FILLING PLOT HOLES: A SUGGESTED SHIFT IN OPERA EDUCATION FOCUSING ON THE SOURCE LITERATURE OF OPERAS

by

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For my grampa and gramma, Herb and Jeanne Evert,

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Abstract

Students of voice are interested in the literary works on which librettists and composers base their operas. However, the guidance of these students toward this literature is relegated to electives, seminars, and the discretion of voice teachers, as opposed to a standardized class. Because many operas specifically exist because of the inspiration from these literary sources, students could benefit from a structured discussion either in a classroom or within the opera casts. In institutions where acting classes are not required, a course in source literature may also help with character creation. The following analysis discusses both old and new research on a range of opera topics through the lens of the source literature to demonstrate the potential for classroom or cast discussions to increase the depth of understanding.

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Introduction

Students of voice and opera are primarily taught to examine an opera through the musical score. The score is what all technical aspects of an opera performance are built upon. Student singers are directed how to read, interpret, and execute the score through the music-specific courses in collegiate and post-graduate curricula. Furthermore, the historical aspects of an opera's creation are also important to the contextual understanding of the composer's and librettist's process in creating the score. An opera singer must also be an actor, and it is in this area that many opera singers lack training. A naturally expressive singer with any combination of technical vocal abilities, facial expression, and body language will be able to keep the attention of the audience on the plot as it unfolds on stage, but the singers who only have technically good singing can, for example, reduce Sarastro in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* down to a bass merely singing an aria. Despite the thorough training mentioned above in collegiate and post-graduate programs, many talented student opera singers do not possess acting abilities.

I propose that creating better singer-actors requires greater emphasis on classical acting training as well as classical singing training. Classical acting training is a compilation of skills that helps actors understand and interpret their roles and usually includes imagining the circumstances of the plot, personalizing the character's behavior and being able to improvise, respond to external stimuli (i.e. the other actors on stage and their movements), and analysis of the script.[1] Classical acting includes focus on the source literature of the opera/libretto. *Source literature* specifically refers to the literary source on which an opera is based (a play, a novel, a

1. Lawrence Cook, "A Complete Guide to Classical Acting," Backstage.com, published March 1, 2021. accessed March 25, 2021, https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/complete-guide-classical-acting-3727/. Classical acting training, much like classical singing training, is made up of so many parts that there is no single source that covers the entirety of what it entails. The two disciplines overlap significantly.

poem, an epic, etc.). Although the concepts of classical acting training may appear to be common sense for opera singers as much as actors, the difference between them is the analysis of the source literature for additional information that is lost during the adaptation process from source literature to libretto to opera score.

BACKGROUND

> "Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without [exact] replication. And there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute…"[2]

Operas are adaptations. Adaptation allows composers and librettists to focus on what they believe to be the most important aspects of the original work. Enhancing the core emotions of the characters and the height of the drama and melodrama are arguably essential to creating the most powerful music – or vice versa.

Linda Hutcheon reminds the reader that adaptation is both the term for process and product.[3] As a product, an opera is an artifact of its time period, and can be treated as such through the study of the process of creating it (Musicology). However, opera is also a transposition of other artifacts, such as written literary and historical works. Composers and librettists both pay homage to and create their own versions of the literary works. Verdi created many of his operas from popular theatre works he would see in Paris, and many of those plays were smash hits at the time, including *La Dame aux camélias* (1848, Alexander Dumas *fils*), which was itself a solo adaptation by the author from his popular novel. Sister Helen Prejean opened the eyes of the nation with her enlightening, powerful accounts of being a spiritual

2. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group LLC, 2006), 7.

3. Ibid., 15.

advisor to death row inmates and the state of the death penalty in the country with her first book. *Dead Man Walking* (1993, Helen Prejean) became a movie within a few years (1995), and an opera five years later (2000). Both examples are lasting immortalizations of real people and events. In this sense we have lasting impressions of specific lives that can help inform the future, just the same as archeological artifacts.

Opera as a process is a collaborative adaptation process (composer and librettist) as opposed to the usually solo process of the authors of novels or poetry. Operas are furthermore collaborative as the many forces behind creating a specific production of an opera come together. Directors, designers, and conductors all have a hand in creating the production in their own specified roles. A singer not only has to follow dramatic direction from the director and musical direction from the conductor, but she must consider what her character's motivations and feelings would be. This is particularly true when a singer is granted more freedom to create her character free of direction.

SUMMATION

When student singers become aware of source literature, they generally pick up the habit of reading and studying these works. Many singers do not learn about this vast resource until they have observed a professional doing so or have received specific guidance.[4] Furthermore, every singer will focus on different social and economic factors that drive the characters and plot based on their own life experiences. I believe that a discussion of the source literature between peers will reveal new ways of thinking about opera character development. Within this discussion, I am suggesting that an emphasis on what changes between the source and the

4. Anecdotally reported by my peers at Indiana University.

libretto is important, especially in the sequence of the plot and the development of the characters. Ideally a discussion of source literature can eventually become a standard required class in higher education. Currently it is up to the discretion of the voice teachers, coaches, or directors individually to teach their own version of source guidance, or similar classes available are relegated to electives or seminars.

The following chapters in this document will discuss what different eras and operas can yield to a singer. I have chosen popular operas because, in a classroom setting, I believe student singers would find it easier to grasp the usefulness of source literature study if they are analyzing opera plots and characters with which they are already familiar. Each chapter will focus on a specific era of opera as it would pertain to a different aspect of literary analysis (plot, character, individual/specific experiences).

Chapter 1

Enlightenment Opera & Sources of Plot

Enlightenment opera and early Romantic opera derived their plots from a litany of literary sources, even when the intention was to use only one. Authors and composers chose plots to be altered to suit their own purposes and points of view, and this could mean a plot came from a long line of adaptations of one story, like Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787), or many different tales coalesce to become one plot, as in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791). Despite the sometimes-fantastic plots of operas, characters began to morph from those of just characters to characters with more human traits. However, the ongoing metamorphosis of plots can go too far and end up creating a trifle based on a masterpiece, as it was with Rossini's *Otello* (1816). For these reasons, Enlightenment operas are excellent examples for students to grasp the adaptation of plot and characters.

Don Giovanni

The legend of Don Juan has the same basic premise throughout most of its history: a rampant philanderer who plays with and discards women, who finally receives his comeuppance at the hands of a supernatural being who gives him a chance to repent, knowing the Don will not, and drags him to purgatory. The most important versions of this fable are Tirso de Molina's (1579–1648; née Gabriel Téllez) *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de Piedra (The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest;* fl. 1616) and Molière's (1622–1673; née Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) *Don Juan Tenorio ou le Festin de pierre (Don Juan or the Feast with the Statue*; 1665). It is chiefly from these two plays that Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749–1838; née Emanuele Conegliano) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) created their *Don Giovanni* (1787).

In Molina's play, *El burlador de Sevilla*, Don Juan begins in Italy with Doña Isabela, who calls the guards after Don Juan has dishonored her by pretending to be her betrothed, Don Octavio. She calls the guards who arrive promptly, but when Don Juan is left alone with the Captain, it is revealed the captain is his uncle, who frees him and lies that it was indeed Octavio who seduced Doña Isabela. To get to the point, I will only describe his transactions with the women of the play. Don Juan and his servant, Catalinón, flee and are shipwrecked on a beach where Juan goes about seducing the woman who comes to help them, a peasant named Tisbea, even though he has just almost drowned. Then, upon his return to Seville, Don Juan meets a friend of his of almost equal repute who speaks of his sudden love for just one woman, Doña Ana. Don Juan pulls a similar stunt to that of Italy and pretends to be his friend to enter her bedroom. When she calls for servants, her father, the Commander, comes, who is then killed in a dual. Finally, Don Juan (again banished) comes upon a peasant wedding and manages to fool the bride, Arminta, and her father into thinking Juan arranged for her hand a long time ago, and he gains access to the bridal chamber.

All four women eventually meet in the presence of the King of Spain, who now has the unfortunate task of figuring out which woman has the rightful claim to Don Juan as a husband, since this was the way to reconcile the loss of honor. The sexism of this action is not lost on today's audiences, but in 1616 this was the custom. Luckily for the women, Catalinón bursts into the hall and tells the story of how his master was dragged into the earth by the statue of the Commander.[5] All are left to their original pairings after the truth of Don Juan's escapades are

5. Tirso de Molina, *The Playboy of Seville or Supper with a Statue* (fl. 1616), trans. Adrienne M. Schizzano, edited by Oscar Mandel, *The Theatre of Don Juan: A Collection of Plays and Views, 1630–1963* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 98–99.

disclosed by his uncle and Catalinón, and all are happy both in their arrangements and the supernatural retribution exacted.[6]

Robert Donington posits that Mozart's most prevalent theme is reconciliation.[7] In all three of the Da Ponte operas, reconciliation is approached differently. In *Don Giovanni,* a person may wonder in what sense reconciliation exists. The second definition of reconciliation is the more prevalent in *Don Giovanni*: "the action of making one view or belief compatible with another."

The reconciliation in *El burlador* is two-fold. The original couples marry and are happy because Don Juan's crimes are known, which follows the first definition of reconciliation ("restoration of friendly relations"). The second reconciliation is when the statue takes Don Juan with him, cementing the belief that one who lives his life basely will be punished eternally. This tangible image of damnation would be effective on the Catholic audiences of renaissance Spain, which is also why the tale translates so well to the Counter-Reformation opera theater of Austria.

Molina's play would not have translated well to opera if that were the only source, though. The female characters were too flat; they each had only one vocalized purpose.[8] With the only two motives boiling down to marriage and vengeance, the women are literally two-dimensional. Molière adds the third dimension. The events of Molière's *Dom Juan* follow a nearly inexplicable course, but his prose and comedy in individual scenes are gold.[9] When Da

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6. Molina, 99.

7. Robert Donington, *Opera & Its Symbols: The Unity of Words, Music, and Staging* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 53.

8. Molina, 98–99. Two, Doña Isabela and Tisbea, demand marriage to restore their honor; Arminta wants marriage primarily to be ennobled (she does not dwell on her honor for long); and Doña Ana wants to avenge her father. Doña Ana, it turns out, recognized the man was not her beloved before Don Juan could deflower her.

9. Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin), translated by John Ozell, revised by Oscar Mandel, *Dom Juan ou le Festin du pierre*, 1665, edited by Oscar Mandel, *The Theatre of Don Juan: A Collection of Plays and Views, 1630–*

Ponte and Mozart created *Don Giovanni*, they took one important thing from Molière: Donna Elvira. Elvira is roughly the same in *Don Juan* as she is in *Don Giovanni*: she is a woman who travels to find Don Juan because he promised to marry her. She is scorned and ridiculed throughout by the Don who encourages others to do so as well. In *Dom Juan* it is revealed she left a convent to marry him after he seduced her, so the hurt is that much greater – even her two brothers are seeking revenge against Don Juan.[10]

Donna Elvira adds another dimension to the operatic character by being a noblewoman who acts like a normal human being. She is the *mezzo carattere* of the three women. Her first aria, "Ah, chi mi dice mai," is serious because her motives are serious.[11] Although some may think it is crazy or ridiculous to travel trying to find Don Giovanni, this is something found in both source plays in multiple characters, so this action is not meant to be comedic. When the aria is performed as a solo without Don Giovanni's mocking commentary, there is little comedic about it. The second aria, "Ah! fuggi il traditor," is certainly comic, despite yet again being entirely serious in Elvira's mind.[12]

Donna Elvira's final aria is a unique case. The aria was added when the opera opened in Vienna because the infamously difficult diva Catarina Cavallieri (Italianate stage name of Katharina Cavalier) demanded it. This aria did the character a service, unlike most of Cavallieri's

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1963 (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 125–142.: Too many characters (114), statue shows up for no reason (162), etc.

10. Molière, 125–142.

11. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Don Giovanni, Opera in Two Acts* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1961), 32.

12. Ibid., 69. It is important to point out that it is unfair to cast only Donna Elvira as irrational because all five of the characters outside of Don Giovanni and Leporello act similarly when they corner Leporello in Don Giovanni's dress in the sextet "Sola, sola in bujo loco" (Act II, Scene 1). As stated earlier with Elvira's "Ah, chi mi dice mai," the tone of those seeking vengeance is serious, but the comedy comes from outside that anger (Leporello unfortunately in Don Giovanni's costume).

demands, historically.[13] In Molière's play Elvira comes to Don Juan to make a plea for him to repent because she is genuinely scared for his soul, which translates into her appearance in the final scene of *Don Giovanni*.[14] Elvira in Molière describes at length her feelings for Don Juan and how they have morphed from her previous vengeful remonstrances. This soliloquy is truncated for the finale of *Don Giovanni*, but when "Mi tradì quell'alma ingrata" is added to the Viennese production, a significant part of her description of her feelings is reinserted into the opera as a *scena*, enhanced by Mozart's music.

