learns she will die is dark and unnerving, while the music earlier in the scene when Frasquita and Mercedes read the cards sounds bright and more typical of an *opéra comique*. The cut in this scene heightens the effect that Carmen is a frightening woman, whereas the other gypsies are just light-hearted, fun-loving girls. Abbott also modified this scene, but slightly differently than the BLY sources. She preserved a little more of the section when Frasquita and Mercedes read the cards, but Carmen’s long and highly dramatic section is complete. In all cases, Carmen is singled out as a dominant, immoral character with abilities that connect her with witchcraft,

their readers. They could not, after all, identify the cuts without knowing the full opera. [Private conversation with Katherine K. Preston]

while Frasquita and Mercedes (with comparatively little music to sing) sink into the background, not at all in the same category as Carmen.

After the card scene, Bizet composed a triumphant and cheerful chorus that sees the smugglers off on their adventure, and then Michaela enters looking for Don José. All five scores cut the chorus, so that the action skips from the card scene to Michaela's entrance. The absence of the celebratory chorus serves to remove a connection between positive, happy music and a group of cut-throats who are about to commit a crime. The impression that the smugglers are not really all that bad is destroyed by the cut because, without the chorus, Carmen and her associates seem much more menacing. The cut further justifies Michaela's fears of the mountains and the smugglers, and the audience is immersed in serious music that underscores Don José's descent into a criminal life, and, by extension, Carmen's role in his demise.

Each score creates a headlong rush towards Carmen's bloody end. According to the printed musical text, after the instrumental Intermezzo, Act IV begins with two choral numbers. The first one introduces the village square as a thrilling place of commerce and a popular meeting ground, but very little actually happens. The second chorus opens with the boys hurrying on stage to alert the townspeople that the Toreadors' procession is arriving. In each score, the entr'acte and the first chorus are omitted (with the exception of the Bostonians source which indicates substantial cuts in the entr'acte). The second, more famous, choral march was also considerably shortened in all the sources, so that there would have been very little time between the beginning of Act IV and the final confrontation between Carmen and Don José. There are no cuts in the Abbott score once Carmen and Don José meet, but this is not true for the other three scores. Forty measures into the duet, Don José sings "Ah! Yes, I fain would save thy life, and with thee, save my own" and Carmen answers, "No, I well know time is flying" and

goes on to proclaim “No, I ne’er will yield me to thee” with a majestic run from a high A-flat to a B-flat below the staff (Figure 5.10).



Figure 5.10: Excerpt from the finale of *Carmen*, Young score, with the beginning of the cut. The last measure on the page contains Carmen’s defiant statement “No, I ne’er will yield me.” Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Bizet switches quickly from Carmen’s cry of defiance to a short duet in which the characters restate their positions in mismatched music that makes it clear the two will never be together again. Finally Don José asks forlornly, with almost no accompaniment, “Then, thou lov’st me no more?” on a simple repeating E-natural. The Young score silenced Carmen by omitting the music from Don José’s “Ah! Yes, I fain would save thy life, and with thee, save my

own” to when he asks Carmen if she loves him. This cut deprives Carmen of one of her last powerful moments and undermines the modern interpretation of the scene—namely that Carmen makes the choice to die rather than give up her free will. Later in the number, Carmen sings that she will be bound by no “feters” [*sic*] and that “free she was born, and free she will die,” but excluding her earlier rebellious moment with its dramatic downward phrase is a great loss. The Liesegang and the Bostonians sources do not cut as early as Young does in this section. Instead, they allow Carmen the statement that she will never yield, but they cut the duet and go straight from Carmen’s theatrical two-octave run to Don José’s question. The Liesegang and Bostonians approach better preserves the intense moment when Carmen declares her independence. Cutting the duet creates a direct connection between Carmen’s defiance and the moment when Don José seems to decide to kill Carmen. Once he is convinced that she does not love him, there is nothing to stop him from murdering her. Nineteenth-century critics saw Carmen’s rebelliousness as a justification for Don José’s actions, and this cut reinforces that interpretation (see Chapter 6).

The BLY scores also excise most of the choral interjections in the duet, so that the interruptions when the audience and characters on stage hear the crowd cheering for Escamillo are almost completely absent. This keeps the audience’s attention on Don José and Carmen, but means that Escamillo’s off-stage presence, which stokes Don José’s jealousy and drives him to murder, is quite limited. Without the choral parts, Carmen’s betrayal, rather than his envy of Escamillo, seems to be the prime factor in Don José’s decision to kill her.

***Carmen* in Translation**

I have not found any scores used by German- or French-language companies, and I do not believe that Italian companies used the Tams-Witmark *Carmen* scores even though the Ditson

score contains Italian and English lyrics. Arthur Tams was closely connected to the English-language opera scene and all the stage directions and other modifications are not only in English, but also seem to refer to the English words. There are many examples where the recitative is dropped in favor of the dialogue, which only appears in the scores in English. Moreover, the names and companies referred to in the marginalia of each score performed only in English.

Opera companies sold libretti to their patrons before performances, and sixteen different libretti for *Carmen* are now housed at the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library. Some libretti include musical excerpts as well as texts. For foreign-language performances, the libretti usually consist of the foreign language (whether French, German, or Italian) as well as English, while for English-language performances typically only the English is provided. For the foreign-language productions, the English is a singing translation since the English lyrics have the same number of syllables as the foreign-language text for each musical phrase. Since I have no scores that I believe were used by Italian troupes (or German or French for that matter), I cannot be certain whether any of the libretti accurately reflects a particular company's performance. The foreign-language libretti do not seem to contain cuts, but it seems unlikely that all of those troupes would have produced the work intact. Critics complained that companies did not always sell a libretto that reflected what they did on stage, so the fact that the libretto is complete does not mean that is how the work was performed.

The Library of Congress holds one libretto sold by the Castle Square Company, and the Tams-Witmark's Liesegang score may have been used by that conductor when he worked for Castle Square. This is the only libretto I found that matched a company that might have used one of the Tams-Witmark sources. Castle Square's libretto includes only English text. In many cases the libretto does not contain lyrics that correspond to music that was cut in the Liesegang score, although the two sources do not match exactly. The two sources are not identical,

however, which is not surprising since the Liesegang score's cuts are sometimes erased or otherwise altered. For example, the libretto's final duet maintains the choral interjections that are cut in the Liesegang score. The libretto does not include the lyrics for the short duet after "Ah! yes, I fain would save thy life, and with thee, save my own" that is also omitted in the score. Since companies did not always perform what was in the libretti they sold, I do not think either the Liesegang score or the Castle Square libretto is a definitive representation of what that company sang.

The Metzler score credits Henry Hersee for its English translation. The Ditson score does not list Hersee as the author of its English words, but the two scores' lyrics are the same for the most part. The Ditson includes the spoken dialogue omitted in the Metzler. For a few of the most famous numbers (such as the "Seguidilla"), the Ditson abandons the Hersee translation and uses one by Theodore T. Barker.

Translators are not acknowledged in any of the libretti I examined. Many of the libretti contain the Hersee translation without crediting him. Libretti for the foreign-language productions have a quite different English translation than the one found in the scores. Unfortunately the translator is not acknowledged. In all cases, the English and French meanings are very similar, though the English syntax is antique even in the nineteenth century. The libretti, for example, contain "thee" and "thou" instead of "you."

Hersee's translation generally privileged the meaning of the text over smooth English writing or matching the English to the melody's shape. As the critics complained about all English-language translations, the English is often quite awkward as well. At the beginning of Act 1, Scene 3, when Zuniga inquires if he is standing near the cigarette factory, he asks "Is yon building the factory/At which young girls are employed/At cigarette making?" Near the beginning of the final duet between Don José and Carmen, the chorus interjects with a

triumphant “Victoire.” In the Italian translation the word is “vittoria” (which does not fit the music well as it is), and the English is “Victoria” which does not even make sense.

The Barker translation does little better. In his version of the “Seguidilla,” he makes sure that the English word “Seville” is sung at the same spot in the melody as the French “Seville.” In English the word is only two syllables unlike the three-syllable French pronunciation. For the final note, therefore, he has to use “la,” changing the word to the nonsense “Sevilla,” but since the “vil” is set to the melisma, it is very similar to the French text setting. In the next phrase, Bizet matches the initial “a” of “Pastia’s” to a high D that pops out of the melody, but in the English, the “Lil” is set to the D, which is awkward and significantly more difficult to sing (Figures 5.11 and 5.12). The setting of the Hersee translation has its own problems. The first syllable of the English “Seville” is sung on the melisma, which is hard to perform, but retains the English pronunciation of the word. “Pastia” is set in the same manner as Bizet, however. Moreover, the word sung on the little turn at the beginning of the “Pastia” phrase is “Dwells,” not “I’ll” as it is in the Barker translation. Although the “l” sound at the end of both words is not ideal for the melody, the vowel sound in “dwells” is easier to sing than in “I’ll” (Figure 5.13).



Figure 5.11: "Seguidilla," mm. 81-89, Choudens Edition, 1875

Figure 5.12 shows a musical score for "Seguidilla," measures 9-21, from the Bostonians score (Ditson Edition, Barker Translation). The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line (C) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has two red boxes highlighting specific phrases: "-vill - la, -vi - glia," and "Lil - las, Pa - stia,". The piano accompaniment is marked "pp e leggiero".

Figure 5.12: "Seguidilla," mm. 9-21, Bostonians score (Ditson Edition, Barker Translation) Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

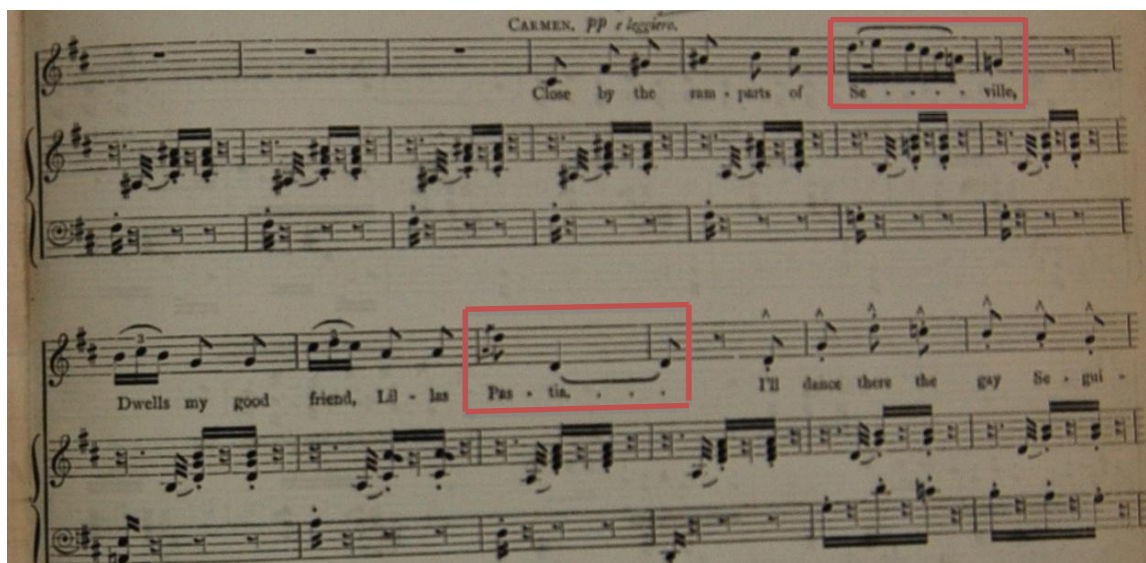


Figure 5.13: “Seguidilla,” mm. 10–22, Abbott conductor’s score
(Metzler Edition, Hersee Translation),
Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin Collection, Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison

In some European countries, such as France, translation into the vernacular also meant adapting an opera to local performance conventions. The French, calling their interventions “naturalization,” routinely added ballets, reshaped the plot, and made other substantial changes to the score in order to make the work more palatable to the local audience.⁵³ As might be expected in the U. S., ballets or numbers that required a large crowd on stage were sometimes omitted or altered so that the troupe could tour economically without the added expense of dancers or a big chorus. Aside from the use of the English language and American-born singers, there was no obvious effort to develop an “American” operatic performing tradition. Further examination of the Tams-Witmark scores might reveal performance practices that were unique to this nation, but the *Carmen* scores do not suggest such a phenomenon.

⁵³Mark Everist, “Partners in Rhyme: Alphonse Royer, Gustave Vaëz, and Foreign Opera in Paris during the July Monarchy,” in *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, 34. For an example of the ways that an opera was re-interpreted for the French market see Katharine Ellis, “Rewriting *Don Giovanni*, or ‘The Thieving Magpies,’” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119, no. 2 (1994): 212–50.

Although there seems to have been no “American” approach to opera performance, as there was in Italy or France, the conservative religious attitudes in the United States made some operas particularly problematic. Each community set its own morality standards for theatrical entertainments as mentioned in Chapter 4. Absent the central governmental censorship of operas that existed in Europe, English-language singers and troupes in America had to decide how close they would stay to the original meaning of the libretto. The most prominent example of significant changes made to an opera’s text at the end of the nineteenth century was Emma Abbott’s adaptation of *La traviata*. She famously refused to sing the “immoral” role of Violetta early in her career, which helped her establish a reputation as the “People’s Prima Donna” who would never perform anything unsuitable for the sensibilities of conservative middle-class Americans. *La traviata* was so popular in the U. S. that she commissioned an entirely new libretto that changed some aspects of the plot as well as the names of the characters.⁵⁴

Staging *Carmen*

Despite the shocking nature of *Carmen*’s plot, the English text was not significantly altered to change the meaning of the lyrics and tone down some of the more sexually charged or violent scenes. Indeed, the stage directions indicate that the exact opposite occurred. Carmen’s sexually aggressive manner towards men was enhanced on stage. Although the Young score contains few acting instructions, the Abbott stage manager’s score is filled with handwritten directions for Carmen that serve to heighten the perception of the character as an immoral seductress who attracts men with her sensual singing and erotic actions and does not behave in an appropriately modest and respectful manner. Right after Carmen and Don José meet, Carmen is instructed to

⁵⁴Abbott called the “new” opera *Cecilia’s Love* and debuted it in the 1881–82 season. “Music,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 August 1881.

inspect each of her admirers in turn before teasing Don José with her flower and then running into the factory. Before Zuniga orders her chained, Carmen is to snap “her fingers in [the] face of Zuniga walking up and down saucily.” During the third-act finale, she is instructed to be sarcastic while singing (to Zuniga) “my dear Senor, sweet officer.” Towards the end of the third act, Carmen should have a “sneer on her face” when looking at Michaela. Finally, just prior to her death, Carmen tries to run into the arena to join Escamillo twice, demonstrating that she has truly abandoned José who, from the nineteenth-century perspective, deserves her everlasting devotion.

The stage directions in the Abbott score also affected Don José’s portrayal. Based upon the evidence of the scores, libretti, and reviews, the fight scene between Don José and Escamillo was staged with varying levels of intensity by different companies. In the Emma Abbott score, for example, Don José’s dagger thrusts are carefully timed to musical accents in the instrumental interlude during the fight. On one level, the confrontation with Escamillo merely reinforces Don José’s violent temper, but for nineteenth-century audiences, the duel was a way for Don José to begin regaining his masculinity and honor. In the Abbott score, after a more violent fight than in some productions, Don José prevails in the struggle and only Carmen’s intervention keeps him from plunging “his dagger into the breast of Escamillo”—for Don José another betrayal by Carmen and proof that she truly loves Escamillo.

By far the most important action added to *Carmen* was a pantomime in Act III. None of the early piano-vocal scores (neither the 1875 Choudens score, nor the Ditson and Metzler scores) have printed stage directions that Carmen should do anything particularly violent towards Don José in the third act.⁵⁵ The Choudens score indicates that Don José should “menacingly” bar Carmen’s exit from the stage at the end of the act. In both the Young and the

⁵⁵The Choudens Publishing Company printed the first *Carmen* piano-vocal score in Paris in 1875.

Abbott scores, however, during the instrumental postlude at the end of Act III, Carmen is directed to rush up behind José and attempt to stab him. Michaela saves Don José in the Young score, and Mercedes and Frasquita intervene in the Abbott source. This pantomime is important because it demonstrates that some productions not only emphasized Carmen's sexual provocativeness, but also her violent temper. In the Young score, Michaela's self-sacrificing personality and goodness are underscored by her heroic action in saving Don José. In nineteenth-century terms, she is truly the perfect woman who protects the people she loves—unlike Carmen who destroys them. In the Abbott version, Mercedes and Frasquita are once again shown to be very different from Carmen. They are saviors, interceding on behalf of someone who could even be construed as an enemy (they are gypsies, Don José was once a soldier), while Carmen is dangerous and vindictive.

Printed scores from the period have two instances of violent (or potentially violent) on-stage actions involving Carmen—a moment in Act I after the off-stage fight when Don José stops her from attacking some of the cigarette factory employees and Carmen's murder. Carmen's other altercation with one of the cigarette girls takes place off stage. Without the thwarted stabbing in the third act, Carmen's violence is only towards women. By attempting to kill Don José, Carmen tries to hurt a man—a significant breach of gender boundaries, both because her actions imply that she feels powerful enough to hurt a man and because she has completely given up any pretense at playing the role usually assigned to women in the nineteenth century. Her attempt on Don José is also more serious than her off-stage fight, for the audience can see her violent actions rather than imagining what might have happened. Even worse, Carmen tries to stab Don José in the back, a cowardly and dishonorable act. Due to this added pantomime, Don José's behavior at the end of the opera becomes more than just a reaction to his jealousy or an act of revenge because Carmen left him for Escamillo, but also an act of self-

defense against a woman who almost killed him earlier. Additionally, the time between the end of Act III and the final duet in Act IV was significantly reduced by the extensive cuts at the beginning of Act IV, so that Carmen's attempt to kill Don José would have been fresh in the audience's minds when he entered the stage for their final confrontation.

