THE IMPACT OF JULES MASSENET’S OPERAS IN MILAN, 1893–1903

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ABSTRACT

Matthew Martin Franke: The Impact of Jules Massenet’s Operas in Milan, 1893–1903

Under the direction of John L. Nádas

The reception of French opera in Italy in the late nineteenth century has received little scholarly
attention. This dissertation attempts to fill at least part of that gap through studying the reception of
three operas by Jules Massenet (1842–1912), the most internationally successful French composer of
the fin de siècle, in Milan, the capital of the Italian music publishing industry. Massenet’s Italian
reception demonstrates that opera’s relationship to Italian identity politics in the late nineteenth
century was far more complex than has been previously imagined.

Massenet’s operas, performed in Italian translation, occupied an ambiguous middle ground
in Italian identity politics. Italian critics described Massenet’s operas as purely French, as
contributing to Italian musical culture, and as inherently cosmopolitan works. Critics thus translated
Massenet’s operas into Italian culture, whether as role models for or foils to Italian musical
developments. Massenet also participated directly in Italian musical culture, visiting Milan frequently
to supervise productions of his operas and serving as a judge in an Italian competition for new
operas.

Music historians such as Jay Nicolaisen and Alexandra Wilson have long agreed that Italian
opera suffered an identity crisis in the late nineteenth century. Studies by Michele Girardi, Julian
Budden, and Alan Mallach have suggested that young Italian composers in this period struggled to
find a balance between the rival legacies of Giuseppe Verdi (their Italian heritage) and Richard
Wagner (imported German culture).
Without denying the importance of the aesthetic opposition between Italian and German music, this dissertation seeks to broaden and complicate this discourse by acknowledging French opera’s equally influential presence on the Italian musical stage. To meet this goal, I examine the reception of the three operas which were produced most often in Italy—Manon, Werther, and Thaïs—through the lenses of translation theory, of contemporary international relations, and the competition between the Ricordi and Sonzogno publishing houses. Massenet’s example shows the ways in which lines between French and Italian opera could be redrawn as needed to make room for alternative, cosmopolitan constructions of Italian musical and cultural identity.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout the dissertation, I use the Italian term fine secolo rather than the French fin de siècle.

The following abbreviations refer to select periodicals (see bibliography).

CM = Le cronache musicali illustrate, later Le cronache musicali: rivista illustrata or Cronache musicali e drammatiche

CP = Cosmorama, later Cosmorama pittorico

GMM = La gazzetta musicale di Milano

GDT = La gazzetta dei teatri

GTI = La gazzetta teatrale italiana

ILIT = L’illustrazione italiana

IP = L’illustrazione popolare

MA = Il mondo artistico

RTM = La rivista teatrale melodrammatica

SID = Il secolo illustrato della domenica
INTRODUCTION

I. FOREIGN OPERA IN ITALY AFTER 1860

Background

Opera has long played a central role in discourses of Italian identity. The composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901), who is generally considered the greatest Italian opera composer, has long been associated with Italian nationalism, even though his personal involvement in revolutionary activity is open to debate.¹ Similar rhetoric surrounds Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) “the greatest composer of Italian opera after Verdi,” whose last opera (Turandot) is considered the “end of the great tradition” of Italian opera.² Prevailing scholarly narratives suggest a linear stylistic progression leading directly from Rossini to Puccini.³

Alexandra Wilson’s prize-winning study The Puccini Problem has, however, begun to expose the cracks in this reductive, linear narrative. Puccini’s music baffled, frustrated, and disturbed his


³This narrative is reinforced by works such as William Weaver, The Golden Century of Italian Opera from Rossini to Puccini (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) and David Kimbell, Italian Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
early critics; only one of his operas (*Manon Lescaut*) met with unequivocal critical and commercial success, and several were outright failures (*Edgar, Madama Butterfly*). Yet even while Verdi was writing his last operas, the Italian press placed Puccini and Pietro Mascagni (1863–1945) in competition for the role of Verdi’s heir. Thus, Wilson writes, Puccini “was effectively shoehorned…into the role of national composer before he had a chance to prove himself or consolidate his style.” Consequently, Italian critics attacked Puccini’s operas for a variety of reasons, including their perceived lack of organic unity, elevation of melodrama to the role of art, overt sentimentality, and openness to foreign influence. In all these ways, the critics saw Puccini’s operas as inadequate representatives of contemporary concepts of *italianità* (Italian identity).

The need for opera to serve a nationalist agenda and the criticism of foreign influence are striking, as foreign opera played an increasingly important role in Italian culture in the decades following the unification of Italy (1859–1861). The early deaths of Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835) and Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) and the lack of new works from Saverio Mercadante (1795–1870) left Verdi and Errico Petrella (1813–1877) as the only remaining Italian composers of national stature still producing new operas in the 1850s and 1860s. In this context, Italian music publishers, lacking new works by Italian composers, actively promoted the works of foreign composers in

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Verdi’s only major rival in this period was Errico Petrella (1813–1877), who scored two major successes in the 1850s (*Mario Visconti*, 1854; *Jone*, 1858) and two in the following decade (*La contessa d’Amalfi*, 1864; *I promessi sposi*, 1869). “Petrella, Errico,” in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21462](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21462) (accessed December 10, 2010).

Following Verdi’s retirement from operatic composition after *Aida* (1871), few of his younger contemporaries created more than one nationally successful opera: Filippo Marchetti’s *Ray Blas* (1869), Carlos Gomes’ *Il Guarany* (1870), Stefano Gobatti’s *I giri* (1873), Arrigo Boito’s revised version of *Mefistofele* (1875), Amilcare Ponchielli’s *La gioconda* (1876) were the most successful new operas of the decade. The most comprehensive study of Italian opera in this period is Jay Nicolaisen, *Italian Opera in Transition, 1871–1893* (Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1980).
Italian translation. Between the 1850s and the 1880s, grand operas originally created for Paris, such as Giacomo Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* and Fromental Halévy’s *La Juive*, cemented their place in the Italian repertoire, as did Charles Gounod’s *Faust*, Ambroise Thomas’s *Mignon*, and Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*. In 1871, the first of Richard Wagner’s operas reached Italy: *Lohengrin*, which overshadowed all Wagner’s other works in Italy.\(^6\)

Despite the great amount of French opera to reach Italy, most modern accounts of Italian opera position Wagner as the chief aesthetic alternative to Verdi in fine secolo musical culture.\(^7\) This perspective, however, exists in a vacuum, having been formed without comparison to the reception of other foreign composers in Italy during the same period, which has not been studied at a comparable level of detail.\(^8\) While most scholars acknowledge that Wagner’s works did not become truly popular in Italy until the 1890s (performances of Wagner’s works aside from *Lohengrin*

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\(^{6}\)Ute Jung-Kaiser has identified 1217 performances of Wagner’s works in Italy between 1871 to 1895; of these, 861, or 71\%, were performances of *Lohengrin*. Ute Jung [Jung-Kaiser], *Die Rezeption der Kunst Richard Wagners in Italien* (Regenburg: Bosse, 1974), 185.

\(^{7}\)The foundational texts on Wagner’s Italian reception are Ute Jung [Ute Jung-Kaiser], *Die Rezeption der Kunst Richard Wagners in Italien*, supplemented by Giancarlo Rostirolla (ed.) *Wagner in Italia* (Turin: ERI, 1982), featuring essays by a variety of authors, including Agostino Ziino and Friedrich Lippmann.


\(^{8}\)The following is a comprehensive list of modern scholarship on the reception of French opera in Italy. For Bizet’s Italian reception, the chief sources are: Sergio Viglino, *La fortuna italiana della “Carmen” di Bizet (1879–1900)* (Turin: De Sono Associazione per la Musica, 2003); Hervé Lacombe, “La Réception de l’œuvre dramatique de Bizet en Italie,” *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome* 108 no. 1 (1996), 171–201.

remained rare in Italy until the early 1900s), no other composer aside from Verdi has received as much credit as a formative influence on the *giovane scuola.* Although it is almost a truism that other foreign composers’ works were performed more often than Wagner’s for many years, the longstanding scholarly interest in Wagner (as opposed to Meyerbeer and Gounod) can leave a false impression of Wagner’s popularity in terms of actual performances of his work. One example will have to suffice here: while Ute Jung has identified eight productions of Wagner’s works in all Milanese theaters from 1871 to 1895, a survey of the same theaters in that period reveals twenty-five productions of Meyerbeer’s operas and eleven apiece of Gounod’s *Faust* and Bizet’s *Carmen.*

Whatever Wagner’s aesthetic significance for Italian audiences and musicians (which was certainly great), the sheer weight of scholarship on his reception and influence in Italy has exaggerated his importance, while downplaying other composers whose works were performed more often and who equaled him in their influence on Italian composers.\(^9\)

\(^9\) I use *giovane scuola* (instead of *verismo*) here as a blanket term for the composers who rose to prominence in the late 1880s and early 1890s: Puccini, Mascagni, Umberto Giordano, Francesco Cilea, Alberto Franchetti, etc. While *giovane scuola* is a somewhat problematic term (the term is stretched to its limits when one considers the late works of Puccini and Giordano; Puccini, Franchetti, and Mascagni were individual enough that it is odd to consider them a school), it has the benefit of avoiding much of the controversy surrounding *verismo,* which has served variously (1) as a label for “realist” operas of all kinds (including works by Gustave Charpentier and Leoš Janáček); (2) as a generic label for operas by most Italian composers from the late 1880s through the 1910s; (3) as an aesthetic equivalent to the Italian *verismo* movement in literature; (4) and as a label for a particular kind of opera centered on love triangles among the South Italian poor. For a variety of modern perspectives on musical *verismo,* see Arman Schwartz, “Rough Music: *Tosca* and Verismo Reconsidered,” *19th-Century Music* 31 no. 3 (2008), 228–44; Andreas Giger, “Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60 no. 2 (2007), 271–316; Adriana Guarneri Corrazol, “Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation” (trans. R. Parker), *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5 (1993) 39–53; Matteo Sansone, “Verismo: From Literature to Opera” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1987); Stefano Scardovi, *L’opera dei bassifondi: il melodrama ‘plebéo’ nel verismo musicale italiano.* (Florence: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1994); Carlo Parmentola, “La giovane scuola,” in Guglielmo Barblan and Alberto Basso (eds.), *Storia dell’Opera* (Turin: UTET, 1977) Vol. I pt 2, 499–587: 499–503.

Massenet in Italy: an overview

By the time that Puccini was being criticized for writing music that revealed overt foreign influence, foreign opera had established roots in Italy. What, then, was the role of foreign opera within fine secolo Italy? If Italian music critics derided foreign influence in operas written by Italian composers, how then did they react to the performance of actual foreign operas? I propose to address this question by examining the reception of a foreign composer who staged no less than fourteen operas in Italy over a period of thirty-five years: Jules Massenet (1842–1912).

Massenet was easily the most successful French composer of his generation; there were approximately 1,600 performances of his operas in Paris during his lifetime. He enjoyed the singular honor of having operas play simultaneously at the Opéra and the Opéra Comique in a time when composers counted themselves lucky to gain a single hearing at either house.11 Massenet was also successful in Italy; over three hundred productions of his operas were mounted in Italy between 1878 and 1925 (almost forty of them in Milan) (see Appendices). His operas were heard by audiences throughout Europe, North America, and South America (see Table 1), and reached French colonial North Africa and Vietnam.12 Further, Massenet occupied a highly influential role in French musical culture, as professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire from 1878 to 1896: his students included Gustave Charpentier (1860–1956), Alfred Bruneau (1857–1934), Florent Schmitt (1870–1958), Xavier Leroux (1863–1919), and Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1847). 13

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11During the years 1893 to 1898 and 1905 to 1914, Massenet’s operas were performed at both the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique. Demar Irvine, Massenet: A Chronicle of His Life and Times (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), 316–17.

12Massenet’s operas reached many cities outside Western Europe and the Americas, including Algiers (Hérodiade, 1896; Cendrillon, 1900), Saigon (La Navarraise, 1900), Constantinople (Manon, 1900), and Tunis (Thaïs, 1902). See Alfred Loewenberg, Annals of Opera, 1597–1940 (3rd ed.) (London: J. Calder, 1978), 1094, 1108, 1174, 1178.

13For a list of Massenet’s most famous pupils at the Conservatoire, see Louis Schneider, Massenet: L’homme – Le musicien (Paris: Carteret, 1908), 42.
Table 1: Early Performances of Massenet’s Operas in Europe and the Americas, 1877–1928

* = world premiere. All other performances are local premieres.

languages: E = English, F = French, G = German, H = Hungarian, I = Italian, R = Russian

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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacchus</td>
<td>1909F</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>1912F</td>
<td>1912F</td>
<td>1913F</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Despite the frequent productions of Massenet’s operas in Italy, he barely figures in most accounts of Italian operatic culture in this period: although scholars such as Julian Budden, Michele Girardi, Mosco Carner, Andrew Davis, and Sylviane Falcinelli have acknowledged his influence on members of the giovane scuola (particularly Cilea, Puccini, and Giordano), only David Kimbell’s general survey of Italian opera grants Massenet parity with Wagner. To date, there is only one study on any aspect of Massenet’s reception in Milan: Giuseppe Montemagno’s short essay on the Italian reception of La Navarraise and Sapho.¹⁵ Yet Massenet and his music were clearly popular in Italy, as my case studies show: his operas usually received great applause from the paying public, regardless of the critics’ opinions, and the Milanese public treated him like a major celebrity. Further, the numerous productions of works such as Manon and Werther demonstrate that Massenet’s works were able to enter and remain in the Italian operatic repertory for years after their premieres (see Appendices 2 and 3). Massenet’s influence on Italian musicians was recognized in his own time by French and Italian authors alike: the critic Luigi Villanis spoke of “the undeniable influence that Massenet has exercised and nonetheless continues to exercise on the Franco-Italian giovane scuola,” while Eugène D’Harcourt wrote that contemporary Italian composers “imitate Massenet more than Verdi.”¹⁶


Although Massenet’s influence on Italian opera is generally acknowledged, his influence has never been linked to a detailed study of his Italian reception. This dissertation fills part of that gap by focusing on Massenet’s reception in Milan, the capital of the Italian music publishing industry, from 1893 to 1903. As it is impossible to address all the Milanese productions of Massenet’s operas in detail in this dissertation, I focus here on the Milanese premieres of the three Massenet operas which were produced most often in Italy: *Manon*, *Werther*, and *Thaïs*. Each of these operas encapsulates a crucial aspect of Massenet’s Italian reception.

What sets Massenet’s reception apart from that of other foreign composers is the extent of his engagement with Italian operatic culture. *Hérodiade* (1881), although premiered in French, was written with Italy in mind, and may well have been originally written to an Italian libretto; scholars generally agree, too, that *La Navarraise* was Massenet’s reaction to Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*.¹⁷

Alone among the French composers of his generation, Massenet traveled to Italy numerous times to supervise the local premieres of his operas (see Table 2).¹⁸ Further, Massenet eventually served on the jury of the fourth opera composition competition sponsored by the Italian publisher Sonzogno (see Chapter Three). From 1893 to 1912 in Milan, Massenet’s operas saw more productions than either Wagner’s or Puccini’s (see Chart 1). Massenet and his operas were a major presence in

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¹⁸The only other French composer of this period to visit Italy as regularly as Massenet was Camille Saint-Saëns, but he only seems to have supervised the premiere of two of his operas in Italy (*Henri VIII*, December 1895; *Phryné*, November 1896); the rest of his journeys (1857, 1879, 1891, 1892, 1904, 1905, 1906) were for pleasure or research. See Stephen Studd, *Saint-Saëns: A Critical Biography* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1995), 34, 125, 144, 161, 187,189, 235, 240, 243; James Harding, *Saint-Saëns and his Circle* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965), 176, 181; Jack Winsor Hansen, *The Sibyl Sanderson Story: Requiem for a Diva* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2005), 274–75; “Foreign Notes,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 37 no. 636 (1 Feb 1896), 101–103.

Milanese musical culture in a period which is traditionally viewed as being dominated by the *giovane scuola* (Puccini, Mascagni, and their contemporaries).

**Chart 1: Productions of Massenet’s, Wagner’s, and Puccini’s operas in Milan, 1893–1912**

For ease of reference, I have divided Massenet’s Italian reception into several loose periods (see Table 2). The *early period* centers on the first operas published in Italy by the Casa Ricordi; the reception and influence of these operas has received far more scholarly attention than any other.

While *Le Cid* is the first of Massenet’s operas to be promoted by the Casa Sonzogno, in many ways it represents a transition to the second period proper, the *Milanese period*, which is the chief focus of this dissertation. From 1893 to 1905, the Casa Sonzogno premiered nine of Massenet’s operas in

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20Almost all the sources cited in note 14 discuss the reception and influence of *Le Roi de Lahore* and *Hérodiade* (both published by Ricordi); only Montemagno addresses Massenet’s reception after 1882. This pattern owes much to the bias in favor of Ricordi in most histories of Italian music, and to Massenet’s own memoirs, in which the Italian premiere of *Le Roi de Lahore* receives its own chapter (XII), while Massenet’s numerous later trips to Italy are scattered (non-chronologically) across chapters XX, XXI, and XXIV. Massenet, *Mes souvenirs (1848–1912)* (Paris: Pierre Lafitte, 1912).
Italy, eight of them in Milan. Finally, the _late period_ marks a crucial shift away from Milan as a site for Massenet’s premieres. After Massenet’s death in 1912, the cycle of Italian premieres came to an abrupt halt. During Massenet’s lifetime, fourteen of his twenty-three operas reached Italy, and from 1878 to 1911, a new Massenet opera appeared, on average, every two-and-a-half years. The 1890s, however, saw the greatest influx of Massenet’s operas, with six new premieres in that decade alone, and a rapid spike in the productions of Massenet’s operas throughout Italy (see Chart 2). While Massenet’s greatest popularity occurred in the 1890s, his operas continued to be produced regularly throughout the 1910s.

**Table 2: Italian premieres of Massenet’s operas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>City: Theater</th>
<th>Italian Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1878: Feb 13*</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td><em>Le Roi de Lahore</em></td>
<td>Turin: Regio</td>
<td>Ricordi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882: Feb 23*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Hérodiade</em></td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889: Apr 7</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Le Cid</em></td>
<td>Rome: Costanzi</td>
<td>Sonzogno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893: Oct 19</td>
<td>Milanese</td>
<td><em>Manon</em></td>
<td>Milan: Carcano</td>
<td>Sonzogno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894: Dec 1*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Werther</em></td>
<td>Milan: Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894: Dec 15</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Le Portrait de Manon</em></td>
<td>Naples: Mercadante</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: Feb 6*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>La Navarraise</em></td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: Apr 14*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sapho</em></td>
<td>Milan: Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899: Dec 28*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Cendrillon</em></td>
<td>Milan: Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902: Nov 25*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Grisélidis</em></td>
<td>Milan: Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903: Oct 17*</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Thaïs</em></td>
<td>Milan: Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905: Oct 18</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame</em></td>
<td>Milan: Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: Dec 19*</td>
<td>Late</td>
<td><em>Ariane</em></td>
<td>Turin: Regio</td>
<td>Sonzogno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911: Nov 28</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Thérèse</em></td>
<td>Naples: Bellini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the large number of Massenet’s operas to reach Italy, a comprehensive study of their reception would present an overwhelming amount of work. Consequently, I focus here on the reception of three Massenet operas ( _Manon, Werther,_ and _Thaïs_ ) in a single city, Milan. Thus I only refer in passing to the reception of other operas— _Le Cid, Sapho,_ and _Grisélidis_ —that were decent if...

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not sensational successes (only *Le portrait de Manon* was a relative failure). *La Navarraise* and *Cendrillon* were anomalies: *La Navarraise* was withdrawn after a single performance, only to be restaged successfully in later years; *Cendrillon* achieved an astonishing thirty performances in its first production, but did not remain in the repertoire (see Appendix 5).

**Chart 2: Average Yearly Productions of Massenet's Operas throughout Italy, 1878–1925**

My criteria for selecting *Manon*, *Werther*, and *Thaïs* as the center of this study are as follows.

As the Milanese period saw Massenet’s greatest popularity (in terms of productions of his works) in Italy and Milan, I have decided to focus on operas that reached Italy in that time (thus excluding *Le Roi de Labore, Hérodiade, Le Cid, Ariane*, and *Thérèse*). From these, I chose works that established themselves in the Italian repertory (at least twenty-five productions in Italy between 1878 and 1925), that were internationally successful in countries aside from Italy and France, and which (ideally) were the occasion for one of Massenet’s visits to Milan. *Werther* and *Thaïs* fit these parameters exactly. *Manon*, as Massenet’s most popular opera worldwide, cannot be ignored; even though the composer

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22See Appendices 2–5.
did not attend the Italian premiere, he did attend a production the following year (see Chapter Two).

*Thaïs* was, however, the last premiere that Massenet attended in Milan, and thus is a richer site for study than the reception of *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*. Therefore, the three operas studied here represent the highlights of Massenet’s Italian reception.

**II. CONTEXTS FOR MASSENET’S ITALIAN RECEPTION**

Massenet’s reception in Milan was part of a broader cycle of exchange between French and Italian musical centers. This cycle of exchange provides historical context both for Massenet’s reception as a French composer in *fine secolo* Italy and for the new emphasis on cultural nationalism in Italian music criticism. Here, we will trace Italy’s changing borders throughout the nineteenth century, explore relationships between French and Italian operatic institutions and cycles of operatic exchange, and analyze the publishers’ rivalry whose competition fueled the wholesale importation of French opera to Italy.

**Italy in the Nineteenth Century: Geography and Culture**

Although nineteenth-century France conformed quite closely to its modern borders, “Italy” remained an idea rather than a political reality for much of this period. The Italian peninsula was a scattered collection of independent states for most of the nineteenth century, until eventually unifying in the second half of the century. For all the rhetoric about how Verdi (and later Puccini) embodied Italian art and culture, the concept of Italy remained fragile even after Italy was unified.

“Internals” had little sense of national culture before 1860. Historian Enrico Dal Lago has noted, “…before 1860, Italians were accustomed to think about themselves as Piedmontese, Lombards, Tuscans, etc…their affiliation to different political entities influenced every aspect of
their daily life.” After the chaos of the Napoleonic wars had ended, the borders stayed relatively stable until the wars of independence (the Risorgimento). Much of the north was held, either directly or as a protectorate, by the Austrian Empire (later renamed Austria-Hungary); the northwest belonged to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, whose capital was at Turin. Much of central Italy belonged directly to the Pope, while southern Italy and Sicily constituted the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which was ruled from Naples.

Italy only became a unified nation-state between 1859 and 1870. The Second War of Independence (1859) saw the Austrians expelled from all of northern Italy except for Venetia; the independent northern states were absorbed by the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, which soon styled itself the Kingdom of Italy. This feat was largely accomplished through French military aid against Austria. Shortly afterward, Giuseppe Garibaldi’s independent revolutionaries overran southern Italy, overthrowing the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; the southern provinces soon joined the Kingdom of Italy. In 1866, Italy joined in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 on the Prussian side, gaining Venetia despite a series of defeats. Rome remained an independent city administered by the papal government and protected by French troops until 1870. The Italian occupation of the city after the withdrawal of the French garrison gave the Kingdom of Italy a new capital, and opened a political rift with the Papacy, which refused to recognize the legitimacy of unified Italy until 1929.

Even after unification, Italy remained a fractured state. Massimo d’Azeglio, a Piedmontese author and politician who played an important role in the Risorgimento, summed up the new Italian state’s dilemma: “…unfortunately Italy has been made but without making Italians.”

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24Lucy Riall, Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation-State (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2009), 31, 35.

25The quotation is commonly given as “Fatta l’Italia, bisogna fare g’italiani,” which is a misattribution. See Emanuele Senici, “Verdi’s ‘Falstaff’ at Italy’s Fin de Siècle,” The Musical Quarterly 85 no. 2 (2001) 274–310: 303. The original may be
could speak “proper” Italian: instead most spoke one of the “mutually unintelligible languages of…Lombardy, the Veneto, Sicily, Naples, and Liguria.”

There was extensive unrest in the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for years following unification. The division between the northern and southern provinces grew greater over time, leading many to question (even today) if Italy was indeed a unified nation. Regions with substantial Italian populations, such as the Trentino and Istria, remained under Austrian control until after World War I, and some fourteen million immigrants left Italy between 1876 and 1915, creating diasporic communities abroad, especially in the United States and Argentina.

The eminent historian of Italian culture R.J.B. Bosworth had these facts in mind when he asserted: “For those who would investigate Italy’s place in the world since the Risorgimento, the most basic datum must be that the words ‘Italy’ and ‘Italian’ do not have a single or consistent meaning.” In this context, our focus on Massenet’s reception in a single city—Milan—makes it easier to place his reception in its political and social context.

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29Bosworth, 5.
Exchanges between French and Italian musical cultures

Massenet’s visits to Italy were part of a cycle of exchange between French and Italian musical centers. Broadly put, the exchange flowed from Italy to France for much of the nineteenth century, with the most talented Italian composers seeking employment in Paris. This trend gradually stopped after the unification of Italy, and began to reverse itself, with French composers (such as Massenet) actively traveling to Italy to promote their work. Here, we will explore the long history of musical and cultural exchanges which made possible Massenet’s engagement with Italian culture.

For much of the nineteenth century, French musical culture was firmly centered on the capital city of Paris, which attracted the most talented musicians from across Europe. In this period Paris represented the French musical mainstream, embodied in the Conservatoire where the best musicians were trained, and the theaters such as the Opéra and Opéra Comique, both supported by government subsidies.

Italian musical culture, while dominated by opera and its institutions, lacked a single cultural center equivalent to Paris. Although it is common today to consider the Teatro alla Scala in Milan to be Italy’s preeminent opera house, for much of the nineteenth century, the Teatro San Carlo in Naples and the Teatro La Fenice in Venice were equally important. Rome was also a major center for opera in the first and last thirds of the nineteenth century, growing in importance after it became the capital of unified Italy. Florence and Bologna, finally, were crucial centers for importing operas.

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31 At the same time, regionalist movements, particularly in the Midi, gained strength throughout the nineteenth century. For a musical perspective, see Katharine Ellis, “Mireille’s Homecoming? Gounod, Mistral, and the Midi,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65 no. 2 (2012) 463–509.
by Meyerbeer and Wagner, respectively.  

As the century continued, however, Milan came to assume greater importance, as it was the center of the music publishing industry. 

Music students traveled between France and the Italian states for most of the nineteenth century. Starting in 1803, French composers regularly visited Italy on Prix de Rome scholarships granted by the French government. Some of the most famous French musicians to have spent formative years in Italy included Hector Berlioz (1830), Charles-François Gounod (1839), Georges Bizet (1857), Jules Massenet (1863), Claude Debussy (1884) and Gustave Charpentier (1887). Similarly, young Italian composers visited Paris as students, especially in the latter half of the century. Of these, Arrigo Boito (1862), Alfredo Catalani (1872), and Ruggiero Leoncavallo (1882) are probably the most famous.

Italian émigrés played a major role in Parisian opera from the 1790s to the 1860s, reflecting Paris’s role as an international center of musical culture (see Table 3). Both Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842) and Gaspare Spontini (1774–1851) sought to make permanent careers in Paris, writing no less than seventeen and eight operas apiece; one of these, Spontini’s Fernand Cortez, is often thought to be the first grand opera.  

Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816) and Saverio Mercadante (1795–1870) also visited Paris, each staging one opera there before eventually returning to Italy; Vincenzo Bellini

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33 Milan’s economic prominence was obvious to contemporary observers. See D’Harcourt, La musique actuelle en Italie, 37: “Milan est la véritable capitale musicale de l’Italie. C’est là que se traitent toutes les affaires du commerce de la musique…”

Table 3: A selective list of operas premiered in Paris by Italian composers, 1791–1867

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>Luigi Cherubini</td>
<td>Lodoïska</td>
<td>Feydeau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Luigi Cherubini</td>
<td>Médée</td>
<td>Feydeau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Giovanni Paisiello</td>
<td>Proserpine</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Gaspare Spontini</td>
<td>La vestale</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809 (rev. 1817)</td>
<td>Gaspare Spontini</td>
<td>Fernand Cortez</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Saverio Mercadante</td>
<td>Les noces de Gamache</td>
<td>Odéon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini</td>
<td>Il viaggio a Rheims</td>
<td>Théâtre Italien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Gaspare Spontini</td>
<td>Olimpie</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini</td>
<td>Le siège de Corinthe</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini</td>
<td>Moïse et Pharaon</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini</td>
<td>Le comte Ory</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini</td>
<td>Guillaume Tell</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Luigi Cherubini</td>
<td>Ali Baba, on Les quarante voleurs</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Vincenzo Bellini</td>
<td>I puritani</td>
<td>Théâtre Italien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Gaetano Donizetti</td>
<td>Les martyrs</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Gaetano Donizetti</td>
<td>La fille du régiment</td>
<td>Opéra Comique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>Gaetano Donizetti</td>
<td>Don Pasquale</td>
<td>Théâtre Italien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>Gaetano Donizetti</td>
<td>Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Giuseppe Verdi</td>
<td>Jérusalem</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Giuseppe Verdi</td>
<td>Les vêpres siciliennes</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Giuseppe Verdi</td>
<td>Don Carlos</td>
<td>Opéra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1801–1835) only wrote one work for Paris, I Puritani, before his early death outside Paris.

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868), on the other hand, moved to Paris at the climax of his international career. After adapting several of his Italian operas for new, French librettos (Moïse et Pharaon was based on Mosè in Egitto, for example), Rossini began writing new operas in French, culminating in Guillaume Tell; he spent much of his retirement in Paris. Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) wrote works for the three major Parisian theaters, staging works at the Théâtre Italien (1835, 1843), Opéra Comique (1840), and Opéra (1843). Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) focused most of his attention on the Opéra; he adapted I Lombardi alla prima crociata into Jérusalem (1847), and wrote two original dramas for Paris (Les vêpres siciliennes, 1855; Don Carlos, 1867). In addition, Verdi revised Macbeth for

35This list omits many works by Cherubini and Spontini, and does not show the local Parisian premieres of operas already premiered elsewhere. It does, however, list French operas which were based on earlier Italian works, such as Verdi’s Jérusalem, Donizetti’s Les martyrs, etc.

its Paris premiere (Théâtre Lyrique, 1865) and traveled to Paris to supervise the French premieres of
his later operas at the Opéra (Aïda, 1876; Otello and Falstaff, 1894).37

In contrast to Italian composers’ regular engagement with Parisian operatic culture, French
composers rarely ventured south of the Alps after their student years, and writing an opera in a
foreign language was seldom a worthwhile career move for most French composers. Most of the
French composers to write Italian operas did so shortly after winning the Prix de Rome; this is true
of Ferdinand Hérold (1792–1833), Victor Massé (1822–1884), and Georges Bizet (Jules Massenet
also attempted an Italian opera at this stage of his career). Another possibility was to write Italian
operas for the Théâtre Italien in Paris; the only well-known French composer to follow this route
was Fromental Halévy (1799–1862).38 There are also few parallels for Charles Gounod’s 1862 trip to
Italy to supervise the Italian premiere of Faust until we come to Massenet’s first Italian trip some
sixteen years later.39 Massenet’s numerous visits to Italy for professional purposes at the height of his
career remain unparalleled.

This situation changed with the appearance of a unified Italian nation-state and France’s
defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Following the unification of Italy, and increasingly after the

Gartioux, La réception de Verdi en France: Anthologie de la presse 1845–1894 (Weinsberg, Germany: Musik-Edition Lucie
Galland, 2001).

38Hérold won the Prix in 1812 and wrote La gioventù di Enrico quinto in 1814 (premiered at the Teatro Fondo, Naples,
1815); Massé won the Prix in 1844 and wrote La favorita e la schiava around 1845; Bizet won the Prix in 1857, and wrote
Don Priscopio in 1859; Massenet won the Prix in 1863 and sketched Valeria in 1865, but apparently abandoned it. The New
Grove states that Massenet’s score is lost, but Demar Irvine cites the manuscript in his biography of Massenet, giving the
impression that the score consists of sketches only. Irvine, Massenet, 37, 320; Winton Dean, Bizet (3rd ed.) (London:
detailed study of Bizet’s Don Priscopio, see Hervé Lacombe, “Don Priscopio de Georges Bizet: un opéra italien par un

Note that I do not include Giacomo Meyerbeer in this list of French composers to interact with Italian music,
despite his prominence in French operatic culture after 1831, as labeling him in this way would discount both his Jewish
heritage and German birth. Indeed, Italian critics generally considered Meyerbeer a German composer and not a French
one. Marco Capra, “La Casa Editrice Sonzogno tra giornalismo e impresariato,” in Morini, Ostali, and Ostali, Casa

39See note 18.
acquisition of Rome, few Italian composers wrote operas for Paris. Even Verdi, for the first time in his career, premiered operas outside Italy and France (see Table 4). Although many Italian composers of the generations following Verdi continued to stage their works in France, Paris no longer seems to have been an option for a world premiere.

Table 4: Foreign world premieres by Italian composers following the unification of Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Giuseppe Verdi</td>
<td>La forza del destino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Trieste (Austria)</td>
<td>Filippo Marchetti</td>
<td>Romeo e Giulietta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>G. Verdi</td>
<td>Don Carlos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Federico Ricci</td>
<td>Une folie à Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>G. Verdi</td>
<td>Aida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>F. Ricci</td>
<td>La docteur Rose, ou la dogaresse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>Antonio Smareglia</td>
<td>Il vassallo di Szigeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>Giacomo Orefice</td>
<td>Il gladiatore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>Ruggiero Leoncavallo</td>
<td>Der Roland von Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Monte Carlo (Monaco)</td>
<td>Pietro Mascagni</td>
<td>Amica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Giacomo Puccini</td>
<td>La fanciulla del west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Buenos Ayres</td>
<td>P. Mascagni</td>
<td>Isabeau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>R. Leoncavallo</td>
<td>Zingari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>R. Leoncavallo</td>
<td>Are You There?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Umberto Giordano</td>
<td>Madame Sans-Gêne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Monte Carlo</td>
<td>G. Puccini</td>
<td>La rondine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>G. Puccini</td>
<td>Il trittico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Massenet and his Italian publishers

During the Milanese period, Massenet’s operas were promoted by two rival music publishers, Ricordi and Sonzogno (see Table 2). At this time, the power of independent impresarios was fading, and government support for opera was steadily decreasing. Instead of theaters or impresarios commissioning new works, as in the past, fine secolo Italian music publishers commissioned works themselves, with the expectation of being able to secure performances of these works in theaters with friendly management. Music publishers tightly controlled an opera’s distribution (piano-vocal

40While the New Grove lists Leoncavallo as premiering an opera titled La jeunesse de Figaro in New York in 1906, James Greening, who has conducted detailed research into Leoncavallo’s reception in America, notes that “there is no record of such a work ever having been produced, whether in the United States or elsewhere.” Greening, “Ruggero Leoncavallo in New York and Other American Cities: 1906 and 1913,” D.M.A. dissertation, City University of New York, 2011: 7.

scores, piano reductions, and arrangements of well-known arias), and increasingly contracted with impresarios on behalf of their composers.\footnote{D’Harcourt, \textit{La musique actuelle en Italie}, 40–1.} Smaller publishing houses were gradually absorbed by larger ones and publishing firms developed national, and even international, presences. In keeping with this new power, the publishers even issued their own music journals, through which they attempted to shape public opinion about the operas, composers, and singers that they promoted.\footnote{Ricordi issued the \textit{Gazzetta musicale di Milano} (1842–1902), \textit{Musica e musicisti} (1902–1905), and \textit{Arz et labor} (1906–1912). Sonzogno issued \textit{La musica popolare} (1882–1885) and \textit{Il teatro illustrato} (1880–1892), \textit{Il secolo illustrato della domenica} (1889–1908) covered the arts in great detail after \textit{Il teatro illustrato} was discontinued.} The publishers’ control of the music industry, and even of composers’ careers, was so total that Pietro Mascagni wrote in 1905, “In musical matters in Italy, the author without a publisher does not exist…The system of operatic performances in our theaters is governed entirely by relationships between publishers and impresarios.”\footnote{Pietro Mascagni, \textit{Per l’opere dell’ingegno} (Rome: Officina Poligrafica Italiana, 1905), trans. Alan Mallach, \textit{Pietro Mascagni and His Operas} (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 163, no original or page number given.}

The situation in Italy was markedly different from that in France, in which government patronage of the great Parisian theaters, the Conservatoire, the Prix de Rome competition, and even the Academy (of which the most distinguished composers were members), altered the dynamics of promoting opera. The Opéra and the Opéra-Comique continued to rely on powerful impresarios in a period in which Italian publishers used impresarios as their puppets; by the 1890s, the Casa Sonzogno even owned two Italian theaters. Rather than being dominated by two large firms, Parisian operatic culture supported multiple, competing publishers (Heugel, Choudens, Durand, Escudier, etc.); the impresarios (such as Léon Carvalho and Albert Carré) of the prestigious state-sponsored opera houses wielded great power.

Massenet thus entered a very different economic environment when he traveled to Italy to promote \textit{Le Roi de Lahore} in 1878. In France, a composer needed tact, patience, and political skill
simply to secure a performance at the Opéra. Worthy composers who lacked the necessary connections suffered from this system: some of the best-known French composers waited for years to achieve a single performance at the Opéra, or premiered their works abroad before bringing them to Paris. And while operas were a form of entertainment, and ticket sales were the best measure of an opera’s success, ultimately it was the impresario’s responsibility if a work failed to bring in the necessary receipts. In Italy, all one needed to secure a performance was the patronage of a powerful publisher. The most famous Italian composer of unified Italy, Giuseppe Verdi, had little need to cultivate Massenet’s legendary charm and tact; instead, Verdi, secure in his publisher’s economic power, was free to avoid public appearances and was renowned for his boorish, ‘bear-like’ behavior.

From the 1870s until the 1910s, the Casa Ricordi was the most powerful Italian music publisher. Centered in Milan, the firm had been founded in 1808 and the core of its repertory consisted of the operas of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi. The firm had an office in Paris as well, and it was partly through Ricordi’s efforts that Verdi had been able to promote his music in the French capital. Similarly, Ricordi’s acquisition of the Italian rights to Massenet’s Roi de Labore and Hérodiade resulted from the firm’s business activities in Paris.

But it was an unusual move for Ricordi to import French opera, as most foreign opera was controlled by another firm: the Casa Lucca, centered in Bologna. The Casa Lucca promoted the

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45 There are many examples of French composers premiering works abroad after 1860. Gounod’s La colombe (1860) and Berlioz’s Béatrice et Bénédict (1862) were both premiered in Baden-Baden, while Saint-Saëns’s Samson et Dalila received its first performance in Weimar (1877). The Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels premiered a number of new operas by French composers between 1881 and 1903, reflecting the growing conservatism of the Parisian repertory. Some notable examples include: Massenet’s Hérodiade (1881), Ernest Reyer’s Sigurd (1884), Emmanuel Chabrier’s Gwendoline (1886), Benjamin Godard’s Jocelyn (1888), Vincent D’Indy’s Fervaal (1897), and Ernest Chausson’s Le Roi Arthus (1903).

46 Camille Saint-Saëns, Massenet’s greatest French contemporary, was renowned for his prickly demeanor, and never enjoyed Massenet’s level of success at the Parisian opera houses. See Studd, Saint-Saëns, 165–68. On Verdi’s reserved and testy personality, see Marcello Conati, Encounters with Verdi (trans. by Richard Stokes) (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), xviii–xxii; on Massenet’s tact, see Harding, Massenet, 43: “He went out of his way to be nice to everyone…it was almost impossible to draw from him anything but the most effusive flattery of a colleague or an acquaintance.”
works of Meyerbeer, Gounod, Flotow, Gomes, and Wagner. The firm also promoted Italian composers such as Pacini, Mercadante, Catalani, and Petrella, and owned three Verdi operas (Attila, I Masnadieri, and Il Corsaro). On May 30th, 1888, however, the Casa Ricordi acquired the Casa Lucca, ending a rivalry that had lasted over thirty years.\(^47\) The result was that Ricordi now controlled a sizeable amount of foreign opera and almost all the canonic works of the Italian opera repertoire. Consequently, the Casa Ricordi seems to have abused its virtual monopoly of Italian opera: after the acquisition of the Casa Lucca, the operas of Pacini, Mercadante, and Meyerbeer began to be staged less often; Alfredo Catalani was convinced that the Casa Ricordi sidelined him in favor of Puccini.\(^48\) For reasons that remain unclear, Ricordi released its control of future rights to the Italian distribution of Massenet’s Manon and Le Cid around this time, a colossal error in light of subsequent events.\(^49\)

The only lasting opposition to Ricordi’s monopoly came from the Casa Sonzogno, also centered in Milan. Headed by the media mogul Edoardo Sonzogno (1836–1920), the firm also published Il secolo, the most widely distributed daily paper in Italy (200,000 copies a day by the 1890s). Sonzogno’s connection to radical (leftist) politicians such as Felice Cavallotti (see Chapter Two), also influenced the firm’s other activities: the Casa Sonzogno issued numerous cheap editions of literary classics, and also published a sheet music series called La musica per tutti (Music for Everyone).\(^50\) The firm was a late-comer to music publishing, having only entered the industry in


\(^{48}\) Nicolaisen, Italian Opera in Transition, 157–58.

\(^{49}\) See Chapter One.

1874, and consequently lacked Ricordi’s longstanding connections with composers and theater managements. Sonzogno, however, circumvented these difficulties in novel ways.

Importing foreign works *en masse* was one strategy: Sonzogno scored a major success with Bizet’s *Carmen*, which had its Italian premiere in Naples in 1879, and reached Milan the following year, and soon became one of the firm’s warhorses. French opera became a mainstay for the firm. Sonzogno promoted works by Thomas, Saint-Saëns, Delibes, Berlioz, Debussy, and Charpentier, in addition to works by Gounod, Massenet, and Halévy which had not fallen into other Ricordi’s hands. Sonzogno also brought in opera from Germany and Eastern Europe, including operas by Richard Strauss, Modest Musorgsky, and Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (see Table 5).

Sponsoring composition competitions to identify talented young Italian composers was another of Sonzogno’s strategies for overcoming Ricordi’s advantage. Between 1883 and 1903, Sonzogno sponsored four competitions for one-act operas: and these events led to the discovery of Pietro Mascagni and Umberto Giordano, two of Sonzogno’s most loyal composers. Sonzogno also did not hesitate to woo dissatisfied composers away from Ricordi, including Alberto Franchetti and Ruggiero Leoncavallo (although Franchetti soon went back to Ricordi). In this way, Sonzogno played a central role in the formation of the *giovane scuola*. Eventually, even Puccini would defect to Sonzogno to publish *La rondine*.

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52 See Chapter One.
Table 5: Italian premieres of select foreign operas promoted by the Casa Sonzogno, 1875–1912 (excluding Massenet)\textsuperscript{33}

* = not an Italian premiere; first production sponsored by Sonzogno

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Opera</th>
<th>City: Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1876*</td>
<td>Ambroise Thomas</td>
<td>Mignon</td>
<td>Turin: Regio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Ambroise Thomas</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
<td>Venice: Fenice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879*</td>
<td>Fromental Halévy</td>
<td>La Juive</td>
<td>Venice: Fenice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Georges Bizet</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Naples: Bellini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Fromental Halévy</td>
<td>La Reine de Clètре</td>
<td>Parma: Regio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Léo Delibes</td>
<td>Lakmé</td>
<td>Rome: Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Charles Gounod</td>
<td>Mireille</td>
<td>Turin: Carignano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Georges Bizet</td>
<td>Les pêcheurs de perles</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Camille Saint-Saëns</td>
<td>Samson et Dalila</td>
<td>Florence: Pagliano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Ernest Reyer</td>
<td>Sigurd</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Camille Saint-Saëns</td>
<td>Henri VIII</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Benjamin Godard</td>
<td>La Vérandière</td>
<td>Milan: Lírico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Camille Saint-Saëns</td>
<td>Phryné</td>
<td>Milan: Lírico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Alfred Bruneau</td>
<td>L’attaque au Moulin</td>
<td>Milan: Lírico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Hector Berlioz</td>
<td>Le Troyens: Le prise de Troie</td>
<td>Milan: Lírico</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Gustave Charpentier</td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Milan: Lírico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Carl Maria von Weber</td>
<td>Euryanthe</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Jacques Offenbach</td>
<td>Les contes d’Hoffmann</td>
<td>Bologna: del Corso</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Richard Strauss</td>
<td>Salome</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Claude Debussy</td>
<td>Pelléas et Mélisande</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Modest Musorgsky</td>
<td>Boris Godunov</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Richard Strauss</td>
<td>Elektra</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Paul Dukas</td>
<td>Ariane et Barbe-Blue</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Richard Strauss</td>
<td>Der Rosenkavalier</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov</td>
<td>Pskovit'yanka</td>
<td>Milan: Scala</td>
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</table>

The two publishing houses promoted very different repertoires. Ricordi’s repertoire consisted largely of Wagner, Verdi, and Italian classics, while Sonzogno’s relied on the works of young Italian composers and a host of foreign composers, especially the French. Both firms sought to control Italian operatic culture: if a theater contracted with Ricordi, few operas by Sonzogno would be heard there in that season. The reverse was also true. Ricordi, however, proved more

\textsuperscript{33}Note that this list is representative, not comprehensive; Sonzogno also promoted the operettas of Charles Lecocq and Jacques Offenbach, for example. Morini and Ostali, “Cronologia delle opere”; Morini and Ostali, “Cronologia della Casa Musicale Sonzogno,” in Morini, Ostali, and Ostali, Casa Musicale Sonzogno, Vol. I, 293–423: 330, 337, 340–341; Gatti, Il teatro alla Scala, 59–72.
successful in controlling major theaters than did Sonzogno, leading Edoardo Sonzogno to buy his own theater in Milan in order to stage works published by his firm (see Chapter Two).

The Casa Sonzogno’s central role in fine secolo operatic culture remains largely undiscussed. This neglect results from a lack of sources; much of the Sonzogno archive was destroyed in the Second World War, while Ricordi’s survived.\(^5\) Following Edoardo Sonzogno’s retirement in 1909, the firm was split in two by Sonzogno’s nephews, allowing Ricordi to solidify its hold on the Italian opera scene.\(^5\) The fading power of the Sonzogno firm also meant that few of the original works by its Italian composers have remained in the modern operatic repertory, except for the traditional pairing of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, and, in a lesser way, works such as Cilea’s *Adriana Lecouvreur* or Giordano’s *Andrea Chenier*.

Most histories of Italian opera in the fine secolo present a narrative clearly biased toward the Ricordi view, presenting Puccini as the leading Italian composer after Verdi (downplaying Mascagni’s achievements), highlighting Wagner’s reception, and ignoring the impact of French operas such as Bizet’s *Carmen*, Thomas’s *Mignon*, or Massenet’s *Manon* (imported by Sonzogno). Most historical studies, of course, rely on the available archival materials from the Casa Ricordi, and assume that the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, Ricordi’s house journal, is an unbiased and comprehensive source of information. The Italian premiere of *Carmen* in 1879 usually receives only passing attention in most histories of late nineteenth-century Italian opera; only recently has it begun to be recognized as a central event in Italian opera, defining realism for a new generation of Italian opera-goers and composers.\(^5\) We owe our current knowledge of the Casa Sonzogno’s activities to

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the work of Marco Capra and Silvia Valisa.\textsuperscript{57} Only recently has any study in English attempted to analyze the struggle between Sonzogno and Ricordi, although this work largely neglects Sonzogno’s efforts at importing foreign opera.\textsuperscript{58}

**Cultural nationalism and nationalist cosmopolitanism**

Both the Casa Ricordi and the Casa Sonzogno were fundamentally committed to an aesthetic of cultural nationalism. This concept, as defined by John Hutchinson in his seminal study of the Gaelic revival in Ireland, prioritizes the embodiment of national identity through art and culture rather than through political maneuvering. Thomas Turino has similarly defined cultural nationalism as “the use of art and other cultural practices to develop or maintain national sentiment for political purposes.”\textsuperscript{59} Artistic and cultural production is mobilized in the service of national identity, and the construction of national art-forms is considered essential to the survival of nations as cultural entities. For this reason, “…the artist-creator is conceived of as the paradigmatic figure of the community, dramatizing the lessons of its historical experience and thereby inspiring future generations to individual and collective self-realization.”\textsuperscript{60} Cultural nationalism helps us understand the role played by poets such as Dante and composers such as Verdi in the culture of unified Italy.\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[57] Capra, “La Casa Editrice Sonzogno tra giornalismo e impresariato”; Valisa, “Casa editrice Sonzogno: Mediazione culturale, circuiti del sapere ed innovazione tecnologica nell’Italia unificata (1861–1900).”
\item[60] Hutchison, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, 197.
\end{footnotes}
In our specific, fine secolo context, cultural nationalism sometimes overlaps with Philip Bohlman’s concept of nationalistic music: musical efforts as a form of cultural competition between nation-states. Nationalistic approaches to cultural nationalism abound in fine secolo Italian music criticism: performances of Italian operas abroad are reported with cheerful complacency, while performances of foreign operas on Italian soil are threats which need to be explained away.

The two publishers’ repertoires also embodied concepts of cultural nationalism. Shrewdly (given the recent unification of Italy), the Ricordi firm promoted its operas as essential expressions of the Italian national character: Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi et al were great Italian artists, and the Italian theaters in which their works were performed were centers of great Italian art. Giulio Ricordi was careful to explain a performance of Gounod’s Faust at La Scala as an exception in a season dominated by the glorious products of Italian art, rather than as part of a trend. Yet, as we have seen, a performance of Gounod’s Faust in fine secolo Italy was hardly an isolated incident. Verdi was positioned as an infallible figure in Italian culture; although Falstaff (1893) baffled and puzzled the critics and public alike, he did not lose his iconic status until well after his death in 1901.

Ricordi promoted Puccini as Verdi’s successor after the success of Manon Lescaut (1893) but Puccini continually failed to live up to the rhetoric of cultural nationalism with which he was saddled.

Puccini’s failure to produce sufficiently “Italianate” music must be seen, however, in its broader context. Verdi, who had not only incorporated foreign techniques, but had written original operas in French, does not seem to have faced a similar level of criticism. But Verdi had established

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62Bohlman distinguishes between national music, which is understood to embody or represent the nation, and nationalist music, which is in explicit competition with the national music of rival states. Bohlman, The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 119.

63Giulio Ricordi implied as much in the speech “Sulla importanza del Teatro alla Scala” which he presented to the town council of Milan on December 31, 1885. The speech is reprinted in Pompeo Cambiasi, La Scala, 1778–1889: Note storiche e statistiche, 4th ed (Milan: Ricordi, 1888), xiii-xviii.

64Senici, “Verdi’s “Falstaff,”” 274–75.
himself as a successful composer before the appearance of a unified Italian nation-state. Puccini’s Italy, on the other hand, was dominated by a developing aesthetic of cultural nationalism: art was expected to serve the nation’s broader cultural agenda and preserve the nation’s individuality.\(^6\) This approach to music and nationalism mirrors Italy’s military history, as the new Italian state sent expeditions to Eritrea, modern Ethiopia, and Libya in an attempt to establish itself as a colonial power.\(^6\) In this context, Italian music such as Puccini’s could not reflect foreign models and adequately serve the nation.

Despite their wholesale promotion of foreign opera, the Casa Sonzogno also claimed to be preserving and promoting the unique qualities of Italian art. The firm promoted their composition competitions, which led to the discovery of Mascagni and Giordano, as regenerating Italian art (see Chapter One). Word even spread that Verdi himself had declared Mascagni his successor in the wake of _Cavalleria rusticana_’s success—rumors which Verdi furiously denied; afterward, the aging composer claimed to have no knowledge of compositions by his younger contemporaries.\(^6\) Sonzogno also contributed to Italian cultural glory by aggressively marketing their operas abroad, staging operatic seasons in Vienna and Paris.\(^6\)

By this point, the tension between the Casa Sonzogno’s promotion of Mascagni as its own successor to Verdi and its wide support of French opera in Italy should be obvious.\(^6\) They resolved this contradiction through the public embrace of _nationalist cosmopolitanism_, or cosmopolitanism in the

\(^6\) Wilson, _The Puccini Problem_, 11–22.


Importing French opera, the Casa Sonzogno claimed, was ultimately beneficial to Italian art, as it provided Italians with a richer musical menu (see Chapter One). Thus performing foreign music did not actually conflict with the Casa Sonzogno’s broader mission of restoring Italian opera, but rather supported it to some degree. Cosmopolitanism, for Sonzogno, provided a means of interacting with foreign music and suppressing nationalistic prejudices: Sonzogno’s vision of *italianità* was self-consciously open-minded, tolerant, and appreciative of foreign culture.

At the same time, cosmopolitanism provided a way of placing foreign opera in the service of local Italian culture, of making space for French opera within an explicitly Italian framework. In this sense, the old model of musical exchange between Paris and Italy, with Italian musicians struggling to gain acceptance, while the French rarely bothered to travel south, made Paris the musical center and left the international reputation of Italian music in the hands of French cosmopolitan listeners. By reversing this model of exchange, by encouraging foreign composers such as Massenet to travel south, Sonzogno not only made Milan a musical destination for foreign composers but also gave Italian audiences and critics the same kind of cultural power over Massenet that Parisian audiences had held over Verdi and Donizetti.

A final dimension of Sonzogno’s aesthetic platform was inherently political. The Casa Sonzogno had strong ties to the Italian extreme left (*l’estrema sinistra*), a coalition which included socialist sympathizers and radical republicans who sought to weaken the power of the constitutional monarchy. In this context, Sonzogno’s publication of the radical daily paper *Il secolo* and his numerous cheap editions of popular novels reflected his populist and radical sympathies.  

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was particularly opposed to Francesco Crispi’s liberal government (prime minister, 1887–1891, 1893–1896), backing opponents as diverse as the radical leftist Felice Cavallotti and the right-wing Antonio Starabba, the marquis of Rudini (prime minister 1891–1892, 1896–1898). Crispi’s foreign policy was notoriously anti-French, and Crispi unwisely committed Italy to a colonial war in Ethiopia, which led to a humiliating defeat at Adua (1896).\footnote{Christopher Duggan, \textit{Francesco Crispi, 1818–1901: From Nation to Nationalism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 670–709.} Thus Sonzogno’s promotion of French opera and cosmopolitanism served not only as an aesthetic stance, but as a political one in support of his repeated calls for an improved political understanding with France.

In this context, the Casa Sonzogno’s promotion of Massenet served multiple functions. In the early stages of Massenet’s Milanese period, Sonzogno employed Massenet’s music as an international foil for that of Mascagni, Leoncavallo, and Mascagni, music which was to be appreciated explicitly for its foreignness, in order to make Italian listeners more cosmopolitan. At the same time, because many heard Massenet’s music as embodying French national identity, critics had to explain Massenet’s popularity with the Italian public. Thus Massenet’s music came to be understood not merely as French, but as inspired by Italian or even German models, and even as typical of a transnational Franco-Italian musical style (see Chapter Three). In these ways, Italian critics made space for Massenet within Italian musical culture.

**III. METHODOLOGY FOR ANALYZING MASSENET’S ITALIAN RECEIPTION**

The previous sections have established the role that Massenet’s operas played within the broader history of exchanges between French and Italian music throughout the nineteenth century, and the particular significance of Massenet’s Milanese period in this context. Here, I will map a theoretical
framework to guide this investigation, drawing chiefly on established theories of reception, translation, and cultural translation.

The broad goal of this study is to provide the fullest possible understanding of the ways that Massenet’s operas functioned within Milanese operatic culture—a “thick description” of the kind suggested by Clifford Geertz, in which the connections between texts or events reveal their embeddedness within their cultural context. The cultural context in question here is that of Edoardo Sonzogno’s Milan, not Massenet’s Paris, and my focus is on the roles that Massenet’s operas played within Italian culture and on the ways that Italian critics related Massenet’s operas to Italian musical culture. Therefore, the French context for Massenet’s operas is important here only in comparison to Massenet’s reception in Italy.

Reception, of course, is a loaded term, given scholarly debates over the nature of textual meaning. Here, following methodologies laid by Hans Robert Jauss, I employ the concept as a way of interrogating the processes by which readers attribute meaning to texts. While this approach has drawn fire from literary theorists who see the focus on the reader as attacking the integrity of the author’s intentions and craft, my concept of reception is not inherently opposed to the study of works from the author’s point of view. Indeed, my primary interest lies precisely in the tension...

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73 Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30, online: https://www.sociosite.net/topics/texts/Geertz_Thick_Description.php. “Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification…and determining their social ground and import.”

74 Hans Robert Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 22–32.

75 Alvin Kernan, The Death of Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), has been a major spokesman against the author’s eroded status in reception studies. The historian Axel Körner has provided an example of an extreme approach to operatic reception studies: “If historians want to establish what an opera meant in its original context of reception, they should not read the libretto or listen to the opera…The historians’ only concern should be to find sources revealing the work’s original reading at the time.” Körner, “The Risorgimento’s Literary Canon and the Aesthetics of Reception: Some Methodological Considerations,” Nations and Nationalism 15 no. 3 (2009), 410–18: 412. Yet Wolfgang Iser’s concept of the “implied reader” suggests that certain elements of the reader’s experience are shaped by the text and its author. See Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 27–38.
between the author(s)’ intentions (as far as these may be determined) and the readers’ interpretations. Some of Massenet’s intentions are quite clear: he created most of his operas with specific Parisian theaters and performers in mind. But how did Italian critics interact with Massenet’s operas, and how were these works affected by their performance in a new setting, with new performers, and in Italian translation?

This viewpoint naturally arises from my interest in translational practices as part of reception. While there is some previous scholarship on translation and music, and a good deal on the reception of music, little work has been done on translation and reception in conjunction. In studies focused on reception within a single culture (rather than across cultural boundaries, as in our case), this has not been necessary. Thus Puccini’s operas were naturally performed in their original language in Italy. In other contexts, musical works with sacred texts (such Mozart’s Requiem) were commonly performed in their original languages and thus translation plays little role in their reception.

Yet when we consider the reception of translated works, the processes of translation must play an important role. How can we understand or contextualize readers’ reactions to a translated text if we do not know the version of the work with which they interacted? Rosamund Bartlett’s study of Wagner’s reception in Russia, for example, devotes great attention to what Russian intellectuals understood Wagner to mean, without ever addressing the actual words on the page in any detail. Wagner’s prose writing is notoriously wordy and difficult to read, even in German, and


his librettos defy conventional operatic norms; it is certainly possible that Wagner’s message was altered in its Russian translation, but Bartlett provides no framework for interrogating this issue.\textsuperscript{78} (To provide an example from outside music, Walter Benjamin’s seminal essay “The Task of the Translator” has been widely distributed in an English translation which cuts several sentences, altering the meaning of the piece).\textsuperscript{79} Therefore the question arises: how can we adequately address Massenet’s reception in Italy without considering that the relationship between music and text in his operas was fundamentally altered by the process of translating his operas into Italian?

I employ the term translation on two levels here: (1) narrowly, as referring to the translation of a text from one system of communication to another, a usage derived from translation studies; (2) more broadly, as a metaphor for the transformative transference of a text or concept between cultures, a phenomena often called “cultural translation.” Both kinds of translation are central to this study. In the period under consideration, Italian performances of Massenet’s operas exclusively employed Italian translations of the French librettos; in the broader sense, critics attempted to translate Massenet’s operas into Italian culture by relating them to local concepts of comic opera, genius, and cosmopolitanism (see Table 1 for a summary of Massenet’s operas in translation across Europe and the Americas). Ultimately, these elements provide a window into Italian musical culture in the period in question. To borrow a phrase from Susan Bassnett, I would like to focus on what is “gained in translation”—on the ways that these translated operas, on being translated into the Italian language and an Italian cultural context, acquired new cultural associations and levels of meaning absent in the original.\textsuperscript{80} In this sense, this study contributes not only to our understanding of specific contexts for Massenet’s Milanese reception, but also to the broader topic of the reception of translated opera.