Kristi Brown-Montesano refers to the sympathetic discussion of Elvira in many analyses as a pitfall. She reminds the reader that Elvira reinforces a stereotype of her time of codependence without cool, collected consideration of her actions, as well as the actions of the man to whom she is so devoted. These opinions surround Brown-Montesano's phrase "hyperly emotionally dependent Donna Elviras of today," which appears to be more of a criticism of the singers' interpretations of the character than the actual academic discussions of Elvira.[15] If it is indeed the performers who need the lesson, the soliloquy in Molière's *Dom Juan* is a useful tool. She describes her own conduct, having been full of errors, and asks for the sake of "the perfect and pure love which brings me hither for your good" to change his ways, and that regardless of what he may think, his time to repent is limited.[16] Whether the "perfect and pure love" performers want to interpret for the stage is that of her own heart or that of heaven, she is still

13. Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas* (Oxford: Clarnedon Paperbacks, 1988), 144. Cavallieri's demands (usually recorded in letters by composers) resulted in arias which, in the present era, are excluded from productions as being extraneous and do not assist the plot of the opera.

14. Molière, 154.

15. Kristi Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 56–58.

16. Molière, 154.

saying this with a calmer resolve than what is seen in the first acts of the opera. Reconciliation here is sought, not through vengeance, but hopefully Don Giovanni requiting her love, or reconciliation with God through penitence.

Donna Elvira's new sense of calm as she understands her feelings can easily be interpreted in the rondo of "Mi tradi quell' alma ingrata." A person who feels so deeply will not consistently remain cool-headed, so her melody wavering into other keys and melismas that meander off into half-steps (initially without a clear pattern) are her feelings becoming unsettled again. However, she always returns to the E flat major of the A section, and ends there, triumphantly.[17] If a singer portrays Elvira's resolve effectively in "Mi tradi," her appearance in the finale can be more effectively interpreted as cool-headed and purposeful. After Don Giovanni's mocking, although the score tells her to sing it "with disdain," Elvira's reproach needs not be the kind of craze that she entered with at the beginning of the opera. She can keep her dignity as she says "Remain, barbarian, in this foul stench, a horrible example of iniquity."[18] During the *lieto fine*, Elvira states she will retire to a convent, which is fitting as that is where Don Juan found her in the first place in Molière.[19]

Da Ponte and Mozart were not the first to add Donna Elvira to the cast, though. Bertati and Gazzaniga's opera preceded Mozart's by a matter of months, premiering in Venice in February 1787, so Da Ponte at least must have been familiar with it. Gazzaniga's opera was a success already. Da Ponte- and Mozart's opera is certainly the greater success for posterity.

17. Mozart, 1961, 235–239.

18. Ibid., 268.

19. Ibid., 291.

Zerlina is an interesting combination of characters. No character of this name exists in the previous editions, but this is good because it forces the reader to pay close attention to characters who share any recognizable features. The first place to look is the peasant girls. Bertati and Gazzaniga beg the comparison by calling their peasant bride Maturina, which is the name of one of the peasants in Molière's play. Maturina is not as interesting because all she shares with the namesake is social status. Zerlina, however, can easily be found in both peasant girls of Molina's play.

As mentioned in the earlier synopsis, Molina's Don Juan seduces Tisbea after she finds him and his servant on the beach, and, subsequently, Arminta on her wedding night by laying a fraudulent claim on her as a bride. If you only know the play's synopsis, Arminta is the Zerlina analogue only because she is a peasant bride, and Don Juan seduces her easily convincing her that he will marry and ennoble. The parallel ends here. However, the personality of Zerlina – a woman who has a strong attractive and controlling power over the men she likes (except the Don) – also comes from Tisbea. She is introduced by a soliloquy which begins: "Of all the girls whose rosy feet the waves kiss on these shores, I alone am not ruled by love. […] My only pleasure is to give the fish my baited line."[20] The metaphor is obvious. When a young man who is clearly in love with Tisbea enters stage right, she plays with his words of love, and both returns and does not return his affection. When Peasant #4 announces the shipwrecked men, she immediately starts calling the shots, telling the men to go get her father and various implements to revive the strangers. As soon as Don Juan is conscious, he begins his seduction - literally. She generally keeps a cool head but wonders aloud if she can trust what he is saying or if he is playing with her. Later in her cottage Don Juan creates a distraction so he can seduce Tisbea and

20. Molière, 57.

succeeds. In Molière's Don Juan Tisbea becomes Charlotte, who likewise cannot figure out if the Don's protestations of love are sincere or a ruse, but she is nonetheless taken in by him. These scenes converge to become the recitative "Alfin siam liberate, Zerlinetta gentil" and the following "La ci darem la mano."[21] Regardless of Don Giovanni's entreaties, Zerlina marries Masetto and Giovanni is punished.

Die Zauberflöte

The ultimate example of Mozart's moralistic operatic settings is *Die Zauberflöte* (1791). Much research has focused on the Masonic symbolism within the opera and, even though that research is relevant, it leads to people seeking the Masonic symbols instead of other pertinent research into the opera. It is a *Märchen* (fairy tale), and the descendent of a large family tree of legends and mythology that can be traced to and far beyond *Die Zauberflöte* into film and television.

Many fairy tales and epics have been reasonably claimed as precursors to Mozart's final opera: "Lulu, oder die Zauberflöte" (Jacob August Liebeskind, 1786); "Oberon" (Christoph Martin Wieland, 1780); "Megara, Die fürchterliche Hexe" (Philipp Hafner, 1763); "Life of Sethos" (Jean Terrasson, 1731); "Huon de Bordeaux" (Anonymous, 13th century); "Partenopeus de Blois" (Anonymous, fl.1170/80); and "Die Nibelungenlied" (Anonymous, 8th century).[22] The lineage is not as clear-cut as that of *Don Giovanni*, though. *Märchen* are both independent tales and homogenous. There is a lack of definition for "fairy tales" until the Countess d'Aulnoy

21. Mozart, 1961, 61–69.

22. Kurt Honolka, *Papageno: Emanuel Schikaneder, Man of the Theater in Mozart's Time*, translated by Jane Mary Wilde (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1984), 88–136.

(1650/51–1705) started publishing her "*contes de fées."*[23] Before this definition the history of written fairy tales, either newly written or transcribed from oral tradition, began 1600 B.C.E.[24] The lacking definition for fairy tales also leads to a great number of pre-1600 stories to be labelled legends, epics, myths, etc. The definitions of each of these narratives overlap considerably. Even when they are based on factual events, the oral traditions, like those of the Troubadours, and the lack of recorded history make for a blur of fact and fiction.

The specific traits of a fairy tale, however, are found in *Die Zauberflöte*. It is important to note that each of these characteristics have multiple plot points or characters that could apply to them. First, "plots will follow a basic pattern which begins with the protagonist confronted with an interdiction which he or she violates in some way [which]…leads to…the assignment of a task." The character is "marked by the task that becomes assigned identity and destiny."[25] This part more directly applies to Papageno, who has lied about a feat of strength, and after a brief magical jaw-wiring, he must be Tamino's sidekick. Tamino takes on the quest for love.[26] Second, "encounters with all sorts of characters: a deceitful villain [Queen of the Night, Monostatos], a mysterious individual or creature [Queen, Sarastro] who gives the protagonist[s] gifts [Queen originally presents the instruments, Sarastro allows them to be used in the trials],

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23. Ed. Jack Zipes. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xvi–xvii. The definition blurs further because so many imaginative tales have so many terms that can be applied to the same story: fairy tale, legend, epic, folk tale/narrative, romance, etc. Now, certainly when a person would research the definition, solid answers will appear, but when every single definition is set side-by-side, the true none-definitive nature of the synonyms becomes apparent.

24. Zipes, xvi–xvii.

25. Ibid.

26. Tamino, the protagonist, would usually be the one who has transgressed, according to fairy tales. Quite often the protagonist will err out of hubris, and so the powers that be demand retribution. Tamino's only actual error is believing he Queen's assertions, and for that he is put through the trials (just one interpretation). Other than that, arguing with a priest and breaking-and-entering are his only transgressions.

three different animals or creatures who offer gifts to help the protagonist[s] [the Genii especially; the gifts being advice, a maps app, and a picnic].” Third: “there is a sudden fall in the protagonist’s fortunes that is generally only a temporary setback.” Case in point is Pamina, also a protagonist, who despairs at Tamino’s silence, but is prevented from suicide by the Genii. Papageno also attempts suicide, despairing at missing out on some pretty tail[feathers]. Fourth: there will usually be three “battles with the villain” or three “impossible tasks completed.” “Battles” is perhaps the wrong word, but the Queen enters three times to cause trouble, and is defeated each time. Although her first temptation of Tamino succeeds, it is not her reward he seeks to obtain to save Pamina after meeting Sarastro. The Queen returns with a blade for Pamina to use to kill Sarastro; Pamina agonizes at the idea of murdering him and ultimately does not. The third time the Queen has come with her reinforcements, and they are defeated by…nothing.[27]

Masonic Mozart scholars point out the prevalence of the multiples of three in *Die Zauberflöte*, but that number is actually common in fairy tales.[28] The arguments for Masonic triples are usually focused on Mozart’s music as opposed to Schikaneder’s libretto. However, since Schikaneder continued to use the sums of three so constantly (three ladies-in-waiting, three team-switching spirits, etc.), singers studying the opera need to ask why these threes exist, if not

27. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The Magic Flute (Die Zauberflöte), An Opera in Two Acts* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1951), 162. In *Die Zauberflöte* this is literal. A crash of thunder is heard, and the music becomes more intense before it changes to the final E flat major section (p. 162–3), but nothing particularly happens to stop them. The Queen shrinks away from conflict, usually with a sudden streak of light to dramatically end the darkness, like Dracula when the daylight hits him.

28. David J. Buch, “*Die Zauberflöte*, Masonic Opera, and Other Fairy Tales,” *Acta Musicologica* 76, vol.76, [Fasc.] 2 (2004). The number three is important to the Freemasons because their belief system is built on three major principles, among other things.

to bolster some hidden concept. Did Schikaneder plan this, or is it because of faults in his libretto, as many scholars claim?

It is possible that, while creating his libretto, Schikaneder may have "lost the plot" more than a little. It does not take a scholar to see there are inconsistencies. For instance, why is it that Papageno is the one who saves Pamina? With such an act, in fairy tale and opera logic, Pamina should have fallen in love with him. What exactly happened that caused Tamino to be led away by the priests to face trials? There is no clear motive. Why, when the Queen enters the garden where Pamina is asleep, does she not simply grab her daughter and go? Why do the spirits, initially sent by the Queen as Tamino's guides, suddenly seem to favor/assist Sarastro's purposes in the second act? What exactly defeats the Queen in the end? All of these are questions asked by critics. This is where the life of Emanuel Schikaneder becomes more important.

The libretto's inconsistencies could be as simple as human error. Schikaneder was not just the librettist and premiere Papageno of the opera (Figure 1). He was the impresario of the Theatre an der Wieden, which was a public theater as opposed to the national court theater that so often staged 18th-century opera premieres. Schikaneder did much of the casting, he designed costumes and sets, and he was the director and stage manager of the entire opera.[29] Other *impressari* had a large hand in the management of operatic productions like he did, but I would posit that, because of his association with such an historically important opera, he is subjected to greater criticism than other librettists.[30]

29. Honolka, 94–95.

30. Ibid.

Zum Erstenmale:

Die

Zauberflöte.

Eine grosse Oper in 2 Akten, von Emanuel Schikaneder.

Personen.

Sarastro.	Hr. Gerl.
Tamino.	Hr. Schack.
Sprecher.	Hr. Winter.
Erster)	Hr. Schikaneder der ältere.
Zweiter) Priester.	Hr. Kistler.
Dritter)	Hr. Moll.
Königin der Nacht.	Mad. Hofer.
Pamina ihre Tochter.	Mlle. Gottlieb.
Erste)	Mlle. Klöpfer.
Zweite) Dame.	Mlle. Hofmann.
Dritte)	Mad. Schack.
Papagene.	Hr. Schikaneder der jüngere.
Ein altes Weib.	Mad. Gerl.
Monostatos ein Mohr.	Hr. Nouseul.
Erster)	Hr. Gieseke.
Zweiter) Sklav.	Hr. Fraisl.
Dritter)	Hr. Starke.
Priester, Sklaven, Gefolge.	

Figure 1. A section of the playbill from the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte*.[31]

What Schikaneder wanted from Mozart was an opera that would fill the theater consistently, and he got it. The opera was so successful that, after Mozart's death, Schikaneder made a sequel, *Das Labyrinth, oder die Zauberflöte zweiter Teil* (1798), collaborating with composer Peter von Winter (1754–1825). This opera was successful at the time of its premiere but is produced rarely now. Winter attempted to mimic Mozart's music at times to assist continuity between the two operas, but Winter's music only achieved mimicry instead of artistry,

31. Kurt Honolka, *Papageno: Emanuel Schikaneder, Man of the Theater in Mozart's Time* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1984), 92. A section of the playbill from the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte*. Schikaneder is mentioned in both of his roles: the librettist and the original Papageno.

and the mimic was not his style of composition.[32] Other librettists attempted sequels as well – especially those who were critical of Schikaneder's libretto at the time.[33]

Given this information, in what sense does the source literature assist the study of *Die Zauberflöte*? It is that the numerous fairy tale sources make sense of this fairy tale opera, in terms of what is true to fairy tales versus what is true to human nature. This is not a philosophical statement. Fairy tales work in an almost mechanical way, as was described earlier in Zipes. The characters do not often stray from their purposes. If Mozart and Schikaneder had kept true to fairy tales, Tamino would have transgressed and later saved Pamina, Sarastro would have been the evil sorcerer the Queen described, and the Queen would be the triumphant magical figure of the opera. We all know this is not what happens. Consider the opera from the view of Tamino.