The pantomime appears to have been present from the initial performances of *Carmen* in the United States until at least the 1890s, if not later, based upon fleeting references to Carmen's actions in a few articles. In a plot summary based on the production by Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company published shortly after *Carmen's* American premiere in 1878, the writer mentioned that Carmen "tries to stab him [Don José]" during the third act. This indicates that the stage action was present in the first performance of the work in the United States.⁵⁶ Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company initially produced the opera in London in the spring and summer of 1878 and then sailed for America. Presumably, the American audience was exposed to the same interpretation of *Carmen* that thrilled London opera goers. Thus, the pantomime is evidence of a transatlantic performance practice.

The presence of the same Act III stage direction in the Young score demonstrates that the pantomime was done in American productions for quite some time.⁵⁷ Indeed, critics were so used to seeing this violent altercation, some seemed to think it was part of the printed text. In 1889, Arthur Weld scolded Emma Juch because she left the action out, as if she was significantly

⁵⁶"The New Opera," *New York Times*, 3 November 1878.

⁵⁷It is unclear how long this pantomime was part of *Carmen* productions. The earliest film version of *Carmen* in the United States was Cecil B. DeMille's 1915 production starring Geraldine Farrar in her first appearance on the silver screen. Although the film's plot differs somewhat from the opera's, at the spot analogous to the end of the third act, Don José and Carmen fight after José insists "I have paid the full price to make you mine." They wrestle, and Carmen bites José several times before he forces her to kiss him and then threatens her with a knife. The scene is disturbing to modern eyes, as José forces himself upon a woman who clearly does not want to be kissed. But, in 1915, this scene accomplished what the pantomime in the earlier stage productions achieved. Carmen is portrayed as violent and willing to fight and hurt a man who loves her. *Carmen*, directed by Cecil B. DeMille, (1915, Famous Players-Lasky Production), accessed on Youtube on 2 August 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDE0tyZso1g>.

deviating from the accepted staging of the work. He described this moment as a turning point in the opera,

she [Carmen] jeers at the innocent peasant girl [Michaela] who brings the message [that Don José's mother wants to see him] and, thwarted in her attempt to escape, she tries to kill José when his back is turned.⁵⁸

Weld's reaction to a production without Carmen's attack on Don José illustrates the reciprocity of interpretation between critics and performers. Beginning with the premiere of the opera, critics identified Carmen as evil, alluring, and the polar opposite of the virtuous Michaela. Performers, perhaps seeking to reinforce this analysis, added elements to the production that supported the critical reaction, which in turn sustained and extended the prevailing views about Carmen and Michaela.⁵⁹ As Roy Howat observes in a recent essay, "any performance is an edition, however transitory—and the effects of an interesting performance on alert listeners or students may be much less transitory than performers realize."⁶⁰ In this case, a bit of stage action that lasted no more than a few seconds became a performing tradition that affected critics' and audience's interpretation of the work for many years. The "play-acting" on stage was highly effective in shaping the ways that audiences understood the plot and the nature of each character. Because it was hard for nineteenth-century audiences to hear spoken or even sung text in large halls without amplification, singers and actors used exaggerated physical movements so

⁵⁸Arthur Weld, "Music," *Post* (Boston), 14 December 1889 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. I will return to this episode in the next chapter to explore the ways that critics protested alternate presentations of Carmen's character.

⁵⁹See Chapter 6 for more on *Carmen's* reception in the U. S.

⁶⁰Roy Howat, "Performance as Research and *Vice Versa*," in *Music Research: New Directions for a New Century*, eds. Michael Ewans, Rosalind Halton, and John Phillips (London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2004), 4.

that everyone could follow the plot. Therefore, a pantomime like Carmen's attack on Don José would have defined her character for the audience much more than anything she sang or said.⁶¹

The stage directions for Carmen and Don José in the Abbott and Young scores show that decisions were made with a view towards turning the audience against Carmen as much as possible, while emphasizing Don José's virile masculinity and Michaela's traditional femininity. This is not a reading of Carmen's character that would evoke sympathy for her, but rather is very much in keeping with the view of Carmen as evil, manipulative, and treacherous. In the next chapter, I will explore the critical reaction to *Carmen* and the myriad influences that shaped the American reception of the opera.

⁶¹Rosalind Halton, "Night and Dreams: Text, Texture, and Night Themes in Cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti," in *Music Research: New Directions for a New Century*, 28.

CHAPTER 6: “HALF-WILD, SELF-WILLED, RECKLESS, AND REBELLIOUS”: *CARMEN*’S RECEPTION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

In a *New York Times* review of a new production of *Carmen* performed at the Santa Fe Opera Festival in the summer of 2014, Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim called Carmen “Bizet’s sultry, headstrong Gypsy girl, who is willing to die rather than have her freedom curtailed.”¹ For Fonseca-Wollheim, as for most twenty-first century opera goers, Carmen is an operatic heroine who risks all to be true to herself. Modern scholars such as Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, Catherine Clément, Nelly Furman, and Susan McClary, have nuanced this reading of *Carmen* by deploying the academic language of literary criticism, history, and sociology through the lenses of interpretative “play,” patriarchy, Orientalism, the Other, exoticism, gender, class, ethnic, and social identities.² Bizet’s music, similarly, has been subjected to multiple theoretical investigations, whether it is examining the origins of the “Spanish” music in the score, the long-range implications of the “fate” leitmotif, or the work’s disruption of the traditional opéra-comique form.³ In the vast majority of this scholarship the writers endorse, at some level, the

¹Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, “A Film-Noirish Carmen, Down Mexico Way,” *New York Times*, 29 July 2014.

²Scholarly work on *Carmen* includes Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, *Carmen: A Gypsy Geography* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013); Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Ann Davies and Chris Perriam, eds. *Carmen: From Silent Film to MTV* (New York: Rodopi, 2005); Nelly Furman, “The Languages of Love in *Carmen*,” in *Reading Opera*, eds. Arthur Groos and Roger Parkers (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 168–83; Evelyn Gould, *The Fate of Carmen* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1996); H. Marshall Leicester, Jr., “Discourse and the Film Text: Four Readings of ‘Carmen,’” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6, no. 3 (November 1994): 245–82; Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³Steven Huebner, “Carmen as *Corrida de Toros*,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 13, nos. 1–2 (1993): 3–29; Ralph P. Locke, “Spanish Local Color in Bizet’s *Carmen*,” in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, eds. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 316–60; McClary, *Carmen*, 62–129.

contemporary understanding of Carmen as a proto-feminist icon. If the first American reviewers of the opera could read today's popular or scholarly writing on *Carmen*, they would not recognize the work. Similarly to their French counterparts, they thought the story was vulgar and offensive, Carmen herself disreputable and deserving of death, and Don José a man trapped by an evil woman who redeemed himself through her murder.⁴

In this chapter, I examine how *Carmen* was interpreted by American critics from its national premiere in 1878 until 1910 as a way to contextualize the understanding of *Carmen* reflected in the staging of the work that I discussed in the previous chapter. Because the opera was so controversial, critics continued to write about it long after its premiere, and it is possible to trace changes in their interpretations over a relatively short period of time. A close reading of the reception documents provides a path to understanding how the larger social, political, cultural, and economic issues that influenced the opera industry as a whole had an impact on the reception of this single piece.

After a somewhat troubled world premiere on 3 March 1875 at the Opéra-Comique, *Carmen* scored a great success in Vienna later that year.⁵ The opera quickly circulated throughout Europe and eventually to the rest of the world, and today is still one of the most commonly performed works on the operatic stage. Immediately after *Carmen's* introduction to the United States by Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company in 1878, American critics struggled with the

⁴On French reception of *Carmen* see Robert L. A. Clark, "South of North: *Carmen* and French Nationalism," in *East of West: Cross-Cultural Performance and the Staging of Difference*, eds. Claire Sponsler and Xiamei Chen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 187–216; Lesley A. Wright, "Rewriting a Reception: Thoughts on *Carmen* in Paris, 1883," *Journal of Musicological Research* 28, no. 4 (2009): 282–94. Spanish reception of *Carmen* is complicated by issues of nationalism and the representation of Spain by artists from other countries. See Michael Christoforidis, "Georges Bizet's *Carmen* and *Fin-de-Siècle* Spanish National Opera," *Studia Musicologica* 52, nos. 1–4 (December 2011): 419–28; Elizabeth Kertesz and Michael Christoforidis, "Confronting *Carmen* Beyond the Pyrenees: Bizet's Opera in Madrid, 1887–1888," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 20, no. 1 (March 2008): 79–110.

⁵The Imperial Opera Company in Vienna performed the work in German. The company received Ernst Guiraud's recitatives just a few weeks before the 23 October 1875 premiere, so the conductor chose to use a combination of recitative and dialogue. Lesley A. Wright, "Introduction: Looking at the Sources and Editions of Bizet's *Carmen*," to *Carmen: A Performance Guide* by Mary Dibbern (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2000), xiii.

opera's so-called realism and its controversial title character. In an art form that was just beginning to be seen as refined, *Carmen's* difficult subject matter and genre instability challenged developing analytical notions about opera. As critics became more comfortable with the piece, they became more insistent on Carmen's inherent and completely, almost beast-like, evil nature, which reflected deep anxiety in American culture over women's roles in society, race, and the influx of immigrants from regions outside of Northern Europe. Ideas about masculinity changed in the run-up to the wars of imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, and critics found ways to rehabilitate Don José from a weak man, too easily influenced by Carmen, to a stronger figure. Although many reviews of *Carmen* do not seem to have been overly influenced by the language of the production, English-language troupes sometimes used specific interpretive strategies to appeal to their middle-class audience. Writers also seemed to associate some English-language performances with a particularly middlebrow interpretation of Carmen's character. Finally, American constructions of race, which often simplified everything down to a continuum between black and white, pushed Carmen into the "black" side of this dominant discourse. Thus, when Theodore Drury chose the opera as his company's debut production, he merely confirmed a long-standing association between blackness and *Carmen* that has since been reaffirmed in works such as *Carmen Jones* by Oscar Hammerstein II and the *Carmen Hip Hopera*.

***Carmen* and the "Opera War"**

Following Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company's successful run in London during the 1877–78 season, the British troupe, managed by Col. James H. Mapleson, traveled across the Atlantic for its first American season in the fall of 1878. They brought their highly acclaimed production of *Carmen* with them to the United States, premiering the work on 23 October at New York City's Academy of Music. Minnie Hauk, a European-trained but American-born soprano, sang the title

role in Italian translation. American critics and audiences were well aware of the work's popularity and Hauk's triumph as Carmen in London, because many U. S. music journals and large newspapers carried coverage of the London opera season. In a July 1878 article in the *New York Times*, the author explained that

to compete with a foreign people in their own specialty, whatever it may be, is to enter upon an almost hopeless task. But when the specialty is art, the competitor the child of a busy nation not yet settled down to the promotion and enjoyment of art pure and simple, and the arena in which she runs the race is Italy—then, at first blush, one would think the candidate for fame utterly overweighted, handicapped beyond all possible chance of success. Yet Minnie Hauk, 'a New-York girl,' as she was called by a gentleman sitting behind me at Her Majesty's Theatre, has fought this great fight and won the battle.⁶

The writer's characterization of the United States as a "a busy nation not yet settled down to the promotion and enjoyment of art pure and simple," was a common excuse given by critics who felt that America was not sufficiently advanced in the arts, and found its way here as a method to highlight Hauk's accomplishments in Britain.

During that same 1878–79 season, the Strakosch Italian Opera Company staged a competing production of *Carmen*, debuting the work in Philadelphia just two days after Mapleson. Proclaiming it an "opera war," the press and Mapleson accused the Strakosch Company of producing the work without gaining permission from Bizet's French publishers, Choudens, and using an orchestration arranged from the piano-vocal score—charges Max Strakosch, the company's manager, denied vociferously.⁷ Strakosch even offered to pay \$100,000 to a charity for yellow fever sufferers if it could be proven that he was using an unauthorized version of the score.⁸ Mapleson maintained that he had paid 10,000 francs to Choudens for the

⁶From Our Own Correspondent, "A New York Girl Abroad," *New York Times*, 11 July 1878.

⁷"An Opera War," *The Sun* (Baltimore), 16 October 1878; "An Opera War," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 19 October 1878.

⁸Reports of Strakosch's offer were widespread. Two examples can be found in "An Opera War," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 19 October 1878; and "Echoes," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 20 October 1878.

exclusive American rights to the opera, and stridently complained that Strakosch had no right to compete with his troupe.⁹ Choudens backed Mapleson's claim when the company's owner wrote a letter, reprinted in the *American Art Journal*, confirming that Mapleson owned the American rights to the work and pointing out that if Strakosch had so much money to donate to charity, "he should have used a small part thereof in purchasing from the publishers a right to presentation of *Carmen*, of which we are the sole proprietors for all countries, and we alone have the right to dispose of it."¹⁰ Mapleson alleged that Clara Louise Kellogg (the prima donna of the Strakosch troupe and once of member of Mapleson's company) and her mother attended performances of *Carmen* given by his troupe in London, where the singer learned the opera and her mother sketched the costumes and scenery.¹¹ Strakosch and his conductor S. Behrens insisted they had the original orchestral parts and score, but Strakosch would not say how he obtained them, mysteriously insisting "I have got it all, but I cannot tell—I got it in confidence, and I could not possibly divulge where I got it from. But I did get a copy of the original composition."¹²

Some of the reports on the scandal, however, hinted at the real reason for this "opera war"—selling tickets. As a writer for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* noted dryly at the end of his article on the subject, "this is the first of a series of advertising dodges by which both managers hope to secure much gratuitous notoriety."¹³ In the end, critics largely ignored the issue in their reviews, with the *North American* admitting, after both companies had visited Philadelphia, that

⁹"Amusements," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 20 October 1878.

¹⁰"The *Carmen* Controversy," *American Art Journal* 30, no. 5 (30 November 1878): 73. Disputes between impresarios over performance rights were not confined to the United States. The same sort of argument erupted in Madrid before *Carmen*'s premiere there in 1887. See Kertesz and Christoforidis, "Confronting *Carmen*."

¹¹HG, "Music," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 October 1878.

¹²"Max Strakosch," *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 25 November 1878.

¹³"Amusements," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 20 October 1878.

few could tell the difference between the Mapleson and Strakosch orchestrations.¹⁴ Because of weak international and American copyright laws, it might have been unethical for impresarios to mount unauthorized productions, but it was not illegal.¹⁵ Managers often used this sort of manufactured controversy to build up buzz in the media for their companies and their newest productions. If it was not unauthorized productions, then it was hyped-up competition between well-known singers, or the ubiquitous coverage of backstage gossip. What was not planted in the press by impresarios was probably encouraged by the singers themselves, press agents, or enterprising reporters out to make a name for themselves in what we would call today, entertainment journalism.

Indeed, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* was correct, and the “opera war” was not the only free publicity the competing productions received courtesy of the press. Many articles pitted Clara Louise Kellogg and Minnie Hauk against each other. Critics compared their performances of Carmen, and journalists implied that the two women were jealous of each other.¹⁶ The last charge may have been true, for in her memoirs, published almost forty years later, Kellogg complained that Hauk stole her bouquets when they sang together, and claimed that she had performed the role of Carmen “several months before” Hauk had.¹⁷

Critics usually preferred Hauk’s Carmen to Kellogg’s. In fact, until 1893, when Emma Calvé sang the role for the first time in New York, Hauk’s interpretation was the standard by

¹⁴“Dramatic and Musical Opera at the Academy” *North American* (Philadelphia), 13 February 1879.

¹⁵It was not until after the passage of the United States Copyright Act of 1891 that foreign publishers, if they followed the proper protocol, could expect the same legal protections as American citizens. E. Douglas Bomberger, “The Kindness of Strangers: Edward MacDowell and Breslau,” *American Music* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 40.

¹⁶Reporting on two feuding singers was a relatively common ploy to build publicity for companies, and certainly could have reflected the reality as well. Prima donnas knew that they had finite careers, and every new young singer was a potential threat. See Chapter 3 for more on ways that prima donnas manipulated and were victimized by the press.

¹⁷Clara Louise Kellogg, *Memoirs of an American Prima Donna* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), 103. I can find no evidence that Kellogg sang the opera before Hauk either in the United States or Europe.

which critics measured all other performances. Hauk was hailed particularly for her natural acting style. An early reviewer thought he enjoyed Hauk's portrayal because "it may be that I am weary of the same set of actions which the Italian schools teach for comedy and tragedy... They all move alike. They are all unnatural."¹⁸ The *American Art Journal's* critic announced that "Miss Hauk's *Carmen* is a genuine and original creation, and it must be considered one of the finest combinations of acting and singing of the modern stage."¹⁹ The *Daily American* observed "that Miss Hauck [*sic*] is much praised for the clever and exceedingly 'natural' personation of this low-lived creature."²⁰

Hauk's acting style paired well with the realism that many critics (and the prima donna) saw in *Carmen*, and helped to usher in a new approach to operatic acting. Many critics thought Hauk was a better actress than singer. "Mlle. Hauk's acting was so fine last night..." wrote one New York critic, "that we could not but think if nature had bestowed upon her a better voice we should have had a great prima donna."²¹ Hauk confirmed in her autobiography that she intended to use more realistic movement and acting techniques in the role writing, "in Bizet's opera natural action, life, and varied movements meant as much as the singing, one blending into the other." Moreover, she bragged she had insisted that the chorus in Mapleson's production drop

¹⁸From Our Own Correspondent, "A New York Girl Abroad," *New York Times*, 11 July 1878.