\textsuperscript{78}Rosamund Bartlett, \textit{Wagner in Russia} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).


\textsuperscript{80}“Gained in Translation,” in Bassnett, \textit{Reflections on Translation}, 118–21.
These two kinds of translation shape my study of Massenet’s Italian reception. While scholars of translation studies and reception studies typically refer to “readers” of the texts in question, my focus here is on operas as they existed in performance. I thus consider operas to consist of a combination of text, music, and performative elements (gesture, blocking, costumes, lighting, etc.); therefore the term “reader” is inadequate to our purposes, as is “listener” (which ignores the visual). Thus the operagoer is my preferred general term for considering the members of the audience who experienced and received the operas in question. The critics who reviewed Massenet’s operas are the most relevant—and most influential—operagoers for my investigation, as they shaped Massenet’s reception through their discussions of nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and cultural translation.

Text-based translation

My first definition of translation is the most commonly used in academic discourse and is the chief subject of translation studies as a discipline. Roman Jakobsen, in an important 1959 article, identified three chief forms of translational activities: intralingual translation, or translation within a language (including, for example, from one dialect to another); interlingual translation, or translation between languages (the most common use of the term); and intersemiotic translation, translation from a verbal system to a non-verbal system (a painting inspired by a poem, for example). In all these cases, an act of translation begins with a source text (the text which is being translated) and creates a target text (the translated text).


Early scholarship on translation often assumes that meaning can be transferred exactly from the source to the target text; this assumption results in an obsession with linguistic equivalency and an evaluative approach to translation. Beginning in the 1970s, as translation studies began to separate from comparative literature and linguistics, new work drew attention to the implicit difficulty of mapping divergent linguistic and cultural systems onto each other, complicating the act of translation. Umberto Eco has pointed out that exact synonyms do not exist even within the same language, let alone when comparing two or more languages: the English “coffee” and the Italian “caffé” (which in the United States would be called “espresso”), for example, refer to two very different beverages; the French “bois” can be translated as “wood,” “timber,” or “woods” in English.

If exact equivalence is impossible to attain in translation, then translators must seek other goals. Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassnett have identified two alternative traditions which they term the “Horace Model” and the “Schleiermacher Model,” after the intellectuals who first seem to have employed them. Rather than assuming pure equivalence between terms, concepts, and grammatical structures, these models privilege either the source or target text. The “Horace Model” views translation chiefly as a “negotiation” between two linguistic systems, prioritizing intelligible meaning

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83For examples of this focus on equivalence, see Jakobsen, “…translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes,” 114; and Eugene Nida, “Principles of Correspondence,” in Venuti, Translation Studies Reader, 126–140: 129, which maintains that “one must in translating seek to find the closest possible equivalent.”

A major shift against this approach occurs in Toury, “Translated Literature,” 14: “…an ST [source-text]-oriented theory is inadequate, or at least insufficient, as a basis for a descriptive theory of translations and translational relationships as empirical phenomena. It dooms research proceeding from it to discussing translation in basically binary terms, so that the student finds himself compelled to characterize many existing translations, if not most of them, in terms that are both negative and final…” See also Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 2–3.

84For coverage of this paradigm shift in translation studies, see Harish Trivedi, “Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation,” 91st Meridian 4 no. 1 (Spring 2005), online at http://iwp.uiowa.edu/91st/vol4-num1/translating-culture-vs-cultural-translation; Bassnett-McGuire, Translation Studies, 39–75.

in the target text over faithfulness to the source text. This translational procedure aims to create a culturally useful translation of the source text, which is absorbed into the target culture. The “Scheleiermacher Model,” on the other hand, prizes the unique tone of the source text; “the reader should be able to guess the Spanish behind a translation from Spanish…If all translations read and sound alike…, the identity of the source text has been lost, levelled in the target text.” Eco neatly captures the differences between these two approaches: “…given a translation from Homer, should the translation transform its readers into Greek readers from Homeric times, or should it make Homer write as if he were writing today in our times?”\(^8^6\)

The Italian translations of Massenet’s operas are caught in the crossfire between these translational approaches, displaying aspects of both Horace and Schleiermacher models. While French and Italian share a number of linguistic features, it is impossible to achieve constant equivalence between the two languages. Thus in the Italian libretto, the character Thaïs is first described as a *donna*, but a *femme* in the French.\(^8^7\) While both terms denote *woman*, their connotations are vastly different. *Donna* is a title of respect, and suggests higher social status—it is closer in cultural meaning to the French *dame* or the English *lady*. *Femme* is neither a title of respect nor a marker of elevated rank. This example suggests that the Italian translators of these operas employed the Horace Model, aiming for cultural relevance in their new Italian context. Yet some passages contain traces of a Schleiermacherian approach, employing obscure or archaic Italian phrases which echo the French source text. For example, Mattia Battistini’s 1911 recording of Werther’s aria “Pourquoi me reveiller” replaces the French phrase *souffle de printemps* with the Italian *soffio della*

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\(^8^6\)Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures*, 3–8, qtd. 8; Eco, *Experiences in Translation*, 22.

\(^8^7\)G. Massenet, *Thaïs, dramma lirico in tre atti e sette quadri, parole di Luigi Gallet (dal romanzo di Anatole France), traduzione ritmica italiana di A. Galli* (Sonzogno: Milan, 1906), 9.
prime.\textsuperscript{88} The use of *prime* in the Italian translation (instead of *primavera*) clearly reflects the sound of the original French, and sounds vaguely foreign in an Italian context. Notably, the phrase does not appear in the printed Italian libretto (where it is *soffio dell’aprile*—substituting a specific month for the general reference to *printemps* in the French text),\textsuperscript{89} and may well have been altered by Battistini himself from the published Italian translation.

What, however, does a translation accomplish in relation to the original text? While translation naturally exists as a *re-writing* or an *interpretation* of the source,\textsuperscript{90} I follow Derrida’s concept that a translated text functions as an extension of the original for readers who are not familiar with the source text.\textsuperscript{91} As G. N. Devy writes, “A literary translation has a double existence as a work of literature, and as a work of translation. Those who do not know the original language tend to look at it as literature, those who do know the original look at it as a secondary product of translation.”\textsuperscript{92} It is precisely because Italian critics and operagoers processed the Italian translations as *artworks*, and not as pale translated reflections of artworks, that they gain their interest for our study of Massenet’s Italian reception. Although some Italian operagoers, and all of the critics, knew that the operas had originally been created with French texts, most of Massenet’s Italian audience could not experience the Italian translation of *Werther* in relation to the French libretto. Even well-informed critics writing for professional music journals take the translation of Massenet’s operas for granted; the translation

\textsuperscript{88}The recording is available on the compact disc accompanying Jacques Chuilon, *Mattia Battistini: King of Baritones and Baritone of Kings* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{89}*Werther*, dramma lirico in tre atti e cinque quadri di E. Blau, P. Milliet e G. Hartmann, versione rittmica di G. Targioni-Tozzetti e G. Menasci; musica di G. Massenet (Milan: Sonzogno, 1892), 39.

\textsuperscript{90}Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures*, 10.

\textsuperscript{91}Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel,” in *Difference in Translation*, ed. by Joseph F. Graham, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), trans. by Graham, 165–207: 188. “If the translator neither restitutes nor copies an original, it is because the original lives on and transforms itself. The translation will truly be a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself in enlarging itself.”

of foreign opera was so common in nineteenth-century Italy that critics rarely discuss it in detail. The Italian translation was the only version of the work that they knew, in the same way that many modern readers know the Bible or the Iliad only through vernacular translations.

**Translated librettos and the operatic event**

What, then, is the broader significance of a translated libretto? How does a translated libretto affect the operatic work as a whole? To answer these questions, we must consider the ontology of opera, with special attention to the role of the libretto (whether translated or not).

A concept from film studies is useful here. Translation scholar Aline Remael has described screenplays for film as “intermediate translations”—texts that are not designed to stand on their own, but which provide guidelines for the creation of another work. Remael’s concept of translation transfers easily to opera librettos. Neither librettos nor screenplays are intended to be processed as independent artworks, but rather help guide the creation of art in performance (the film differs simply in that it is captured on camera). Relying here on Jakobsen’s concept of intersemiotic translation (the adaptation of an idea between artistic mediums), I view the libretto as an intermediary which channels or translates a source text (a play, novel, or poem) as it is turned into an opera. The libretto’s intermediary status is underlined by the way in which composers (especially Verdi and Puccini) are known to have intervened in its creation, demanding revisions to the text so that they could begin working on the music. The libretto’s intermediary role for Massenet seems to have been relatively fixed: in a newspaper interview in 1892, he described the memorization of the libretto as an essential step in his compositional process.

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setting, the combination of text and music assuredly precedes the specifics of the staging. Only when the text, music, and staging have reached a relatively finalized form can a performance occur. The operatic work, in this reading, lies in the combination of music, words, and staged performance—the operatic event (see Figure 1). Subsequent changes or revisions of an opera’s constitutive elements (music, libretto, staging), in this view, are modifications to the performance script. While Fabrizio Della Seta rightly points out the danger of devaluing operatic performance scripts as texts (a collected works edition being considered for Rossini as early as the 1820s), translational practices compel us to consider ways that these operas were adapted with performance in mind.

Massenet’s Werther provides a useful model for this analysis, as it embodies multiple levels of translation. The source text of the opera is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s novel, Die Leiden des jungen Werthers, and thus, from a musical point of view, the opera is an intersemiotic translation of the novel. The libretto (by Edoard Blau, Paul Milliet, and Georges Hartmann) is in close dialogue with the novel, but at the same time supersedes it; while Massenet read the novel (in French translation) in preparation for writing his opera, his primary source of reference in creating the opera was the libretto, the intermediary. The music that Massenet wrote, in turn, is designed around the


96I base this view of opera as a text for performance on Carl Dahlhaus, trans. by J. Bradford Robinson, Nineteenth-Century Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 9–10: “…a Rossini score…is a mere recipe for performance, and it is the performance which forms the crucial aesthetic arbiter as the realization of a draft rather than an exegesis of a text. Rossini’s musical thought hinged on the performance as an event, not on the work as a text passed down.” Fabrizio Della Seta has noted that the origin of this view of opera as an essentially performative art derives from Hegel’s Aesthetics. Della Seta, “Some Difficulties in the Historiography of Italian Opera,” Cambridge Opera Journal, 10 no. 1 (1998), 3–13: 5n, 6.

97Intersemiotic translation has only recently begun to be the subject of sustained scholarly inquiry. For recent scholarship on the concept of intersemiotic translation, including the tension with theories of adaptation, see Renée Desjardins, “Inter-Semiotic Translation and Cultural Representation within the Space of the Multi-Modal Text,” Transcult 1 no. 2 (2008) 48–58: 50; Daniella Aguiar and João Queiroz, “Towards a Model of Intersemiotic Translation,” The International Journal of the Arts in Society 4 (2009), no page numbers.

98 Massenet, Souvenirs, 164.
libretto, and the two form a seemingly inseparable whole, a script for musical performance. This script is then the basis for staged operatic performances, the *events* which constitute the actual

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99My depiction of a libretto sometimes influencing a source text is inspired by Andrew Porter, “Verdi and the Italian Translations of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth,*” in David Rosen and Andrew Porter (eds.), *Verdi’s Macbeth: A Sourcebook* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 351–55: 352–53, which suggests that Piave’s libretto influenced Giulio Carcano’s translation of Shakespeare, which in turn may have served as a source text for the opera.

100An additional element exists through the codification of staging practices (although modern performance practice regards this element of the operatic text as negotiable). While staging manuals may attempt to present an authoritative “official” staging text, some simply document aspects of a particular production. For a study of the ways in which production books may be unreliable, see Parker, “Reading the ‘Livrets,’ or The Chimera of ‘Authentic’ Staging,” in Pierluigi Petrobelli and Fabrizio Della Seta, *La realizzazione scenica dello spettacolo verdianno* (Parma: Istituto nazionale di studi verdiiani, 1996, 345–66. While Parker notes that the production books “aimed to make certain aspects of the production a fixed text,” (349), he suggests that the books came into existence as “a vain attempt to hold in place an
existence of the opera in real time. Thus librettos must be considered in relation to the music and
dramatic spectacle they were designed to accompany.

The translated libretto, when considered in relation to this scheme, fundamentally changes
the operatic event, as it replaces the linguistic lens through which performers and audiences interact
with the staged musical performance. The translation of an opera libretto is not simply a matter of
rendering the meaning or significance of the source text as well as one can within the target language
and culture. Rather (and here we return to Remael’s idea of the intermediary text), the translated
opera libretto is primarily a script for performance, an intermediary text added after the fact to an
existing operatic musico-dramatic constellation. An opera may acquire any number of substitute
intermediary texts: Werther, after all, was premiered with a German text in Vienna before it was ever
performed with its original French text (see Table 1, above).

The “seemingly inseparable whole” referred to above, the combination of text and music, is
shattered by the process of translation: the French libretto is removed, and an Italian one is put in its
place. At the same time, the absent French libretto echoes throughout the musical setting. Joseph
Kerman made this point elegantly in his study of W. H. Auden’s translation of Die Zauberflöte:

A literary translation is made for someone who does not read the original….But in a
musical translation, the music is steadily in your ears, not merely in the back of your
mind. Imagine reading Pope’s [translation of the] Iliad while Homer is chanting the
original hexameters synchronized exactly with the English, line by line.101

As Andreas Giger has argued in his study of Verdi’s settings of French texts, nineteenth-century
French and Italian poetry had different prosodic styles which lent themselves to different musical

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approaches. Even in Italian translation, a French opera retains musical structures designed with a French text in mind, to which the Italian text is sometimes awkwardly, sometimes eloquently, adapted.

While translated librettos preserve elements of plot and characterization, they had to match most of the music’s existing rhythms and metrical contours above all: there are even cases of adaptations which keep much of the music intact but abandon the original plot and characters entirely. There is, then, an odd form of translational equivalence in operatic translation, in that the French and Italian librettos relate to a single musical text, which often remains unchanged at the macro level, despite numerous changes at the local level. At the same time, a baffling array of choices awaits opera translators; Andrew Porter has noted of his own efforts to create an English version of Verdi’s *Macbeth*:

> Usually something must be sacrificed. It may be the exact sense. It may be the best sounds, in a passage where precise sense does matter more than anything else. It may be the rhyme. What I found myself least willing to sacrifice was singable sounds and accurate musical articulation…

Verdi’s music had to be paramount. *Macchia* has two syllables, so it had to be a “bloodstain,” not a “spot.” With a slight adjustment of underlay, Shakespeare’s “will not sweeten” can be fitted to Verdi’s notes, but the phrase where it falls is attacked on a c, “α’ suoi balsami,” and so I changed it to “cannot sweeten.”

Yet an exact substitution of Italian text for French is rare and difficult to achieve, as vocabulary, meter, and prosody all differ between the two languages. As Philip Gossett has noted, “Opera has always been the art of compromise, but rarely are the issues so perversely incompatible as in translation between Italian and French.” The substitution of an Italian libretto for a French one

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103 Verdi’s *Jérusalem* and Rossini’s *Le Siège de Corinthe* are two notable examples.


105 Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, 405.
necessitates numerous small-scale changes to the music to accommodate the new text. The most obvious example is Werther. In French, the name is pronounced Ver-TAIR, in Italian, VER-ter.

All aspects of Massenet’s Italian reception were affected by the translation of his librettos. We have already seen how changing the language affected the relationship between text and music. Each word of the Italian libretto carried its own cultural connotations which could differ markedly from the French libretto (consider Thaïs as donna or femme) and which in turn affected the performers’ sense of characterization and even drama (in the Italian Werther, “Carlotta” (Charlotte) admits that she loves Werther an entire act before she reaches this realization in the French version—see Chapter Two). These changes directly affect both the dramaturgy of the operas in question and the characterization of each role. The translated libretto was mirrored in every Italian performance, whether they followed the translation exactly or not (in the now-lost nuances of singing and accent, in the cheap librettos Italians read, in the vocal scores they bought, in the critics’ reviews, which naturally cited passages from the operas’ Italian texts).

Understanding these translational processes is an essential preliminary step to any analysis of the reception of translated opera. As we have seen, translations can carry a great amount of cultural baggage. By considering translational processes in the Horation (target-oriented) sense, as negotiations between systems of communication, we can begin to understand the ways in which Massenet’s operas were altered by (and for) their translation for Italy. Although most of the music and plot of each opera remain intact, the Italian translations of Massenet’s operas alter fundamental aspects of the works in question. While the Italian Werther may be a twin to the French Werther, twins are not double instantiations of the same person, but individuals who share common features.

The operas which Italian audiences heard were not the same as those which Massenet presented in France. One cannot assume that the French version of an opera represents the Work, which is merely reflected through its translation. Rather, following Derrida and Devy, I propose that
these translations functioned as new originals for their Italian audiences. Absent an analysis of translation, this reception study would assume complete equivalence between the various versions of Massenet’s operas, or pretend that operatic works are static. Translation, in other words, dramatically affects the operas under consideration, and any analysis of their reception that did not consider translation’s transformational affects would be fundamentally flawed.

**Cultural translation**

Having demonstrated the ways in which a single text is transformed by translational processes, I will now explore the second, broader definition of translation as a metaphor for the *transformational transfer of concepts between cultures*, a process generally termed *cultural translation* by cultural theorists. Cultural translation subsumes elements of cultural transfer, but with the explicit discussion of decoding and transforming the foreign in order to place it within a target culture. This general, metaphorical definition is employed by a broad range of scholars: The cultural theorist Homi Bhabha sees translation, broadly defined, as a way of interacting with other cultures.\(^{106}\) Similarly, the literary and cultural scholar António Sousa Ribeiro argues that “Potentially, any situation where we try to relate meaningfully to difference can be described as a translational situation,” while Monika Gomille considers translation “the central model of contact of cultures.”\(^{107}\)

Scholarly opinions vary, however, on whether translation plays a positive or negative role in cultural contact. Recent work has stressed translation’s role as marking and (re)defining cultural boundaries, as a way of creating meaning and understanding between cultures. In this regard, literary scholar Wolfgang Iser’s discussion of translation as a process in which one’s “frame of reference”

\(^{106}\)Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 228. “Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication.”

“is subjected to alterations in order to accommodate what does not fit…” is typical. At the same time, the translator has the ability to represent and speak for the foreign, and translation can serve as a tool of cultural hegemony. An awareness of the differences between languages and the ways that translation represents an interaction with the foreign and the marginalized has led many scholars to employ translation as a method of deconstructing discourses of gender, postcolonialism, and globalization.

Cultural translation is often not directly concerned with relationships between a source and a target text, or the fine points of tracing or contesting grammatical equivalence, a fact which has drawn fierce criticism from some textually-based translation scholars. Yet as Boris Buden and Stefan Nowotny have argued, cultural translation is implicit within earlier, text-driven scholarship which acknowledges language’s relationship to culture. One can find similar assertions of translation’s viability as a broader cultural metaphor among the writings of traditional translation scholars such as Willis Barnston and Susan Bassnett. Meanwhile, some recent scholarship has argued for a symbiotic relationship between cultural translation and traditional text-based work.

Cultural translation is ideally suited for this investigation of Massenet’s Italian reception. The kind of cultural translation I have in mind is mediated through and works symbiotically with

111Trivedi, “Translating Culture vs Cultural Translation.”
114Gomille, viii.
interlingual translation as defined above: If the Italian libretto for *Thais* changes the social connotations of the courtesan’s profession through labeling her *donna*, then at some broader level the libretto is not simply concerned with translating the words of the French text, but also the general cultural concepts which lie behind it. The issues which concerned the critics (opera’s place in Italian culture, opera’s relationship to national identity, Massenet as a celebrity, Massenet’s operas in relation to the rivalry between Ricordi and Sonzogno) were filtered through the lens of specific operatic performances which were themselves filtered through Italian translations of French librettos. Italian music critics relied on these translated librettos to understand what kinds of stories the operas told and to make sense of the music and drama as a whole, and to find a place for these works within the context of Italian cultural nationalism. My analysis of the reception of Massenet’s operas is grounded in specific events (operatic performances) which generated discourses of cultural translation explaining Massenet’s relevance to Italian operatic culture.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

**Source materials**

Having explored the subject, contexts, and methodology for the dissertation, all that remains is to sketch the relationship of the chapters to each other and describe the source materials on which this dissertation draws. These are divided into three categories: archival and manuscript materials; printed scores and librettos; and press materials.

Many of Massenet’s personal papers and manuscripts remain in the archives of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, while others are privately held by the Massenet family. But the most useful archival materials are surely those which no longer exist or which are currently

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115Some of the composer’s letters from the family’s collection have been published in Anne Massenet, *Jules Massenet en toutes lettres* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 2001).
inaccessible. Few of Massenet’s letters to the Casa Sonzogno have survived, as most of the Casa Sonzogno’s archival material from before 1915 was destroyed in World War II; the Casa Ricordi preserves no letters from Massenet from 1888 to 1896, although it is likely that Massenet stayed in touch with the firm during that time as well.\textsuperscript{116} The Bibliothèque nationale has issued a detailed online catalogue of its holdings (even digitizing some of Massenet’s letters and manuscripts), but Sonzogno does not appear in their list of Massenet’s correspondents. Similarly, Massenet’s French publishers draw a blank. Georges Hartmann’s materials seem to have been lost completely, while Heugel et Cie’s papers do not seem to have been available to researchers since the firm’s acquisition by Alphonse Leduc in 1980.\textsuperscript{117}

I have been able to locate a number of printed scores and librettos related to Italian productions of Massenet’s works in the Milanese period. Of these, the librettos are uniformly issued by the Casa Sonzogno, while the scores are either co-issued by Heugel et Cie and the Casa Sonzogno or are solely issued by Heugel. One particularly rare document is the full Italian production book (\textit{messa in iscena}) for \textit{Manon}, one of only seven Sonzogno production books to survive today.\textsuperscript{118} In several cases, I have been able to locate librettos from early productions, although barring specific annotations by operagoers, there is little way of knowing if a libretto corresponds to a given

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Of the 122 letters from Jules Massenet preserved in the Archivio Storico Ricordi at the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan, 108 fall between the years 1877 and 1884. The remaining fourteen letters span twenty-seven years from 1885 to 1911, one year before Massenet’s death.

\textsuperscript{117}In a personal conversation in November 2012, Hugh MacDonald confirmed that to his knowledge, Hartmann’s business papers have disappeared. For the rise and fall of Georges Hartmann’s music firm, see MacDonald, “Georges Hartmann, the ‘Ideal Publisher,’” \textit{Journal of Musicological Research} 28 (2009): 295–311.

Although Demar Irvine repeatedly cites the Heugel archives in his biography of Massenet (completed in 1974 and published in 1994), I have been unable to access this material. For the acquisition of Heugel by Leduc, see “Editions Heugel,” Alphone Leduc webpage, accessed 10 Dec 2013, \url{http://www.alphonseleduc.com/EN/historique_editions_heugel.php}.

\end{flushleft}
performance. Additionally, the translated Italian librettos often give the impression of having been prepared without direct comparison to the music in question: the order of words and phrases can differ greatly from the printed vocal scores. Because the printed scores seem a closer reflection of the operas as they existed in performance, I have generally followed their text-setting when there is any conflict between sources. Yet the scores themselves were published only in piano scores and piano-vocal scores; full scores remained the treasured property of the publishers.

Given the general lack of archival material related to these productions, my dissertation chiefly relies on printed press coverage of these events, viewed in conjunction with available early librettos and scores. Given the Milanese setting, I have focused largely on local sources, although I have also used sources from across Italy and French journals (especially *Le Ménestrel* and *Le Monde artiste*) when appropriate. The relevant Italian journals fall into several categories, each with its own unique strengths and weaknesses.

(1) Music and theater journals provide detailed analyses of performances, coverage of social events featuring well-known musicians, as well as gossip and rumors. Often issued weekly or bi-weekly, these journals contain reviews which are often published several days after an operatic performance. Their contributors are usually identified only by pseudonyms (“Virgilio,” “Il Misovulgo,” etc.); the authors’ true identities remain unknown in most cases. These journals are sometimes explicitly biased, as they were typically run by publishing houses and theatrical agencies: *La gazzetta musicale di Milano*, for example, as the Casa Ricordi house publication, rarely provides fair or adequate coverage of Massenet’s operas in his Milanese period. Other journals, although not officially tied to either firm, exclusively carry advertisements for music published by either the Casa Ricordi or the Casa Sonzogno. In terms of the publishers’ rivalry, the least overtly biased journals are *La gazzetta teatrale italiana*, *Il mondo artistico*, and *La rivista teatrale melodrammatica*, although these journals are often biased in favor of particular singers promoted by their own theatrical agencies.
Illustrated papers such as the *L’illustrazione italiana*, *L’illustrazione popolare*, and *Il secolo illustro della domenica* establish music’s role within Italian culture as a whole, placing coverage of operas side-by-side with current political and cultural events. Marketed toward decidedly middle-class and often female readers, illustrated papers typically feature advertisements for luxury items such as perfumes. Their coverage of operatic performances tends to focus less on musical details than on summarizing the effect of the production as a whole. They often feature elaborate illustrations of climatic scenes from operas which can provide insight into staging and costuming practices. *Il secolo illustro della domenica* is particularly useful as it is the descendent of the Casa Sonzogno’s music journal, *Il teatro illustro* (publication suspended 1892), and frequently features music criticism by Amintore Galli, the Casa Sonzogno’s chief musical adviser. The journal is frequently biased in favor of Sonzogno productions, although its coverage of operas promoted by the Casa Ricordi (*Iris*, *Tosca*) seems relatively neutral.

The daily papers are vital for establishing detailed records of operatic productions: they contain daily advertisements of works performed, list ticket prices, and note any major substitutions within the cast. Several papers regularly feature promotional articles on the day of an opera’s premiere, which summarize the plot of the opera in advance. They typically contain detailed reviews of the early performances of a production, and are the best sources for understanding an operatic performance as an event occurring in real time. Their critics rarely employ complex musical terminology, writing instead for general readers. Their target audiences vary widely: *Il secolo* (published by the Casa Sonzogno and heavily biased) is an explicitly liberal newspaper; *Il sole* is geared toward businessmen. Both *La Lombardia* and *La perseveranza* feature prominent arts coverage.

These materials, while obviously incomplete, allow us to reconstruct the outlines of Massenet’s Milanese period. Because so many important documents are lost, Massenet and Sonzogno remain hazy figures in our story; mysterious actors whose motives may be guessed, but
who rarely speak directly. But their presence is not necessary to the history sketched here: the reception of *Manon*, *Werther*, and *Thaïs* emerges more clearly when not weighed down by the personal biases of the men who worked so hard to bring these operas to the Italian public.

**Chapter summaries**

This study of Massenet’s Milanese reception analyzes the numerous discourses centered on the Italian premieres of *Manon*, *Werther*, and *Thaïs*. As the first major study of the Milanese period of Massenet’s Italian reception, this dissertation contributes to scholarly knowledge in a number of ways. Through this study, I demonstrate Massenet’s central importance to Sonzogno’s narrative of nationalist cosmopolitanism and place Massenet’s operas in the context of Italian cultural nationalism. Further, I trace the reception of each of these operas in relation to the reception of the novels on which they were based, and consider the ways in which the operas were affected by the processes of translation and by international politics.

*Manon* (Chapter One) placed Massenet in conflict with Puccini (who premiered his own *Manon Lescaut* the same year that Massenet’s opera reached Italy), and the opera’s reception provides useful insight into the intersection between Franco-Italian diplomatic relations and Italian cultural nationalism. *Manon* was variously interpreted as a French opera, an international opera, and even (in some aspects) an Italianate opera. At the same time, this tragicomic opera greatly confused Italian critics who were not familiar with *opéra comique* as a genre.

*Werther* (Chapter Two), although not as popularly successful as *Manon*, was the occasion of Massener’s first visit to Italy in twelve years; Massenet and his publisher positioned the composer as a musical celebrity equal to Verdi, and *Werther* as the masterpiece that proved his worth. The opera’s relationship to Goethe’s celebrated novel played a major role in this process, as did Massenet’s
shrewd policy of socializing with the crème of Milanese musical society, disarming his critics. *Werther* is the opera that remade Massenet’s Italian reputation.

*Thaïs* (Chapter Three) saw Massenet’s music performed simultaneously with diplomatic celebrations of new accords between France and Italy, and the composer was praised as the leader of a new, transnational musical community. At the same time, however, Massenet’s Italian critics saw the opera as benefitting exclusively from the political context and from the beauty of the soprano, leading them to discount the opera and treat Massenet and his music as passé.

Finally, in the conclusion, I analyze Massenet’s Italian obituaries (1912), summarizing the place that he had earned within Italian musical life, and the composer’s legacy in Italy, and suggests directions for future research. This study of Massenet’s Milanese reception exposes the numerous ways that foreign operas thrived in a society which had come to prize opera as an expression of national identity above all else.
CHAPTER ONE

Manon and the Critics: Locating French Opera within Italian Culture

Introduction

Of the operas considered in this dissertation, Massenet’s Manon was the most overtly politicized. From the beginning, the opera was caught up in the bitter rivalry between the Ricordi and Sonzogno publishing firms; Ricordi briefly held the Italian distribution rights to the opera before they passed to Sonzogno. When Manon became the property of the Casa Sonzogno, its Italian reception was dominated by comparisons with Giacomo Puccini’s opera Manon Lescaut, published by Ricordi. Both operas were equally popular throughout Italy during the fine secolo, and the regular performances of Massenet’s and Puccini’s Manons were powerful symbols of the publishers’ rivalry in fine secolo Italy.

Equally importantly, Manon’s Italian reception destabilized dominant discourses of cultural nationalism. Manon arrived in Italy in the wake of Pietro Mascagni’s Cavalleria rusticana (1890) and Puccini’s Manon Lescaut (1893), operas which were widely hailed as restoring the failing tradition of Italian opera. Yet Massenet’s Manon enjoyed a level of popularity unparalleled by any foreign opera since the arrival of Bizet’s Carmen in Italy (1879). In the five years between 1893 and 1897, Massenet’s Manon was produced at least forty-five times in some twenty-three Italian cities, with multiple productions in major cities such as Milan, Turin, Naples, Florence, and Rome (see Appendix 2). Manon’s success in Italy undermined much of the nationalist rhetoric surrounding Puccini’s success—in Turin, Italian operagoers were just as likely to hear Massenet’s opera as

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1Alexandra Wilson, “Defining Italianness: The Opera that Made Puccini,” The Opera Quarterly 24 no. 1–2 (2008), 82–92.
Puccini’s; in Milan, Massenet’s opera was produced far more regularly than Puccini’s. Consequently, *Manon*’s reception alters the existing scholarly portrait of fine secolo Italian opera.

*Manon* became an obvious problem for nationalist critics, especially as Franco-Italian relations ebbed in the wake of the Aigues Mortes massacre of 1893; some critics even called for Massenet’s opera to be temporarily banned. In reply to these attacks, music critics supporting the Casa Sonzogno proposed a variety of ways in which Massenet’s *Manon* could be a culturally meaningful experience for Italian audiences. The debates over *Manon* are a milestone in the formation of the Casa Sonzogno’s aesthetic fusion of cultural nationalism with cosmopolitanism.

The following chapter falls into four large sections, each of which articulates ways in which Massenet’s *Manon* affected and was in turn affected by Italian operatic culture. The first section sketches *Manon*’s pre-history in Italy: the nine-year delay between *Manon*’s French and Italian premieres, and the debate over Massenet’s conflict with Puccini in the months before the premiere. The second analyzes the adaptation and translation of Massenet’s opera for the Italian market and the premiere itself. The third section explores some of the ways that Italian critics made space for French opera within Italian culture, explaining the opera in terms of nationalism, cosmopolitanism, or some combination of the two. The fourth and final section is devoted to *Manon*’s legacy in Italy, with particular attention to Massenet’s rivalry with Puccini and the opera’s role as a repertory piece for the Casa Sonzogno.

I. BEFORE THE PREMIERE

Although *Manon* was first performed in 1884, it did not reach Italy until 1893. The Italian press therefore asked, “Why hasn’t it been performed in Italy before?”2 And critics sympathetic to

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2“*Manon* di J. Massenet al teatro Carcano,” MA 27 no. 45 (28 Oct 1893), 3: “Perché non è stata data prima d’ora in Italia?”
Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* similarly suggested that if Massenet’s *Manon* had waited nine years for its Italian premiere, it would do little harm to postpone its premiere further. This section will explore why *Manon* waited so long to come to Italy and the early debates over its rivalry with Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*.

**Manon and the publishers**

It is difficult to answer questions about *Manon*’s arrival in Italy conclusively, since, as noted in the Introduction, the Sonzogno offices and their associated archives were largely destroyed in World War II. But it is clear that the rights to the opera passed between two French and two Italian publishers in the years 1886–1891.

*Manon* was first published by the French firm of George Hartmann in 1884, the same year that the opera premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. Following their previous promotion of *Le Roi de Labire* and *Hérodiade* in Italy, the Casa Ricordi announced that they had acquired the Italian distribution rights to *Manon* by March 1886; Ricordi also advertised an Italian translation by Gian Andrea Mazzucato. By this time, performances of the opera in Italian had already occurred in New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago. These performances may well have been experiments to test the opera’s success in foreign markets before importing it to Italy; the Casa Sonzogno had followed a similar procedure with Bizet’s *Carmen*. Two weeks after Ricordi’s announcement, however, Marie

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3 Untitled article, GMM 41 no. 11 (14 March 1886), 2; front-page advertisement, GMM 41 no. 11 (14 Mar 1886).


Heilbron, the first soprano to portray Manon on stage, died at the age of thirty-five, and Massenet suspended the current production of the opera in Paris.⁶

The next seven years contain little relevant concrete evidence. For unknown reasons, the Ricordi firm forfeited the Italian rights to Massenet’s *Manon.*⁷ Possibly Ricordi was concerned by the opera’s fall from the Parisian repertory; perhaps the Ricordi firm realized that *Hérodiade* had not been as successful as *Le Roi de Labore* (see Appendix 5), and doubted the wisdom of continued investment in Massenet; or, perhaps, they realized that promoting Giuseppe Verdi’s *Otello* (which premiered in 1887) would consume much of their resources. By July 1888, *Manon* had passed to the rival publishing firm of Sonzogno.⁸ Under Sonzogno’s care, the opera was not performed in Italy for another five years; again, the destruction of the Sonzogno archives makes it difficult to reconstruct events. The most likely explanation is that Massenet and his French publisher, Georges Hartmann, did not want an Italian production to proceed until the opera had been revived in Paris; this was not achieved until 1891, when *Manon* was staged at the Opéra-Comique, starring Massenet’s protégé Sibyl Sanderson. Unfortunately, Hartmann’s publishing firm folded in May of the same year. Hartmann’s stock, including Massenet’s *Manon,* eventually passed to the firm of Henri Heugel. It is unknown if the change in ownership meant that the Italian rights had to be re-negotiated, but it seems likely, as the British rights were re-negotiated in February 1891.⁹

*Manon’s* eventual premiere in 1893 came at an opportune moment for the Casa Sonzogno. The previous years (1890–1892) had been filled with successful operas by young Italian composers.

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⁶Irvine, *Massenet,* 145, 316. The opera did not return to Paris until 1891, but it was performed in the cities of Lyon, Rouen, Le Havre, Toulouse, and Montpellier between 1886 and 1889. Branger, *Manon,* 96n.

⁷I have examined the surviving letters between Massenet and the Ricordi firm in the Archivio storico Ricordi in Milan; there is a ten-year gap (from 1887 to 1897) in their surviving correspondence.

⁸“Notizario,” *Il teatro illustrato* 8 no. 91 (July 1888), 96.

published by the firm: Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), which toured Italy through 1891, and *L’amico Fritz* (1891); Ruggiero Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, Mascagni’s *I Rantzau*, and Umberto Giordano’s *Mala Vita* (the latter three in 1892). It is probably not a coincidence that Massenet’s *Manon* was premiered in Italy in a year (1893) in which Sonzogno brought out only one major new opera by an Italian composer: Leoncavallo’s *I Medici*, a would-be Italian answer to Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungens* (Leoncavallo never completed the projected sequels of his tentative trilogy of Italian Renaissance operas).¹⁰ The premiere of Massenet’s *Manon*, in the autumn of 1893, also was an apt answer to Giacomo Puccini’s recent *Manon Lescaut*, which was first performed in February 1893 in Turin.¹¹

**Patriotism at the opera: the debate between D’Ormeville and delli Specchi**

The first major debate over *Manon*’s impact on Italian operatic culture occurred before the opera had ever been performed in Italy, with an exchange of articles between Carlo D’Ormeville and a certain Cavaliere delli Specchi (probably a pseudonym). Unlike the reviews of the opera’s eventual performance, this exchange of polemical articles pays no attention to the sound of the music or its effect on stage, debating instead *Manon*’s place within Italian operatic culture and what measures should be taken to protect Italian art from foreign incursions. This debate is the first substantial coverage of *Manon* in the Italian press, and it suggests the level of hostility that Massenet’s music faced from Italian nationalists.

It is telling, however, that the debate between D’Ormeville and delli Specchi did not occur in the journals published by Ricordi and Sonzogno. D’Ormeville, a well-known theatrical agent and

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librettist, ran his own journal, the *Gazzetta dei teatri*, which promoted his singers and touring companies. While not officially affiliated with either Ricordi or Sonzogno, D’Ormeville adverized music published by Ricordi, not Sonzogno, in his journal. He probably had business connections with the Ricordi firm, and it is not surprising that he argued in favor of suppressing Massenet’s opera. D’Ormeville’s essay was sparked by the knowledge that Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* would have its Milanese premiere in the upcoming Carnival season at La Scala, and Sonzogno was about to stage Massenet’s opera before the Italian public had a chance to hear Puccini’s opera.

When the journals announced that Mr. Sonzogno, having assumed responsibility for two or three Milanese theaters for the fall season, would have Massenet’s *Manon Lescaut* performed in one of them, I did not want to believe this announcement. Now that the news is officially confirmed, allow me to say a few words on the matter, as frank as they are unbiased.

I must say first of all that I am not speaking out of a silly fit of chauvinisme, because I have always believed that Italy must show, as she has always shown, the greatest and most cordial hospitality to strangers; I am a proud supporter of the principle that art must have no boundaries. I must also say that I am not speaking out of political enmity, because it would truly be foolishness to close Italian theaters to French authors solely because French shipyards are now closed to Italian workers, as has been demanded, and never would I want an Italian Aigues Mortes to damage French artists. I must finally say that I am not speaking out of personal enmity, or on behalf of others, who could be more or less directly interested in this issue. I speak only from a purely spontaneous feeling in my soul, free from any insinuations and from any ulterior motives.

Massenet’s *Manon Lescaut* came into the world about eight years ago and all this time Mr. Sonzogno has never thought of having it performed in Italy[...]

Now, however, that one of our young and talented fellow-citizens has covered himself with true glory with a work based on the same plot—now that the performance of this work on the great stage of our Scala is approaching—now, exactly now, Mr. Sonzogno has decided to import Massenet’s opera of the same

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12D’Ormeville had written librettos for operas such as Marchetti’s *Ray Blas* (1869), Gomes’ *Il Guarany* (1870), Catalani’s *Elda* (1877), and Ponchielli’s *Lina* (1877).

13Confusingly, Italian critics regularly referred to both Massenet’s *Manon* and Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* as *Manon Lescaut*.

14On August 17, 1893, Italian migrant workers were attacked during riots in the small French town of Aigues-Mortes. The rioters, French workers who believed the Italians were taking their jobs, killed about thirty Italians and injured a hundred more. The massacre sparked public demonstrations against the French; see Christopher Duggan, *Francesco Crispi, 1818–1901: From Nation to Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 630: “In Rome the windows of the French embassy were smashed; in Messina the French consulate was attacked; and in Genoa and Naples trams owned by a French company were set on fire.” Full-scale rioting erupted in Rome and Naples. Salvatore Saladino, *Italy from Unification to 1919: Growth and Decay of a Liberal Regime* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), 77; quotation from
name here. Evidently he believes and hopes that this importation will attack Puccini’s opera, and this does not seem to me, and is not, as a matter of fact, convenient or patriotic. If Massenet’s *Manon Lescaut* had already been performed in other Italian theaters, then never mind; but, since it has waited eight years, it seems to me that one could wait another six months and give the French *Manon* in Milan after the Italian *Manon*. Oh! If, reversing the situation, someone were to dare to put on Puccini’s *Lescaut* in Paris—that is what he now wants to do here with Massenet’s *Lescaut*...

I conclude in the hope that Mr. Sonzogno—who for all his speculations, has the soul of an artist, and, for all his productions of French operas, is an Italian citizen—will want to reflect impartially on all that I have impartially proposed, and that it will be decided to cancel the announced performance of the French score. Certainly I am not afraid that a comparison [of the two operas] will crush Puccini, not at all. I would like, however, the faintest suspicion of a war against him to be removed.

Mr. Sonzogno has shown great care over Leoncavallo’s *Medici*, and on these grounds we are completely in agreement. But one does not bring foreign weapons to the fight for the glory of our homeland.15

The internal contradiction in D’Ormeville’s argument is striking. On the one hand, Italy must remain open to foreign art: “art must have no boundaries.” On the other hand, to perform

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15Carlo D’Ormeville, “Due franco parole,” in GDT 55 no. 33 (7 Sept 1893), 3: “Quando i giornali annunziarono che il signor Sonzogno, assunta per l’autunno l’impresa di due o tre teatri milanesi, avrebbe fatto rappresentare in uno di questi la *Manon Lescaut* di Massenet, io non volli prestar fede a cosi fatto annunzio. Ora che la notizia è officialmente confermata, mi siano permesse due parole altrettanto franche che disinteressate su tale proposito.

“Premetto che io non parlo per uno sciocco accesso di chauvinisme, poichè ho sempre creduto che l’Italia debba usare, come costantemente ha usato, la più larga e cordiale ospitalità verso gli stranieri, fautore, quale mi vanto, del principio che per l’arte non vi debbano essere barriere—premetto che io non parlo per animadversione politica, poichè sarebbe davvero una stoltezza il pretendere che abbiano a chiudersi i teatri italiani agli autori francesi per il solo fatto che i cantieri francesi si vanno chiudendo agli operai italiani, nè mai mi verrebbe in mente di desiderare una Aigues Mortes cisalpina a danno di artisti transalpini—premetto infine che io non parlo nè per antipatie personali, nè in favore di terzi, che possano essere in questo fatto più o meno direttamente interessati. Io parlo solo per un sentimento dell’anima tanto spontaneo, quanto scervo da qualunque sottinteso e da qualunque secondo fine.

“La *Manon Lescaut* di Massenet è venuta al mondo da circa otto anni e tutto questo tempo il signor Sonzogno non ha mai pensato di riprodurla in Italia...

“Ora però che un giovane e valente nostro concittadino si è coperto di vera gloria con un lavoro, che ha per base lo stesso argomento—ora che la riproduzione di questo lavoro sulle massime scene della nostra Scala è imminente—ora, proprio ora il signor Sonzogno si decide ad importare fra noi il lavoro omonimo di Massenet. Evidentemente con questa importazione si crede e si spera di far torto all’opera del Puccini, e questo non mi sembra, e non è infatti, nè conveniente, nè patriottico. Se la *Manon Lescaut* di Massenet fosse già stata rappresentata in qualche teatro d’Italia, pazienza: ma, posto che si era aspettato otto anni, pare a me che si sarebbe potuto aspettare ancora sei mesi e dare la *Manon* francese a Milano dopo la *Manon* italiana. Oh! se, invertendo le parti, qualcuno avesse osato di fare a Parigi, con la *Lescaut* del Puccini, quello che ora si vuol fare fra noi con la *Lescaut* del Massenet!...

“Concludo sperando che il signor Sonzogno—il quale, per quanto speculatore, ha anima d’artista, e, per quanto rappresentante di opere francesi, è cittadino italiano—voglia serenamente riflettere a quanto serenamente io qui venni esponendo, e si decida a sospendere l’annunziata esecuzione dello spartito francese. Certo io non temo che dall’immediato confronto il Puccini abbia a rimanere schiacciato, tutt’altro. Mi piacerebbe però che fosse allontanato anche il più sospetto di una guerra bandita contro di lui.

“Rivolga il signor Sonzogno tutte le sue cure ai *Medici* di Leoncavallo e su quel campo ci troveremo tutti d’accordo, ma di fronte ad una gloria patria non sorga con armi straniere a combattere.”
Massenet’s *Manon* before Puccini’s opera has had a chance to be heard in Milan seems like a sign of “war” against Puccini, an attack neither “convenient [n]or patriotic.” While D’Ormeville decries national biases, he explicitly uses the French word *chauvinisme*, as if to suggest that nationalist insularity is an explicitly French trait. Later in his article, he suggests that staging Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* in Paris would be understood as an insult in France, providing an implicit example of French *chauvinisme* in (hypothetical) action. Despite D’Ormeville’s argument in favor of showing “hospitality to strangers,” he implies that staging Massenet’s opera would hurt Italian art. Sonzogno’s promotion of Massenet might well have been easier for D’Ormeville to process had Sonzogno represented a foreign publishing firm; that Sonzogno “for all his productions of French operas, is an Italian citizen” only makes matters worse. Italians should not promote foreign operas at the expense of operas by other Italians.

That D’Ormeville should rise to the defense of Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* is not extraordinary, since the opera had met a tremendously enthusiastic reception when it premiered in Turin in February 1893, and it was supposed to be performed at La Scala, the most prestigious opera house in Milan, within the next year.¹⁶ (Puccini’s opera had not been first given in Milan so as not to distract audiences from Verdi’s *Falstaff*, which premiered in Milan within the same week).¹⁷ Puccini’s opera, his first great success, was also the work that turned him from an obscure composer, whose only full-length opera had been a flop, into the young composer best suited to carry Verdi’s mantle and continue the Italian tradition: Puccini was “the young man in whom our highest hopes for our

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¹⁶Alexandra Wilson, “Defining Italianess: The Opera that Made Puccini.”

¹⁷This also was partly out of caution, since Puccini’s previous opera, *Edgar*, had failed at La Scala in 1889. Budden, *Puccini*, 66.
art are now placed.”" In the cultural nationalist environment in which D'Ormeville and other critics operated, threatening Puccini was an attack on Italian art, and (by extension) Italy itself.

D'Ormeville’s brief reference to Ruggiero Leoncavallo’s *I Medici* is especially telling, as it offers a vision of what D'Ormeville thinks Sonzogno’s mission ought to be. D'Ormeville implies that Sonzogno should promote more operas like *Medici*, a drama steeped in Italian history, composed by a talented young Italian composer. D'Ormeville's statement “one does not bring foreign weapons to fight for the glory of our homeland” lends itself to a militantly nationalist interpretation: the glory of Italy is achieved through the glory of Italian art. Opera is a weapon with which one can fight for the honor of the nation on the national and international stage, and Sonzogno, as a power broker who encourages and supports young Italian composers, should continue to do his duty for Italy. Therefore D'Ormeville suggests that Sonzogno, in effect, should give precedence to Puccini’s opera, as published by Ricordi, for the benefit of Italian art and Italy itself; the Italian must be given pride of place over the foreign. Patriotism demands nothing less.

D'Ormeville’s article drew a rapid and passionate response. In the following number of the *Gazzetta dei teatri*, D'Ormeville published a reply by the Cavaliere delli Specchi which had been printed in the newspaper *La sera*.

Like this, to sum up, Mr. Sonzogno has to shelve Massenet’s opera, so as not to take advantage of the novelty of Puccini’s plot, and he has to favor a competitor’s play for the insane pleasure of listening…to the patriot, my good friend D’Ormeville! It’s too much!

Our lyric theater has long had the disgrace of being the monopoly of Commendatore Ricordi. Italian production has been dead. The young have not been able to find a dog to help them. All the musicians that graduated from our Conservatories in the last decade have had to break their pens, having become useless.

Anyone who succeeded—whether through recommendations, or clear signs of talent—on miraculously entering the impenetrable Mosque on via Omenoni [Ricordi’s house], saw sometimes smiles of commiseration, sometimes

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encouragement and flattery, sometimes also, but less often, an offer—and *I Medici* and Ruggero Leoncavallo, which the esteemed D’Ormeville has made the mistake of mentioning, can speak to this!—some financial help and the promise, almost never kept, of trying a staged rehearsal.

This is what the Italian operatic theater was reduced to!

Finally, as an amusement for a great man, Edoardo Sonzogno added a musical division to his industrial [publishing] efforts. The young turned to him and were treated with only minor “salaam aleikums,” but were given useful help. We suddenly had a kind of theatrical orgy: all the musicians forced into silence for years set to work with ardor. Outside Italy they began to see that our resources were not exhausted: in all our theatrical life there was a strong and healthy awakening, and—a comforting result—from the minds of our new composers there came, among many monsters, quite a few beautiful, strong, and vital creatures.

Now that Mr. Sonzogno, who has not yet staged Massenet’s *Manon*, just as he has not staged Reyer’s *Sigurd*, just as he has not attempted Saint Saën’s *Enrico*—for a good reason: the young Italian masters gave him no time; now—I say—Mr. Sonzogno does not need a season to prepare to give us a taste of the refined loveliness of Massenet’s opera! Mr. Sonzogno, because he loves his country, cannot content himself to let the beautiful and fortunate opera by our Puccini have the run of quite a lot of theaters, before launching a score that, if performed, for example, last year, would have taken away all the freshness of the plot chosen by the musician from Lucca [Puccini]! Mr. Sonzogno, according to D’Ormeville, always for love of country, must let this *Manon* sleep in peace so as not to exist at the same time as herself…

Mr. Sonzogno, in short, continuing this argument, must never shake the dust from Thomas’s *Francesca da Rimini*, out of patriotic respect toward Antonio Cagnoni, and he also must, in the future, which I hope will come soon for our art, prohibit Ruggero Leoncavallo’s *Vie de Bobeme* from being staged from the patriotic fear of holding up Giacomo Puccini’s way, who is pleased to be producing an opera on the same subject!

It is an evangelical resignation, this, which the esteemed D’Ormeville cannot expect!

For art, meanwhile—and this is the conclusion that consoles everyone—we will have one result: let us applaud the aristocratic deliciousness of Massenet’s music and unanimously welcome the sweet melodies of Puccini: *Manon* and her infinite love will be twice glorified.

It is better thus, putting patriotism aside!

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19 Sonzogno also held the Italian rights for Ernest Reyer’s *Sigurd* and Camille Saint-Saën’s *Henri VIII*.


21 Puccini and Leoncavallo had each recently announced their intention of completing an opera based on Henry Murger’s *Scénes de la vie de bohème*. Budden, *Puccini*, 137–38.

22 “Al Cavaliere deli Specchi,” GDT 55 no. 34 (14 Sept 1893), 2. “Così, riassumendo, il signor Sonzogno dovrebbe lasciare ne’ suoi scaffali l’opera del Massenet, per non sfruttare la novità dell’argomento trattato dal Puccini e dovrebbe
Delli Specchi’s scathing reply makes clear his partisan support for Sonzogno. He seems to have ignored all of D’Ormeville’s claims of impartiality, as if they were not even worthy of a reply: in his view, D’Ormeville obviously represents Ricordi’s interest. The contrast between Ricordi’s firm, which seems to consist only of Puccini (Alberto Franchetti is not mentioned), and Sonzogno’s, which has the rest of the young composers, is exaggerated, for one thing. And to talk of a “strong and healthy awakening” in Italian opera without mentioning the impact of Verdi’s Otello (1887) is an unusual omission, as well.
Delli Specchi’s striking comparison of Ricordi’s establishment with a mosque and its promises of help to “salaam aleikums” seem designed to belittle Ricordi through comparison with orientalist stereotypes. The specific example of Ricordi’s help, “a sort of financial help and the promise, almost never kept, of trying a staged rehearsal,” almost certainly alludes to Leoncavallo’s contract with Ricordi for *I Medici*. Leoncavallo was to receive 2400 lire and future royalties, but Ricordi did not have the opera performed. After waiting a year for Ricordi to take action, Leoncavallo took the opera to Sonzogno, who arranged the premiere. This story is a clear example of what delli Specchi saw as Ricordi’s oppressive grasp on the Italian opera industry.

Clearly, D’Ormeville’s attack on Sonzogno’s patriotism cut deep: delli Specchi repeats the word and its derivatives five times, each time employing it as a backhanded insult. Yet fundamentally delli Specchi agrees with D’Ormeville’s description of the role of opera in Italian society as a tool with which to fight for the glory of the nation. This is most apparent from delli Specchi’s account of the renewal of Italian art: “Outside Italy they began to see that our resources were not exhausted.” International acknowledgement of Italy’s artistic achievements validates Sonzogno’s efforts; the blood metaphor (delli Specchi refers to *la vena nostra*, literally “our veins”) further suggests an awareness of Italian traditions and heritage. In delli Specchi’s eyes, Ricordi’s monopoly of Italian opera is responsible for the decay of Italian operatic culture. Its bureaucracy limits the success of young composers, breaking their pens and effectively thinning the blood of Italian art, weakening and feminizing it. (Who are the young composers who had their pens broken by Ricordi? Certainly Leoncavallo, and probably Mascagni, who had also attempted to interest Ricordi in his operas, but...

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Sonzogno’s young composers, on the other hand, are responsible for “strong and vital” works.

Patriotism, the nourishing of the nation’s artistic blood, remains the motivating factor for each author. When D’Ormeville suggests that all Italian publishers should set aside their differences in the service of Italian art, delli Specchi implies that D’Ormeville’s cries of patriotism are simply a clever cover for Ricordi’s business interests and an attempt to suppress the competition. Indeed, in delli Specchi’s view, Sonzogno’s efforts at reviving Italian operatic culture are true acts of patriotism, since Sonzogno has promoted the works of many young Italian composers. Delli Specchi’s closing point, that the competition between the two operas will hurt neither, effectively calls D’Ormeville’s bluff: if D’Ormeville is not worried that competition between the two operas will hurt Puccini’s work, then why is he complaining?

Yet delli Specchi’s article contains its own internal contradiction, since it never explicitly clarifies the role that imported foreign operas are to play in Italian musical culture. For all his defense of Sonzogno’s importation of French operas, delli Specchi does not claim that French operas are a healthy influence on Italian art. They are not acknowledged to be an influence at all, and consequently cannot be a threat. Sonzogno’s patriotism is proved by his support of young composers such as Leoncavallo, but how can delli Specchi imply, as he does, that Sonzogno’s promotion of Massenet’s Manon is a patriotic act? The answer must lie in his argument that the Italian public deserves to hear “the refined loveliness” and “aristocratic deliciousness” of Massenet’s opera, as it deserves to hear other operas by other French composers such as Saint-Saëns, Reyer, and Thomas.

What exactly are Italians supposed to gain from hearing these operas? Delli Specchi never clarifies this precisely, but the subtext is that it is healthy to be exposed to a variety of operatic traditions. Foreign operas are not role models for young Italian composers, since they are already busy continuing the Italian tradition with their strong and vital works. Yet ultimately, delli Specchi simultaneously understands opera through nationalist and cosmopolitan terms. Sonzogno’s importation of *Manon* to Italy is an act of patriotism, in that it gives the Italians an opportunity to demonstrate their cosmopolitanism through the process of hearing (and appreciating) foreign operas and allows them to stay abreast of contemporary culture.

Delli Specchi’s nationalist construction of cosmopolitanism stands in contrast to D’Ormeville’s willingness to suppress Massenet’s opera for the glory of Italian art. Both authors acknowledge the importance of importing foreign operas, although D’Ormeville sees the performance of such works as less necessary than delli Specchi does; the difference in their views is how to deal with foreign operas which threaten Italian operas. Putting the business of maintaining the artistic glory of Italy into economic terms, delli Specchi argues for a free market, while D’Ormeville argues for a restrictive tariff to protect home-grown products. These two argumentative positions in turn reflect the political and economic tensions of both the opera business and of Franco-Italian political relations, which had recently erupted into violence over tensions between French and Italian workers.25 Yet despite their differences, the two authors do agree that opera should contribute to the glory of the Italian nation. D’Ormeville even goes so far as to suggest, in a furious rebuttal reiterating his earlier arguments, that competition between two Italian operas on the same subject (such as Puccini’s and Leoncavallo’s *Bohèmes*) is healthy, since Italian art will triumph either way.26

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25See note 14.

The debate between D’Ormeville and delli Specchi highlights nationalist interpretations of how to fit Massenet’s *Manon* within Italian culture. D’Ormeville’s protectionist policy suggests that he saw French opera a clear “other” to Italian opera; as foreign art, French opera does not deserve to take pride of place on Italian stages. His attempt to protect Puccini’s opera from Massenet’s clearly implies his opinion of the relative value of the two operas to Italian culture. Delli Specchi’s more nuanced argument, on the other hand, positions French opera in a hybrid position. Italian audiences should have the ability to demonstrate their openness to foreign art; therefore, foreign art should be introduced, even set into competition with native art (*Puccini’s Manon Lescaut*). In delli Specchi’s construction, therefore, the Italian audience acquires cosmopolitan values by interacting with foreign art. Or, put another way, going to see Massenet’s *Manon* is both an international and a national experience. Foreign opera, while not an expression of Italian national identity, is essential to delli Specchi’s implicit definition of the Italian operatic experience, which includes the knowledgeable appreciation of foreign opera.

The aftershocks of this debate continued up until the premiere, as it became clear that both operas would be produced in Milan within the next year. A short article published in *Il Mondo artistico* (reprinted from the *Gazzetta piemontese*) satirically summarized the debate:

> Massenet’s *Manon* has given rise to lively polemics. It appeared less patriotic to a certain firm to present the French maestro’s *Manon* to the Milanese public before that of the Italian maestro. But really it seems to us that patriotism, in art, is beautiful and good chauvinisme, and, thank heaven, artistic chauvinisme is a French sin, not an Italian one. Besides it is good not to forget that when Puccini was about to set his *Manon* to music, Massenet’s was already in existence; therefore the rivalry, if rivalry is really the word, was not caused by Massenet. On the other hand, the Italian *Manon* has no reason to fear the French *Manon*, given the different ways in which the two maestros have developed the story; instead, the comparison between the scores will be pleasing.27

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27“Appunti quesiti,” MA 27 no. 42–43(10 Oct 1893), 5. “La *Manon* di Massenet ha dato luogo a vivaci polemiche. Parve a taluno impresa meno patriottica quella di presentare al giudizio del pubblico milanese la *Manon* del maestro francese prima della *Manon* del maestro italiano. Ma in verità ci sembra che il patriottismo, in arte, sia chauvinisme bello e buono e, grazie al cielo, lo chauvinisme artistico è peccato francese non italiano. Inoltre giova non dimenticare che quando il Puccini si accinse a musicare la sua *Manon*, esisteva già la *Manon* di Massenet; la rivalità dunque, se pur di rivalità è il caso di
The oblique reference to Ricordi (“a certain firm”) suggests that delli Specchi was not alone in his disregard for D’Ormeville’s protestations of impartiality. The comments on the difference between Italian patriotism and French chauvinisme ironically underscore D’Ormeville’s own use of the term to characterize the French. In this view, Massenet’s opera is not trying to compete with Puccini’s; if anything Puccini’s opera represents an Italian attack on French artistic territory. Predictably, the review of Manon in the Sonzogno newspaper Il secolo makes a similar point: “Before Massenet, Halevy set Manon to music, as a ballet, and Auber [as an opera]: Puccini came last.”

Massenet apparently kept abreast of this debate. His concerns about the tense Franco-Italian political situation (which emerges in D’Ormeville’s passing reference to the massacre of Italian migrant workers at Aigues-Mortes), and the Sonzogno-Ricordi rivalry can be deduced from a letter that Ruggiero Leoncavallo wrote to Massenet in October 1893:

[the baritone] Isnardon has shown me (in confidence) one of your letters laying out your concerns about the performance of Manon. Be absolutely calm…First of all the political situation here is not the way it has been represented in France. Real Italians love and respect France and support connections with France…As for your masterpiece, it will be judged with all the equanimity, respect, and interest due to a maestro such as yourself. In spite of my great involvement with the coming premiere of my second work [I Medici], I have attended piano and orchestra rehearsals, since, as you know, I know Manon by heart…Also, about those patriotic ideas…You are one of those composers whose nationality is disputed! As for us who admire you and delight in studying your work we will attend the premiere of Manon to cry again and again “Vive Massenet!”