> "Sprecher: […] Er ist Prinz.
> "Sarastro: Noch mehr, er ist Mensch."[34]

Tamino will see the grieving woman in front of him (the Queen) as a wronged person because she is grieving for her kidnapped daughter. His goal is to save her from the villain until he is confronted by the Sprecher, who instead describes a benevolent, wise leader, which creates cognitive dissonance for Tamino. He asks for answers and receives only more confusion.[35] When Pamina and Tamino meet, it is obvious she is unharmed, and the only person in the scene who is punished is the person guilty of a crime.[36] Tamino's humanity is what explains the seemingly random shift of place between the Queen and Sarastro. The shift is from Tamino's point of view

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32. Donald G. Henderson, "The 'Magic Flute' of Peter Winter," *Music & Letters* 64, no. 3/4 (Jul.-Oct. 1983): 193–205, accessed August 23,2018, https://www.jstor.org/stable/735575, 199.

33. Honolka, 106.

34. Mozart 1951, 83.

35. Ibid., 57–61.

36. Ibid., 78. Monostatos is given 77 lashes for attempted sexual assault.

because he is finding out in real time what is happening just like the audience. He changed because he received more information, as an open-minded human being would do. Tamino has shown himself to be the ideal candidate for an Enlightened order. From this perspective, Schikaneder's libretto makes more sense. Mozart's music, therefore, enhances the libretto's essence: the idea that men and princes are equal when they embrace human error and the willingness to change.

The Genii are another example of the nonconforming plot elements. They do not appear to make much sense: first seeming to be in the employment of the Queen and then shifting to Sarastro. That is not the case. In fairy tales, magical creatures like Genii, imps, and other fairy types usually appear when they are needed, as an *ex machina*. The Genii in the opera do precisely this: they lead Tamino and Papageno to Sarastro's realm, they prevent two suicides at the last moment, they appear with food and the magical instruments when these things are needed, they lead Pamina to the place of trials to go with Tamino. Kurt Honolka suggests that they serve the greater good and their own agenda, not an employer.[37]

One important thing to remember is that Mozart was always an active collaborator in the shaping of the libretti. Though the correspondence with Schikaneder is lost, Mozart could easily share the blame with Schikaneder if the libretto makes so little sense. Honolka explains this well:

> "Nothing was more foreign to the mature Mozart than to draw his characters in obvious black and white. The Countess of *The Marriage of Figaro* [Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, 1778] is by no means the angel which a bowdlerized German translation makes her out to be, Masetto is not a jealous village idiot, and thought even the animated marionettes of the *Così* jokes are on the brink of the absurd, Mozart has us guessing about what is true feeling and what is irony. And as with Da Ponte, we must give Schikaneder his due as the partner of a dramatic composer who knew exactly what he wanted. It may be that the basic plan was altered more than once and modified during many months of

37. Honolka, 113.

> cooperation, for Mozart a relatively long period. But this long gestation wasn't just a matter of chance, but a period of enriching and deepening meaning."[38]

In addition to being a fairy tale, *Die Zauberflöte* was fashioned by Mozart and Schikaneder into a study of a prince's human foibles as well. This is entirely characteristic of Mozart, who ruffled the feathers of the aristocracy by setting a play like *Le mariage de Figaro* (Beaumarchais) which openly criticized the aristocracy. *Die Zauberflöte* demonstrates the equality of spirit in all men; a prince prone to misunderstanding just like his companion the bird-catcher. Each man can become a better version of themselves through study and trials, particularly when aided by love. In these higher ideas, which themselves are both human and fairy tale depending on one's point of view, along with Mozart's music, create the lasting appeal of an opera which, at the lexical level, appears so problematic.

Otello

Due to revolutions that shifted the focus of history away from the aristocracy, productions of operas are pushed into the background of historical focus in favor of the developing *lieder* and domestic music-making of the common man. Opera does not slow down, so to speak, but in terms of popular operatic composers there tends to be a jump from Vienna back to Italy. Rossini, great composer that he was, was no less subject to the critique of his operas, but he faced a very different kind of criticism that would not face many other composers until later in the century. Rossini made the mistake of setting Shakespeare.

Gioacchino Rossini's (1792–1868) *Otello* premiered on December 4, 1816, in Naples. It was generally enjoyed by audiences, but those familiar with the works of William Shakespeare

38. Honolka, 109.

(1564–1616) would be merciless to composer and librettist. It is true that the opera bears very little resemblance to the play. Librettist Francesco Berio de Salsa (1765–1820) removed all the spice of Iago and created such a mild melodrama that one wonders how Otello could have gotten angry at all. Before seeing the opera, Lord Byron (1788–1824) wrote "Tomorrow night I am going to see 'Otello,' an opera from our 'Othello [1603],' and one of Rossini's best, it is said. It will be curious to […] discover what they will make of Shakespeare in music." After seeing the opera, he railed against it: "They have been crucifying 'Othello' into an opera […] all the real scenes with Iago cut out, and the greatest nonsense instead […]."[39]

Unique to this opera is the criticism of the fidelity to Shakespeare. In the early 19th century, England's great writers consistently quoted or praised Shakespeare in their works or in their correspondences, like Jane Austen and Lord Byron.[40] The hero-worship of Shakespeare, even in the present day, has been termed "bardolatry" by George Bernard Shaw.[41] Presently Shakespeare is still considered one of the greatest writers in the world, even though evidence exists he also "recycled" plots from other authors. *Othello* is derived from Cinthio's (a.k.a. Giovanni Battista Giraldi, 1504–1573) "Un Capitano Moro," published in 1565 in *Gli Hecatommithi*.[42] Berio's libretto was derived from a French adaptation of the Shakespeare, *Otello, ou le More de Venise* by Jean-François Ducis in 1792. Ducis did not faithfully translate

39. Lord Byron, quoted in John W. Klein, "Verdi's 'Otello' and Rossini's," *Music & Letters 45*, no. 2 (Apr., 1964): 130–140, accessed June 16, 2019, www.jstor.org/stable732071, 130.

40. *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) immediately come to mind for Jane Austen. Byron's clear love for Shakespeare shows in his outrage at the opera, mentioned earlier.

41. Ton Hoenselaars, "Between Heaven and Hell: Shakespearian Translation, Adaptation, and Criticism from a Historical Perspective," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36, no. 1 (2006): 50–64, accessed June 16, 2019, www.jstor.org/stable/3508735, 51.

42. Cleveland A. Williams, "Shakespeare's Adaption of Cinthio's "Un Capitano Moro" into Othello" (2018), *Master's Theses*, 1315, accessed June 15, 2019, https://opencommons.uconn.edu/gs_theses/1315, 11.

Shakespeare's works to French, taking liberties with characters and plot points in French Enlightenment fashions. He took it upon himself to write a happy ending where Desdemona lives, and Iago is forgiven.[43] Ducis would be mercilessly mocked for his translations. He not only "translated" *Othello* but also *Hamlet, Romeo & Juliet, King Lear*, and *King John*. The disparity between original and Ducis was so large that playwright Johann Friedrich Shrink (1755–1835) wrote a play called *Shakespeare in der Klemme* (1780), in which the ghost of Shakespeare in Elysium rips into the ghost of Ducis, who has "mistakenly" been taken to Elysium by Charon, the ferryman to the Underworld.[44]

In the opera Iago is now a spurned former lover of Desdemona's, bent on revenge against her but also Otello, whom he hates beyond being beloved by Desdemona. Iago has come by a love note of Desdemona's (instead of a handkerchief, as in the Shakespeare), and uses it to convince Otello Desdemona is unfaithful, though the audience is not privy to what the note says or if there is even a name on it besides Desdemona's. Desdemona, meanwhile, finds out her father has promised her to Roderigo, son of the Doge, and only finds out at the impromptu wedding celebration that Otello and Desdemona have made "a vow" to each other. Otello happens upon the scene but only in time to think Desdemona has been unfaithful to him with Roderigo. In the next scene Desdemona says to a pining Roderigo that she is married to Otello. Otello, seeing them together, takes this as further fuel for his jealous theories, and challenges Roderigo to a duel that ultimately does not occur. Suddenly in Act 3, Desdemona is in her bedroom, lamenting her husband's jealousy. She sings arguably the most famous aria from this

43. Hoenselaars, 54.

44. Ibid. The anger from Shakespeare is specifically geared towards Ducis' version of Hamlet.

opera, the Willow Song ("Assisa al pie d'un salice"). Otello enters and, despite her entreaties, stabs her. When it comes out that Iago has challenged Roderigo to a duel, is struck, and confesses before dying, Otello anguishes over what he has done to Desdemona, and stabs himself as well.[45] It would still have been more powerful to use Shakespeare's ending, of course. It is Emilia, Desdemona's servant and Iago's wife, that exposes his crimes in the end. When Iago is brought in to face Othello, he remains silent.[46] Emilia is still featured in the opera, but she is not explicitly said to be Iago's wife. In both play and opera, however, Emilia is on Desdemona's side.

Berio and Rossini could not have won over Shakespeare purists. Berio went on to make further alterations to the Ducis "translation," making the ending of the libretto tragic again, but with Otello stabbing Desdemona instead of strangling her. As Byron raged, all the best parts of Iago have been mutilated. Iago is the primary driving force of the plot of the play, so transforming part of his malice into a paltry spurned romance and doing away with many of his machinations gut the opera's continuity and poignancy.[47]

The music is generally regarded well though not overly praised, save for Desdemona's "Assisa pie d'un salice" which is sung frequently by mezzo-sopranos as an aria in recitals. Arguably it is the third act, which most closely resembles Shakespeare's play, and this aria that caused the opera to be the success that it was overall. As a listener, I was struck by how un-Rossini-like the aria sounded as compared to the rest of the opera. The pure shock of hearing

45. Gioacchino Rossini, *Otello, ossia il Moro di Venezia (*Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, n.d. (ca.1816), https://imslp.org/.

46. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedies of William Shakespeare*. New York: The Modern Library, 1994), 880.

47. Hoenslaars, 60.

something so somber immediately caught my attention when I first heard the opera in its entirety during my Master's degree. The term "un-Rossini-like" is used by Richard Osborne, author of the Grove article about Rossini's *Otello*.[48] Meyerbeer wrote favorably of the third act:

> "The third act of *Otello* established its reputation so firmly that a thousand errors could not shake it. This third act is really godlike, and what is so extraordinary is that its beauties are quite un-Rossini-like. First-rate declamation, continuously impassioned recitative, mysterious accompaniments full of local colour, and, in particular, the style of the old romances brought to highest perfection."[49]

"Assisa al pie d'un salice" would be one of many interpretations of Desdemona's "Willow Song" over the next couple centuries. The gravity of Desdemona's situation was beautifully crafted in Rossini's aria from the beginning. Desdemona, in the Shakespeare, says:

> "[…] My mother had a maid call'd Barbara;
> She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad
> And did forsake her; she has a song of 'willow';
> An old thing 'twas, but it expresse'd her fortune,
> And she died singing it; that song to-night
> Will not go from my mind; I have much to do
> But to go hang my head all at one side,
> And sing it like poor Barbara. […]"[50]

She has now realized that she will die by Othello's hand. Being resigned to this fate just as Barbara was, she sings the same song, though she does not finish it:

> "The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
> Sing all a green willow,
> Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
> Sing willow, willow, willow;
> Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;-
> Lay by these;-
> Sing willow, willow, willow; […]
> Sing all a green willow must be my garland.

48. Richard Orsborne, "Otello (i) [Otello, ossia Il moro di Venezia ('Othello, or The Moor of Venice')]," *Grove Music Online,* published online 2002. Accessed June 15, 2019. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

49. Giacomo Meyerbeer quoted in Orsborne.

50. Shakespeare, 1994, 864.

Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve,- […]"[51]

In the opera, the Willow Song begins with a harp, which Desdemona herself is meant to be playing. This is where the "un-Rossini-like" music begins, with ascending arpeggios in the harp (Figure 2). The orchestral part starts where the arpeggios end in m.17 (Figure 3). The long prelude reinforces Desdemona's preoccupation with her fate, much like the lyrics of Shakespeare's Willow Song. Knowing she will die, Desdemona sings the aria, nearly in a trance. In this way, the aria does a greater service to the Shakespeare than the rest of the opera because this is the same mood of the Shakespeare Willow Song. The only mention of a willow in the aria is at the beginning where Isaura lies, having been stabbed, metaphorically (which foreshadows Desdemona's fate). It is difficult to tell if the "Isaura" mentioned is supposed to be Barbara or just a character in the song.