¹⁹"Italian Opera—*Carmen*," *American Art Journal* 29, no. 26 (26 October 1878): 306.

²⁰"Naughty Opera," *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 4 November 1878. Minnie Hauk spelled her name "Hauk," but the press was often misspelled it "Hauck."

²¹"Record of Amusements," *New York Times*, 24 October 1878. Singers trained in Italy were taught specific movements to coincide with certain emotional situations and chorus members moved together. Hauk apparently avoided these actions, which had become stylized over the years. While the majority opinion seems to have been that Hauk's acting was better than her singing, not everyone agreed. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* maintained after a performance in 1886 with Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company that "her singing is exceedingly artistic, and while it never seeks to overdo by special display, it equally retains every needed point to sustain and intensify the dramatic situations of the role." "Opera and Drama," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 January 1886.

the “the old-fashioned Italian ‘switch signals,’” for a more modern approach.²² Italian opera performers were also moving to a more “natural” acting style in this time period. According to James Hepokoski, the *disposizioni sceniche* for Verdi’s *Otello*, written in 1887 primarily by Giulio Ricordi, is filled with exhortations to perform with *naturalezza* (naturalness); “as if it were happening in reality.” Ricordi particularly encouraged each member of the chorus to act independently of each other instead of using group movements that Ricordi found old fashioned and unrealistic.²³

Kellogg generally was criticized for wooden acting and for attempting a role that was too low for her voice. A writer in St. Louis called her “stiff-kneed.”²⁴ In Philadelphia, another critic observed that her “self-consciousness” prevented her from showing “that perfect abandon so absolutely essential to the character.”—“She always gave the impression of unreality or indifference.”²⁵ Another author charged that the part was “almost altogether out of Miss Kellogg’s range, and she makes a mistake struggling with it at all.”²⁶ Even Kellogg agreed in her memoir that the part was uncomfortable for her to sing.²⁷ Yet she was only one of many sopranos who attempted the role even if it was too low for them.²⁸ *Carmen* became such a

²²Minnie Hauk, *Memories of a Singer* (London: A.M. Philpot, Ltd., 1925; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1977), 161.

²³James Hepokoski, “Staging Verdi’s Operas,” in *Verdi in Performance*, eds. Alison Latham and Roger Parker, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.

²⁴“Amusements,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 7 January 1881.

²⁵“Dramatic and Musical,” *North American* (Philadelphia), 26 October 1878.

²⁶“Musical Notes,” unknown newspaper [probably from Chicago], 25 January 1879 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

²⁷Kellogg, *Memoirs of an American Prima Donna*, 73.

²⁸Critics maintained that sopranos Adelina Patti, Anna de Belocca, and Emma Juch among others all had voices that were too high for the role. Some writers even thought the part was too low for Hauk. Marie Roze solved the problem by claiming in an 1878 interview that Bizet originally wrote the music for her in a higher key, which she used in her performance. “Marie Roze,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 3 December 1878. While Bizet offered the role to Roze early in the compositional process, she turned it down. Roze was certainly stretching the truth to imply that Bizet completely rewrote the role for Célestine Galli-Marié who eventually sang the premiere. See McClary, *Carmen*,

popular success that many sopranos simply could not afford to pass up the opportunity to sing the title role. Moreover, many troupes depended upon a few star singers to attract audiences. Although *Carmen* was a reliable money-maker for most companies, impresarios needed to have their most famous singers in the opera to ensure a good house. As the prima donna of the Strakosch Italian Opera Company, Kellogg had to perform the role, especially when the opera was so new, to help guarantee the financial success of her company even if it was a difficult part for her to sing.²⁹

***Carmen*, Genre, and the High-Art Ideal**

The first American reviews of Bizet's opera were mixed. Well aware of its popularity in Europe, critics did not dismiss the work out of hand, but were not quite sure what to make of it. Several early reviews noted the opera's genre bending, calling it, for instance, "an oddity of the oddest sort—a light opera with grim, wicked motives and a tragic end."³⁰ Some critics ascribed the uncertain genre to the demands of the libretto, such as in an article from the *New York Times* written before the opera had even arrived in the U. S. "At this theatre they called everything opéra comique, hence *Carmen* has been regarded as outside the legitimate world of 'grand opera,' but the story is tragic enough for Italian fancy, and sufficiently improper for the French mind, which in art is both sensuous and sensual."³¹ The author's essentializing of specific artistic

15–28 for a thorough consideration of the history of *Carmen*'s composition. Susan Rutherford asserts that *Carmen* was often sung by sopranos in Europe as well. Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 229.

²⁹See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the star system and the strain it placed on the featured singers. Annie Louise Cary was the Strakosch Company's contralto. She was well known and certainly capable of singing the role, but Kellogg still took the role.

³⁰"A Captivating New Opera," *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), 9 November 1878, reprinted in the *Boston Transcript*.

³¹From Our Own Correspondent, "A New York Girl Abroad," *New York Times*, 11 July 1878.

tendencies with certain “races” (as they were called in the nineteenth century) was entirely commonplace. After *Carmen*’s premiere in Milwaukee in 1881, the local critic observed that “the first part of the opera contains some trivial things, which might with propriety be found in opera bouffe. The last two acts, however, are intensely dramatic.”³²

Identifying two sections in the opera—the “bouffe” part and the “grand opera” portion became the standard explanation for the opera’s transgression of typical genre boundaries. The music was alternately praised for its captivating melodies and picturesque effects, or condemned for its vulgarity and combination of traditional operatic arias with what one critic described as a “strong flavor of the opera comique, (which may be ‘spicy,’ but is not very pure—art-wise,...).”³³ Most authors agreed with this early judgment: “to say that he [Bizet] hesitates between *Lohengrin* and *La Belle Hélène* is hardly an exaggerated statement of his odd position.”³⁴

Critics often portrayed Bizet’s music as being caught between Offenbach and Wagner. As late as 1894, Elson referred to the description when he wrote in a review of Emma Calvé’s performance,

The old sneer which comes down from that hostile epoch [when *Carmen* was premiered] and says that *Carmen* is the half-way house between Offenbach and Wagner, has in it a bit of truth. *Carmen* is Offenbachian ?? [word illegible] insouciant treatment and sensuous melody count for anything, and it is also Wagnerian in the employment of its leit-motif of five notes representing the evil worked by *Carmen* upon Don José, appearing first in the end of the overture, threading its way through all the opera, and culminating with wonderful force in a baleful finale.³⁵

In Elson’s formulation, the “Offenbachian” music was the Spanish-inflected tunes primarily sung by *Carmen* in arias such as the “Habanera” and the “Seguidilla.” Elson specifically calls the

³²“Amusements,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 9 April 1881.

³³“Record of Amusements,” *New York Times*, 24 October 1878.

³⁴“Musical Affairs,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 31 October 1878.

³⁵Louis C. Elson, “Calvé’s *Carmen*,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 28 February 1894.

use of the “fate” motive Wagnerian, but others found Wagner in the orchestral writing and drama of the plot—though most believed Bizet lacked Wagner’s depth and melodic talent. At least one critic labeled Bizet a “Wagner in miniature.”³⁶

In France, critics also made the connection between Wagner and Bizet. Théodore de Banville praised Wagner’s influence on Bizet as a way to transform the superficial fantasies usually composed for the Opéra Comique into a “divine language expressing the anguish, the folly, the celestial aspirations of humanity.”³⁷ Other critics, such as Léon Escudier, complained about Wagner’s influence, writing “he [Bizet] makes a point of never finishing his phrases till the ear grows weary of waiting for the cadence that never comes.”³⁸ After Friederich Nietzsche turned against Wagner in his 1888 *Der Fall Wagner*, he cast Bizet (and specifically *Carmen*) as the antidote to the excesses of Wagner’s operas.³⁹

Carmen’s uncertain genre and eclectic musical influences undermined its reception as an example of the sophistication and refinement that some American critics were beginning to expect from grand opera.⁴⁰ It was right around the time of *Carmen*’s premiere that many American writers began to conceive of opera as a cultivated art form for the educated elite rather than mere entertainment. *Carmen* reminded many critics of more lowbrow attractions. Some writers contended right after the premiere that despite the opera’s obvious faults, it would be popular precisely because it was not true high art. In an article bemoaning *Carmen*’s successful

³⁶The phrase is used in “Amusements,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 19 November 1878 and “Amusements,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 23 November 1878. It is likely that the two reviews were written by the same person, but without a byline it is impossible to know for certain.

³⁷Review of *Carmen* by Théodore de Banville as quoted in McClary, *Carmen*, 114.

³⁸As quoted in Ibid.

³⁹See Sander L. Gilman, “Nietzsche, Bizet, and Wagner: Illness, Health, and Race in the Nineteenth Century,” *Opera Quarterly* 23, nos. 2–3 (Spring–Summer 2007): 247–64.

⁴⁰As we saw in Chapter 4, *Carmen* was the only opera routinely performed by comic-opera companies, no doubt because the work’s genre instability made it more approachable for these troupes and their singers.

debut, one writer declared that “the success of the opera is an indication, to a certain extent, of the mental and moral tone of the period.”⁴¹ Another New York critic went so far as to brand the opera’s story “dull” and described Carmen as

a young person in whom we can take no interest. If in real life, a woman, having flirted with an officer, although of inferior rank, and won his love, and having been greatly served by him, prefers a bull-fighter or the like, it is her affair, the public has no right to make any remarks upon the matter. But when in a drama, opera, novel, or other like work, this goes on before your eyes, it very seriously affects the interest we take in that young woman as a heroine. As art, such a design is bad, as bad as bad can be, for it utterly sets at naught that elevation of feeling, (if we do not go so far as to say ideality,) without which art gives no true pleasure.⁴²

A Chicago author identified only as H. G. admitted in a review that the music was charming but, “on the whole ... there is something unsatisfactory about the performance. The secret may be in the fact that the subject is unworthy of embodiment in music. The author is consistent in working out the character of a pretty, willful, heartless gypsy girl.”⁴³ He went on to define a great work of art.

Now it will probably be conceded by all that an opera which depends upon dramatic action more than upon its music, cannot in any sense be a great opera. *Carmen* may cause an evening to pass agreeably, but it lacks the element of human interest, lacks...the high and noble purpose that renders music an incentive to worthier life and action...⁴⁴

We saw in Chapter 1 that this conception of grand opera as more than a musical drama that afforded a pleasant evening was only just beginning to take root in American critical thought in 1878. If grand opera should be a work of art primarily for uplift and education, *Carmen*, for these critics, clearly did not fit the bill. The music was debased by its reliance on what many called

⁴¹“The New Opera,” *New York Times*, 3 November 1878.

⁴²“Record of Amusements,” *New York Times*, 24 October 1878.

⁴³H. G., “Music,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 November 1878.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

“Spanish folk music,” and the story was far from inspirational.⁴⁵ This reconfiguration of opera was happening just prior to the Wagner craze and demonstrates that, even before Wagner’s music and ideas took hold with American critics and audiences, some writers were already seeking to redefine what opera should mean and portray. Just like English-language opera, *Carmen* had an image problem. Unlike opera performed in English, however, *Carmen*’s popularity with audiences eventually overwhelmed the concerns voiced by early critics, and it became an accepted part of the high-art repertoire.

***Carmen*, Gender, and America’s Double Standard**

Initial responses to the character of Carmen were confused—American writers did not seem to know what to make of her. Some critics had intensely negative reactions to the character immediately. Others seemed to find her to be somewhat sympathetic, if limited morally. E. R., with the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, described Carmen as “daring, reckless, and yet, with all, lovable and captivating.”⁴⁶ The author of another early review almost forgave Carmen for her actions. “Carmen’s great fault is fickleness. She does nothing evil, although at all times given to a reckless abandon.”⁴⁷ Although operas frequently featured servant characters, critics seemed confused by a working-class woman who was not a maid. Carmen’s power and charisma might have made these critics uncomfortable, but they strove to put her in a box they understood—loveable with an alluring hint of danger.

Within a few months, however, the earlier and somewhat more generous readings of Carmen’s character, were replaced with universal condemnation of her sensuality and evil

⁴⁵H. G., in his review, identified Michaela’s arias as the only really good music in the opera—not coincidentally the music that most resembled traditional Romantic operatic writing, sung by the most traditional character in the work.

⁴⁶E. R., “The New Opera,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 26 October 1878.

⁴⁷“Amusements,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 23 November 1878.

scheming. For these men, Carmen broke every rule. Rather than being the “angel in the house”—a woman who was a good influence on those around her, was always filled with a noble altruism, and stayed busy at home, away from the public sphere—Carmen worked in a factory, steered Don José astray, and led a public, criminal life. As one critic described her, “Carmen defies decency, does not know decorum, and is utterly heartless—as incapable of self-sacrifice as one of her favorite toreador’s bulls.”⁴⁸ The absence of a willingness to sacrifice herself for others was one of the worst crimes a woman could commit in a society that demanded women sublimate themselves for the sake of their families. According to a writer with the Philadelphia paper, the *North American*, Carmen “was a woman thoroughly bad at heart, deceitful and cruel, incapable of an honest affection, loving in her wild, ungovernable way only where her love was not sought.”⁴⁹ Notice that this critic is particularly fearful of her “wild and ungovernable way” and that she pursued men, not the other way around—unruly women were a threat to an orderly society, and perhaps an unwelcome reminder of what might happen when a woman took a more active role in determining her own destiny. On the other hand, there is a whiff of fascination about this quotation as well. She might have been “wild and ungovernable,” but it was when Carmen was in love that her true nature emerged. For this writer, and for many others, Carmen challenged the traditional middle-class values they were used to seeing portrayed on stage, but the idea that she would break traditional boundaries because of her passionate personality was surely as attractive as it was terrifying. *Carmen’s* reputation was not all that different from some stereotypes about prima donnas. In Chapter 3 we saw that many prima donnas also teetered between good and bad, alluring and respectable.

⁴⁸“The New Opera,” *New York Times*, 3 November 1878.

⁴⁹“Dramatic and Musical Opera at the Academy,” *North American* (Philadelphia), 13 February 1879.

Even when *Carmen* had become a fixture in the American repertoire, the critical aversion to Carmen remained, stoked by fears of the consequences of women who were out of control and out of their proper element. From the lower to the upper-middle classes, American women were crossing traditional gender boundaries. Between 1880 and 1910, 5.4 million women entered the work force in the U. S., often in occupations not all that different in status and responsibilities from Carmen's job as a cigarette roller. These women were employed as garment workers, in light manufacturing, or in domestic or clerical work. Middle-class women challenged men's social control through their activities in women's clubs, as well as in the temperance and suffrage movements. In many ways, Carmen was the embodiment of the New Woman. She smoked, worked, and needed men only to the extent that they served her short-term interests. Of course, in part, she did not fit this profile either, because she was neither middle class nor educated.⁵⁰ As historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explains, "to place a woman outside of a domestic setting, to train a woman to think and feel 'as a man,' to encourage her to succeed at a career, indeed to place a career before marriage, violated virtually every late-Victorian norm. It was literally to take her outside of conventional structures and social arrangements."⁵¹ Thus, Carmen's disinterest in marriage and stability, her violent actions ("like a man") as well as her sexual freedom were such serious violations of the social norms of middle-class America in this period that her actions simply could not be explained within the context of her time. Critics struggled to conceal their fascination behind a veneer of disapproval—many of them saw

⁵⁰Vivien Gardner, "Introduction," in *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850–1914*, eds. Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 1–14.

⁵¹Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 252.

themselves, after all, as arbiters of musical taste and advocates for the sort of decorous art forms appropriate for a powerful, sophisticated nation.⁵²

Although critics often expressed shock at Carmen's unprincipled behavior, there were American precedents for her in literature and art. Nineteenth-century American popular fiction was rife with stories about female sexual predators who lured innocent men to their demise.⁵³ In these stories women were the perpetrators, and their willingness to break sexual taboos was the source of their criminal behavior. Men were seemingly helpless against such aggressive women. The sensational coverage of the 1836 murder of Helen Jewett (who was widely believed to have been a prostitute) set the stage for an understanding of "fallen" women as the cause of a downward spiral for everyone around them. Their corruption was so extreme it forced others to take drastic action to remove these women from society.⁵⁴

Carmen's smoking was particularly significant. People in the nineteenth century often assumed that women who smoked were, at the very least, deviant and might pose a threat to a happy household or, at worst, were prostitutes.⁵⁵ Thus, this vice was just one more reason for audiences to distrust her. Her smoking also became such an important part of Carmen's image in the United States that it transferred into other areas of American life. Since at least 1863, when Congress mandated that cigars had to be sold in boxes, tobacco advertisements used tempting images of women of color to attract men to their products. Carmen became so associated with

⁵²See Chapter 1 for more discussion about nineteenth-century critics' agendas.

⁵³Wendy Gamber, "'The Notorious Mrs. Clem': Gender, Class, and Criminality in Gilded Age America," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 11, no. 3 (July 2012): 326.

⁵⁴Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 199–203. Jewett was killed by a man who was probably her lover, but the news articles as well as the novels and stories inspired by her case, painted her as the cause of her own murder and a woman who deserved death because of her behavior.