—

parlare, non fu provocata dal Massenet. Ne d’altra parte la Manon italiana ha motivo di temere la Manon francese, dato il diverso modo con cui i due maestri hanno svolto l’argomento; piuttosto sarà gustoso il raffronto tra i due spartiti.”


Leoncavallo to Massenet, in Lettres autographes et correspondances diverses adressées principalement au maître et à Mme Massenet (Paris: Vente Henri Baudoin, 1938), rptd in Branger, Manon, 113: “Isnardon m’a montré, confidentiellement, une lettre de laquelle paraît clairement votre préoccupation pour la représentation de Manon. Soyez absolument tranquille…D’abord la situation politique n’est pas ce que l’on voudrait faire croire au-delà des Alpes…Les vrais Italiens aiment et respectent la France et n’ont point de sympathie pour ces alliances…Quant à votre chef-d’œuvre, il sera jugé avec toute la sérénité et avec tout respect et l’intérêt qu’on doit à un maître tel que vous. Moi-même, malgré mes graves préoccupations de la prochaine première de mon second ouvrage, je me suis rendu au théâtre pour assister aux répétitions de piano et d’orchestre, car, vous le savez, je connais par cœur Manon….Donc, point de préoccupations patriotiques…Vous êtes de ces maîtres dont on ne dispute la nationalité! Quant à nous qui vous admirons et qui nous faisons une gloire de vous étudier, nous attendons la première de Manon pour crier encore: Vive Massenet!”
As will be shown below, Leoncavallo’s assessment of the publishers’ rivalry and the political situation was basically correct: *Manon* enjoyed a tremendous success at its premiere, and the political controversies largely exhausted themselves before the premiere. Indeed, some Italian critics were clearly proud of Massenet’s success in Italy; Giuseppe Depanis of *La gazzetta piemontese* wrote delightedly:

…it adds a worthy score to our repertory, and it demonstrates that in Italy, thank God, *chauvinism* of any kind is not tolerated and politics and art do not mix. Can Massenet’s countrymen say the same?30

It was in the context of these aesthetic, musical, economic, and political tensions that an Italian audience first experienced Massenet’s *Manon*, on the night of the 19th of October 1893, at the Teatro Carcano in Milan.

II. THE ITALIAN MANON

While the debate between D’Ormeville and delli Specchi establishes much of the critical context for *Manon*’s Italian premiere, it is necessary to consider the opera’s significance as a musical and literary text. Far more than any of the other operas considered in this dissertation, *Manon* was heavily altered for the Italian market, being stripped of the generic markers of *opéra-comique*, and being distributed in Italian translation. This section will consider all these factors and complete our portrait of the many contexts for the adaptation of Massenet’s opera for the Italian market and the premiere itself.

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Changes for the Italian version

As we will see later, many Italian critics considered Massenet’s *Manon* as a typically French opera. Evaluations of this type focused on *Manon’s* status as an *opéra comique*, a style of French opera that was historically not very popular outside of France. Yet while the Italian critics viewed *Manon* as a uniquely French work, few critics acknowledged that the Italian version of *Manon* sounded very different from the French version. Indeed, when *opéras comiques* such as *Manon* or Bizet’s *Carmen* came to Italy, the spoken dialogue in between musical numbers, a distinctive feature of *opéra comique*, was turned into recitative, thus narrowing the expressive speech-song continuum. In *Manon’s* case, Massenet had composed French recitatives by December 1884, which were translated for the Italian edition.\(^{31}\)

*Manon*, however, was subjected to major cuts, beyond the changes that usually occurred in adapting an *opéra comique* for the Italian stage. The three secondary female parts (the actresses Rosette, Poussette, and Javotte) were removed, leaving Manon as the only female soloist, except for one female servant who barely sings. The opening of Act 1, in which the minor characters Rosette, Poussette, Javotte, Brebigny, and Guillot have dinner, was eliminated, and lines for Poussette and her friends in later scenes are assigned to other characters. Instead the act began with the chorus of travelers, which served as a traditional introductory chorus. Further, Act III, scene 1, which includes a ballet, was cut, for unknown reasons.\(^{32}\) Consequently, the remaining five scenes were redistributed into four acts. For the premiere, a new sequence of scenes was followed (see Table 6).

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\(^{32}\)While Italian operas even in this period rarely had integrated ballets, another version of Act III, scene 1 exists without the ballet; see for instance *Manon, an opera in Five acts, music by M. Massenet, words by MM. H. Meilhac and Ph. Gille. English version by Joseph Bennett. Music arranged by George Bellingham* [dual-language English and Italian libretto] (New York: F. Rullman, 1885); this Italian libretto was apparently used for early performances of *Manon* in Britain and the United States. My description of alterations to the Italian version used in Milan is based on the following score: *Manon, opera in quattro atti e cinque quadri, parole di Enrico Meilhac e Filippo Gillié, musica di G. Massenet, riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Sonzogno; Paris: Heugel, 1894, plate # H et C° 7012, G.H. 1525, G. H. 1528).
Table 6: The French and Italian sequence of scenes in *Manon*33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Plot summary</th>
<th>French sequence</th>
<th>Italian sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Amiens</em>: Manon and Des Grieux elope in Guillot's carriage</td>
<td>Act I</td>
<td>Act I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Des Grieux's apartment, Paris</em>: Manon decides to leave Des Grieux for M. de Brétigny</td>
<td>Act II</td>
<td>Act II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermezzo-Minuet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cours de la Reine</em>: At a popular festival, Manon hears that Des Grieux has entered the priesthood</td>
<td>Act III, scene 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Act III, scene 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>St. Sulpice</em>: Manon seduces Des Grieux in church</td>
<td>Act III, scene 2</td>
<td>Act III, scene 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermezzo-Minuet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hotel Transilvanie</em>: Des Grieux gambles; Manon is arrested</td>
<td>Act IV</td>
<td>Act III, scene 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Le Havre</em>: Manon dies</td>
<td>Act V</td>
<td></td>
<td>Act IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further complication to this sequence is the placement of the Intermezzo-Minuet, a setting of the “Folia de españa,” which Massenet introduced at the start of Act III. (Later in scene 1, the “Folia” returns, underscoring Manon’s dialogue with Des Grieux’s father.) The Italian sequence, having eliminated the Cours de la Reine scene, had no use for this thematic reminiscence, and placed the Minuet between the St. Sulpice and Hotel Transilvanie scenes.

The Italian critics encountered a very different *Manon* than the one they would have heard in Paris. Yet few critics seem to have realized this fact. The critic of *Il secolo* mistakenly claimed that Massenet himself had originally written the opera with recitatives: the performance was true to the composer’s intentions.34 Only the critics of the *Gazzetta dei teatri* and *La gazzetta piemontese*, the Turin daily paper, seem to have been aware of the changes or to have thought the changes to Massenet’s score worthy of comment. Depanis, writing for *La gazzetta piemontese*, wrote that he presumed the cuts were made with Massenet’s consent, but he still felt the combination of Act III, scene 2 and Act IV as a single act in two scenes was a mistake.35 Most critics assumed that the opera they heard


34“Eco dei teatri: Manon,” *Il secolo*, 20 Oct 1893, 3: “A differenza di tanti lavori dell’Opera Comica di Parigi, che hanno i dialoghi parlati, la *Manon* venne eseguita subito in origine coi recitativi in musica, e la odierna edizione del Carcano non differisce che per alcune accorciature volute da Massenet medesimo.”

represented Massenet’s intentions; the mediating processes of cultural translation were taken for

    granted.

    The Italian piano-vocal score of the opera also indicates some flexibility regarding the
organization of the opera’s last three scenes. Although the end of the Saint-Sulpice scene is labeled
“Fine del Atto III”, the opening of the Hotel Transylvanie scene is clearly marked “Quadro
secundo” [sic]; the end of the Transylvanie is labeled “Fine del 1° Quadro dell’Atto IV.” The last
scene, at Le Havre, meanwhile, is explicitly labeled “Atto IV.” Even though all performances I have
found seem to follow the grouping shown in Table 6 above, it is possible that some performances
grouped the Transylvanie and Le Havre scenes together as Act IV.\footnote{Massenet, opera in quattro atti e cinque quadri, parole di Enrico Meilhac e Filippo Gillé, musica di G. Massenet, riduzione per canto e pianoforte (Milan: Sonzogno; Paris: Heugel, 1894, plate # H et Cie 7012, G.H. 1525, G. H. 1528), 173, 174, 234, 235.}

    Although Massenet revised the score by 1890, the earliest Italian vocal score seems to owe
more to the pre-1890 edition.\footnote{Irvine, Massenet, 157; Branger, Manon, 100–102; Jack Winsor Hansen, The Sibyl Sanderson Story: Requiem for a Diva (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2005), 153–56.} The omission of Act III, scene 1, is especially odd, as that scene
appears in the earliest published Italian libretto, which was apparently used in Italian-language
productions in England and the United States (the ballet was still cut, however).\footnote{Manon, an opera in Five acts, music by M. Massenet, words by MM. H. Meilhac and Ph. Gille. English version by Joseph Bennett. Music arranged by George Bellingham [dual-language English and Italian libretto] (New York: F. Pullman, 1885), reissued as Manon (New York: Charles F. Burden, nd.: part of the series: Libretto. The original Italian French or German libretto with a correct English translation); Manon, an opera in four acts, the words by MM. H. Meilhac and Ph. Gille, the music composed by J. Massenet, the English version by Joseph Bennett [piano-vocal score] (London and New York: Novello, Ewer, and Co., c. 1885). The uncredited Italian translation in the dual-language libretto above generally matches that in Manon, opera in quattro atti e cinque quadri di H. Meilhac e F. Gillé, versione italiana di A. Zanardini, musica di G. Massenet (Milan: Sonzogno, 1931).} The Nouvel
Edition (new edition), which was published in France in 1895, was published directly in Italy by
Heugel (unlike earlier editions, which bear the names of both Heugel and Sonzogno), but it does not
seem to have reached Italy until the 1910s. Even then, though, there seems to have been some
confusion about the grouping of scenes into acts, with some indications in the score suggesting that
Act III, scene 1, could function as Act II, scene 2.\textsuperscript{39} To date, however, I have not uncovered any reference to a performance of \textit{Manon} which included Act III, scene 1; as late as 1969, the scene was omitted in Italian production at La Scala starring Luciano Pavarotti and Mirella Freni.\textsuperscript{40}

Given the confused state of the surviving Italian editions of the opera, it is hardly surprising that the Italian translations themselves present a baffling array of options. There are at least two Italian translations of \textit{Manon}: one published in Italian scores co-published by the Casa Sonzogno and Heugel et C\textsuperscript{6}; another translation, attributed to Angelo Zanardini, was published in librettos issued by the Casa Sonzogno.\textsuperscript{41} To date, I have found no trace of the translation by Gian Andrea Mazzucato which was advertized in the \textit{Gazzetta musicale di Milano}.\textsuperscript{42}

The multiple versions of the Italian libretto contain numerous minor differences which gradually alter one’s perception of the drama. Compare, for instance, the opening lines of the opera in the Italian version: the chorus of townspeople waiting for the coach, in which the libretto and vocal score offer completely different versions of the text to be sung:

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\textsuperscript{39}The only Italian version of the Nouvel Edition that I have seen in person advertises Massenet’s late works (including \textit{Panurge}, premiered 1913) on the back cover. \textit{Manon, opera in quattro atti e cinque quadri, parole di Enrico Meilhac e Filippo Gille, musica di J. Massenet, testo italiano} (Paris: Heugel, n.d.), 176 labels Act III scene 1 as the second scene (presumably of Act II). By 1916, the Sonzogno catalog listed an arrangement of Manon’s famous gavotte “Obéissons quand leur voix appelle”; A “Gavotta « Obbediamo del core alla voce » per soprano e pianoforte…L\{ire\} 1.25,” was advertized in \textit{Catalogo delle edizioni pubblicate e repertorio delle opere, operette e balli: Casa musicale Sonzogno in Milano} (Milan: Tip. E. Reggiani, 1916), 52.


\textsuperscript{41}The attribution only appears in the twentieth century; throughout the late nineteenth century, the translation is not credited to any author. The text, however, seems to be identical to that in earlier Sonzogno librettos (1894, 1896). The attribution to Zanardini appears in \textit{Manon, opera in quattro atti e cinque quadri di H. Meilhac e F. Gille, versione italiana di A. Zanardini, musica di G. Massenet} (Milan: Sonzogno, 1931).

\textsuperscript{42}Front-page advertisement, GMM 41 no. 11 (14 Mar 1886).
Another, more complex example occurs in Manon’s aria in Act II, when she comes to terms with leaving her lover:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French libretto, 1892</th>
<th>Italian libretto</th>
<th>Italian vocal score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entendez-vous la cloche</td>
<td>Udiste la campana?</td>
<td>Il gaio soun udiste?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voici l’heure du coche</td>
<td>L’ora non è lontana</td>
<td>La vettura è alle viste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les voyageurs, les voyageuses</td>
<td>Che il cocchio arriverà</td>
<td>Tutto dobbiam veder!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des curieux, des curieuses</td>
<td>E per veder chi giunge noi siam qua.</td>
<td>I viaggator, le viaggatrici,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’est le devoir!</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dobbiam veder! Per noi è gran dover!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These differences gain significance for our study as it is unclear which version of the text was performed at the premiere. Several critics who attended the premiere refer to passages in the opera as they relate to the printed Sonzogno libretto, rather than to the vocal score; reviews of the Milanese revival of Manon in 1896 also refer to the Sonzogno libretto rather than to the vocal score,

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43Manon, opéra comique en cinq actes et six tableaux de MM. Henri Meilhac et Philippe Gille, musique de J. Massenet (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1892), 7.


45Manon, opera in quattro atti e cinque quadri, parole di Enrico Meilhac e Filippo Gillé, musica di G. Massenet, riduzione per canto e pianoforte (Milan: Sonzogno; Paris: Heugel; plate # H et Cie 7012, G.H. 1525, G. H. 1528), 1894, 5–6.

46Manon, opéra comique (see note 43), 38–39.

47Manon, opera comica (see note 44), 34.

48Manon, opera in quattro atti (see note 45), 124–26.
as do reviews of a production in Malta in 1897. The only critic to discuss the vocal score criticizes its ungainly prosody; at the same time, all the early Italian recordings of Manon employ follow the vocal score. Although it is possible that the critics simply relied on faulty librettos, it is equally likely that the words printed in the vocal score were sometimes amended in performance, to follow the printed libretto. Given the many textual variants, reconstructing the libretto as it was actually sung in at the premiere is practically impossible without access to the kinds of detailed performing materials which might have been held in the now-lost Sonzogno archives. However, the vocal score seems to have become the standard for performance by the turn of the century: Enrico Caruso (1904) and John McCormack (1913) both followed the vocal score in their Italian recordings of Des Grieux’s aria “En ferment les yeux.”

The premiere

Manon’s Italian premiere occurred at the Teatro Carcano, an old theater in Milan. While operatic productions at the Carcano were not rare, the theater chiefly staged repertory works such as La Traviata, Faust, and La Favorite. Sonzogno’s decision to stage a premiere in the theater led the Milanese press to doubt his judgment. In one cartoon from Cosmorama, two opera-loving rats look

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49The RTM critic refers to “A Parigi ne andrem,” while Depanis mentions “Addio o nostro picciol desco”—the vocal score has only “A Parigi andrem” and “Addio...o nostro piccol desco.” See “Teatri locali: Carcano,” RTM 31 no.1403 (23 Oct 1893), 2; and Depanis, “Arte e scienze: Manon. II. La rappresentazione,” La gazzetta piemontese, 21 Oct 1893, 2. For the 1896 productions, see “Echi del Teatro Lirico: Sibyl Sanderson giudicata dalla stampa milanesse dopo la prima della Manon,” MA 30 no. 46–47 (30 Oct 1896), 10–11, which refers again to the “Picciol desco” aria, and gives the last line of the opera as “Tale è l’istoria di Manon Lescaut!” (the vocal score has “E questa è l’istoria di Manon Lescaut!”). “Adelina Rizzini e il suo debutto al Reale di Malta nella Manon di Massenet,” CP 62 no. 41 (21 Nov 1897), 3, explicitly refers to Manon’s entrance aria as “Io sono ancor tutt’attonita” (the vocal score has “Ancor son io tutt’attontita”).

50Francesco Contaldi, “Manon Lescaut nell’arte e nella musica,” GMM 49 no. 27 (8 July 1894) 422, 427–29: 429. Early recordings of the “Sogno” (“Chiudi gli occhi”) by Enrico Caruso and Beniamino Gigli follow the vocal score, as do later recordings by Giuseppe di Stefano.

51See “Chiudi gli occhi,” also known as the “Sogno,” as recorded by Caruso, 9 Feb 1904; Matrix: B100 1-2; Victor Cat:81031, re-released on Caruso, Nimbus 7803, compact disc, 1989; and by McCormack, 3 Jan 1913, Matrix:B12707-1, Victor Cat:64312, re-released on McCormack in Opera, Nimbus7820, compact disc, 1991.

52Throughout the 1880s and early 1890s, the Carcano was the scene of intermittent opera seasons; there were no seasons at all in 1881, 1887, 1889, and 1890. Some operas produced at the Carcano in 1891 and 1892 included Ernani, II
forward to the revival of the season (see Figure 2). The rats were not the only ones to be puzzled.

“Virgilio,” the critic for the Gazzetta teatrale italiana, also wondered why Sonzogno was starting the production at the Carcano, when Sonzogno also controlled the Teatro Dal Verme, and could just as easily have arranged the premiere at the newer theater.53

Yet the first reviews make it clear that Massenet’s opera benefitted from the intimate space of the Carcano, and that the production suffered a little when it was transferred to the larger, less resonant Teatro Dal Verme.54 But the fact that Massenet’s opera had triumphantly closed the season at the Carcano, and was so successful with the public that the same cast had to perform the opera again at the Dal Verme only a few days later, was a significant publicity coup for Sonzogno. It was customary for most Milanese newspapers that followed the arts to provide full coverage of a new opera only on the days surrounding its premiere: typically, a promotional article on the day of the premiere, describing the plot in detail, and a full-length review the day after. By transferring the same production from one theater to another, the Sonzogno firm gained extra publicity for Manon; several Milanese papers treated the opening night at the Dal Verme as a second premiere. (The Ricordi-run Gazzetta musicale di Milano, however, gave scant notice to the production at the Carcano and completely ignored Manon’s success at the Dal Verme).55 Consequently, in addition to the reviews for

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53“Cronaca milanese,” GTI 22 no. 27 (5 Oct 1893), 2: “…ma a me pare uno sbaglio sciupare questa importante primizia laggiù in un teatro disavvaiato, mentre si potrebbe affrettare l’apertura del Dal Verme, che dovrà accogliere gli stessi artisti e le stesse masse corali ed orchestrali, ed appunto coll’opera di Massenet inauguravi trionfalmente la stagione autunnale.” A similar point was made in the 17 October issue of the Gazzetta.

54La Lombardia, 26 October 1893, 3.

55“Rivista Milanese: Sabato, 21 Ottobre,” GMM 48 no. 43 (22 Oct 1893), 701, describes the premiere briefly. The following issues (29 October and 5 November) do not mention the opera at all, even though it was still being performed.
the opening at the Carcano on 19 October 1893, there are a second set of reviews for the
production beginning at the Dal Verme on 25 October (see Table 7).

Figure 2: “Al Carcano” (“At the Carcano”)

“They left us without music for so long!” – “And now, instead, so much nice stuff… Cavalleria
rusticana], [sic] Piccolo Haynd [sic]. Manon Lescaut…”

This clever marketing strategy would have been in vain if the public had not enjoyed the
opera. Fortunately for Sonzogno, the opera was “a popular and critical success” and “… a
triumphant success in front of the very best society.”57 Arrigo Boito, Leoncavallo, Arturo Toscanini,
and Francesco Tamagno are reported to have attended.58 The public may have largely consisted of
fashionable society, but the tickets were also extremely cheap: admission to the second night cost
only one lira, at a time when tickets for opera in Milan typically cost at least twice that amount. (The

56CP 58 no. 40 (19 October 1893), 3. Il piccolo Haydn was a one-act opera by Gaetano Cipollini (1855–1935), one of the
young composers promoted by the Casa Sonzogno; it was presumably paired with Cavalleria rusticana.


price went up to two, then three lire when the production was transferred to the Dal Verme. But even this was not very expensive compared to the opening night of Leoncavallo’s *I Medici* at the Dal Verme, which cost five lire). Prices aside, the opera enjoyed a solid success; the *Rivista teatrale melodrammatica* opened its review with the statement that “the public has fallen under the spell of a masterpiece.” *Il mondo artistico* and *Il secolo* counted four encores (the opening and closing sections of the duet in Act II, the opening chorus of the St. Sulpice scene, and the instrumental Minuet), strong applause for many other numbers, and curtain calls after each act for the cast, the conductor, and the choir director (see Table 8).

Table 7: Performances of *Manon* in Milan, October to November 1893

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teatro Carcano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 October (Thursday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 October (Saturday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 October (Monday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 October (Wednesday)</td>
<td>Teatro Dal Verme. Tickets: 2 lire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 October (Saturday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October (Monday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October (Tuesday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 November (Wednesday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 November (Sunday)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 November (Wednesday);</td>
<td>benefit for Lison Frandin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strangely, none of the encores on the opening night were of solo arias, although *Manon* contains striking arias (“Je suis encore tout étourdie,” “Adieu, notre petite table,” “En fermant les yeux,” etc.). Instead, the chorus and orchestra received the greatest applause. The explanation of this anomaly undoubtedly lies in the relative skills of the cast. Lison Frandin seems to have

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60“Teatri locali: Carcano,” *RTM* 31 no. 1402 (23 Oct 1893), 2: “…il publicco ha ceduto all’attrattiva di un capo lavoro.”


Table 8: The Cast of *Manon*, Teatro Carcano, 19 October 1893

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Artist</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Manon</em> Lescaut</td>
<td>Lison Frandin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier des Grieux</td>
<td>Edoardo Castellano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M.</em> Lescaut</td>
<td>Jacques Isnardon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guillot de Morfontaine</td>
<td>Ludovico Contini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M.</em> de Brétigny</td>
<td>Carlo Buti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conte Des Grieux</td>
<td>Enrico Giordani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conductor</td>
<td>Rodolfo Ferrari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir Director</td>
<td>Aristide Venturi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

carried the evening through her acting skills rather than her voice. None of the reviews complemented her voice, praising instead her “exquisite artistic sense,” and the “subtlety, elegance, and unequaled passion that she lent to the role of Manon.” While the critic for *Il Trovatore* tactfully noted of her performance: “Frandin has the intellect of a true artist...Frandin knew very well how to cover those deficiencies which could have been noted in her,” the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* makes these deficiencies perfectly clear: “she lacks two essential qualities: a voice and pronunciation.”

The other chief problem with the cast was that Jacques Isnardon (in the comic role of *M.* Lescaut, *Manon’s* cousin) upstaged Edoardo Castellano, who played the romantic lead, the Chevalier Des Grieux. This is apparent even in favorable reviews which praised Edoardo Castellano for his

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66 “Manon di Massenet al teatro Carcano,” CP 58 no. 40 (26 Oct 1893), 1: “…la Frandin...prestò alla figura di Manon una finezza, un’eleganza ed una passione senza pari.”

67 “Spettacoli di Milano,” *Il trovatore* 40 no. 44 (27 Oct 1893), 2: “La Frandin ha vero intelletto d’artista...la Frandin ha saputo mirabilmente coprire qualche deficienza, che in lei avrebbe potuto essere notata.”

68 “Rivista milanese,” GMM 48 no. 43 (22 Oct 1893), 701: “…la Frandin, attrice d’eccezionale talento, riuscì talvolta a far dimenticare che le mancano due essenzialissime qualità: la voce e la pronunzia.”
good voice and Jacques Isnardon for his comic timing. More harshly, the critic of the *Gazzetta dei teatri* wrote that Castellano was young and inexperienced, while Isnardon was “a perfect actor.”

The *Rivista teatrale melodrammatica* was even harder on Castellano: “This young tenor has a very sweet voice, good in all registers, which lent itself obediently to the caress of Massenet’s music. But it was not enough for the heat of passion, for the enthusiasm of love, for the internal struggle of a soul that wants to overcome a fatal fascination and cannot.”

The pairing of a female lead whose greatest strength was her acting with a male lead whose greatest strength was his voice probably explains the lack of encores for the soloists on the opening night.

The presence of two French singers (Lison Frandin and Jacques Isnardon) in the cast undoubtedly helped shape Milanese perceptions of Massenet’s work as an authentic French *opéra comique*. Both singers were graduates of the Paris Conservatory and had sung at the Opéra Comique in Paris, and after the Italian premiere Massenet sent congratulatory telegrams to both, which were reprinted in the Italian press. Another element that must have helped establish the work’s French

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70“Al Carcano: *Manon*,” GDT 55 no. 40 (26 Oct 1893), 2: Castellano is described as “troppo giovine forse nella carriera…Malgrado ciò, egli ebbe in vari punti approvazioni ed applausi”; of Isnardon, “Un vero artista, un attore perfetto…”

71“Teatri locali: Carcano,” RTM 31 no. 1403 (23 Oct 1893), 2: “La voce di questo giovane tenore, dolceissima, uguale in tutta la estensione, si presta obbediente alle carezze della musica di Massenet, ma non abbastanza, agli impieti di passione, agli entusiasmi d’amore, alla lotta interna dell’anima, che vorrebbe vincere un fascino fatale e non lo può.”

pedigree was the staging, which Sonzogno had copied from the staging at the Opéra Comique in Paris, and which “played no small role in the success.”

III. A FRENCH OPERA IN AN ITALIAN CONTEXT

Despite the controversies over bringing Manon to a performance, the major cuts, and a less-than-ideal cast, Manon was a success with the Milanese public. This success, however, created new problems for Italian critics who wished to understand the opera in nationalist terms. Despite the numerous changes to the score, the libretto, and even the plot, Manon was not an Italian opera, even if it could pass as one. Elements of Massenet’s French opera echoed through the Italian adaptation, baffling and confusing its critics. Consequently, Manon’s success led Italian music critics to develop a variety of explanations for the opera’s appeal, its popularity, and its style. Most notable among these are invocations of French identity and the concept of an “international” style drawing on a variety of musical traditions.

**Manon, French identity, and the concept of opéra comique**

Though Manon was stripped of many musical features that one might think were essential to its identity as an opéra comique, many Italian critics understood Massenet’s opera as an authentic French work, despite the changes.

As an opéra comique, Manon embodied a foreign aesthetic, which Italian critics related to the comedy of manners. It was possible for Italian critics to attack the artistic value of Manon without mentioning a single musical detail. The critic of La Lombardia wrote:

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Massenet’s opera is above all a comic opera, in the precise sense which the French give it. It has all the characteristics of this hybrid art form in which the elements of comedy and drama mix in a common preoccupation with *good manners*, in which a laugh must not go past the limits of propriety, and weeping is not allowed to become a sob or a cry of sorrow; in which a witty spirit very often takes the place of true gaiety, and elegant sentimentality replaces the rough vehemence of passion.\(^\text{74}\)

And G. B. Nappi of *La perseveranza* explained, rather less pejoratively:

Massenet’s *Manon* is couched in terms of the most straightforward type of *opéra comique*: it is a comedy that reaches toward the boundaries of drama and lyric tragedy, bearing nevertheless, on the whole, an intimate character, an intonation rather superficial or light: that of Puccini’s score—motivated by a profoundly passionate feeling—reveals the temperament of an Italian artist…

Massenet’s *Manon*, with its marked French character, perhaps doesn’t entirely suit the Italian nature…

Like French comic operas in general, and in Massenet’s scores in particular, there is in the work more superficiality than profundity of emotion.\(^\text{75}\)

Here *opéra comique* becomes a metaphor for French society and the French national character, which is, by implication, superficial and sentimental. For these critics, Italian audiences cannot fully appreciate such elegantly superficial music, because Italians, as a people, feel things more deeply.

The critic “Il misovulgo” (Aldo Noseda), writing for the *Corriere della Sera*, noted the same sentimental aesthetic in Massenet’s opera but provided a more nuanced explanation. First he explains it in terms of Massenet’s personality as a composer, then in the nature of comedy itself. Later he explains that comic opera is especially suited to the French national character:


“Ha tutti i caratteri di questa iberna forma d’arte in cui gli elementi comici e quelli drammatici si associano in una comune preoccupazione di *correttezza* in cui il riso non deve uscire dai limiti della convenienza ed al pianto non è permesso di diventar singhiozzo o grido di dolore; in cui assai spesso lo spirito brillante tien luogo della vera gaienza, e l’elegante sentimentalità sostituisce la rude vemenza della passione.”


“*Manon* di Massenet, pel suo marcato tipo francese, non risponde forse totalmente all’indole italiana…

“Come nelle opere comiche francesi in generale, e nelle partizioni di Massenet in particolare, c’è in codesto lavoro maggiore superficialità che profondità di sentimenti.”
...It is not the composer who has done violence to the characteristic features of his talent to add new strings to his lyre; it is the subject which has been gently adapted by the librettists to fit the nature of the musician. The great quantity of violent passion and of types accentuated by raw and brutal sensations contained in the novel is dulled and polished up in the opera, to serve as a canvas for Massenet's inspiration, so as not to constrain his imagination...

Of that entirely French art-form known as the *opéra comique*, it will be enough for me to affirm, for my part, that I do not have much fondness for hybrids: but this does not seem the right time to open proceedings against them...

***

*Manon* therefore belongs to a genre which is averse to colors that are too bold; it seeks its effects in delicate shades, in good manners, in the elegance more than in the grandeur of its lines. It is, if we want to put it this way, a smaller art, that easily appears a little *mièvre* [soppy], but in which the French—lovable, elegant, and spirited *causeurs* [conversationalists] in music too—succeed marvelously...

Il Misovulgo presents *opéra comique* as an extension of the French national character: “lovable, elegant, and spirited,” “perhaps a little soppy.” At the same time, Il Misovulgo tries to carve out a space for a composer’s personal expression in a world seemingly dominated by nationalist identity politics. Massenet is more than simply a French composer; he is an artist with particular skills who is perfectly suited to continuing the French *opéra comique* tradition. To this end, Il Misovulgo stresses that Massenet has had his librettists alter Abbé Prévost’s novel of passion and adventure into a sentimental story more suited to his “sensitive” nature; the delicacy and sentimentality of Massenet’s opera are personal as well as French. *Opéra comique*, however, remains “entirely French.”

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76 Il Misovulgo, “*Manon*: opera comica di G. Massenet,” *Corriere della sera*, 23 Oct 1893, 2. “...Non è il compositore che ha violentato le caratteristiche del suo ingegno per aggiungere nuove corde alla sua lira: è il soggetto che si è gentilmente prestato, sotto gli auspici dei librettisti, a secondare la natura del musicista. Tutto quanto racchiude il romanzo di passioni violate, di tipi accentuati di sensazioni crude e brutali è stato smussato, ingentilito nell’opera, si da servire come canevaccio all’ispirazione di Massenet, non mai da contrastarne il volo...

“Quanto alla forma d’arte che tutta propria della Francia, si afferma nell’*opéra comique*, basterà ch’io affermi dal canto mio che non ho alcuna tenerezza per gli’ibridi: soltanto, non mi pare questa l’opportunità d’intentar loro un processo...

***

“*Manon* appartiene dunque ad un genere che rifugge dalle tinte troppo colorite e cerca i suoi effetti in delicate sfumature, nella correttezza, nell’eleganza più che nella grandiosità delle linee. È, se vogliamo, arte più piccina, che appare facilmente un po’ *mièvre*, ma in cui i francesi—amabili, eleganti, spiritosi *causeurs* anche in musica—riescono a meraviglia...”

The very fact that these critics felt the need to explain the concept of opéra comique to their readers at length suggests how foreign the genre remained for many Italians in 1893. This is despite the inroads made by opéra comiques such as Ambroise Thomas’s Mignon, which first reached Italy in October 1870, and Georges Bizet’s Carmen, which was first performed in Italy in November 1879.\footnote{Morini and Ostali, “Cronologia delle opere,” 36, 815. Mignon reached Trieste (then part of the Austrian Empire) in August 1870. The first performance inside the political entity of Italy occurred in Genoa on the 20th of October. Carmen reached Italy in November 1879. Meyerbeer’s Dinorah had reached La Scala as early as 1870.} Partly, this lack of familiarity with the French genre needs to be understood in the context of the decline of Italian comic opera (opera buffa), which generated few new works after the 1850s. Italian opera scholar Julian Budden describes the situation:

\[\ldots\text{opera buffa\ldots}\text{continued to throw up an occasional well-turn...}\]

Italian operatic audiences in the 1890s were not used to seeing new comedies on the operatic stage, or, for that matter, many comedies at all, never mind operatic comedies from France. While older comedies such as Rossini’s Il barbiere di Siviglia and Donizetti’s L’elisir d’amore had remained in the repertoire, the most popular old operas of the period, and the majority of new operas, were tragic. The 1890s unexpectedly produced two Italian comedic operas which are still performed today, although neither Mascagni’s L’Amico Fritz (1891) nor Giuseppe Verdi’s Falstaff (1893) enjoyed the same level of success as tragic operas such as Cavalleria rusticana.

Italian critics found themselves in a difficult position with Manon, for the opera mixed elements of tragedy and comedy in a way that seems to have made critics uncomfortable. G. B. Nappi, quoted above, identified this generic hybridity as fundamental to the genre of opéra comique itself: “...a comedy that reaches toward the boundaries of drama and lyric tragedy...” The critic for

Il sole was unusual in his belief that this generic mixing was the reason for the opera’s success: “the musical work is balanced, and the comic and passionate elements are integrated throughout the work in such a way that the whole is greatly unified. This is a great quality, and because of this the public listens without becoming tired, rapt and delighted.”

Certainly no other opera on the Italian stage at this time mixed tragedy and comedy to this extent.

For Italian critics relatively unfamiliar with French comic opera, the mixture of tragic and comic elements seemed a central feature, more an aesthetic than a musical identifier. The frequent invocation of the comic threatened to reduce the tragic parts of Massenet’s music to sentimentality. Yet the craft of Massenet’s work remained undeniable; even if the music was not particularly moving, it seemed elegant and well-made. These aesthetic qualities were related both to opéra comique and the Frenchness of the opera, in keeping with Italian stereotypes of the French as “elegant conversationalists.” Some of the critics cited above presented French sentimentality and elegance in opposition to force, honesty, and vehemence of expression, virtues associated variously with Puccini, Wagner, and Meyerbeer. Such comments correspond to gendered codes in contemporary French music criticism, in which “delicate” and “exquisite” are code for the feminine, while “force” is associated with the masculine.

G. B. Nappi’s comparison of Massenet’s opera with Puccini’s is a good example of a similar binary opposition at play:

...[the character] of Puccini’s score—motivated by a profoundly passionate feeling—reveals the temperament of an Italian artist—who, notwithstanding his marked liking

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81Even Puccini’s Manon Lescaut downplays this generic mixing: while the first act is largely comic, the remaining three acts focus on the “desperate passion” of Manon and Des Grieux. In dramatic terms, the closest Italian parallel to Massenet’s Manon is Puccini’s La Bohème (which premiered in 1896), whose light-hearted opening act gradually gives way to the despair of the last: as in Massenet’s Manon, the first act comically and sentimentally introduces the young lovers, the third act shows their relationship in an emotional crisis, and the last act depicts the death of the heroine.

for some mannerisms characteristic of the melodic and harmonic manner of the modern French school—has not forgotten the traditions of national lyric theater.

The last scene [of Massenet’s opera] has very beautiful passages: the transfiguration and death of Manon are enlivened with very expressive music, but the passionate note is lacking; that which Puccini realized with singular force in the third and fourth acts of his Manon is not there.83

The force and emotional directness of Puccini’s score stand in marked contrast to Massenet’s delicate, elegant music. Yet even here, note that Nappi admits Puccini’s debt to French musical styles, even if it ultimately has little affect on Nappi’s critical opinion. Puccini might write a melody in the French style, but his use of these melodies to depict passion and not “superficiality” marks him as an Italian, and thus superior. Puccini’s own summation of the difference between his opera and Massenet’s makes the same point: “Massenet feels it as a Frenchman, with the powder and the minuets. I shall feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion.”84

Il Misovulgo’s attempt to explain the value of Massenet’s opera, despite its sentimentality, works with the same binary oppositions:

In the love duets, in Manon’s very beautiful monologue in the second act, in the dramatic scene at St. Sulpice, and in the pathetic scene of Manon’s death, I found much more than [the work of] an elegant composer: there is in these moments so much sweetness of sentiment that this sweetness becomes a force: \textit{lenitas vis mea.}

In Tristan und Isolde passion is found in violently sublime accents; the duet from Les Huguenots has such magic that Meyerbeer regretted having written it...Yet a musician, at great distance from these colossi, can always hope to touch those chords which he has not yet struck. ..

And is it really true that passion only shows itself, as many seem to believe today, in spasmodic and stabbing violins and perorations underpinned by trombones, ophicleide, bass drum, and tam-tam?85

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“L’ultimo quadro ha bellisime pagine: la trasfigurazione e la morte di Manon, sono colorite da una musica assai espressiva, ma non c’è la nota passionale; quella trovata con singolare potenza da Puccini nel terzo e nel quarto atto della sua \textit{Manon} non c’è.”


Il Misovulgo’s backhanded defense of Massenet raises more questions than it answers. While he first establishes the “sweetness” of Massenet’s music, in opposition to Wagnerian music-drama and Meyerbeerian grand opera, the “colossi,” his argument depends on collapsing the binary (sentimentality/sweetness vs. force/the sublime) on which he has structured his thinking. Given Il Misovulgo’s conceptual framework, how can sublime sentimentality, or sweet force, be possible? Each seems a contradiction in terms. In the end, Massenet’s music may be damned for not belonging to the colossi, but it is at least blessed with the virtue of restraint, an element lacking in contemporary operas (the “spasmodic” “perorations” bring both Puccini and Mascagni to mind).

The International Manon

The binary opposition between sentimentality and force, between Massenet and Puccini, sets French and Italian culture in conflict. But as demonstrated in the Introduction to this dissertation, the historical relationship between French and Italian operatic traditions was far more complex than this simple binary. Other critics, more attuned both to the history of Franco-Italian operatic exchange and the international operatic scene, collapsed this view. These critics—Il Misovulgo for Corriere della Sera, and the critics from Il trovatore and Il secolo—are far more interested in details of musical structure and style, and consequently are more alert to the moments in Massenet’s score which betray the influence of non-French composers. Of these three critics, Il Misovulgo is the most imaginative, deconstructing the significance of national style. It is hardly surprising that the other two critics take such pointedly international stances, as both journals had ties to Sonzogno: Il secolo

assai più e assai meglio che il compositore elegante: c’è in essi tanta dolcezza di sentimenti che questa dolcezza diventa una forza: lenitas vis mea.

“In Tristano e Isotta la passione trova accenti violentemente sublimi: il duetto degli Ugonotti un tale incanto che Meyerbeer si rammaricava d’averlo scritto…Eppure un musicista, a molta distanza da quei colossi, può sperare sempre di toccare qualche corda che essa non abbian fatto vibrare…

“Ed è proprio detto che la passione si esplica solo, come molti mostran credere oggi, con violinate spasmodiche e perorazione a base di tromboni, oificeide, gran cassa e tam-tam?”
belonged to the company; *Il trovatore*, though independent, exclusively ran advertisements for Sonzogno’s publications (much as the *Gazzetta dei teatri* exclusively advertised Ricordi’s music).

Given the discourse of associating *Manon* with Frenchness and opéra comique, it is surprising that some critics traced links between Massenet and Italian opera. While emphasizing such resemblances helped present Massenet in relation to Italian operatic traditions, such associations were not always positive. Several critics felt that the ending of the scene at the Hotel Transilvanie, in which Des Grieux and Manon are arrested, resembled the Act II finale of *La traviata* too much:

The second part [of Act III, in the Italian sequence], the scene at the Transylvania gambling house, has outmoded and old melodramatic ingredients. This father who comes to give his solemn reproof to his son, who has been caught cheating, has the air of that well-known and disagreeable papà Germont. The music at this point… loses a little of its elegant simplicity. The melodrama grows weak here; indeed, the drama is watered down.

…there are two or three places in the opera which come close to situations which he has not even glimpsed, which he has distorted, or inappropriately recalled from the old repertory. I would like to give as an example of this the whole of the second part of Act III with the gambling scene, the apparition of Armando’s father, and that banal and very antiquated concertato.

The reference, of course, is to the Act II finale of *La traviata*, which also features a gambling scene and the appearance of a disapproving father, and which also ends with a concertato. In this sense, Massenet’s work seems a derivative recycling of the “old repertory,” which in turn affects the internal coherence of the opera. As Alexandra Wilson has noted, Italian music critics at this time expected increasingly more originality and organicism in contemporary operas.

That Massenet’s opera was nine years old by 1893 seems to have had little effect on the critical evaluation of the

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86“Spettacoli di Milano,” *Il trovatore* 40 no. 44 (27 Oct 1893), 2: “La seconda parte, la scena della bisca di Transilvania, ha vieti e vecchi ingredienti melodrammatici. Quel padre che viene a fare il suo rimprovero solenne al figlio, colto a barare al giuoco, ha tutta l’aria di quel così noto e così antipatico papà Germont. La musica, in esso (non nel padre) perde un po’della sua snellezza. Il melodramma infaocisce, anzi diluisce il dramma.”


work; despite the obvious differences in aesthetics between Massenet’s opera and Italian conventions, his opera was measured by the same standards, as if it were newly composed in 1893. In a different part of his article, for example, Il Misovulgo compares *Manon* explicitly to *Falstaff*, as if Verdi’s recent opera came first: “Brétigny’s comical departure … unintentionally reminded me of another well chosen exit, in *Falstaff*…” It does not seem to have occurred to Il Misovulgo that perhaps Verdi could have been influenced by Massenet!

At the same time, Il Misovulgo was not simply comparing Verdi and Massenet in order to establish or uphold a hierarchy of national styles. His commentary on national categories deconstructs nationalist readings of music, just as he effectively destroyed the sentimentality/force binary:

…it seems childish to me to linger so much on the observation that a French composer writes some French music—if this is the proper way to make oneself understood, then it is essential to return to the ordinary distinctions between German, Italian, and French music. This observation simply turns into a statement of praise; that type, that character is certainly a credit to a work of art. And the saying “One hears that this music is French!” honors French music, when the music is beautiful, well-made, and inspired by those general characteristics which do not suffer from nationalist restrictions.

Il Misovulgo suggests that for all the talk of national characters in music, all that really matters is if audiences enjoy the music. Only a successful work will ever be praised for “sounding French”; the music that does “sound French” to the audience succeeds because of its universal characteristics.

Yet in Il Misovulgo’s earlier discussion of *opéra comique*, he does not dispute that the French are

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89As Ricordi had held the Italian rights to *Manon*, the firm could certainly have made the score available to Verdi if the composer were interested in examining the score.

90“*Manon: opera comica di G. Massenet, “ Corriere della sera*, 23 Oct 1893, 2: “E qui mi sembra puerile del pari soffermarsi a notare che un compositore francese scriva della musica francese—se proprio per farsi intendere, è indispensabile ricorrere alla distinzione volgare di musica tedesca, italiana e francese. Questa constatazione si risolve semplicemente in un titolo di lode; che il tipo, il carattere è per certo un merito dell’opera d’arte e il dire “come si sente ch’è musica francese!” è tutta ad onore della musica francese stessa, quando sia musica bella, ben fatta ed ispirata a quei criteri d’indole generale che non patiscono restrizioni di nazionalità.”
“lovable, elegant, and spirited” and that their music is too; rather, he sees national character as irrelevant to the quality of a work and its success. Any music can be “beautiful and well-made,” in which case, audiences will want to think of it in national terms. At the same time, any successful work by a French composer generates broader praise for French music in general.

Il Misovulgo’s aesthetic model recalls D’Ormeville’s concept of the Italian artist battling for the cultural glory of the nation, but there is an important difference. There are no illusions about who controls the cultural significance of opera: the audience’s whispered *come si sente ch’è musica francese!* is the sign of approval, the arbiter of taste, success, and cultural glory in the sense suggested by D’Ormeville. The audience, not the composer, wields all the power when it comes to associating music with national styles. The rest of his review focuses on Massenet’s compositional and dramatic choices, and it is in this light that Il Misovulgo criticizes Massenet’s appropriation of the gambling scene: as shown above, the emphasis is again on Massenet’s personal choices, not on a French encroachment of Italian territory.

If Il Misovulgo criticizes the discourse of Massenet’s Frenchness in favor of an analysis of Massener’s actions as a composer, the critic of *Il secolo* (probably Amintore Galli) takes this reading a step further. In stilted prose, Massenet is first established as part of a long tradition of French opera composers, then claimed to be a uniquely individual composer, then to be open to a variety of influences, including Chopin, Wagner (implied through the use of leitmotivs), and Italian opera:

> Massenet’s musical creation is inspired by the pure and noble festivity of Adam and Berton and by the pathetic style of Herold and Halévy. The effervescence of the Gallic spirit shines there, but there is also a sweet and penetrating melody. Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Delibes—inheritors of the art of Lesueur, David, and Berlioz—also enriched the palette of the author of *Manon*. But above all, it is to his own musical nature that Massenet owes his style full of life and color, of vivacity and élan…

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92 For a comparison of Massenet’s technique to Wagner’s, see Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 63–72.
Massenet prefers free vocal melody…and when Manon dreams of the seductions of a life of pleasure, we have one of those sweet, melancholic cantilenas that reminds us of Chopin’s pathos.

Massenet did not abandon the system of leading motives, and we have them also in Manon. When De Grieux meets Manon and remains struck by her glance and her sigh, one hears an elegant and expressive phrase, which just becomes a kind of leitmotiv, which is always presented with new technical processes and always with new effects, according to the demands of the action…

The act [act III] closes with a concertato in the Italian style, in which the melody was very expressive; it was pleasing, and there were nine curtain calls for the performers.

The inspiration of the author of Manon kept at white heat even to the end of the opera, and the last act was a poem of passion.\(^9^3\)

Note that while this description describes Massenet as the heir of French “effervescence,” he is also capable of creating “a poem of passion,” even though many of the critics discussed above specifically denied Massenet’s ability to create passionate music. Further, Massenet’s engagement with Italian opera, as typified by the Italianate concertato, is presented positively; its relevance to an Italian audience is measured through the amount of applause for the artists. Finally, Massenet’s use of recurring themes is taken as evidence of his concern with organicism and his engagement with Wagner’s music dramas, signs of his work’s timeliness and modernity.

This review in Il secolo is in close counterpoint to delli Specchi’s argument in favor of performing Manon. After tying Massenet to so many stylistic influences, it is hard to view the


“L’effervescenza dello spirito gaulois vi brilla, come pure non manca la nota dolce e penetrante.

“Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Delibes—eredi dell’arte di Lesueur, di David, di Berlioz—arricchirono pur essi la tavolezza dell’autore di Manon.

“Ma è soprattutto alla sua natura musicale che Massenet deve la forma piena di vita e di colorito, di vivacità e di slancio dei suoi lavori…

“Ma Massenet preferisce la melodia vocale libera…e quando Manon sogna le seduzioni della vita dedita al piacere, abbiamo una di quelle cantilenae soavemente melanconiche che ricordano il pathos Chopiniano.

“Il sistema del motivo dominante non fu abbandonato da Massenet e l’abbiamo anche nella Manon. Quando De Grieux si incontra in Manon e resta colpito dal suo sguardo e dal suo sorriso, odesi una frase elegante ed espressiva, che appunto diventa una sorta di leit-motiv, il quale vien presentandosi sempre con nuovi effetti, secondo esigono le varie peripezie nell’azione…

“L’atto si chiude con un concertato all’italiana, molto espressiva ne è la melodia; piace e procura nuove chiamate agli esecutori.

“La ispirazione dell’autore di Manon si è mantenuta fervidissima sino alla fine dell’opera, e l’ultimo atto è un poema della passion.”
composer as simply French or as the complete antithesis of strong, passionate Italian art. Rather, it seems as if there is something to appeal to everyone in Massenet’s music, and that (as delli Specchi had argued) this is music that Italian audiences have a right to hear. Through discussing the diverse and pleasing elements of Massenet’s work, the Secolo reviewer provides a kind of practical demonstration of Manon’s value for the Italian public.

IV. MANON’S LEGACY IN ITALY

Although Manon lay at the center of many controversies during its early reception, the opera survived them all to become Massenet’s most popular work in Italy. Manon rapidly became a repertory work for the Casa Sonzogno; it was, along with Cavalleria rusticana, Mignon, and Carmen, one of the firm’s most popular works. Manon achieved this position in spite of, or perhaps because of the rivalry between Ricordi and Sonzogno (Ricordi controlled the rights to Puccini’s Manon Lescaut). The competition between Massenet’s and Puccini’s operas became an overt symbol for the struggle between the two firms. This section will briefly summarize several important trends in Manon’s Italian reception, with particular attention to later Milanese productions.

Manon’s progress throughout Italy

After Manon’s premiere in Milan in 1893, the Casa Sonzogno quickly promoted the opera across Italy. Following the same procedure as in Milan, Sonzogno arranged for a production of the opera at one of Turin’s secondary theaters, the Carignano, with the same cast. The performances were a great success, and the Casa Sonzogno may well have planned to have the opera performed in Genoa as well.94 This production does not seem to have occurred. On the night of November 28, twenty-three passengers were killed in a fiery train crash eleven miles outside Milan; the soprano Lison Frandin

94“Nouvel étranger,” Le Ménestrel 59 no. 46 (12 Nov 1893), 366.
was trapped inside the sleeping car during the crash, with her foot caught in a doorway as she tried
to escape. Although she was eventually rescued by train attendants, Frandin lost over 80,000 francs
in cash, her clothes, jewelry, and an uncashed check for 25,000 francs. She is reported to have
received a million francs in compensation from the train company, but Frandin does not seem to
have sung Manon again until November 1894 (see Appendix 2). 

Not even a train crash could not stop Manon’s progress throughout Italy. On December
19th, barely two weeks after Frandin’s brush with death, a new production of the opera occurred at
the Teatro Mercadante in Naples. Edoardo Castellano sang tenor and Rodolfo Ferrari conducted, as
in Milan and Turin, but a new soprano, Adelina Stehle, played the role of Manon. The production,
hailed by the Secolo illustrato della domenica (a Sonzogno paper) as a “triumph,” was a harbinger of
things to come. After the production at the Mercadante, Manon truly began its tour of Italy. In the
following months, the opera appeared in towns such as Lodi, San Remo, Cremona, Faenza,
Bologna, Bari, Asti, Genoa, Rome, and for a second time in Turin. By the end of 1894, Manon had
reached every major Italian city except Florence, where it was finally performed in February 1895;
there were over forty productions of Manon throughout Italy within three years.

Manon remained a regular presence on Italian musical stages throughout the period covered
in this dissertation, with over eighty productions by 1903 and over one hundred productions by
Massener’s death in 1912. After 1902, its fortunes began to decline, never again achieving more than
five or six productions a year (see Chart 3); as will be shown later, Puccini’s Manon Lescaut grew in

95“Nouvel étranger,” Le Ménestrel 59 no. 50 (10 Dec 1893), 397; “Attualità della settimana: Il disastro ferroviario di
Limito,” SID 5 no. 218 (3 Dec 1893), 387.

96“Nouvel étranger,” Le Ménestrel 59 no. 51 (17 Dec 1893), 405. Note that the franc and the lira were roughly equivalent
in value in this period.

97“Napoli-Teatro: Manon,” SID 5 no. 222 (24 Dec 1893), 414.
popularity in the same period. Still, *Manon* was Massenet’s most popular opera in Italy, and it remained in the Italian repertory well into the 1920s.

**Chart 3: Productions of *Manon* throughout Italy, 1893–1925**

Manon’s central status in the Casa Sonzogno’s repertoire is best understood through a survey of its subsequent productions in Milan between 1893 and 1903. The repertoire of Milanese theaters provides a unique perspective on Sonzogno’s musical priorities, since Milan was the headquarters of the Casa Sonzogno. As we will see in Chapter Two, the Casa Sonzogno owned and operated its own opera house, the Teatro Lirico Internazionale, in Milan from 1894 on, and the repertoire of this theater provides an indication of *Manon’s* importance to the firm (see Table 9). In the ten years under consideration, *Manon* appeared in ten productions (on a yearly basis from 1893–1898); seven of these productions took place at Sonzogno’s own Teatro Lirico; only one occurred at Milan’s most prestigious theater, La Scala (*Manon* was later performed there in 1906 and 1916). *Manon* thus accounts for ten of the thirty-one Milanese productions of Massenet’s operas in Milan from 1893 to 1903 (see Appendix 1).

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98See Appendix 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theater</th>
<th>Soprano</th>
<th>Tenor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893: October 19</td>
<td>Carcano</td>
<td>Lison Frandin</td>
<td>Edoardo Castellano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893: October 25</td>
<td>Dal Verme</td>
<td>Lison Frandin</td>
<td>Edoardo Castellano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894: November 14</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Ernestina Bendazzi Garulli</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895: January 13</td>
<td>Scala</td>
<td>Adelina Stehle</td>
<td>Gioachino Bayo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895: October 24</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Amelia Karola / E. B. Garulli</td>
<td>E. Garbin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: October 27</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Sibyl Sanderson</td>
<td>Francesco Pandolfini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897: November 13</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Febea Strakosch</td>
<td>Gioachino Bayo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: December 26</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Emma Bel Sorel</td>
<td>Gioachino Bayo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: March 7</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Emma Bel Sorel</td>
<td>Giuseppe Moretti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902: February 12</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Ernestina Bendazzi Secchi</td>
<td>Giorgio Bazelli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sibyl Sanderson at the Teatro Lirico, 1896

As Table 9 reveals, many singers embodied the role of Manon on the Italian stage. Of all the singers who followed Lison Frandin, Sibyl Sanderson (1864–1903) made perhaps the greatest impression on Milanese musical culture, earning wide acclaim for her naturalistic acting and careful attention to diction. She also made an impact as a popular celebrity. The American-born Sanderson was Massenet’s favorite singer in this period; she had revived Manon at the Opéra-Comique (1891) and premiered Esclarmonde (1889) and Thais (1894), and she was renowned for her great vocal range, elaborate costumes, and personal beauty.

Sanderson’s visit illustrates another aspect of the complicated relationship between French and Italian opera. Although her performance style seems to have been eminently naturalistic and attuned to the popular concept of “verismo” discussed in the Introduction, she had developed her style through Massenet’s personal coaching, and Italian critics greeted her approach as unique. The potential impact of Sanderson’s visit on acting standards in Italian opera is a topic that awaits further detailed investigation; what follows is a necessarily brief summary, included here because it suggests yet another way that Massenet’s Manon affected Italian opera.

Sanderson’s immediate appeal for Italian audiences seems to have derived from her status as a well-known star of Parisian opera; she was not (like Frandin) a French-trained singer who had chosen to make a career in Italy. Before the opening of her Manon in 1896, she was advertised as the
“ideal Manon…The audience of the Lirico can be proud to be able to know and applaud this great artist.” The Corriere della sera described Sanderson as “an authentic diva from the Paris Opéra,” and L’Italia del popolo as “a star of the great foreign theaters, admired for her beauty and elegance.” Sanderson represented the very latest in French musical trends; even the critic of the Rivista teatrale melodrammatica, a journal not commonly given to superlatives, noted soberly that she was clearly the best of the French opera singers to visit Milan in recent years.

Sanderson’s reception in Milan was based on an implicit comparison with the other singers to have sung Manon before here. And if Lison Frandin had been more talented as an actress than she was as a singer, her successors—Garulli, Stehle, and others—had tended to emphasize singing over acting. With this in mind, the critic of the daily paper La sera wrote:

Being used to hearing Manon sung, the public found it hard at first to think that Sanderson could do something more and better than that: with her voice, her diction, her flexible gestures, and every science of the stage, she revived that which Massenet had imagined.

The most open-minded and discerning spectators were immediately aware that acting and singing—as Sanderson had done—is neither easy nor common.

Sanderson’s performing style, in other words, owed much to the emerging style of modern acting: she acted naturally and moved freely about the stage and did not employ stock theatrical gestures and poses to enhance her acting. Instead her unique interpretation brought the character to life. In

99“Sibyl Sanderson,” MA 30 no. 45 (20 Oct 1896) 5: “Ecco la Manon con tutto il suo fascino, con tutte le sue grazie, con tutte le sue seduzioni…Manon ideale…Il pubblico del Lirico può essere orgoglioso di poter conoscere—ed acclamare—la grande artista.”

100Echi del Teatro Lirico: Sibyl Sanderson giudicata dalla stampa milanese dopo la prima del Manon,” MA 30 no. 46–47 (30 Oct 1896), 10–11. “una diva autentica dell’Opéra di Parigi”; “una stella dei grandi teatri dell’estero, ammirata per la sua bellezza e la sua eleganza…”


“I più spregiudicati e i più fini fra gli spettatori si sono subito accorti che dire e cantare—così come lo ha fatto la Sanderson…non è cosa facile né comune.”

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her *Manon*, as her biographer Jack Warner Hansen notes, “in every scene Manon was a different woman with a different voice…” She combined this naturalistic acting style with a delicate attention to diction, phrasing, and characterization, to compensate for a voice which was not naturally powerful. The Italian reviews suggest that her performance was notable for its restraint:

She sang the romance from the second act, *Addio, mio picol desco*, with a simplicity and naturalness that demonstrated her artistic conscience; she was ready to sacrifice obvious effects which would have provoked applause.

...she was very moving in the last act, in which her inflection and movements seemed to owe a great deal to our dramatic [i.e., theater] actresses.

The Italian actresses referred to probably include Eleonora Duse, who was famous for her naturalistic acting and is widely considered one of the founding figures of modern acting. The critics’ stunned reaction to Sanderson suggests that her combination of acting and singing skills was unique in Italy at that time.

The critics were not the only ones in awe of Sanderson’s unique performing style. Giacomo Puccini might have attended one of her performances (perhaps the only time that he saw Massenet’s *Manon* in performance), and apparently tried to interest her in performing *La bohème*. Jack Warner Hansen, Sanderson’s biographer, transcribes the only surviving letter from Puccini to Sanderson, which suggests they had already met: “Like the rest of Milan I remain at your feet. I urgently beg of

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107 Hansen, *Sanderson*, 274. Note, however, that Dieter Schickling’s account of Puccini’s movements has no record of Puccini attending any of Sanderson’s operatic performances at this time; he tracks Puccini moving between Lucca, Florence, Genoa, and Milan from September to December 1896. There are enough gaps in this account, however, that Puccini may possibly have visited Milan. Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini: Catalogue of the Works* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003), 431. Hansen also relays a story (of doubtful authenticity) that Puccini met Sanderson and played sketches of *Tosca* for her, trying to interest her in the role.
you to consider my proposition most carefully.” While ultimately Sanderson never performed any of Puccini’s music in public, it would seem that, despite their artistic differences, Puccini and Massenet were united in their admiration for this singing actress who bridged the worlds of opera and modern theater.

The Two Manons

As we have seen, the specter of competition between Puccini and Massenet loomed over Manon’s Italian reception from the very beginning. This rivalry, however, has never been the subject of any detailed scholarly study. The following is a tentative sketch of the major outlines of the rivalry between the two Manons from 1893 to 1925. This conflict came close to defining Manon’s Italian reception, despite both Massenet’s and Puccini’s efforts to direct attention away from it.

The Gazzetta musicale di Milano, the Ricordi house journal, pointedly ignored Massenet’s opera as much as possible. The only notice the Gazzetta took of the premiere was a brief article less than a column long, which noted:

Short notice requires us to note briefly a lovely success, warm and sincere up through the first half of the third act, less warm in the final of the third act and in the fourth act.