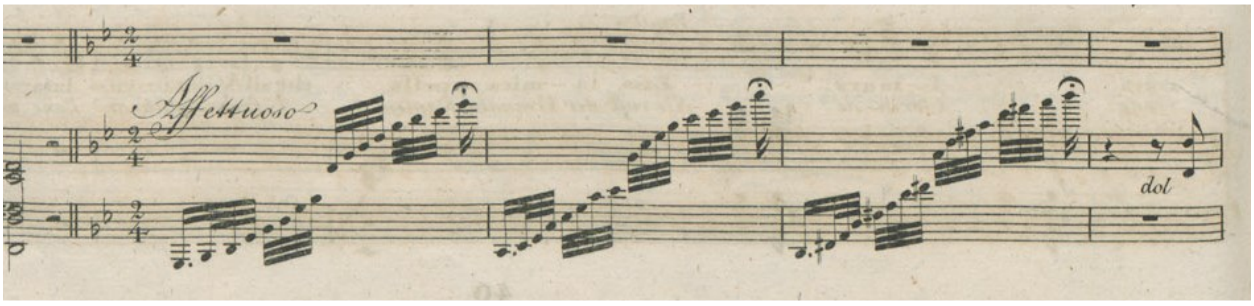

Figure 2. Rossini, Gioacchino. "Assisa al pie d'un salice," from *Otello*, mm.1–4.[52]

51. Shakespeare, 1994, 865.

52. Rossini, 158. I chose to use these scans from the library of the Fondazione Gioacchino Rossini because these are scans are from a first edition score from the same year of the premiere of *Otello*.

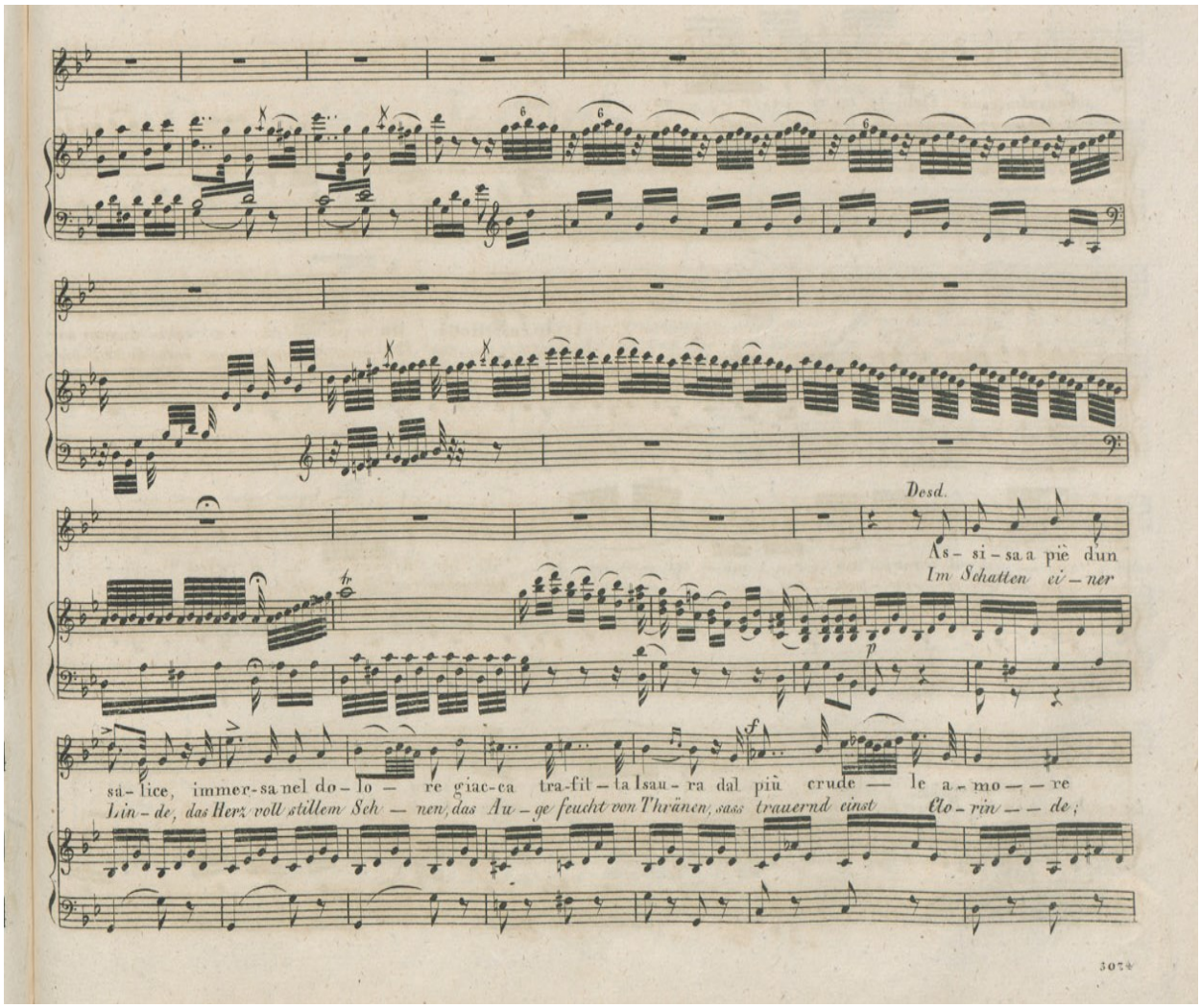

Figure 3. Rossini, Gioacchino. "Assisa al pie d'un salice," from Otello, mm.5-30.[53]

Rossini's opera would serve as a springboard for future Shakespearean opera successes, particularly those of Berlioz and Verdi. Of course, these operas would also be judged by the original Shakespeare, though not as harshly as Rossini had been. This may be attributed to Berlioz- and Verdi's opinions of Rossini's attempt, of which Verdi would be particularly harsh.[54]

53. Rossini, 159.

54. Klein, 139.

Fidelity to source material would become more important later in the 19th century, but the differences in musical style would render the criticism far less harsh.

Enlightenment thinking helped restructure plots for Mozart just as Ducis' Enlightenment-driven reinterpretation of Shakespeare would hamper Rossini. The important thing that helped the successes of the operas was the Enlightenment's emphasis on human equality in both the positive and negative, which in turn helped move opera towards a more realistic approach to characters and plots.

Chapter 2

Character Analysis & Purification Rituals in 1800's Opera Sources

The Fallen Woman trope is so pervasive in opera that it is possibly the easiest character to analyze for student singers. Though archaic, the term "fallen woman" instantly brings up the image of a sex worker or, at the very least, a single woman who has had sexual relations. Journal articles about social issues frequently focus on sex in the nineteenth century. Topics are almost exclusively about the feminism and sexual liberation, with the patriarchal misogyny of the male protagonists at the bottom of it all. Most of these narratives, however, lack the context of what other alternatives of liberation were available to women. Opera was changing in the nineteenth century to reflect the lives of the middle- or lower-class people, even though opera was still primarily a fashionable gathering place for the upper-class and aristocracy. By the turn of the twentieth century, *Verismo* operas became vogue, with composers like Pietro Mascagni and Giacomo Puccini showing a much darker side of human experience.

Character study sometimes suffers when the character is one as well-known as Carmen or Violetta Valéry. Without study of the source literature, singers will take only the journal topics (sexual liberation, feminism, etc.) and use those to ascribe broad definitions of the characters and their actions, i.e. Violetta feels sexy because she has established sexual independence. Deeper conversations could be had, though, if they read Alexander Dumas *fils* novel. Why has she continued her lifestyle despite being clearly ill? Did she have other options?

La traviata

The infamous courtesan of Giuseppe Verdi's (1813–1901) *La traviata* (1853) is adapted from the life of a real woman. When a novel contains scandalous information or events, the public demands to know upon whom or what these events are based. What Alexandre Dumas *fils* wrote in *La dame aux camélias* (novel 1848, play 1852) was easily traced back to the courtesan Marie Duplessis (née Alphonsine Plessis). The stir the novel caused in the Parisian public was made all the greater because La Duplessis had, at that point, been dead for only one year.

Alphonsine Plessis, later known as Marie Duplessis (January 15, 1824–February 3, 1847) was born into poverty and worked her way up into being the most well-known courtesan of her day. She was trafficked into sex work by her drunken-gambler father when she was barely past puberty, but when she was free of his influence a few years later, she had already learned what kind of wealth she could gain by sexual means.[55] When she eventually made it to Paris, she became one of the most celebrated courtesans of the era. Lifelong-friend Romain Vienne wrote one of the first biographies of Duplessis' life after her death, after other writers who had barely known her sought to capitalize on the fiction they could produce.[56] Alexandre Dumas *fils* was one of these liars in Vienne's eyes, and so he left him out of his biography of Duplessis'.[57] Dumas, however, had already had the last word by producing a novel close enough to the truth of

55. Julie Kavanagh, *The Girl Who Loved Camellias* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 28.

56. Ibid., 15.

57. Ibid., 228.

La Duplessis' last few years of life that those who knew her could corroborate his claims. The Parisian public, thirsty for gossip, could now read every detail.[58]

Dumas' success with this tale continued when he adapted the novel into a play of the same name (1852). In a botched translation from French to English, *La dame aux camélias* became *Camille*, likely a mistake made because of the presence of Duplessis' favorite flower in the French title, camellias, and having nothing to do with her name, which Dumas had changed to Marguerite Gautier in both the novel and the play.[59]

Dumas changed several aspects of Duplessis' personality when he wrote her as Marguerite Gautier, mostly to add melodrama. La Duplessis had been known as a regal figure amongst courtesans, possessing of an air of dignity that did not exist in most women of her profession, which many of her lovers said of her even during her lifetime.[60] She had, in fact, died with the title of Countess (Figure 4), having married one of the suitors on which her fictional lover, Armand, had been based: Comte (Count) Édouard Perregaud. In the novel, after Marguerite shuns her lover (as a favor to his father), Armand takes every opportunity to insult her in public, which was not necessarily true to life despite Édourard and Marie's marriage being tempestuous and later estranged.[61] The final insult in the novel is when Armand verbally lashes out at Marguerite during a very public ball, after which she faints, from both the onslaught and

58. Kavanagh, 223–240.

59. Alexandre Dumas *fils*, *La Dame aux camélias*, trans. Liesl Schillinger (New York: Penguin Books, 2013).

60. Kavanagh, 116.

61. Ibid., 177–222. Chapter Five, "The Countess," describes the rocky marriage of Édouard Perregaux and Alphonsine Plessis on February 21, 1846, which became estranged soon after and was not reconciled before her death.

Figure 4. *Marie Duplessis*, painted by Édouard Viénot.[62]

her re-emerging illness. This scene is easily recognized as the Act 2 finale of *La traviata* ("Avrem lieta di maschere la festa…").[63]

Another adaptation from life to art is her death. Marie had given orders that Édouard not be permitted into her room to say his last farewells, despite his waiting outside her front door while she knew she was breathing her last.[64] Marguerite, in the novel, had forgiven Armand for his treatment of her via both a letter and a journal, but he could not return from travelling fast enough to see her one last time. This ending would not do for theatre, so in the play and opera Armand/Alfredo arrives in time to hold her as she dies ("E strano! Cessarono gli spasimi del dolore…").[65] What is factual from the reality-turned-opera plot about the death of a tuberculosis

62. Kavanaugh, cover photo.

63. Giuseppe Verdi, *La traviata, Melodrama in tre atti di Francesco Maria Piave, Piano/Vocal Score* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press & Casa Ricordi, 2001), 204.

64. Kavanagh, 217.

65. Verdi, 393.

patient is the *spes phthisica*, in which a patient experiences the sensation of being healthy again moments before death.[66] Violetta's *spes pthisica* is one of the most dramatic operatic finales.

In examining the "sexual excesses" of Violetta Valéry and the death she suffered, it is important to add an understanding of tuberculosis to the literary study in the context of the 19th-century. Although this death is true to the life of La Duplessis, the ignorance of the cause and the stigma of consumption at its height creates a complex commentary on *La traviata*. Even after the tubercle bacillus was discovered by Robert Koch in 1882, there was a dispute about what exactly people believed caused the disease. They had believed for so long that consumption was caused by socioeconomic status, loose morals, choice of dress, and other factors that it was impossible for them to believe that such a disease spread in the same way as the common cold.[67] Marie Duplessis had died over 30 years *before* Koch's discovery, though, and this was in the prime era of the misunderstandings of consumption.

Alexander Dumas *fils* invokes many of the common images and misconceptions of consumption. Arthur Groos describes several of the ways in which bodily fluids that were thought to be unclean (menstrual blood and the blood coughed from consumptive lungs) are implied by Dumas in the novel, but not explicitly named.[68] It is important that

66. Arthur Groos, "'TB Sheets': Love and Disease in 'La Traviata,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7, No. 3 (Nov 1995), *Cambridge Opera Journal* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Nov. 1995), 238. Accessed January 23, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/823641.

67. Carolyn A. Day, *Consumptive Chic: A History of Beauty, Fashion, and Disease* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 15.