⁵⁵Dolores Mitchell, "Images of Exotic Women in Turn-of-the-Century Art," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 328; McClary, *Carmen*, 73.

smoking that after 1885 her “type” was used in numerous advertisements for cigarettes and cigars. Historian Dolores Mitchell maintains that, “representations of Carmen types could allude to Spain, noted for its tobacco products, or to Cuba.”⁵⁶ Many of the women whose images were utilized in tobacco advertising were assumed to be degenerate or uncivilized, yet the pictures were designed to attract a primarily white male audience who would be unlikely to associate with such women in real life, but were nonetheless fascinated with them.⁵⁷ The commodification of racial difference exemplified in the tobacco art was also present in other types of advertising such as trade cards used to sell many household products.⁵⁸

The tobacco commercial art, often rife with sexual innuendo, illustrated the sort of fascination with Carmen that writers evoked in their commentary on the character. Critics found her repellent, but also completely captivating, often because of her overt and aggressive sexuality. As a Chicago writer expressed it, Carmen “is always piquant, and she may be, doubtless is, brutal in her inclinations and thoughts, but her brutality is marked by a bewitching voluptuousness, a dazzling beauty and a captivating grace.”⁵⁹

One of the chief criteria by which writers judged a “successful” Carmen was if the singer was able to imbue the character with enough style and charm to justify the interest of a respectable man such as Don José. Implicit in this concern was the notion that no honorable man would be attracted to a woman who presented herself as more lustful than loving, more aggressive than appealing. In 1890, Riter Fitzgerald criticized Louise Natali’s interpretation on

⁵⁶Mitchell, “Images of Exotic Women in Turn-of-the-Century Art,” 329.

⁵⁷Mitchell identifies Turkish, Spanish, Native American, and African ethnic groups as the four types of what she calls “exotic” women of color used in this type of tobacco art.

⁵⁸For more information see Nicole Schröder, “Commodifying Difference: Depictions of the ‘Other’ in Nineteenth-Century American Trade Cards,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 85–115.

⁵⁹“Music,” *Daily Inter Ocean* (Chicago), 4 December 1880.

just these grounds. Asserting that evil “was not a difficult quality for a woman to portray,” he went on to condemn Natali because she did “not portray the fascination that enables Carmen to bewilder and overpower the men. She needs a depth of feeling that carries all before it—that causes the heart to throb faster, the blood to rush to the head, the eyes to glitter, and the passions to arouse. Natali must not stamp her feet and glare and be rude all the time.”⁶⁰ Another Philadelphia critic agreed saying that her

conception of the part is so crude and commonplace that all the romantic interest of the character is dispelled, and in place of the Carmen of Michelet’s [Mérimée’s] story and Bizet’s music, vicious, if you please, and utterly devoid of moral sense, but having a grace and charm and piquancy of her own which save her from vulgarity, we have a bad-tempered, bad-mannered, brazen-faced hussy, coarse and loud-mouthed, an excessively disagreeable and objectionable young person, whose ascendancy over Don Jose [*sic*] there is nothing to explain, for in and about whom there is no faintest suggestion of seductive or fascinating power.⁶¹

Implied in this criticism is that Don José should, and could, be aroused (his heart needed to “throb” and the “blood to rush” to his head, reflecting his “passion”), but Carmen could not have those same feelings. In a world that portrayed women as morally pure precisely because of their asexuality—their ability to rise above the base instincts that drove men—Carmen’s seductiveness and passion were especially disturbing.⁶² Natali, who may have been trying to show this sort of overt sexual desire on stage, was deemed unladylike in every way for trying to portray female lust instead of demure “romance.”

⁶⁰Riter Fitzgerald, “Bizet’s Carmen,” *Philadelphia Evening Item*, 26 August 1890 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University.

⁶¹“Music and the Stage,” *The North American* (Philadelphia), 26 August 1890.

⁶²Barbara J. Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 41.

Just as in Europe, some critics even encouraged singers to soften Carmen's character, arguing that the American public would be alienated by a "realistic" portrayal of the role.⁶³ In this case "realistic" seemed to mean a Carmen after the modern heart; a woman who is aware of her own sexuality, uses it to her own purposes, and then, refusing to buckle under society's ideas of morality and proper behavior, dies rather than submits.⁶⁴ A critic in 1880 described this woman as Prosper Mérimée's Carmen

If she follows the Carmen of Prosper Mérimée she will err on the wrong side, for she will present to us a gypsy with all a gypsy's instincts, all her wild, ungoverned passions, willful defiance of right, cruel spurning of the love which she has called forth and willingly casts aside, and jealous grasping with her whole soul after the love she wants, regardless of the world present or to come. Such a character is fascinating in fiction, repulsive and horrible in reality.⁶⁵

This unnamed critic praised Minnie Hauk for her characterization because she was able to "give us a woman in reality cast in the same mould, but with her vulgarity and her intense lawless passion glossed over."⁶⁶ The author acknowledged the difficulty of negotiating the thin line between decorum and tastelessness when he wrote that despite a "dramatically consistent" and interesting portrayal, Hauk's Carmen was still "objectionable to the cultivated taste, which looks upon the opera as catering first to refinement, and not at all to realism."⁶⁷

I have quoted several critics so far who were taken aback by Carmen's lawlessness and ungovernable wildness. It is her failure to be ruled by male ideas of appropriate female conduct that rendered her "wild" and "lawless." Meanwhile, a singer playing the role was caught in a

⁶³For examples of European critics complaining about realistic portrayals of Carmen see Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 268–69, and Clark, "South of North."

⁶⁴See Furman, "Language of Love" for a succinct overview of the different ways Carmen and Don José's relationship has been interpreted throughout the twentieth century.

⁶⁵"The Opera," *The North American* (Philadelphia), 25 November 1880.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

nearly impossible position. On the one hand, critics wanted her to be sensual so that she would be attractive and exciting on stage, but, on the other, she had to balance her sexuality within rigid social rules regarding suitable female behavior. Even Hauk and Emma Calvé, who were considered the two great Carmens of the period, were not immune from this criticism. There was simply no way to be both demure and aggressive, but that was what the critics demanded.

Carmen's open sexuality was one of the main reasons why critics accused her of being evil and a devil, and that they blamed for ultimately causing her own death. One reviewer reminded his readers that "her conduct is the worst of which a woman can be guilty."⁶⁸ A Philadelphia critic pronounced Carmen

a selfish, passionate, hot-blooded little devil—there is no other word—whose power of fascination was solely physical, and who delighted in captivating the masculine affection partly for the gratification of her vanity and partly for the gratification of her animal nature.⁶⁹

In 1897, Louis C. Elson described the fate motive in *Carmen* "with its baleful augmented second which pictures the evil that Carmen works on Don José."⁷⁰ A Louisville critic found Emma Calvé's performance of the "Seguidilla" both disturbing and an apt description of Carmen's character. The "Seguidilla"

might have been a rollicking little ditty, sung to please a soldier sitting near; but with Calvé it was more sinister than that. Its purpose was to lure her prey into the evil clutches of a wanton. It was the epitome of a woman's power of fascination. Coquetry, witchery, invitation, were mixed in it. And, sprightly though its tune, there lurked mysteriously in it—stamped there by Bizet and expressed by Calvé—the note of peril to come, the prophecy of unhappy fate. One could almost feel the threatened danger when he saw the victim drawn irresistibly into the power of this dazzling creature by her web of music. And yet his submission was not to be wondered at.⁷¹

⁶⁸"The New Opera," *New York Times*, 3 November 1878.

⁶⁹"A Brilliant Scene," *North American* (Philadelphia), 6 May 1890.

⁷⁰Louis C. Elson, "The Opera," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 4 February 1897.

⁷¹"Carmen: Sung by the Great Calvé before Brilliant Louisville Audience," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 22 October 1901.

Ritter Fitzgerald in Philadelphia had a similar view on Carmen's character.

Carmen is a devil of the manola type and the manolas all carry daggers. She is a *fille de joie*—beautiful, bold, passionate, fascinating, who can purr like a cat as well as scratch like one. She knows her power. All the men are fascinated by her. Her audacity charms them one moment; her caresses overpower them the next.⁷²

These quotations share a similar theme. Carmen is depicted as two sides of the same dangerous coin. On the one hand she was aggressive and violent—she carries a “dagger” and “scratches like a cat” and conspires to entice Don José into her “evil clutches.” On the other, she was inviting, and could attract any man because she was “fascinating,” “dazzling,” and “passionate.” In the nineteenth century, only men were supposed to have such power, because it was a women's job to encourage men to control themselves through their decorous and moral influence, not lure men to their doom. Carmen's very power, while rooted in her sexuality, was seemingly stolen from men who were conquered by her behavior and became unnaturally submissive. When a woman abandoned her traditional role, men were helpless to fend off her advances. With such a viewpoint, the logic is inescapable. A woman who breaks through the boundaries of good taste and appropriate behavior is a menace. She destroys innocent men and abandons her proper role. Death is the only remedy for such a sin. Although many writers depicted Carmen's murder as a result of Don José's jealousy, they always placed the blame for his rage on Carmen's shoulders. Calling the work a “naughty opera,” a Nashville critic described the plot of the opera as

the story of a gipsy strumpet—not to mince matters—who infatuates a young Spaniard, seduced him from his modest and lovely betrothed, and then deserts him for a muscular bull-fighter, and after he has returned to and been forgiven by his Michaela, ensnares him again, and is very naturally murdered by the Don on the indications of a second desertion.⁷³

⁷² Fitzgerald, “Bizet's *Carmen*.”

⁷³“Naughty Opera,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 4 November 1878.

In 1886, for an article in women's magazine, an unnamed writer asserted that

Carmen finally pays the penalty of her treachery in the whirlwind of passion and indignation that she has evoked, and perishes by the poniard of that lover whose heart she had so ruthlessly trampled upon.⁷⁴

The discussion in the previous chapter demonstrates this interpretation was reinforced and strengthened by the way that *Carmen* was performed in the U. S. The addition of the pantomime when Carmen tries to kill Don José and the cuts to Act IV significantly shortened the act and telescoped all attention on Carmen's defiance of Don José.

Many of these ideas about Carmen were hardly unique to the United States, and were shared by critics across Europe. As Robert L. A. Clark explains the character's French reception, Carmen was "sexually dissident in relation to the bourgeois mores of the day; and, finally, an outlaw."⁷⁵ French plot summaries of the work blamed Carmen for her own murder as in this retelling in the *Larousse* encyclopedia: "when Carmen tires of him and his jealousy, she breaks off their relationship and becomes involved with a matador; José kills her."⁷⁶ Indeed, even as late as 1963, one French scholar wrote "the lovely Carmencita, before being murdered, is indeed a murderess."⁷⁷ In Spain, where critics focused most of their reviews on issues of national identity and the clumsy appropriation of Spanish culture in the opera, Carmen was labeled a "French coquette."⁷⁸ George Bernard Shaw in England described Carmen as

superstitious, pleasure-loving, good-for-nothing, caught by the outside of anything glittering, with no power but the power of seduction, which she exercises without sense

⁷⁴"*Carmen*," *Arthur's Home Magazine* 54, no. 7 (July 1886): 488.

⁷⁵Clark, "South of North," 187.

⁷⁶*Larousse du XX^e siècle en six volumes* (Paris, 1929) as quoted in Furman, "The Languages of Love," 170.

⁷⁷Michel Leiris, *Manhood: A Journey from Childhood into the Fierce Order of Virility*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1963), 54 as quoted in Furman, "The Languages of Love," 171.

⁷⁸[Felipe Pedrell] F. P., "La Quincena Musical," *Ilustración Musical Hispano-Americana* 1/2 (1888): 10, as quoted in Kertesz and Christoforidis, "Confronting *Carmen*," 94.

or decency. There is no suggestion of any fine quality about her, not a spark of honesty, courage, or even of that sort of honor supposed to prevail among thieves.⁷⁹

Michaela: The “Real” Woman of the Opera

If Carmen was violent and overly sexual to nineteenth-century American critics, then Michaela was the personification of goodness and innocence. Just as Bizet and his librettists intended, Michaela was seen as the antidote to all that was frightening about Carmen. She was the only “decent character in the opera.”⁸⁰ Critics hailed Michaela as “a visionary of the good and true,” and recognized her as a foil to Carmen and as the “legitimate sweetheart of the lost lover.”⁸¹ An 1895 review makes clear why Michaela was such a beloved character in the nineteenth century.

The simplicity, the modesty, the ingenuous devotion of the peasant girl, her ready self-sacrifice, her unconscious courage, all the qualities which render her such a moving and sympathetic figure, such a contrast to the hard and brilliant Carmen.⁸²

In other words, she was the perfect “True Woman”—modest, devoted, and self-sacrificing.

Sometimes reviewers confused Carmen with the singers who played her, and the same happened with Michaela. Critics often wondered how a nice woman could effectively portray Carmen, and they might forgive a singer for an anemic portrayal on the grounds that most women simply could not be expected to understand Carmen. “It goes without saying that there are few lady singers who can interpret the part of Carmen in accordance with its natural conception,” wrote one Milwaukee critic about the Hess Opera Company’s 1889 production. “It

⁷⁹George Bernard Shaw, “Twenty Years too Late,” *The World*, 30 May 1894, as quoted in McClary, *Carmen*, 120–21.

⁸⁰“Naughty Opera,” *Daily American* (Nashville, TN), 4 November 1878.

⁸¹H. G., “Music,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 November 1878; Stuyvesant, “Our New York Letter,” *Sun* (Baltimore), 2 November 1878.

⁸²“Concert and Opera,” *North American* (Philadelphia), 10 December 1895.

is no disparagement to Miss Guthrie to say that she is somewhat inadequate to such a task.”⁸³

While it might be unpleasant for a prima donna to be confused with Carmen, Michaela’s performers were often hailed as virginal and as good as the character. According to an article in the *Atcheson Daily Globe* in Kansas, Henry W. Savage used a prayer to decide Maude Chaise was his next Michaela.

When Mr. Savage of the Castle Square Opera Company was considering Miss Maude Chaise for the role of Michaela in *Carmen*, he requested her to recite a selection which would give him some idea of the quality of her speaking voice. Miss Chase demurred, saying that she “never spoke pieces” and was really at a loss to meet his wishes... “Oh can’t you think of something?” urged Mr. Savage. Miss Chase hesitated a moment and then, advancing to the footlights, recited, “Now I lay me down to sleep.” At its conclusion Mr. Savage said, “Well, Miss Chase, if you can sing Michaela’s prayer with as much feeling I can guarantee a success for you in the role.”⁸⁴

Writers also contrasted Michaela’s music with that of Carmen’s. Some critics enjoyed Carmen’s music, calling it “bright, sparkling and melodious;” the kind of tunes that the audience members hummed as they exited the theater.⁸⁵ For many writers, however, Carmen’s music was not particularly beautiful, and certainly not what they wanted from grand opera. Like her character, commentators welcomed Michaela’s music as familiar and lovely in a conventional manner that many authors found irresistible. “Musically, the redeeming point of the opera is a scena and aria given to Michaela in the third act,” explained a critic soon after the premiere, “[her aria]—“To dice no”—which is really beautiful and with an elevated beauty.”⁸⁶ Much later, in 1904, another critic echoed this sentiment, “some of the most beautiful music is assigned to Michaela. It is pure melody, and contrasts with the rather tropical, temperamental passages

⁸³“The Hess Opera Company,” *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, 24 July 1889.

⁸⁴“Her Recitation,” *Atcheson Daily Globe* (KS), 13 December 1899.

⁸⁵“Italian Opera—*Carmen*,” *American Art Journal* 29, no. 26 (26 October 1878): 306.

⁸⁶“Record of Amusements,” *New York Times*, 24 October 1878.

which are assigned to Carmen.”⁸⁷ Notice that Carmen’s music was not just “temperamental,” it was “tropical” which hints at the racial overtones that were part of the reception of her character in America, which I will return to later in this chapter.

***Carmen* and the Middle Class**

In many ways, Michaela could be constructed as the perfect American woman, but some singers wanted to find a way to bring Carmen back into the mainstream of female social roles. By the late 1880s, critics had grown more comfortable with the character. So much so, that when Emma Juch tried a tamer interpretation of the role in 1889, she was roundly condemned. Composer and critic Arthur Weld in Boston described her Carmen as being “theatrical without being dramatic; attractive, but not seductive; it savors more of a pretty and coquettish ‘sales-lady’ at a large dry goods house than a working girl in a Spanish cigarette factory.”⁸⁸ One aspect of Weld’s criticism of Juch revolved around her refusal to portray Carmen as suitably seductive and enticing. There is more to his critique than just disappointment at Juch’s restraint, for this was an English-language production. Many Americans, particularly middle-class Protestants, were still deeply suspicious of theatrical display for religious reasons, and an opera such as *Carmen* reinforced and confirmed all their doubts. Some prima donnas, especially those who sang for the more conservative English-language audience, positioned themselves as sympathetic to their clientele’s moral concerns. Emma Abbott, for instance, crafted her entire image to appeal to this traditionally-minded audience that worried that the theater might lead them to moral ruin.⁸⁹

⁸⁷“*Carmen* at Ford’s,” *The Sun* (Baltimore), 18 December 1904.

⁸⁸Arthur Weld, “Music,” *Post* (Boston), 5 December 1889 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁸⁹In October 1887, in an incident recounted in newspapers across the country, Emma Abbott rose to the defense of the theater during a church service in Nashville after hearing a sermon which denounced the stage. She argued that not only were the works that her company performed free of “impure or improper thought,” but also that “her life

Indeed, although her company performed *Carmen* beginning in 1880, Abbott was not part of the cast until 1890.