It is already well-known how beautiful Massenet’s brilliant work is…

We will conclude by noting that Massenet’s elegant music is truly welcome after a long, much too long sequence of more or less characteristic sketches unfortunately drawn along the lines of Cavalleria rusticana.

There is no coverage of Manon’s transfer to the Dal Verme in later issues, and the Gazzetta’s cover illustrations during October and November 1893 were reprints of costume designs for Puccini’s

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108 Hansen, Sanderson, 274, no original given.


“Oramai è noto quanto sia bellissima questa creazione geniale del Massenet…

“Concluderemo dicendo che l’elegante musica di Massenet è davvero la benvenuta dopo una lunga, troppo lunga serie di bozzetti più o meno caratteristici infelicemente ideati sulla falsariga della Cavalleria Rusticana.”
Manon Lescaut, as if to remind the Milanese public of Puccini’s opera, which they had not yet heard.\footnote{See the covers for the GMM 48 no. 43, 44, and 45 (22 Oct, 29 Oct, and 5 Nov 1893).}

In February, 1894, when Puccini’s opera enjoyed a great success in Milan, the prominent music critic Amintore Galli, the Casa Sonzogno’s chief musical adviser, published a review of Puccini’s Manon Lescaut in Il secolo. Amintore Galli writes authoritatively and with condescension; he was, after all, a prominent music historian, critic, and aesthete. Galli had served on the staff of the Milan Conservatory for many years (Puccini had been one of his students).\footnote{The chief source on Galli is Giampiero Tintori, Luigi Inzaghi, Guido Zangheri, and Sergio Martinotti, Amintore Galli: musicista e musicologo (Milan: Nuove Edizioni, 1988). For an overview of Galli’s career, see Luigi Inzaghi, “La vita,” in Amintore Galli, 31–46.} Galli’s article openly discusses Puccini’s and Massenet’s works, disingenuously refusing to make comparisons between such unequal works:

First of all we begin by saying that we are not thinking of comparing Massenet’s Manon with that of the maestro from Lucca. We cannot do this because it is not prudent to compare a young man, who is still searching for his own artistic path, with someone who has reached his goal…Everyone knows the author of the Roi de Lahore, the Cid, and Werther…

Nor is there a comparison to be made between two really different musical natures, those of Massenet and Puccini, because it doesn’t take great acumen to notice the distinguished young man’s effort to assimilate certain mannerisms of the French musical charmeur. Notwithstanding this, Massenet remains a melodist who is all grace, smiles, delicacy, sentiment, and a sentiment lit by a light that is brilliant and (this gives one pleasure to notice this) clear: it is the halo of a frank and sincere art, and it is the incarnation of an open and serene ideal.

Puccini, on the other hand, if judged by Le Villi, Edgar, and by his latest work—is all nerves and starts; in painting the figures of an intentionally overloaded drama, his colors, one could say without exaggerating, do not come out as he wishes…

Looking at the works of great musical artists, one always sees a beautiful clarity of the melodic line. It is true that this quality is an attribute of the old, classical art, of which our young people, in general, don’t want to know anything more because they prefer the spasmodic rhythms of Wagner in Tristan und Isolde. And these rhythms force their way through…many points of Puccini’s Manon, for example in the intermezzo: but Wagner did not use these frantic, convulsive rhythms in every one of his works…
We can say nothing about Lescaut’s personality: in Massenet he is her cousin, in Puccini her brother. In the first case, he is hilariously drawn, in the second he is nothing but a revolting procurer…

Galli attacks Puccini’s opera on every point. The plot has been distorted and vulgarized; Puccini has no style of his own, but unsuccessfully imitates Massenet and Wagner. Compared to Massenet, who the author reminds us is an accomplished composer, Puccini is an inept bungler who is unable to shape his art as he wishes. And in addition to reminding his readers that Puccini is young and inexperienced, and that it would not be fair to compare his work with Massenet’s, Galli (like the Cavaliere del Specchi), stresses Puccini’s origins in the small, provincial city of Lucca.

Galli, however, was in the minority; as Alexandra Wilson has shown, Manon Lescaut established Puccini’s reputation in Italy. Only in July 1894 did the Gazzetta musicale di Milano publish an article comparing the two Manons, with Francesco Contaldi’s long article “Manon Lescaut nell’arte e nella musica.” As one might expect from an author published in a Ricordi journal, Contaldi presents the two operas as uniquely French and Italian (in keeping with Puccini’s statement about his own opera as representing Italian passion); Puccini’s opera emerges


“Nè un confronto si può instituire tra due nature musicali affatto diverse, quali appunto sono quelle di Massenet e quella di Puccini, sebbene non ci voglia grande acume per scoprire lo sforzo che fa l’esimio giovane per assimilarsi certe maniere del musicista charmeur francese. Ciò non ostante, Massenet resta il melodista tutto grazia, sorrisi, delicatezza, sentimento, e di un sentimento irradiato da luce geniale, e, quel che più ci piace notare, limpida: è l’aureola dell’arte schietta e sincera e la incarnazione di un ideale aperto e sereno.

“Il Puccini invece a giudicarlo dalle Villi, dall’Edgar e dal suo ultimo lavoro,—è tutto nervi e scatti, nel dipingere le figure del dramma sovracarica volontieri le tinte, direbbe che esageri, non riuscendo come sarebbe suo desiderio...

“Osservando i lavori dei grandi artisti di musica, emerge costante la bella chiarezza delle linee melodiche; è vero però che questo pregio è un attributo dell’arte del passato o classica, e che i nostri giovani, parlando in generale, non vogliono più saperne di essa, cui preferiscono le forme ritmiche spasmodiche del Wagner del Tristan ed Isolde; —e questi ritmi si fanno strada in mezzo a forme meno ricercate e più nostrali in molti punti della Manon del Puccini, ad esempio nell’intermezzo; ma Wagner non usò questi ritmi affannosi, convulsi in ogni suo lavoro... Nulla poi diciamo del personaggio di Lescaut: in Massenet un cugino, in Puccini un fratello; nel primo corretto con tratti esilaranti, nel secondo non altro che un ributattante lenone.”

113Wilson, “Defining Italianness: The Opera that Made Puccini.”
intact from the comparison as “the italianized Manon, a Manon surrounded by a halo of music of passion and sorrow.”

It is difficult to assess the rivalry between the two Manons without possessing a comprehensive list of operatic productions throughout Italy. Such a list, of course, does not exist, and most historical studies of operatic life in specific Italian cities focus chiefly on the most prestigious theaters, excluding all others. Thus, for example, there is no detailed study of the Teatro Dal Verme, Milan’s second great theater, which saw the premieres of Leoncavallo’s Pagliacci, Puccini’s Le villi, etc, nor are there histories of the Teatro Pagliano in Florence, the Brunetti in Bologna, the Fondo/Mercadante in Naples, etc. Given the rivalry between Ricordi and Sonzogno, focusing exclusively on the massimi (first-rank theaters such as La Scala in Milan or the San Carlo in Naples), provides a completely warped picture of Italian operatic culture in the fine secolo. Both publishers struggled to control theaters of all kinds, and the statistics of any one theater can only reveal which publisher had greater luck or influence over the theater management. Instead, a much more accurate picture emerges if one studies all the operatic productions at all the theaters in a particular city. Consequently, it is difficult to assemble an accurate list of all the operatic productions in even one Italian city without conducting considerable archival research.

My present survey of the rivalry between the two Manons is limited to cities whose operatic life has already been documented by researchers (Catania, Livorno, and Palermo) and cities whose daily newspapers I have been able to examine (Milan and Turin). While this survey cannot provide a comprehensive portrait of Italian musical culture, it is representative of the struggle between these two operas in a variety of contexts. Each example reveals unique aspects of the rivalry between the two Manons (see Table 10).

114Francesco Contaldi, “Manon Lescaut nell’arte e nella musica,” GMM 49 no. 30 (29 July 1894), 475–477: 477: “la Manon italianizzata, la Manon cinta dall’aureola di una musica di passione e di dolore…”
First, it is worth noting the disparity between counting productions of an opera and counting performances. Livorno’s example is exemplary here. While Massenet’s opera had more productions (5 to 4), Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* actually enjoyed more performances (48–45). This fact reveals a basic limitation in relying too heavily on counting productions as a measure of an opera’s popularity.

Second, geography seems to have played some role in determining the success of these operas. In Milan, the headquarters of both Ricordi and Sonzogno, Massenet enjoyed more total productions of his opera (13 to 7), and in Turin, nearby, both composers tied at twelve productions apiece. Massenet’s many productions in Milan clearly reflect the existence of Sonzogno’s Teatro

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Massenet 1893–1903</th>
<th>Puccini 1893–1903</th>
<th>Massenet 1903–1925</th>
<th>Puccini 1903–1925</th>
<th>Massenet Total</th>
<th>Puccini Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livorno</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: The Two *Manons* in Select Italian Cities, 1893–1925
Lirico, which only produced works promoted by the firm; eight of the thirteen Massenet productions listed above occurred at the Lirico (see Appendix 1). The Casa Ricordi lacked a comparable resource. Puccini (and Ricordi) enjoyed a clear advantage in southern cities such as Palermo and Catania, far from the music-industrial center at Milan, cities in which Ricordi’s long history opera promotion may have translated into improved connections with local theater administrations and impresarios.

Third, the popularity of each opera fluctuated over time. For this chart, I have chosen two ending points: 1903 (the date of Massenet’s last known visit to Milan) and 1925 (one year after Puccini’s death, and thirteen years after Massenet’s). From this perspective, Massenet’s *Manon* seems to have enjoyed a slight edge in popularity during the first ten years (1893–1903), while Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* made up lost ground in the following years. However, the sum of all productions of the two operas in all five cities from 1893–1925 is equal. D’Ormeville’s fears were clearly exaggerated: while each opera dominated certain cities, it seems likely that the two operas were equally popular on the whole.

Despite the steady competition between the two operas (in November 1897, both *Manons* played simultaneously in Milan), both composers were remarkably quiet about the competition between their works.\(^{120}\) The competition between the two *La Bohèmes* (Puccini’s and Leoncavallo’s) seems to have been the topic of greater public controversy. Puccini, as we have noted above, explained the two operas as expressions of national identity; Massenet, always diplomatic, made a point of expressing his admiration for Puccini when writing to Puccini’s publishers.\(^{121}\) When it was rumored that Massenet had played a role in sabotaging a French production of Puccini’s opera,

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\(^{120}\)“Teatri di Milano,” CP 62 no. 41 (21 Nov 1897), 1.

\(^{121}\)Massenet to Giulio Ricordi, 22 Oct 1898, letters 119 and 120 in the Massenet correspondence file, Archivio storico Ricordi, Biblioteca nazionale Braidense, Milan. See also Massenet’s speech (October 1903) quoted in Chapter Three.
Massenet took the story seriously enough to issue a formal denial of all ill intentions “toward my colleague, Puccini,” stating that he hoped Italian composers would enjoy a warm reception in France.¹²²

Conclusions

Massenet’s *Manon* played a major role in Italian musical culture in 1893 and beyond. Arriving in Italy in the wake of Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*, but arriving in Milan before Puccini’s opera had had a local production, Massenet’s opera provides an excellent example of the tension between national and international operatic cultures. The debate over whether or not Massenet’s opera should even be produced in Milan was undoubtedly the result of political tensions between Italy and France, but it would be a mistake to view the debate between D’Ormeville and delli Specchi and the subsequent reviews as a rare case of political influence on operatic culture. Rather, these critical writings reveal one of opera’s basic relationships to cultural nationalism in fine secolo Italy: Italian operagoers saw operas—even foreign operas—as opportunities to further the glory of the nation through artistic achievement. While critics sympathetic to Ricordi questioned whether *Manon* could serve the nation, the question for Sonzogno’s supporters was rather how *Manon* could accomplish this goal.

Despite this critical debate, the opera was a great success in Milan and in Italy, and it equaled Puccini’s rival opera in popularity. Those members of the audience who read the theatrical columns regularly may well have been familiar with delli Specchi’s argument that Italian audiences had a right to hear Massenet’s opera; certainly the public seems to have turned out in force to hear *Manon*,

despite recent tensions between the French and Italian governments. Indeed, the French music journal *Le Ménestrel* noted approvingly that *Manon’s* popularity showed that the Italians knew better than to mix art with politics; regardless of the audience’s intentions, the very fact that they had applauded a French composer was understood politically in France as a sign of tolerance.\(^\text{123}\) But as we have seen, the very fact that the Milanese could go to see *Manon* at all was the result of politically daring decisions by the Casa Sonzogno.

In a more local sense, however, the critics’ attempt to explain Massenet’s work in terms of national styles also served nationalist ends. The pointed lack of sympathy for *opéra comique* and its opposition to Puccini’s “passion” allowed Italian audiences to understand *Manon* as an explicitly foreign work which could not escape its foreignness. The frequent emphasis on the “sentimentality,” “lightness,” and “exquisiteness” of Massenet’s opera further served to feminize the foreign composer, in contrast to the strong, masculine art of Puccini. Efforts to validate Massenet’s work despite its “sentimentality,” such as Il Misovulgo’s, struggled to make sense of the binary opposition between sentimentality and force. Significantly, the few reviews not to focus on the national quality of Massenet’s work took the opposite tack, praising Massenet’s opera for the passionate quality of its music.\(^\text{124}\) But it is also possible that, despite the negative connotations of much Italian critical writing about Massenet, the audience at the Teatro Carcano and at the Dal Verme were able to appreciate Massenet’s work in the way that delli Specchi proposed: not disapproving of *Manon’s* “sentimentality” or generic hybridity, but embracing it because it was good music that they had a

\(^{123}\)“Nouvelles Diverses: étranger,” *Le Ménestrel* 59 no. 44 (29 Oct 1893), 349: “Le succès de *Manon* se maintient très vif à Milan…Cette victoire artistique est tout à la honneur des Italiens, qui viennent de prouver qu’ils savent ne pas mêler la politique aux questions d’art, et qu’une telle partition, d’où qu’elle vienne, est toujours assurée de trouver près d’eux de l’admiration.”

right to hear, as cosmopolitan music-lovers functioning in a modern, international culture. In this way, *Manon* ideally represented the Casa Sonzogno’s operatic aesthetic.
CHAPTER TWO
Massenet, maestro sovranno: Werther at the Teatro Lirico Internazionale, 1894

Introduction

The success of Manon in 1893 probably raised Edoardo Sonzogno’s interest in introducing another opera by Massenet to the Milanese public: Werther, which had been premiered in Vienna in 1892. The Italian premiere of Werther proved very different from Manon’s for three reasons. First, Werther’s premiere occurred in Sonzogno’s new theater, the Teatro Lirico Internazionale, a space explicitly dedicated to the Casa Sonzogno’s aesthetic of nationalist cosmopolitanism. Second, Massenet’s physical presence in Milan played a major role in determining the outcome of Werther’s reception; Massenet and Sonzogno controlled the composer’s media image through a carefully chosen round of public appearances. Third, unlike Manon, Werther was strangely divorced from international politics. Instead, Massenet’s warm reception became a point of pride for Milanese critics, proof that nationalism had not corrupted Italian hospitality, and in this regard the reception of Werther became part of a squabble between French and Italian music critics over the impact of imported operas on national stages. All three of these points came together to make Werther’s premiere a unique case of cultural translation, a seemingly seamless transfer of an artistic object across national and cultural boundaries: Werther’s success seemed undeniable and unassailable, and unlike Manon, the opera’s plot and dramaturgy survived intact.

While Werther was successful with the Milanese critics, Werther’s reception was secondary to Massenet’s own cultural translation. The premiere of Werther redefined Massenet’s public image in Italy, transforming Massenet from the young composer Italians remembered from his last visit into a
graying master composer unparalleled in his craft.¹ The opera itself became the ideal symbol of Sonzogno’s international agenda—written in French, premiered in German, and given in Italian translation at Sonzogno’s International Lyric Theater—and its roots in Goethe’s novel served to emphasize Massenet’s new-found reputation for seriousness and profundity. And if Manon was the work which won over the Italian public, Werther was the magnum opus which convinced his critics of the height of his aspirations and the depth of his talent. Werther established Massenet’s reputation in Italy for the rest of his Italian career.

Werther’s premiere is also significant as the beginning of Massenet’s relationship to the giovane scuola, for whom Massenet assumed something of the role that Giuseppe Verdi played for the Casa Ricordi. Massenet’s presence in Milan—the first of many such visits over the next ten years—allowed him to meet repeatedly with Sonzogno’s stable of composers. As the most famous composer associated with the Casa Sonzogno in this period, Massenet assumed special importance in Sonzogno’s artistic project. Like Verdi, Massenet was an aging, internationally successful composer whose example provided a role model and inspiration for the younger composers of his circle. His influence on Mascagni, Cilea, Giordano, and even Puccini (who seems to have avoided Massenet) was widely acknowledged (see the Introduction).

Following the approach established in the Introduction, this analysis will consider Werther’s reception in relation to the translation of the opera’s libretto, and develop the Italian cultural context for Massenet’s opera. Consequently, this chapter falls into several broad sections: first, a brief history of the Teatro Lirico Internazionale, a theater owned and managed by Massenet’s Italian publisher, Edoardo Sonzogno; second, an overview of the opera’s relationship to Goethe’s novel, and the changes made in the Italian translation of the libretto; third, the reception itself, with special attention to the publicity machine surrounding Massenet’s return to Italy. The three threads of the

¹Massenet had last visited Milan in 1882, when the composer was barely forty years old, for the Italian premiere of Hérodiade.
chapter provide a window into Edoardo Sonzogno’s artistic agenda as embodied in his theater, the ways in which Werther was adapted for the Italian market, and the re-establishment of Massenet as a celebrity figure within Italian music culture.

I. CREATING THE VENUE: THE TEATRO LIRICO INTERNAZIONALE

Unlike Manon, which had premiered in the run-down Teatro Carcano, Werther had its Italian premiere in a renovated theater. Edoardo Sonzogno bought the old Teatro Canobbiana for the express purpose of presenting operas by composers published by the firm. There was a special need for such a theater, since the management of La Scala had remained sympathetic to the Ricordi firm for the last few years, and only one opera published by Sonzogno had been put on at La Scala from 1892 to 1894 (see Table 11). Sonzogno’s control over other Milanese theaters had been variable at best in the past; having lost any influence at La Scala, Sonzogno appears to have secured the Teatro Dal Verme for his operas for the 1892 and 1893 seasons, but he must have intended this as a temporary solution only. The sale of the Canobbiana was considered as early as October, 1893, and was finalized by December, 1893. Because of the theater’s significance as the setting for Werther’s premiere and as the physical embodiment of Sonzogno’s aesthetic platform, we will briefly consider its history.

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3 Valsecchi and Antolini, “Cronologia sintetica,” 57.

Table 11: Operas performed at the Teatro alla Scala from 1890–94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Operas published by Ricordi</th>
<th>Operas published by Sonzogno</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Rossini, <em>Il barbiere di Siviglia</em></td>
<td>Bizet, <em>Les pêcheurs de perles</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Verdi, <em>Simon Boccanegra, Ernani</em></td>
<td>Thomas, <em>Hamlet</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner, <em>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Gomes, <em>Condor</em></td>
<td>Gluck, <em>Orphée et Eurydice</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner, <em>Lohengrin</em></td>
<td>Mascagni, <em>Cavalleria rusticana</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gluck, <em>Orphée et Eurydice</em></td>
<td>Massenet, <em>Le Cid</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner, <em>Tannhäuser</em></td>
<td>Samara, <em>Lionella</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Bellini, <em>Norma</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Catalani, <em>La Wally</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meyerbeer, <em>Gli Ugonotti</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ponchielli, <em>Il figliuol prodigo</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Verdi, <em>Otello</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner, <em>Tannhäuser</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Donizetti, <em>Lucrezia Borgia, Lucia di Lammermoor</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Franchetti, <em>Cristoforo Colombo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verdi, <em>Rigoletto, La traviata, Falstaff</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner, <em>Der fliegende Holländer</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Catalani, <em>Loreley</em></td>
<td>Franchetti, <em>Fior d'alpe</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donizetti, <em>Lucia di Lammermoor</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Franchetti, <em>Cristoforo Colombo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Puccini, <em>Manon Lescaut</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verdi, <em>Rigoletto</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner, <em>Die Walküre</em></td>
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Edoardo Sonzogno had purchased his new theater with the explicit intention of creating a venue in which to develop his artistic goals. Sonzogno’s self-righteous promotion of cosmopolitanism served, as it had in the debates over *Manon*, as an implicit attack on the Casa Ricordi’s nationalist agenda (see the Introduction). A letter of his, reprinted in *La Lombardia*, states in part:

> For my part, I believe that it is very useful for artistic progress that the best works of all schools should be heard, so that next year I will open at my own expense a great lyric theater in Milan, with the intent of creating a true international academy, on whose stage will be performed the most successful works of composers from all lands.7

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5 Statistics drawn from Carlo Gatti, *Il Teatro alla Scala nella storia e nell’arte* (1778–1963). Vol. II: Cronologia completa degli spettacoli e dei concerti a cura di Giampiero Tintori (Milan: Ricordi, 1964): 63–6. Note that while all French and German operas given at La Scala in this time were performed in Italian translation, Table 11 uses their original titles for ease of comprehension.

6 Beginning customarily on December 26th of the previous year; thus the 1895 season began on December 26, 1894, etc. All operas listed during a year were thus performed in the carnival, quaresima, spring, and autumn seasons.

An unsigned editorial from Sonzogno’s newspaper Il secolo on the eve of the theater’s opening elaborated this point. Here the emphasis on avoiding nationalist biases is even more pointed:

This evening, the 22nd of September, the Teatro Lirico Internazionale will open in Milan.

This is an important event in the history of art, because Milan’s example will doubtless be imitated in other nations, and new theaters will be opened on the same plan as this one: that music should have a free field in which to manifest itself in perfect equality, so that only the best works can triumph, without national preconceptions.

Mr. Edoardo Sonzogno intended to build a theater dedicated to universal art...

The same concept is to be affirmed by Felice Cavalloti in the prologue with which the theater will open this evening.8

While Sonzogno’s cosmopolitan rhetoric was chiefly directed at Ricordi, it also had an impact on Italy’s international reputation as an operatic backwater dominated by small local scenes. The French press, in particular, reacted to Sonzogno’s new theater with grudging respect, as an extraordinary outlier in a country whose theaters were poorly regulated. Le Ménestrel noted:

The international lyric theater that Mr. Sonzogno has constructed at Milan under the name Teatro internazionale will open on September 20…Mr. Sonzogno will produce eight new works in eleven weeks without government subsidies or involvement…Certainly, the decentralization about which we slander our neighbors when we speak of “Italian regionalism” occasionally has some good in it. Could a theater director in Marseille or Lyon, cities larger and richer than Milan, risk a similar artistic enterprise to prove himself Mr. Sonzogno’s equal?9

venturo aprirò a mie spese a Milano una grande teatro lirico, nell’intento di creare una vera accademia internazionale, sulle cui scene riprodurò i diversi lavori veramente riusciti dei compositori di tutti i paesi.”


“È un fatto importante nella storia dell’arte, perché l’esempio di Milano sarà senza dubbio imitato dalle altre nazioni; e nuovi teatri si apriranno col programma di questo: che la musica abbia un campo libero nel quale manifestarsi in una perfetta eguaglianza, affinché solamente le opere migliori possano trionfare, senza preconcetti di nazionalità.

“Il signor Edoardo Sonzogno intese di erigere un teatro all’arte universale…

“E lo stesso concetto afferma Felice Cavallotti nel prologo col quale questa sera si inaugura il teatro.”

9“Nouvelles diverses: étranger,” Le Ménestrel 60 no. 34 (26 Aug 1894), 269: “Le théâtre lyrique international que M. Sonzogno a construit à Milan sous la dénomination de Teatro internazionale sera ouvert le 20 septembre…M.Sonzogno produira huit nouveautés en onze semaines sans aucune subvention et sans aucune intervention de l’Etat…Certes, la décentralisation dont on médit chez nos voisins quand on parle du « régionalisme italien », a quelquefois du bon. Est-ce à Marseille où à Lyon, villes plus grandes et surtout plus riches que Milan, qu’un directeur de théâtre, fût-il même l’égal de M. Sonzogno, pourrait risquer pareille entreprise artistique?”
Sonzogno’s attempt to internationalize Milan’s musical profile heightened Milan’s musical importance within Italy and within Europe, as few cities of the size of Milan could afford such a lavish theater. The French critic Arthur Pougin made a similar point in a short article a few weeks later: “the number of theaters [in Milan] seems excessive for a population of hardly 400,000 people.” Yet for Pougin, the significance of the new theater lay in its repertoire: “It is an important artistic event not only for Milan, but also for Italy, and our interest in it does not stop there, since Mr. Sonzogno intends to draw heavily on French repertoire in his theater.”

The purchase and renovation of the Canobbiana were not without their pitfalls. By January 1894, the theater’s sale was public knowledge. The architect Achille Sfondrini, acting for Sonzogno, bought the theater for the sum of 270,000 lire. According to the Corriere della sera, the money was distributed to the box-holders of the theater; the city of Milan, also a part owner of the theater, received no money, but no longer had to pay for the upkeep of the theater. The sale of theater led to controversy with one particularly powerful boxholder, Commendatore Pompeo Cambiasi, a

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10 Arthur Pougin, “Semaine Théâtrale: La Canobbiana, de Milan,” Le Ménestrel 60 no. 37 (16 Sept 1894), 291–92: 292: “…à Milan, où le nombre de théâtres peut sembler excessif pour une population qui ne dépasse guère 400.000 habitants…”

11 Ibid, 291: “C’est là événement artistique important non seulement pour Milan, mais pour l’Italie, et qui ne laisse pas que de nous intéresser en même temps, puisque M. Sonzogno se propose de puiser [sic] largement dans le répertoire française pour alimenter celui de son théâtre.”


13 “Ah!…Commendatore…!” GDT 56 no. 4 (25 Jan 1894), 3–4. The article contains a reprinted article from the Corriere della sera.
supporter of the Ricordi firm and a member of the board of directors of La Scala. As the Corriere summarized the situation,

…it was necessary to secure the agreement of all the box-holders. Now all have agreed, save one, the Honorable Pompeo Cambiasi, who has declared that he will never sign such an agreement for motives that he says are artistic, because the new theater could cause grave damage to La Scala, which, he says, Milan must protect at all costs.

Cambiasi’s stand in defense of La Scala, which was at this point the exclusive territory of Ricordi, did him little credit; his action had the potential to be catastrophic for Sonzogno. Sfondrini, who had begun the renovation, now had to suspend his work indefinitely; the city of Milan, also party to the sale, refused to take any responsibility for the situation. Eventually, however, Cambiasi must have capitulated to the wishes of the other box-holders, as the theater opened some eight months later. Cambiasi’s stand was probably not a simple case of partisan loyalty to the Ricordi firm, however, but probably reflected his sincere beliefs about the relative importance of the music promoted by Ricordi and by Sonzogno. Given Sonzogno’s avowed intention to create a theater open to “composers from all lands,” it is worth remembering that Cambiasi had prefaced his 1888 history of La Scala with a speech by Giulio Ricordi, presenting La Scala as the bastion of Italian art in a time of corruption and decadence. There is little reason to suppose that Cambiasi’s views would have changed six years later, and his loyalty to the Italian nationalist aesthetic that the Ricordi catalogue had come to symbolize probably is behind his defense of his position on “artistic grounds.”

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14Cambiasi is best known for his history of La Scala. *La Scala, 1778–1889; note storiche e statistiche* (Milan: Ricordi, 1888).

15“Ah!…Commendatore…!” GDT 56 no. 4 (25 Jan 1894), 3–4. “…era naturalmente necessaria l’adesione di tutti i palchettisti. Ora tutti aderirono, meno uno solo, e questo uno è l’on. Pompeo Cambiasi, il quale ha dichiarato che non firmerà mai una simile convenzione per motivi, dice, artistici, vale a dire perché il nuovo teatro potrebbe arrecare grave danno alla Scala, che Milano, dice, deve ad ogni costo tutelare.” reprinted in

And in one sense, Cambiasi would be proved right; the opening of the Teatro Lirico in September 1894 would serve as the defining event of the operatic season, far outshining the 1895 season at La Scala, and crucially changing the balance of power on the Milanese operatic stage. Now there were three major theaters (Lirico, Dal Verme, and Scala) in Milan instead of two; whichever publisher held two of the three theaters controlled the local opera scene. It was possible to secure an advantage in the sheer number of performances of a publisher’s work and the number of theaters tacitly controlled by Ricordi or Sonzogno. The years 1895 and 1896 would belong completely to Sonzogno, as the wily publisher secured control of the Scala while also filling the Lirico with his operas. Ricordi was driven back to the Teatro Dal Verme.  

A brief survey of the operas performed over the next few years confirms and clarifies Cambiasi’s fears for the Scala. Sonzogno’s Scala seasons filled the stage with a mass of French operas by Massenet, Saint-Saëns, Thomas, Berlioz, Bizet, Reyer, and Paladilhe and new Italian operas by Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano. Throughout Sonzogno’s reign at La Scala, not a single opera by Verdi, Ponchielli, Bellini, Donizetti, or Rossini was heard—the Italian heritage on which Ricordi so proudly staked its reputation. There were no revivals of Franchetti’s popular *Cristoforo Colombo* or *Asrael*, or Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*. There were also no performances of Wagner, Gounod, or Meyerbeer, composers whose works were chiefly promoted by Ricordi.  

There was, indeed, a major shift in the choice of operas available to the public, from a repertoire dominated by Italian classics, Wagner, and grand opera, to a repertoire centered on contemporary French opera and Italian “verismo.” La Scala’s importance declined; while Ricordi reclaimed the theater for the 1897 season, the theater remained closed for the 1898 season.  

All of this was in the future when Cambiasi protested Sonzogno’s acquisition of the Canobbiana. Cambiasi’s eventual capitulation apparently occurred around March: the Teatro Lirico

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Internazionale had its triumphal opening on September 22, 1894, and the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* noted that it had taken Sfondrini a mere six months to renovate the theater.\(^{19}\)

The theater itself was an imposing space; the *Secolo* columnists were understandably proud of the tapestries and the concert hall that was attached to the theater. The Edison Company received special praise for the electric lighting it provided,\(^{20}\) rather than a single grand chandelier, the theater contained “hundreds of small electric lights.”\(^{21}\) It impressed even the critic of the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, whom one might reasonably expect to have been hostile to Sonzogno’s efforts:

> One immediately recognizes the author [Sfondrini] in the elegance and skill of the dome, and also in the ornamentation, which is in the style of the Renaissance. The dominant colors are white, red, and gold. The theater, in addition to its vast floor seating, has two rows of boxes, a balcony with seats, a wide gallery around the amphitheater, and finally a loggia with standing room… It [the theater] can hold about two thousand people.\(^{22}\)

The theater was decorated with artworks by Annibale Brugnoli (1843-1915), a renowned painter who had helped decorate the cupola of the Teatro Costanzi, the vault of Cathedral of Aquila, and other important buildings.\(^{23}\)

Brugnoli’s contribution to the Teatro Lirico, a painting entitled “L’origine del teatro” (The Origin of the Theater) which occupied the vaulted ceiling over the stage, is significant for the way in

\(^{19}\)“Rivista milanese,” GMM 49 no. 39 (30 Sept 1894), 611–12: “La ricostruzione del grande teatro della Cannobiana fu compiuta mirabilmente in sei mesi dall’architetto Sfondrini, costruttore del teatro Costanzi di Roma.” Sfondrini’s previous experience in building the Teatro Costanzi in Rome probably contributed to the speedy construction of the Lirico. Both theaters were roughly the same size (about 2,000 seats), had Renaissance-themed decoration, and used electric light. Incagliati, 18–9.

\(^{20}\) *Il secolo*, 24 Sept 1894, 2.

\(^{21}\)“Le 5 rappresentazioni inaugurali del Teatro Lirico Internazionale,” *Il trovatore* 41 no. 39 (29 Sept 1894), 1: “centinaia di fiamelle electriche.”

\(^{22}\)GMM 49 no. 39 (30 Sept 1894) 611–12: “Vi si ravvisa subito lo stesso autore nella eleganza e sveltezza della cupola, come anche nell’ornamentazione, che è nello stile del Rinascimento. I colori dominanti sono il bianco, il rosso e l’oro. Il teatro, oltre a una vasta platea, conta due file di palchi, una balconata a poltrone, una larga galleria ad anfiteatro, infine una loggia con posti in piedi… Vi potevano essere circa duemila persone…”

which it depicted Sonzogno’s international ideals.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, the topic of the painting was suggested by Amintore Galli, the music critic for \textit{Il secolo} and artistic director of the Casa Musicale Sonzogno.\textsuperscript{25} The painting makes no specific claim for a national school of drama, opera, or art of any kind; one can easily imagine that a new Italian opera theater could easily have featured portraits of Italian musicians, for instance, as Giuseppe Verdi’s Casa del Riposo would prominently display on its opening in 1900.\textsuperscript{26} Rather, Brugnoli’s “L’origine del teatro” thematicizes a prominent aesthetic divide in dramatic art, depicting the opposition of the cults of Apollo and Dionysius, “the first an aristocratic cult, the second a cult predestined for the people” (see \textbf{Figure 3}).\textsuperscript{27} The Dionysiac revelers surround a statue of the god on the left; on the right, the actor Thespis, surrounded by white oxen, declaims.\textsuperscript{28} Such a scene, with its classical values, would have fit well with the Renaissance styling that the \textit{Gazzetta} described. Brugnoli’s painting stresses the common roots of all Western theater in Greek drama. Art, the painting suggests, arises out of the coexistence of opposites, not from angry opposition between them.

The significance of the theater’s décor to Sonzogno’s aesthetic and political vision for his theater is pointed. Brugnoli’s painting and Sfrondrini’s Renaissance décor contrasted with the Teatro Lirico’s use of electric light. Electric light was a powerful symbol of technological progress and modernity among liberal Italians in this period; the popular ballet \textit{Excelsior} (scenario by Luigi Manzotti, music by Romualdo Marenco; La Scala, 1881) explicitly celebrated scientific progress, with

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24}“Cronaca: Il Teatro Lirico Internazionale: I cooperatori,” \textit{Il secolo} 24 Sept 1894, 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{25}“Il nuovo Teatro Lirico Internazionale a Milano,” \textit{Il secolo}, 22 Sept 1894, 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{26}The concert hall of the Casa di Riposo contained portraits of Giovanni Pierluigi di Palestrina, Girolamo Frescobaldi, Claudio Montevedi, Alessandro Scarlatti, Benedetto Marcello, Domenico Cimarosa, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, and Gioachino Rossini. “La Casa di Riposo pei Musicisti,” MA 34 no. 42–43 (11 Oct 1900), 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{27}\textit{Il secolo} 22 Sept 1894, 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the electric battery as a symbol of the new age. The theater’s structure and décor therefore combined references to Italy’s historical past and the height of modern technology.

Figure 3. Brugnoli’s *L’origine del teatro*, as reproduced in *Il secolo*, 22 Sept 1894, 1.

Both these themes would be central to the dedicatory speech written by Sonzogno’s friend, the radical politician Felice Cavallotti (1842–98). Cavallotti’s role in opening Sonzogno’s new theater reveals Sonzogno’s political sympathies, as Cavallotti had been an ardent opponent of Francesco Crispi’s liberal, anti-French government and had recently attacked the prime minister’s personal character in a series of inflammatory letters accusing Crispi of bigamy.

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31 Cavallotti was a friend of Sonzogno’s, as shown by their correspondence, written in the familiar and dating back to the 1870s; he also served on the committee for Sonzogno’s second composition competition of 1888. Mario Morini and Piero Ostali, Jr. “Cronologia della Casa Musicale Sonzogno,” in Morini, Ostali, and Ostali, *Casa Musicale Sonzogno* (Milan:
Cavallotti did not deliver his speech in person; that task was entrusted to Luigi Monti (1836–1904), a noted actor who held official posts at both the Accademia dei filodrammatici and the Conservatorio.\(^{32}\) The speech, however, was less than successful, as Monti “had to retreat from the stage among ear-splitting cries of *basta* (enough),” and he had to cut short his speech (it is unclear at what point) and retreat backstage. A British correspondent similarly wrote that the prologue was “drowned with yells and whistling.”\(^{33}\) The local press had varying opinions about the matter. The *Corriere della sera* wrote that the audience’s behavior “would have seemed not only improbable, but impossible, some years ago.” *La Lombardia* attributed the audience’s behavior to their eagerness to see the opera scheduled for that evening. Sonzogno’s own paper, *Il secolo*, downplayed the failure of the speech, claiming that the disturbance was merely the result of too many people trying to find their seats. *Il secolo* reprinted it in full, giving the false impression that the entire speech had been heard.\(^{34}\)

Cavallotti’s speech is a verbal equivalent of the rhetoric developed by Brugnoli’s painting. Aristotle’s role in the development of drama serves as a constant backdrop to Cavallotti’s rhapsodic exploration of several themes: the theater’s geographical and historical place within the city of Milan, Milan’s cosmopolitan heritage, and Sonzogno’s role as the mastermind behind the theater’s

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renovation. Proceeding more by implication than by overt argument, the speech serves as a manifesto for Sonzogno’s theater and the relationship of Sonzogno’s aesthetic to Italian identity.

This universality, this internationalism, leads Cavallotti to eulogize Milan as the ideal cosmopolitan city, and the operas that will be performed in the new theater as a binding force that unites Italians wherever they may be. Having suggested the new theater’s roots in the historical past, Cavallotti prepares his next main point: the Teatro Lirico does not re-imagine Italian identity, but rather revives an identity construct with long roots. The theater emerges as a symbol of Italian progress and modernity: not a brazenly jingoistic nationalism, but a nationalism which includes tolerance and respect for foreigners.

This is Milan…ancient Milan, which our grandfathers loved, which saw their loves, their follies, their sorrows, their uprisings…which continues to live anew in new monuments, in new streets, in its whirling activity…It lies on a road trod by many nations, as though on the crossroads of the great road which connects peoples, and it came to form hospitable traditions and a universal spirit, so that foreigners…when they wished to do justice to Milan, gave it the true honor of calling it a cosmopolitan city…

…From here [the city] a message flies freely, spreading everywhere, beyond the two seas, beyond the mountains, announcing to so many melancholy Italians that the shining ideal of the Italian soul and of Italian art has not died.35

Not only does the Teatro Lirico embody the spirit of ancient Milan, it is also a reflection of modern, cosmopolitan Milan. Hospitality and tolerance, in other words, are Milan’s contribution to the rebirth of the Italian spirit, and the Teatro Lirico is a symbol of Milan’s role in Italy’s rebirth.

Opera’s role in this revival of the Italian spirit emerges only at the end of the speech, in which Cavallotti invokes the spirit of poetry as embodied by the heroines of Norma, Il barbiere di

35Opere di Felice Cavallotti, Vol. IX, 245–47: “…così è di Milano…la Milano antica, quella che i nostri nonni amarono, che vide i loro amori, le loro pazzie, i loro dolori, le loro rivolte…che essa di continuo rivive nei monumenti nuovi, nelle nuove vie, nell’attività vertiginosa… la quale poste sul passaggio delle diverse nazioni, quasi al crocicchio della gran strada dei popoli, si venne formando ad tradizioni ospitali e a quello spirito di universalità, per cui allo straniero…quando vogliono a Milano far torto, le rendono onore vero chiamandola, città cosmopolita…

“…da qui liberi il volo e porti dovunque, oltre il doppio mare, oltre i monti, una parola che annunzi non morte, fra tante italiche melanconie, le idealità luminose dell’anima italiana, dell’arte italiana.”
Siviglia, La traviata, Lucia di Lammermoor, Otello, Hamlet, Carmen, Cavalleria rusticana, Mignon, and Faust.\textsuperscript{36}

The list of operas represents both the Italian tradition (Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi) and French imports (Thomas, Bizet, and Gounod). There is no reference here to Sonzogno’s rivalry with Ricordi, even though Ricordi held the Italian distribution rights for the Italian works on Cavallotti’s list, as well as Gounod’s Faust. The performance of French operas in Sonzogno’s new theater was part of Cavallotti’s vision of the rebirth of Italian art. Significantly, none of Wagner’s heroines appear in Cavallotti’s list, not even Elsa from Lobengrin, which was Wagner’s most popular work in Italy at this point.\textsuperscript{37} Even though Cavallotti stresses the international mission of the theater, the most popular German opera of the day is pointedly excluded from his vision of Italian opera’s future.

Despite Cavallotti’s rhetoric going unheard, the evening “was a very brilliant success…the large audience [included] many foreigners, several art critics from abroad, and some of the most famous theatrical impresarios.”\textsuperscript{38} Many noted musicians and composers in attendance that evening: Bazzini, Pietro Mascagni, Alberto Franchetti, and Antonio Carlos Gomes (best known today for his opera Il Guarany), among the composers; the sopranos Hericlea Darclèe, Regina Pinkert, Teresa Stolz, and Sibyl Sanderson; the tenor Francesco Tamagno, who had first created the title role in Verdi’s Otello. Aside from the Italian press, which attended in force, journalists from Paris, London, Vienna, Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern, Barcelona, and Stockholm attended the opening. Sonzogno

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid, 248.

\textsuperscript{37}Lobengrin was quite popular in Milan at this time: it was produced at La Scala in 1889 and 1891, and would be produced at the Teatro Dal Verme in 1894 and 1896. Raffaela Valsecchi and Bianca Maria Antolini, “Cronologia sintetica delle rappresentazioni d’opera nei teatri milanesi: 1861–1897,” in Antolini (ed.) Milano musicale (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 1999), 43–60: 56–9. As noted in the Introduction (see note 6), Lobengrin was the first of Wagner’s operas to be produced in Italy, seeing its first production at Bologna in 1871.

\textsuperscript{38}“Teatri: La Martire di S. Samara al Teatro Lirico Internazionale,” Il sole, 23 Sept 1894, 2. “La festa …è risunta brillantissima…vi assisteva un pubblico imponente…molti stranieri, parecchi critici d’arte venuti dal di fuori e impresari teatrali fra i più noti.”
published an illustrated commemorative booklet (*Il teatro lirico internazionale*) and struck a medal in bronze, silver, and silver plate, with a motto by famed Italian historian Cesare Cantù (1804–1895).39

The opening of the theater was marked by multiple opening performances. Rather than performing two operas in rotation, as was customary, Sonzogno opened his theater with no less than six different operas in five days; he employed roughly three full casts in rotation (see Table 12). This lavish display drew a stunned tribute from *Le Méristrel*: “Five new productions in five days! Which theater in Paris could be capable of such a *tour de force*?”40 The first night was given to a now-forgotten work, *Martire* by the Greek composer Spyros Samaras, to an Italian libretto by Luigi Illica. The second night saw a performance of Mascagni’s *L’amico Fritz*; the third, Leoncavallo’s *I Medici*.41 The first three performances alone brought in receipts of 20,000 lire.42 On the fourth night (26th September) *Il piccolo Haydn* by Gaetano Cipollini, another of Sonzogno’s young composers, was paired with Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*.43 The fifth and final night featured Franchetti’s recent comedy *Fior d’Alpe*, which had premiered at La Scala the previous March. The preparation required for rehearsing six operas and multiple casts was enormous, and Sonzogno had to use La Scala as a rehearsal space in the weeks before the premiere, as the work on the Teatro Lirico wound to a


close. On each night, except apparently the third, the operas were succeeded by a performance of Leo Delibes’ ballet *Coppelia*.

As in the productions of *Manon* in the previous year, the orchestra was led by Rodolfo Ferrari and the chorus by Aristide Venturi. The opening of Sonzogno’s “international lyric theater” was a major coup in demonstrating the aesthetic and political aims of the firm. Each of the five premieres featured the work of a talented young composer. Mascagni and Cipollini represented talent specifically discovered or cultivated by Sonzogno; Leoncavallo and Franchetti, who had until recently been published by Ricordi, represented defections from Sonzogno’s greatest rival. Samaras’ opera and Delibes’ ballet represented the international element. The theater’s design, its decorations, and electric lighting, and Cavallotti’s rhetoric, further combined to suggest that the Teatro Lirico was a modern venue dedicated to one of the oldest, most cosmopolitan arts.

The new theater’s repertoire in its first season was also a lavish tribute to Sonzogno’s power and taste. The most recent season at La Scala had featured sixty-six performances of seven operas in six months (see Table 11); the Teatro Lirico presented seventy-two performances of twelve operas in eleven weeks, averaging over six performances a week (see Table 12). Of these, all but two were known quantities guaranteed to fill the theater, including popular favorites such as *Pagliacci*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *I Medici*, *Manon*, and *Mignon*. The crowning height of the season occurred when Sonzogno

44“Rivista Milanese,” GMM 49 no. 37 (16 Sept 1894), 579.

45*Il secolo*, 26 Sept 1894.

46Gatti, *Il teatro alla scala*, 64.

47Sonzogno seems to have repeatedly changed his plans regarding the repertoire of his new theater. French papers announced that he planned to produce Massenet’s *Le portrait de Manon* and Delibes’ *Lakmé*, Bizet’s *Djamileh*, and Coronaro’s *Claudia*. Some of the works performed were probably substitutions for the works originally announced at the theater. “Nouvelles diverses: étranger,” *Le Ménestrel* 60 no. 34 (26 Aug 1894), 269. As late as October 14, *Le Ménestrel* still announced an upcoming performance of *Le portrait de Manon*. “Nouvelles diverses: étranger,” 60 no. 41: 326. The Italian press mentioned *Le portrait de Manon*, but also claimed that the theater would perform *Il Cristo di Valaperta* by Brunetto, *L’attaque du moulin* by Bruneau, *Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart, and *Yevgeny Onegin* by Chaikovsky. “Cronaca,” MA 28 no. 36–37(10 Sept 1894), 3; “Cronaca milanese,” GTI 23 no. 24 (12 Sept 1894), 1.
brought in an internationally renowned foreign composer to supervise the Italian premiere of a recent opera at the new theater. That composer was Massenet, and the opera, Werther.

Table 12: The Fall 1894 season at the Teatro Lirico Internazionale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening Date</th>
<th>Title (performances)</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 22</td>
<td>Martire (11)</td>
<td>Samara</td>
<td>Lison Frandin, Giovanni Apostolu, O. Beltrami, Stefania Collamarini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>L’amico Fritz (5)</td>
<td>Mascagni</td>
<td>Gioacchino Bayo, Fanny Torresella, S. Collamarini, Carlo Buti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>I Medici (4)</td>
<td>Leoncavallo</td>
<td>Giuseppe Kaschmann, G. Apostolu, F. Torresella, G. Scarnec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Il piccolo Haydn (10)</td>
<td>Cipollini</td>
<td>S. Collamarini, Fiorell, Francesco Pandolfini, F. Torresella, C. Buti, Mario Roussel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 27</td>
<td>Fior d’Alpe (3)</td>
<td>Franchetti</td>
<td>Amelia Karola, G. Apostolu, Persini, C. Buti, G. Scarneco, Michele Wigley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 6</td>
<td>Mignon (10)</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>L. Frandin, G. Bayo, F. Torresella, E. Lorrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 23</td>
<td>Graziella (2)</td>
<td>Auteri-Manzochi</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli, Ernestina Bendazzi Garulli, Buti, S. Collamarini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 3</td>
<td>I Rantzau (4)</td>
<td>Mascagni</td>
<td>Amelia Karola, Gioacchino Bayo, G. Kaschmann, C. Buti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>Manon (7)</td>
<td>Massenet</td>
<td>Ernestina Bendazzi Garulli/L. Frandin, A. Garulli, M. Wigley, E. Lorrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>Werther (5)</td>
<td>Massenet</td>
<td>A. Garulli, Etele Schiff, Lenzini, Ines Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8</td>
<td>Cavalleria rusticana (2)</td>
<td>Mascagni</td>
<td>L. Frandin, G. Apostolu, C. Buti, S. Collamarini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. WERTHER AND TRANSLATION

Translation is a particularly useful way of understanding Massenet’s Werther on the Italian stage, as the opera itself lies at the center of a complex web of translational activity. This web, I argue, underpinned the Italian reception of the opera, and was common knowledge among Massenet’s Italian critics. At the same time, translation transformed Massenet’s opera, altering the relationship between text and music and altering the cultural references embedded in the opera.

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Werther also exists in a complex relationship with the Italian reception of Goethe’s novel. Bearing in mind Roman Jakobsen’s analysis of literary adaptation as a form of translation, I place Massenet’s opera in this context as well, straddling the boundaries of artistic genres (novels, plays, and operas) and languages (German, French, and Italian).\footnote{Roman Jakobsen, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” 114; in Venuti, The Translation Studies Reader (London: Routledge, 2000), 113–18.} The opera’s French libretto was derived from a German novel; the French libretto was then translated into German for the opera’s world premiere (in Vienna, in 1892). Massenet’s opera was premiered in its original French later in the year in Switzerland, and was finally performed in France in 1893. Due to the unfortunate destruction of the Sonzogno archives, there is little archival material regarding the commissioning of the Italian translation, but the earliest editions I have found are copyrighted 1892, suggesting that preparations for the opera’s Italian premiere began several years before it arrived in Italy.

From a German novel to a French opera

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (The Sorrows [or Sufferings] of Young Werther) consists of a series of letters written by a highly sensitive, nature-loving young man named Werther “who seeks to find some order of existence into which he can integrate himself without losing himself.”\footnote{Eric A. Blackall, Goethe and the Novel (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), 39.} Most of Werther’s sufferings occur in the fictional town of Wahlheim, where he meets Charlotte, the daughter of a local administrator. His love for her is doomed: Charlotte is engaged to Albert, a young man who works for the court; her marriage has been arranged by her now-deceased mother, whose memory Charlotte reveres. Charlotte serves as a surrogate mother to her numerous siblings, and Werther’s love of nature and children combines with his attraction to Charlotte. Sensing that Charlotte will never abandon Albert, Werther pursues a diplomatic career at
court, but he resigns his appointment at the court of an unidentified German state after an episode in which he is embarrassed in front of influential aristocrats. The conclusion of the novel is narrated by an anonymous editor, who is generally thought to be a friend of Werther’s, but may well be a coroner investigating his suicide. In an emotionally wrenching final meeting with Charlotte, Werther reads her his translations of Ossian’s poetry, then kisses her. Charlotte, on extricating herself, declares that she will never see him again; he leaves in despair. Werther shoots himself with pistols borrowed from Albert, and lingers in agony some twelve hours before expiring. Charlotte is overcome with grief, but does not visit the dying man or attend his funeral. The book ends with a sparse account of Werther’s burial.

Goethe’s novel first appeared in 1774 and was a sensation: it inspired fashions, merchandizing, and even (it was rumored) actual suicides. The novel quickly spread beyond German-speaking lands: it was translated into French (1775), English (1779), Italian (1781), Russian (1788), Dutch (1790), and Spanish (1803). Goethe himself tired of the attention the book drew and penned several parodies, as well as revised edition (1787). This edition contains several new episodes and alters the original, making Albert more sympathetic, and providing more insight into Charlotte’s feelings, which are more ambiguous regarding Werther.

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54 Friedenthal, Goethe, 130.

The libretto created by Édouard Blau, Paul Milliet, and Georges Hartmann omits most of the novel’s social critique. The novel’s Werther chafes against the constraints of bureaucracy (letters of 24 December 1771 and 8 January 1772), is embarrassed by his misadventures at court (letter of 15 March 1772), and defends a man accused of a crime of passion (editor’s note, 1787 version only). The French libretto only refers to Werther’s ambitions at court in passing (Act I, scene 3), and paints Charlotte’s father, the Bailiff, as a benevolent if pedantic *bon bourgeois* (in the novel, her father wants to investigate a local murder).

Massenet’s opera draws heavily on the 1787 edition of the novel in its extended portrait of Charlotte’s feelings. Charlotte’s duets with Werther (in Acts I, III, and IV) and Sophie (Act III) reveal her feelings throughout the drama. This is a marked difference from the novel, even in the 1787 version, where Charlotte’s words are always reported by another character (Werther or the editor); in Werther’s case, there is always the possibility that he is reporting his inaccurate perception of her demeanor. The operatic Charlotte, however, participates actively in the duet in which Werther falls in love with her, and practically apologizes for forgetting her engagement to Albert and inappropriately encouraging Werther’s advances (*Dieu m’est témoin qu’un instant, près de vous/j’avais oublié le serment qu’on me rappelle*). Further, rather than remaining shut up in her room after Werther has kissed her, Charlotte tries to prevent his suicide, but arrives too late. Act IV consists of an extended duet in which Charlotte confesses her love for Werther and witnesses his death.

Yet, as in Goethe’s novel, the operatic Charlotte largely reacts to Werther’s passion, even if her physical presence lends an element of reality to what might otherwise seem Werther’s ungrounded obsession. Only rarely do her actions drive the drama forward, and in each case these moments are drawn from the novel: when she tells Werther not to visit until Christmas, and when she runs away from him after the kiss in Act III.

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Charlotte’s reactive nature is underlined in her solo scenes, both of which occur in Act III. In the Letter Scene, she reads three of Werther’s letters, her longest solo, which largely consists of reading in another person’s voice, of being spoken through. Her frenzied prayer for the strength to withstand Werther, after Sophie’s departure, appeals to a higher power for aid in her struggles. Charlotte is thus caught between the demands of the other characters in the drama: Werther’s passion places her in an awkward position, Albert demands that she give the pistols to Werther’s servant, and Charlotte even feels compelled to fake cheerfulness so as not to upset her sister Sophie. The memory of her dead mother completes the list of Charlotte’s obligations to the other characters.

The libretto also expands the novel’s portrait of Sophie, Charlotte’s younger sister. While in the book, Sophie is barely eleven years old (see the letter of 16 June, 1771), the opera increases her age to fifteen and employs her as a foil to Charlotte and as a possible love interest for Werther. Of all the leading characters, Sophie owes the most to comic opera, both in her dialogue and her music, as Stephen Huebner has noted. Sophie also shares Charlotte’s responsibility for their family (Act I, scene 3: nous prenons soin, Charlotte et moi, de la famille).

While Sophie is generally thought to have been invented by Blau, Millet, and Hartmann, a similar figure appears in Raffaele Gentili’s 1862 opera Werther, which Massenet and his librettists may have known. There, Sofia is the daughter of a local baron, and, as in Massenet’s opera, is a romantic interest for Werther—his fiancée, in fact. Werther abandons her during their wedding ceremony because his old passion has for Carlotta (Charlotte) has been rekindled. While the libretto

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58 Massenet was in Italy (on his Prix de Rome fellowship) while the opera was still being produced. Additionally, French music critic Adolphe Jullien mentioned it in his 1873 article on musical settings of Goethe. Adolphe Jullien, “Les œuvres de Goethe et la musique (2e article),” La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris 40 no. 17 (27 Apr 1873), 129–31.
contains no direct statement of Sofia’s age relative to Carlotta’s, it does emphasize Sofia’s childlike nature, suggesting her youth, an element that recurs in Massenet’s opera.\footnote{Sofia trae seco Carlotta per la mano, quasi con gioia infantile.” Werther: melodramma tragico in tre atti, dell’avvocato Leopoldo Farnese, posto in musica dal maestro Raffaele Gentili (Milan: Giacomo Pirola, 1864), 8.}

The ending of the opera is simultaneously more overtly emotional and more chilling than that of the novel; there the protagonist, while rejected at court, is mourned by the citizens of Wahlheim. Goethe’s editor notes that local authorities took measures to avoid social unrest:

> The old officer arrived hastily on hearing the tidings, and kissed the dying man, shedding ardent tears… It was twelve midday when he died. The presence of the officer, and the precautions he took, prevented any disturbance. About eleven that night he had him buried at the place he had chosen for himself. The old gentleman and his sons followed the corpse, but Albert was unable to. There were fears for Lotte’s life. Guildsmen bore the body. No priest attended him.\footnote{Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther, translated and Michael Hulse (London: Penguin, 1989), 134: “Der alte Amtmann kam auf die Nachricht herein gesprengt, er küßte den Sterbenden unter den heißesten Threnen…Um zwölfe Mittags starb er. Die Gegenwart des Amtmannes und seine Anstalten tuschten einen Auflauf. Nachts gegen elfe ließ er ihn an die Stätte begraben, die er sich erwählt hatte. Der Alte folgte der Leiche und die Söhne, Albert vermocht’s nicht. Man fürchter für Lottens Leben. Handwerker trugen ihn. Kein Geistlicher hat ihn begleitet.” German text from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Leiden des jungen Werthers, Synoptischer Druck der beiden Fassungen 1774 und 1787, Annika Lorenz and Helmut Schmiedt, eds. (Paderborn, Germany: Igel Verlag Literatur, 1997), 211 [1787 edition].}

The opera, on the other hand, ends with Werther’s death, not his burial, and contains a passionate final duet for Charlotte and Werther, as he dies from his wounds. The operatic Werther dies in private, attended only by Charlotte; there is no communal mourning for the fallen hero. Instead, Blau, Milliet, and Hartmann craft a portrait of societal indifference: the Bailiff’s children sing their Christmas carol, Charlotte faints in front of the body, and the curtain goes down amid sounds laughter, clinking glasses, and happy shouting (rires bruyants, chocs de verres, cris joyeux). There is no indication whether Werther is to be buried under the linden trees in the churchyard, as he requested. In the opera, Werther’s death does not upset the social order in the slightest; his is a purely private passion.
Both in Goethe’s time and in Massenet’s, the novel was widely rumored to be based on Goethe’s own romantic disappointments (particularly his infatuation with Charlotte Kestner, née Buff) and the suicide of Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem. In keeping with this autobiographical reading of the novel, Massenet’s opera takes place “aux environs de Francfort, de Juillet à Decembre 178..,” and the chorus includes “habitants du bourg de Wetzlar,” the city in which Goethe met Charlotte Buff. Similarly, a series of articles in Le Ménestrel promoting the opera’s revival in 1903 contained detailed summaries of Goethe’s friendship with the Kestners, while Guido Menasci’s Italian biography of Goethe openly acknowledged the autobiographical nature of the book.

**Italian contexts for Werther**

*Werther* was first known in Italy through French translations. The first Italian translation, Gaetano Grassi’s *Werther, opera di sentimento*, was published in 1782. By 1811, six Italian translations were available, and by 1827, Grassi’s *Werther* had been reprinted five times. In the later nineteenth century, the most common edition was Riccardo Ceroni’s *I dolori del giovane Werther*, which was taken up by the Casa Sonzogno as part of the *Biblioteca universale*, their affordable series of literary classics which was printed from 1883 until 1911 and perhaps beyond.

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62 The opera’s choice of dates—all the action in the novel occurs between 1771 and 1772, but the opera is set in the 1780s—is unexplained by any scholarly study to date. The German edition of the opera is set in the 1770s.


Its influence in Italy was immediate, despite the disapproval of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Werther} influenced Italian poets such as Vincenzo Monti (1754–1828) and Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), and was an inspiration for Italian author Ugo Foscolo’s \textit{Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis}, another narrative of doomed love culminating in suicide (1802/revised 1816 and 1817).\textsuperscript{68} As Stephen N. Cristea notes, the openly political \textit{Ortis} (in which the protagonist is a political refugee from a failed Italian revolution) ultimately “overshadowed” \textit{Werther} in Italy.\textsuperscript{69}

Although Italians wrote music inspired by \textit{Werther}, little of it remained popular for long. Gaetano Pugnani (1731–1798) wrote an orchestral suite (1795), while the now-forgotten composers Luigi Balochi and Felice Blangini (1781–1841) wrote cantatas in 1802 and 1813 respectively. The first Italian operatic settings (see \textbf{Table 13}) tended towards comedy; both Camagna’s and Gasbarri’s libretti derive from Antonio Sografi’s comic play \textit{Verte} (Venice, 1794).\textsuperscript{70} A tragic opera, \textit{Werther}, by Raffaele Gentili (1837–1867) was produced in Rome (1862), Milan (1864), and Modena (1865), but seems not to have been performed again.\textsuperscript{71}

Thus by the time that Massenet arrived in Milan, exactly thirty years had passed since the last performance of an opera based on \textit{Werther}. Perhaps for this very reason, Italian critics had little

\begin{footnotes}


\end{footnotes}
reason to oppose Werther as they had Manon; Massenet’s work did not threaten an Italian opera’s place in the repertoire. Instead, Massenet’s opera could assume its place as the sole operatic setting of a popular novel (which incidentally was published in Italy by the Casa Sonzogno).