68. Groos, 240. Marguerite's camellias are red for five straight days every month, implying menstruation. The flowers are white the rest of the month. The camellia Marguerite gives Armand as a seal of their covenant in the novel is red. In the play, though, it is white, which is likely Dumas attempting to prevent shock in his audiences by avoiding this issue of menstrual blood. In the opera the color is not specified. Groos suggests that the red camellia given in the context of the scene at the dinner party could also imply Marguerite's illness is causing her too much pain for their tryst to take place that night, red being the color of the blood she has just spat into a basin.

Marguerite/Violetta is only seen to be coughing up blood when she is a "kept woman" (common term for courtesans in the 1800's). In the first- and third acts of the play and opera she is coughing up blood and is "unclean," but not while she is in the country with Armand/Alfredo, which be a kind of rebirth or, in a sense, absolution.

There is a legitimate medical reason why Violetta is healthier in the countryside. Patients of tuberculosis often went to the countryside to convalesce, with many documented cases in doctors' records and patients' journals.[69] Marie Duplessis is recorded to have visited Baden-Baden in 1846 for a "cure." She did not rest as she ought to have, though, and spent most of her nights in the casinos, living like she had in Paris. In the Romanticized life Dumas wrote for the courtesan, not only did she go to the countryside, but she had lived quietly in her monogamous relationship until the visit from Armand's father. The reader is led to believe that Marguerite is made well by this change of lifestyle; in a sense, she is cured when she leaves her lurid life behind. I say that Dumas is directly telling his audience that Marguerite is well because she is not a sex-worker anymore. This is what makes her discussion with Armand's father so heartbreaking: she *knows* that she is literally sacrificing her life so that Armand's sister can marry well, and so Armand can repair his reputation. Why would she do this? The easy answer is "for love," or perhaps to complete a true martyrdom for love. I am not saying this is not true, but I am saying there is a better question to ask: why would Dumas and Verdi still need to complete this opus with the death of someone who does something this selfless? The novel and the opera, being based on a real woman with a real life, were fictional case studies of a consumption patient

69. Day, 63–80. Although the rest and country air did wonders for many patients, it was still a short-term cure at best. By the time antibiotics were discovered that could outright cure tuberculosis, many patients had lived long enough in the country to die in old age or from other natural causes.

which confirmed people's prejudices about courtesans, sex work, city life, consumption, and other prejudices of the middle class by punishing the perceived transgressor.

The ardent love and martyrdom of Marguerite Gautier/Violetta Valéry is the primary focus of audiences. Because she does this for something so abstract as the potential marriage of the sister of her lover, whom she (and the audience) has never met, she holds a place of honor amongst the "fallen women" of opera: she is the best of them.

Carmen

Carmen, however, is the worst of the worst. *Carmen* (1875) by Georges Bizet (1838–1875) premiered 32 years after *La traviata*. The novella *Carmen* (1847), by Prosper Mérimée (1803–1870) preceded *La dame aux camèlias* by two years. *Carmen* has a likely second primary source in Alexander Pushkin's short story *The Gypsies* (1847). The two plots are so similar that it has been suggested both authors copied the other, but with the conflicting dates between writing and publication, as well as the distance between France and Russia, it is difficult to prove plagiarism on either side.[70]

There are four chapters total. The first two set up the chance encounters of the unnamed archaeologist narrator, Carmen, and Don José. Carmen's character description, like Marguerite Gautier's, is given as a third-person account by an anonymous narrator to whom the entire story is given by the lover: Don José. The reason for not discussing this third-person narrator in the

70. David A. Lowe, "Pushkin and Carmen," *19th-Century Music* 20, No.1 (Summer 1996): 72–76, accessed January 23, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/746668. Because the discussion here is focused on female sexuality and how it is utilized and punished, Pushkin's Romani, Zemfira, will not appear in this analysis beyond this point. Zemfira marries Aleko, a man who ultimately becomes a jealous husband and kills Zemfira and her unnamed lover. Zemfira's duty as a gypsy is only dancing and there is no further mention of her using her sexuality in service to the business of the other gypsies. For all intents and purposes, Zemfira here is not so much defined as a gypsy as she is a woman in an unhappy marriage who takes a lover. Pushkin's story, however, does lend non-sexual plot points to the overall form of Bizet's opera.

previous section of this chapter is that Armand's/narrator's/Dumas' description of Marguerite is more forgiving than Don Jose's/narrator's/Mérimée's is of Carmen. Beyond that, Marguerite's actions are more virtuous than Carmen's. Carmen is painted by Don José (via Mérimée) as having been such a difficult woman that she brought her death on herself. He describes how he killed Carmen and turned himself in. The third chapter, specifically, is his confession to the narrator and the source of Bizet's opera. Though there is a Chapter 4, there is no continuation of the plot nor response from the narrator. Chapter 4 launches into a rant about the Romani that I believe is meant to justify the descriptions of the Romani throughout the novella. The fourth chapter is a total departure from the plot of the other three, and even though some academic sources claim it is a continuation by the narrator's character, there is no indication that it is so.

What does Don José say about Carmen? In his initial description of her, he states she sways her hips "like a filly at a Cordova stud farm" and like "cats who don't come when you do call them and do if you don't call them."[71] He describes her physically in the ways that she does or does not conform to the Romani stereotypes, which clearly paints her as having a fairer skin color than most others. He continues with disparaging commentary and name-calling (witch, sorceress, wolf, devil, servant of the devil, etc.), even does so to describe the Romani people who he has only just met and are even helping him with actively bleeding wounds after each of his fights or murders.[72] Carmen's actions are nothing but contrary. She will choose the exact opposite of what any one person wants her to do. She is so skilled at manipulation that her fellow smugglers often succeed in their criminal plans even when she changes the *modus operandi*.

71. Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen*, trans. Lady Mary Lloyd https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2465/2465-h/2465-h.html, Chapter 3. *Please take note that this online resource is all a single page, so I will put in the Chapter numbers instead.

72. Ibid.

Carmen does indeed use her flirtation and overt sexuality to get what she wants out of people. Don José, however, is nearly as blameless as Carmen is before they meet. He had been forced to leave his hometown and join the armed forces because of a violent incident that occurred when he lost a tennis game.[73] Don José, even though he turned himself in after murdering Carmen, only offers half apologies for his actions, or he makes statements that take some of the blame off himself. The best example of this is the final sentence of the novel proper: "Poor child! It's the [Romani] who are to blame for having brought her up as they did!"[74]

Exoticism is a term which music students will know in relation to *Carmen* as the opera is usually the example to describe it in general music history classes, since a French composer, French librettists, and a French novelist wrote about a Romani/Spanish subject. *Orientalism* is a better term to apply to *Carmen*. Oriental describes lands in the East, and Occidental lands in the West, so why would Orientalism describe one of the most Western nations in Europe? Spain was one of the most diversely populated countries in Europe with large groups of "Moors" (former term for Northern African Muslims), Jews, and Romani. Over time Spanish identity became intertwined with the traditions and symbolism of these various groups, along with those of native Spaniards, that Spain is now defined by all these cultures – a "melting pot" long before the United States. The Jews and the Romani were the two groups who truly were of Eastern origin, and the Moors, though from Africa, brought with them a religion originating in the Middle East, hence the Oriental label bestowed upon them.[75]

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73. Mérimée, Chapter 3.

74. Ibid.

75. Jose F. Colmiero, "Exorcising Exoticism: 'Carmen' and the Construction of Oriental Spain." *Comparative Literature* Vol 54, No 2 (Spring 2002), accessed February 18, 2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122479, 129.

Because of Orientalism the subject of Carmen and race is still one that bears more scrutiny. In the fourth chapter mentioned above, which Mérimée wrote after the original novella was published, he describes the Romani people in a series of anecdotes with "citations" of the personal experiences of himself and other people who spent time in Spain.[76] Some academics refer to this chapter as "ethnographic," but the language used is overtly insulting to the Romani, describing them as "repulsive" and "dirty."[77] Mérimée describes only events that reinforce the Romani stereotype. Stories of theft, relationship violence, witchcraft, swindling, and overtly racist and colorist physical descriptions are crowned by the statement that this chapter is to prove Mérimée's and/or the narrator's "expertise" on the Romani.

The facts above color the relationship of Don José and Carmen in Bizet's opera. Despite the small size of Mérimée's novella, Bizet and librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy manage to extrapolate chapter 3 into an entire opera. The focus is primarily on the disfunctional relationship between the two main characters. Don José, the only part of this dyad whose perspective exists, has no respect for Carmen or the Romani based on the derisive language he uses to describe them.

Leo Muscato's production is important. In Florence, Italy, in 2018, director Leo Muscato changed the finale by having Carmen shoot Don José before he could kill her.[78] This drastic change in staging was to protest domestic and relationship violence, especially the high rates still reported in Italy. Carmen is the killer, but she is innocent because it was self-defense; Don José

76. Hutcheon, 2006, 155.

77. Mérimée, Chapter 4.

78. Varsha Saraogi, "Opera 'Carmen' Gets a New Ending to Stop Violence Against Women," *Thomson Reuters Foundation,* January 3, 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-women-opera-carmen/opera-carmen-gets-new-ending-to-stop-violence-against-women-idUSKBN1ES1Q6 (Accessed February 17, 2019).

would have killed her otherwise. Carmen's other so-called crimes are far easier to absolve in a classroom discussion when the coordinator helps show it through the lenses of other women who committed similar ones, like Manon.

Manon

The plot of a man being led into vice only to be turned back by the death of his lover was not new when Mérimée's *Carmen* was written. Its popularity started earlier, in the first half of the eighteenth century. The earliest of the novels-turned-opera in this analysis is *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* by Abbé Prévost (Antoine François Prévost d'Exiles, 1731). Although Manon has become the topic for several popular operas, the focus here will be *Manon* by Jules Massenet (1884).

Unlike Carmen, Manon's mere existence rather than her direct provocation seems to be the cause of Des Grieux's actions, in his own words.[79] However Manon is still vilified along with the rest of the female sex as being the downfall of men, or at least useless like household kitsch. The introduction to a 1919 English translation of the novel begins with a condemnation of the female sex by Guy de Maupassant (1919): "Notwithstanding the experience of centuries, which has proved that woman is, without exception, incapable of any true artistic or scientific work, female doctors and politicians are being forced upon us in the present day."[80] Maupassant continues on the sexist tirade that ultimately concludes women exist to look pretty, "be loved" (quite often a euphemism for being a man's sexual plaything and not as a human deserving of the

79. Abbé Antoine François Prévost d'Exiles, *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (1935). Des Grieux mentions at multiple points throughout the novel how he would do anything for Manon, which seems to be true when taking his crimes of theft, cheating at gambling, and murder into consideration. His motives are always for Manon, often to keep her safe, with him, or to save her, which, arguably, is jealousy still but of a different nature than Don José with Carmen.

80. Guy de Maupassant, Introduction to *The Story of Manon Lescaut and the Chevalier des Grieux* by Abbé Antoine François Prévost d'Exiles, trans. Burton Rascoe (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1919).

emotion), and to bear children. As much as one could overlook some faux pas in discussions that inadvertently suggest "*così fan tutte"* ("all women are like that"), there have been so many added introductions of this nature to novels like Manon that now there needs to be a discussion like that of Carmen above as to what the true crimes of Manon are - if any.

Manon is a young woman who, while in transit to a convent for her inappropriate sexual behavior, meets the Chevalier des Grieux, a student of theology. They fall madly in love instantly and from the moment he rescues her from her guardian they are in constant trouble. A few highlights as follows from the novel:

- They are living together unmarried.
- He abandons his family and ambitions.
- They fall short on money so Manon decides to earn it as a courtesan.
- Des Grieux joins a ring of men who cheat at gambling.
- They dupe a second man for his money (outright theft).
- Des Grieux kills a man to escape from confinement.
- Des Grieux frees Manon through bribery.
- An unsuccessful second theft attempt lands Manon deportation to America as a prisoner prostitute.
- She finally wants to marry the Chevalier, but another man of higher rank wants to also, so he challenges Des Grieux to a duel and loses, leaving Des Grieux and Manon to flee prosecution.
- Manon dies in the wilderness in Des Grieux's arms.

It is truly an irrational series of events where, even though Des Grieux is the one who chiefly commits the crimes, he is pardoned repeatedly because of his rank, and Manon, for lack of rank, is imprisoned in steadily worse circumstances even though she herself commits only one theft. The constant stream of events in this novel brings to one's mind the aria "What a Movie" from Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* (1952) when the character sings "And, to top it all off, the volcano erupts!"

Manon's motives are particularly difficult to discover, however, because Prévost rarely gives her any lines. Manon seems to appear out of nowhere with no back story; readers know

nothing of her except her relationship with the Chevalier des Grieux. The English translation of the novel down to the succinct "Manon Lescaut" is a misnomer as the entire novel is about what the Chevalier does and thinks. The reader hardly sees anything of what Manon wants or thinks beyond her love for Des Grieux and her enjoyment of luxury. These are not easy traits from which to get a decent character sketch for reinvention on the operatic stage.