Emma Juch, in her more reserved interpretation of the role, was merely appealing to her audience when she declared “unless I can play Carmen without affronting the modesty of any woman in the audience I will abandon the part.”⁹⁰ Weld, in turn, by calling Juch’s Carmen a “shop girl” was making a veiled reference to the stereotypical woman that attended English-language opera.⁹¹ His review dripped with condescension towards Juch’s company as well as the audience towards whom he seemed to believe the performance was geared. For instance, he criticized the second scene in Act II when Don José goes to the tavern. Rather than finding Carmen’s flirting with Don José seductive and her dance enticing, Weld accused Juch and her Don José (Charles Hedmondt) of making the scene overly comedic in order to get “a laugh from the gallery. But it must be remembered that Bizet did not write this wonderful opera to amuse the gallery.”⁹² In other words—*Carmen* was serious business and a grand opera (with all the cultural baggage that designation entailed), not a silly comic opera beloved by the people in the cheap seats.

Not only was Juch’s Carmen insufficiently sexual, according to Weld, it was also insufficiently violent. Juch left out the pantomime when Carmen tried to kill Don José at the end of Act III. Weld, clearly mistaking performance tradition for the printed text, described the scene in Act III to his readers, writing that the attack was in the French libretto, implying that

was as free from blame as that of any woman.” “Emma Abbott Protests Against a Pastor’s Denunciation of the Theatre,” *American Art Journal* 47, no. 26 (15 October 1887): 408.

⁹⁰“Gossip of the Day,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 October 1889.

⁹¹See Chapter 1 for more information about grand opera and the middle-class audience.

⁹²Arthur Weld, “Music,” *Post* (Boston), 5 December 1889 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The gallery was where the less expensive seats were located. Critics often used the term as short hand for “lower-class audience without very good taste.”

anything in the original was sacrosanct and Juch had a duty to follow Bizet's instructions.

Sarcastically, he suggested that if Juch wanted to "refine" the part by leaving out the attack then

let us 'refine' all other operas as well. Let Faust marry Marguerite and let us dispense with Mephistopheles altogether. In *Lohengrin*, let us depict Frederic von Telramund as a high-minded, honorable gentleman, and Venus in *Tannhäuser* shall no longer preside over a seductive group of lovely girls who steal men's souls away, but she shall be mistress of a young ladies' seminary where 'dancing and deportment' are studied. In Verdi's last masterpiece, *Otello*, we will eliminate the role of Iago entirely...But what about Verdi's ever popular and gloriously beautiful *Traviata*?...it must never be performed again.⁹³

Once again Weld not only criticized Juch's interpretation, he did so by using language laden with upper-class disdain for middle-class female proprieties by invoking the "young ladies' seminary where 'dancing and deportment' are studied."

Juch took great exception to this review, and wrote a letter to the editor of a rival Boston paper taking on each of Weld's criticisms. She claimed that her study of Mérimée's novella led her to conclude that other artists overstated Carmen's bad qualities. This idiosyncratic reading was quite different from just about every other singer's and critic's conclusions then and now. Most people agree that Bizet's Carmen is more refined than Mérimée's because she is single and the only violence she perpetrates is off stage. In the novella, Carmen is more ferocious and married, thus she commits adultery along with all her other sexual crimes.⁹⁴ Juch wrote,

no one can gainsay that she [Carmen] was capable of acts of devotion, possibly when least expected. For instance, even after Don José ceased to attract her, when he was wounded, she nursed him through the serious hurt, and thus accordingly to the novel, saved his life. The words of Prosper Mérimée concerning this incident are as follows: 'For 15 days she never quitted (Don José) me for a moment; she did not close her eyes; she nursed me with a skill and attention which no woman ever before displayed for a man she loved best. As soon as I could stand up again, she carried me off to Granada in secrecy.'⁹⁵

⁹³Arthur Weld, "Music," *Post* (Boston), 14 December 1889 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁹⁴Clark, "South of North," 204.

⁹⁵"Miss Juch's Carmen," [letter to the editor dated 12 December 1889] *Boston Herald*, 13 December 1889 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

She vociferously defended her interpretation of the role as a “portrayal of a Carmen with touches of goodness and womanly feeling.” Because she believed “the composer intended Carmen should be a creature of strong contrasts,” Juch emphasized the character’s “higher moments as well as her unrestrained vagaries.”⁹⁶ Rejecting Weld’s comments, Juch stated that she had received “many letters...from women” praising her portrayal which demonstrated “that my Carmen has touched a sympathetic chord, and that it appeals more to my audiences than an entirely depraved and brutal impersonation would.”⁹⁷ Perhaps it was just that popularity that worried Weld. A Carmen who fit more easily into the proper Victorian mold might have been even more dangerous to the social order. It is harder to blame Carmen for her own murder if she is kinder to the other characters and displays fewer of the negative qualities that critics cited when excusing Don José’s murderous actions.

Juch seemed to have believed, as many Victorians did, that the mere presence of evil on stage could infect the audience and corrupt their morals.⁹⁸ By creating a Carmen who was basically a good girl with a few unsavory qualities, Juch tried to have her cake and eat it too. On the one hand, she could perform one of the most popular operas in America, something her audience no doubt expected would be part of her repertoire, but, on the other, Juch played the part in such a way as to inoculate herself and her audience against some of *Carmen’s* bad influences. I have argued elsewhere that Juch’s company failed, in part, because she alienated her middle-class audience because of the methods she used to attract a wealthy audience who could pay the high ticket prices that (had they attended her productions) would have allowed her to

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸David Monod, “The Eyes of Anna Held: Sex and Sight in the Progressive Era,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10, no. 3 (July 2011): 306.

pay for her huge troupe and expensive costumes and scenery.⁹⁹ In fact, in her letter to the editor she boasted that her second-act costume was an exact replica of one worn at the Metropolitan Opera. Her interpretation of Carmen, however, seems to have been one way she tried to appeal to the middle-class segment of her audience.

Although no other critics were as condescending or as aggressive as Weld, writers questioned Juch's interpretation throughout the 1889–90 season. In a Milwaukee paper in 1890, one author stated

Miss Emma Juch, it is said, is trying to make the character of Carmen more acceptable to the religious element than has heretofore been the case with the ladies who have sung that role. Miss Juch's ambition seems to be laudable, but it is questionable whether people who go to see Carmen care to have her very much modified.¹⁰⁰

This writer identified Juch's motivations as trying to attract the portion of the audience that was suspicious of the theater, but perhaps Juch's goal was foolhardy. This conservative audience probably would not have gone to see *Carmen* anyway, while most opera-goers preferred the traditional interpretation of the role. By the end of the 1890 season, Juch seems to have given up and changed her interpretation. In May, a Philadelphia critic observed

Miss Juch, who was the Carmen, has evidently changed her view of the part since she first played it here. Then it will be remembered she tried to persuade us that Carmen was a pretty good sort of girl, rather vain, perhaps, and possibly more mobile and impulsive than is consistent with a well-balanced character, but very loving and tender-hearted, and with the nature and irresponsibility of a child. That is all very well, perhaps, but it won't fit in either with the story or the music, and Miss Juch has ceased to insist upon this view.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹See Kristen M. Turner, "A Joyous Star-Spangled-Bannerism': Emma Juch, Opera in English Translation, and the American Cultural Landscape in the Gilded Age," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 8, no. 2 (May 2014): 219–52.

¹⁰⁰"People Who are Talked About," *Yenonine's News* (Milwaukee, WI), 9 February 1890.

¹⁰¹"A Brilliant Scene," *The North American* (Philadelphia), 6 May 1890.

In the final analysis, Juch could not carry a new conception of Carmen's character by herself. The social and cultural forces that shaped most people's understanding of the role were too strong for Juch to fight.

***Carmen* and Masculinity**

While Carmen emerges from the pages of the stage manager's scores and from reviews as an overly strong character who was a menace to those around her, reception of Don José's character demonstrates the evolving attitudes toward masculinity in this period.¹⁰² Steven Huebner uses the extended metaphor of the matador and the bull in his article, "Carmen as *Corrida de Toros*," to show that Escamillo is the only conventionally heroic man in the opera, while Carmen can be seen as the matador (usurping the usual male stereotype) and Don José as the bull—a man with such an "enfeebled male ego" that he strikes out uncontrollably against all of his perceived enemies.¹⁰³ Nineteenth-century critics, too, struggled with Don José's masculinity. Early reviews of *Carmen* rarely mentioned Don José, perhaps because Carmen's character was so overwhelming that authors felt they had to respond to her in their essays. One New York critic called Don José "the only personage in *Carmen* who excites any interest," meaning that all the other characters were either poorly-drawn stock characters or so beyond the pale (such as Carmen) that he did not even want to address them. Most writers only commented on the tenor's handling of the role while rarely responding to the character himself.¹⁰⁴

When *Carmen* premiered in 1878, the United States was just exiting the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. In Chapter 3 I explained that, still raw from a conflict that is the

¹⁰²See Chapter 3 for more on male gender roles.

¹⁰³Huebner, "Carmen as *Corrida de Toros*," 13.

¹⁰⁴"Record of Amusements," *New York Times*, 24 October 1878.

bloodiest in United States history, some Americans temporarily abandoned the soldier/hero model of masculinity for a more refined, more cultured (even feminine) ideal.¹⁰⁵ By the Spanish-American War in 1898, the cultural image of men as the heroic defenders of weaker women had returned with full force and, to a certain extent, had been extended to a model of the United States as a masculinized country that had a responsibility to protect and govern feminized populations around the world. Many, including Theodore Roosevelt, portrayed the wars of imperialism at the turn of the century as a way to revitalize and export American manhood.¹⁰⁶ Matthew Frye Jacobson argues that the war with Spain was “especially characterized by a rhetoric and iconography of sexual melodrama.”¹⁰⁷ The American press, in an effort to support and even encourage war, carried many articles suggesting that the vulnerable natives of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines needed to be protected and civilized by the honorable soldiers from the United States.¹⁰⁸ Thus, critics rehabilitated Don José, whose character they had largely ignored in analyses of the opera for almost two decades, as a man who was strong enough to stand up to Carmen’s immorality. In a profile of tenor Fernando de Lucia in 1894, Karleton Hackett described Don José as

a Spaniard (one of that race whose knives have ever been longer than their patience) a sergeant of dragoons, the son of a peasant, in love with a peasant girl, and at last goaded

¹⁰⁵See Mary Warner Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁶Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s–1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 211.

¹⁰⁷Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 161. As in all violent conflicts, the reasons the United States entered the Spanish-American war were many and complex, but they included “war fever” whipped up by yellow journalism and politicians, the hope that a wartime economy would force adoption of a silver standard (as opposed to the less inflationary gold standard), and a desire to open new markets to American businesses. See also Joseph A. Fry, “Phases of Empire: Late Nineteenth-Century United States Foreign Relations,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (New York: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 307–32 on American imperialism at the turn of the century.

¹⁰⁸Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 158–61.

to madness and murder by the devilish fascination of a gypsy cigarette maker. A man of the people, moved by the simple, violent passions of the people.¹⁰⁹

In this formulation, Don José becomes the everyman, and though described as Spanish (with the essentialized traits apparently everyone expected of Spaniards), the valorizing of a simple, honest soldier sounds very much like the sort of man valued in the American heartland. This representation of Don José went against the popular image of Spanish men in the United States at the time. They were often judged to be dangerously violent in this era of high Southern European immigration and political tensions with Spain. Hackett drew on this racialized stereotype by writing that Spaniards were known for “knives [that] have ever been longer than their patience,” but then abandoned it to ground Don José firmly in a peasant farming class that was then (and still is) praised as the ultimate symbol of proud American masculinity.¹¹⁰ The performance tradition reflected in the Tams-Witmark scores supports this masculinized Don José by downplaying his devotion to his mother, emphasizing his physicality during the fight with Escamillo, and focusing the audience’s attention on the conflict between he and Carmen during the final scene.

Hackett went on to commend de Lucia for portraying Don José in the way

Bizet imagined him. Not a dainty picture for my lady’s boudoir, but the laying bare of a throbbing, suffering human heart; the pitiful story of a simple dragoon turned deserter, wrecking the life of the gentle girl who loved him, leaving his heart-broken mother to die alone of shame until he, a brigand and an outlaw, touches the depth of despair, and slays her who was the cause of all.¹¹¹

Here, Hackett managed to blame Carmen, “the cause of all,” while turning Don José’s violence from a brutal response out of jealousy into an act of heroic proportions against a woman who had caused him to betray the essential traits of honorable masculinity. In depicting Don José’s

¹⁰⁹Karleton Hackett, “Fernando de Lucia,” *Music* 5, no. 6 (April 1894): 766.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

response to Carmen as one of a “throbbing, suffering human heart,” rather than merely the superficial reactions of a “dainty picture for my lady’s boudoir,” Hackett reinforced the stereotype that men experienced deep, meaningful emotions, while women were merely hysterical. By the later nineteenth century, “true men,” in the virile, physical image of role models like Theodore Roosevelt, were valued for their passionate natures, which coexisted uneasily with the demands of an overly-pampered, mannered existence in modern America.¹¹² Only through Carmen’s death could Don José control the wild but destructive passion she excited in him, transforming himself from an unthinking creature who abandoned his core beliefs back into a man.

In an 1899 review of an Ellis Opera Company performance with Alberto Alvarez as Don José, the writer gave a blow-by-blow account of the last scene of the opera that reveled in Don José’s violence and dominance over Carmen.

Nothing more thrilling, more excitingly realistic and more effective can easily be imagined than was his jealous rage when, discovering the perfidy of Carmen and taunted to fury by her heartlessness, he seizes her, and forcing her to her knees, holds her there while he gives vent to his reproaches and his hate. It caused the immense audience to hold its breath in suspense.¹¹³

This horrifying review celebrated Carmen’s weakness and the return of Don José’s power, even though he was driven by hatred and anger. In the late 1890s, the United States was in the grip of a patriotic fervor that pitted the plucky upstart newly-minted imperialist nation against (as the press described them) the uncivilized people of color in Cuba, the Caribbean, and the

¹¹²E. Anthony Rotundo, “Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770–1920,” *Journal of Social History* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 26–27. Jacqueline M. Moore argues that at the end of the nineteenth century, though the use of violence to regulate the social order and as a marker for manly virility was still acceptable among some in the working-class, in the middle and upper classes, young men were increasingly encouraged to control their aggressive impulses in the name of civility. “‘Them’s Fighting Words’: Violence, Masculinity, and the Texas Cowboy in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 1 (January 2014): 28–55.

¹¹³“Alvarez Wins New Honors,” *Herald* (Boston), 9 February 1899 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Philippines. At the same time the review was published, Filipinas were portrayed in the American press and in photographic images as dangerously savage women who needed to be controlled by the more civilized American (read white) race.¹¹⁴ It is not hard to read the quotation above as a parable of the United States taking charge, controlling, and defeating an unworthy, femininized foreign nation. Thus, even though it was Don José who was ruled so deeply by emotion that he was driven to murder, it was Carmen who was the barbarian.

Carmen and Race

Carmen was an Other in a land filled with them. As a nation heavily, but uneasily, reliant on immigrants for population growth and energy, Carmen's ethnic status was problematic on several levels. Although even today racial politics in the United States often devolves into a discourse that divides humanity into a stark dichotomy between white or black, an elaborate hierarchy existed in the nineteenth century which identified individuals or immigrant groups as "more white" or "less white." Those who fell on the "less white" side of this continuum were often subjected to restrictions and cultural treatment that resembled (although did not approach in severity) the discourses about, and treatment of, African Americans. The tendency to create racialized associations between immorality or savagery and non-Anglo-Saxons is deeply rooted in American society, going back, according to Ronald Takaki, to colonial times and British cultural tropes.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Nerissa S. Balce, "The Filipina's Breast: Savagery, Docility, and the Erotics of the American Empire," *Social Text* 87, vol. 24, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 92

¹¹⁵See Ronald Takaki, "The Tempest in the Wilderness: The Racialization of Savagery," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 892–912.

During the nineteenth century, European and American racial theories relied on biological as well as cultural markers.¹¹⁶ Yet there were significant differences in the way such racist conceptions functioned on either side of the Atlantic. In the context of Third-Republic France, *Carmen* was an Other within a neighboring European nation. Her Gypsy identity married easily with conceptions about Jews and the Orient.¹¹⁷

Immigration historian George J. Sanchez draws on Benedict Anderson's ideas when he points out that "the imagined community of the 'United States' has centered around two powerful constructions—one of a 'nation of immigrants' and the other of a 'society wracked with a white-black tension.'"¹¹⁸ *Carmen* activated both of these images. Critics thought opera was a foreign import, something of immigrants, not of America.¹¹⁹ With its Spanish subject and Gypsy heroine, *Carmen* remained strongly marked by its national and cultural differences throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The spectacle of the work was closely tied with its exotic locale. An advertisement for the Ditson piano-vocal score in the *Macon Telegraph*, for instance, describes the work as "A Spanish Opera, introducing Spanish Gypsies, Soldiers, Spanish Dous [sic] a Torreador and Spanish Contraband Traders. We are in contact with the bizarre ways and incidents of the Spanish Peninsula, and the music is quite in consonance with the prevailing brightness."¹²⁰ The writer could hardly find one more noun to modify with "Spanish."

¹¹⁶See Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002): 154–73 for an overview of the historical investigation into constructions of race in the United States.

¹¹⁷See McClary, *Carmen*.

¹¹⁸George J. Sanchez, "Race, Nation, and Culture in Recent Immigration Studies," in *Race and Immigration*, 20.

¹¹⁹See Chapter 1 for information on the persistent belief that opera was a European art form.

¹²⁰"Ad for Five Famous Operas," *Macon Telegraph* (GA), 16 February 1881.