Table 13: Italian operas based on Die Leiden des jungen Werthers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Librettist</th>
<th>Premiere</th>
<th>Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>Werter e Carlotta</td>
<td>farsa, 1 act</td>
<td>Vincenzo Pucitta</td>
<td>G. D. Camagna</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>S. Moisè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Werter</td>
<td>farsa, 1 act</td>
<td>Nicolo Benvenuti</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Pisa</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>Carlotta e Werter</td>
<td>dramma per musica</td>
<td>Carlo Coccia Gaetano Gasbarri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Cocomero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>Carlotta e Werther</td>
<td>melodramma</td>
<td>Mario Aspa Almerindo Spadaletta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Nuovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Werther</td>
<td>Melodramma tragico, 3 acts</td>
<td>Raffaele Gentili Leopoldo Farnese</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating the Italian Werther

Sonzogno had planned for Massenet’s Werther to be performed at the new theater from the beginning of the season. The opera was a logical choice in several ways. Werther was drawn from a more prestigious source than Massenet’s most recent operas: both Thaïs and La Navarraise derived their plots from recent, sensational literature. Instead, it was based on a literary classic, Goethe’s novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers. Massenet’s Werther was therefore able to sustain comparison with Verdi’s recent Shakespearian operas, Otello and Falstaff, and, because it was believed to be based on true events, it could also be understood as participating in verismo. As a recent opera which had performed across Western Europe and America (see Table 14) in the last two years, Werther was the ideal vehicle for re-launching Massenet’s Italian career and for demonstrating the Teatro Lirico’s cosmopolitan program.

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73 See note 47. Il mondo artistico, relying on anonymous sources, listed Werther as a possible repertory choice for the Teatro Lirico as early as August 1894. “Cronaca milanese,” MA 28 no. 34 (20 Aug 1894), 3.
Alert readers of Italian musical periodicals would have known Massenet’s opera by reputation long before they had a chance to hear it in Italy. The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, the Ricordi house journal, devoted nearly a full page to *Werther’s* premiere at the Hofoper in *Opera* in 1892 and provided substantial coverage of the opera’s French and Belgian premieres in 1893.75 Similarly, Sonzogno’s illustrated weekly paper, the *Secolo illustrato della domenica*, combined a review of *Werther’s* Parisian premiere with a dramatic engraving of a love scene between Werther and Charlotte.76

Sonzogno seems to have done his best to secure a capable cast for the opera’s premiere. The reliable Rodolfo Ferrari led the orchestra.77 The tenor Alfonso Garulli (b. 1856), then thirty-eight years old, was just coming off a successful production of *Manon*, in which he had played Des Grieux.78 His understanding of Massenet’s style was not in question, and indeed, the reviewers

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76 SID 5 no. 178 (19 Feb 1893), 64.

77 Ferrari led the Italian premiere of Massenet’s *Manon* (see Chapter 1) and was the principal conductor at the Teatro Lirico from 1894–97. For details on Ferrari’s career, see Paolo Rosa, “Ferrari, Rodolfo,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 46 (1996) [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/rodolfo-ferrari_(Dizionario-Biografico)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/rodolfo-ferrari_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) accessed 5 Feb 2013.

78 Morini, Morini, Ostali, *Casa Musicale Sonzogno*, Vol. II, 544. See *Il Teatro illustrato* 6 no. 67 (July 1886), 106–07 for profile article on Garulli and portrait. For a modern biography of Garulli, see Maria Catarina Calabrò, “Garulli, Alfonso,”
would agree that Garulli had carried the performance. However, he was certainly too old for the part, and the *Cosmorama*, the most wickedly humorous of the Milanese theatrical journals, published a cartoon of a fat, double-chinned Werther (see Figure 4). Signor Lenzini, who performed the role of Albert, seems to have had experience in roles as varied as Telramund in Wagner’s *Lohengrin* and Chevreuse in Donizetti’s *Maria di Rohan*. Of Etelka Schiff, who performed the role of Charlotte, little is known, except that she had previously performed the role of Valentine in *Les Huguenots* under Gustav Mahler’s baton. Ines Salvador, who performed the role of Sophie (Sofia), is likewise something of a marginal figure; earlier in the year she had performed the lead role in Ambroise Thomas’s *Mignon* at the Teatro Ponchielli in Cremona. The minor characters (the Bailiff, Johann, and Schmidt) were performed by the same talented group of singers which had helped launch *Manon*: Buti, Wigley, and Giordano.

A piano score of *Werther* seems to have been published jointly by the Casa Sonzogno and Heugel et Cie. Unlike *Manon*, which was subject to major cuts, the action of *Werther* seems to have survived its Italian translation largely intact. While the French version of the opera contains four acts and five scenes, and the Italian only three acts, this seems to have had little effect on the music as notated: the last three scenes of the opera constitute Act III in the Italian version, rather than Acts

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79“Corrispondenze: Modena,” GMM 45 no. 4 (26 Jan 1890), 65; “Teatri: Guastalla,” GMM 47 no. 47 (20 Nov 1892), 761. Note that Morini, Morini, and Ostali, *Casa Musicale Sonzogno*, Vol. II, 554, list Lenzini’s first name as Antonio. The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* of 26 Jan 1890, however, mentions a baritone named Luigi Lenzini; the *Gazzetta*’s review of the *Werther* premiere, in vol. 49 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 773–74, does not mention Lenzini by name. All reviews of *Werther* in the Milanese press which mention Lenzini refer to him by his last name only. In most cases, he is simply referred to as *il baritono Lenzini* (the baritone Lenzini), which strongly suggests that there was only one operatic baritone named Lenzini, not two. Lacking further evidence, it seems likely that the Lenzini described in the *Gazzetta* in 1890 and 1892 performed in *Werther*’s premiere.

80“Színházak,” Zenevilág (Budapest) 1 no. 20 (15 May 1891) 235.

81GMM 49 no. 32 (14 Jan 1894), 29.

Figure 4: A cartoon of a double-chinned Garulli as Werther\textsuperscript{83}

III and IV as in the French. The chief changes consist of minor alterations to the music in order to accommodate the new Italian text; the different French and Italian pronunciations of the protagonist’s name (Ver-TAIR in French, vs. VER-ter in Italian) necessitated numerous small changes to the opera’s music.

The Italian translation was fashioned by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci, a pair of Italian literary men who are now best remembered as the librettists for Pietro Mascagni’s \textit{Cavalleria rusticana}.\textsuperscript{84} Menasci was especially qualified for translating the French libretto, as he had published poetry in both French and Italian, and several years later, he published a biography of

\textsuperscript{83}CP 59 no. 47 (13 Dec 1894), 5.

\textsuperscript{84}Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci had both published at least one of volume poetry with the Casa Sonzogno Guido Menasci, \textit{Note liriche} (Milan: Sonzogno, 1891); Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti, \textit{Fantasie liriche} (Milan: Sonzogno, 1891).
Goethe. Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci’s libretto was not entirely successful; there are a number of minor discrepancies between it and the published score, and their libretto was not followed even at the premiere. The eminent critic G. B. Nappi also had harsh words for their translation. Consequently, the following analysis relies chiefly on the Italian vocal score, not the Italian libretto: many passages in the printed libretto can only fit Massenet’s music with great difficulty.

The practical difficulties of translation: “O nature”

“O nature” is a fitting example for our study, since it is Werther’s entrance aria, and Massenet’s depiction of Werther’s reflections and emotional reactions. Focusing on Werther’s arias thus emphasizes the parts of the work that seem to have made the greatest impression on the Milanese audience. A comparison of the French and Italian texts of the aria (Table 15) opens up a number of interesting angles for analysis. As one might expect, there are few changes to the notated music of the aria; Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci seem to have tried to match the Italian text to the French original in sound and meaning, so that the translation fits Massenet’s music fairly closely. The differences between the two texts center on connotative as well as denotative meanings: seemingly minor differences in word choice lead to a different picture of Werther as a character.


86 “Werther, dramma lirico di G. Massenet,” MA 28 no. 51 (11 Dec 1894): “Meno felice sembra la traduzione ritmica dei signori Menasci e Targioni-Tozzetti: ritmica non lo deve esser troppo, se gli artisti nel cantare spostavano o cambiavano le frasi e le parole stampate nel libretto tradotto.”

87 “Teatri e notizie artistiche: Rassegna musicale: Werther,” La perseveranza, 4 Dec 1894, 3.
### Table 15: A comparison of the French and Italian texts of Werther's Entrance Aria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The French Text of the Aria</th>
<th>The Italian Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O nature, pleine de grâce,</td>
<td>O natura di grazia piena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reine du temps et de l’espace,</td>
<td>che al calore le nevi alterni,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daigne accueillir celui qui passe</td>
<td>non ti sdegnar ch’io mi prosterni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et te salue, humble mortel!</td>
<td>e ti saluti con umil cor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystérieux silence! ô calme solennel:</td>
<td>Che immensità divina, oh pace sovrumanata,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tout m’attire et me plait! Ce mur,</td>
<td>or ti sveli a me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et ce coin sombre,</td>
<td>Ah sì, le vecchie mura, la limpida fontana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cette source limpide et la fraîcheur de l’ombre;</td>
<td>la freschezza dell’ombra, tutto mi chiama a sè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il n’est pas une haie, il n’est pas un buisson</td>
<td>Qui profumano i fior e gorgheggia un augel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Où n’éclose une fleur, où ne passe un frisson.</td>
<td>spira un bel venticel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O nature! Enivre-moi de tes parfums!</td>
<td>O natura, deh! m’inebria di splendore,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mère éternellement jeune, adorable et pure,</td>
<td>madre eterna casta e pura,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et toi, soleil,</td>
<td>fammi lieto il core. E tu,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viens m’inonder de tes rayons!</td>
<td>sol, su me riversa i raggi d’or!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two versions of the text contrast starkly, and the rhetorical force of Massenet’s original is simplified and diluted in the translation. The original French text employs a clear and consistent rhyme scheme; the Italian does not. The blurring of the rhyme obscures some of Massenet’s compositional choices. Despite its placement in the libretto as part of the second verse, the first line of the second verse (**Mystérieux silence! ô calme solennel**) rhymes with the last line of the first verse (**Et te salue, humble mortel!**). Massenet’s choice to set **Mystérieux silence!** as a codetta to the first verse, and not as part of the contrasting middle section of the aria, clearly arises from his attention to the rhyme scheme. In the translation by Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci, Massenet’s choice makes less sense, since there is no equivalent to the **mortel//solennel** rhyme of the original. Instead, the text of the second verse is distorted into ten limping **settenarii**, with two or three to a line, and the first line of verse two shares an internal rhyme with the second line of the same verse (**sovrumanata//fontana**). The

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89From librettos published by Sonzogno, with variations suggested by the Italian vocal score. Libretto: *Werther, Dramma lirico in tre atti e cinque quadri* (Milan: Sonzogno, copyright 1892, this printing 1932); Score: *Werther, Dramma lirico in tre atti e quattro quadri* [actually five], *riduzione per canto e pianoforte* (Milan: Sonzogno; Paris: Heugel, 1909).
Italian rhyme, sustained across the division between musical sections, is barely audible and does little to enhance the rhetoric of the aria.

While the Italian text does not preserve the rhyme scheme of the French text, its chief virtue is that it retains Massenet’s music with little alteration, with largely the same meaning. There are only four changes to the vocal melody, all of them the kind of minor adjustments necessary to fit an extra syllable into the melody. More important are the changes in accent and sonority created by the shift from French to Italian poetry. The use of the vowels in the text, and their placement in the melody, change the shape of the line, and the tone colors available to the soloist. These changes are greatest in the B section. Here are three phrases, removed from their metrical setting and presented solely as sung, with their translations. The music sung for each phrase is largely the same (see Musical Example 1):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{…Ce mur, et ce coin sombre,} & \quad \text{Ah si, le vecchie mura,} \\
\text{Cette source limpide} & \quad \text{la limpida fontana} \\
\text{et la fraicheur de l’ombre;} & \quad \text{la freschezza dell’ombra}
\end{align*}
\]

Only at the end of the example (l’ombre and l’ombra) does the Italian approximate the sound of the French vowel; the comparison of fraicheur and freschezza reveals a similar mimicking of French consonants.

But the rest of the passage sets very different words to the same notes. Any specific rhetorical power held in the rising third to which Massenet set Ce mur (that wall), any element in which the notes themselves seem to gesture toward that wall, and not any other—is removed. Indeed, the Italian mura is now set to the same notes with which Werther had referred to ce coin sombre (that dark corner); the dark corner itself is conveniently excised from the translation. Similarly, Massenet employed the rising fourth to emphasize the word “limpide,” as if pointing out the tranquility of the stream, drawing it to the listener’s attention. The Italian translation reverses
the order of the words; Werther lingers, not on the limpidness of the fountain, but on the fact that it is a fountain. Further, the translators fill gaps in the lyrics with insertions such as “Ah, sì”; this procedure is commonplace throughout the Italian translation. Although Italian critics emphasized Werther’s poetic vision of nature, his powers of observation seem weaker and less finely tuned in the translation.

The opening rhyme of the French text is perhaps the most obvious example of the changes resulting from translation, although the change might in fact reflect a cultural difference rather than a poetic one. Thus while the Italian text preserves the opening acclamation of “Nature, full of grace,” the following lines remove the potentially blasphemous lines hailing nature as the “Queen of time and space.” Instead, Werther informs us that nature alternates snow with heat—a stirring philosophical reflection. The similarity of Werther’s aria to the Ave Maria might well have led his Italian translators to soften the resemblance.

90“Cronaca milanese,” GTI 23 no. 33 (4 Dec 1894), 1.
There is another, more prosaic explanation for the alteration of the opening rhyme. The opening of the first verse with three rhyming lines (grâce/ /espace/ /passe) is a grammatical impossibility in Italian. The Italian grazia and spazio do not rhyme, and there is no obvious alternative which allows the meaning and rhyme of the French to be preserved. Indeed, the translators seem to have done their best to make up for weakening the opening metaphor by emphasizing elements of nature-worship later in the text. Werther’s description of the “humble mortal” who prostrates himself before nature is shifted from third to first person; and instead of “mysterious silence,” a somewhat banal expression, he remarks on the “divine immensity” of nature.

In one example, the Italian translators created a moment of new significance not to be found in the French original, a moment that relies in part on connotations specific to Italian opera. Werther describes nature, “the Eternal Mother,” is not only “pure,” but “chaste” as well. Linguistically, this word choice (substituting for the French “adorable”) suggests connections to earlier depictions of pagan worship in Italian opera, such as Norma’s prayer to the casta diva, the chaste goddess. The association of purity and chastity with nature also fits well with Emanuele Senici’s research on operatic associations of Nature (symbolized by the Alpine mountains) with virginity and chastity. Dramatically, this adjective is also well-chosen, since it suggests ways in which Werther’s love of nature will soon come to include a love for Charlotte, a virginal yet maternal figure whom he will meet in the very next scene.

Cultural translations of characters and their motivations

Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci’s Italian libretto made numerous changes to the French libretto’s meaning and cultural content. This kind of adaptation, as we have seen in the Introduction, in which

91Emanuele Senici, Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: the Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
translators gear their work toward the target audience rather than toward fidelity to the original text, is categorized as a translation along the Horation model. At the same time, these changes border on the more general concept of cultural translation as a way of adapting ideas (in this case, an opera libretto) across cultural boundaries. While the music remains largely the same, these alterations affect the presentation of Werther and Charlotte, subtly altering the rhetorical force of their statements and re-writing the characters’ inner thoughts and motivations. Consequently, these changes affected the Italian critics’ reaction to the opera.

Changes to statements by and about Werther make the character more passionate and less sentimental. Thus, while Johann describes him in Act I as “mais pas fort... en cuisine” (not a good eater), in the Italian translation, he states bluntly that “ma il cervel gli cammina!” (his brain wanders)—emphasizing Werther’s poetic approach to life and lack of practicality (p. 16). Werther is less fond of children in the Italian version—both Werther’s exclamations of “Chers enfants!” are replaced with generic sentiments (“Quanto è bel!; “Oh ideall”) (p. 33–34). Werther is far more aggressive in his attempts to woo Charlotte, telling her directly of his love for her in Act I (p. 64):

Ah! Pourvu que je voie
Ces yeux toujours ouverts, ces yeux, mon horizon,
Ces doux yeux, mon espoir et mon unique joie,
Que m’importe à moi le sommeil!

Ah! perché mi han guardato
Gli occhi suoi si ben, gli occhi pieni d’amor,
Gli occhi vostri, o gentil, e mi hanno innamorato
Come ormai posso dormir?

The Italian Werther is plainly innamorato (in love); he sees Charlotte’s eyes as pieni d’amor (full of love). Werther’s love for Charlotte here is immediately less purely spiritual, less metaphorical; rather than an abstract exclamation, requiring no response, the Italian Werther asks a direct question, requiring an answer: how can I sleep at this moment? This train of thought continues throughout the scene, as

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93See note 88.
Werther tells Charlotte *Tu sei l’anima mia gemella* (You are my soul’s twin), instead of the more veiled French text (*Mon âme a reconnu votre âme*).

If Werther becomes blunter and ultimately less poetic, Charlotte’s sensibility is also dulled and her language resembles that of a stereotypical Italian opera heroine. After Werther’s statement that they are, in effect, soulmates, Charlotte replies bluntly, even formally: *Che dite signor?* (The French text was *Vous me connaissez?*) Charlotte’s discussion of her mother is similarly direct, and much of the suppressed emotion of the French (*Pourquoi tout est-il périssable? Les enfants ont senti cela très vivement…*) is replaced by factual detail: *Perchè tutto deve finire? Anche i bimbi hanno pianto lacrime di dolor…*

The most radical change to Charlotte’s speech occurs in her solo scene at the start of Act III, which makes her romantic attraction to Werther clearer, and more conventionally passionate. Charlotte’s monologue, her first solo in the opera, is one of the few passages which is thoroughly rewritten in the Italian translation, and contrasts greatly with the generally literal translation of Werther’s letters immediately following.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Werther! Werther!...Qui m’aurait dit la place Que dans mon cœur il occupe aujourd’hui! Depuis qu’il est parti, malgré moi tout me lasse, Et mon âme est pleine du lui! Ces lettres…ah ! je les relis sans cesse…. Avec quel charme, mais aussi quelle tristesse. Je devrais les détruire…je ne puis !</th>
<th>Oh Werther! Mio Werther! Diletto e caro nome! Qui nel mio core a poco a poco entrò. Da ch’egli se n’andò non so ridir piú come dimenticare io non lo so! M’ha scritto che m’ama la gentil frase, dolce, che pur tanto m’accora! La dovror lacerare? Ah! non potrò!</th>
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Charlotte immediately claims Werther as her own (*Mio Werther!* and values his letters as expressions of his love for her. The delicate sadness with which the French Charlotte reads Werther’s letters is replaced by cycles of depression and gaiety: at his absence, she did not know how to laugh anymore (*non so ridir piú come*), but her laughter is restored on receiving his letters (*la vo ridere ancora*). Charlotte’s
music remains largely the same, of course; but her words are giddier, less considered, and more emotionally volatile.

Finally, Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci insert an intertextual reference to another opera: Giuseppe Verdi’s Rigoletto. Charlotte thinks of Werther as a caro nome (dear name)—his name alone is an objection of affect and meditation for her. This phrase would have been familiar to all Italian opera goers through its use in Gilda’s famous aria. By employing this phrase, the translators imply parity between the plots and characters of the two operas. Only a few scenes later, Werther will seemingly force his affections on Charlotte, just the Duke seduces Gilda. Charlotte’s obsession with Werther’s name, like Gilda’s obsession with Gualtier Maldè’s, similarly suggests that her affection for him, like Gilda’s for the Duke, is idealized and incapable of fulfillment in the real world. Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci’s revision of this scene, with its obsessive, desperate emotional tone, further plays into this analysis: like Gilda, Charlotte is both a partner in and a victim of her seduction, blind to its true effect on herself and those around her.

At the same time, this translated revision affects the dramaturgy of the opera significantly. In the French version, Charlotte does not openly admit her love for Werther until Act IV; she is still in denial of her affection for him throughout Act III (this, indeed, is the context for her prayer for strength before Werther’s entrance). In the Italian version of the scene discussed above, Charlotte practically admits the depth of her affection for Werther at the start of Act III, robbing Act IV of its dramatic revelation of Charlotte’s true feelings. Consequently, it is not surprising that some Italian critics felt that the end of the opera went on far too long.

III. THE MILANESE RECEPTION OF WERTHER

Massenet’s visit to Milan thrust him into the heart of Italian musical culture, and the composer engaged on a busy round of social and public appearances. Given the lack of surviving
correspondence between Massenet and Sonzogno, it is difficult to tell how much of this was planned in advance, and how much of it fortuitously fell into place, but it is likely that Sonzogno arranged Massenet’s visit as carefully as he had arranged the opening of the Teatro Lirico. Massenet, too, must be given credit for his renowned tact and charming manners, which undoubtedly made the Milanese social scene much easier to conquer. *Il secolo*, as the mouthpiece of the Sonzogno empire, took special pains to promote Massenet’s arrival, reporting on his activities, appearances, and providing detailed accounts of the first performances of the opera. But the sensation surrounding Massenet was not simply the result of artificial hype; other major Milanese newspapers, such as *La perseveranza* and *La Lombardia*, also covered his visit in detail, as did a number of Milanese music journals. After the phenomenal success of the Teatro Lirico, anything Sonzogno placed in the spotlight could remain there on its own power.

There were good reasons for Massenet’s newfound celebrity in Milan: he was the first internationally renowned foreign composer to visit the city in years. Even though Massenet was French, his visit was not viewed as a threat to Italian musical culture, despite the outrage over the premiere of *Manon* the previous year. Giuseppe Verdi had just returned from a triumphal visit to Paris, in which *Otello* was staged at the Opéra.94 Italian art having just conquered a French stage, there was little room for Ricordi’s partisans to protest too vocally about Massenet’s conquest of the Italian public, especially when Massenet was *not* staging a work La Scala, Milan’s most prestigious theater. The critics who reported Massenet’s visit were understandably quiet about its political implications.

In a later interview with the French press, Massenet claimed that his trip to Milan was taken on short notice; he had gone to Provence with the intention of spending the winter in the French

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94 The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* published six pages of reviews of this event: Vol. 49 no. 42 (21 Oct 1894), 657–62.
Riviera when he received a notice from Sonzogno asking him to come.\textsuperscript{95} Regardless of Massenet’s memory of events, \textit{La Lombardia} announced that the composer would come to Milan on November 13th, nine days before he arrived.\textsuperscript{96} Additionally, \textit{Werther} had been advertized on the playbills of the Teatro Lirico for several months, so it is likely that his trip had been planned beforehand.

Before reaching Milan, Massenet took a detour to Genoa, where Giuseppe Verdi was spending the winter.\textsuperscript{97} While Massenet claimed this visit occurred in 1896, Marcello Conati has established that in fact Verdi and Massenet must have met between the 19th and 21st of November, 1894.\textsuperscript{98} Massenet left two accounts of the visit, each equally vacuous, and there is no mention of it in Verdi’s surviving correspondence; there is little indication of what the two men talked about, although it is certainly possible that little more than politenesses were exchanged during their brief visit. Massenet could hardly do otherwise than to claim that Verdi had received him kindly; his own admiration for Verdi was probably sincere. Verdi’s opinions of Massenet’s music are hard to reconstruct: in 1885, Amilcare Ponchielli could confidently write of his and Verdi’s shared distaste for Massenet,\textsuperscript{99} but by April 1894, Verdi, in a newspaper interview, called Massenet “an excellent composer”—which may have been no more than politeness.\textsuperscript{100} Certainly it was a tactful gesture for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95}Jules Massenet, “A Visit to Verdi,” in Marcello Conati, \textit{Encounters with Verdi} (translated by Richard Stokes; Cornell University Press, 1984), 277.
\item \textsuperscript{96}\textit{La Lombardia}, 13 November 1894.
\item \textsuperscript{97}A fact which he could have known from the \textit{Gazzetta musicale di Milano}. “Corrispondenze: Visite al maestro Verdi,” GMM 49 no. 44 (4 Nov 1894) made it known that Verdi would be spending the winter in Genoa.
\item \textsuperscript{98}Conati, \textit{Encounters with Verdi}, 276–77.
\item \textsuperscript{100}Massenet, in Conati 273.
\end{itemize}
Massenet to visit the most influential Italian composer before attempting his return to the Italian stage; his nervousness and Verdi’s gruff humor come through in his account of their dialogue:

Verdi was writing at a little table; he rose and approached with great warmth. I told him that I would only feel at ease in Italy, after I had paid him my respects.

“Then it’s a passport you require? Do you prefer _lettres de grande naturalisation_?”

Similarly, in his memoirs, which were published many years later, Massenet describes a similar sentiment: “As I was leaving, I felt drawn to remark ‘now that I had visited him, I was in Italy.’”

Both versions of the dialogue point up Massenet’s awareness of Verdi’s status as a symbol of the Italian operatic tradition; the first suggests that Verdi was fully aware of the political aspect of Massenet’s visit. Verdi’s quip implies a good deal about the elder composer’s views of his role in facilitating Massenet’s success. As a symbol of Italian music, Verdi could grant Massenet access to Italian musical culture, or perhaps make Massenet something of an honorary Italian. That these words were Massenet’s chief memory of the visit says a good deal about the French composer’s awareness of the delicacy of his position in Italy.

Massenet’s visit to Verdi seems to have had the desired effect. While his thirty minutes’ chat with Verdi did not make the news, the Ricordi camp was curiously charitable toward Massenet during his time in Milan. The _Gazzetta musicale di Milano_ gave _Werther_ a kind if not glowing review; Arrigo Boito, Verdi’s close friend and librettist, a powerful figure in the Milanese musical scene, also met with Massenet socially. Equally likely is that Ricordi may have felt it would be bad for business

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101 Massenet, “Hommage a Verdi M. Massenet,” _Le Gaulois du dimanche_ 1 no. 17 (9/10 Oct 1897), 1. English translation by Richard Stokes, in Conati, _Encounters with Verdi_, 278:

“Verdi écrivait sur une petite table; il se leva et vint à moi avec les plus chaleureuse courtoisie. Je lui dis que je ne me sentirais bien en Italie qu’après l’avoir salué.

—Alors, c’est un passeport que vous venez chercher ? Préférez-vous des lettres de grande naturalisation ?”


« maintenant que je lui avais rendu visite, j’étais en Italie!...”
to alienate an internationally successful composer who still had several works (*Le Roi de Lahore* and *Hérodiade*) published by the company. Even if Massenet did not actually need Verdi’s imprimatur to succeed in Milan or to silence his critics, Massenet’s homage to Italy’s greatest living composer could only have seemed an appropriately respectful gesture.

Massenet’s visit to Milan became major news, with even his minor movements being reported in the daily press; thus it is possible to reconstruct much of his schedule during his week in Milan. The events of the night suggest that Sonzogno was alert to the publicity that could be gained from the composer’s arrival. Massenet reached the Central Station at 7:41 pm on November 22, on a train coming from San Remo, and settled into a room in the Hotel Bella Venezia, in the Piazza San Fedele, a few minutes’ walk from La Scala and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele.  

Probably it was part of Sonzogno’s plan for Massenet to arrive during the production of *Manon* which was currently running at the Teatro Lirico. Doubtless tired from his journey, Massenet was not at the theater at the opening curtain (scheduled for 8:30), arriving only around 10 pm. By the end of the second act, the word had begun to spread in the theater that the composer was present. This certainly was no accident, although *Il secolo* and *La perseveranza* both insisted that the subsequent applause was spontaneous: Massenet, observing the performance from a box at the right of the stage, had to show himself to the public at the end of the second act, to cries of *fuori il Massenet, fuori il maestro.* At the end of the performance, the composer was called to the stage for to take a bow. The audience’s enthusiasm made a good story and good advance publicity for *Werther.* The critic of *Il secolo*

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103 *Corriere della sera*, 23 Nov 1894. The Hotel Bella Venezia (in which Massenet had stayed in 1879 and 1882) enjoyed a central location on the Piazza S. Fedele, near the Teatro Manzoni; it was about half a mile from the Teatro Lirico. See Karl Baedeker, *Italy: Handbook for Travellers: First Part: Northern Italy* (London: Dulau, 1895), 116–17. Although *La Lombardia* of 19 Nov 1894 implied that Massenet would be traveling with his wife, the *Corriere* states that the composer was traveling alone when he arrived in Milan. Massenet, *Souvenirs*, 118; Irvine, *Massenet*, 105, 130.

delightedly summed up the evening, presenting Massenet as modest, shy, and grateful to his adoring Italian public:

…the maestro was constrained to present himself to the public a few times…At the end of the opera the demonstrations were renewed: the maestro did not want to appear any more, but the public…insisted on seeing him again; and there were eight curtain calls.

Maestro Massenet was profoundly moved and thanked the public effusively. He will remain in Milan a few days to stage his new opera Werther, which will come off in the coming week.105

On November 25th, Massenet visited the Lirico again to hear Manon, with similar results to the previous occasion.106

Massenet’s schedule was now a mixture of rehearsals, public appearances, and socializing. Rehearsals occupied Massenet for the next few days after his arrival, as evidenced by short blurbs in the press.107 On November 27th, the critic of La Lombardia predicted that the premiere of Werther would be “the greatest artistic event of the season.”108 For such a statement to be made in the season that had seen the opening of the Teatro Lirico gives some idea of the excitement surrounding Massenet’s visit, and of the pains to which his supporters in the press were willing to go to stir up excitement for Werther. Similarly, the Mondo artistico ran a short article reminding its readers that


“Alla fine dell’opera si rinnovò la dimostrazione: il maestro non voleva più presentarsi: ma il pubblico oltre agli applausi alla bravissima Frandin ed all’ottimo Garulli, insistette per rivederlo: e vi furono otto chiamate.

“Il maestro Massenet era profondamente commosso e ringraziò con effusione il pubblico.

“Egli si trattiene a Milano parecchi giorni per mettere in iscena la sua nuova opera Werther, che passerà la settimana ventura.”


Massenet had not visited Italy since 1882, but that “the recent success of his Manon has won new sympathy and enthusiasm for him.”

Massenet attended a party hosted by Ruggiero Leoncavallo on November 28th. Leoncavallo was an ideal host for Massenet: the two men were old acquaintances, having known each other in Paris before Leoncavallo had earned fame with Pagliacci. As Konrad Dryden has shown in his recent biography of Leoncavallo, the Italian composer had actually introduced Massenet to the American soprano Sybil Sanderson, who was Massenet’s favorite interpreter of Manon, Esclarmonde, Thaïs, and other roles. Le Minestrel reported that the party was attended by “the entire press and all the notables of Milan.” Leoncavallo drank a toast to a future production of Massenet’s Grisélidis in Milan, and to “Italy’s invasion by all the good French maestros” like Massenet. While Grisélidis would not reach Italy until 1902, the second half of Leoncavallo’s toast speaks volumes about the Sonzogno circle’s enthusiasm for Massenet and French music.

Massenet’s most visible public appearance was at the club La Famiglia Artistica (The Artistic Family), which he visited three times between the 27th and 30th of November. Each of his visits corresponded with a performance of “Un tramonto,” a composition by Gaetano Coronaro with words by Arrigo Boito, and at least one performance of Wienawski’s Violin Concerto No. 2 in D

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109“Cronaca locale: Massenet a Milano,” MA 28 no. 50 (30 Nov 1894), 3: “il recento successo della sua Manon gli ha acquistate nuove simpatie e nuovi entusiasmi.”

110Konrad Dryden, Leoncavallo: Life and Works (Bamberg: Sancis Verlag, 2005), 28.

111“Nouvelles diverses: étranger,” Le Minestrel 60 no. 48 (2 Dec 1894), 381: “De Milan: « Hier soir, le maestro Leoncavallo a donné chez lui un grand dîner en l’honneur de Massenet. Toute la presse et les notabilités milanaises y assistaient. Au dessert, M. Leoncavallo, en buvant à Massenet, a fait le vœu de voir représenté pour la première fois, à Milan, sa nouvelle partition de Grisélidis [sic], et a souhaité l’invasion en Italie de tous les bons maîtres français comme lui… »”

112Massenet revised Grisélidis substantially in 1898–99 and 1901 before its premiere at the Opéra-Comique; the Italian premiere was at the Teatro Lirico in November, 1902. Demar Irvine, Massenet: A Chronicle of His Life and Times (Portland, Ore: Amadeus, 1994), 189; Mario Morini and Piero Ostali Jr., “Cronologia delle opere,” 572.
minor. The Famiglia Artistica seems to have been neutral ground in a city divided firmly into rival artistic camps. Coronaro, one of the young composers whose work was published by Sonzogno, received Massenet’s congratulations on his work. Boito seems to have also been present at one of Massenet’s visits, as a letter of his to Verdi dated 2 December mentions talking with Massenet. Boito and Massenet had known each other for many years, having met at Ricordi’s villa on Lake Como when Massenet was promoting Le Roi de Lahore in Italy. On November 29th, Massenet returned to the Famiglia artistica, where he and M. Antoine of the Theatre Libre of Paris were honored at a reception, at which Massenet “was much moved” and paid tribute to Italian art and hospitality, remarking on the courtesy and kindness of his hosts.

The very next day, November 30th, Massenet returned to the club; as the critic of the Perseveranza (probably Guido Nappi) wrote, the club decided to host a last-minute reception in Massenet’s honor on hearing of his imminent departure (the composer had to leave Milan on December 3rd, after the premiere of Werther, in order to return to Paris in time for the resumption of classes at the Paris Conservatoire). Massenet certainly knew how to express his gratitude; breaking through prolonged cheers, he led a toast to the Famiglia artistica, and had to repeat his

113G. Anfossi, “Alla Famiglia Artistica,” GMM 49 no. 48 (2 Dec 1894) 759. The Wienawski concerto was performed by America Montenegro; Adelina Stehle, who would later sing Massenet’s Manon, performed the role of Dori in Coronaro’s work.

114“Teatri e notizie artistiche: Famiglia artistica,” La perseveranza, 28 Nov 1894.

115Boito to Verdi, 2 Dec 1894, rptd in Conati, Verdi: intervisti ed incontri (Milan: Formichiere, 1980): “Ho visto il dolce Massenet che mi ha parlato della sua visita a palazzo Doria. Non so come sia andato il Werter jer sera, non ho assistito alla rappresentazione.”

116Massenet, Mes souvenirs, 117–18.


118“Rivista Milanese,” GMM 49 no. 48 (2 Dec 1894), 757: “L’autore ha assistito alle ultime prove, e presenzierà solo alla prima rappresentazione, dovendo lunedì trovarsi a Parigi per riprendere la classe al Conservatorio di musica.” As December 2, 1894, was a Sunday, the Monday in question must be December 3.
toast of the previous night—“Italy is not only the land of art but also of hospitality.” The words of the toast suggest Massenet’s sensitivity to Italy’s long-standing reputation as the home of the arts, and also his ability to read his audience; he simultaneously thanked and flattered them. Massenet seems to have turned his own documented nervousness in public speaking to his benefit: the humility of his toast, in keeping with his modest behavior in front of the audience in the Teatro Lirico, must have lessened any seeming threat posed by Massenet’s conquest of the Italian theatrical world. Regardless of his personal thoughts, he shrewdly took up the position of a humble foreigner in awe of his hosts and their culture.

**The Premiere at the Lirico**

The premiere, which occurred on December 1st, was a tremendous success with the public. *Werther*’s premiere capped the season the Lirico: it was “the event of the season”; the audience represented the best of society, and several papers stressed that the applause was spontaneous and natural (i.e., not led by a claque). Yet despite the furor surrounding *Werther*, most of the excitement centered on Massenet himself and not his opera. As *Cosmorama* put it, “All Milan and the greater part of the Italian intellectuals waited impatiently to hear *Werther* and to see Massenet.” *Le Ménestrel* (a journal printed by Massenet’s French publisher, Heugel) noted proudly that “Not since

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121 “Teatri di Milano: al Lirico Internazionale: *Werther*,” GDT 56 no. 46 (6 Dec 1894), 1: “I plaudenti di sabato sera non erano i soliti moretti della claqua, non erano i fedeli e compiacenti amici dell’editore-impresario, non erano gli invitati costretti per cortesia a riscaldare l’ambiente. Era invece il pubblico pagante; il vero pubblico [sic], che esprime liberamente la propria opinione senza restrizioni e senza partito preso.”

122 “Il *Werther* di Massenet al Lirico,” CP 59 no. 46 (6 Dec 1894), 1: “Tutta Milano e molta parte dell’Italia intellettuale s’accoglieva impaziente di sentire il *Werther* e di veder il Massenet.”
the ovations given to Verdi after *Falstaff* and *Otello* have we seen a similar enthusiasm.”¹²³ The composer himself had won the Milanese over, both through his reputation, his personal demeanor, the continued popularity of *Le Roi de Lahore*, and the recent success of his *Manon*.¹²⁴ Now, at the premiere of his new opera, few papers could bring themselves to say anything cruel about him, even if some critics felt that *Werther* was at times ponderous, overly serious, and dull. Yet the opera was certainly a sensation. Massenet received applause at the end of each act; public excitement at his appearance was increased by a false rumor that he would not able to attend the premiere.¹²⁵ After the second act, the orchestra presented him with a golden pen and visiting card. At the end of the opera, he took five curtain calls with the artists, and one by himself, and was crowned with a laurel wreath decorated with tricolored ribbons. (Members of the audience who had had the opportunity to examine the ceiling painting on the origins of the theater must have realized the symbolism of crowning Massenet in this way). As at his earlier appearance before the Italian public in the preceding week, Massenet was visibly moved.¹²⁶

Unlike the premiere of *Manon*, *Werther*’s premiere seems to have made the rival camps of Sonzogno and Ricordi forget their enmity for the moment. The *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, Ricordi’s journal, could not help but wish Massenet and his opera “a success as complete as he and his

¹²³“Nouvelles diverses: étranger,” *Le Ménestrel* 60 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 389: “Depuis les ovations à Verdi, après Falstaff et Otello, on n’avait vu ici pareil enthousiasme.”

¹²⁴“Alla rinfusa,” GMM 49 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 773, notes wistfully that Massenet’s success with *Werther* was enough to make one forget “that cold greeting which he received in Milan on another occasion” (ovazione che devono avergli fatto piacevolmente dimenticare certa fredda accoglienza che altra volta ebbe in Milano). This is one of the few references to *Hérodiade*’s relative failure at its Milanese premiere in 1882, during Massenet’s previous visit to Milan.

¹²⁵The rumor was spread by “Al proposito del *Werther*,” *La perseveranza*, 1 Dec 1894.

¹²⁶It is unknown if the ribbons were Italian or French tricolors. “Rivista Milanese: *Werther* di J. Massenet al teatro Lirico,” GMM 49 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894) 773–74; “Cronaca milanese,” GTI 23 no. 33 (4 Dec 1894); “Teatri e notizie artistiche: Teatro Lirico Internazionale: La Prima del *Werther*,” *La perseveranza*, 2 Dec 1894, 3.
admirers could desire” before the premiere. Yet none of the major figures associated with the Ricordi camp seem to have attended the Werther premiere. Boito avoided the premiere, probably because it would have been difficult for him to meet Edoardo Sonzogno publicly—the year before, the two had nearly fought a duel over insults exchanged in the press. Puccini was hunting at Torre del Lago during Massenet’s visit; he only returned after Massenet had gone. Verdi remained in Genoa for the winter, as was his habit.

In the absence of any figure to be set in opposition to Massenet, the praise poured in. A typical example is the Gazzetta dei teatri, which gushed that “Werther is doubtless one of the illustrious French composer’s finest creations.” Il Mondo Artistico went one better, proclaiming the Massenet the greatest composer of modern times. Massenet’s portrait received a place of honor on its front page, and the opera was greeted with this encomium:

To say that Massenet is the sovereign master of counterpoint and harmony; that he possesses an orchestral palate of unrivaled richness; that few know the theater and a composer’s resources as he does, is to say something that is already known: it is a superiority with which no-one can remove.

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127 “Rivista Milanese,” GMM 49 no. 48 (2 Dec 1894), 757: “Auguriamo al Massenet un successo complete quale egli ed i molti ammiratori suoi possono desiderare.”

128 Boito had nearly fought a duel with Sonzogno around Christmas 1893 after one of Boito’s private letters criticizing Sonzogno’s treatment of the English composer Frederic Cowen was printed; Sonzogno publically called Boito a coward (vigliacco), and Boito traveled to Naples to fight him. The duel was avoided through negotiations between Boito’s and Sonzogno’s seconds, much to Boito’s chagrin. Piero Nardi, Vita di Arrigo Boito (Verona: Casa Editrice Mondadori, 1942, rptd. 1944), 600–02; Joseph Bennett, “Facts, Rumours, and Remarks,” The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular 35 no. 611 (1 Jan 1894), 22; “Mr. Cowen’s ‘Signa,’” The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular 34 no. 610 (1 Dec 1893), 726–27; Phillips-Matz, Verdi: A Biography, 724.

129 “Alla rinfusa,” GMM 49 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 774.

130 Matz, Verdi, 729.


132 “Werther, dramma lirico di G. Massenet,” MA 28 no. 51 (11 Dec 1894), 2: “Dire che Massenet è maestro sovrano di contrappunto e di armonia; che possiede una tavolozza orchestrale di una ricchezza sbalorditiva; che pochi come lui conoscono il teatro e le risorse del compositore, è dire cosa risaputa: è una superiorità che nessuno può contrastargli.”
In light of such praise, the entire *giovane scuola* is dwarfed. It is hard to imagine this review being written only a few years earlier, in an Italy in which Giuseppi Verdi had not retired from composition, in which Charles Gounod was still alive.

Yet the shadow of Verdi was not completely absent from the reviews of *Werther*. Milan’s hospitality to Massenet was partly viewed in light of Verdi’s reception in Paris: Italy knew how to return the favor. This sentiment was undoubtedly a reaction an angry article written by the French journalist and critic Victorin Joncières in *La Liberté* and republished in the Italian papers:

> At the Opéra, they are playing *Lohengrin*, *Die Walküre*, and *Otello*; at the Opéra-Comique, *Falstaff* and *Cavalleria rusticana*…
>
> Yes, in Paris, this hospital for foreign artists, Reyer has waited twenty years for a performance of *Sigurd*; Saint-Saëns, just as long for *Samson et Dalila*; Chabrier, seven years for *Gwendoline*.133

Naturally, the Italian press could not let such a statement pass unnoticed. Carlo D’Ormeville wrote a lengthy rebuttal of Joncières’ article, and his review of *Werther* opened in this way:

> I hope that Mr. Massenet, having returned to Paris, has told his friends—including Mr. Victorin Joncières of the *Liberté*—with what expansive cordiality the Milanese celebrated him, with what spontaneous applause and agreement they have welcomed his work.134

*Il trovatore* opened its review of *Werther* with a similar sentiment, viewing the warm reception of *Werther* as a counterbalance to the hostility Verdi had encountered during his recent trip to Paris:

> Having returned to his country, Maestro Massenet will certainly have told his countrymen of the cordial, festive, and enthusiastic welcome he received among us. What a better and more dignified response to the news than Aurelien Scholl’s good

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> “Oui, dans ce Paris, si hospitalier pour les artistes étrangers, Reyer a attendu vingt ans la représentation de *Sigurd*; Saint-Saëns, aussi longtemps celle de *Samson et Dalila*; Chabrier, sept ans, celle de *Gwendoline*."

134 Carlo D’Ormeville, “Al Lirico Internazionale: Werther.” GDT, 6 Dec 1894, 1: “Io spero che il signor Massenet, tornato a Parigi, avrà raccontato ai suoi amici—compreso il signor Victorin Joncières della Liberté—con quanta espansiva cordialità i milanesi lo hanno festeggiato, con quanto plauso spontaneo e concorde essi hanno accolto il suo lavoro.”
humor, when Giuseppe Verdi’s *Otello* and *Falstaff* were added to the repertory of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique!

The illustrious French maestro’s *Werther* could not have had a more widely applauded and praised baptism in Italy. It was arranged by the godfather, Edoardo Sonzogno, with that largesse, munificence, and that obsequious sentiment toward art and artists that have given him the pride of place among our theatrical impresarios. In *Il trovatore*’s view, Massenet’s visit to Milan was thus a counterpart to Verdi’s visit to Paris. The implied comparison of Massenet to Verdi is in complete contrast to the reception of *Manon* the previous year, when Massenet’s “feminine” music had been widely contrasted with the “strong, forceful” music of Puccini and Verdi. Note too that Sonzogno’s role in arranging *Werther*’s premiere is cast as that of the godfather—casting the relationship between Massenet and Italy in terms of familial attachment. From this it is only a few steps to the events of 1903, when Massenet would be claimed outright as an honorary Italian composer by Italian writers such as Matilde Serao (see Chapter Three).

Presumably it was in response to this minor controversy that Massenet penned the following letter, which must have been written shortly before Massenet’s departure from Milan, but was not published in *La perseveranza* until December 4th. The choice of words is so similar to that used in the articles above that it seems worth reprinting in full:

*Milan, 2 December 1894*

To dear Maestro Ferrari, to my friends and brothers, the professors of the splendid orchestra of the Teatro Lirico Internazionale created by Mr. Sonzogno, to our admirable interpreters, our invaluable collaborators, to our artists in the chorus, I extend my profound gratitude for your affectionate and thoughtful attention; to all of you, my most warm and thankful felicitations.

I owe to you the moving welcome I received from the Milanese public on the 1st of December, 1894, at the first performance of *Werther* in Italy.

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“*Il Werther* dell’illustre maestro francese non poteva avere, in Italia, battesimo più largo di applausi e di lodi. Ha fatto un padrino, Edoardo Sonzogno, con quella larghezza, con quella munificenza, con quel sentimento ossequioso dell’arte e degli artisti, che gli hanno dato il primo posto tra i nostri Impresari teatrali.”
Undoubtedly some of the authors quoted above had Massenet’s letter in mind when they opened their reviews of the opera. The wording of the letter is suggestive both of Massenet’s desire not to omit anyone who deserves to be thanked, but also to surrender his agency in Werther’s success. The work has succeeded, not through his efforts, but through those of the performers who brought it to life. Their hospitality, and not any foreign invasion of the Italian stage, has created the Italian Werther.

Werther’s relationship to Goethe’s novel also undoubtedly affected its and Massenet’s reputations. With the death of Gounod the previous year, Massenet was to all intents and purposes the greatest living French opera composer of the day. Producing a work based on Goethe could only increase his status. Il secolo played up Massenet’s achievement by opening their review of the Milanese premiere with a list of previous attempts to set Werther to music, discussing works by Rudolf Kreutzter, Vicenzo Pucitta, Carlo Coccia, Mario Aspa, Raffaele Gentili, and the violinist Pugnani. By presenting Massenet’s opera in the context of the works that had gone before it, the Secolo columnist implied that Massenet’s work had already earned its place in history: the review of the Milanese premiere discussed both the Viennese and Parisian premieres of the work, as well as the compositional history of the opera. As Il secolo wrote admiringly of the Vienna premiere, “The...
press had reason to write that Werther, together with Faust and Mignon, completes the splendid French musical trilogy inspired by Goethe’s genius.”

Not that Werther was an easy opera for the Milanese public to understand. Steven Huebner has demonstrated that some French listeners heard the opera as a French reply to Tristan und Isolde, the opera’s blurring of number structures, systematic use of recurring themes, and unmitigated tragedy made it heavy fare for Italian audiences. Unlike the “hybrid” Manon, with its anguished concertato at the Hotel Transylvanie, there were relatively few traces of Italian opera in Werther. At least one critic detected Wagner’s influence in the work. Even Il secolo, while emphasizing the Werther’s passion and force, had to admit that the work possessed a fairly limited appeal: “Massenet has created, in this work, the most passionate music drama of many that have appeared in the recent period of transformation in opera…[it is]an opera dear to musicians as well as to those with good taste…” The critic of the Gazzetta teatrale italiana openly admitted that he had delayed writing his review until he had a chance to hear the second performance, because of the “many beauties and many delicate orchestrations.” But in his actual review, he could not help asking of the second act, “But didn’t it degenerate into monotony several times?” The Rivista teatrale melodrammatica reviewer wrote openly that Werther was a success with “the intelligent who have trained their souls in the modern aesthetic,” but that after the end of the first act, the plot was “dull” (uggioso), obvious.

137“Eco di teatri,” Il secolo 2 Dec 1894, 3: “La stampa ebbe ragione di scrivere che Werther completa, insieme a Faust ed a Mignon, la splendida trilogia musicale francese ispirata dal genio di Goethe.” For a similar comparison of Massenet’s opera with Gounod’s and Thomas’s, see “Rivista teatrale: Werther di Massenet,” ILIT 21 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 375.


140“Eco dei Teatri,” Il secolo 5 Dec 1894, 3: “Massenet ha creato con questo lavoro il dramma musicale più appassionato di quanti apparvero nell’ultima periodo di trasformazione dell’opera…Il Werther è…un’opera cara tanto ai musicisti quanto ai buongustai…”

141“Cronaca milanese,” GTI 23 no. 33 (4 Dec 1894), 1.
“without a single interesting event to vary the situation.”

Only Carlo D’Ormeville seemed to have disagreed with such criticisms, arguing that “the paying public, the true public” had been the one to make Werther a success, and not “the faithful and obliging friends of the publisher and impresario [Edoardo Sonzogno].”

Comparison with Manon was inevitable, and rarely was it favorable. The Gazzetta teatrale italiana declared that Werther would never surpass Manon in popularity, “because in the story and the libretto one notes a certain heaviness and monotony over which the orchestral beauties do not always triumph.” The Rivista teatrale melodrammatica found Werther’s dramaturgy unsuited to the stage, because the opera lacked a relationship to everyday life, unlike operas such Manon or La traviata.

Werther is the exact parent of Jacopo Ortis, a lover in the most acute state, who is left breathless by a thousand fixations; a plausible pathological case, but rare enough to seem fairly impossible. Manon and Violetta, who have many points of contact, are figures that we could encounter every day in our lives, and blessed is he who doesn’t know them very well! Ortis and Werther are the fruit of a fading romanticism; they take love to a place which is not real; it is better not to love than to go into spasms as they do...It is therefore that I find in the plot of Werther that heaviness which many have lamented.

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142Teatri locali: Lirico,” RTM 32 no. 1457 (8 Dec 1894): “Fin dal primo atto si comprende il nobile disegno del protagonista di rispettare la donna amata e i sacri doveri dell’amicizia, e di questa salsa ne abbiamo fino all’ultimo, senza che un fatto interessante venga a variare la situazione.”

143“Teatri di Milano: al Lirico Internazionale: Werther,” GDT 41 no. 46 (6 Dec 1894), 1: “I plaudenti di sabato sera…non erano i fedeli e compiacenti amici dell’editore-impresario…Era invece il pubblico pagante; il vero pubblico, che esprime liberamente la propria opinione senza restrizioni…”

144“Cronaca milanese,” GTI 23 no. 33 (4 Dec 1894), 1: “…nel soggetto e nel libretto si nota qualche cosa di pesante, di monotono, che le bellezze orchestrali non riescono sempre a vincere.”

145A literary work, by the Italian poet Ugo Foscolo, which was strongly influenced by Werther.

146Teatri locali: Lirico,” RTM 32 no. 1457 (8 Dec 1894): “Il Werther è parente strettissimo di Jacopo Ortis, un innamorato allo stato più acuto, che si affana a mille fisime; un caso patologico verosimile, ma tanto raro da sembrarne quasi impossibile. Manon e Violetta, che hanno tanti punti di contatto, sono figure che si incontrano tutti i giorni sul nostro cammino e beato chi non ne fà troppo stretta conoscenza! Ortis e Werther sono il prodotto di un romanticismo tramontato; essi hanno portato l’amore in un ambiente che non è il vero; meglio non amare che spasimare come essi fanno... È adunque per me l’argomento che dà al Werther di Massenet, la pesantezza che da molti viene lamentata...”
The *Mondo artistico* was slightly more optimistic: “If *Werther* perhaps does not have the passionate power of *Manon*, it has a marvelous completeness of form which exceeds all the works of this extremely careful maestro: his opera is therefore destined to seduce any public.”\(^{147}\)

*Werther*, then, was hardly a critical success; its survival was partly the result of the outstanding performance by Alfonso Garulli as Werther. The press was unanimous in praising Garulli’s abilities in creating the part. Carlo D’Ormeville’s opinion is representative:

> I have written many enthusiastic articles about Garulli’s quality, but I must say that never has he moved and convinced me as much as now… no-one could sing it better than he.
>
> He was grand, immense, unsurpassable: he was truly Massenet’s collaborator.\(^{148}\)

The rest of the cast drew mixed reviews. Etelka Schiff apparently did not look the part of Carlotta, and opinions varied as the quality of her performance.\(^{149}\) The rest of the cast was competent, but not particularly distinguished; indeed, the comic talents of Buti, Giordani, and Wigley, which had helped make *Manon* such a success, were barely needed in *Werther*.

The excitement of Massenet’s visit seems to have lingered after the composer’s departure; the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* noted that “The repeated performances of *Werther* were just as successful as the premiere;” an admission that must have been difficult for the rival journal to

\(^{147}\) “*Werther*, dramma lirico di G. Massenet,” MA 28 no. 51 (11 Dec 1894), 2: “Se il *Werther* non forse tutta la potenza passionale di *Manon*, ha la meravigliosa finitezza della forma da superare tutte le opera di questo pur finitissimo maestro: la sua opera è dunque destinata a sedurre qualunque pubblico.”

\(^{148}\) “Teatri di Milano: al Lirico Internazionale: Werther,” GDT 41 no. 46 (6 Dec 1894), 1: “Io ho scritto più volte articoli entusiastici sulle qualità di Garulli, ma debo dire che mai come ora mi ha commosso e convinto…Ernesto Rossi non avrebbe potuto scolpire la scena della morte meglio di lui, come nessuno potrebbe meglio di lui cantarla.
>
> “Fu grande, immense, insuperabile: fu un vero collaboratore di Massenet.”

\(^{149}\) “Teatri di Milano: al Lirico Internazionale: Werther,” GDT 41 no. 46 (6 Dec 1894), 1; “Rivista milanese,” GMM49 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 773.
make. Sonzogno let the production run for five performances, eventually closing on December 9th.

Conclusions

Having staged a triumphal first season at the Lirico, Sonzogno turned his attention to a bigger prize. Having obtained the contract for La Scala for 1895, the publisher presented a full season of operas from his repertoire, including another production of Manon (13 January 1895) and a reprise of Werther (20 March 1895). The production was not a success, however. Most critics agreed that the opera was not suited to the large stage of La Scala; the opera had made a greater impact in the smaller, more intimate space of the Lirico. Il secolo, of course, claimed that these factors made little difference to the success of the work. But the public was, as Il trovatore put it, “grim and inexplicably severe.” La Lombardia put the matter bluntly: “Werther…has flopped at La Scala. And the fault is not to be found…in Massenet’s music.” Instead, the failure was blamed on Rodolfo Ferrari, for slowing down and over-emphasizing the music in an attempt to make it heard in the vast space of La Scala. Ada Adini was said to portray Charlotte without any passion; her most notable role to date, in the Bologna production of Die Walküre, had perhaps not prepared her for the

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150“Rivista Milanese,” GMM 49 no. 49 (9 Dec 1894), 774: “Le successive rappresentazione del Werther ebbero l’uguale successo della prima.”

151The performances took place on these dates: 1 December, 4 December, 6 December, 7 December, and 9 December. On the first night, the ballet was La fata d’oro, and on subsequent performances, it was Coppelia.


154“Settimana teatrale di Milano,” Il trovatore 42 no. 12 (23 March 1895), 1: “Il Werther…trovò un pubblico arcigno e inespicabile rigido…”

nuances of Massenet’s score.\textsuperscript{156} Fernando Valero, normally an excellent tenor with good technique, received mixed reviews for his Werther. “The public...demonstrated their discontent by the end of the first act and did not change their opinion.”\textsuperscript{157} On the next night, Valero was himself again, but it was too late: not many people came to the performance.\textsuperscript{158} The last performances, on 29 March and 3 April, were apparently better, but the excitement that had accompanied \textit{Werther}’s premiere three months before was gone.\textsuperscript{159}

While none of the critics wanted to blame Massenet or his music for the failure of the opera, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that \textit{Werther} had owed its initial success in Milan to Massenet’s presence. Even with a strong performance from Garulli, Massenet’s graceful socializing, and the Sonzogno publicity machine going full force, many of the professional critics had found the opera lengthy, tiresome, and boring. Without any of this apparatus, with a second-rate cast whose only bright spot was the young Rosina Storchio as Sophie, the opera could do little but founder in the great echoing space of La Scala. \textit{Werther} saw only two more Milanese productions by 1901; then another sixteen years passed before the opera was revived in 1917. The opera was only moderately popular in the rest of Italy: unlike \textit{Manon}, which was produced over a hundred times by 1925, \textit{Werther} gathered less than sixty productions (see \textbf{Appendix 3}).

\textit{Werther}’s rise and fall on the Milanese opera scene remains significant, however, for its role in Massenet’s Italian reception. Despite relative \textit{Werther}’s lack of long-term success, the opera was fundamental to establishing Massenet’s Italian reputation as the greatest French operatic composer, equal to Verdi and far exceeding any of Italy’s younger composers in talent and expertise. The work

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{156}“Teatri locali: Scala,” RTM 33 no. 1471 (23 March 1895).

\textsuperscript{157}“Teatri e concerti: Scala,” \textit{La Lombardia}, 21 March 1895, 3: “Il pubblico iersera dimostrò il suo malcontento fino dal primo atto e non mutò più opinione.”

\textsuperscript{158}“Teatri e concerti,” \textit{La Lombardia}, 22 March 1895, 3.

\textsuperscript{159}“Teatri e concerti: Scala,” \textit{La Lombardia}, 30 March 1895, 3; “Cronache milanese,” GTI 24 no. 10 (2 April 1895), 1.
\end{flushleft}
thus helped redefine Massenet for Italians. In turn, Massenet’s presence, and the Italian reaction to his celebrity status, helped Werther survive its first production despite earning a reputation as a difficult work and despite the Italian translation’s idiosyncrasies. The process of translating Massenet, the public figure, into Italian musical life also helped create a space for Werther, a space shaped partly by Sonzogno’s vision of the Teatro Lirico Internazionale as a free space for art unrestricted by nationalist boundaries. In the end, when the work was performed without Massenet’s presence or elaborate publicity, it could fail without tarnishing Massenet’s reputation.
CHAPTER THREE

Thaïs and the Diplomatic Reconciliation of the “Latin Races”

Introduction

In October 1903, another Massenet opera had its Italian premiere at the Teatro Lirico in Milan: Thaïs. Unlike La Navarraise, Thaïs did not fail on its first night, but it was the last Milanese premiere which Massenet attended in person. Thaïs’s Italian premiere lay at the center of a web of media events paralleled only by the premiere of Werther, but with the added benefit of a favorable political context. Thus, Thaïs marked the high point of Massenet’s fortunes in Italy.

Although the opera was popular with the Milanese public, the opera received generally negative reviews, and critics tried to explain away Thaïs’s success with the public. The title role was played by Lina Cavalieri, a former cabaret star popularly acclaimed as the most beautiful woman in the world; several critics felt that the Italian public’s enthusiasm for Cavalieri was a good explanation for the opera’s inexplicable success. Further, the opera premiered shortly after the Italian royals’ first state visit to France, and many critics felt Thaïs’s political context was explanation enough for its success.