And yet this is exactly what Massenet and librettists Henri Meilhac (also a librettist of Bizet's *Carmen*) and Phillipe Gille do. As ridiculous as the novel can be, the opera matches it in many ways, but also succeeds in creating a contrast of seriousness in the love of Manon and Des Grieux. The opera strikes a relatively ridiculous tone immediately. Characters are introduced under different circumstances and sometimes relations than the novel (for example, Lescaut is now Manon's cousin instead of her brother[81]), and events are altered to create better flow of the plot (Guillot Morfontaine vows revenge for a stolen carriage instead of monetary theft).[82] The first truly sincere moments, naturally aided by Massenet's sublime music, are the second act arias of Manon and Des Grieux.

Manon's arias are important because Massenet gives the character the opportunity to explain her actions. Andrew Miller explores this new voice of Manon extensively in terms of her arias.[83] The arias – seven in total – take a gradual turn that slowly deprive Manon of voice, the primary source of self-expression, to the point of her death when she no longer sings as she does at the beginning of the opera. She is also gradually deprived of her identity as she starts to refer to herself in the third person and finally as just a story ("Et c'est lá l'histoire de Manon

81. Jules Massenet, *Manon: Opera in Five Acts, Piano/Vocal Score* (Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer Inc., 1963), 27.

82. Ibid., 168.

83. Andrew Miller, "From Literary Page to Operatic Stage: Manon's Tragic Voice of Her Own," *The French* Review 81, No 4, (Mar. 2008): 682–696, accessed June 10, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25481247.

Lescaut!").[84] Throughout the opera Manon seems to be acutely aware that her life cannot go on as it does without some mortal consequence, which ultimately happens. Miller claims Manon's guilt is more for turning towards her sexual desires than for her love and for that she will face punishment.[85] It could be argued, however, that Manon's death via exhaustion is because her sexual life and her romantic life cannot coexist without fatal consequences. One reason to believe this is because of the chronologically earlier operatic example of Verdi's *La traviata* in which the heroine likewise dies because of her attempts to live the two lives at once. In Violetta's case she was able to sustain her life, she felt, by living the way she did, but only when this life was no longer enough did she succumb to her illness. Manon had no chance of being able to survive as a courtesan because she had already known something better that fulfilled her soul to a greater extent. She would perish regardless, but if she had stuck with Des Grieux and married him, perhaps she would have lived after all. Therefore, in Massenet's opera unlike Prévost's novel, Manon did not necessarily die to cure a man or to redeem herself. She may have died because of the exhaustion of trying to live two lives with too little experience or knowledge of the world to know what she truly wanted in life.

Eugene Onegin

Violetta, Carmen, and Manon (hereafter will be referred to as "the Fallen") are "punished" for their immoral choices, according to the moral standards of the 19th-century. Tatiana Larina of *Eugene Onegin* (novel in verse Alexander Pushkin, 1833; opera Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky, 1879) is rewarded for her good choices. Tatiana is still a tragic opera heroine,

84. Miller, 691.

85. Massenet, 690.

though. She makes the morally acceptable choice to stay faithful to her husband, but she does not get to be with the man she loves. The tragedy is psychological.

Understandably, people would wonder why a woman who kept her virginity needs to be included in an essay about the fallen women. Tatiana offers her love to Onegin via the famous letter of both novel and opera. Furthermore, the "loss of innocence" aspect of being "fallen" also applies to the education of women and their increasing role in society; in the workforce and in politics. When conservative groups of people needed a scapegoat for the impending downfall of society, they blamed novels, just like a similar ideology vilified Rock'n'roll and Elvis Presley. For Tatiana in particular, she was not only educated, but is a voracious reader of novels.

Tchaikovsky separated the score of *Eugene Onegin* into seven tableaus that underscore the most important parts of Pushkin's plot:

1. Eugene Onegin and Vladimir Lenskii (engaged to Olga Larina) visit the Larin household where Onegin and Tatiana Larina are introduced for the first time.
2. Tatiana's sleepless night when she agonizes over a letter she is writing to Onegin, candidly expressing her love for him.
3. Onegin meets with Tatiana to describe how her letter did truly touch him, but he feels he must reject her to spare her the dull husband he thinks he will be.
4. Tatiana's Name Day Party[86]: Onegin is tricked by Lenskii into coming, thinking it would be a small affair. Upon seeing a huge to-do, he decides to avenge himself by flirting brazenly with Olga, but the flirtation backfires and Lenskii challenges Onegin to a duel. Tatiana is humiliated and heartbroken.
5. The duel: Lenskii is killed by Onegin, who then flees the country.
6. Onegin returns to find himself at a party across from an aggrandized Tatiana, now a princess (lower aristocracy) through marriage to Prince Gremin. Onegin suddenly feels pangs of love for Tatiana, who tries to hide her anguish at seeing him again.
7. Tatiana grieves her marriage now that Onegin has confessed his love in a letter. Though he comes to her and begs her to go with him, she stands firm saying that she does not

86. A Name-Day celebration is held for people who are named after saints of the Russian Orthodox faith. Tatiana, being named after 3rd-century Saint Tatiana, is given this party, which would be held on January 12, the date of Saint Tatiana's execution.

necessarily believe her love for him since he has only now decided to declare himself, and that she is married and will remain true despite still loving Onegin. She flees.

As previously demonstrated in this chapter, opera plots begin farther into the novel than starting on page one. It makes sense, therefore, that the opera starts in chapter three of Pushkin's novel.[87] Tchaikovsky kept the chronological order of the events of the novel, including the sequence of the key dialogue for the characters. Tchaikovsky created one of the easiest comparisons of novel and opera that exists. Every tableau in the opera corresponds to specific chapters in the novel.

Alexander Pushkin wrote *Eugene Onegin* as a novel in verse, like those of Lord Byron in England in the same period.[88] English translators work hard to translate accurately from Cyrillic verse to English verse to preserve the integrity of Pushkin's poetry. Pushkin speaks through an anonymous narrator in *Onegin*. The narrator has a greater role than those of *La dame aux camélias* and *Carmen*, even though Pushkin's *Onegin* precedes both (1833). Through his unnamed narrator (who can be easily assumed to be Pushkin himself), Pushkin describes a little of "his" experiences with love and travel, as well as other non sequiturs that make his thought process difficult to follow at times. However, the narrator also implies he knows Tatiana (whom

87. Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin,* trans. James E. Falen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Chapter 1 of Pushkin's *Onegin* describes Onegin's life to the point where he leaves town to live on his inherited estate in the country. Onegin was a passionate lover in his youth, but more of a cad than in earnest. After a few years of the normal life of a young man about town, he suddenly finds no pleasure in his activities, which is introduced as spleen. Spleen, usually a term found in English literature of this same era, is a feeling of "melancholy without a cause, defined by a disgust with everything" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Chapter 2 describes Tatiana's character, which is created much from her natural romantic nature, but also from her penchant for reading romantic novels. The way she is described in this chapter helps later to amplify the distress she feels while writing the letter, and her coldness to Onegin in public after she is married, both of which were uncharacteristic behaviors.

88. John Garrard, "Corresponding Heroines in 'Don Juan' and 'Evgenii Onegin,'" *The Slavonic and East European Review* 73, No. 3 (July 1995): 428–448, accessed January 12, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4211859. Gerrard wrote of the similarities that exist between Pushkin's *Onegin* and Byron's *Don Juan*. Byron's *Don Juan*, like *Onegin*, was of a different nature than the existing *Don Juan/Don Giovanni* texts at the time because his Don Juan seemed to unwittingly fall into his sexual hijinks and misfortunes.

he often calls Tanya) and Eugene both personally, and he is also more explicit about which information he specifically gets from Eugene as opposed to that which he knows already.[89]

Tatiana behaves far differently than the Fallen, but what is it that makes her so different? In two words: circumstance and logic. *Eugene Onegin* does not contain the same kind of moral struggle as *Carmen* or *La traviata*. Tatiana is a daughter of the landed gentry, and she is well-behaved and well-liked despite being the quieter sister. When she falls in love with Eugene, she is rebuffed, and even though his response is kindly meant it is poorly executed and shatters her. After her Name Day party, Pushkin describes how Madame Larina begs her daughter to consider accepting a proposal, despite not loving Gremin.[90] Madame Larina herself is the foreshadowing of Tatiana's fate. She describes how she lived a good life with Tatiana's father even though they did not marry for love.[91] Tatiana has a choice open to her which the Fallen do not. The Fallen all come from families in which few choices for monetary- and social advancement were available. Alphonsine Plessis, remember, was initially forced into the sexual trade by a drunken gambler father. Carmen, being from an ethnic group shunned by society, had next to no choice. If she took work as a maid or in a factory, she loses her freedom of choice entirely, after having been brought up with full independence. Manon, having abandoned her family, has no resources. Life circumstances were against them, and each made the best of it with the tools they had. People who came from privilege – including the lower class – did not appear to understand these kinds of choices because they had more open to them. Tatiana was fortunate to be married to a wealthy man who loved her and treated her well, as well as to gain a title and social advancement.

89. Pushkin, 211.

90. Ibid., 168.

91. Ibid.

Tatiana knew she had options, but what appears to be the only option is to marry Gremin. Each of these women has made the best choice of those which were open to them, and two would have been punished by the world anyway, even in reality.

Pushkin writes that, after their initial meeting after Tatiana's marriage, Onegin has persistently shown up at society gatherings only for her, but she is always cold and distant to him. Tatiana only breaks her veneer in her own house, where she is found by Onegin, sitting alone, and crying over his letter to her:

> "The princess sits alone in sight,
> Quite unadorned, her face gone white
> Above some letter that she's reading –
> And cheek in hand as down she peers,
> She softly sheds a flood of tears.
>
> In a brief instant then, who couldn't
> Have read her tortured heart at last!
> And in the princess then, who wouldn't
> Have known poor Tanya from the past!
> Mad with regret and anguished feeling,
> Eugene fell down before her, kneeling;
> She shuddered, but she didn't speak,
> Just looked at him – her visage bleak –
> Without surprise or indignation.
> His stricken, sick, extinguished eyes,
> Imploring aspect, mute replies –
> She saw it all. […]
>
> Until at last she whispered low:
> 'Enough; get up. To you I owe
> A word of candid explanation. […]'"[92]

92. Pushkin, 1995, 206–207.

She launches into her own speech of rebuke, uninterrupted by Onegin. When she completes her speech, she flees the room before he has any opportunity to speak. Gremin enters not long after, and Pushkin ends the novel on this cliff-hanger.

The speech is hardly altered between the novel and the opera. Tatiana's logical questioning of why Onegin suddenly wants her also sets her apart from the other heroines. It is not necessarily a sense of morality, but the foresight to see that there is no happy ending for them, and the only one who risks anything for this love is herself.

Eugene Onegin is a unique case of operatic adaptation because of how faithful Tchaikovsky and librettist Shilovsky were to the original text, keeping all events as true to the novel as possible while still creating an opera in which the action does not drag. Tatiana is a paragon of morality for the time period in which she was created, but in the modern era she is more so an intelligent, well-read woman who could see how her life would end up if she chose to leave her husband. Onegin's own speech after her letter was exactly what she would have seen: "In wedlock we would both be broken. However much I loved you, dear, once used to you…I'd cease, I fear."[93] Tatiana did the right thing for her future.

The heroines of the nineteenth century are judged by opera audiences and novel readers alike as having made morally poor choices. Moral preaching is part of the point of nineteenth-century literature, but when playing a character in an opera, morality is not what will make a character realistic or relatable. The response to everyday needs is what makes these characters relatable; finding means to ends. Carmen is looking to make money, but she does so through her smugglers outfit. Manon wants independence to be with her lover, but with a scoundrel for a

93. Pushkin, 1995, 88.

brother and ignorance on her and her lover's parts, they picked "easy money." Violetta is the most innocent because she gained her independence through her work, even though that work is morally ambiguous in the society in which she lives. And yet each woman is commonly discussed more for their sexual freedom than their actual choices.

Tatiana, as a foil to these women, had other choices to make. She is not happier for choosing to stay in her marriage as opposed to running away with the man she loves. She foresees that the consequences of running away with Onegin would be ruinous only to herself.[94] However, if she had come from a less stable family home, she could have very easily made the same kinds of choices at the other three heroines.

We must remember, however, that morality was why the authors wrote the fates of their characters as they did. Although one character's fate was taken from real life, the rest are fictional as far as we know. If these authors had taken part in the same kinds of activities, including paying for the services of prostitutes, they would have little to no blame put on them for their actions, which is why the male protagonists recover. The blight is extinguished.

One of the most important facts from both history and literature that can help with character study of sexually liberated nineteenth-century heroines is that there exists the reality of Alphonsine Pessis. Remember that Alphonsine did not have a choice and was first prostituted out by her father. When she learned this was fast money after a life of poverty, it is likely that nothing could seem like a better option than this career path, especially when doing so allowed her to also escape this abusive father. This should stand as a reminder that even if an opera plot seems far-fetched in the 21st century, there is still realism in the context of the opera's time

94. Pushkin, 1995, 88.

period. Therefore, we must remember, as performers, that there is always some reality in the characters we play.

After two chapters of discussion, this analysis clearly displays a Feminist view of these operas and their sources. This lens is important to notice because it demonstrates my personal experience. I put it to the reader that opinions are still part of analysis when a singer can acknowledge their own bias and use it to understand their own interpretation of the character and events of the plot.