Americans, particularly around the 1890s, separated immigrants into two groups. “Old” immigrants from Northern Europe had begun to arrive to the U. S. in the 1820s. Most of these so-called racial groups had already coalesced into a “white” set that exercised Anglo-Saxon superiority and privilege by the end of the nineteenth century. “New” immigrants from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe (including Spain) started emigrating in huge numbers around 1890, and many Americans saw them as very poor and uneducated troublemakers.¹²¹ By the late 1890s, *Carmen*’s Spanish subject was even more provocative because of the ongoing political and violent struggles between the United States and Spain. These new immigrants, who included people who looked like Carmen and were stereotyped as she was in reviews, were seen as essentially foreign, separate not only from native-born Americans, but also from earlier waves of immigrants. They were as historian Matthew Frye Jacobson explains it, “both white *and* racially distinct from other whites” and pushed into a category of Other that placed them on the black side of the continuum from white to black.¹²² Moreover, class was another important ingredient in the subjective construction of race in the United States. As a lower-class factory worker, Carmen fulfilled the demographic characteristics that many Americans used to identify someone as “not white” at this time.¹²³

Carmen’s identity as a Gypsy placed her and the opera squarely within the racial stereotypes of the time. Reviews depicted Carmen as uncontrollable, impulsive, morally defective, and beastlike. I have picked out just a few quotations that are representative of the

¹²¹Howard Markel and Alexandra Minna Stern, “The Foreignness of Germs: The Persistent Association of Immigrants and Disease in American Society,” in *Race and Immigration*, 205.

¹²²Matthew Frye Jacobson, “Becoming a Caucasian: Vicissitudes of Whiteness in American Politics and Culture,” in *Race and Immigration*, 135–37. See also David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2007) for a discussion rooted in labor history on strategies used by new immigrants to assimilate into U.S. society by positioning themselves as “white” instead of “black.”

¹²³Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies,” 159.

way in which critics described her character: “Her temper as of a wild cat;”¹²⁴ “Carmen is a human tigress, fierce, fearless, knowing no law but to obey her own impulses and wholly without moral sense.”¹²⁵ “there was the wild and unrestrained passion of a tropical nature;”¹²⁶ she was a “tigerish lover;”¹²⁷ “the hearty, animal nature of the cigar girl was impressed upon this audience.”¹²⁸ This sort of language portrayed Carmen as a fundamentally immoral animal. Along with the highly sexualized descriptions quoted earlier in this chapter, she was framed in ways that were typical of representations of African Americans in the United States.¹²⁹

Even *Carmen*’s music was “blackened.” In a 1922 *Musical Quarterly* article, Gilbert Elliot, Jr. argued that “the negro originated little and assimilated, transformed and transmitted much, and...it [African-American music] is really a treasure house of things which the negro has absorbed, colored, if you will, and passed on. Among the elements to be discovered in it, a rhythmical reference to things Spanish, particularly to Spanish folk-dances.”¹³⁰ Critic Henry Krehbiel asserted, “the Habanera...is indubitably of African origin.”¹³¹ In fact, Bizet based his “Habanera” on “El Arreglito” by Sebastián Yradier, who used the music he heard while traveling

¹²⁴“Dramatic and Musical,” *The North American* (Philadelphia), 24 December 1885.

¹²⁵“The Hess Opera Company,” *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, 24 July 1889.

¹²⁶Louis C. Elson, “Calvé’s Carmen,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 28 February 1894.

¹²⁷“Grand Opera that is Grand,” *Buffalo Express*, 25 April 1890.

¹²⁸Elson, “Calvé’s Carmen.”

¹²⁹For information on images of African Americans and racial politics in the Progressive Era see David W. Southern, *The Progressive Era and Race: Reaction and Reform, 1900–1917* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2005). For an example of “blacking” Filipinos in the wake of the annexation of the Philippines see Balce, “The Filipina’s Breast.” There is a long history of comparing women to cats. For a consideration of this association, which is often used to suggest images of, as the author explains it, “duplicité, temptation, eroticism and evil,” see Terri Waddell, “The Female/Feline Morph: Myth, Media, Sex and the Bestial,” in *Cultural Expressions of Evil and Wickedness: Wrath, Sex, Crime*, ed. Terrie Waddell (New York: Rodopi, 2003), 75–96.

¹³⁰Gilbert Elliott, Jr., “Our Musical Kinship with the Spaniards,” *Musical Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (July 1922): 414.

¹³¹Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1914), 68.

in South America as the basis for this and other songs.¹³² Krehbiel, a progressive for his time in racial matters, used the supposedly African roots of the “Habanera” to expose the black origins of familiar European (or white) music. Elliott, on the other hand, believed that African Americans appropriated music from other places (in this case Spain) to create a musical style he thought was a debasement of more “pure” traditions. Either way, both Krehbiel and Elliott saw *Carmen*’s exoticized music not as a product of the Middle East or the Orient, as it was often portrayed in Europe, but rather as African in some fundamental way.

Theodore Drury chose *Carmen* as the first opera his company produced in 1900. His performances of *Carmen* with an all-black cast merely cemented the already powerful connection between blackness and the work. At the time, neither the black nor the white press commented upon the larger social implications of a black woman playing Carmen, except to celebrate that the performance marked the first time a complete grand opera had been produced by an African American opera troupe. The subject matter of the work was less important than the very fact that the company was presenting opera at all. The following year, the company produced *Il Guarany* by Gomes. The *Musical Courier* critic opined that Desseria Plato’s “‘Ave Maria,’ with chorus in Act I was well done. Her Carmen last year undoubtedly fitted her better than the high born aristocrat pictured in the daughter of old Don Antonio, but she looked well.”¹³³ This writer seemed more comfortable with a black woman portraying a lower-class Gypsy than the upper-

¹³²McClary, *Carmen*, 74–75. McClary argues that Spanish music was rather disreputable in France at this time. Ralph P. Locke, however, counters that, in fact, Spanish music was widely accepted in French culture and that the sheet music version of “El Arreglito” was dedicated to Zélia Trebelli, an important opera singer. Locke, “Spanish Local Color in Bizet’s *Carmen*,” 353–55. Trebelli later sang the role of Carmen in London during the 1878–79 season and it became a favorite pastime of London critics to compare her interpretation with that of Minnie Hauk.

¹³³“Theodore Drury,” *American Citizen* (Kansas City, MO), 31 May 1901 reprint of article in *Musical Courier* 42, no. 20 (15 May 1901): 11.

class Portuguese noblewoman in *Il Guarany*. *Carmen* became the opera Drury returned to the most throughout his career. Between 1900 and 1932 he produced *Carmen* at least ten times.¹³⁴

***Carmen*, Realism, and the Progressive Era**

Emma Calvé sang *Carmen* for the first time with the Metropolitan Opera in 1893, and her iconic performance of the role became the gold standard by which all other singers who attempted it were judged, dethroning America's first *Carmen*, Minnie Hauk. Calvé traveled to Spain to learn how to dance the flamenco and to meet the cigarette girls of the La Cortuja factory who had inspired Mérimée. Critics had once resisted what they saw as the realism of the opera. Now they embraced it and connected Calvé's performance with Eleonora Duse and modern ideas of naturalism and the subconscious.

It so seemed to me that there was a note of modernity in the interpretation, as if this girl not only felt deeper, loved more, suffered more severely than her companions, but also that she knew more. She secured more psychologic [sic] than the wench who loved bull-fighters and soldiers indiscriminately. She was a 'Carmen' of the tag end of the century; and just here is where I think the Duse influence is felt...in suggesting those half-tints of feeling, of giving a mental hint which is like a flash of lightning in an unknown, trackless region.¹³⁵

Calvé fueled this interpretation with her well-known admiration for Duse and her insistence that her performance was deeply authentic due to her careful research, Mediterranean family background, and *Carmen*-like volatile personality.¹³⁶

Once Minnie Hauk's acting was praised for its realism, but Calvé's interpretation went further than Hauk's. George Bernard Shaw, dismayed, described *Carmen*'s death scene as

¹³⁴The article, "Race Must be Made Opera-Conscious," *Afro-American* (Baltimore, MD), 2 July 1932 reported that as of 1932, Drury had produced *Carmen* 10 times, *Aida* 10 times, *Faust* 3 times, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, 3 times, *I Pagliacci* 1 time and *Il Guarany* 1 time.

¹³⁵"The Theatres," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 December 1893.

¹³⁶Huebner, "La Princesse Paysanne du Midi," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer*, 371–73.

horribly real...to see Calvé's Carmen changing from a live creature, with properly coordinated movements, into a reeling, staggering, flopping, disorganized thing, and finally tumble down a mere heap of carrion, is to get much the same sensation as might be given by the reality of a brutal murder.¹³⁷

The success of Calvé's performance and her boasting of her extensive research for the role, encouraged other sopranos to do the same. Zélie de Lussan and Minnie Hauk (perhaps in a bid to maintain her position as the ultimate Carmen) also publicized trips to Seville and meetings with the cigarette girls at La Cortuja.¹³⁸ Critics accepted and even praised the move towards realism in the performance of *Carmen*, in part because, by the 1890s, realism and naturalism had begun to dominate American literature. Novelists such as William Dean Howells, Henry James, and Mark Twain placed their characters in contemporary situations, often with a political agenda in mind.¹³⁹ At the opera, *verismo* works by Puccini and Mascagni dominated new repertoire produced by the leading opera companies. David Belasco (whose work inspired Puccini to compose *Madama Butterfly* and *La fanciulla del West*) revolutionized American melodrama by applying contemporary ideas about realism and psychology to the sentimental stories popular in that genre.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Belasco's innovative staging, particularly his dramatic stage lighting, contributed to a new realism in set design and scenery in American theaters. In the early

¹³⁷George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London*, vol. III, 227–28 as quoted in Rutherford, *Prima Donna and Opera*, 269.

¹³⁸Zélie de Lussan, "In the Days of My Youth," *M. A. P.* (1 February 1902) found in HTC Clippings 14: Zélie de Lussan, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. In her article, "Carmen, On and Off the Stage," in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 37 no. 1 (January 1894): 1–10, Hauk described her visit to Seville and its cigarette factory. After noting that "imagination and reality are usually in conflict with one another" (p. 4) she ended the article by declaring proudly "I recognized the fact that I had not misinterpreted the part of Carmen." (p. 10)

¹³⁹Ruth C. Crocker, "Cultural and Intellectual Life in the Gilded Age," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (New York: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 213.

¹⁴⁰Ralph J. Poole, "Indecent Ingénues: David Belasco's and Mae West's Delegitimization and Refashioning of American Melodrama," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 48, no. 4 (2004): 513.

twentieth century only the Metropolitan Opera House and Belasco's own theater contained lighting technology capable of producing the realistic effects for which Belasco was famous.¹⁴¹

By the 1890s, the depiction of female sexuality became more common on respectable stages, even as Progressive-Era reformers sought to regulate obscenity and suppress red-light districts through high-profile crusades against "white slavery," gambling, and drinking. For instance, Anna Held, a French singer/dancer/actress who dominated the vaudeville stage at the turn of the century, performed only in relatively expensive entertainments designed for the middle class, but was famous for her skin-tight costumes and sexy stage act. Historian David Monod uses Held's extremely successful career to argue against the most common interpretation of sexuality in the Progressive Era. Usually framed by historians as a time period dominated by straight-laced reformers whose campaigns against vices such as prostitution, drinking, and gambling drove the middle class into African-American jazz clubs and lower-class burlesques for illicit enjoyment, Monod claims that by the late 1890s, Americans had found a way of "separating themselves from the commerce of her [Held's] sexuality. In order to do this they needed mechanisms for containing and neutralizing the effects of her erotic assault on their morals."¹⁴² In other words, rather than assuming that they might be led astray by sexually explicit and immoral displays on the stage simply by watching them, American audiences and critics began to detach their own morality and private actions from what they saw at the theater. Juch's initial interpretation of *Carmen*, designed to protect her audience from *Carmen*'s bad influence, represented the older way of thinking about sexuality on stage. By the turn of the century, many audience members thought they could watch immorality without becoming immoral themselves.

¹⁴¹Helen M. Greenwald, "Realism on the Opera Stage: Belasco, Puccini, and the California Sunset," in *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini*, ed. Mark A. Radice (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1998), 293.

¹⁴²David Monod, "The Eyes of Anna Held," 297.

Although this process was just beginning at this time, for there were still many critics who found Held “vulgar” and “gross,” some writers (and presumably the audiences at her packed performances) found her fascinating without feeling threatened by her.¹⁴³

This new understanding of sexuality on the stage is also reflected in critical reactions to Carmen after 1900. Writers seemed less concerned with the long-term moral implications of going to see the work. *Verismo* operas with heroines whose actions and appearance on stage were even more shocking than Carmen’s also served to make her seem less scandalous in comparison. J. Alfred Johnstone opened a 1910 article entitled “The Morals of Carmen and Marguerite” by stating,

condemnation of the nakedly realistic and squalid atmosphere of Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* or Strauss’ *Salome* may justly be as unqualified as it is severe. But it does not, for a moment, imply disapproval of the presentation of unconventional morals on the operatic stage. That would be prudish and ill-judged.¹⁴⁴

Despite this introduction, Johnstone was not praising Strauss or Puccini, whose music he considered too unrefined and disturbing to offset sufficiently the “squalid, tawdry, gloomy, pessimistic...and gruesomely realistic” subjects. Instead he praised *Carmen* because though it “is not an idealistic work” the “delicate charms of its musical treatment” overcame the moral ambiguities in the plot and in Carmen’s character. Bizet’s music, once seen as too picturesque and sexually explicit, was now, according to Johnstone, genteel and provided a “dainty sparkle and bright beauty.”¹⁴⁵ Johnstone insisted,

the step back from *Madama Butterfly* or *Salome* to *Carmen* is a long one; but it is a step in the right direction. It is a step out of sickness into health, from fevered gloom to

¹⁴³Ibid., 296–97.

¹⁴⁴J. Alfred Johnstone, “The Morals of Carmen and Marguerite,” *Musical Standard* 34, no. 881 (19 November 1910): 320.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

freshness, from weird melancholy to sparkling brightness, from gruesome sentiment to animated life.¹⁴⁶

He still thought Carmen was a “hoydenish virago” and she found “her proper end at the point of a dagger” but conceded that this was not important to the audience any more since the singers depicted her as captivatingly romantic and besides, “what matter all her naughty ways?”¹⁴⁷ Johnstone’s essentially conservative views of the newer *verismo* operas such as *Salome*, highlights his attitude toward *Carmen* which would have seemed progressive in the 1880s. Developments in popular culture, literature, and science since *Carmen*’s premiere gave critics ways to understand the work more sympathetically.

Critics now celebrated singers who took a gritty but still romantic and sexy approach to Carmen. For instance, writers rewarded singers, such as Miss le Baron with the Castle Square Company, for the way in which “she threw herself into the character, with its insinuating intention, its brazen assurance, the wayward defiance that enhances the dangerous fascination of this siren.”¹⁴⁸ To be sure critics agreed that Carmen deserved death, but talk of her evil nature and comparisons to animals slowly slipped away. While reviewers had always insisted that Carmen should be beautiful and alluring, they often seemed uneasy when singers fulfilled their desires. Now authors were more comfortable with a Carmen who was openly sexual and brought an earthy realism to the role. L. D. in Atlanta reported to his readers after a performance of *Carmen* by the Savage Grand Opera Company in Los Angeles that “Marion Ivell

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 321.

¹⁴⁸“*Carmen*” unknown newspaper in Portland, OR, 13 March 1908 found in HTC Clippings 13: *Carmen*, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

was the Carmen, and a typical one, the graceful, vivacious, alluring girl of the people, living to love and laugh and love again.”¹⁴⁹

Some singers, too, seemed to approach the work differently. Minnie Hauk, Emma Juch, and other nineteenth-century Carmens were sometimes criticized for wearing costumes that made Carmen look too upper class. She was supposed to be a cigarette girl, not a noble lady critics sniffed. Beautiful and expensive costumes were a major source of pride (and publicity) for nineteenth-century singers and few would have consented to wear rags on stage. Led by Emma Calvé, who insisted on dressing in a more realistic costume right down to her worn shoes, singers began to dress similarly to the women in the chorus.¹⁵⁰ A New York critic approved of Olive Fremstad’s Carmen for this reason because she “properly makes no distinction between herself and the rest of the crowd of tobacco workers.”¹⁵¹ Calvé and Fremstad were willing to put the needs of the production ahead of their own vanity, which, in turn, made them all the more famous. It is not all that different from the acclaim beautiful actresses receive today for purposely making themselves ugly for a role.

Just as critics came to accept Carmen and became more at ease with her sexual nature after 1900, Michaela became less interesting to some writers. While many critics still maintained that her beauty and innocence made her the best character in the opera, others began to call the part “pale.”¹⁵² She just could not compete with the far more compelling Carmen. In 1908, Geraldine Farrar sang Michaela with the Metropolitan Opera. Her legendary acting talents saved

¹⁴⁹L. D., “*Othello* and *Carmen* win Highest Praise,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 19 January 1905.

¹⁵⁰For a description of Calvé’s approach to the physical and costuming requirements of the role see Huebner, “*La princesse paysanne du Midi*,” 370–71.

¹⁵¹“Carmen at the Opera First Time this Season,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1906.

¹⁵²“A Remarkable *Carmen* at the Manhattan,” *New York Times*, 15 December 1906.

the role for one New York critic because she “made the character seem something more than a lay figure; and that is something of an achievement.”¹⁵³

Carmen’s nationwide circulation probably explains the abundance of other vehicles in which the story or character of Carmen was exploited. Actresses, dancers, and popular singers found their careers made or forever changed when they performed some iteration of *Carmen*. Just one year after the opera’s premiere, two different burlesques of *Carmen* began to tour the country.