But while Thaïs benefitted both from Cavalieri’s celebrity status and from the political situation, it would be a mistake to take the critics at their word and see Thaïs’s success as determined solely by its social and political context. As shown throughout this dissertation, Massenet’s Italian reception had always existed in tension with politics. While his operas served as symbols of Sonzogno’s pro-French, estrema sinistra political stance, there was rarely a clear correlation between international affairs and the success of any particular opera. Both Manon and Werther, after all, had succeeded in Italy when Franco-Italian relations were at their ebb, and La Navarraise’s failure had
little to do with politics. And in none of these cases had Massenet’s operas relied on celebrity performers or sex appeal for their success.

By focusing on the international political situation and Cavalli’s sex appeal, critics unsympathetic to Massenet were able to discount his increasing cultural authority in Italy and minimize the achievements of both Massenet and the Casa Sonzogno. This maneuver also allowed such critics to ignore Massenet’s actual relationship to Italian internal politics (Sonzogno’s push for closer ties with France as a particular political stance within Italy) and external politics (Massenet’s role as symbolic leader of an explicitly Franco-Italian music). For Massenet’s critics, invoking politics or sex appeal served, not as a way of highlighting an important issue, but as a way of minimizing the aesthetic value of the opera under consideration.

Rather, I argue that Thaïs owed much of its success in Italy to Massenet’s integration into Italian operatic culture. Admittedly, his social integration was in itself politicized through the Casa Sonzogno’s broader political, cultural, and aesthetic agenda. Yet the true issue at stake in Thaïs’s premiere was not Massenet’s status as a symbol of French art, but rather his role as a cultural authority in both French and Italian artistic spheres, a role which he filled all the more easily now that Italy and France had reached an accord. Massenet’s public appearances at concerts, parties, and a diplomatic banquet made him a physical representative of French art in Italy. At the same time, the Italian public’s enthusiasm for Massenet was greater than ever, and journalists and critics described him as an honorary Italian. His service as the chair of the fourth Sonzogno Competition for one-act operas further marked him as a foreigner who had assumed a place and was willing to participate in Italian musical culture.

Ultimately, Thaïs’s role as the high-water mark of the Casa Sonzogno’s aesthetic program, coupled with a political context which for once was not overtly hostile to French art, allowed the opera to transcend the usual discourses of cultural translation. Instead, Thaïs’s popular success,
Massenet’s visible role in celebrating the Franco-Italian reconciliation, and Massenet’s participation in Sonzogno’s fourth opera competition, opened a new space for Massenet as the leader of a new, transnational Franco-Italian musical aesthetic based on the concept of the “Latin race,” which proposed a fundamental racial kinship between the French and the Italians. This “Latin” construction, promoted by the Casa Sonzogno, was justified by contemporary anthropology and employed for clearly political ends.

At the same time, high watermarks are harbingers of decline. Although *Thaïs* proved far more popular with the public than Massenet’s most recent works, *Thaïs* was one of Massenet’s first operas to be criticized as old-fashioned. The opera’s cold critical reception showed how far Massenet’s reputation had slipped in Italy since the premieres of *Manon* and *Werther*. In 1903, Italian critics still treated Massenet respectfully, but they no longer held him up as the greatest living opera composer, as they had in 1894.

This chapter analyzes the Milanese premiere of Massenet’s *Thaïs* as part of a complex of cultural exchanges surrounding the Franco-Italian reconciliation of 1902–03, Massenet’s integration into Italian operatic culture, and the associated themes of translation, transnationalism, and identity politics. The discussion is organized into three broad sections covering (1) the origin of the opera and the Italian libretto; (2) the initial Italian reception of the opera; and (3) discourses of sex, politics, and race which affected *Thaïs*’s reception.

I. ORIGINS OF THE OPERA AND THE ITALIAN LIBRETTO

From legend to novel

Massenet’s *Thaïs* was based on the novel of the same name by Anatole France (1844–1924), the prominent French author and literary critic. Although France’s work does not seem to have enjoyed the same circulation in Italy that it did in his native country, the *Corriere della sera* assumed that its
readers would have heard of him. Yet there seem to have been few Italian editions of his work until after the Italian premiere of Massenet’s opera. Fratelli Treves published a translation of Le crime de Sylvestre Bonnard in 1904, and one of Thaïs in 1905. Eventually, as Taide, France’s novel was the fifty-seventh volume of the Casa Sonzogno’s Collezione Sonzogno (published 1920–1933). France’s novel was probably accessible to most Italians only in its French original when Massenet’s opera reached Milan.

The story, however, was probably familiar to Italian audiences in the barest outline, as France’s novel adapted the vita of St. Thaïs of Egypt, who was often known in Italy as Taide. Thaïs was a notorious prostitute of Alexandria who acquired wealth and fame through her profession. A monk, often identified as Paphnutius but sometimes as Serapion, visited her, convincing her to renounce her prior life in order to become a nun. After three years of penance, she was released from solitary confinement, but died within days. The story was popular in the Middle Ages, and was the subject of a tenth-century Latin play (with which France was familiar) by the nun Hrotsvit of

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5“The Life of St. Thaïs: Introduction,” in E. Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson, and Robert K. Upchurch, The Life of St. Thaïs in the Northern Homily Cycle (early 1300s), reprint from Saints’ Lives in Middle English Collections (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), online at http://www.lib.rochester.edu/Camelot/teams/wthaintro.htm (accessed 6 March 2013). Benedicta Ward, Harlots in the Desert (Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 76–7. Her feast day is October 8, and is still celebrated in both the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Incidentally, Massenet’s opera premiered on October 17, but it seems highly unlikely that the opera’s premiere was designed to have any relationship to the feast day.
Late-medieval frescoes at the Chiesa di San Ambrogio in Sulbiate in northwest Lombardy preserve her memory, and a medieval abbess of Milan’s convent of San Radegonda bore her name. Her story was also the subject of a religious play printed in Venice in 1598 and an Italian prose account published in 1667.

In Massenet’s own time, the French archaeologist Albert Gayet (1856–1916) gave the Thaïs legend a new burst of life, as he claimed to have discovered the tombs of Thaïs and Serapion at the lost city of Antinopolis. Gayet, who has been described as “a serious scientist in his youth, but perhaps somewhat of a charlatan in later years,” exhibited the two mummies at the Musée Guimet in Paris. Massenet apparently went to see the exhibit; however, while his memoirs imply that he saw the mummies before the French premiere of his opera in 1894, Gayet did not excavate Thaïs’s alleged remains until 1901.

France’s novel (serialized in 1889, published in book form in 1890) turns the Thaïs legend on its head, as betrayed by its subtitle *comte philosophique*. For while Thaïs still converts to

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8Camillo Boito, *Il duomo di Milano e i disegni per la sua facciata* (Milano: Luigi Marchi, 1889), 53.


Christianity in France’s account, the novelist changes the focus of the story from Thaïs to Paphnutius (named Paphnuce). The novel becomes a temptation narrative in the tradition of Flaubert’s *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, with the crucial difference that Paphnuce cannot resist temptation in the end, even after meeting St. Anthony in person and asking for his blessing. Instead, the monk is tormented by erotic dreams sent by the Devil; in the end, he flings himself lustfully on Thaïs’s corpse, to the horror of her fellow nuns. At its core, France’s novel depicts the monk’s journey into self-deception, as he believes that the dreams reflecting his physical desire for Thaïs are messages from God commanding him to save her soul. The monk is “a grotesque innocent,” a sympathetically drawn anti-hero whose fanaticism is his fatal flaw. France’s novel thus presents a cynical gloss on a piece of church history in keeping with France’s personal philosophy, aptly summarized in an article in *Le Temps*: “He said that I have illusions. I have; the sad thing is that I know it. Nevertheless, I have them still, I have kept almost as many as I have lost…I think they are the only realities of life.”

*Thaïs’s* success made France into one of the most influential contemporary French authors; he became a member of the Académie Française in 1896. Although France had connections with prominent members of the French right wing, he used his new-found prominence in ways that must have recommended him to Sonzogno’s liberal circle, with its documented ties to the extreme left, although he never enjoyed the political prominence that Émile Zola commanded. In 1898, France

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13France’s original title for the novel was in fact *Paphnuce*. Tylden-Wright, 139.


publicly supported Zola and the Dreyfusards, and the following year he began speaking and writing in support of Jean Jaurès’ Socialist Party. By 1902, one of his main causes was to break the earthly power of the Catholic Church. In 1904, France attacked the political role of the Catholic Church in print; by 1905, this essay would become his treatise *L’Église et la République*. Eventually, his complete works would be placed on the papal index of banned books.

**Opera versus novel**

Massenet’s opera was a setting of a controversial novel which portrayed religion and conventional bourgeois morality in a skeptical light; in this aspect, *Thaïs* shares its origins with Massenet’s earlier *Hérodiade*, which was based on a novella by Flaubert. Massenet was, according to his memoirs, “immediately carried away by the idea” of creating the opera when the topic was proposed to him by his publisher Heugel and the librettist Louis Gallet. Much of the opera was written between 1892 and 1893, and it premiered at the Opéra in Paris in March 1894. Like France’s novel, the opera deals with the conversion of Thaïs, although here the monk is named Athanaël rather than Paphnuce.

Louis Gallet’s libretto for the opera condenses and narrows the scope of the book, altering the dramatic trajectory of the work significantly. Paphnuce’s numerous visions in the novel are condensed into Athanaël’s one vision in Act I; Thaïs’s Christian upbringing is omitted from the

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18Tylden-Wright, 204–05; Jefferson, 111, 115–16, 123.


“Louis Gallet et Heugel me proposèrent un ouvrage sur l’admirable roman d’Anatole France, Thaïs.

“La séduction fut rapide, complète. Dans le rôle de Thaïs, je voyais Sanderson.”
opera entirely. The fantastic episode in which Paphnuce becomes a stylite, and pilgrims build a city around his pillar, is lacking. Similarly, the elaborate symposium, in which philosophers debate the nature of existence and in which Eucrites kills himself in order to experience true freedom, is omitted. Massenet and Gallet simplified the many ironies of the novel in order to create a simpler, broader dramatic arc. Thaïs the opera focuses on the dramatic irony of two people who exchange beliefs: the monk converts Thaïs to Christianity; but in doing so, the monk is unable to contain his physical attraction to her, ultimately rejects his asceticism, and confesses his love to her as she dies. (As Anatole France pithily summarized the opera, “Paphnuce conquers Thaïs and Thaïs conquers Paphnuce.”) While the opera preserves some of Athanaël’s inner conflict, visions, and delusions, the broader plot depicts a psychological and religious struggle between the monk and the courtesan instead of the monk’s progressing journey into delusion.

This alteration of the plot was necessary if Thaïs was to be a fully three-dimensional character (unlike the novel, in which the courtesan is most often seen through Paphnuce’s eyes). The libretto transforms Thaïs into a priestess and a devout servant of Venus, rather than a troubled soul who “believes everything” and seeks enlightenment in the words of all philosophers. The operatic Thaïs dares the monk to defy the goddess (I.2: “Ose venir, toi qui braves Vénus!”), debates the meaning of love with Athanaël (I.2: “Qui te fait si sévère…Homme fait pour aimer, quelle erreur est la tienne!”), prays to Venus (II.1: “Toi, Vénus, réponds-moi de son éternité!”), and invokes the goddess while meeting with the monk (II.1: “Vénus, invisible et présent!”). In this way, the libretto breaks down the novel’s distinction between the trusting Thaïs and the skeptic Nicias for the sake of

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21 Huebner, French Opera, 153.

a clear-cut dramatic contrast between Thaïs and Athanaël (in the novel, it is Nicias who utters the progenitor of Thaïs’s cry of defiance). 23

The opera’s plot shares with Tannhäuser its opposition between Christian piety and the service of Venus. The difference is that Tannhäuser begins under Venus’s power and is gradually liberated, while Athanaël, on the other hand, gradually succumbs to Thaïs. In this, the opera presents Thaïs as a femme fatale who uses her sexuality as a weapon (which, as Steven Huebner notes, contrasts with the novel, in which Thaïs acts “out of instinct and completely natural behavior”). 24

### Table 16: Instrumental music in *Thaïs*, 1894 version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location in score</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Relation to plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act I, scene 1</td>
<td>Vision d’Athanaël</td>
<td>Athanaël dreams of Thaïs miming the Loves of Aphrodite in a theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act II, scene 1</td>
<td>Symphonie des amours d’Aphrodite</td>
<td>Thaïs performs the Loves of Aphrodite in front of Athanaël, Nicias, etc. (cut 1898)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act II, scene 2</td>
<td>Méditation</td>
<td>Thaïs converts to Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act III, scene 2</td>
<td>Ballet de la Tentation (cut 1898)</td>
<td>Athanaël dreams of various demonic creatures (leading into L’apparition de Thaïs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act III, scene 2</td>
<td>Symphonie: La course dans la nuit</td>
<td>Athanaël hurries to see Thaïs before she dies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plot is not the only connection to Wagner. Claire Rowden notes that early French critics related Massenet’s narrative use of instrumental interludes to Wagnerian practices. The score contained no less than five instrumental pieces in its first version, and the ballet was not simply a divertissement, but served the plot (see Table 16). 27 Further, at Massenet’s request, Gallet’s libretto for Thaïs consists of unrhymed free verse (poésie mélique) almost indistinguishable from prose; Gallet

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23Anatole France, *Thaïs* (Paris: Calman-Levy, 1922), 51: “Crains d’offenser Vénus, répondit Nicias; c’est une puissante déesse. Elle sera irritée contre toi, si tu lui ravis sa plus illustre servante.” Note that Nicias presents Thaïs as a servant of Venus, and his comment seems to be a mocking quip, rather than a literal reference to Thaïs being a priestess.

24Huebner, *French Opera*, 149.


26Ibid, xxi, xxvii, xlix.

27Ibid, ix.
published an aesthetic justification of his creative choices shortly before the opera’s French premiere.\textsuperscript{28} Rowden also notes that Wagner’s music-dramas were sometimes provided with prose translations in France in this period, although Wagner’s German librettos themselves were not themselves written in prose.\textsuperscript{29} Massenet’s interest in the prose libretto might be understood as both a reaction to the influence of Wagner in France, and as part of French composers’ growing interest in prose librettos: by 1894, Gounod, Charpentier, and Debussy had attempted—or were writing—operas employing prose librettos.\textsuperscript{30} Finally, Huebner also notes that the work’s generic title \textit{comedie lyrique} had Wagnerian overtones, compared to the common French translation of \textit{musikdrama} as \textit{drame lyrique}.\textsuperscript{31}

The opera’s French subtitle also reflects \textit{Thaïs}’s troubled origins. The opera was originally meant for the Opéra-Comique, but Sibyl Sanderson, for whom the role was written, broke her contract with the Opéra-Comique in favor of the Opéra, which paid more.\textsuperscript{32} A work designed as an \textit{opéra-comique} had perforce to be modified to fit the specifications of the Opéra.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{28}Rowden, \textit{Thaïs: Dossier} ix–xi; Huebner, \textit{French Opera}, 142.


\textsuperscript{31}Huebner, \textit{French Opera}, 142–43, 156. In Italy, \textit{Thaïs} was simply called a \textit{dramma lirico}, with fewer specifically Wagnerian overtones. The term \textit{dramma lirico} had been occasionally used as a generic title for Italian opera used since the 1830s. Donizetti’s \textit{L’assedio di Calais} (1836) is one of the first instances. Other examples include Verdi’s \textit{Nabucco} (1842), \textit{I Lombardi alla prima crociata} (1843), \textit{Ernani} (1844), \textit{Attila} (1846), and \textit{Otello} (1887); Mercadante’s \textit{Il regente} (1843); Marchetti’s \textit{Romeo e Giulietta} (1865) and \textit{Ray Blai} (1869); Ponchielli’s \textit{La gioconda} (1876); Puccini’s \textit{Edgar} (1888) and \textit{Manon Lescaut} (1893); among translations of foreign operas, Thomas’s \textit{Mignon} (Italian premiere, 1870), Bizet’s \textit{Carmen} (Italian premiere, 1879), and Massenet’s \textit{Werther} (Italian premiere, 1894). Italian translations of Wagner’s works rarely seem to have used the term. \textit{Thaïs, dramma lirico in tre atti e sette quadri, parole di Luigi Gallet (da romanzo di Anatole France), traduzione ritmica italiana di A. Galli} (Milan: Sonzogno, 1906); “Eco dei teatri: \textit{Thaïs, dramma lirico in 3 atti e 7 quadri},” \textit{Il secolo}, 18 Oct 1903.


\textsuperscript{33}Rowden, \textit{Thaïs: Dossier}, xvi.
Massenet’s opera had several unusual features. In keeping with *Thaïs’s* intended origin at the smaller theater, the work features only two main characters, Thaïs and Athanaël, plus several secondary characters (Palemon, Nicias, Myrtale, Crobyle, and Albine). Consequently, there is no secondary pair of characters to balance the principals (as Albert and Sophie, for instance, complement Werther and Charlotte). However, its adaptation for the Opéra is reflected in the ballet scenes, and the extended instrumental interludes such as the *Symphonie des amours d’Aphrodite* (cut in the 1898 revision) and the *Méditation*.

*Thaïs’s* mixed pedigree influenced its initial mixed reception at its premiere at the Opéra de Paris on 16 March 1894. French critics accused the opera of being decadent, effeminate, and Wagnerian. Further, the basic plot—involving a religious man being tempted by a sensual woman—recalled in its barest essentials elements of earlier works by Massenet: *Marie Magdalene* (Jesus and Mary); *Erodiade* (Jean and Salome); and *Manon* (Des Grieux and Manon in Act III).\(^{34}\) The outcry over the music and plot was only increased by Sanderson’s wardrobe malfunction on the opening night.\(^{35}\) Massenet began cutting parts of the opera after its eighth performance, but the opera still managed to reach thirty-one performances by 1895.\(^{36}\) Massenet’s revision for the 1898 revival at the Opéra, with the *Symphonie des amours d’Aphrodite* and the *Ballet de la tentation* cut, and the Oasis scene and the Act II ballet added, remains the standard version for modern performances (see Table 17).\(^{37}\)

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\(^{34}\) Ibid, 20; Huebner, 107.

\(^{35}\) At the end of Act I, one of the shoulder straps on her dress broke, exposing her bust. Hansen, *The Sibyl Sanderson Story*, 205.


### Table 17: Comparison of the 1894 and 1898 versions of *Thaïs* (instrumental pieces are in italics)\(^{38}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1894 version(^^{39})</th>
<th>1898 revision(^^{40})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Act I</strong></td>
<td>Scene 1: La Thébaïde</td>
<td>Scene 1: La Thébaïde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scene 2: Alexandrie</td>
<td>Scene 2: Alexandrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Act II</strong></td>
<td>Sympathic: <em>les amours d’Aphrodite</em></td>
<td>Scene 1: Chez Thaïs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scene 1: Chez Thaïs</td>
<td>Scene 2: Devant la maison de Thaïs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scene 2: Devant la maison de Thaïs</td>
<td><em>Méditation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Act III</strong></td>
<td>Scene 1: La Thébaïde</td>
<td><strong>Act III</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scene 1: L’Oasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Prélude</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scene 2: La Thébaïde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symphonic: <em>La cours dans la nuit</em></strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scene 3: La mort de Thaïs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Adaptations for Italian performance

The Italian premiere of *Thaïs* was based on the 1898 edition, as may be deduced from descriptions of the plot in the Italian media and the surviving Italian scores and librettos. Although performances of the work in Italy were arranged by the Casa Sonzogno, the Italian edition seems to have been printed by Heugel et Cie in Paris, while it was presumably marketed and distributed by the Casa Sonzogno. Italian librettos, however, were published by the Casa Sonzogno.\(^{41}\) Both the score printed

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\(38\)This chart is based on that in Clair Rowden’s *Republican Morality and Catholic Tradition at the Opéra: Massenet’s Hérodiade and Thaïs* (Weinsburg, Germany: Musik-Edition Lucie Galland, 2004), 302. Rowden notes (303) that the “Alexandrie” scene may originally have been part of Act II.

\(39\)*Thaïs: Comédie Lyrique in 3 actes et 7 tableaux* [piano score] (Paris: Heugel et Cie, 1894, plate #9648).

\(40\)*Thaïs: Comédie Lyrique in 3 actes et 7 tableaux* [piano vocal score] (Paris: Heugel et Cie, 1894, plate #7644).

by Heugel et Cie and the libretto printed by the Casa Sonzogno attribute the Italian translation to Amintore Galli, although small differences exist between the two.

Gallet’s poésie mélée provided a special challenge for Galli. One edition of the Italian libretto bears a disclaimer, presumably written by Galli or one of his associates: “The libretto of this opera was in prose in the French original; in the translation, while the meaning is rendered literally, and the musical rhythm remains intangible, the form of the lines is absolutely free.” In this Galli shows his awareness of the controversies surrounding Gallet’s prose libretto. He also tacitly acknowledges how unusual a prose libretto is on the Italian stage in 1903, since at this point, no successful Italian opera had been written to a prose libretto.

While poésie mélée’s similarity to prose might have made Galli’s work harder, the Italian libretto is generally faithful to its French model. Indeed, since Galli did not have to concern himself with strict meters present in the original French text, he was able to match the assonance, syllable count, and meaning of Gallet’s original text far more easily than in some of his other translations. He did, however, attempt to recreate the few rhymes present in the original French. Both Galli’s disclaimer, noted above, and the relatively small number of rhymes in the libretto suggests a conscious effort to follow Gallet’s poetic style closely. Galli even avoided rhymes in Crobyle and Myrtle’s song for La Charmeuse (Act II, scene 2), which, as the only diegetic song occurring with the opera, would have been an ideal place for the insertion of rhymed poetry.

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43The first Italian opera to set a prose libretto is generally thought to be Mascagni’s Amica, written in 1904–1905 and premiered in Monte Carlo in 1905. Allan Mallach, Pietro Mascagni and His Operas (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 165–67; McDonald, “The Prose Libretto,” 165.
Galli’s translation of Thaïs’s entrance in Act I, scene 2, provides a clear example of his approach to crafting the Italian libretto. Louis Gallet’s French text appears on the left, Galli’s Italian translation on the right, with syllable counts at the end of each line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>Italian Text</th>
<th>Syllables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C’est Thaïs, l’idole fragile qui vient pour la dernière fois s’asseoir à la table fleurie… Demain, je ne serai pour toi plus rien qu’un nom !</td>
<td>È Thaïs, l’idolo debole Che l’ultima volta a seder Sen viene alla mensa fiorita! Doman, Non sarò più per Nicia Che sol un nome!44</td>
<td>9p 9p 9p 9p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Galli’s version has minor differences in textual meaning (the Italian version addresses Nicias directly), the translation is remarkably close in meaning, sound, and tone. Galli employs homophones (idole-idolo; fleurie-fiorita; serai-sarò; nom-nome) to preserve much of the sound of the French original. Similarly, while Galli is unable to preserve Gallet’s use of assonance at the end of the first three lines (fragile, fois, fleurie), he is able to create a similar effect through his internal repetition of volta and viene, as well as his use of non, Nicia, nome. Galli also maintains the 3+6 structure of the opening line and mirrors the 2+6 division of the line Demain, je ne serai pour toi with the 2+7 division of Doman, Non sarò più per Nicia. The musical setting accommodates the extra syllable by eliminating a single tied note (see Example 2).

The Italian translation had a significant effect on the sound of Massenet’s music in performance. As Massenet was setting poésie mélique, the use of verses of irregular length defines the length of melodic phrases and provides a conversational element. The sequence of words, heard as collections of syllables, helped shape Massenet’s musical language. Galli’s translation, on the other hand, regularly transforms the internal divisions of these lines, sometimes, as above, turning a

44Thaïs [vocal score] (Heugel, 1903), 64–5.
collection of assymmetrical verses into straightforward novenarii. Further, the difference between Italian and French vocabulary necessitated subtle displacements of the internal structure of musical and textual phrases. Going back to Thaïs’s first lines, the Italian and French versions contain divergent metrical emphases, as can be seen through the placement of words of more than one syllable (marked in Example 2 in green for French words; in blue for Italian words). From this, one can easily see that the Italian text’s internal organization differs significantly from that of the French text. Only in the middle lines (à la table fleurie) does the metrical structure of Galli’s translation bare any great resemblance to that of the French text. Therefore, even while Galli seems to have done his

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45Thaïs [vocal score] (Heugel, 1903), 64.
best to produce a completely faithful translation of Gallet’s text, his Italian libretto necessarily took on a personality of its own.

At the same time, Galli was not solely interested in mirroring the French original, as he occasionally inserted rhymes absent in the French, although he never allowed rhyme to become an organizing principle for any lengthy section of the text. Rhyme, in other words, functions as an occasional, decorative element in the Italian libretto. Thus, in Athanaël’s entrance in Act I, Galli created an internal rhyme *desolato—peccato*. Galli’s choice of this rhyme is especially obvious, as he could easily have written “e nel dolor[é]” at the end of the second line.

Non! mon cœur est plein d’amertume…
Je reviens dans le deuil et dans affliction!...
—La ville est livrée au péché!

No… Ho il core pien d’amarezza…
Io ritorno nel pianto e desolato in cor!
È l’urbe in balia del peccato!

Similarly, the Italian translation of Athanaël’s first conversation with Nicias (Act I, scene 2) includes the lines:

NICIAS: Or via, m’abbraccia, e il benventuo sii.
Alfin, lasci il deserto? Ritorni a noi?
ATHANAËL: O Nicia, io qui non son che per un dì,
Un’ora sola…

Galli or his associates at the Casa Sonzogno also seem to have had second thoughts about the insertion of rhymes into the Italian libretto: in at least one case, a rhyme present in the printed libretto disappears in the vocal score.46

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46 Nicias’s three lines “Ne t’offense pas de leur raillerie,— ne baisse pas devant elles les yeux!—admire-les plutôt!” in Act I, scene 2 quartet (Athanaël, Nicias, Crobyle, Myrtale) are transformed into strict quinari, with an internal rhyme (Thaïs, [libretto] (Sonzogno, 1906), 18):

I motteggi loro
Tu non dei curare!
Nè gli sguardi mai
Tu non dei chinare!
Piuttosto, ammirale!

The vocal score (Heugel, 1903, 51), however, perhaps reflecting revisions made in rehearsal and performance, removes the rhyme between lines two and four:

I motteggi loro
Tu non déi curare
Nè gli sguardi mai
Tu non chinera!
The global significance of the Italian premiere

In Paris, *Thaïs* was never as popular as *Manon*, which by 1905 had reached its 500th Parisian performance after twenty-one years on the stage; *Thaïs*, after sixteen years, finally reached its 100th Parisian performance in 1910. While the Italian press covered major French and Belgian productions, the opera’s limited popularity may be measured by a rumor, circulated in the French music journal *Le Monde artiste*, that *Thaïs*’s Italian premiere in 1903 was arranged as a favor to Massenet, since he was coming to Italy anyhow for the fourth Sonzogno Competition.

The Italian premiere of *Thaïs*, far from being an a coda to the opera’s successful appearances outside France, helped the opera earn its place on the international stage. This fact is underlined by the fact that Lina Cavalieri, the first Italian *Thaïs*, went on to introduce the opera to Russian audiences. Indeed, *Thaïs* only achieved real popularity in Paris after Lina Cavalieri performed it at the Opéra in 1907. Of the twenty-one international productions listed in Table 18, eleven were in Italian. Although *Thaïs* took nine years to reach Italy, perhaps because of the scandalous aspects of the original Parisian production in 1894, it took far longer to reach foreign countries without a major

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48*Il secolo illustrato della domenica* covered the original Paris production of 1894; see 6 no. 235 (25 March 1894), 92–93, and 6 no. 238 (15 April 1894), 117–18.


50Vincent Giroud, *French Opera: A Short History* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2010), 211. See the list of Parisian revivals in Table 18; after being only intermittently present in the Parisian repertoire for many years, *Thaïs* was performed yearly from 1907 to 1915. See also Carl Van Vechten, *Music after the Great War and Other Studies* (New York: Schirmer, 1915), 127. Irvine, *Massenet*, 316–17, lists performances at the Opéra every year from 1894–1898, 1901–1902, 1904–1905, and 1907–1915, totaling 137 performances at the Opéra between 1894 and 1915. Of these, seventy-one occurred between 1907 and 1915, after Cavalieri performed the opera in Paris.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>City (Theater)</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Cast and revivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894: Mar 16</td>
<td>Paris (Opéra)</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Sibyl Sanderson and Jean Delmas; revivals: 1898, 1901, 1904, 1907–1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: Mar 7</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Georgette LeBlanc and Seguin; revived 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: Dec 19</td>
<td>Montpellier</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Erard and Bégué</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: Mar 25</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>unknown cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903: Oct 17</td>
<td>Milan (T. Lirico)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Lina Cavalieri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904: Dec</td>
<td>Lisbon</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>unknown cast; revived 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905: Feb 22</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>revived December 4, 1918, at the T. Del Liceo (Geneviève Vix and Mattia Battistini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906: Mar 27</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Lina Cavalieri, Mattia Battistini. Cavalieri performed the opera yearly, 1906–1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: Feb</td>
<td>Tunis</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>unknown cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: Nov 25</td>
<td>New York (Manhattan Opera)</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Mary Garden and Renaud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: July 21</td>
<td>Buenos Ayres</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>unknown cast; revived 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: Aug 20</td>
<td>Montevideo (T. Solis)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Livia Berlendi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909: Mar</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>revived 1910 with Mattia Battistini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910: April 13</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>unknown cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911: July 18</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Edvina and Gilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912: Dec 2</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>unknown cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913: Dec 29</td>
<td>Moscow (T. Solodovnikoff)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Carmen Melis and Mattia Battistini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914: Mar 9</td>
<td>Kiev (T. Solozoff)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916: Mar 18</td>
<td>Madrid (T. Real)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Vix and Mattia Battistini; revived, January 7, 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920: Summer</td>
<td>Rio de Janiero</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>unknown cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920: Nov 16</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>unknown cast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Francophone presence. Only well after Italian performers had spread the opera to Russia, Poland, Spain, Portugal, and South America did it eventually reach London and New York.

**The Italian cast**

Edoardo Sonzogno assembled a competent, all-Italian cast for *Thaïs* (see Table 19). The two chief roles were held by Francesco Maria Bonini as Athanaël and Lina Cavalieri as Thaïs. Of these, Bonini would earn the critics’ respect for intelligently performing a difficult role; Cavalieri undoubtedly upstaged the earnest, hard-working baritone, as she was renowned as one of the most beautiful women in Europe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>French name</th>
<th>Italian name</th>
<th>Performer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thaïs</td>
<td>Thaïs</td>
<td>Lina Cavalieri, later Emma Vecla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athanaël</td>
<td>Atanaele</td>
<td>Francesco Maria Bonini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicias</td>
<td>Nicia</td>
<td>Enrico Quadri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palemon</td>
<td>Palemon</td>
<td>[Ettore] Brancaleoni[54]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crobyle</td>
<td>Crobila</td>
<td>I. Rapalli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myrtale</td>
<td>Mirtale</td>
<td>G. Marchi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albine</td>
<td>Albina</td>
<td>G. Forlini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Charmeuse</td>
<td>L’ammaliatrice</td>
<td>G. B. Riguttini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The title role had originally been written for and premiered by the American soprano Sibyl Sanderson (1864–1903), who had performed the role at the Opéra de Paris in both 1894 and 1898. By the time that Sonzogno was casting the opera, Sanderson was no longer an option for the Italian

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52In the last two performances of the production, Cavalieri was replaced by the young Emma Vecla (1877–1972), who would later become known as the “queen of Italian operetta.”

53Some of the sources listed in the previous paragraph give Brancaleoni’s first initial as “G.,” but this is probably an error. An operatic bass named Ettore Brancaleoni was a “giovane artista” in 1888, and is probably the same performer. See “Teatri: Carrara,”GMM 43 no. 46 (11 Nov 1888), 415–16.
premiere, having sunk into alcoholism and morphine addiction. In May 1903 she died at the age of thirty-eight from complications of liver disease.\footnote{Hansen, The Sibyl Sanderson Story, 400, 403, 431, 440.}

Natalina “Lina” Cavalieri (1874–1944) was an apt replacement for Sanderson in several ways, although she did not possess Sanderson’s vocal range or unique timbre. Like Sanderson, Cavalieri was a strong actress with a relatively quiet singing voice. Like Sanderson, Cavalieri was renowned for her beauty—a million postcards of her likeness are said to have been sold, she published a self-book of beauty tips, and she eventually starred in several films.\footnote{Later, too, she was portrayed by Gina Lollobrigida in 1955 film titled La donna più bella del mondo. Irvine, Massenet, 250; Paul Fryer and Olga Usowa, Lina Cavalieri: The Life of Opera’s Greatest Beauty (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), 50; Lina Cavalieri, My Secrets of Beauty (New York City: The Circulation Syndicate, 1914).} Unlike Sanderson, who suffered stage fright (one cause of her alcoholism) and suffered frequent illnesses,\footnote{Hansen, The Sibyl Sanderson Story, 192.} Cavalieri was a reliable performer who had risen from the cabaret circuit to the operatic stage. Ten years Sanderson’s junior, she had been a professional singer since the age of fourteen; she had her start singing popular songs in cafes and cabarets. By the age of twenty-one she was headlining at the Folies Bergère in Paris; five years later, in 1900, she turned to opera.\footnote{Cavalieri’s career move from cabaret to opera was not unprecedented; Emma Bel Sorel (who performed in the Italian premiere of Massenet’s Cendrillon in Milan in 1899), had also started in cabaret. Giancarlo Landini, “I grandi cantanti di Casa Sonzogno,” in Morini, Ostali, and Ostali, Casa Musicale Sonzogno: Cronologie, saggi, testimonianze (Milan: Sonzogno, 1995), Vol. I, 149–241: 160; Fryer and Usowa, Cavalieri, 32–3. Clair Rowden has noted the similarities between Thaïs and the kinds of spectacles performed at the Folies Bergères, which in our context, suggests that the role of Thaïs may have been a natural fit for Cavalieri. Rowden, Republican Morality, 180.} Throughout her early career, she was unable to shake the critics’ suspicion that her beauty played a greater role than her singing in her success; as the Italian journalist “Jarro” wrote: “one cannot separate the woman from the artist, or her charm from her intelligence.”\footnote{Jarro (G. Piccini), Viaggio umoristico nei teatri (Florence: Bemporad, 1903) 4.} But she worked hard to improve her technique; by June, 1902, the Musical World could report that “A correspondent in Florence says that her improvement as singer and play-actress
is marked, and that she no longer depends on her beauty or the past fame of her café-concert nights.”\footnote{Lina Cavalieri, “The Musical World 2 no. 5 (June 1902), 66.} Certainly Cavalieri knew her limitations and worked within them. Her core repertoire consisted of “Verismo” standards; she seems to have avoided bel canto roles.\footnote{Cavalieri listed Massenet’s Manon, Fedora, Tosca, Andrea Chenier, Adriana Lecouvreur, Siberia, La traviata, Carmen, and Thaïs as her core repertoire in an interview. Fryer and Usova, Cavalieri, 40.}

Still, Sonzogno was gambling on Cavalieri when he offered her a contract to open the season at the Teatro Lirico with Thaïs. By the time that Cavalieri assumed the title role in Thaïs, she had performed only eight operatic roles, including the lead in La traviata and in Massenet’s Manon.\footnote{The other roles were Nedda in Pagliacci, Marguerite in Faust, Suzel in L’amico Fritz, and Maddalena in Andrea Chenier, and the title roles in Puccini’s La Bohème, and Fedora. Fryer and Usova, 167–68; “Corrispondenze: Firenze,” GMM 57#45 (6 Nov 1902), 598.}

Massenet recalled in his memoirs that “Sonzogno insisted strongly that I should let her see the part before I left [Paris].”\footnote{Massenet, Mes souvenirs, 199: “Sonzogno m’engagea vivement à lui faire voir le rôle avant mon départ.” English translation by H. Villiers Barnett, My Recollections, 201–202.} Perhaps because of her limited experience, Cavalieri traveled to Paris several weeks before the premiere to study the role of Thaïs personally with Massenet.\footnote{“LIRICA: Lina Cavalieri a Parigi,” CM 4 no. 34 (30 Sept 1903), 3.}

Massenet’s memoirs tactfully do not describe his initial impression of her talents. She seems to have spent about a week in Paris before returning, as La Lombardia reported, with the composer’s blessing.\footnote{“Teatri e Concerti,” La Lombardia, 9 Oct 1903, 3: “Sono incominciate le prove della « Thaïs » di Massenet, protagonista la Lina Cavalieri, la quale ha avuto il pieno assentimento dell’autore.”}

Still, at least one critic thought Cavalieri’s nervousness affected her performance at the premiere, while another noted that her performance proved that her hard work in studying operatic singing had paid off.\footnote{La Lombardia, 19 Oct 1903, 3: wrote of the second performance: “Lina Cavalieri...vinta la emozione di una « première »...” G.B. Nappi, “Thaïs di Massenet al Lirico,” La perseveranza, 18 Oct 1903, 3: “Il suo canto appassionato, e delicato a tempo e luogo, l’interpretazione giusta, l’azione piena d’eleganza e di naturalezza, mostrarono a tutti che la gentile artista per forza di volere e per l’abile direzione della sua maestra Maddalena Mariani Masi, continua spedita sulla via del progresso e che non è lontana dalla meta.”}
Massenet probably made a realistic assessment of Cavalieri’s abilities as an opera singer. Indeed, she may have made such an impression on the composer precisely because of her physical allure. Certainly she was not the first opera singer with a quiet voice and a beautiful face whom Massenet had encouraged (his protégé Sibyl Sanderson comes to mind). At any rate, the composer is alleged to have told her that “Your beauty gives you the right to make mistakes sometimes”; and while this anecdote may well be apocryphal, its existence testifies to Cavalieri’s reputation as a siren rather than a singer.67 At the premiere, Cavalieri’s performance was strong enough for her to share curtain calls with Bonini, and Massenet.68 During and after the *Thaïs* premiere, Massenet and Cavalieri seem to have developed a working relationship. While he was still in Milan, Massenet and Cavalieri went out to eat at the Grand Hotel,69 and in years to come, Massenet would entrust the role of Ensoleidad to her at the premiere of his *Cherubin* (1905).70 His opinion of her *Thaïs* was high enough for him to allow her to perform the work at the Paris Opéra in 1907, 1909, and 1910.71 Francesco Maria Bonini (1865–1930), the baritone who performed the role of Athanaël, drew far less attention from the Milanese press. He was described as “passable” (*discreto*),72 “a good

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67Fryer and Usova, *Cavalieri*, 5. A slightly different version of this story occurs in Jarro, *Viaggio umoristico*, 22, in which Massenet excuses Cavalieri’s singing out of tune because of her beauty: “Una volta Lina Cavalieri domandava al maestro Massenet: "— Suono mai?"
“E il maestro:
“— Siete così bella che ne avreste quasi il diritto…”


actor and singer,” possessing a “splendid voice,” “an adequate actor, a polished speaker, and a
tasteful singer,” but in no way did he command the critics’ or the crowd’s attention as Cavalieri did.
His talents do not appear to have been in doubt, although he seems largely to have performed major
roles in second-rank theaters. The previous year, for instance, he had played Germont in La traviata
and Iago in Otello at the Teatro Donizetti in Bergamo; other major roles included Marcello in
Puccini’s La bohème and Scarpia in Tosca. His most distinguished roles lay in the future: in 1912, he
sang the role of Hans Sachs in La Scala’s production of Die Meistersinger and Re Raimondo in
Mascagni’s Isabeau.

The rest of the roles were relatively minor. Only the tenor Enrico Quadri (Nicias) received
any particular mention in the press afterwards, although he took over his part on short notice from
Carlo Dani, who became ill. Fortunately for the production, the role of Nicias is relatively minor
(the tenor does not have any solo numbers). One of the few reviews to mention his performance in
any detail merely notes that as “he has taken the stage with few rehearsals, he will certainly

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73”Teatri e Concerti: Thaïs di Massenet,” La Lombardia, 18 Oct 1903, 3.


75”Teatri: Thaïs di Massenet al Lirico,” Il sole, 18 Oct 1903, 1: “Ottimo il baritono Bonini, corretto attore, forbito dicitore
e cantante di gusto.”

76”Corrispondenze: Bergamo,” GMM 57 no. 38 (18 Sept 1902), 514.

Mar 1898), 186.

78Giancarlo Landini, “I grandi cantanti di Casa Sonzogno,” 202; Carlo Gatti, Il teatro alla Scala nella storia e nell’arte (1778 –

79Like Cavalieri, Carlo Dani (1873–1944) was a relative late-comer to opera, having previously been a bicyclist of some
fame. He made his debut in Rigoletto in Florence in 1895. Around 1896, he abandoned his athletic career in favor of
“Firenze,” GMM 50 no. 3 (20 Jan 1895), 46–7: “…il debutto del velocipedista Dani nel Rigoletto ebbe un successo misto
d’ilarità, quantunque gli sia stata riconosciuta una buona qualità di voce ed abbia saputo in alcuni momenti farsi
applaudire. Occupato come egli è stato finora a recarsi qua e là per prender parte alle gare velocipedistiche, non ha
potuto darsi seriamente allo studio, oltreché quell’esercizio va poco d’accordo colla pratica del canto. Se studierà…potrà
molto probabilmente riuscire un buon tenore.” “Firenze,” GMM 53 no. 25 (23 June 1898), 366: “Il giovane tenore Dani
– che da due anni ha abbandonato la carriera del ciclista per quella del cantante – non aveva ottenuto un successo
strepitoso…La sua voce piccola e delicata…nei momenti drammatici dell’opera…era apparso assolutamente insufficiente.”
The orchestra was led by the reliable Rodolfo Ferrari, who returned to the Lirico after conducting the carnival and spring seasons at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice.

II. THE INITIAL ITALIAN RECEPTION OF THAÏS

The premiere itself

Thaïs’s premiere in Milan, in the broadest outlines, had much in common with that of Manon ten years before. Again a largely Italian cast performed a nine-year-old opera by Massenet, adapted from a well-known novel, in Italian translation at a theater managed by Edoardo Sonzogno; and again the opera was a popular success but met with mixed reviews in the local press. Again, too, the opera was associated with Massenet’s protégé, Sibyl Sanderson, and again, she did not introduce the opera to the Italian public.

The difference between Thaïs’s premiere and Manon’s lies in the nexus of the opera’s text, music, and performance, its adaptation to the Italian stage, and its reputation among Italian opera-goers in the years that followed. For if Manon remained memorable for Italian audiences and critics as a bold, provocative, and occasionally unsettling mixture of comedy and tragedy, Thaïs found itself in an entirely different situation, between simultaneous accusations of being either too old-fashioned or too modern. Further, Manon was controversial in part because of the competition between it and Puccini’s opera on the same subject; while Thaïs, broadly speaking, was not the center of such a controversy. The critical discourse centered less on whether Massenet deserved the chance to have

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81Ferrari conducted at La Fenice in Carnival 1903 (directing Orefice’s Chopin, Mascagni’s Ratcliff, and Massenet’s Cendrillon) and Spring 1903 (ending May 1903) (Verdi’s Il trovatore, Ghin’s Il santo). Michele Girardi and Franco Rossi (eds.) Il teatro la Fenice: cronologia degli spettacoli 1792–1936 (Venice: Albrizzi, 1989), 307–09.

82While several papers noted the similarity of the plot to that of Cesare Galleotti’s Anton (music by Cesare Galleotti, libretto by Luigi Illica), which premiered at La Scala, February 1900, most reviews do not emphasize the competition
his works staged in Italy, and more on whether this opera was valuable in any way. The critics generally agreed that it was not.

The premiere was typically lavish. *Thaïs* opened the autumn 1903 season at the Teatro Lirico. The season itself was quite short, lasting about six weeks, from mid-October to early December. *Thaïs* alternated successively with Giacomo Orefice’s *Chopin*, Umberto Giordano’s *Fedora*, and Spiros Samaras’ *Storia d’amore*.

As noted below, the premiere occurred in close proximity to the city of Milan’s official banquet to celebrate the new-found friendship between France and Italy. Massenet was present at both the banquet and the premiere; his visit to Milan was longer than usual, as he was one of the judges for the fourth Sonzogno competition for the best opera by a young composer. Consequently, it seems that much of the Sonzogno jury and several famous Italian composers attended the Italian premiere of *Thaïs* at 8:30 in the evening on Saturday, October 17. *Il secolo* proudly reported that Arrigo Boito, Engelbert Humperdinck, Francesco Cilèa, Umberto Giordano, Giacomo Orefice, Cleofonte Campanini, Asger Hamerik, and others attended, as well as the singer Francesco Tamagno. Through gathering of such talented musicians, the Casa Sonzogno used the *Thaïs* premiere to celebrate its aesthetic and political power.

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83 *Thaïs* opened on 17 October; *Chopin* on 28 October; *Storia d’amore* on 17 November; *Fedora* on 21 November. Of these, *Thaïs* and *Storia d’amore* were Italian premieres; *Fedora* had first been performed in 1898, and *Chopin* in 1901. Gustave Charpentier’s *Louise* was announced shortly before the start of the season, but was not performed, for unknown reasons; the opera had received its Italian premiere at the Lirico in April 1901, but was not heard again until February 1908. Morini, Ostali, and Ostali, *Casa Musicale Sonzogno*, Vol. II: 73, 216, 574, 763; “Cronaca milanese,” *La frusta teatrale* 41 no. 20 (25 Sept 1903), 1; “In platea,” *Musica e musicisti*, anno 58, 2 no. 10 (October 1903), 901; “In platea,” *Musica e musicisti*, anno 58, 2 no.11 (November 1903), 997; “In platea,” *Musica e musicisti*, anno 58, 2 no.12 (December 1903), 1082–83; “Un avvenimento musicale: *Chopin*,” *SID* 13 no. 620 (1 Dec 1901), 390–391.

84 *Il secolo* 18 Oct 1903, 3; *SID*, 1 Nov 1903, 350.
Yet Massenet was clearly the star of the evening. While the singers drew their share of applause, the only piece to receive an encore was the *Méditation*. The audience was unenthusiastic over the opening scene (Athanaël and the Cenobites), but by the end of the first act their mood improved enough for there to be six curtain calls for the artists and Massenet. At the end of Act II, finally, there was a curtain call for the artists alone. Significantly, after the Act III duet “O messager di Dio” (“Ô messager de Dieu”), the most applause was for Massenet, who had to take three curtain calls, and not the singers. Massenet received even more applause at the end of the opera; throughout the night he took eleven bows.

Several critics noted that the audience was confused and distracted by the management’s decision to let down the curtain after each scene, rather than at the end of each act. Since the opera had seven scenes split into three acts, there were no less than six curtains in the course of one evening. Some critics were influenced by this proceeding: “Virgilio” criticized the opera as lacking organic unity, admitting that the frequent curtains affected his opinion, while “R.C” of *La Lombardia* completely ignored the division into acts and described the opera as consisting only of seven scenes.

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85“Teatri e Concerti: *Thaïs* di Massenet,” *La Lombardia*, 18 Oct 1903, 3: “Ma il bis unico della serata, fu il soave, idilliaco intermezzo tra il terzo e quarto quadro...”


The critics were divided over the opera’s reception on the whole. The general consensus was that it was received “favorably, but without enthusiasm.”\footnote{G. Di Belgioioso “Le prime rappresentazioni: Thaïs Commedia lirica in 3 atti di G. Massenet (Teatro Lirico–Milano),” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2: “L’opera, in conclusione, è stata accolta con favore, ma senza entusiasmo.”} Others felt it was “a good success which will get better with subsequent performances.”\footnote{Teatri e Concerti: Thaïs di Massenet,” La Lombardia, 18 Oct 1903, 3: “Un successo buono che migliorerà nelle successive rappresentazioni...”} As usual, the Sonzogno journals seem to have exaggerated Massenet’s success, or at least to have “remembered it with advantages.” Il secolo illustrato della domenica described an “unforgettable evening” in which Massenet received “triumphal honors.”\footnote{A.G. [Amintore Galli], “Thaïs dramma lirico in tre atti e sette quadri,” SID 15 no. 719 (1 Nov 1903), 350: “Il maestro Massenet assisteva alla rappresentazione e venne fatto oggetto di onori trionfali in una serata indimenticabile.”} But the Gazetta teatrale italiana’s description of the evening as a fiasco successo (a feeble success) was probably nearer the truth, even if somewhat biased in the opposite direction.\footnote{“Cronaca Milanese: Lirico,” GTI 32 no. 27 (20 Oct 1903), 1.}

Meanwhile, the Cronache musicali e drammatiche claimed that Thaïs had had more success in Milan than it had had in Paris.\footnote{G. Di Belgioioso, “Le prime rappresentazioni: Thaïs: Commedia lirica in 3 atti di G. Massenet (Teatro Lirico – Milano),” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2: “Per la prima rappresentazione della « Thaïs » di Massenet, nuova per l’Italia, v’era a Milano vivissima attesa, tanto più che all’ « Opéra Comique » [a], all’opera del popolare maestro aveva già arriso ottimo successo.” Note that Thaïs actually premiered at the Opéra, not the Opéra Comique.} While true at least of the opera’s initial production in 1894, such a claim ignored the heavy revisions the opera had undergone since its premiere and its subsequent revivals.

Regardless of the critics’ indifference, Thaïs posted an opening run of eighteen performances at the Lirico.\footnote{Thaïs was performed on the following dates (possibly incomplete): Oct 17, 18, 19 or 20, 22, 24, (one unidentified performance, possibly on the 26th, as the 29th was the seventh performance) 29, 31, Nov 2 or 3, 5, 8, 9 or 10, 14, 15, 25, 28, Dec 1, 2 or 3. “Teatri,” Il sole, 17 Oct–3 Dec, 1903. Both December performances featured Emma Vecla instead of Lina Cavalieri.} This was a very successful production by any measure; during this period, a run of fifteen performances was exceptional at the major Milanese theaters. Thaïs was also popular throughout Italy in the subsequent years: it saw at least thirty-one productions in Italy by 1925 (see...
Appendix 4. *Thaïs* thus surpassed all of Massenet’s other operas in popularity except for *Manon* (over 100 productions) and *Le Roi de Lahore* (over thirty productions), both of which had been on the Italian stages much longer. 97 *Thaïs* was far more successful than any of Massenet’s recent operas which had reached Italy (*La Navarraise*, *Sapho*, *Cendrillon*, or *Grisélidié*). Cavalieri, as noted above, continued to perform the role, but set her ambitions on the Paris Opéra; she only performed the opera once more in Italy (in Genoa, 1905). The most popular Italian *Thaïs* was to be Carmen Melis (1885–1967), who performed in eleven of the thirty-one productions I have been able to identify. The opera also entered the repertoire of the famous baritone Mattia Battistini (1856–1928), who performed the role of Athanaël at least four times in Italy.

The critics respond

The small amount of critical support came from journals published by the Casa Sonzogno, which tended toward propaganda. *Il secolo illustrato della domenica* gushed over Massenet’s talent for setting scenes of passion. 98 The daily *Il secolo* presented Massenet as a musical prophet; their reviewer mixed a reverent tone (“Massenet has…come…to reveal…mysteries”) with overwritten, banal praise (“the delicious world of music,” “his incomparably exquisite art”):

Massenet has once again come among us (we predict that this will not be the last time, but one of many others to come) to reveal to us new mysteries from the delicious world of music. And he returns here always with his irresistibly fascinating melodies, with his sovereign mastery of orchestral painting, with his incomparably exquisite art, truly his own…

…with *Thaïs*, Massenet attests not only to his great productiveness, but also to the marvelous versatility of his genius. 99


98“*Thaïs*,” SID 15 no. 719 (1 Nov 1903), 350: “Massenet ha saputo trovare la musica appassionata che si richiedeva per questo dramma: la sua è una musica espansiva e profonda ad un tempo: essa scaturisce veemente dal cuore…Voluttuose melodie attraversano la magica partizione ministra di estetica ebrezza.”

Such coverage probably had little effect on most musicians and critics, who would have examined other news sources and found in them a litany of complaints. But Sonzogno’s papers, with their massive circulation, must have played a major role in shaping public opinion among amateurs and average opera-goers, and may well have affected Thaïs’s wide circulation in Italy despite its failure with the critics. It is indicative of Il secolo’s bias, that unlike any other paper, its initial review focused solely on Massenet’s achievements, conveniently bypassing the contentious issue of Cavalieri’s vocal abilities contra her sex appeal.  

Few Italian critics had anything good to say about Massenet’s score. Most journals paid lip service to Massenet’s reputation, but typically followed such statements with veiled criticism. La Frusta teatrale’s review presents a typical reaction to the opera, free of the partisan bias which guided the Sonzogno journals:

The first theater to open fire with a new work was the Lirico which opened Thaïs by Massenet, an opera that isn’t actually new, but which is still ignored in Italy. And it is good that even this work of the prolific French master was made known to us, not so much for the great quality of the opera itself, because it does not have any great quality, as much as to give a new proof of the great and brilliant versatility of this musician.

[emphasis mine]

100 Il secolo illustrato della domenica does address the issue, but only in a positive light.

101 For such a criticism, see “Cronaca Milanese: Lirico,” GTI 32 no. 27 (20 Oct 1903), 1: “Ho assistito alle prime due rappresentazioni di questa Thaïs di Massenet, e se ho potuto persuadermi che in essa signoreggia il maestro fattore e creatore di leggiadissime forme musicali, l’artefice mirabile che già all’arte diede quei gioielli che han nome Werther, Manon, Griseldis, Saffo e Cendrillon, mi sono anche persuaso che questa Thaïs è opera disorganica...” (emphasis mine).

102“Cronaca milanese,” La frusta teatrale 31 no. 21 (31 Oct 1903): “Il primo teatro ad aprire il fuoco delle novità liriche è stato Il Lirico che si è inaugurata colla Thaïs di Massenet, un’opera non nuova veramente ma in Italia ignota ancora. Ed è bene che anche questo lavoro del fecondo maestro francese sia stato fatto conoscere fra noi, non tanto per il grande valore dell’opera stessa, perché grande valore non ha, quanto per dare una prova novella della grande e genialissima versalità [sic] del brillante ingegno di questo musicista.” (emphasis mine).
For this critic, the opera is clearly no masterpiece, but the author’s obvious respect for Massenet mitigates his criticism of the music itself. His argument—that Thaïs’s value lies not in itself, but in giving Italian audiences a better picture of Massenet’s talent—is inherently deferential; while Thaïs has comparatively little value, Massenet’s standing is not in doubt.

Not all the critics were so kind. Most fell into one of three camps. One camp felt that the subject and libretto were too weak for a successful opera. The second group attacked Thaïs as an old-fashioned work which did not contribute to contemporary Italian opera; a third argued that Thaïs was a dangerously decadent work. Massenet found himself attacked as both too old-fashioned and too modern; his judgment was also called into question, and some reviews portrayed him as past his prime. These criticisms show that while Massenet remained popular with the Italian public, his star was rapidly fading among critics and knowledgeable musicians.

Viviani’s review in the Rivista teatrale melodrammatica provides an example of the first kind of criticism. While the music is well-made, the opera ultimately fails because of the weak libretto, which leads the critic to consider indirectly a number of issues related to matters of translation and dramaturgy:

I have read the mystical, psychological, and partly voluptuous novel by Anatole France, and I must confess that, to my mind, the libretto which Louis Gallet extracted for maestro Massenet, lost a good deal; and not a little was lost on its printing in Galli’s rhythmic translation, for all its care.

This music, which comes to us nine years after the first performance of the opera, lacks something, it lacks, I will say, that something which drives us to enthusiasm…

And this something, in my opinion, is found in the nature of the characters and the libretto.

The music is always miraculously well-made…but the characters, indeed, don’t have great passions to extract (that of Athanaël is…embryonic), and, I repeat, I miss the dramatic effects…

…One cannot extract a true and suitable drama from Anatole France’s novel: all the exquisite psychology must turn to blessings. And this I object to! At this time we cannot mix psychology and music. Only the skeleton of the novel remains, and this is not enough.¹⁰³

¹⁰³¹ Teatri locali: “Thaïs, del Massenet al Lirico,” RTM 41 no. 1920 (23 Oct 1903), 3:
Ostensibly, the libretto’s failure is measured here through its relationship with the original novel. The weak libretto, with its undeveloped characters, has forced Massenet into setting a pale and undramatic subject which does not deserve his music. The opera is an empty reflection of France’s powerful and psychologically convincing novel, and Massenet is a victim of the dual levels of adaptation—first from France’s novel to a libretto, and second from the French libretto to the Italian. Meanwhile, Viviani’s discussion of “psychology” leads him to view the opera as something of a failed experiment, evoking the tone of much French criticism of the opera’s initial run.

If Viviani portrayed Massenet’s work as daring the impossible, “R.C.” of La Lombardia condemned Thaïs, on the other hand, as too old-fashioned and artificial:

The crowd which flooded the theater wanted to be able to proclaim another triumph for the composer of Werther, the pleasant daydream of Sapho, Cendrillon, and Grisélidis...but Thaïs, in spite of very beautiful passages, loomed over itself; and, having come to us a decade after it was written, it bears the signature of old Massenet. The best moments remind one of other exquisite passages by the same author...there is a deficiency in this score of the exquisite personal brilliance which made the author of Manon and Werther famous, and instead, on the contrary, an excess of that musical stinginess which manifests itself in long dialogues which are often gray and monotonous, which contribute to the latest style of the illustrious French composer.

And for me, this is not very laudable! There remains the learned musician... who knows how to use all the shades, the chiaroscuri, the finesses of sound; who knows how to knead, blend, and mould; who knows how to color and illuminate; but from whom the greatest part of his brilliant inspiration has departed. There remains the greatest manufacturer of sounds, but the true artist has disappeared!

“Ho letto il mistico, psicologico e quasi voluttuoso romanzo di Anatole France e devo confessare che, a parer mio il libretto che il signor Luigi Gallet ha ricavato per il maestro Massenet, ha perduto molto, e non poco a sua volta, la traduzione ritmica del Galli, per quanto accurata...

Manca a questa musica, che a noi viene dopo nove anni dalla prima rappresentazione dell’opera, manca dirò un quid per trascinarci all’entusiasmo... E questo quid, a mio modo di vedere, è a ricercarsi nella natura dei personaggi e nel libretto.

“La musica è sempre mirabile per la fattura... , ma questi personaggi appunto non hanno passioni grandi da estrinsecare (quella d’Atanaele è...in embrione) e, ripeto, manco gli effetti drammatici... Dal romanzo di Anatole France non poteva esser ricavato un melodramma vero e proprio: tutta la squisita psicologia è dovuta andare a farsi benedire. E sfido io! Per ora non si può fare della psicologia con la musica. E’ rimasto lo scheletro del romanzo. E questo non basta.”

104“Teatri e Concerti: Thaïs di Massenet,” La Lombardia, 18 Oct 1903, 3:

“La folla che gremiva il teatro avrebbe voluto potere glorificare in nuovo trionfo, l’artista nel « Werther », sognare piacevolmente nella « Saffo », nella « Cendrillon », nella « Griselda »...ma la « Thaïs » malgrado bellissimi brani è di per sé
For this reviewer, Massenet seems washed up, despite his many achievements. His technical ability is undeniable, but he has lost his dramatic sensibility and musical inspiration. Massenet is simply repeating himself, working carefully with what few ideas he has left.

While R.C. does not elaborate, one can speculate on which passages would have aroused his ire. The only passage he directly criticizes is the ballet, which had been added to the opera for its 1898 Parisian revival. Given that the public was noticeably bored by the first scene, this, with its subdued modal harmonies, probably inspired his attack on gray monotony. In the aria in Scene 1, “Hélas! enfant encore,” Athanaël’s vocal line employs ornamented turns and cadential suspensions which occasionally recall Bellini or Verdi. Athanaël’s “Voila donc la terrible cite” in Scene 2, with its fusion of styles, may well have seemed an unstable potpourri: the swirling strings, with the superimposed horn calls, recall the “Ride of the Valkyries,” while Athanaël’s vocal line reflects the influence of Gounod. Similarly, Crobile and Myrtale’s scene with Athanaël is influenced by a long tradition of French exoticist local color, and while piquant, is hardly the most original passage in Massenet’s score.