Chapter 3

American Experience; History Beyond Literature

An American opera singer will have a perspective on opera formed by their experiences in the American education system as well as American current events and politics. In older, canon-repertoire operas the original knowledge base is more likely to be abstract, such as knowing the courtesan falls in love and dies in *La Traviata* (Giuseppe Verdi, 1853), but without knowing many of the nuances, hence the need to read the Dumas *fils* novel (1848) besides watching various productions of the opera. For a French student this is history and classic literature already; something she likely read in school herself, but as an adult opera singer may need to read again and study more closely to understand it from her adult mind and experiences. American students do not necessarily have that base of knowledge for foreign operas like *La traviata*, but they do for recent American operas. *Little Women* (part 1 1868, part 2 1869) by Louisa May Alcott is the equivalent in this case, as a book many American students are required to read in school but will likely need to read again if they are working on a role in Mark Adamo's opera of the same name (1998).

Further study and discussion of American operas will also include the American knowledge base of non-fiction books and issues still current in the United States. *Dead Man Walking* (opera Jake Heggie, 2000; book Helen Prejean, 1993) is a prime example of a still-current American debate, and singers studying the opera will inevitably have an opinion about capital punishment. This is still applicable to the American education system as most high-school-aged children, if not all, are required to discuss current events in the classroom. Operas like *The Death of Klinghoffer* (John Adams, 1991) and *As One* (Laura Kaminsky, 2014) likewise

have ties to contemporaneous events. Though these two operas were not necessarily books before they were operas, the same kind of research is key in learning about them. The more current the topic, the more room there is for interpretation on stage. *Little Women* (Adamo) has almost no research to be found in academic journals, so the information we have from which to learn about our roles is as scant as that in operas based on current events.

Discussing these already well-known topics and the literature associated with them in a classroom setting would be useful to young American singers. Having already discussed literature, history, and academic research in older, established operas, students will have some idea of where and how to start researching new operas.

Little Women

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott is an American classic but, in studying the book, students do not usually learn how much of the book Alcott was forced to write to appease a publisher and the mid-1800's American public. Alcott herself referred to the idea of this book as "moral pap for the young."[95] Opera singers learning Mark Adamo's opera who read the book again later in life will be aided not only by the numerous academic articles written about Alcott and her best-known novel, but also to read into Alcott's real life, snippets of which are weaved into the articles. Alcott, in a sense, adapted her novel to be a rosier view of her own life. Adamo, however, has tried to show as much reality as possible in his operatic adaptation, and these realities ought to be noted.

95. Sophie Gilbert, "The Lie of *Little Women*," *The Atlantic*, September 2018, accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/09/little-women-louisa-may-alcott/565754/.

Little Women is the most successful novel of Louisa May Alcott, and the most enduringly successful. The book features a general timeline of the lives of the March sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. Many people read the various vignettes of the novel through the lens of their own childhood memories. There are good, happy memories, such as when the girls give up their Christmas breakfast to a less fortunate family, only to be later rewarded by neighbor Mr. Lawrence with a special supper.[96] These are juxtaposed by the negative realities of siblinghood, like the vengeful outburst of Jo after Amy burns her manuscript after the "slight" of not being allowed to go to the theatre.[97] The focus is not so much on the time period in which they live, being the very end of the Civil War and years thereafter, but rather on the relationship of sisters and the various paths they tread, which is the reality of all people who have siblings. Everyone is unique in the March family, made clear initially by their expressed thoughts and feelings of having a Christmas without presents.[98]

The success of the novel that was important to Alcott was the money she received for it to help support her family, especially considering she was pressured into writing the book in the first place.[99] Alcott was not without critics in her time because many adults demanded books for children with a moralistic, Christian message, presenting children who were well-behaved according to stringent standards, but this was a minority in Alcott's feedback.[100] She largely did not care, though. Her success was extreme. Children, especially girls, felt like they were being

96. Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2000), 25.

97. Ibid., 76.

98. Alcott, 1-3.

99. Anne Boyd Rioux, *Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of* Little Women *and Why It Still Matters* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 9.

100. Ibid., 46–50.

seen, and Jo especially encouraged the first generation of Little Women readers to pursue their own work outside of the home.[101]

In the present day she continues to be criticized for bending to public opinion in many of the choices she made for the book, as well as the liberties she allows her heroines. Starting in the 1970s criticism for Alcott was mainly for actions deemed feminist or anti-feminist in *Little Women*. Seth Curtis Beach suggests that if Alcott had written poetry instead of *Little Women*, she would "have been a philanthropist and a reformer."[102] Carolyn Heilbaum says "Alcott betrayed Jo" by marrying her in the end, and overlooking the marriage is what makes Jo a positive model.[103] One particular thing to note, however, is that although Alcott acquiesced and married Jo off, she was adamant that she would not bow to pressure and marry Jo to Laurie. [104]Jo's marriage to Professor Bhaer has been criticized as having an "Oedipal" nature, inferring Jo married a figure much like her father.[105] Foote postulates that the entire book glosses over the justified anger of the women in their various life experiences, teaching them to quash it because it is unladylike.[106] Such articles help *Little Women* researchers explore the "internal tug-of-war

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101. Boyd Rioux, 63–71.

102. Seth Curtis Beach quoted in Jill P. May, "Feminism and Children's Literature: Fitting "Little Women" into the American Literary Canon," *CEA Critic* 56, No. 3 (Spring/Summer 1994): 19-27, accessed June 24,2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44378244: 24.

103. Carolym Heilbaum quoted in Ann B. Murphy, "The Borders of Ethical, Erotic, and Artistic Possibilities in 'Little Women,'" *Signs* 15, no. 3 The Ideology of Mothering: Disruption and Reproduction of the Patriarchy (Spring 1990): 562–585, accessed June 24, 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174428: 565.

104. Louisa May Alcott quoted in Boyd Rioux, 15: "I won't marry Jo to Laurie to please anyone." Alcott felt compelled by both her publisher and her fans to marry Jo in the end, even though she herself – her model for Jo – never married. She said herself that marrying Jo at all caused her to conclude the book "in a very stupid style" (p.25), so the criticism for Jo's marriage at all is now moot since the author herself did not want it to take place.

105. Ibid., 569.

106. Stephanie Foote, "Resentful 'Little Women': Gender and Class Feelings in Louisa May Alcott," *College Literature* 32, no.1 (Winter 2005): 63-85, accessed June 24, 2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25115246: 67.

between the novel's progressive instincts and [Alcott's] era's prevailing [literary and moral] constraints revealed by a book that was far from [moral] pap."[107]

This criticism of Alcott and her books misses a point that transcends both the fiction and the history of Alcott: "Things change, Jo." This *leitmotif* pervades Mark Adamo's opera *Little Women* and the sentiment may assist singers trying to interpret Alcott's novel. While many people who have sought to rewrite or adapt *Little Women* do so with their own ideas about what Alcott would have wanted, Adamo, as both composer and librettist, focuses on a theme that does not appear to have been previously explored in *Little Women* research. Jo resists change except that which she initiates herself. She cannot stand Meg falling in love and getting married, Laurie loving Jo herself instead of being just her friend, Amy's trip abroad and marriage to Laurie, and especially Beth's illness and death. Throughout the opera people are convincing Jo that she will change, too. Jo does not appear to notice that her trip to New York and meeting Bhaer creates a change in her, but that is mainly because it is quickly overshadowed by Beth's death, the ultimate change.

Other realities are represented in the opera far better than in other adaptations. First is the representation of the father, Gideon (opera name; Alcott's father was named Amos Bronson). Gideon is a mimic of Louisa May Alcott's real father in that he puts principle over financial need – a deficiency that had to be made up by his wife and daughters, and so in the opera Gideon is heard make a similar declaration as his wife attempts to discuss their finances.[108] Another reality so far only covered in the opera is the reality of Meg and Brooke's life with two infant children.

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107. Gilbert.

108. Mark Adamo, *Little Women, opera in two acts* (Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer Inc., 2001), 96.

In Act 2, Scene 1, when all family members are singing in epistolary, Meg sings of the struggles of trying to get the two children to sleep, as she and Brooke are at their wits' end and ready to try laudanum.[109] Though other scenes demonstrating the tribulations of the family members in both the Alcott family and the March family had to be omitted for the sake of time, this still gives a greater sense of what struggles had to be faced in a real life. Greater still are the emotions represented by scenes of death and love are not outside of the realms of reality either, which is a stretch for opera!

Adamo is explicit in showing the inner workings of the characters' minds, so dramatic interpretation is not as flexible as it in in older operas. The instrumental interludes in which characters are not explicitly saying what they are thinking or feeling are the main points where a singer's physical interpretation of the character shows the most. One device that eliminates these interludes is the use of supernumerary singers in the background of a character. The introduction of *Little Women* is a great example of this. As Jo sits and writes her poem about her sisters (titled "In the Garret" in Alcott)[110], the four sisters together are represented in their childhood forms upstage, singing the poem (Introduction: "Four Little Chests").[111] Another time the "thinking" is entirely vocalized is Jo's aria "Perfect as we are."[112] Jo is represented in novel and opera as having a kind of manic energy when she is writing, which everyone recognizes and knows not to disturb Jo's "fall[ing] into a vortex," as her writing moods are described in Alcott's novel, is shown descriptively in the aria as her thinking aloud as she both writes her "pot-boilers" and

109. Adamo, 195–197.

110. Alcott, 461–2.

111. Adamo, 1–5.

112. Ibid., 63–74.

mulls over Laurie and the changes in his which she can sense.[113] The audience and indeed the woman singing Jo do not have to guess at all what she is thinking.

The greatest reason to do research about *Little Women* before learning the opera is the great question Adamo creates in the beginning: is it really no change at all that Jo wants? When Laurie enters the attic and he and Jo discuss his marriage to Amy and their relationship now, Adamo has initially written Jo as being unsure of her true feelings for Laurie.[114] This is a huge change made in adaptation and anyone who knows the novel or other adaptations well might bristle at the notion that Jo is actually in love with Laurie. The point of travelling back in time, however, is to remind Jo that people have always said things change.[115] When she realizes that things do not always change for the worse as she initially believes, she comes to understand that Laurie is better off where he is, just as she herself is ready for the next great change in her life: Professor Bhaer.[116] The use of dialogue in this moment is the powerful contrast to the romantic view she has of life. One interpretation could be that since opera is not reality, the moment Jo speaks normally is her coming to the realization of that new reality, just as her words express.

Dead Man Walking

Another variation of love in an opera accompanies a very difficult topic: capital punishment. *Dead Man Walking* by Jake Heggie and Terrance McNally describes a vignette from the expansive history of capital punishment in the United States: that of a convict

113. Alcott, 258.

114. Adamo,1–24.

115. Ibid., 287.

116. Ibid., 295.

befriended by Sister Helen Prejean. Sister Helen published her book, *Dead Man Walking*, in 1993. It describes her personal experience guiding two death row inmates to their ends, and her work to find the humanity in them. As unpleasant as this opera and the book can be, they are still important to opera history, and it behooves opera students to read between the lines of the death penalty debate for the things that make this a story of humanity like other operas.

Approaching *Dead Man Walking* without focusing entirely on the topic of capital punishment is difficult, but it is possible. Despite being a non-fiction book, Prejean's account reads more like a novel when she describes her dealings with the convicts, the victims' families, and her own friends and family, as well as her descriptions of her thoughts and feelings. Paul Lauritzen points out how Prejean has a unique ability to humanize people in every situation she describes. Lauritzen specifically cites the moment when Prejean is making a call to Bishop Philip Hannon from a gas station, hoping to use the influence to get a stay of execution from the governor for Patrick Sonnier.[117] Sister Helen describes:

> I look at bottles of ketchup and cans of pork and beans. I am in one of these old-time country stores with rusted gas pumps out front, the ones that have the round glass tops. I notice there's dust on the necks of the ketchup bottles. The merchandise must move slowly here. A woman sits on a stool behind the counter. She has the radio on. Normal life. The way life ought to be. People at their jobs listening to the radio. (Prejean 54, quoted in Lauritzen 228)

Lauritzen uses this example to contrast to an article written by a person who also witnessed an execution, but who was less than kind in her description of the people who lived in the town surrounding the prison, creating a kind of "other" in implying that these people are either

117. Sister Helen Prejean quoted in Lauritzen, 228.

actively complicit in the prison's workings or are too simple to know what is happening or to care.[118] The point is that Prejean compares this employee as one of us instead of one of them.

In reading Prejean's book, it is clear throughout that, regardless of the stance, every person she mentions is "us" and not "them." Even the least important of the characters in this story, like the gas station attendant, is given the dignity of merely existing. This is what Sister Helen does for Pat Sonnier and Robert Willie, in her own way, but also for the victims. She tries to see their perspectives. This is a good way to understand why Sister Helen is against the death penalty: each person is still a child of God. Therefore, the words of Sister Helen's hymn in the opera are incredibly poignant: "He will gather us around, all around. He will gather us around. By and by, *you and I*, all around."[119]

The exercise of seeing the other point of view is a good way to study other characters in this or any other opera. Sister Helen must work to find the human in the person who has been called an animal; a person dehumanized by other people: Joseph DeRocher in the opera, Patrick Sonnier and Robert Willie in reality. It has been theorized that Sister Helen is at a disadvantage here because she speaks from privilege.[120] This is a privilege that she herself concedes: "I feel guilty that so much love has been lavished on me. In the face of this man's utter poverty, I feel humbled."[121] This quote comes after Pat Sonnier has told her that no one has really loved him before, while they sit together during his final hours. This love, which is purely platonic but still

118. Lauritzen, 220.

119. Jake Heggie, *Dead Man Walking, opera in two acts, piano/vocal score* (Bent Pen Music Inc., 2000), 10. Sister Helen will sing the same hymn at the end, just after Joseph DeRocher has died (p. 397, mm.1682–92).