Actresses Olga Nethersole and Rosabel Morrison took successful productions of a spoken play of *Carmen* on the road for years beginning in the mid-1890s. Morrison’s version featured a film of a Mexican bullfight. A dancer called Carmencita performed Spanish-style numbers as part of vaudeville shows, in her own solo productions, and was the first woman to appear in an Edison short film in 1894. There were also multiple silent movie versions of the work. Carmencita and the burlesques followed traveling opera productions around the country. A city that welcomed an operatic treatment of *Carmen* often received a visit soon after from a more popular-style version, as impresarios took advantage of a locality’s familiarity with *Carmen* for their own shows.

Carmen was one of the most performed operas in America despite (or more likely because of) the controversial nature of the plot and especially the title character. Critics thought she was evil and deserved her fate as punishment for leading a good man astray. Although after 1900, the so-called realism of the work became more accepted, as realism in literature, the theater, and opera came into fashion, writers did not change their opinion on Carmen’s

¹⁵³“New Carmen Sings at Metropolitan,” *New York Times*, 4 December 1908. Marcia Gay sang Carmen in this production. Farrar would later sing the role of Carmen with the Metropolitan in 1914.

fundamental guilt. Nineteenth-century approaches to the opera, as represented in the scores in the Tams-Witmark/Wisconsin collection, reinforced this essentially negative view of Carmen's character by applying cuts and inventing stage actions that framed her as violent and separated her from the other women in the opera (even the gypsy characters). Don José, on the other hand, was rehabilitated by the end of the century and cast in as positive a light as possible.

The work was received in the United States as a foreign import with a main character that easily fit into prevailing discourses and concerns about race, immigration, and women's roles. The alluring and disturbing Gypsy was vilified by critics, but so popular across class and racial lines that she surfaced in sheet music, vaudeville, the dance hall, in plays, and on the silver screen. As an immigrant, racialized Other, struggling to assert herself against a hegemonic dominant culture, while at the same time changing those around her forever, Carmen was an operatic realization of the lived experience of many people who came to the United States in the late nineteenth century. At once feared and beloved, celebrated and censured, Carmen touched a nerve in America precisely because she was both familiar and exotic.

EPILOGUE

In May 1913, the Executive Committee on Popular Opera at the City Club in New York City announced, with great fanfare, that they had engaged the impresarios Milton and Sargent Aborn to manage a new opera troupe devoted to the performance of grand and comic opera at popular prices.¹ Otto Kahn, the most important patron of the Metropolitan Opera and the President of the City Club, was a director and major financial backer of the new company, which promised to produce opera primarily in English translation at New York's large Century Theater. Plans for the new Century Opera Company were ambitious—they would begin their forty-five-week season on 15 September 1913, charging 25 cents to \$2 per ticket offering six evening performances and two matinées every week. The repertoire was equally impressive and varied running from *Götterdämmerung* to *Tosca* to *Bohemian Girl*. Otto Kahn later explained that the Century was meant

to take a step in the direction of providing a place for popular music enjoyment differing from the Bowery variety, but there was no question of trying to impose 'uplifting,' or 'educational' influences upon a reluctant, indifferent or scoffing public. We believed...that there were a great many persons who would eagerly welcome the opportunity to hear the masterpieces of operatic art, at prices within their reach, and who would derive from it satisfaction, joy and inspiration. And we felt that opera—or, indeed, any form of art—should not be regarded and treated as a luxury.²

Kahn overtly distanced himself from the language of uplift that so many people evoked when discussing opera at popular prices or in English. Perhaps Kahn did this because he had not

¹"Incorporates for City Club Opera," *New York Times*, 10 May 1913; "Aborn Brothers for Century Opera," *New York Times*, 11 May 1913.

²Otto H. Kahn, "An Experiment in Popular Priced Opera," in *Our Economic and Other Problems: A Financier's Point of View*, ed. Otto H. Kahn (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920), 395.

forgotten the sting of Oscar Hammerstein I's challenge to the Metropolitan between 1906 and 1910 with his Manhattan Opera Company. Hammerstein had marketed his troupe as the socially and musically uplifting alternative to the snobbish and exclusive Metropolitan.

The Aborn brothers, who had been selected to manage the Century Company, had produced English-language opera for years. They ran multiple troupes that toured throughout the United States simultaneously, but they had rarely ventured into the expensive and unforgiving New York City market. Henry W. Savage was their biggest competitor, but the Aborn companies were generally not of the quality or of the scale of the Castle Square organizations. The Century Opera Company was the Aborns's chance to break into the upper echelons of opera management with the money and prestige of Kahn, the City Club, and the Metropolitan Opera behind them, as *The Washington Post* was quick to report on 18 May 1913.

The position now held by the Aborns is the most important operatic post in America—a noteworthy advance for two earnest impresarios, who only a few years ago were conducting with fluctuating success and with precarious financial backing summer comic opera companies in several cities of the East.³

Milton Aborn announced he would sail for Europe on 11 June to look for talent for the company, though he declared “we do not believe in the star system, and do not intend to observe it in the opera season at the Century.”⁴

Throughout the summer, the newspapers followed the progress of the new company, reporting on each important hire and other plans. Lois Elwell, the first singer engaged for the Century, defiantly explained she had studied in Europe for two years because “a European stamp” was necessary for an American singer to “get a chance at grand opera” in the U. S., but that she did not learn anything other than how to pronounce French and Italian. Although the

³Ralph Graves, “Prestige for Aborns as Opera Directors at Century Theater,” *Washington Post*, 18 May 1913.

⁴“Aborns at Century Theatre,” *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 15 May 1913.

plans were for the Century to produce each opera in English, followed by performances in the original language, Elwell said she preferred to perform in English because “if you can sing an opera in your own language it is far more easy to express yourself.”⁵

The scale of the Century Opera Company was larger than most English-language troupes, and it was unusual in producing the same repertoire in two languages, but otherwise much of what the public read about the company was familiar. There was the appeal to American patriotism and the old argument that English was best for singers and audiences to understand the operas. The managers denigrated the star system, and the cheap tickets were used as evidence that the company would democratize opera by allowing middle- and working-class opera lovers access to great works at a price they could afford.

Typical too, was what happened to the troupe in the fifteen short months of its existence. By January 1914, critics had complained so much about the terrible English translations the company used that the Aborns announced a \$50 prize to anyone who could deliver a good English libretto.⁶ According to the Aborns and some newspaper reports, the cheapest seats (those priced between .25 and \$1) were selling well, but the company was not earning enough revenue because few people bought tickets in the \$1.50 and \$2 sections (which took up half the house). A reporter for the *New York Tribune* pointed out that perhaps the “gentlemen” of the City Club did not realize that for most people \$2 was not “cheap opera.”⁷ Once the Metropolitan Opera opened for the season, attendance in the expensive sections at the Century dropped off even more. A writer for *Outlook* observed that “the well-to-do majority

⁵“Our Singers Don’t Need European Aid,” *New York Times*, 29 June 1913.

⁶S. S., “Translated Opera,” *Life* 63, no. 1629 (8 January 1914): 81.

⁷“Opera in English Ends First Year,” *New York Tribune*, 19 April 1914.

preferred to pay more for worse seats at the big Metropolitan Opera House. They wanted to scan society and hear the stars all in one evening.”⁸

The season was trimmed as losses mounted. They abandoned the unusual plan to offer the same operas in multiple languages in favor of English-language productions. The *Tribune* reported that the Century stayed with English because the company did not have the vocal resources to produce opera bilingually. Critics disagreed whether the English-language or foreign-language performances were more popular. In the *Tribune*, the writer stated that “when...Monday nights were devoted to opera in the original language, the house was as full as and often times fuller than it was at the English performances.”⁹ In a retrospective look at the troupe, Henry Krehbiel agreed explaining “the nights on which the operas were given in their original tongues were the best patronized—a circumstance explained largely, if not wholly, by the greater fondness for opera of the city’s citizens of foreign birth than that of the native.”¹⁰ But a magazine article called “Democratizing Opera” asserted that the company decided to limit their singing to English because attendance at the English-language performances was so much better than at the foreign-language productions.¹¹ The title of the article, “Democratizing Opera” might betray the author’s bias towards opera in English. As Savage, Thurber, Kellogg, and others had argued for years, this writer also framed the Century’s cheaper English-language productions as the best hope for the “cultivation and development of a popular appreciation of

⁸“English Opera in America,” *Outlook* 109 (3 March 1915): 500.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Henry Edward Krehbiel, *More Chapters of Opera: Being Historical and Critical Observations and Records Concerning the Lyric Drama in New York from 1980 to 1918* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1919), 182.

¹¹“Democratizing Opera: What the Century Opera Company Has Done and Expects to Do,” *The Independent* [issue and volume obscured in database] (27 April 1914): 171.

good music in this country.”¹² The Century’s second season opened in the fall of 1914, but after anemic sales in New York, the company went on the road to Chicago where it collapsed on 2 January 1915.¹³ Otto Kahn blamed the economic strain of World War I for the troupe’s failure.

It seemed that the Century Opera Company had succumbed to the same pressures that had overwhelmed so many other overly ambitious English-language companies such as the American Opera Company or the Emma Juch English Opera Company. It was too big, the season was too long, and the Aborns charged too much for the fragile English-language market. Except...it was all a lie. Adolph Tomars and his wife Semion, once a singer in the Century Opera Company, left behind the real reason that Kahn and the City Club founded the troupe in the papers for a biography they researched, but never wrote, on Oscar Hammerstein I. In 1910, Kahn and the Board of Directors at the Metropolitan paid Hammerstein \$1.2 million to close his Manhattan Opera Company (which Kahn saw as an existential threat to the Metropolitan) and to leave New York with the promise not to produce opera in that city or Philadelphia for ten years. In 1913, however, Hammerstein was back in New York after having lost a fortune on a new opera house in London. He announced he was going to build a new theater and produce opera in English translation. According to a front-page article in the *New York Times*, Hammerstein went to the Metropolitan’s board in December 1912 and asked them for a modification in his contract, assuring them “that his project would not interfere with their productions.” The *Times* quoted Hammerstein insisting

the new institution would not conflict with them...I intend nothing but the production of opera in English for the masses—for all, the rich and the lowly. The Metropolitan Opera Company charges from \$1.50 to \$6. I intend to charge from 25 cents to \$3. They

¹²Ibid.

¹³“Century Opera to Close,” *New York Times*, 25 December 1914.

are on Broadway; I am on the east side. They have the society of wealth and fashion; I want mine to be the society of brawn and music.¹⁴

The Metropolitan refused Hammerstein's request and sued him after Hammerstein refused to give up his plan. The Metropolitan was apparently worried enough by Hammerstein's argument that an English-language company would not violate his agreement with them, that in May 1913, the City Club (which was made up of supporters of the Metropolitan) announced plans for the Century Company. This move allowed the Met to argue in court that they, too, had a popularly priced English-language company and thus Hammerstein was in direct competition with them. The day after the City Club announced their plans, Hammerstein struck back pointing out that the Club's action came right after he decided to offer grand opera in English, and ridiculing their stated objectives as well as their budget which he said was hopelessly inadequate.

The day after my announcement the City Club told the press and public that New York had been shamefully if not criminally neglected by the absence of opera at \$2...The Board of Directors of the City Club calculates that the total cost of giving grand opera will be but \$13,000 a week, inclusive of a rental of \$2,000 for the Century Theatre. It is infamous for people to say that this theatre is called the Century because it is a century out of the way and a century behind the times.¹⁵

After a long battle, the appellate court ruled unanimously in favor of the Metropolitan Opera on 17 April 1914 and barred Hammerstein from producing opera in New York.¹⁶ In a final gesture of defiance, Hammerstein staged one night of opera at the Lexington Opera House on 21 August 1914 and then gave up his fight.¹⁷

¹⁴"Hammerstein Loses in Fight for Opera," *New York Times*, 7 December 1913.

¹⁵"Hammerstein Rails at City Club Opera," *New York Times*, 5 May 1913.

¹⁶"Uphold Opera Ban on Hammerstein," *New York Times*, 18 April 1914.

¹⁷"Grand Opera Acts for the East Side," *New York Times*, 22, August 1914.

Semion Tomars alleges that as soon as the Metropolitan won the lawsuit and Kahn and the Century's board had recouped their initial investment, they purposely sabotaged the company by slashing the troupe's budget, forcing the Aborns to lay off singers and to cut rehearsal time. Without financial support and hampered artistically by fewer rehearsals and smaller casts, the company folded during a tour of Chicago. Tomars charges in the notes preserved at the New York Public Library that the Century's popularly priced English-language opera was successful in New York, so the board sent the company to Chicago where they could disband the troupe away from the prying eyes of the New York press. Tomars writes "why did the Met send the Century Opera Company to Chicago? And cutting 20% of the co. personel [sic]? They could have done that in NY? The voice from the wilderness still cried [sic] out-loud, in New York they could not do it. While making money!"¹⁸

Tomars's claim that the Century Opera Company made money in New York is hard to substantiate. W. J. Henderson reported that, though the company claimed the cheap seats were occupied, he had seen nearly empty houses.¹⁹ Upon the announcement that the company would fold, Richard Aldrich praised Kahn "and the other public-spirited music lovers associated with him" but sadly concluded that "it seems to be clear, now, that the New York public, and apparently also the Chicago public, does not number enough people who are willing to go to performances of the grade offered by the Century Opera Company, and to pay for their entertainment."²⁰ Critics are not necessarily a reliable guide in determining the size of audiences since they often disagreed with each other, and, of course, could not attend every performance. Sometimes to suit their own agendas they exaggerated or undercounted an audience. We have

¹⁸Semion Tomars, Handwritten Document, Adolph S. Tomars Collection, Oscar Hammerstein I Research Papers, Box 1, JPB 03-8, Music Division, New York Public Library

¹⁹W. J. Henderson, "Cold Facts about the Century Opera Company," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 January 1915.

²⁰Richard Aldrich, "General News and Notes of the Music World," *New York Times*, 3 January 1915.

only to look at the disagreement over the audiences for the Century's English-language productions to see an example of this phenomenon. Without the financial records, it is impossible to verify Tomars's story, but she was a member of the company, and, presumably, had at least some inside knowledge of the troupe's finances and the motivations of its founders. Moreover, the timing of the company's rise and fall, the fact that the Metropolitan had never expressed an interest in English-language opera before, and their vested interest in making sure Hammerstein followed their agreement, all tend to substantiate Tomars's claim.²¹ For their part, Kahn and the Metropolitan always denied that the Century Opera Company and Hammerstein's lawsuit were related. Kahn wrote in April 1915 that

the idea of using the Century Theatre as the home of opera at popular prices had long been in the minds of some of my colleagues on the Board of the Metropolitan Opera and myself. When, with the cooperation and upon the public-spirited initiative of the City Club, we carried this idea into effect, it was not a move of strategy, of defense or defiance—as was and probably still is believed by some uncharitably disposed diagnosticians of motives—but solely an attempt, influenced by no extraneous considerations, to serve a worthy cause. It was in the spirit of bringing the joy and solace derivable from art closer to the masses of the people, nearer to their reach and their means, that we undertook this venture, and in the hope that we might be able to add something of value, however modest, to the civic assets of New York.²²

The Century Opera Company was the last and only substantial venture the Metropolitan made into English-language and cheap opera. English-language opera had fallen on hard times. The arguments in favor of the practice had become little more than a cynical cover to ensure that the Metropolitan would not have to contend with another challenge from Oscar Hammerstein I. The affair also shows that the cultural connotations of English-language and foreign-language opera had become so different that Hammerstein thought he could argue they were two completely different art forms and that his proposed company therefore would neither

²¹The Metropolitan English Grand Opera Company jointly produced by Henry Savage and Maurice Grau in 1900 was a private undertaking that merely rented the Metropolitan Opera House.

²²Otto H. Kahn, "An Experiment in Popular Priced Opera," 404.

threaten the Metropolitan artistically nor financially. His position could be dismissed as no more than a questionable legal tactic from a man who was desperate to return home, except that the Met's directors actually took it seriously enough to establish their own English-language troupe.

The Century Opera Company was the final manifestation of the nineteenth-century English-language troupe. While English-language opera did not entirely disappear after World War I, it never again attained the position from which it could challenge the primacy of foreign-language opera, or represent a viable alternative as opera for the middle class. I have demonstrated in this dissertation that opera played an important role in the process of class and identity formation during the end of the long nineteenth century. After the Civil War, Americans increasingly organized themselves into groups that shared similar economic, geographic, and educational circumstances, but they remained strictly segregated along racial lines. While other historians (principally Lawrence Levine and Sven Beckert) have focused on the ways that the most powerful families on the East Coast used foreign-language opera to help define the American bourgeoisie (to use Beckert's term), I have framed English-language opera as a cultural product that initially served a comparable function for portions of the middle class.

For the urban white middle class that made up the bulk of the audience of grand opera sung in English translation, opera performed in this manner was a potentially uplifting entertainment that carried neither the stigma of the snobbishness associated with the wealthiest opera patrons, nor the clearly European connections of lyrics sung in a foreign language and casts made up of celebrity singers from overseas. The most successful English-language impresarios, Emma Abbott and Henry W. Savage, capitalized on middle-class suspicions of the wealthy elite by positioning their troupes' performances as an entertaining American musical products suitable for a genteel, but still down-to-earth, audience. Their arguments echoed and expanded upon discussions in the press that related middle-class values, musical uplift, American

patriotism, and the primacy of the English tongue in the United States, with English-language opera.