The likelihood that these scenes, mostly from the first half of the opera, were the ones the critic had in mind increases given that he seems to have approved of the Méditation and the last two scenes. In this the critic employs a somewhat elitist tone:

105Ibid: “…le danze son graziose se non molto originali ma un poco troppo prolungate.” “Thaïs di Massenet,” ILIT 30 no. 43 (25 Oct 1903), 340, makes a similar point: “Thaïs ha tutta la ossatura e il contenuto di una piccola opera, mentre il maestro, preoccupato di fare un lavoro adatto alle scena dell’Opéra di Parigi, l’ha imbottita di pagine inutili, di pezzi decorativi, che allungano lo spettacolo, senza procurare un maggior diletto allo spettatore.”
The only encore of the evening was the sweet, idyllic intermezzo between the third and fourth scenes, one of those exquisite creations of Massenet’s, which sweetly tickled the ears, pleased and satisfied them, and made people clap.  

And again:

The last two scenes left the public slightly cold, even though the final duet was one of the best things in the opera.  

In this aspect the Lombardia critic betrays a fundamental mistrust of the public taste; his praise of the Méditation is in spite of its success with the public, and is rather ironic at that; one cannot quite tell if he is mocking Massenet’s “exquisite creation” or only the public’s reaction to it. Unlike the typical Sonzogno coverage, in which public approval guarantees an opera’s value, here art and popular appeal are separate.  

Perhaps one reason that Massenet’s art seemed old-fashioned to the Lombardia critic was that the Milanese public understood the opera’s musical language and dramatic conventions reasonably well. While Thaïs had been a shocking opera in Paris in 1894, by October 1903 its innovations were no longer readily apparent in comparison with the most recent operas by leading Italian composers. Mascagni’s Iris (1898) had attempted a more lurid psychological drama: the villains attempt to convert the heroine to sensuality and prostitution, and much of the last act occurs in Iris’s mind. Tosca (1900) dealt far more explicitly with sexual and physical violence (including suicide, execution, torture, and attempted rape). The Te Deum scene of Act I treats religion with an irony which matches anything in Thaïs: the villain Scarpia plots Tosca’s seduction in church while choristers sing a Te Deum to celebrate Napoleon’s defeat.

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106 *La Lombardia*, 18 Oct 1903: “Ma il bis unico della serata, fu il soave, idilliaco intermezzo tra il terzo e quarto quadro, una di quelle squisite creazioni massenetiane, che vellicano dolcemente le orecchie, piacciono, soddisfano e fan battere le mani.”

107 Ibid: “Gli ultimi due quadri lasciano un po’ freddo il pubblico, sebbene il duetto finale sia una delle cose migliori dell’opera.”
If Massenet was too old-fashioned for the critic of La Lombardia, the Trovatore critic used the same evidence to attack Thaïs as a modern, decadent work, unsuccessful through its avoidance of the melodic expansiveness that characterized Massenet’s earlier, successful work:

Thaïs belongs to Massenet’s latest manner, that is to say to that decadent Massenet that, after having risen to incomparable heights of the passionate melodrama in Manon and above all in Werther, found himself now short on melodic inspiration. Therefore he spasmatically tormented those ideas that still occurred to his mind, partly at least to amplify them, to give them every instant newer and brighter clothes. Alas! Instead he blew out the first flash of the still vivid light and made them monotonous, grey, and often deformed.

The same instrumentation, which was always marvelous and for which he was rightly called magister elegantarium, just forming nevertheless an incomparable picture of dazzling colors and delicious undertones, reveals here and there its tricks and appears from time to time the work of a tired and deadened mind...

Regrettably, while the development of this psychological drama must be simple and very clear, driven only to give the most effective and intense emphasis to the spiritual movements of the two protagonists, the poet and the musician have equally botched their mission. Athanaël sometimes appears coarse, and sometimes a bit vulgar...The character of Thaïs comes out absolutely incomplete: the public, instead of feeling the gradual and miraculous change in her, finds instead a thoughtless woman who from wanton pleasure passes to the severest penitence only because she has been frightened by Athanaël’s violent invective. And this is why the drama and music neither convince nor persuade.¹⁰⁸

Massenet the decadent: This review approaches the criticisms raised at the 1894 Parisian premiere, if for slightly different reasons. Here Thaïs is presented as decadent only in the sense that it is a decayed art, not as provocative or Wagnerian. But the critical suspicion of illustrative music which


“Thaïs appartiene all’ultima maniera di Massenet, vale a dire a quel Massenet decadente che dopo essere assunto ad incomparabili altezze nel melodramma passionale colla Manon e soprattutto col Werther, si trova ora a corto di ispirazione melodica e perciò quelle idee che ancora alla sua mente creatrice ricorrono, egli le tormenta spasmaticamente quasi per amplificarle, per dar loro ad ogni istante nuova veste e più rifulgente, ma ahimè! invece ne spegne il primo sprazzo di ancor vivida luce e le rende monotone, grigie e spesso deformi.

“La stessa istruimentazione, che fu sempre meravigliosa e per cui ben a ragione egli fu chiamato magister elegantarium, pur tuttavia formando un incomparabile quadro di splendidi colori e dalle sfumature deliziose, risente qua e là dell’artificio e vi appare di quando in quando lo sforzo di una mente stanca ed affievolita... Disgraziatamente, mentre lo svolgimento di questo dramma psicologico doveva essere semplice e chiarissimo, diretto unicamente a dare il più efficace ed intenso risalto ai movimenti dello spirito dei due protagonisti, tanto il poeta quanto il musicista hanno fallito la loro missione. Athanaël appare quando troppo rude, e quando persino volgare; spesso si abbandona a sdilinquimenti inopportuni che falsano il suo vero carattere. La figura di Thaïs ne esce poi assolutamente incompleta: il pubblico invece di intuire in lei il graduale e il miracoloso ravvedimento, si trova davanti ad una incosciente che dal piacere più sfrenato passa alla penitenza più aspra solo perché spaventata dalle filippiche irruent di Atanael. Ed ecco perché dramma e musica nè convincono, nè persuadono.”
informed so much of the Parisian reception returns in the critic’s complaint that the authors do not show Thaïs’s conversion, even as they applauded the Méditation, the purely musical depiction of this psychological development.

Reviews such as these suggest that Massenet’s public image had changed profoundly in Italy. He was no longer the “young maestro,” or even the great composer associated with Werther. Rather, he was old enough (sixty-one) to be accused of having lost his talent; he was established enough to be a target for young critics with an eye to controversy. These reviews also suggest that Italian critics treated Massenet on par with contemporary Italian composers. Alexandra Wilson has documented roughly contemporary attacks on Pucci’s Tosca as a decadent, artificial, disorganized, and dramatically uncompelling opera.¹⁰⁹ Italian critics were not singling out Massenet for special treatment, but Thaïs’s success with the Italian public counted for relatively little with the new generation of Italian music critics.

**Thaïs and the crisis of criticism**

The Milanese critics, as shown above, were generally unsympathetic to Thaïs. Some presented it as an out-of-date, old-fashioned or at least run-of-the-mill work which imitated Massenet’s other, better operas without adding anything new. Others, as we have seen, did not understand Massenet’s dramaturgy or viewed the opera as a failed experiment. Yet the Milanese public applauded the opera from the beginning. Thaïs’s success forced critics to examine the growing divide between popular and critical taste. How could such a seemingly mediocre opera be successful with the public?

For many Italian critics, there was little aesthetic distance between the critic and the public, although this assumption had been gradually changing over the last few decades. In 1903, however, many reviewers still took the public’s response as a sign of an opera’s quality; the more encores a

work received, the greater its success, and thus its value. For some critics, *Thaïs* was only moderately successful because it received relatively little applause. For others, who asserted their intellectual independence from the audience as a whole, the opera did not deserve the applause that it did receive. Critics who disliked the opera either downplayed or did not discuss the amount of applause an opera received; while supportive critics, such as those writing for Sonzogno journals, emphasized or exaggerated the audience’s approval.

Amintore Galli’s review of the opening night for *Il secolo* demonstrates the way that a supportive review could lean on audience reactions. This excerpt, describing the performance of Act I, is typical of Galli’s tone throughout the review:

The first applause was aroused by the baritone Bonini in his narrative in the first act, sung with a voice that was robust, full, and capable of all varieties of accents in expressive and dramatic song.

The invocation by Athanaël and the monks which closed the first scene was applauded; Bonini took a bow.

And the arioso *Spirti del ciel* was pleasing; Bonini sang it with great art…

[Cavalieri] made them appreciate her immediately with the phrase, sung with great sweetness:

*Non chiediamo più,*
*No, a codesta notte,*
*Che un po’ di pazzia ebrezza*
*E d’oblio divino!*

But it was at the melody of the seduction, *Perché tanto severo!* and at the finale of the act that warm and unanimous applause burst forth.\(^{110}\)

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“I primi applausi furono provocati dal baritono Bonini nel racconto del primo atto, detto con voce robusta, ampia, educata alla varietà d’accenti del canto d’espressione e drammatico.

La invocazione d’Atanaele e dei monaci, con la quale si chiude il primo quadro, è applaudita; il Bonini si presenta a ringraziare.

È gustato l’arioso
*Spirti del ciel,*
modulato dal Bonini con bell’arte.

Ella [Cavalieri] si fa apprezzare subito nella frase, espressa con molto dolcezza:
*Non chiediamo di più,*
*No, a codesta notte,*
*Che un po’ di pazzia ebrezza*
*E d’oblio divino!*

Ma è nella melodia della seduzione
*Perché tanto severo!*
ed al finale dell’atto che gli applausi scoppiano unanimi e calorosi.”
The review presents the performance, as much as possible, from the perspective of an audience member. This review grants far more importance to the public’s applause, and less to the reviewer’s opinion as it diverges from the public; indeed, Galli only emerges as a critical voice toward the end of his review.

On the other hand, “Virgilio,” writing for the *Gazzetta teatrale italiana*, downplayed the audience’s response significantly. His poor opinion of the opera is clear from his nonchalant tone and lack of interest in parsing the reasons for what he perceived as the opera’s failure:

> Is it the music, superbly made, but not always responding to the characters’ emotions or to the atmosphere? Are they the same characters or the same environment, which have no fiber and no contagious passion? Very probably one thing or another contributed to the weak success, and there are doubts if *Thaïs* will become more or less popular in Italy…

Unlike Galli, Virgilio states his opinion before discussing the opera’s performance, not after. Yet he discusses the audience’s reaction only in relation their enthusiasm for Massenet and to the quality of the singers. Thus he notes of Lina Cavalieri, “There was applause for every one of her pieces,” supporting his view that Cavalieri’s performance had been a “magnificent victory” (*una magnifica victoria*). Virgilio separates the audience’s response from the work: he uses applause only to measure the quality of the performance.

G.B. Nappi, the critic for *La perseveranza*, opened his review with a similar rhetorical gesture which allowed him to ignore most of the audience, although he still acknowledges the importance of the public’s applause:

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111Virgilio, “Cronaca Milanese: Lirico,” GTI 32 no. 27 (20 Oct 1903), 1: “È la musica, superbamente fatta, ma non rispondente sempre al sentimento dei personaggi e dell’ambiente? Sono i personaggi stessi o lo stesso ambiente che non hanno fibra e passione comunicativa? Molto probabilmente è l’una cosa e l’altra contribuiscono al fiacco successo, e lasciano il dubbio se questa *Thaïs* potrà, o meno, popolarizzarsi in Italia…

112Ibid: “Ebbe applausi ad ogni suo pezzo, e specialmente al drammatico duetto con Atanacle nel quadro primo del secondo atto, alla canzone di Eros, e in tutta la scena dell’oasi, un lungo duetto col baritono, e anche nella scena soave della morte, espressa con fine sentimento.”
But, scratching the surface of this success, do we find the public’s unconditional admiration?
Many cannot agree with such a statement in good conscience.
This work of art, admired in so many reports, with those headlines that make Massenet into one of the most illustrious representatives of operatic art in the world, sometimes leaves the most intelligent part of the audience unpersuaded. We will see the reason why.\textsuperscript{113}

By explicitly casting his critical opinion as one shared by the \textit{intelligent} audience, Nappi neatly sidesteps the issue of applause. The audience only emerges in his account to reinforce his own impression that Athanaël and Thaïs are musically incompatible. Applause plays no role even in his discussion of the singers’ performances: one cannot even learn from his review that the \textit{Méditation} was encored. Nappi’s review thus stands in marked opposition to the populist approach that Galli took in writing for \textit{Il secolo}.\textsuperscript{114}

Viviani’s review of \textit{Thaïs} for the \textit{Rivista teatrale melodrammatica} marks the middle ground between the two approaches. Like Virgilio, he states his opinion of the opera first, but, as we shall see below, he does not entirely dismiss the audience’s reaction as a means of evaluating the opera as a text:

\ldots one always wants passion, effects, and moving and interesting scenes.

\textit{Manon} and \textit{Werther}, for example, responded to this need without bumping into any romantic nonsense or rancid romanticism, I would say. And yet, I believe that \textit{Thaïs} has not had enthusiastic and widespread popular success. One cannot extract a true and suitable drama from Anatole France’s novel: all the exquisite psychology must turn to blessings. And this I object to! At this time we cannot mix psychology and music. Only the skeleton of the novel remains, and this is not enough. The remainder of my argument is proved by the fact that in nine years the opera has not gained much popularity in France…

\textsuperscript{113}G.B. Nappi, “\textit{Thaïs} di Massenet al Lirico,” \textit{La perserveranza}, 18 Oct 1903, 3: “Ma, raschiando la superficie di questo successo, troveremo l’incondizionata ammirazione del pubblico?
“È quanto in consciienza non si potrebbe affermare.
“L’opera d’arte, ammiratore sotto molti rapporti, per quei titoli che fanno di Massenet uno dei più illustri rappresentati della scena lirica del mondo, lasciò talvolta la parte più intelligente dell’assemblea. Vediamo ne le cause.”

\textsuperscript{114}One should note that Galli did not take this seemingly anti-intellectual approach from a lack of talent: as noted previously in this dissertation, Galli was Sonzogno’s chief musical adviser, a professor at the Milan Conservatory, a composer, journalist, and author of some distinction. His massive treatise on musical aesthetics still awaits an English translation.
But it [the opera] had a great success... Despite the opera’s success with the Italian public, which Viviani subsequently describes in some detail, *Thaïs* “has not had...popular success.” The rhetorical maneuvering here is intricate, revealing the weight of the popular opinion on the critic who disagrees with it. Because the psychology and music cannot mix, the opera ought not to succeed with the public; because, unlike *Manon* or *Werther*, *Thaïs* is tangled in “romantic nonsense” (and decadence), it should not have the same popularity as those operas. The public’s acceptance of *Thaïs* at its Italian premiere can and should be discounted in this instance.

But more importantly, Viviani seeks to express his own opinion through the public voice, using “popular success” to mean not only *popular* success, but also *critical* success. How else to explain to his assertion that an opera which “had a great success” did not have “popular success”? There are, then, at least two levels at which the *popular* operates: the immediate, applying to any particular night in the theater (“the opera had a great success”), and the lasting (“*Thaïs* has not had enthusiastic and widespread popular success”), applying not only to the immediate, but also with an eye to the opera’s future role in the repertoire. The inherently historical side of measuring popular taste emerges clearly when Viviani notes that *Thaïs* has never enjoyed great popularity in France; by extension, the opera will not have great success in Italy either. Since *Thaïs* has not yet attained repertory status in France, it will not in Italy.

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“La *Manon* e il *Werther*, per esempio, rispondono a ciò senza irtare nel romanturme, nel romantico rancido, voglio dire. E però credo che *Thaïs* non abbia ottenuto un successo entusiastico e grandemente popolare. Dal romanzo di Anatole France non poteva esser ricavato un melodramma vero e proprio: tutta la squisita psicologia è dovuta andare a farsi benedire. E sìondo io! Per ora non si può fare della psicologia con la musica. E’ rimasto lo scheletro del romanzo. E questo non basta. Del resto il mio parere è confermato dal fatto che l’opera neanche in Francia, non ha acquistato, in nove anni, molta popularità...

“Ma il successo fu ottimo...”
If popular success could also include critical success, reporting applause could become a way of tacitly expressing the critic’s views. Viviani continued his review with a description of the high points of the score:

But it [the opera] had a great success: *Thaïs* is equal in worth, musically, [with] the other operas of the glorious French master, although it cannot rival them in popularity. Some passages are very exquisite for their masterful form, for their brilliant inspiration, for their majestic dramatic expression, as well. The finale of the first act, for example, the duet between Athanaël and Thaïs in the second act: especially Athanaël’s phrases, *Pietà, Signor, pietà*, the *Pater noster*, very suggestive for the pleasing harmony of the chorus, for Athanaël’s voice which dies in the distance, and the duet at the oasis, *D’acqua aspergimi labbra e mani*, which is a real jewel.

Perhaps the best passage is the symphonic intermezzo from the second act, with the violin solo: here is all of Massenet’s dazzling palette and ineffable delicacy. The public loudly demanded an encore, which was given. The talented professor who executed the solo so well deserved applause.

Maestro Massenet attended the performance and the public called him eleven times to the stage.116

This description omits all mention of applause until the second paragraph. But when the public does appear, rapturously applauding the *Méditation*, the moment that the audience applauds is presented as the best in the opera, while the applause is presented as proof of its worth. Viviani has the best of both worlds: the public is mistaken about the opera as a whole, but public taste bears out his own opinion about the musical value of the score.

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116Ibid: “Ma il successo fu ottimo: *Thaïs* vale, musicalmente le altre opere del glorioso maestro francese, se pure non può rivaleggiare con la popolarità di queste. Ci sono de’ brani squisitissimi, quali per la forma magistrale, quale per la geniale ispirazione, quali per la maestosa espressione drammatica, anche. Il finale dell’atto primo, a esempio, il duetto tra Atanaele e Thaïs nel second’atto: specialmente le frasi d’Atanaele: *Pietà, Signor pietà*, il *Pater noster*, assai suggestivo per la soave armonia del coro, per la voce d’Atanaele, la quale muore lontanando e il duetto nell’oasi *D’acqua aspergimi labbra e mani*, che ho trovato un vero gioiello.

“Forse il brano migliore è l’intermezzo sinfonico del second’atto, con l’a solo di violino: qui è tutta la tavolozza smagliante e l’ineffabile delicatezza del Massenet: il publico chiese a gran voce la replica, che fu accordata e merita lodi il bravo professore, ch’esegui tanto egregiamente l’a solo.

“Il maestro Massenet assisteva alla rappresentazione e il publico l’evocò per undici volte alla ribalta...”
III. SEX, POLITICS, AND RACE

Explaining away the opera

Critics such as Virgilio and Viviani, in disagreeing with the public, had to explain why an opera with few obvious redeeming factors could be so popular. Deriding the public taste, as the critics of La Lombardia and La perseveranza did (see above), was a risky maneuver. First of all, there was no great divide between the opera-going public and the critic’s readership, and such a condescending tone was guaranteed to alienate them. Second, such an attack on popular taste undermined the assumed aesthetic behind many reviews: the counting of encores, bows, etc. If opera’s value did not lie in its ability to please its listeners, then a new role for opera would have to be found. And the few available alternatives were radical—a nationalist Italian equivalent to Wagner’s concept of opera as a national symbol, for instance, would leave little room for imported works such as Thaïs within Italian culture.

External explanations—ones which had little or nothing to do with aesthetics, musical style, or social roles—were thus attractive options. The critics explained away the opera’s success either by emphasizing Lina Cavalieri’s sex appeal or contemporary Franco-Italian politics. While there was definitely some foundation for each claim, neither explains the opera’s popularity as completely as the critics implied.

Despite Cavalieri’s efforts to improve her vocal talents, many Italian critics agreed that Cavalieri’s physical appearance was more important to her success than was her singing. This thread of criticism was part of a discourse in which Cavalieri’s body was inevitably the subject of comment. This emphasis on her physical person reveals both her status as a celebrity and the inherent sexism

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117 See notes 106 and 113.

118 The celebrations of Verdi’s centennial in 1913 provide an excellent example of the complex role that music played in Italian nationalism. See Laura Basini, “Cults of Sacred Memory: Parma and the Verdi Centennial Celebrations of 1913,” Cambridge Opera Journal 13 no. 2 (2001), 141–61.
of her reviewers. Even her admirers couched their praise of her in such terms: Il secolo (a Sonzogno paper) noted of Cavalieri’s entrance, “wrapped in a strawberry-colored veil”: “Scantily clad, Mrs. Cavalieri was bewitching.” Il secolo illustrato della domenica similarly published an engraving of the ‘seduction scene’ from Act I featuring Cavalieri in a seductive pose, her arm outstretched, her naked thigh escaping from her loose gown (see Figure 5). Gabriele D’Annunzio, who apparently attended one of the performances, sent her a volume of his poetry with the dedication, “To Lina Cavalieri, who was able to combine with her talent an unusual harmony between the beauty of her body and the passion of her voice—from a grateful poet.”

Thus discussions of Cavalieri’s physical appearance were commonplace in the reception of Thaïs, and such discussions far exceed the normal conventions of commenting on the bodies of operatic performers in this period.

Several critics are especially notable for emphasizing the role that Cavalieri’s personal appearance played in her success. “Virgilio” of the Gazzetta teatrale italiana mentioned her singing only after discussing her personal appearance and acting, although he implied that her voice had much improved from her last Milanese performance (in Fedora at the Teatro Lirico, in April):

Lina Cavalieri achieved a magnificent victory in creating her character: a superb victory for a most intelligent artist, a totally complacent victory for the beautiful lady. She is a marvelous Thaïs through the beauty of her figure, for the fine and elegant harmony of her attire, for the passion and spirit she instilled in her part, for the correctness of her acting, for her complete command of her singing. We admire this intelligent artist, who knew how to work true miracles in her musical education… [emphasis mine]

119Il secolo, 18 Oct 1903, 3: “…avvolta in un velo color fragola. Poco vestita, la signora Cavalieri è affascinante.” Fryer and Usova, 52–3, their translation (no original provided).

120*Cronaca milanese: Lirico,* GTI 32 no. 27 (20 Oct 1903), 1: “La Cavalieri consegui una magnifica vittoria nella creazione del personaggio: una vittoria superba per l’artista intelligentissima, una vittoria di somma compiacenza per la bella donna. Ella è una Thaïs meravigliosa per la bellezza della figura, per l’armoniosità fine ed elegante del suo vestire, per la passionalità e l’anima trasfusa nella sua parte, per la correttezza dell’azione, per l’arte eletta e somma di canto. Noi l’ammiriamo questa intelligente artista, che ha saputo operare veri miracoli nella sua educazione musicale.”
The critic of *Il trovatore* made the same point in almost identical terms, stressing Cavalieri’s bodily charms as fundamental to her success in the role.

Lina Cavalieri surpassed herself… *She magnificently embodied the figure of Thaïs to whom she gave all the seductions of her marvelous beauty, and, if she was a bit over-the-top here and there, it was rather rare… she was always as effective in her acting as in her singing.* 

[emphasis mine]

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121SID 15 no. 719 (1 Nov 1903), 349.

Belgioioso, the critic of the *Cronache musicali e drammatiche*, was more explicit about the effect that Cavalieri’s sex appeal had on the public, suggesting that the public appreciated Cavalieri’s performance more for her physical appearance than for any special talent she possessed for singing:

the public…became surly and suspicious over the bad performance of a quartet [in Act I, scene 2: Athanaël, Nicias, Crobyle, Myrtale] that almost compromised the fortunes of the evening. But Cavalieri’s blazing beauty, appearing partly veiled in a luxurious Egyptian costume, her arms and shoulders exposed, saved the situation.

The scene finished among acclamations and six calls for the artists, Massenet, and Maestro Ferrari…

Lina Cavalieri enjoyed success through her art and her beauty.\(^{123}\)

Cavalieri’s background in cabaret, where female performers were explicitly evaluated for their beauty, probably played a role in her reception.\(^{124}\) Lison Frandin, after all, had a similarly quiet voice and a strong stage presence, and her reception was quite different from Cavalieri’s. Frandin was a professional opera singer who studied at the Paris Conservatoire; Cavalieri was a cabaret singer who dared to sing tragic opera. While none of the reviews for *Thaïs* explicitly mentions her background, Cavalieri was by this point famous enough for her past to need no introduction.

Yet by far, the international political situation was the most commonly invoked explanation for *Thaïs*, allowing critics to explain away the public’s seeming lack of taste through popular euphoria. Attributing the work’s popularity to the recent diplomatic reconciliation between the Italian and French governments, “R.C.,” the *Lombardia* critic, opened his review as follows:

How is it possible to speak ill of a Frenchman’s work, now that the dishevelled Latin sister [France] opens her arms; now that our colleagues from across

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\(^{123}\)G. Di Belgioioso, “Le prime rappresentazioni: *Thaïs* Commedia lirica in 3 atti di G. Massenet (Teatro Lirico – Milano),” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2:

“Il pubblico...ritorna arcigno e diffidente per la cattiva esecuzione d’un quartetto che per poco non comprometteva le sorti della serata. Ma la bellezza sfolgorante della Cavalieri, che apparisce quasi velata in un costume egiziano ricchissimo, colle braccia e le spalle nude, salva la situazione.

“Il quadro finisce fra le acclamazioni con sei chiamate agli artisti, a Massenet ed al maestro Ferrari... successo artistico e di bellezza di Lina Cavalieri...”

\(^{124}\)Fryer and Usova, *Cavalieri*, 12, describe the atmosphere at the Folies Bergère: “Performers were especially renowned as much for their physical beauty as for their singing, acting or dancing talents.”
the Alps recite poetry and verse, making mistakes in their Italian because of their emotions?

Long live France, long live Italy, long live the Marseillaise, long live the Royal March, even Garibaldi’s hymn, long live Massenet, long live Thaïs, long live his symbol of femininity!

Ah, if only yesterday, between one act and the other, they had played a bit of the Marseillaise, the public would have been more enthusiastic for the pleasant and illustrious author of Manon and Werther—those are operas!—they could have surpassed a dozen curtain calls and probably reached a gross of them—because these days curtain calls have become commercial.125

R.C. implies that Thaïs has been absorbed into contemporary political discourse; it functions as an operatic equivalent of the patriotic hymns he mentions in his second paragraph. The resignation of his opening line—one cannot speak ill of the French in today’s climate—is matched by the bitterness of his own opinion of the opera, noted above.126 The jibe about the Marseillaise is not without a certain basis in fact; later in the review, the critic noted that after the end of the first act, “some members of the public called for the Marseillaise.”127 Note, too, his open declaration that “curtain calls have become commercial”; probably for this reason, R.C. pays little attention to the public’s reaction to the opera. Instead, he explains the opera’s success through politics.

Few critics were as eager to explain Thaïs’s reception through politics as R.C. Yet many agreed that politics had played an important role in determining the opera’s success. Il trovatore reported that:

125a Teatri e Conceri: Thaïs di Massenet,” La Lombardia, 18 Oct 1903, 3.

“Come si potrebbe dir male della creazione di un francese, oggi che la scapigliata sorella latina ci apre le braccia e fa spropositare in italiano, certo dalla commozione, i colleghi d’oltr’Alpi, con citazioni in prosa e in versi?

“Vive la France, viva l’Italia, vive la Marseillaise, viva la Marcia reale, magari l’Inno di Garibaldi, viva Massenet, viva la Thaïs, evviva il suo simbolo di femminilità!

“Ah se iersera tra un atto e l’altro si fosse dato un po’ di stura alla Marsigliese il pubblico si sarebbe accalorato maggiormente e il simpatico e illustre autore della «Manon» e del «Werther» - quelle son opere! – avrebbe potuto sorpassare la dozzina di chiamate e raggiungere magari la grossa – poiché adesso le chiamate son diventate cosa commerciale.”

126a…scompare l’artista vero!” See note 104.

127a Alcuni volevano la «Marsigliese».” Ibid.
… the public was motivated to applaud as much by goodwill as by enthusiasm, and because they sensed the honeymoon with our Latin sister [France]. Yet the applause was still tepid and grim faces were common among the spectators.  

While the *Gazzetta teatrale italiana* concluded:

> The very pleasant maestro [Massenet] received about a dozen curtain calls on the first night; certainly he would have received fewer, if one accounts for this moment of Franco-Italian patriotic lyricism shot through with general complacency.

Even Massenet felt that politics had helped his opera; he wrote to his wife the night of October 17:

> After the first act, there were a great number of curtain calls…The hall rose to its feet, etc., etc.  
> But in this moment of tenderness between Italy and France, that is natural, and the work benefits from it.

A number of critics, as well as the composer himself, agreed that politics had played an important role in determining *Thaïs*’ success. But what events had led them to this conclusion? And why were some members of the audience calling for the “Marseillaise” in 1903? What had changed in the last ten years, that the press could move from calling for *Manon* to be temporarily banned in the wake of the Aigues Mortes massacre, to recording popular enthusiasm for a French composer (if not for his work)?

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129*Cronaca Milanese: Lirico,”* GTI 32 no. 27(20 Oct 1903), 1: “Il simpaticcissimo maestro alla prima sera ebbe una dozzina di chiamate; poche certo, se poi si tien conto del momento di lirisismo patriottico italo-francese attraversato con generale compiacenza.”

> “Après le 1er acte, il y a eu une quantité de rappels formidables…La salle debout etc. etc.  
> “Mais en ce moment de tendresse Italo-Franco cela est naturel et l’ouvrage en profite.”
The Franco-Italian reconciliation

The political tensions between France and Italy, resulting in the diplomatic reconciliation that affected Thaïs’s Italian reception, had long roots. The disputes with France concerned the Italian government’s relationship with the papacy, Italy’s status as a colonial power, and the balance of power in fin-de-siècle Europe. These tensions came to the surface in 1870, when Italy annexed Rome despite French protests, and again in 1881 when France established a protectorate over Tunisia, blocking Italy’s colonial ambitions. In retaliation, Italy, Germany, and Austria formed the Triple Alliance of 1882, which guaranteed mutual assistance in case of French attack; in return, Italy would remain neutral in case Austria and Russia went to war. The 1880s and 1890s saw both countries levy economic sanctions on the other’s goods; the Italian economy was particularly devastated by these measures. When Italy went to war in modern Ethiopia (then called Abyssinia), the Ethiopian army was partially equipped with weapons supplied by France. In 1893, the massacre of Italian migrant workers in the French town of Aigues Mortes led both countries to the brink of war, with


134 Barclay, Rise and Fall, 30.

135 Ibid, 33.
extensive military maneuvers on the border. In 1894, the French president, Marie François Sadi Carnot, was assassinated by an Italian anarchist.

The reconciliation came about slowly. In 1896, Italy’s decisive defeat at the Battle of Adwa brought an end to both the Abyssinian war and to Francesco Crispi’s Liberal government. This crucial event allowed for the possibility of a diplomatic reconciliation, as the Italian left, under Crispi’s leadership, had been markedly anti-French. The new leadership took a more moderate stance on foreign policy, seeking to restore good relations with France while still adhering to the Triple Alliance. Italian foreign policy began to turn toward France: secret treaties in 1900 and 1902 guaranteed Italian neutrality in case of French involvement in a war (this treaty later became Italy’s justification for not assisting Germany and Austria in World War I). In 1900, the two governments made a pact in which Italy agreed not to interfere with French ambitions in Morocco, while France agreed not to obstruct Italian interests in Libya; this treaty was renewed in 1902. In 1901, the French awarded the Légion d’honneur to King Vittorio Emanuele III as a sign of friendship. And while Italy reaffirmed the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria in 1902, the Italian government also signed a treaty guaranteeing Italian neutrality towards France.

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138 Duggan, *Crispi*, 706–11. See also Gooch, *Army, State and Society*, 73–95, for a summary of the war in Abyssinia. Adwa is sometimes spelled Adua or Adowa.

139 Conybeare and Sandler, “Triple Entente,” 1198.

140 Thierry Cornillet, *Emile Loubet, ou la modération au pouvoir* (Les Grilles d’Or, 2008), 169; Barclay, *Rise and Fall*, 41–2.

141 “I reali d’Italia a Parigi,” IP 40 no. 41 (11 Oct 1903), 641–42.

142 Barclay, *Rise and Fall*, 43.
the premiere of *Thaïs*, the King and Queen of Italy made a formal state visit to Paris; by April 1904, President Emile Loubet returned the favor, visiting Rome.\textsuperscript{143}

\textbf{15 October 1903: Opera as a tool of cultural diplomacy}

*Thaïs*’s Italian premiere was part of a cycle of cultural exchange between France and Italy, paralleling the political exchanges described above. Nor was *Thaïs* the only opera involved or cultural event to be concerned: while Massenet visited Milan in October 1903, Puccini visited Paris for the French premiere of *Tosca* (the French press suggested that Puccini’s success was the result of popular enthusiasm caused by politics and the presence of the Italian colony in Paris).\textsuperscript{144} Both composers’ visits overlapped with the Italian royals’ visit to Paris, explaining the explicitly political edge to Massenet’s reception in Milan. Massenet’s own involvement in the political aspect of this exchange, by attending a “Franco-Italian banquet” hosted and organized by the town council of Milan, suggests further that he was aware of both the cultural exchange and its immediate political significance.\textsuperscript{145} **Table 6** places *Thaïs* within a broader cycle of cultural and diplomatic exchange. While it is impossible at the moment to demonstrate any deep planning behind these events, it seems likely that neither Ricordi’s promotion of Puccini in Paris nor Sonzogno’s support of


\textsuperscript{145}The letters published in “*Echi del banchetto franco-italiano*,” *La Lombardia*, 16 Oct 1903, 3, clarify the town council’s role in hosting the banquet.
Massenet in Milan were coincidences. The Italian critics who noted the political elements of *Thaïs*’s reception were certainly aware of the broader context.

Opera played an important role in this cycle of cultural exchange, as can be seen by the events of October 15 shown in Table 20. Many scholars, such as Jane Fulcher, Barbara Kelly, and Jann Pasler, have explored the political and social significance of operatic performances in Republican France.\(^{146}\) The events of October 15 allow us to see these internal social functions as applying also to international politics. In this sense, the prominent place given to opera in a diplomatic context suggests that French and Italian power brokers employed opera as a tool of cultural nationalism, to embody the essence of their national identity constructions through artistic performances.

The most explicit use of opera as a diplomatic tool was the Italian royal family’s four-day visit to Paris in which King Vittorio Emanuele III and Queen Elena attended the Paris Opéra with French President Emile Loubet and his wife. The ceremonial function of the evening is affirmed by the Opéra’s programming that evening: the second act of *Aida*; the play *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, by Molière, performed by actors from the Comèdie Française; and the ballet *La maledetta*, starring Italian ballerinas. After the performances, the President and his guests exited to the successive strains of the Italian Royal March and the Marseillaise.\(^{147}\) Opera here served a ceremonial and welcoming function. The Opéra’s performance of an Italian opera by an iconic Italian composer was an explicit act of hospitality toward the Italian visitors.

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\(^{147}\)“Il viaggio reale a Parigi,” ILIT 30 no. 43 (25 Oct 1903), 347, 351.
Table 20: Massenet, Puccini, and the Italian royals (1903)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Massenet</th>
<th>Puccini</th>
<th>Italian royals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Massenet arrives in Milan</td>
<td>Puccini arrives in Paris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jean Aicard’s <em>France et Italie</em> at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 13</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tosca</em> premieres at the Opéra-Comique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Italian royals arrive in Paris; Franco-Italian friendship banquet in Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Massenet attends the Franco-Italian friendship banquet; <em>Thaïs</em> premiere postponed</td>
<td>Puccini rumored to have received the Légion d’honneur</td>
<td>Italian royals visit the Opéra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 17</td>
<td><em>Thaïs</em> premieres at the Teatro Lirico</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Italian royals leave Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late October/early November</td>
<td>Massenet leaves Milan</td>
<td>Puccini leaves Paris, October 27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reception of Puccini’s *Tosca* at the Opéra-Comique and (eventually) Massenet’s *Thaïs* at the Teatro Lirico assumed significance in a similar way: Opera gained cultural and political significance through its proximity to political events. This is not to argue, as the Italian critics did of *Thaïs*, that politics alone accounted for either composer’s success, but rather to place the two in a

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151 “Massenet e il Concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 39 (4 November 1903) 4; “Il maestro Massenet abbandonata Milano è giunto ieri l’altro a Bruxelles per presiedere le prove della sua *Saffo* alla Monnaie.” “Nouvel diverses,” *Le Ménestrel* 69 no. 44 (1 November 1903), 352: “M. Massenet à peine revenu d’Italie, a dû repartir tout aussitôt pour Bruxelles, où l’appelaient les dernières répétitions de *Sapho*, l’un de ses rares ouvrages qui n’ont pas encore été représentés au theatre de la Monnaie. Il est revenu passer vingt-quatre heures à Paris pour prendre part aux élections du Conservatoire (nomination d’un professeur titulaire à l’une des classes du chant), et il n’a pas encore trouvé le temps d’assister à aucune des représentations de son *Hérodiade* à la Gaité. Il sera bientôt le seul!”

larger cultural context. Regardless of their intentions, Puccini and Massenet served as cultural representatives for their respective countries.

Puccini enjoyed a popular success in Paris; by March 1903, months before his visit, *La bohème* had already passed one hundred performances in Paris. The French critics were not impressed with *Tosca*; Puccini wrote to Giulio Ricordi, “*Tosca* is filling the theatre, but the critics have arrayed me for the sacrifice.” The *Illustrazione italiana* reportedly breathlessly that the composer had enjoyed a complete success; *La Lombardia* reported mixed reviews in the French press (Puccini was accused of being Wagnerian among other things), but likewise agreed that the premiere had been successful. If Puccini did indeed receive the *Légion d'honneur*, the appointment was probably motivated as much by politics as by his success with the French public.

Massenet’s participation at the Franco-Italian friendship banquet in Milan, at first glance, would seem to have been merely polite attendance at a diplomatic function. Yet the composer hated appearing at such events; his participation suggests that he considered the event professionally important. Massenet was the only artist of note among the eight hundred attendees, who seem to

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155 “*La Tosca* a Parigi,” *La Lombardia*, 16 Oct 1903; “Rivista teatrale: Puccini a Parigi,” ILIT 30 no. 42 (18 Oct 1903), 319.

156 *Il sole*, 17 Oct 1903.

157 Massenet’s distaste for public speaking is best summarized in a letter to Paul Chevalier, 10 Oct 1900, translated by Demar Irvine: “… you know my antipathy toward involvement in any public manifestation, naturally attended by the press…I avoided the banquet for the hundredth [performance] of *Le Cid*, that is further evidence, I think, of my confirmed opinion of such gatherings.” Massenet did speak in public if the occasion required it; for example, he had
have consisted of politicians, engineers, diplomats, lawyers, and captains of industry. Yet he sat at the table of honor with the French consul, the heads of the Italian and French chambers of commerce, and members of the local French émigré community, and Edoardo Sonzogno.¹⁵⁸

Massenet’s speech, a vapid collection of polite flattery toward Italian artists, has no overtly political content. Yet Massenet’s attendance must have meant more, as the premiere of Thaïs was originally scheduled for October 15, but had to be postponed at the last minute.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, Massenet’s appearance at a diplomatic banquet was to have coincided with the premiere of his opera, which is probably why he did not originally plan on attending the dinner. The Italian press makes it clear that Massenet had agreed to attend the banquet on short notice.¹⁶⁰ His attendance served two functions. First, it was good publicity for his own work; second, it astutely situated his work as part of the Franco-Italian reconciliation.

The banquet occurred in the great hall of the Unione Cooperativa di Milano at Corso Sempione, 2, on the evening of October 15. The Unione Cooperativa, founded in 1880, was one of the largest cooperative associations in Italy. The Unione’s offices on the Corso Sempione contained twenty-one grocery suppliers, a shoe store, several warehouses, and a restaurant, which apparently catered the banquet.¹⁶¹ The hall, which held about 820 guests, was decorated in art nouveau (stil florvale) style and was illuminated by electric lights in the shape of flowers.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰“Cronaca: Il banchetto franco-italiano,” Il secolo, 13 Oct 1903, 3, suggests that Massenet might have been invited to the banquet on relatively short notice. “Cronaca di Milano: Il banchetto franco-italiano,” La Lombardia, 14 Oct 1903, 3, notes that “Iermattina è stato invitato il maestro Massenet, che ringraziò commosso e promise d’intervenire.”
¹⁶¹“Echi del banchetto franco-italiano,” La Lombardia, 16 Oct 1903, 3; Salvatore Veca, La teoria economica della cooperazione (Naples: Luigi Piero, 1907), 200–201.
The Unione Cooperativa's location probably played a role in celebrating the Franco-Italian reconciliation. The building lay just outside the Arco della Pace, a faux-Roman triumphal arch begun by Napoleon Bonaparte and completed by Milan’s Austrian rulers. The Arch held further significance for the Franco-Italian celebration, since it played a role in the wars of the Risorgimento: in June 1859, after the Battle of Magenta, the victorious Emperor Napoleon III of France and King Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoy entered Milan together through this arch. Holding the banquet at the Unione Cooperativa, near the Arco della Pace, provided specific geographical and historical significance to the banquet.

Although Massenet was the only artist at the banquet, his presence was not marginal. His attendance was advertised beforehand and his presence in Milan was referred to in several toasts and speeches at the banquet. Georges D’Anglade, the French consul, toasted the cultural exchange between Paris and Milan: “While our Massenet finds himself here among us in Milan, your Puccini is triumphing in Paris!” Giovanni Mussi, an Italian senator, similarly commented that “Rossini, Bellini, and Verdi received from the French that golden crown which we have voluntarily given to…Massenet.” Massenet’s visit to Milan assumed a political dimension: his visit and his success in Italy, like Puccini’s in Paris, provided a model for healthy exchange between France and Italy.

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Therefore, when Massenet got up to speak, the significance of his speech was clear. A nervous speaker in any case, he was “clearly moved” at its end.\(^{166}\) Probably his emotion came both from nervousness as well as personal feeling: One should note, too, that Massenet apparently gave the speech in Italian (none of the Italian papers which printed the speech refer his speaking in French) and that this speech may well have inspired the *Lombardia* review’s reference to French artists making “mistakes in their Italian because of their emotions.”\(^{167}\) He ended his speech as follows:

> Artists have the right to dream freely, to equality in their successes, and to brotherhood in their relationships; and therefore—after all the immortal glories of Italy: Palestrina, Lully, Pergolesi, Cimarosa, Paisiello, Cherubini, Spontini, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi—you also possess a complete galaxy of very talented modern masters—I raise my glass to my illustrious colleagues, Boito, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano, Franchetti, Ciléa, [and] Puccini, who in this moment of the French people’s enthusiasm for the Italian people is having a triumph with his *Tosca*.
>
> Long live the Italian masters! Long live Milan! Long live Italy, which I love!\(^{168}\)

This speech, reprinted in Milanese and Roman journals, seems to have struck its mark: the audience burst into applause, and the stage was set for the premiere of *Thaïs*.

>
> “Tutti i commensali vollero baciarlo e abbracciarlo, mentre l’illustre maestro appariva evidentemente commosso.”

\(^{167}\)“Teatri e Concerti: *Thaïs* di Massenet,” *La Lombardia*, 18 Oct 1903: “…fa sproporsi in italiano, certo dalla commozione, i colleghi d’oltr’Alpi, con citazioni in prosa e in versi.”

\(^{168}\)“Un entusiastico discorso di Massenet per l’arte italiana,” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2: “A tutti rispose Massenet col seguente discorso:
>
> “Poiché noi siamo riuniti questa sera, per festeggiare l’unione dei due paesi, che tutti riuniscono nelle loro origini, è pure dolcissima cosa il pensare alla famiglia degli artisti che vive in una stessa comunione di ideali.
>
> “Sì, gli artisti di tutti i paesi, in ogni clima, lavorano con le stesse speranze.
>
> “In arte non vi sono compromissioni, in arte non possono esistere sottintesi; le astuzie sono sconosciute all’arte che ha un solo scopo: il vero, solo il vero, ch’è la bellezza, la sincerità.
>
> “L’uomo scompare [,] la sua anima agisce.
>
> “Gli artisti hanno diritto alla libertà delle aspirazioni, all’eguaglianza nei loro successi, alla fratellanza nei loro rapporti; e poiché—dopo tutte le glorie immortal di’Italia che si chiamano Palestrina, Lulli, Pergolesi, Cimarosa, Paisiello, Cherubini, Spontini, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti e Verdi—voi possedete tutta una pleiade di maestri moderni dallo splendido ingegno—alzando il bicchiere bevo ai miei illustri colleghi Boito, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano, Franchetti, Ciléa, Puccini, che in questo momento di entusiasmo del popolo francese per il popolo italiano trionfa a Parigi colla sua *Tosca*.
>
> “Evviva ai maestri italiani! Evviva Milano! Evviva l’Italia che io amo!”
Even though it is a piece of diplomatic flattery, this speech encapsulates Massenet’s relationship with Italian operatic culture in the late nineteenth century: his own personal affection for Italy is exaggerated into a public homage which seems to have endeared him to his audience. As a foreigner, he pays tribute to Italy’s musical heritage and the achievements of contemporary Italian artists, while stressing his own personal love for Italian culture and art. He calls for toleration for foreign art, and he rejoices in Puccini’s reception in Paris; he celebrates the cultural exchange between Paris and Milan, which has created Puccini’s success in France. But what Massenet’s carefully crafted rhetoric states is only as important as what it omits. His celebration of Puccini’s success in Paris is implicitly a celebration of his own reception in Milan; his appreciation of Italian art is mirrored by Italians’ appreciation for Massenet’s own music.

No discussion of this complex of political and cultural exchange could be complete without acknowledging Edoardo Sonzogno’s ambitions and goals. In many ways, the banquet celebrated the fulfillment of one of Sonzogno’s long-term political objectives—reconciliation and realignment with France—and he may well have felt that his promotion of French opera throughout the long period of tension between France and Italy had been validated (his patriotism had been attacked for promoting Massenet—see Chapter One). The homage paid to Massenet at the banquet may well have seemed a vindication of Sonzogno’s cosmopolitan principles. In this sense, the Franco-Italian friendship banquet and the subsequent Italian premiere of *Thaïs* represent the highpoint of Sonzogno’s fused artistic and political agendas.

**Massenet and the fourth Sonzogno competition**

Massenet’s visit to Italy in 1903 was the longest he had made in some time, lasting nearly a month. In it, he followed his usual routine in visiting Milan, as laid out by Sonzogno: supervision of
rehearsals, a premiere in which (contrary to Massenet’s habit in France)\textsuperscript{169} the composer would be seen by the public, and a reception at the Famiglia artistica. But his visit was further complicated by his attendance at the Franco-Italian banquet and a second farewell banquet, while his days must have been filled with his duties as president of the jury for the Fourth Sonzogno Competition. While few details are available about these events, Massenet clearly played a more active role in Milan than he had in the past (see Table 21).

**Table 21: Massenet’s schedule in Milan, October 1903**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Massenet arrives in Milan\textsuperscript{170} and attends a rehearsal of <em>Thaïs</em> at the Lirico. Full rehearsals begin\textsuperscript{171}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>The jury meets to begin reviewing submissions for the Sonzogno Competition\textsuperscript{172}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Massenet attends the Franco-Italian friendship banquet; Dani is ill; Quadri replaces him; <em>Thaïs</em> premiere postponed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 17</td>
<td><em>Thaïs</em> premières at the T. Lirico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 22</td>
<td>Massenet and the jury for the Fourth Sonzogno Competition reach their verdict, having reviewed 237 operas\textsuperscript{173}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late October/early November</td>
<td>Farewell banquet for Massenet, who promises to return to Milan for Italian premiere of <em>Cherubin</em>; Massenet leaves Milan\textsuperscript{175}</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Massenet’s involvement in the Fourth Sonzogno Competition underlined his integration into Italian operatic culture. For Massenet was not simply a member of the jury, but its president.\textsuperscript{176} He

\textsuperscript{169}\emph{Mes souvenirs}, 193.

\textsuperscript{170}The *Gazzetta teatrale italiana* reported Massenet’s presence in Milan on October 10th: “Cronaca Milanese,” GTI 32 no. 26 (10 Oct 1903), 1: “Il 15 si apre coll’opera-ballo *Thaïs* questo teatro...Massenet è a Milano per assistere alle ultime prove e alle prime rappresentazioni.”

\textsuperscript{171}“Teatri e Concerti,” *La Lombardia*, 9 Oct 1903: “Sono incominciate le prove della «Thaïs» di Massenet, protagonista la Lina Cavalieri.” This brief notice presumably marks Cavalieri’s return from Paris; it is hard to imagine that the opera would have been staged with only six days’ rehearsal, so the ”prove” referred to here are probably staged or dress rehearsals.

\textsuperscript{172}“Pel Concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 36 (14 Oct 1903), 3.

\textsuperscript{173}Il *sole*, 23 Oct 1903; GTI 65 no. 41 (29 Oct 1903), 2.


\textsuperscript{175}CM 4 no. 39 (4 November 1903), 4: “La nuova opera di Massenet a Milano” and “Massenet e il Concorso Sonzogno.”

\textsuperscript{176}“Pel concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2.
led a truly international committee consisting of well-known composers and educators: the German composer Engelbert Humperdinck (1854–1921), best known today for *Hansel und Gretel*; the Danish composer and conductor Asger Hamerik (1843–1923), who had been director of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore; the Belgian composer Jan Blockx (1851–1912), director of the Antwerp Conservatory; from Spain, Tomás Bretón (1851–1923), the director of the Madrid Conservatory. Italy was represented by Francesco Ciléa (1866–1950), the composer of *Adriana Lecouvreur*, who had also been present on the jury of Sonzogno’s last opera competition; the conductor Cleofonte Campanini (1860–1919); and Amintore Galli (see Figure 6). Together these men would read through over 200 operas by young composers, in order to select several which Sonzogno would stage the next season in the Teatro Lirico. The winner, selected by a public vote, would receive a prize of 50,000 lire. Naturally, the first meeting of the jury occurred at the Teatro Lirico Internazionale.

Massenet’s leadership of the Fourth Sonzogno Competition must be understood in a historical context for the significance of his role to be clear. Traditionally, the Sonzogno competitions only accepted one-act operas by Italian composers, and the juries had only consisted of

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178 “Il Concorso Sonzogno,” GDT 65 no. 41 (29 Oct 1903), 2. Of all these participants, Bretón is the most difficult to identify, as French and Italian papers regularly refer to him simply as “Breton” or “Berton,” and sometimes give his first initial as “F.” or “J.” “Pel Concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 3, however, makes it clear that “Berton” is Spanish, and has composed “Amanti di Ternel,” which is a clear reference to Bretón’s opera *Los amantes de Teruel* (1889). His identity is further confirmed when *Musica e musicisti* identifies him as the author of *Dolores* (1895). “Concorso internazionale Sonzogno,” *Musica e musicisti*, anno 58, 2 no. 12, 1028, 1054–56. See also Morini and Ostali, “Cronologia della Casa Musicale Sonzogno,” *Casa Musicale Sonzogno*, Vol. I, 342.

In February 1902 the *Musical Times* announced that Arturo Toscanini and Umberto Giordano would appear on the jury; it is unclear whether there is any foundation for this rumor. The *Musical Times* also protested that “Signor Sonzogno ought surely to have secured one of our many eminent composers to represent…Great Britain and Ireland.” “Foreign Notes,” The *Musical Times* 44 no. 720 (1 Feb 1903), 123.


180 “Pel concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 36 (14 Oct 1903), 3.
Italians (Amintore Galli was a constant presence on each jury). The first such competition, in 1883, led Giacomo Puccini to write his first opera, *Le ville*; while Puccini was awarded no prize, he succeeded in raising funds to have the opera performed at the Teatro Dal Verme, and his success launched his career, winning him Ricordi’s patronage. The second competition, announced in 1888, was eventually won by Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*; Umberto Giordano won special mention for his *Marina*. The third competition, announced in 1890, was won by G.B. Coronaro’s *Festa a marina*, which, while forgotten today, was heavily promoted by the Casa Sonzogno as a work in the tradition of *Cavalleria rusticana*. The prizes were smaller (2,000 lire in 1883, 3,000 in 1888, 4,000 in 1890) and there had been no more than seventy submissions to each competition. The fourth competition, announced in 1902, was the first of the series to be open to submissions from outside Italy, the first to have an international jury, and the first to offer such a large prize. Subsequent competitions funded by the Casa Sonzogno focused on libretti (1904) and instrumental and vocal compositions (1907, 1909).

Massenet was thus elevated to a position of great symbolic cultural power. While the balance of power on the committee lay with the Italian judges (three of the eight judges were Italian), Italian critics seem to have accepted Massenet’s authority over the jury without protest. Lacking the official records of the committee, it is unclear whether Massenet wielded any practical power on the jury or if his appointment was purely honorary.

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As chair of the jury, Massenet judged not only new Italian operas but operas from across Europe. Of the approximately 237 submissions, approximately 200 were from Italian composers; one opera was submitted from as far afield as Beaver, Pennsylvania. Ildebrando Pizzetti (Il Cid) and Frederick Delius (Margot la rouge) are the most famous of the young composers whose

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183“Giuri del concorso Sonzogno” (The Jury of the Sonzogno Competition) in “Concorso internazionale Sonzogno,” Musica e musicisti, anno 58, 2 no. 12 (Dec 1903), 1028, 1054–56: 1056. For unknown reasons, Hamerik is not present in the photo.

184“Teatri: Concorso Sonzogno,” Il sole, 23 Oct 1903, 2; this number also appears in “Concorso internazionale Sonzogno,” Musica e musicisti, anno 58, 2 no.12 (December 1903), 1054–56, and in “L’esito del concorso melodrammatico internazionale Sonzogno,” GTI 32 no. 28 (30 Oct 1903), 1. “Pel concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2, lists the number of submissions as “oltre 300.”
submissions failed to win a prize.\textsuperscript{185} In order to process such a vast number of works as quickly as possible, each of the eight members of the jury was responsible for a group of operas. Each member then brought the best selections from his group of operas to the attention of entire jury. The work proceeded quickly, as many of the submissions were of poor quality.\textsuperscript{186} Incomplete submissions were excluded from consideration, as were those not written in Italian or not provided with an Italian translation. Finally, any submission which revealed its author’s name was rejected. The operas were evaluated both for their librettos and their scores: the jury’s published verdict read, in part:

…an opera would not be considered if it was not accompanied by a libretto of good quality and corresponding to modern taste, and if its quality was not, moreover, matched by the technical aspects of its harmonic elaboration and orchestration, corresponding to the progress of musical art in our times.

The jury further noted that a number of submissions had “absurd” plots but good music, or good librettos but bad music.\textsuperscript{187}

On October 22nd, a bare five days after the premiere of \textit{Thaïs}, Massenet and his colleagues selected three operas for future performance at the Lirico: \textit{Domino azzurro} by Franco Da Venezia (music) and Giuseppe Zupponi-Strani (libretto); \textit{La Cabrera} by Gabriel Dupont (music) and Henri...

\textsuperscript{185}Neither opera was performed during the composer’s lifetime; Pizzetti’s score was lost, while Delius re-used some of his music in later works, although the opera was eventually premiered in 1983. Mario Morini and Piero Ostali, Jr., “Cronologia della Casa Musicale Sonzogno,” in Morini, Ostali, and Ostali (eds.), \textit{Casa Musicale Sonzogno} (Milan: Sonzogno, 1995) Vol. I, 342; Anderson, “Margot la rouge,” \textit{The New Grove Dictionary of Opera. Grove Music Online}. Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press, accessed July 31, 2013, \url{http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/O903303}

\textsuperscript{186}“Pel concorso Sonzogno,” CM 4 no. 37 (21 Oct 1903), 2.

\textsuperscript{187}“L’esito del concorso melodrammatico internazionale Sonzogno,” GTI 32 no. 28 (30 Oct 1903), 1. The competitors were quite creative in their choice of pseudonyms. Some of the names include: \textit{Del gran poema io son l’ultima nota} and \textit{Ogni fatica merita premio}, as well as \textit{Pour toi Nénette}.

“La Commissione nell’esaminare le singole opere si informò al concetto predominante del programma di concorso, secondo il quale un’opera non sarebbe stata presa in considerazione se non accompagnata da un libretto di valore e di gusto moderno, e se a questo pregio non avesse accoppiato altresì quelli di una tecnica così nella elaborazione armonica come nella orchestrazione, corrispondente al progresso dell’arte musicale dei nostri giorni.

“Assai di rado nelle opere presentate al concorso si sono trovati riuniti questi diversi attributi, circostanza codesta che obbligò la Giuria a mettere in disparte tutti quei lavori che, dettati sopra un buon libretto, mancavano poi di una musica degna di esso per ispirazione ed organismo musicale, o quelli notevoli per la musica, ma composti sopra libretti assardi pel concetto e di forme vici.”
Cain (libretto); and Manuel Menéndez by Lorenzo Filiasi (music), Vittorio Bianchi, and Anton Anile (libretto). 188 These operas were subsequently performed at the Teatro Lirico in May, 1904; Massenet was unable to attend the award ceremony on May 20 because of illness. Gabriel Dupont, a pupil of Massenet’s who had taken the second prize in the 1902 Prix de Rome, won first place, receiving the grand prize of 50,000 lire; Lorenzo Filiasi received a special honorary prize of 10,000 lire. The two short operas were frequently paired together (in the same way that Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci are now paired) and were performed across Europe. 189

Massenet, the “Latin” composer

Even the most negative reviews acknowledge the Italian public’s acceptance of Massenet. Massenet’s eleven curtain calls at the premiere testify to the composer’s popularity with the Milanese public. After the first act, according to Il secolo, “the whole theater called for the maestro,” and this occurred again after the second act and at the end of the performance. 190 The Rivista teatrale melodrammatica considered the public enthusiasm less motivated by the public’s approval of the music, and more

188 GDT 65 no. 41 (29 Oct 1903), 2.


Gabriel Dupont (b. 1878) was too ill with tuberculosis to attend the award ceremony in 1904; the same illness led to his early death in 1914, before his last opera, Antar, could be premiered. See Maurice Dumesnil, “Gabriel Dupont, Musician of Normandy (1878–1914),” The Musical Quarterly 30 no. 4 (Oct. 1944), 441–47.


Franco Da Venezia (1876–1937), who won third place, received degrees in piano performance and composition from the Milan conservatory (where he studied with Amintore Galli, among others); despite receiving a prize in the competition, his opera had so little success that he subsequently abandoned operatic composition. See M. Francesca Agresta, “Da Venezia, Franco,” Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani 33 (1987), online at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/franco-da-venezia_(Dizionario_Biografico)/, accessed 31 July 2013.

190 “Thaïs,” Il secolo 18 Oct 1903, 3: “Gli artisti sono chiamati due volte al proscenio: indi tutto il teatro grida “il maestro” e Massenet si presenta due volte...”
driven by their fondness for Massenet: “at the end of the performance, [the public] wanted to cheer again for the illustrious musician, so dear to and so fond of the Italians.”

La Lombardia stated that “the illustrious maestro [is] as dear to the Italians as if he had been born among us.” The weekly paper Illustrazione italiana was even more direct: “[Massenet] has found his greatest inspirations in the Italian sun and its music, and is happy that we consider him rather one of our own…”

This explicit acceptance of Massenet as an honorary Italian, or as a highly Italianized Frenchman, occurs as well in this interview with Massenet, by the Italian writer and journalist Matilde Serào (1856–1927). The interview took place in Paris, shortly before Massenet departed for Milan, and was re-printed in the Roman music journal Cronache musicali e drammatiche:

Jules Massenet…comes, goes, speaks, laughs, and gesticulates, and is agitated with a completely southern fire, more like an Italian from the Mezzogiorno than a Frenchman from the North...He speaks of Italy, his Italy, his dear Italy, where everyone loves him, the Italy which he adores...He will go to Milan, and a new rose will be added to the crown of Jules Massenet, the maestro whom we all love!