African Americans, however, had different conceptions about art, culture, and class than the white majority. These were forced upon them by their segregated and oppressed position in American society. Opera in English, therefore, carried different connotations within the black community. Many blacks valued opera because it embodied the uplifting qualities of Western art music. Some of the African Americans who attended performances by the Theodore Drury Opera Company (and concerts by black classical musicians) were no doubt drawn to the music's reputation for sophistication and refinement, the accomplished performers, and a chance to prove their own gentility, education, and financial success. Unlike white members of the middle class, who felt secure in their American citizenship, many blacks believed they had to prove to the dominant culture that they deserved the full benefits of American society. Blacks who wrote about English-language opera did not refer to patriotism but instead concentrated on the social, moral, and cultural benefits of opera and art music. African American class identification was also different from that of white audience members of English-language opera. Most African Americans did not aspire to the middle class because they knew that the professional positions and resulting financial means that allowed whites to claim that class designation were largely closed to blacks. Rather African Americans sought entrance into the colored aristocracy; a class whose members identified themselves through education, public performances of gentility, and exemplary dress, language, and behavior, not by economic success or job title.

Throughout this dissertation, I have contrasted English-language opera with foreign-language opera, particularly the Metropolitan Opera Company, whose audience was made up of two intertwined but still identifiable groups—those for whom opera itself was a passion, and those for whom *going* to the opera was a passion. Opera took its place as a high art among the

educated elite in this period, capable of both moral and cultural uplift, as well as intellectually challenging the discerning listener. Equally important to the composition of the foreign-language opera audience, however, was the upper class, who saw opera attendance as a chance to enact their own public statements of wealth and sophistication. Being seen at the opera in an expensive box wearing the latest fashions confirmed for these patrons that they belonged to the top of the American social hierarchy. These men and women sought to emulate the lifestyle of the British aristocracy that they admired and, in many cases, contributed their wealth to, through intermarriage with the leading, but impoverished, dynasties in the United Kingdom.

English-language opera in America failed to establish itself as a lasting performance practice in part because its middle-class audience did not share the essential conservatism of the educated elite or the upper class. The middle class was not interested in the unchanging qualities of the operatic canon, which appealed to the intellectual and aesthetic interests of the Metropolitan's most ardent opera lovers. Instead, they came to prefer the excitement of original works performed by established as well as new stars. Neither did many in the middle class value the social implications of foreign-language opera attendance that were so important to many of the wealthiest patrons of the Metropolitan.

By 1910, the middle class was fascinated with musical comedies and new comic operas by American and even European composers, rather than English-language grand opera. Henry W. Savage's phenomenal success with a 1907 Broadway production of *The Merry Widow* by Franz Lehár ushered in operetta's Silver Age. The *Merry Widow's* triumph also showed Savage where the future lay in popular musical entertainment in America. Within just a few years, he had abandoned all his efforts to produce opera in English and switched his attention to the Broadway stage and later to silent films through his affiliation with the Famous Players Film Company. Savage was not alone. The energy, expertise, and business savvy of the network of

people who produced English-language opera provided the nucleus of the network that eventually shaped both the Broadway musical and early silent films. Performers such as William T. Carleton, De Wolf Hopper, Fay Templeton, and William Pruette started their careers in English-language comic or grand opera but ended them on Broadway or in the movies.²³ A handful of opera singers, such as Zélie de Lussan or Alice Nielsen, moved between English-language and foreign-language opera.²⁴ Few other performers were able to make this transition, however. Many women, for instance Emma Juch or Marie Tavy, simply ended their careers as English-language opera fell out of fashion. It was difficult for an aging woman to get a job on Broadway or, even more so, in the unforgiving world of film. Men, on the other hand, could maintain longer careers and some of them went from leading roles in opera to featured roles in musical comedies, and then ended their professional lives in small film roles. English-language opera did not so much die in the United States as transform itself. Always following the same audience, the network that delighted the middle class in productions by the Emma Abbott or Castle Square Opera Companies, still thrilled them on Broadway and on the silver screen.

²³Carleton had by far the longest career of the performers mentioned in this list. He debuted in America as a baritone with the Clara Louise Kellogg English Opera Company in the early 1870s, managed his own comic-opera company through most of the 1880s and 1890s, sang in vaudeville, musical comedies, and acted in plays on Broadway in the early twentieth century and, by his death in 1922, was appearing in films. See Kristen M. Turner, "The Toreador Goes To Hollywood: Networks of Production in American Popular Entertainment, 1873–1922" (paper presented, North American Conference on 19th-Century Music, Fort Worth, TX, 12 July 2013). De Wolf Hopper and Fay Templeton both began their careers singing European comic operas in English translation in the 1880s, but by the turn of the century were much better known as Broadway performers. William Pruette started his career singing with Emma Abbott and ended it on Broadway.

²⁴Zélie de Lussan sang English-language opera with such companies as the Boston Ideals but also appeared with foreign-language troupes including the Metropolitan. Nielsen was unusually flexible and performed English-language opera with her own company and the Bostonians, foreign-language opera with the Metropolitan and the San Carlo Companies, and also appeared in plays on Broadway.

APPENDIX 1: DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Abbott, Emma (1850–1891) American-born soprano who studied in the U. S. and Europe, before beginning her career in London. After refusing to sing Violetta with Her Majesty’s Italian Opera Company in Great Britain, she returned to America in 1876. She and her husband (Eugene Wetherell d. 1889) ran the Emma Abbott English Grand Opera Company from 1878 until her sudden death in 1891. She was one of the most financially successful English-language opera singers in the United States, although critics were decidedly mixed as to the quality of her voice.

Antrim, Minna Thomas (1861–1950) Antrim was a writer and poet, best known for her advice books for young men and women.

Calvé, Emma (1858–1942) A French soprano who became one of the first international opera stars. She frequently sang at the Metropolitan and other great opera houses in Europe. She was best known for her *Carmen*.

Carleton, William T. (1859–1922) Born in England, the baritone traveled to the U. S. for the first time in 1873 to sing with the English-language Clara Louise Kellogg Grand Opera Company. In 1881, he left grand opera performance for good saying that grand opera was dying and that the American public preferred comic opera. He managed his own opera company off and on for the next eleven years. In the late nineteenth century, he turned to vaudeville and later plays and musical plays. He appeared in his first silent film in 1914, and appeared in approximately 40 movies before his death.

Crinkel, Nym (1835–1903) Andrew Wheeler (who wrote under at least two different *noms de plume*: Nym Crinkel and J. P. M., as well as in his own name) was a prolific journalist, playwright, drama critic, and novelist. He wrote for most of the major New York newspapers before his death in 1903.

Curtis, George William (1824–1892) was a writer, editor, and orator. He was part of the network around Ralph Waldo Emerson as a young man. While he wrote about 40 books, published with the *New York Tribune*, and was the associate editor of *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine*, his longest association was with *Harper’s New Monthly* where he was the editor and the author of the “Easy Chair” columns.

Damrosch, Walter (1862–1950) The son of conductor Leopold Damrosch, and brother to conductor and educator Frank Damrosch, Walter was a composer and conductor. He had a long association with the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Symphony Orchestra (founded by his father in 1878 and merged in 1928 with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra). In 1927, he became the musical advisor to NBC and hosted a series of televised “Music Appreciation Hour” programs aimed at children.

Finck, Henry T. (1854–1926) Finck was an important New York City music critic and advocate for Wagner and German music. He wrote for the *Nation* (later the *Evening Post*) for 43 years until his retirement in 1924. Many of his reviews were co-written with or written entirely by his wife Abbie Cushman Finck (d. 1940) whom he married in 1890.

Fiske, Harrison Grey (1861–1942) A theatrical editor, critic, and manager-producer, Fiske became editor of the *Dramatic Mirror* in 1879 at only 18 years old, and bought it in 1888. After his wife, Mary Augusta Davey (known as Mrs. Fiske on stage), became a star in 1894, Fiske became his wife's manager and producer. He and his wife were a central part of the fight against the domination of the Theatrical Syndicate. He sold the *Dramatic Mirror* in 1911 to produce *kismet*, which was a huge success but by 1914 Fiske declared bankruptcy and for the next 18 years his finances were precarious as he produced plays for his wife and others. He retired after Mrs. Fiske's death in 1932.

Fitzgerald, Riter (d. 1911) The art, music, and literary critic for the *Philadelphia Evening Item*. Riter also dabbled in painting, writing fiction, and composing parlor songs.

Gilman, Lawrence (1878–1939) was an important American music critic who became managing editor of *Harper's Weekly* in 1911 and later became the music, drama and literary critic for the *North American Review*. From 1923 until 1939 he was the *New York Tribune's* music critic.

Grau, Maurice (1849-1907) Born in Brno, Grau came to New York at age 5 and started his career as an operatic impresario and artists' manager in 1872. He managed the Clara Kellogg English Opera Company in 1873 and was part of a successful partnership with Henry A. Abbey and John b. Schoeffel between 1891 and 1896 producing opera at the Metropolitan Opera House. He took over sole management of the company until 1903.

Karl, Tom (d. 1916) A tenor who specialized in comic opera, he had a 40-year career, and was one of the managers of the Bostonians.

Hackett, Karleton (1870–1935) A critic and vocal pedagogue, Hackett graduated from Harvard and trained as a bass in Europe before moving to Chicago in 1893. He wrote for *Music* early in his career and later became the music critic for the *Chicago Evening Post* from 1907 until 1932. He was also the head of the vocal department in the School of Music at Northwestern University from 1896 to 1911 and President of the American Conservatory of Music from 1932 until his death.

Hauk, Minnie (1851–1929) An American-born, European-trained mezzo-soprano, she was the first important *Carmen* to take on the role after the opera's premiere. She had a transatlantic career and was known for her realistic acting style. She retired in 1895 and lived in Switzerland until her death.

Haweis, Hugh Reginald (1839–1901) was an English Anglican cleric, writer, and speaker whose ideas about music were extremely influential in Victorian Britain. His most important monograph was *Music and Morals* (1871). Haweis's work was well known in the United States, and he undertook at least one American lecture tour.

Hess, Clarence D. (fl. 1870s–1900s) was an opera impresario who primarily produced English-language performances. He managed Clara Louise Kellogg 1873–1875, then began his own opera company which he sold to Emma Abbott in 1878. He continued to produce comic and grand opera throughout his career including many summers in Milwaukee, WI

Kellogg, Clara Louise (1842–1916) The first American-born soprano to achieve a solid European reputation. In the United States she headlined several companies, including a successful English-language company from 1873 to 1876 for which she made several translations. She retired in 1887 after her marriage to Karl Strakosch.

Krehbiel, Henry (1854–1923) One of America's most influential music critics, he worked for the *New York Tribune* from 1880 until 1923 and also wrote many books about music including one on African-American music and the first English translation of Thayer's *Life of Ludwig van Beethoven*.

Mapleson, Col. James Henry (1830–1901) An important transatlantic opera impresario, Mapleson's Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company performed and traveled throughout the United States and Great Britain between 1862 and 1889. His company provided the first performing opportunity for many American-born singers, and was also a major competitor with the Metropolitan. One motivation for the Metropolitan's change from Italian to German-language performance in the 1884–1885 season was to avoid direct competition with Mapleson.

Marchesi, Mathilde (1821–1913) a German mezzo-soprano who became one of Europe's most important vocal teachers. After teaching in Cologne and Vienna, she moved to Paris in 1881 and taught there until her death. Her most famous pupils include Nellie Melba, Emma Calvé, and Emma Eames.

Mathews, John Lathrop (1874–1916) one of W. S. B. Mathew's three sons, John was a journalist and later expert on deep waterways writing three books about rivers and water conservation.

Mathews, William Smythe Babcock (1837–1912) An important music critic and pedagogue based for most of his career in Chicago, Mathews was born in New Hampshire but moved South in 1850 to take up a teaching position in Macon, GA. After the Civil War he moved to Chicago and began a career as a critic ultimately founding his own journal *Music* in 1891 designed to replace specialized journals such as *Dwight's* and *Brainard's*. He was also involved in planning the music for the Chicago's World's Fair in 1893. A prolific writer, many of his articles and books were designed to provide guidance to amateur musicians and music lovers in women's music clubs, and he advocated for better and more standardized music education in the United States.

Murio-Celli, Adelina (1844–1900) A composer and the most important voice teacher in New York City in the late nineteenth century. She was raised in Paris and studied at the Conservatoire and sang in Europe, Mexico, and the United States before retiring in 1870 to teach. She married a French diplomat named Ravin d'Elpeux soon after her retirement and moved to New York with him in 1880. Her grand house facing Gramercy Park became an important center of vocal study in New York. Her most famous pupils included Emma Juch, Eleanore Broadfoot, and Marie Engle (the last two women sang with the Metropolitan). The twenty-six parlor songs she composed, and that her husband published, were often dedicated to her pupils or famous friends such as Adelina Patti or Clara Louise Kellogg.

Murray, John K. (J. K.) (fl. 1880s to 1920s) was a baritone who sang English-language opera during his entire career. Born in Liverpool, he came to the U. S. in 1869 and made his debut in

1884. He was a member of many English-language companies specializing in both comic and grand opera including the Carleton Opera company and the Castle Square Opera Company often performing with his wife, soprano Clara Lane. He also founded several opera companies including the Murray-Lane Opera Company and the Boston Lyric Opera Company.

Neidlinger, W. H. (fl. 1890s and 1900s) A composer and pedagogue who wrote at least one book on vocal techniques as well as many songs.

Painter, Uriah (fl. 1880s–1900/1) Manager and Owner of the Lafayette Square Opera House. In 1897 he filed suit against his partner in the Lafayette Square, John Albaugh, and eventually seized control of the entire theater. He became very ill in late 1900 and died before 9 February 1901 when there is a letter about his estate in the Lafayette Square Opera House records following his death.

Plato, Desseria Broadley (d. 1907) probably born in New York City and studied at the National Conservatory at the same time as Harry Burleigh and Will Marion Cook in the 1890s. She sang Acuzena in Signor Farini's Grand Creole and Colored Opera Company production of *Il trovatore* in 1891 and substituted for Sissieretta Jones at the Colored American Day concert at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. She also sang with John Isham's Oriental American Company (a well-known black vaudeville troupe) which concluded its shows with "Forty Minutes of Grand and Comic Opera."

Pontius, W[illiam] H. (1844–1908) a composer who studied in Italy and the director of the Dubuque Vocal Institute.

Roze, Marie (1846–1926) French soprano who sang with Her Majesty's Italian Opera Company, and in English with the Strakosch-Hess company for the 1880–1881 season and with the Carl Rosa Company in the mid-1880s. She married Col. Mapleson's son with whom she had at least one child. After her retirement she taught voice in Paris.

Russell, Louis (1854–1925) An American organist, composer, and pedagogue who taught at the Metropolitan Schools of Music, and the Newark College of Music. He published several books on vocal pedagogy.

Savage, Henry W. (1859–1927) A successful real estate businessman, in 1894 Savage became entered the entertainment industry when he built the Castle Square Theater in Boston. In subsequent years he produced opera in English at popular prices along with other types of popular entertainment such as comic opera, plays, and musical plays. His production of *The Merry Widow* in 1907 touched off the Silver Age of Operetta in the United States. By 1915, he had become involved in the film industry through his association with the Famous Players Film Company.

Seidl, Anton (1850–1898) Born in Pest, Seidl became a naturalized American after moving to the country in 1885. Early in his career, he lived and studied with Richard Wagner at Beyreuth. In New York he conducted American premieres of many of Wagner's operas, and became one of the premiere orchestral conductors in New York. Working with Laura Langford, he conducted at Brighton Beach in the summers through the Seidl Society. He died suddenly in 1898, having become one of the most important and influential conductors in the United States.

Strakosch, Karl (1859–1916) A nephew to Max and Maurice Strakosch, he was also an impresario although not as successful as his uncles. He married Clara Louise Kellogg in 1887 after managing her last opera company.

Strakosch, Maurice (1925–18870 Born near Brno, Czech Republic he was part of one of the most important musical families in America. He was not only an impresario, but a composer and performer. Along with his younger brother, Max, and other members of the family was part of one of the most important families of impresarios in the United States. He moved to New York City in 1848 and organized a two-year tour of the United States with Adelina and Carlotta Patti. He married Amalia Patti in 1852. During his career he produced thousands of concerts and operas, working with every major impresario in the United States, as well as most important art-music performers in a transatlantic career in America and Europe.

Strakosch, Max (1835–1892) Along with his brother Maurice, an opera and concert manager and impresario. He came to the United States in 1853 and in 1855, joined his brother Maurice's business as an agent. When Maurice spent seven years in Europe (1861–1868) managing Adelina Patti's career, Max assumed leadership of the Strakosch business interests in the U. S., primarily managing Louis Moreau Gottschalk, and then a variety of opera companies including ventures with Clara Louise Kellogg and Max Maretzek. Even when Maurice was in America, Max managed a variety of entertainment companies such as opera, operetta, and concert companies.

Walker, Aida Overton (1880–1914) Walker performed in vaudeville troupes such as the Black Patti Troubadours, was in the original production of *In Dahomey*, and was the main choreographer and dancer in the Williams and Walker vaudeville shows. She was married to George Walker.

Weld, Arthur (1862–1914) A conductor, critic, and composer, he was primarily known for working with comic-opera and musical-comedy companies during his career. Born in Boston, he graduated from Harvard, studied in Germany, and then became a conductor in Boston and later Milwaukee and New York City. He also was Henry W. Savage's general musical director in the early 1910s.

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