For Serào, Massenet’s excitable temperament becomes a signifier of his emotional sympathy with Italians matched only by his personal affection for Italy. This emotional sympathy undercuts boundaries of nation, and also race. Serào’s contrast between the articulate, emotional Southerner and the taciturn northerner invokes contemporary depictions of racial temperaments.

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192"Teatri e concerti: Thaïs di Massenet,” La Lombardia, 18 Oct 1903, 3: “…all’illustre maestro, caro agli italiani come fosse nato tra noi.”


194Massenet e Thaïs,” CM 4 no. 35 (7 Oct 1903), 3: “Giulio Massenet, arrivato dalla campagna, per tre giorni, va, viene, parla, ride, gesticola, si agita con quel suo brio tutto meridionale, simile più a un italiano del mezzogiorno che a un francese del Nord; e chiacchera con tutti, passa dall’uno all’altro, saluta, scherza, è di un’amabilità così abbondante da incantare... egli taglia il discorso, graziosamente, parla dell’Italia, della sua Italia, della sua cara Italia, dove lo amano tanto, l’Italia che egli adora e dove viene, dove va, ogni tanto, dove andrà, certamente, in ottobre, dove verrà... senz’altro alla seconda metà di ottobre... egli verrà a Milano e una nuova rosa sarà aggiunta alla corona di Giulio Massenet, il maestro, che tutti amiamo!”
The Italian press presented Massenet as a composer attuned to the Italian spirit and beloved by the Italian public, as if he were an Italian. Massenet was the ideal cosmopolitan composer, in his love for Italy, and also as a foreign musician who had been integrated into Italian musical culture. Massenet seems to have been careful to present himself publicly in such a way as to be able to take advantage of either of these viewpoints. The Italian press frequently acknowledges his French identity, but Massenet’s love for Italy, his seconda patria, is also a fairly common trope.

Massenet’s integration into Italian culture allowed him to be used as an exemplar of a transnational identity construction much in vogue during the Franco-Italian reconciliation: the “Latin race.” The concept was elaborated in the writings of contemporary Italian scholars such as the anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi (1841–1936). Sergi promoted his theories in books such as Origine e diffusione della stirpa mediterranea (1895) and La decadenza delle nazioni latine (1900). Sergi argued that all Western civilization was the invention of a “Mediterranean” race which included the founders of ancient Greece and Rome.195 His racial analysis largely relied on categorizing the shapes of skulls.196

Sergi’s theory thus placed Italy at the center of European civilization. Sergi also argued implicitly for a racial definition of modern Italy as a state largely composed of the descendants of the Mediterraneans. As historian Aaron Gillette writes in his history of race in Italy under fascism:

Generally, Italians concerned with this issue [racial identity] identified one of three groups as representing the ‘true’ Italians: the Mediterranean race, a shorter, darker people responsible for ancient classical civilization; the Nordic Aryan race, a taller, fairer people associated with Northern Europe, who came into prominence in European history with the ‘barbarian’ invasions co-incident with the collapse of the Roman Empire; or an indigenous Italian race, a people native to Italy from remotest


prehistory who survived relatively free from admixture with peoples outside the peninsula. By arguing that modern Italians were descended from the Mediterraneans, Sergi contradicted other anthropologists and cultural theorists of his time. Gaetano Traezza, for example, had argued as early as 1878 that Italians were fundamentally Aryan, while Alfredo Niceforo claimed that northern Italians were Aryans, while southern Italians were Mediterraneans.

Thus race had a major part to play in the controversial “Southern Question” so essential to contemporary debates on Italian identity: how to integrate Southern Italy into the newly unified Italian nation. As Aliza S. Wong and John Dickie have noted, discourses centered on the racial difference and perceived cultural backwardness of southern Italians led some Italian intellectuals to call for the colonization of the South by the North. Racial categories were often advanced to explain why Southern Italy lagged behind the North in literacy, industrial development, and the reduction of crime rates. Criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) and Enrico Ferri (1856–1929) employed race to explain variations in crime rates throughout Italy, although their systems were naturally less systematic than Sergi’s. Lombroso, for instance, split Europeans into “German” and “Latin” races, while Ferri described “Germans,” “Slavs,” and “Greco-Latin.”

In this light, Serào’s labeling of Massenet as an explicitly Southern Italian (“from the Mezzogiorno,” i.e., Southern Italy) may well be a coded reference to Massenet’s racial identity as a Mediterranean or Latin composer. Serào’s assumption that “Frenchmen from the North” were

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197Gillette, Racial Theories, 2.
198Ibid, 23.
201Gibson, “Biology or Environment?” 102, 205.
complete opposites of passionate southern Italians suggests that she may have considered the French to be Aryan or Teutonic. At the same time, Serào may simply have associated Massenet with the Mezzogiorno for personal reasons, since she grew up in Naples and worked there for much of her life.

Referring to a “Latin” or “Mediterranean” race, then, was a fluid, politically-charged gesture capable of many interpretations. These racial categories often provided an explanation for conflicts between ethnic groups, whether at the international level (the Austrians and Italians) or the national level (Northern Italians versus Southern Italians). Given the multiplicity of racial theories in existence (of which this discussion has provided the barest sketch), the “Latin” race could be stretched to include the Greeks, the French, and the Spanish. Meanwhile, such rhetoric could coexist with that of French theorist Arthur de Gobineau, who argued that all European civilization arose from the Aryan race and that Italy in particular was an example of the disastrous effects of racial mixing.

Still, Latin and Mediterranean rhetoric was particularly useful as Italy began to distance itself from the Triple Alliance. Much of the political rhetoric surrounding the Franco-Italian reconciliation centered on the common origins of both the French and Italian cultures in a common ancestor: ancient Rome. Consequently, the rhetoric of reconciliation frequently invoked the rhetoric of the Latin race, appealing to the roots of French and Italian language, culture, and racial identities as a way of constructing unity between the two rival nations. Further, the new emphasis on France and Italy’s racial unity distanced both countries from France’s great rival, Germany. While Italy remained

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202 There are of course exceptions. Paolo Orano (1875–1945), who later became a Fascist ideologue, employed the concept of latinità (Latin identity) less along linguistic or racial lines than along cultural and religious ones, positing an opposition between “Latin” and “Jewish” groups (overlaid with an Occident-Orient binary opposition). See Francesco Germinario, “Latinità, antimeridionalismo e antisemitismo negli scritti giovanili di Paolo Orano (1895–1911),” in Alberto Burgio (ed.), Nel nome della razza: Il razzismo nella storia d’Italia, 1870–1945 (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1999), 105–14.

203 Gillette, Racial Theories, 13.
allied to Germany, Italy’s new friendship with France appeared to be a more natural, more racially appropriate diplomatic understanding within the context of Mediterranean rhetoric.

Mediterranean symbolism (both Greek and Latin) dominated the diplomatic celebrations. An allegorical intermezzo, *Italie et France*, was inserted between the acts of the recent play *La légende du cœur*, by the French author Jean Aicard (1848–1921), staged at a gala performance at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhard in Paris on October 12th. Aicard’s intermezzo, a piece of unabashedly political theater, portrayed the reconciliation of France and Italy as the restoration of peace between two quarrelling sisters, and featured a recitation of Dante’s sonnet “A ciascun’alma presa e gentil core” from the *Vita Nuova*. But for this discussion, the most revealing passages are those in which the two countries, embodied by actors, explain their relationship to each other:

ITALY
Greetings, France! — France is my favorite sister.
Our hearts have beat together from distant times.
The blood of my ancestors has soaked into her soil
And through the glorious centuries our destinies have been mixed.

FRANCE
Italy is my sister; Greece is our mother;
Both our arts are the children of Homer.
When Caesar came to Gaul he brought the Beautiful
And his flaming torch of war was a pure beacon.

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207 Beauquier et al, 27.
Rooting this racial kinship in Caesar’s conquest of Gaul emphasizes France’s share of Rome’s legacy. Yet this is not purely a “Latin” identity, as Aicard’s France emphasizes the Greek origins of Greco-Latin culture. Aicard’s intermezzo presents a transnational Mediterranean identity as overriding both Italian and French national identities.

Similar sentiments appeared in the speeches given at the friendship banquet in Milan, in which Senator Mussi, obviously influenced by Sergi’s theories, toasted a clearly Roman and Latin antecedent for French and Italian culture: “Hail sweet Latin blood! It is not possible to imagine an alliance more natural than yours. Your children created the greatest civilization, and were born to understand and love each other.” Similarly, a Signor Carabelli, a member of the Milan town council, declared in his speech that “When two nations, such as France and Italy, mindful of their common origins and their glorious traditions, conscious of the power that Latin genius guarantees them, meet each other and grip each others’ hands fraternally, then the march of progress and its victory are inevitable.”

If Il secolo’s partisan rhetoric is anything to go by, the Casa Sonzogno had already adopted Latin rhetoric in their promotion of Massenet. Galli’s review of Thaïs’s Italian premiere reads, in part:

The incomparable exquisiteness of [Massenet’s] art, truly his, has inspired a legion of young composers, not only in France, but among us too [in Italy]. He, with Berlioz, Gounod, and Bizet, forms the tetrarchy of the new musico-drammatic era of friendship with the nation on the other side of Mont Cenis.

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209. “Il banchetto franco-italiano,” La Lombardia, 15 Oct 1903, 3: “Quando due nazioni, come la Francia e l’Italia, memori delle comuni origini e delle glorie tradizioni, consci della forza che il genio latino loro assicura, s’incontrano e si stringono fraternamente la mano, è immancabile la marica e la vittoria di ogni progresso.”

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The *Secolo* review goes on to position this tetrarchy, and its unidentified Italian equivalent, as the guardians of “Latin art, this art of light, harmony, balance, homogeneity, and sympathetic to our feelings…”

The Casa Sonzogno co-opted Massenet’s musical style as a symbol of a new, authentically “Latin” art, implicitly uniting French and Italian art. The unstated foil for Latin art, of course, is Wagner, the most controversial (and influential) “non-Latin” composer of the day, whose works hardly match the description of ideal “Latin art.” Further, Casa Sonzogno emphasized Massenet’s role as an inspiration of some members of the giovane scuola, commonly downplayed at the time because of Italian nationalist concerns: he has “inspired a legion of young composers…among us too.” In this, the *Secolo* reviewer not only summarizes the Casa Sonzogno’s view of Massenet’s relevance to the Italian musical scene, but also their hope for his continued influence.

Massenet’s acceptance of the Latin aesthetic is clear in his memoirs, in which he quotes Camille Bellaigue’s eulogy for Verdi:

“...la incomparabile squisitezza dell'arte sua, veramente sua, che ha ispirato una legione di giovani compositori, e che fa scuola non soltanto in Francia, ma pur tra noi. “Egli, con Berlioz, Gounod e Bizet, forma la tetrachia della nuova èra drammatico-musicale dell’amica nazione d’oltre Cenisio, tetrarchia cui corrisponde, in un’altra sfera di idealità, quella dei nostri sommi maestri, ed entrambe gloriosamente debellatrici dei conati d’imbastardimento dell’arte latina, arte questa di luce, d’armonia, d’equilibrio, ed omogena e simpatica al nostro sentire.”

In this light, the composition of the jury for the Sonzogno competition (three Italians, one Frenchman, one Belgian, one Spaniard, one German, and one Dane) may well have been designed to ensure that the balance of power remained with the “Latins.”

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“Eco dei Teatri: *Thaïs*,” *Il secolo*, 18 Oct 1903, 2:

“…la incomparabile squisitezza dell’arte sua, veramente sua, che ha ispirato una legione di giovani compositori, e che fa scuola non soltanto in Francia, ma pur tra noi. “Egli, con Berlioz, Gounod e Bizet, forma la tetrachia della nuova èra drammatico-musicale dell’amica nazione d’oltre Cenisio, tetrarchia cui corrisponde, in un’altra sfera di idealità, quella dei nostri sommi maestri, ed entrambe gloriosamente debellatrici dei conati d’imbastardimento dell’arte latina, arte questa di luce, d’armonia, d’equilibrio, ed omogena e simpatica al nostro sentire.”

Mes souvenirs, 200–201; English translation by H. Villiers Barnett, *My Recollections*, 203–204: “Camille Bellaigue, dans une remarquable étude sur Verdi, consacre à ce maître admirable ces paroles aussi justes qu’elles sont belles. «...Une fleur éclatante est tombée de la couronne du génie latin. Je ne puis songer à Verdi, sans me rappeler cette parole fameneuse de Nietzsche, revenu du wagnérisme et même retourné contre lui : « Il faut méditerraniser la musique. » Non pas certes la musique tout entière. Mais aujourd'hui qu'a disparu le vieux maître, l'hôte glorieux de ce palais Doria, d'où son regard profond s'étendait chaque hiver sur l'azur de la mer ligurienne, on peut se demander qui viendra sauver dans la musique les droits et l'influence de la Méditerranée. »”
Massenet’s use of these words is particularly appropriate, as Bellaigue sets Verdi in his winter lodgings at the Palazzo Doria in Genoa. Thus Massenet is able to combine his own memory of meeting Verdi at the Palazzo Doria (see Chapter Two) with Bellaigue’s image of Verdi, the Mediterranean composer, staring out over the Mediterranean Sea. And there is more than a touch of self-awareness, too, in the way that Massenet ends his own discussion of Verdi with the question of Verdi’s successor. If Verdi is no longer an Italian composer, but a ‘Mediterranean’ one, then Massenet himself is perfectly qualified to succeed Verdi.

Conclusions

Ascribing Thaïs’s success to politics or Cavalieri’s sex appeal remained a convenient way for Italian critics to avoid dealing seriously with the opera and with Massenet’s integration into Italian culture. As we have seen, while there was more than a grain of truth in the critics’ claim that Thaïs had benefitted from its political context, the reality of the matter was far more complex. Thaïs was part of a web of international political exchanges, in which opera was used as a symbol of nations and their cultures. Further, because of its use in these exchanges, Massenet’s opera turned into an emblem of the Casa Sonzogno’s own political agenda. Massenet himself seems to have been a willing participant in both Sonzogno’s use of his music and in the application of Latin rhetoric to his work. Through Massenet’s public appearances, his use of Latin rhetoric, and his involvement in the fourth Sonzogno competition, we can understand the true level of Massenet’s cultural power and social integration within Italy.

What were the implications of holding up Massenet and his French colleagues as the role models for a Latin musical style? Such a maneuver threatened the fragile basis of a purely Italian nationalism in opera. If Italy and France could form one broader, transnational racial identity through music, the long-cherished boundaries between national styles would have to be abandoned
(Il Misovolgo, whom we encountered in Chapter One, had already dissected the commonplace national style divisions in 1893). Indeed, Fausto Torrefranca’s famous polemic against Puccini (*Giacomo Puccini e l’opera internazionale*, 1912) responds exactly to this crisis in Italian nationalism; he views international influence as a disease afflicting Italian music, weakening national culture.\(^{212}\) While Torrefranca targets Puccini as an Italian composer who has fallen prey to foreign influence, many of his specific criticisms of Puccini’s music are related to the influence of French opera in Italy. His polemic is inconceivable without context of the Casa Sonzogno’s efforts at importing foreign operas to Italy.

Placing Massenet’s operas within a transnational Franco-Italian space therefore destabilized both Italian identity constructions and Massenet’s place within them. While the Italian press discussed Massenet the man as practically an Italian, by 1903 Italian critics no longer sought to annex his music into contemporary Italian constructions of nationality. Rather, the success of Massenet’s integration into Italian operatic culture provoked a backlash. By conquering the Italian stage and winning the affection of the Italian public, Massenet had become enough of an establishment figure that he provided a target for critics of all kinds. Massenet was now old enough to be attacked as old-fashioned, progressive enough to be attacked as a decadent, and international enough that critics did not try to prove his value to Italian operatic audiences.

Thus the cycle of events surrounding the premiere of *Thaïs* brings Massenet’s later Italian reception full circle. Over the course of ten years, Massenet’s operas had overcome many obstacles, as had Edoardo Sonzogno, who managed, whether through luck or planning, to make Massenet’s music one with the Franco-Italian reconciliation. Further, through leading the Sonzogno jury, Massenet became one of the first foreign composers to be granted such explicit cultural power over

\(^{212}\)Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 125–32, 144–47.
Italian musicians. He amply fulfilled the role left void at Verdi’s death, the guardian of “the rights and influence of the Mediterranean in music,” with all its political and social implications.

Yet, despite being Massenet’s greatest popular success in years, *Thaïs* marks the beginning of the end. It was Massenet’s last visit to Milan for a premiere; illness prevented him from returning the following year. No subsequent Italian premiere during his lifetime would approach *Thaïs’s* success. He would only make one more journey to Italy.\(^{213}\) Thus Massenet’s Italian fortunes, having reached their peak, were also poised on the brink of decline.

\(^{213}\)Massenet’s last journey to Italy was for the premiere of *Ariane* in Turin in December 1907. *Thérèse* (Naples, 1911) was the last Italian premiere which occurred during Massenet’s lifetime, although Massenet seems to have missed the premiere. Massenet’s last Milanese premiere during his lifetime was *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Teatro Lirico, 1905), which served as a model for Puccini’s *Suor Angelica* (1918). *Mes souvenirs*, 242; Morini, Mario, and Piero Ostali, Jr. “Cronologie delle opere,” Vol. II, 578–79; Carner, *Puccini*, 434.
CONCLUSION: MASSENET’S LEGACY IN ITALY

As we have seen, Massenet assumed a leading role in Milanese musical culture from 1894 to 1903, competing successfully with Puccini, leading the jury for the fourth Sonzogno Competition, and serving as a figurehead and role model for the Casa Sonzogno’s circle of young Italian composers. Throughout the dissertation, my analysis has emphasized three major themes: Massenet’s unique position in the Ricordi-Sonzogno rivalry, the translation of his operas for the Italian stage, and the “Italianization” of his operas and his public persona. Here, I explore these concepts in conjunction with Massenet’s Italian obituaries (1912), demonstrating the endurance of critical discourses surrounding these issues in the years after Massenet’s last visit to Milan. These three themes, I argue, hold the key to understanding Massenet’s impact in Milan and his translation into Milanese musical culture.

Massenet and the publishers

Even though the Ricordi and Sonzogno firms, through their sponsorship of music criticism, directly controlled much of the discourse about Massenet, the composer was uniquely positioned to thrive in an environment in which the publishers’ rivalry had hurt so many careers, especially those of Alfredo Catalani and Ruggiero Leoncavallo. Because Massenet had published operas with both Ricordi as well as Sonzogno, it was not in Ricordi’s best interests to attack Massenet’s operas.\(^1\) Even when Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* was struggling against Massenet’s *Manon*, the official Ricordi journal did little

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\(^1\)See Appendices 1 and 5 for evidence that Ricordi continued to produce *Le Roi de Lahore* and *Hérodiade* during the Milanese period.
to address the rivalry directly: the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* provided very little information about the regular performances of Massenet’s operas or the composer’s frequent visits.

The Casa Sonzogno had much to gain from Massenet’s Italian reception. The steady importation of Massenet’s operas allowed the Casa Sonzogno to demonstrate its openness to foreign art, and provided a powerful counterbalance to what the Casa Sonzogno perceived as Ricordi’s jingoistic nationalism. Massenet’s operas were the ideal works to promote the cosmopolitan aesthetic embodied by the Teatro Lirico Internazionale: Italian critics heard Massenet’s operas as a potent mixture of traditional Italian opera (for example the references to *La traviata* embedded in *Manon*), Wagnerian motivic structures, and French operatic traditions (such as *opéra comique*).

Massenet’s music provided a functioning example of a truly international musical style for Milanese critics and musicians, and *Manon* in particular became one of the Casa Sonzogno’s most performed works. In these ways, Massenet’s music became enmeshed in the Casa Sonzogno’s discourse of nationalist cosmopolitanism, and Massenet became the archetype of the “Latin” composer. Massenet’s celebrity status also worked with the Casa Sonzogno’s media machine, and the publisher reaped the benefits of repeatedly bringing such a famous musician to Milan.

Massenet’s business relations with both Ricordi and Sonzogno colored his legacy in Italy. After his death, several Italian music journals reprinted excerpts from his *Souvenirs* describing his time in Italy, selectively emphasizing either his ties to Ricordi or Sonzogno. *Il mondo artistico* chose selections describing Massenet’s trips to Italy for the Prix de Rome fellowship and for the Italian premiere of *Le Roi de Lahore*. *Il mondo artistico’s* Massenet, in other words, came of age in the decades immediately following Italian unification: his fondest memories are of his collaboration with the Casa Ricordi.² *Il teatro illustrato*, on the other hand, largely chose excerpts of the *Souvenirs* which discuss Massenet’s fortunes in Italy in the 1890s; their Massenet is actively engaged with

contemporary Italian culture and works closely with both Ricordi and Sonzogno. Dinners with Umberto Giordano, Francesco Cilea, and Edoardo Sonzogno; hearing Lina Cavalieri and Enrico Caruso sing; and Massenet’s visit to Verdi form the central events of their excerpts, in addition to the premiere of the *Le Roi de Lahore*. Later in the issue, the journal reproduced the photograph of Massenet and the Sonzogno competition committee, which is reproduced in Chapter Three as Figure 6.3

The Italian Massenet

How had Massenet come to occupy such a position in Italian musical culture? The answer lies in his ongoing Italianization and his active engagement with Italian musical culture. Through his frequent visits to Milan, his numerous public appearances, his friendly association with the *giovane scuola*, and his work in the fourth Sonzogno Competition, Massenet participated in Italian culture to a level unmatched by any other foreign composer in Italy in this period. And his public image became similar to Verdi’s: he was a master of theater, the ultimate professional, yet a composer of genius; his music was easily understood by the average operagoer; he was the leader of a school, rather than a lone genius; and his music drew from and continued many traditions, rather than radically departing from or re-imagining past models.

Massenet seems to have understood his delicate position in Italy, and to have maneuvered carefully to ensure his continued success. His account of his visit to Verdi emphasizes his humility in the face of Italian genius and his eagerness to acquire _lettres de naturalisation_, and his documented public statements flatter Italian art and artists obsequiously. Massenet also seems to have been perfectly willing to support Sonzogno’s construction of a transnational, “Latin” compositional school. Yet while it is tempting to see some of Massenet’s effusive love for Italy and the Italians as a

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3“Dai ‘Mes Souvenirs’,” *Il teatro illustrato* 8 no. 16 (1 Sept 1912), unnumbered pages.
ploy to ensure a sympathetic hearing with Italian audiences, the same tone reappears in Massenet’s memoirs (written for a French market), which only reached Italy after his death. Thus one cannot dismiss the possibility that Massenet may have been at least partially sincere in his public statements and writings regarding his visits to Italy.

Massenet’s Italian obituaries provide useful insights into his Italianization and the degree to which the Italian critics embraced him as one of their own. A common theme was Massenet’s identification with Italy, almost to the exclusion of his French identity: *Il teatro illustrato* noted that “In Italy, which he loved like a second homeland, he was very well-known and very popular.”

The Ricordi journal *Ars et labor* closed its obituary as follows:

> Every Italian must not forget the lively sympathy which Giulio Massenet always held for Italy. Replying to Giulio Ricordi, who one day informed him of the sentiments of the Italian public about his operas, he replied, verbatim: “Je suis Romain” [I am a Roman]. This phrase does not seem like a commonplace statement when one has seen his memoirs of Italy; his reminiscences of the springtime of his past life in Rome constitute the better half, and the most lively and enthusiastic part, of the book. And we also note this fact: his last opera is *Roma*...this *Roma* responds to and complements his own statement “Je suis Romain.”

This kind of coverage continues the trend of claiming Massenet as an honorary Italian (noted in Chapter Three). Yet in this (probably apocryphal) anecdote, which is presented by an Italian critic, Massenet himself claims his Italian status, confident of his identity; he does not need the critics or the public to validate what he has felt so deeply. *Il mondo artistico* similarly commented on a published excerpt of Massenet’s memoirs:

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Massenet’s Italian identity [*italianità*], which murmurs subtly like a stream woven under the song of his notes, the close relationship to our national character which is openly revealed in the pages [of his memoirs], rich in anecdotes, lyrical and melancholic snapshots...  

The critic is eager to demonstrate Massenet’s assimilation into Italian culture through his writings (the “note” in the original could refer to either the *Souvenirs* or to his musical compositions); as Matilde Serao had said nine years earlier (see Chapter Three), Massenet thinks and feels *like an Italian.*

Massenet’s cultural integration is further demonstrated in a series of tributes from leading Italian musicians after his death. Pietro Mascagni emphasized Massenet’s importance to Italian music and culture in an open letter to Madame Massenet: “Massenet was so loved in Italy by artists and the entire public that I am moved, both as a colleague and *as an Italian*” [emphasis mine].

Similarly, Umberto Giordano summed up Massenet’s influence on Italian composers, and hinted at Massenet’s cultural equivalence with Verdi:

> Massenet was a genius and the head of a school [*caposcuola*]. All modern music of feeling and elegance derives from his. All of us, without exception, have sampled the honey of his flowers...
>
> He was above all a man of the theater, the only one who could compare himself (although obviously of a very different temperament) to Verdi.

Giordano thus implicitly clarifies Massenet’s dominant role for the *giovane scuola*—he was the *caposcuola,* the aesthetic leader, both in France and Italy—in other words, the leader of the “Latin”

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6“Appendice: Massenet e l'Italia: Sfogliando le “Memorie,” inedite del maestro,” MA 46 no. 36–37: 2: “L’italianità di Massenet, che mormora come un rivo sottile sotto la trama canora delle sue note, la filiazione sua ideale dal genio nostro si rivela apertamente nelle pagine, ricche d’aneddoti, di scatti lirici e di melanconia...” An identical article (with the same title and introduction) appears in *L’illustrazione popolare* 49 no. 34 (5 Sept 1912), 563–65, although the excerpts from the *Souvenirs* are different.

7“La nostra inchiesta su Massenet,” *Il teatro illustrato* 8 no. 16 (1 Sept 1912), unnumbered page: “Massenet fu tanto amato in Italia dagli artisti e dal popolo intiero [sic] che io mi sento colpito come collega e come italiano...”

8“La nostra inchiesta su Massenet,” *Il teatro illustrato* 8 no. 16 (1 Sept 1912), unnumbered page: “Massenet era un genio ed un caposcuola. Tutta la musica moderna fatta di sentimento e di eleganza deriva dalla sua. Tutti, indistintamente, abbiamo assaporato il mieli dei suoi fiori...
>
> “...Era soprattutto uomo di teatro. Il solo che si possa paragonare, beninteso con diverso temperamento, a Verdi.”
composers. What Giordano had only hinted, the conductor Vincenzo Lombardi openly proclaimed: Massenet was “the Verdi of France...a serious man of great genius.”

**Translation**

While the preceding discussion has demonstrated the complex ties between Massenet’s integration into Italian operatic culture and his relationship to the two chief Italian music publishers, our portrait of Massenet’s Italianization would not be complete without addressing the role that translation played in making his works accessible for Italian audiences. One must acknowledge, of course, that all foreign operas were routinely translated for the Italian market, and that Massenet’s translation was not in itself unique or new. But translation is crucial to understanding Massenet’s widespread acceptance by Italian operagoers; it undermines the critical discourses surrounding Massenet’s foreignness or his Frenchness; and it puts Sonzogno’s cosmopolitan rhetoric in focus.

Massenet’s translation into Italian culture took a number of forms and was aided by a number of agents. Massenet’s works were mediated by a variety of critics, performers, and translators, all with their own agendas. Critics such as Amintore Galli, Il Misovulgo (Aldo Noseda), and Carlo D’Ormeville debated whether or not Massenet’s music could function within Italian culture, and if so, how. Performers such as Lison Frandin, Lina Cavalieri, Sibyl Sanderson, Mattia Battistini, and Alfonso Garulli created Massenet’s characters on stage, mixing French and Italian performing traditions, traditional and modern acting, emphasizing singing over acting, or acting over singing. Translators such as Targioni-Tozzetti, Menasci, and Galli adapted Massenet’s librettos for

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9°“La nostra inchiesta su Massenet,” *Il teatro illustrato* 8 no. 16 (1 Sept 1912), unnumbered page: “È morto il Verdi della Francia!...

“... Egli volle e seppe imitare l’immortale Verdi, specialmente nell’alta virtù di dimostrare con i fatti che l’uomo sano, serio e forte d’ingegno può e deve lavorare fino alla morte!”

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Italian performance, struggling to preserve the old text-music relationship, and creating new ones as necessary.

As noted in the introduction, translated texts function as literature for readers who are unfamiliar with the original, and the Italian translations of Massenet’s operas remained in the Italian repertory for many years after the composer’s death. Italian singers continued to perform Werther in Italian through at least the 1940s, Thaïs through the 1950s, and Manon through the 1960s and possibly later. The translations of Massenet’s operas, therefore, came to be treated as independent texts in their own right.

Massenet’s music thus entered into the musical consciousness of Italian operagoers, associated firmly with Italian texts. An example of the way that Massenet’s music came to be associated with its Italian rather than its French text may be found in the obituary published in Il trovatore. The critic Ferrucio Vecchi quoted from one of Massenet’s Italian librettos in his obituary as he tried to sum up Massenet’s art:

No musical cue was more all-encompassing, intense, overflowing with sorrow and with conquest, than that which dominates the duet at San Sulpice!

Non ha per te più baci la mia bocca,
Scordato hai tu?

These are words murmured from one pair of lips to another...  

10See the following recordings, which document live performances of these operas in Italian translation through the mid-twentieth century:


See Mario Morini and Piero Ostali, Jr. “Cronologie delle opere,” in Morini, Ostali, and Ostali, Casa Musicale Sonzogno Vol. II: 3–867: 551–52, for coverage of the first known Italian production of Manon in French with Act III, scene 1, recitatives, etc.

11Ferrucio Vecchi, “Giulio Massenet,” Il trovatore 59 no. 20–21 (15 Sept 1912), 1: “Mai spunto musicale fu più riepilogativo, intenso, colmo di dolore e di conquista, come quello dominante nel duetto di San Sulpizio!

“Non ha per te più baci la mia bocca,
Scordato hai tu?”

“Sono le parole mormorate labbro contro labbro...”

The equivalent passage in the French libretto is: “N’est-ce pour toi plus une caresse/Tout comme autrefois.”
Quotations such as these are clearly meant to invoke the memory of the melodies and the performances which accompanied them in the theater—and by invoking them, the critic seeks to connect with his readers (thus the emotive prose surrounding his quotation). Writing such as this presupposes deep knowledge on the part of the reader—knowledge of both the music and text: a seemingly inseparable whole.

Translation also indirectly affected Massenet’s reception, complicating discourses about Massenet’s foreignness or Frenchness. If an opera such as Manon could have all of its generic stylistic markers removed, its dialogue converted to recitative, its French turned to Italian, then what foreign elements remained? Massenet’s operas were confusing for Italian critics precisely because of the critics’ obsession with national identity, character, and style, and the need to find such meanings in an opera whose most explicitly French features had been removed. This confusion was only heightened by Massenet’s many stylistic influences (including Verdi and Wagner as well as Thomas and Gounod). Finally, as can be seen from the Appendices, Massenet’s Italianized operas were often sung by Italians whose performance was certainly influenced by their own artistic training.

With these many levels of mediation in mind, it is hardly surprising that Massenet’s operas, transformed by Italian translations, performers, and stage conventions, should become central to the Casa Sonzogno’s cosmopolitan agenda. This international rhetoric emerges strikingly in the reception of Werther and Thaïs, works which, according to Milanese critics, established their author as the greatest living opera composer and which placed him at the head of the international “Latin” compositional school.
Directions for future research

Massenet’s Italian reception has major implications for the future study of fine secolo Italian musical culture and the role of translation in reception history. Here I sketch the avenues for future research which follow logically from my research findings, although this brief list cannot be comprehensive.

First of all, Massenet’s reception demonstrates the continuing importance of French opera in Milanese musical discourse in this period. Standard narratives of the history of Italian opera may pay lip service to French opera’s stylistic influence on the giovane scuola, but the dominant trend in contemporary scholarship remains a conflict between Italian tradition and the works of Wagner. Massenet’s Italian reception provides context for his acknowledged influence on major Italian composers such as Puccini and Giordano. In this light, a new study of Massenet’s influence of Italian composers is long overdue.

Second, Massenet’s reception provides a more nuanced picture of the Casa Sonzogno’s aesthetic program. Prior studies, such as Alan Mallach’s survey of fine secolo Italian opera, have focused on the Casa Sonzogno’s promotion of Italian composers—particularly Mascagni, Giordano, Leoncavallo and Cilea—as the firm’s chief contribution to musical culture. As I have shown, however, the importation of foreign opera was an essential part of the Casa Sonzogno’s aesthetic platform, a way of counterbalancing Ricordi’s nationalism, and was part of an effort to make Italian operagoers more cosmopolitan. More work, therefore, is needed on the Casa Sonzogno’s importation of foreign opera, particularly the activities of the Teatro Lirico Internazionale, and the Italian reception of composers promoted by the Casa Sonzogno, such as Richard Strauss, Ambroise Thomas, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Spiros Samaras.

Third, and perhaps most important for musicology as a whole, Massenet’s reception provides new context for an accepted scholarly narrative that is clearly derived from corporate propaganda. As noted above, most scholarly approaches to the historiography of fine secolo opera
privilege the Casa Ricordi’s perspective. Understanding this fact allows us to reevaluate the common claim that Puccini was Verdi’s musical heir, and to place Puccini and Massenet in a culture dominated by high-flown, nationalistic rhetoric promoted by the two rival companies. This insight allows scholars to mark the differences between Sonzogno’s marketing rhetoric and Ricordi’s, and to start sketching the rhetorical and aesthetic outlines of their competition. More broadly, my findings suggest that scholars should take a highly critical approach to narratives put forward by the Casa Ricordi in this period, for the firm, through its dominance of the historiography of Italian opera, minimized Massenet’s aesthetic and cultural importance to fine secolo opera. This is not to say that the standard Ricordi narrative of Italian opera is valueless, but that it must be understood for what it is, the descendant of the company’s marketing copy, and it must be understood in relation to competing historical accounts.

Fourth, and finally, my research has opened a conversation between the study of operatic reception and translation studies. This interdisciplinary approach, I believe, has the potential to transform our understanding of cross-cultural musical reception: for far too often, opera scholars discuss the reception of foreign operas without addressing translational processes. By focusing on Massenet’s translation into the Italian language, I hope to have shown that translation can be an essential part of musical reception studies, since translation can fundamentally alter the relationship between music and text. This approach therefore has major implications for the study of any music which has a sizeable textual element, for what is gained in translation is just as important as what is lost. Translation thus is a powerful analytical tool which can and should alter our understanding of musical reception across cultural boundaries, both in terms of linguistic content and as a metaphor for transformative processes of cultural transfer.
Massenet’s lasting legacy in Italy merits further study, and my findings have the potential to transform our understanding of the era. Although his impact in Italy has rarely been explored in detail until now, this dissertation has demonstrated that Massenet, like Verdi and Wagner, played a significant role in fine secolo Italian operatic culture. Unlike his peers, however, Massenet’s role in Italy was constantly open to redefinition: his music was inherently French, was inspired by the Italian masters, was inherently cosmopolitan, was fundamentally “Latin.” These wildly divergent views of Massenet’s cultural significance suggest that his music was caught in the crossfire of a broader aesthetic and cultural struggle between the Casa Ricordi and the Casa Sonzogno, and was facilitated by the complex and often overlooked processes of textual and cultural translation. Ultimately, the many interpretations of both Massenet and his music provide rich insights into the complex politics of fine secolo Italian musical culture.
APPENDIX 1: PRODUCTIONS OF MASSENET’S OPERAS IN MILAN, 1879–1912

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<tr>
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<td>December 1</td>
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<td>1894</td>
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<td>Verdi</td>
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<td>Cremona</td>
<td>Ponchielli</td>
<td>Maria Stuarda Savelli</td>
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<td>Vera Domelli</td>
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31"Teatri d'Italia: Cremona," MA 28 no. 6 (31 Jan 1894), 8.

41 Rivista musicale illustrata 1 no. 6 (March–April 1894), 118; “Teatri d'Italia: Faenza,” MA 28 no. 7–8 (10 Feb 1894), 9.

51"Teatri d'Italia: Bologna," MA 28 no. 9–10 (20 Feb 1894), 7.


71 Rivista musicale illustrata 1 no. 6 (March–April 1894), 119.

81“Arte e scienze,” Gazzetta piemontese, 18 & 22 April 1894.


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<td>Lirico</td>
<td>E. Bendazzi Garulli / Lison Frandin</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli</td>
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<td>Rossini</td>
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<td>Drammatico</td>
<td>Elvira Miotti</td>
<td>Nassareno Brescia / Guglielmo Mazzoni</td>
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<td>Zoe Nesleida</td>
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<td>[Joaquín] Gioachino Bayo</td>
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17“Teatri d’Italia,” MA 29 no. 8–9 (10 Feb 1895), 9.
18“Teatri d’Italia,” MA 29 no. 10 (20 Feb 1895), 9.
20“Nouvelles diverses: étranger,” Le Ménestrel 61 no. 19 (12 May 1895), 450, refers to the tenor as “Garbini” but this is most probably Garbin.
<table>
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<td>1898: March 9&lt;sup&gt;24&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Nuovo</td>
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<sup>21</sup>“Corrispondenze,” RTM 34 no. 1508 (1 Jan 1896), 3.

<sup>22</sup>“Teatri: Catania,” MA 30 no. 27–28 (1 July 1896), 7.

<sup>23</sup>“Arte e scienze,” La gazzetta piemontese, 21 & 23 Nov 1896.

<sup>24</sup>“Teatri,” La provincia di Pisa, 17 March 1898, 3.

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20"Milano: Lirico," CP 69 no. 11 (14 Apr 1900), 1.
22"Fra Parucche e Cibus," Il ponte di Pisa 14 no. 13 (1 Apr 1906), 3; and 14 no. 14, (8 Apr 1906), 3.
23"Corrispondenze: Napoli" GTI 35 no. 30 (30 Nov 1906), 2.
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<td>Carlo Silvestri (?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910: January 1 (14)</td>
<td>Livorno</td>
<td>Rossini/Politeama</td>
<td>Francisca Solari</td>
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<td>Carlo Dani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910: May 25</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Ikso/Gallupi</td>
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<td>Genzardi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911: October 28</td>
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<td>Regio</td>
<td>L. Cannetti</td>
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<td>Edoardo Garbin/F. Tumminello</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911: December 27</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Albertina Baldi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Romano Ciarov</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Pavia</td>
<td>Fraschini</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1913: December 20–</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1, 1914</td>
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<td>1914: January 13</td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>Nuovo</td>
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<td>/February 34</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aristodemo Giorgini</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914: December 26</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Carlo Felice</td>
<td>Rosina Storchio</td>
</tr>
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<td>Beniamino Gigli</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915: January 8</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>San Carlo</td>
<td>Ersilde Cervi Caroli</td>
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<td>Tito Schipa</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915: January</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pagliano</td>
<td>Tedeschi</td>
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<td>1916: January 30</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
<td>Rosina Storchio</td>
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<td>Alessandro Bonci/Tito Schipa</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916: March 9</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Ersilde Cervi Caroli/Rosina Storchio</td>
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<td>Tito Schipa</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916: November 11</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
<td>Act III, in concert; Gino Marinuzzi, conductor</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916: December 2</td>
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<td>Biondo</td>
<td>Luba Satarian</td>
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<td>Angelo Parola</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917: January 23</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Politeama Chiarella</td>
<td>Gina Viganò</td>
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<td>Beniamino Gigli</td>
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32“Teatri: Firenze,” MA 42 no. 1–2 (1 Jan 1908), 22.

33“Teatri: Bologna,” MA 42 no. 1–2 (1 Jan 1908), 22.

34“Note volanti,” GDT 76 no. 41 (31 Dec 1914), 10.

35“Arti e scienze,” La stampa, 22 and 25 Jan 1917.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Opera</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>1917: August 1</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Bianca Cervelli, Giovanni Calleri</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918: March–May</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
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<td>1918: March 16</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
<td>Perla Barti, Beniamino Gigli</td>
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<td>1918: June 1</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Giuseppina Baldassare Tedeschi, Emilio Perera</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Pavia, Fraschini</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919: January 13</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
<td>Juanita Caracciolo, Dino Borgioli</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919: February 14</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Politeama Chiarella</td>
<td>Ersilde Cervi Caroli, Alessandro Bonci</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919: April 7</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Paganini</td>
<td>Ersilde Cervi Caroli</td>
<td>Alessandro Bonci, Umberto Macnez</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919: September 13</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Politeama Chiarella</td>
<td>Ersilde Cervi Caroli</td>
<td>Lionello Cecil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919: October – November</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920: January 3</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Rosina Storchio, Juanita Caracciolo; Volpi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921: February 22</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Genevieve Vix</td>
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<td>1922: September 9</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Balbo</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>1922: October 19</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Politeama Garibaldi</td>
<td>Ottavia Giordano, Roberto D’Alessio</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923: January 18</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Carignano</td>
<td>Maria Melato, Giuseppe Adami</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923: February 28</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Carmen Melis, various tenors</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924: January 19</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Fenice</td>
<td>Ebe Boccolini, Giuido Volpi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924: March – May</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924: November 22</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Politeama Chiarella</td>
<td>Carmen Floria, Solari</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924: March 25</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
<td>Zita Fumagalli-Riva, Samuel Tulmann</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925: February 14</td>
<td>Parma</td>
<td>Regio</td>
<td>Carmen Melis, Lionello Cecil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925: April 11</td>
<td>Catania</td>
<td>Bellini</td>
<td>Carmen Melis, Lionello Cecil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925: November 14</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
<td>Carmen Melis, Hipolito Lazaro</td>
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50“Arti e scienze,” La stampa, 15 Feb 1919.
57Note torinesi,” GDT 81 no. 17 (9 Oct 1919), 7; “Ultime di cronaca: Manon di Massenet al Politeama Chiarella,” La stampa, 14 Sept 1919.
58“Gli spettacoli d’oggi,” La stampa, 9, 10, and 16 Sept 1922.
60“Teatri: al Chiarella,” La stampa, 23 Nov 1924.
APPENDIX 3: PRODUCTIONS OF WERTHER IN ITALY, 1894–1925

Note that this list is not comprehensive. All data not derived from the Opera Theaters section of the Bibliography is cited in the footnotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Theater</th>
<th>Werther</th>
<th>Charlotte</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894: December 1</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli</td>
<td>Etelka Schiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894: December 15</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Mercadante</td>
<td>Giovanni Apostolu</td>
<td>Lison Frandin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895: March 20</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
<td>Fernando Valero</td>
<td>Ada Adini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895: March 30</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>San Carlo</td>
<td>Giovanni Apostolu</td>
<td>Lison Frandin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: January 22</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Carlo Felice</td>
<td>Ferrari d’Alboredo</td>
<td>Maria Lubkovska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896: January 1</td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>Drammatico</td>
<td>Stehle [?]</td>
<td>Turconi Bruni</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896: March 8</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli/E</td>
<td>Gemma Bellincioni</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897: January 6</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
<td>Umberto Beduschi</td>
<td>Angelica Pandolfini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897: March 15</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Del Corso</td>
<td>Umberto Beduschi</td>
<td>Amadea Santarelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897: April 18</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Fenice</td>
<td>Giovanni Apostolu</td>
<td>Amadea Santarelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897: April 18</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Carignano</td>
<td>Pietro Ferrari</td>
<td>Della Rogers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897: October 7</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Jean Delmas</td>
<td>Amadea Santarelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: April 16</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
<td>Franco Pandolfini</td>
<td>Elisa Petri</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899: December 30</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Fernando De Lucia</td>
<td>Maria Stuarda Savelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: February 7</td>
<td>Padua</td>
<td>Verdi</td>
<td>Paolino Agnelli</td>
<td>Lina Pasini Vitale</td>
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<td>1900: March 19</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pagliano</td>
<td>Umberto Beduschi</td>
<td>Pasini [Vitale?]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901: March 4</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Duse</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli</td>
<td>Amadea Santarelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901: March 19</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli</td>
<td>Armanda Degli Abbati</td>
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3ªMorini, La R. Accademia degli Immobili ed il suo Teatro “La Pergola, (1649 – 1925), 251–52. Morini lists this performance as occurring in 1898, but this seems to be an error; the 1897 date is confirmed by “Corrispondenze: Firenze,” GTI 16 no. 1 (20 Jan 1897), 2; “Corrispondenze: Firenze,” GMM 52 no. 4 (28 Jan 1897), 56.
6ª“Corrispondenze,” GTI 27 no. 10 (10 April 1898), 2; 27 no. 11 (20 April 1898), 2.
7ª“Corrispondenze: Padova,” GMM 55 no. 7 (15 Feb 1900), 103; “Teatri: Padova,” MA 34 no. 7–8 (11 Feb 1900), 8.
8ª“Corrispondenze: Firenze,” GMM 55 no. 12 (22 Mar 1900), 173.
9ª“Corrispondenze: Bologna,” GMM 56 no. 10 (7 Mar 1901), 160.
<table>
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<td>1901: November 3</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Jean Delmas Cesira Ferrani</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903: January 12</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Verdi</td>
<td>Alfonso Garulli Amelia Melani</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903: March 8 (6)</td>
<td>Livorno</td>
<td>Avvolaratti</td>
<td>Ernesto Colli Rosita Jacoby/Amelia Melani</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903: November 22(6)</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Biondo</td>
<td>Franco Mannucci Enrica Canovas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904: February 13</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
<td>Fernando De Lucia Maria Stuarda Savelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904: December 15</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Adriano</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini Peri de Stefani</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906: January 6 (11)</td>
<td>Parma</td>
<td>Regio</td>
<td>Leone Cazauran Elisa Petri</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906: December 26</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Del Corso</td>
<td>Montignani Maria Stuarda Savelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907: January 15 (8)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini Maria Prassino/Gemma Bellincioni</td>
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<td>1907: January 17</td>
<td>Modena</td>
<td>Municipale</td>
<td>Cazauran Teresina Burchi</td>
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<td>1908: January 5</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Politeama Nazionale</td>
<td>Gino Giovannelli Gotti Maria Prassino</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910: April 22 (2)</td>
<td>Pistoia</td>
<td>Manzoni</td>
<td>Alessandro Ravazzolo Emilia Corsi</td>
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<td>1910: November 4</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Biondo</td>
<td>Enrico Pazzi Giuseppina Bonetti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911: February 4</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Carlo Felice</td>
<td>Victor Granier Rosita Cesaretti</td>
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<td>1911: July 11 (8)</td>
<td>Pistoia</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Luigi Fauda Emilia Corsi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911: November 6 (7)</td>
<td>Reggio Emilia</td>
<td>Municipale</td>
<td>Narciso Del Rey Ebe Boccolini Zacconi</td>
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<td>1912: February 25 (7)</td>
<td>Catania</td>
<td>Bellini</td>
<td>Narciso Del Rey Ida Bergamasco</td>
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<td>1912: March 2</td>
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<td>Verdi</td>
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<td>1913: mid-January</td>
<td>Trento</td>
<td>Sociale</td>
<td>Alessandro Ravazzolo Maria Castellazzi</td>
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<td>1913: mid-February</td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>Ristori</td>
<td>Angelo Pintucci Jole Massa</td>
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<td>1913: February 25</td>
<td>Catania</td>
<td>Bellini</td>
<td>Narciso Del Rey Ida Bergamasco</td>
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12“Corrispondenze: Firenze,” GTI 32 no. 3 (30 Jan 1903), 1.

13“Corrispondenze: Firenze,” GTI 33 no. 6 (29 Feb 1904), 1.


15“Teatri: Bologna,” MA 41 no. 1–2 (1 Jan 1907), 22.


20“Teatri,” GTI 42 no. 5 (20 Feb 1913), 3.
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Orchestra Leader</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Cast</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Gorizia</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Vittorio Salbego</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914: April 13</td>
<td>Udine</td>
<td>Minerva</td>
<td>Vittorio Salbego</td>
<td>Anita Conti</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914: September / October</td>
<td>Ravenna</td>
<td>Mariani</td>
<td>Umberto Macnez</td>
<td>Ida Bergamasco</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914: October</td>
<td>Padua</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Vittorio Salbego</td>
<td>Anita Conti</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914: December</td>
<td>Lodi</td>
<td>Gaffurio</td>
<td>Umberto Macnez</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914: December 5 (2)</td>
<td>Reggio Emilia</td>
<td>Municipale</td>
<td>Umberto Macnez</td>
<td>Giulia Tess</td>
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<td>1914: December 19 (2)</td>
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<td>Umberto Macnez</td>
<td>Giulia Tess</td>
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<td>1915: January 7 (20)</td>
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<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Umberto Macnez</td>
<td>Giulia Tess</td>
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<td>1915: January 12 (2)</td>
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<td>1916: June 28 (2)</td>
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<td>Reinach</td>
<td>Giuseppe Giorgi</td>
<td>Ida Bergamasco</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917: mid-February (28)</td>
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<td>Dal Verme</td>
<td>Arnoldo Georgewski</td>
<td>Annie Malatesta</td>
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<td>1917: July (?) / August (29)</td>
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<td>Ida Bergamasco</td>
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<td>?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918: July 26 (1)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Eliseo</td>
<td>Vornos</td>
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<td>1918: November 28 (7)</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
<td>Marcello Govoni</td>
<td>Giuseppina Bonetti</td>
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<td>1918: December (31)</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
<td>Romano Ciaroff</td>
<td>Baldi Vetri</td>
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<td>Politeama Chiarella</td>
<td>Marcello Govoni</td>
<td>Gina Fuini</td>
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21“Teatri” GTI 42 no. 6 (2 Mar 1913), 3.
22“Teatri,” GTI 43 no. 7 (10 Mar 1914), 3.
23“Teatri,” GTI 43 no. 11 (20 April 1914), 3. The orchestra was led by Mario Mascagni, the composer’s nephew.
24“Da Ravenna,” GDT 76 no. 35 (8 Oct 1914), 4.
25“Note volanti,” GDT 76 no. 36 (22 Oct 1914), 7.
26“Negli altri teatri d’Italia,” GDT 76 no. 41 (31 Dec 1914), 5.
29“Noti volanti,” GDT 79 no. 16 (9 Aug 1917), 4.
31“Note fiorentine,” GDT 80 no. 25 (Dec 1918), 3; Ugo Morini, Pergola, 287.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Principal</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919: April 19</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
<td>Romano Ciaroff</td>
<td>Laetitia Casabella de Montecucchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919: May</td>
<td>Cesena</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Marcello Govoni</td>
<td>Nerina Lollini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919: November</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Juan Nadal</td>
<td>Baldi Vetri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919: November 22</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Marcello Govoni</td>
<td>Ida Bergamasco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920: April 4</td>
<td>Bergamo</td>
<td>Donizetti</td>
<td>Juan Nadal</td>
<td>Elvira Magliulo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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33“Note volanti,” GDT 81 no. 9 (15 May 1919), 7.
34“Da Trieste,” GDT 81 no. 20 (20 Nov 1919), 5.
35“Da Genoa,” GDT 81 no. 21 (11 Dec 1919), 5.
Note that this list is not comprehensive. All data not derived from the Opera Theaters section of the Bibliography, in Fryer and Usova (Lina Cavalieri), or Chuillon (Mattia Battistini), is cited in the footnotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Theater</th>
<th>Thaïs</th>
<th>Athanaël</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1903: October 17 (18)</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
<td>Lina Cavalieri / Emma Vecla</td>
<td>Francesco Maria Bonini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905: October 18</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Lina Cavalieri / Emma Vecla</td>
<td>Francesco Maria Bonini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: January 26 (14)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Rovescali/ Carmen Melis/ Gemma Belincioni (April 25)</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini / Francesco Cigada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: May 11</td>
<td>Ravenna</td>
<td>Alighieri</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Adamo Gregoretti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: August 25</td>
<td>Brescia</td>
<td>Grande</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Francesco Cigada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: September 24</td>
<td>Cremona</td>
<td>Ponchielli</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Francesco Cigada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: January 15th (6)</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
<td>Fochessato</td>
<td>Domenico Viglione Borghese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: February 20 (2)</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Fenice</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Giuseppe Kaschmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: May 6 (9)</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Francesco Cigada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: September 26</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Domenico Viglione Borghese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908: December 2</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>San Carlo</td>
<td>Lilian Granville</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini</td>
</tr>
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<td>1910: January 3</td>
<td>Piacenza</td>
<td>Municipale</td>
<td>Elisa Raccanelli</td>
<td>Giorgio Schottler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910: January 6 (10)</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Regio</td>
<td>Carmen Carpi Toschi</td>
<td>Léon Paulus / Benedetto Challis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910: January 13 (10)</td>
<td>Pistoia</td>
<td>Manzoni</td>
<td>Giulia Bari</td>
<td>Oddo Galeotti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914: January 24</td>
<td>Novara</td>
<td>Coccia</td>
<td>Alvina Diannette</td>
<td>Oddo Galeotti</td>
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</table>

1^"Teatri: Ferrara," MA 42 no. 5–6 (21 Jan 1908), 11.

2^"Dopo la prima recita, durante la quale il baritono Paulus, che cantava in francese, fu fischiato, l'opera venne sospesa e ripresa dopo 23 giorni." Guido Leone, L'opera a Palermo dal 1653 al 1987, II: 58.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Location</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Performer/Ensemble</th>
<th>Conductor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915: January 1</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Bianca Bellincioni</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stagno</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917: January 27</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Mattia Battistini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919: April 19</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
<td>Carmen Melis</td>
<td>Taurino Parvis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920: December 21</td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>Filarmonico</td>
<td>Carmen Carpi Toschi</td>
<td>Mariano Stabile</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921: January/February</td>
<td>Pistoia</td>
<td>Manzoni</td>
<td>Giulia Bari</td>
<td>Oddo Galeotti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921: March 1</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>José Segura Tallien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924: April 15</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
<td>Flora Revalles</td>
<td>Enrico de Franceschi</td>
</tr>
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APPENDIX 5: PRODUCTIONS OF MASSENET’S OTHER OPERAS IN ITALY, 1878–1925

Note that these lists are not comprehensive. All data not derived from the Opera Theaters section of the Bibliography is cited in the footnotes.

Ariane (Arianna), Opéra, 1906. 1 production.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Theater</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907: December 19</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Regio</td>
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Cendrillon (occasionally Cenerentola), Opéra-Comique, 1899. 10 productions.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>City</th>
<th>Theater</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899: December 28</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: September 27</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Adriano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: December 29</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Regio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901: May 4</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama Genovese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901: November 16</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902: April 19</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>San Carlo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903: January 28</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>La Fenice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906: February 27</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Dal Verme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: December 26</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920: June 4</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Paganini</td>
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Le Cid (Il Cid), Opéra, 1885. 8 productions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1889: April 7</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890: January 11</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890: December 25</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891: January 28</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
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<td>1891: March 5</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pagliano</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897: October 14</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897: December 26</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Carlo Felice</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907: December 26</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Fenice</td>
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Grisélidis (Griselda), Opéra-Comique, 1901. 3 productions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1902: November 25</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904: February 4</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Carlo Felice</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904: April 10</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
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**Hérodiade (Erodiade),** Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, 1881. 17 productions.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1882: February 23</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886: October 4</td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
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<tr>
<td>1902: January 18</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>Comunale G. Verdi</td>
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<td>1905: August 13</td>
<td>Macerata</td>
<td>Rossi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907: January</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>Comunale G. Verdi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907: October 23</td>
<td>Treviso</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909: March 9</td>
<td>Fiume</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
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<td>Grande</td>
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<td>1910: January 2</td>
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<td>Regio</td>
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<td>1910: January 19</td>
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<td>Ponchielli</td>
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<td>La Fenice</td>
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<td>1911: January 11</td>
<td>Parma</td>
<td>Regio</td>
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<td>1913: February 1</td>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>Petruzzelli</td>
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<td>1913: May 20</td>
<td>Lecce</td>
<td>Greco</td>
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<td>Mirandola</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
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<td>Palermo</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919: October 18</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama Genovese</td>
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**Le jongleur de Notre-Dame (Il giullare di Nostra Signora),** Monte Carlo, 1902. 1 production.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905: October 18</td>
<td>Milan</td>
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**La Navarraise (La Navarrese),** Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), London. 23 productions.

<table>
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<th>Date (performances)</th>
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<th>Theater</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1896: February 6</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896: September 29</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897: November 3</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899: January</td>
<td>Sanremo</td>
<td>Principe Amadeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899: February 14</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: December 16</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901: November 21</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903: January 3</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904: January 21</td>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>Petruzzelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904: December 16</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Bellini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905: November 18</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>Politeama Rossetti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906: March 28</td>
<td>Sanremo</td>
<td>Del Casinò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907: February 1</td>
<td>Messina</td>
<td>Vittorio Emanuele</td>
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<td>1907: May 26</td>
<td>Ascoli Piceno</td>
<td>Venticido Basso</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908: February 2</td>
<td>Venice</td>
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258
**Le portrait de Manon (Il ritratto di Manon), Opéra-Comique, 1894. 5 productions.**

<table>
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<th>City</th>
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<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Politeama Garibaldi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Lucca</td>
<td>del Giglio</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Lucca</td>
<td>del Giglio</td>
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**Le Roi de Lahore (Il re di Lahore), Opéra, 1877. 36 productions.**

<table>
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<th>Theater</th>
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<td>1878: February 13</td>
<td>Turin (20)</td>
<td>Regio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878: March 21</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878: August 15</td>
<td>Vicenza</td>
<td>Eretenio</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bologna</td>
<td>Comunale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878: December 26</td>
<td>Piacenza</td>
<td>Municipale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Venice (19)</td>
<td>Fenice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879: February 6</td>
<td>Milan (20)</td>
<td>Scala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879: March 16</td>
<td>Pisa</td>
<td>Nuovo</td>
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<td>1879: May 12</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Politeama</td>
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<td>Filarmonico</td>
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<td>1882: December 25</td>
<td>Naples (22)</td>
<td>San Carlo</td>
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<td>Treviso</td>
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<td>Modena</td>
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14“Corrispondenze: Trieste,” GMM 34 no. 23 (8 June 1879), 208; “Corrispondenze: Trieste,” GMM 34 no. 21 (25 May 1879), 192.
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>City</th>
<th>Theater</th>
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<td>Comunale</td>
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<td>1887: December 25</td>
<td>Parma</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889: c. June 11</td>
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<td>1889: August 10</td>
<td>Fermo</td>
<td>dell’Aquila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890: January 23</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>Nuovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890: August 17</td>
<td>Brescia</td>
<td>Grande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894: May 17</td>
<td>Ravenna</td>
<td>Alighieri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: March 15</td>
<td>Palermo</td>
<td>Massimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: October 16</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898: December 26</td>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>Regio</td>
</tr>
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<td>1899: February 5</td>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>Piccinni</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899: March 25</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala</td>
</tr>
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<td>1902: June 18</td>
<td>Fabriano</td>
<td>Gentile</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905: January 24</td>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>Petruzzelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923: July 23</td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>dell’Arena</td>
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*Sapho (Saffo)*, Opéra-Comique, 1897. 15 productions.

<table>
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<th>Theater</th>
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<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
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<td>1898: April</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Pergola</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898: June 14</td>
<td>Trento</td>
<td>Sociale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: November 16</td>
<td>Ancona</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898: December-January 1899</td>
<td>Mantua</td>
<td>Sociale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: December</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Rossini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898: December 6</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899: January 5</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>Carlo Felice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899: January</td>
<td>Sanremo</td>
<td>Principe Amadeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899: January 25</td>
<td>Trieste</td>
<td>G. Verdi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: March 29</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900: December 8</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901: December 6</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Lirico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906: October</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Mercadante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913/14</td>
<td>Novara</td>
<td>Coccia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917: March 3</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Costanzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917: February 28</td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>Scala (Acts II and V)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Thérèse (Teresa)*, Monte Carlo, 1907. 1 production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (performances)</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911: November 28</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Bellini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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