120. Dalke, 42.

121. Prejean, 82.

essential to every person's humanity, is immortalized in book, movie, and opera. As Pat is strapped into the electric chair[122]/Joe is strapped to the gurney, he mouths/says to Helen "I love you,"[123] which she returns in kind. Perhaps, had he experienced more of this kind of love in his life, he would not have committed his crimes.

Avoiding the main topic of capital punishment entirely is impossible, but students will not be aided in character study if they only argue for their own opinions on the topic. Modern operas are more likely to deal with modern issues, so divorcing one's own opinion from one's character's opinion can be difficult.

In the opera Jake Heggie has done similar things as Tim Robbins did for the 1995 film interpretation of Prejean's book. Two convicts become one, and the crimes of both have been rolled into one horrific rape and double murder, demonstrated in the prologue of the opera.[124] After the shock of this scene, the opera opens on Sister Helen at Hope House with children, just as she had been in real life before starting her journey to death row. Her first music is the "He will gather us around" motive that will be repeated throughout the opera.[125] Sister Helen is forced throughout the first act to avoid other people's opinions about Joe in order to make her own opinion, and to be able to reinforce her own convictions that every person deserves to live – even Joe. Helen's major aria, "This Journey," is difficult to understand taken at face value, but I think the book assists the mezzo-soprano particularly here. This is not necessarily the run-of-the-mill prayer for help from God to see her through this. She describes this as a journey to God, to

122. Ibid., 93.

123. Heggie, 397, m.1280.

124. Ibid., 1–9, mm.1–120.

125. Ibid., 10–33.

Jesus, to "this man," and to the truth, but also to herself. There are natural spaces between phrases, but the greater musical structure does not differentiate the journey to God or to herself as being any different than that to this man, Joe. She understands that this greater understanding of Joe is also finding a greater connection to God. She wonders aloud at her own humanity as well as his. She wonders what it is he will want from her as a spiritual advisor (mm.656–660 "Does he want me to help him to die?") and in almost the same breath wonders what it is that she fears about this situation (mm.666–681).[126] This echoes the book wherein there are many similar strains of her thoughts, questioning the true purpose of this work, but also wondering about what circumstances help create the human beings she meets in Pat and Robert, as well as what lead to their crimes. The aria is the beginning of her thought processes which will ultimately humanize Joe in spite of his crimes. Likewise, the aria helps humanize Helen for the audience members, because, just as people have preconceived ideas about convicts, so too do they have preconceived notions about nuns. Helen is human and figuring it all out as she goes, just like all people do.

Arguably it is when they find true common ground that Helen and Joe can trust each other as fellow human beings as opposed to a nun and a convict. One of the most memorable parts of the opera is in Act 2, Scene 3: Helen and Joe get onto the subject of Elvis Presley, whom they both enjoy.[127] They swap their stories of Elvis (Sister Helen seeing him in Las Vegas when she was young, Joe wanting to be him). When they get back to reality they discuss how Helen feels about him, and her description of her feelings as those of a devoted family member: caring about him regardless of what he did (though, as of that moment, he has admitted nothing). This

126. Heggie, 58–59.

127. Heggie, 267.

familial love is reinforced when Helen is with Joe and his family in the next scene. He still wants her there, even in these last precious moments with his actual family. There is an important contrast in this scene. Joe is human and important to his family and to Helen, but the audience is reminded that he is not human to the guards, who discuss their plans for later as anyone might in a normal work environment.[128] The conversation of the guards is also an important part of the book. Sister Helen describes how most of the people who work at the prison emotionally separate themselves from the work that they do to get by. All kinds of excuses are given, mainly having a family or themselves to feed, or that this is just part of the job.[129] The guards further add in the old "eye for an eye" argument and other short pontifications to justify what is about to happen. They eventually stop talking and the scene focuses again on the pain of the family, especially Joe's mother, as he is lead away.

It is at this point that Helen repeats "This Journey" in a reprise that answers the question of what this is about.[130] The journey is "terrible," but the point is to walk "side by side" as equal human beings. In her mind Joe is now entirely as a human being like herself. She manages to convince Joe to confess, however, by also humanizing his victims. She tells him how she went to the place where the two died, and the ability to do so means that there is a second person to inhabit that memory in Joe's mind, bringing the entire crime to a terrifying reality to him as well. Just as the prison employees can put him to death by dehumanizing him, so too can he see his crime as not being real because the two victims were not real. The moment the victims become human is the moment Joe cannot deny his fault: he and his brother both rape the girl, his brother

128. Ibid., 292, starting at m.780.

129. Prejean, 227.

130. Heggie, 322.

shoots the boy (which was not the plan), and out of panic "I killed her with my own two hands."[131]

Helen takes this moment of truth to reinforce his humanity; that she still loves him even though he did this. She tells him now that she wants him to look at her when he goes, so he leaves seeing the face of love. That is precisely how he dies: seeing the face of human love in Helen.

131. Heggie, 364.

Conclusion

> "We assess the value of literary narratives…as much as we assess value in persons. We evaluate in the context of our past experience with other books (or persons) that are either like or unlike that in front of us."[132]

Opera character analysis is steeped in opinion, bias, and personal experience, but it is also one of discipline because a singer must work within the parameters of the score. Source literature is an excellent resource that helps combine the two, filling in parts of the narrative that we are not privy to within the operatic score. The music assists a singer in understanding what the characters are thinking, but it does not tell her why the character has made one decision over another. At the very least, reading the source is merely taking in a different point of view.

Both novels and operas are artifacts of human experiences and the times in which they are written. A novel or play will become something new because what ends up sung on stage is the original through the lens of the composers' and librettists' experiences, as well as their minds and opinions. Further adaptation is made by singers, directors, and conductors to create the specific production. A singer is never "great" only because they have perfect technique.

Poetry, language, translation, period circumstances led to which text was set by which composer to which chords and with which voice in the melody and acting with good vocal technique. Take Franz Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade," for example. At Lieder.net a student will find much of the information they need: original text, translation (in six languages), the poetry is by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and from the first part of his opus *Faust*, as well as the names and dates of the many composers who set the same poem (showing both

132. Lauritzen, 229.

how popular and important the poem is).[133] Students are going to make the connection between Goethe's *Faust*, this art song, and Charles Gounod's (1818-1893) opera *Faust* (1859), but will they read Goethe for one art song? It is unlikely. However, will they be interested in Goethe if they are involved in Gounod's opera? Possibly.

I will reiterate that teaching the literature on which operas are based ought to be in the core curriculum of the collegiate education of young opera singers, and not just an elective. Classroom discussions and assignments can facilitate or reinforce new ideas that will keep opera interesting and relevant in the new productions the students will be a part of in the future. Furthermore, a discussion of source literature among cast members of an opera production may be an excellent opportunity to challenge the viewpoints and opinions singers have about their own characters and those of the cast around them. Having more information about another person's thought process about their character could be beneficial. Opera is, after all, a process of adaptation as much as it is a product of it.

133. Ad. Emily Ezust & Ed. Peter Fastl, Franz Schubert's "Meine ruh ist hin, oder Gretchen am Spinnrade, Opus 2, D118," *Lieder.net*, published 2003.

Appendix

Catalogue of Operas and Source Texts

This appendix is a continuation of the Appendix C in Boris Goldovsky's *Bringing Opera to Life* (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1968). Due to the publication year this appendix can be amended in the present day. This appendix is Goldovsky's bibliographical appendix rearranged to be alphabetical by opera title.

This appendix is unlikely to be complete as the genesis of works leading to the exact one upon which the libretto is based is a large enough project to become a reference text in the future.

Each entry is organized as follows:

OPERA TITLE (Premiere date), Composer (Dates)
- Author (dates). *Title* ("play,""novel," or "poem"). Original premiere or publication date(s).
- *ADDITIONAL OPERAS AFTER THIS SOURCE* (Date), Composer (Dates)

ACIS & GALATEA (1718), G.F. Handel (1685-1759)
- Ovid (a.k.a. Publius Ovidius Naso; 43 B.C.E.-17 or 18 B.C.E.). *The Metamorphoses* (narrative poem), 8 A.D.
- *ATALANTA* (1736), G.F. Handel
- *CADMUS & HERMIONE* (1673), J.B. Lully (1632-1687)
- *DAPHNE* (1937), R. Strauss (1864-1949)
- *EURIDICE* (1600), J Peri (1561-1633)
- *EURIDICE* (1600/2), F. Caccini (1587-1641)
- *LAS FORTUNAS DE ANDRÒMEDA Y PERSEO* (1653), J. Hidalgo (1614-1685)
- *LA LIRA D'ORFEO* (1683), G.B. Draghi (1640-1708)
- *LA MORTE D'ORFEO* (1619), S. Landi (1587-1639)
- *L'ORFEO* (1607), C. Monteverdi (baptized 1567-1643)
- *MINOTAUR, THE* (2008), H. Birtwistle (b.1934)
- *ORFEO* (1647), L. Rossi (1597-1653)
- *ORFEO* (1672/3), A. Sartorio (1630-1680)
- *ORFEO ED EURIDICE* (1762), C.W. von Gluck (1714-1787)
- *ORPHÉE* (1690), L. Lully (1664-1734)
- *PERSÉE* (1682), J.B. Lully
- *SEMELE* (1744), G.F. Handel
- *TESEO* (Theseus; 1713), G.F. Handel

- *DIE STERBENDE EURYDICE* (1698/9), R. Keiser (1674-1739)
- *VENUS & ADONIS* (1683), J. Blow (1649-1708)

ADRIANA LECOUVREUR (1902), F. Cilea (1866-1950)

- Ernest Legouvre and Eugene Scribe. *Adriana Lecouvreur* (play), 1849.

ÄGYPTISCHE HELENE, DIE (1928), R. Strauss

- Euripedes (c.480 B.C.E. – c.406 B.C.E.). *Helen* (play). 412 B.C.E.

ALBERT HERRING (1946/7), B. Britten (1913-1976)

- Maupassant, Guy de (1850-1893). "Madame Husson's Rose-King," in *Guy de Maupassant's Short Stories*. 1887.

ALCESTE (1767), C.W. von Gluck

- Euripedes. *Alcestis* (play). 438 B.C.

ALCINA (1735), G.F. Handel

- Ariosto, Ludovico (1474-1533). *Orlando furioso* (epic); 1516, completed 1532.
- *ARIODANTE* (1735), G.F. Handel
- *ARMIDE* (1686), J.B. Lully
- *L'ISOLA DI ALCINA* (1728), R. Broschi (1698-1756)
- *L'ORLANDO* (1711), C.S. Capece (1652-1728)
- *ORLANDO* (1733), G.F. Handel
- *ORLANDO FURIOSO* (1714), A. Vivaldi (1678-1741)

ALICE IN WONDERLAND (2007), U. Chin (b. 1961)

- Caroll, Lewis (1832-1898). *Alice in Wonderland*. 1865.

ALZIRA (1845), G. Verdi (1813-1901)

- Voltaire (a.k.a. François-Marie Arouet; 1694-1778). *Alzire, ou les Américains*. 1736.

ANTONY & CLEOPATRA (1966), S. Barber (1910-1981)

- Shakespeare, William (1564-1616). *Antony & Cleopatra* (play), 1607.

ARIANE ET BARBE-BLEUE (1907), P. Dukas (1965-1935)

- Maeterlinck, Maurice (1862-1949). "Ariane et Barbe-bleue" from *Bluebeard Tales from Around the World*. 1899.
- Perrault, Charles (1628-1703). "Barbe-bleue" from *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*. 1697.
- *BARBE-BLEUE* (1866), J. Offenbach
- *BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE* (1918), B. Bartók (1881-1945)

ARIODANTE (1735), G.F. Handel – See *ALCINA*

ARMIDE (1686), J.B. Lully - See *ALCINA*, also

- Tasso, Torquato (1544-1595). *Gerusalemme liberata* (epic poem), 1581.

- *ARMIDA* (1817), G. Rossini

ATALANTA (1736), G.F. Handel – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

ATTILA (1846), G. Verdi

- Werner, Zacharias (1768-1823). *Attila, König der Hunnen.* 1809.

BALLO MASCHERA, UN (1859), G. Verdi

- Scribe, (Augustin) Eugène (1791-1861). *Gustave III ou le Bal Masqué* (play). 1833.

- *GUSTAVE III* (1833), D. Auber (1782-1871)

BARBE-BLEUE (1866), J. Offenbach - See *ARIANE ET BARBE-BLEUE*

BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA, IL (1813), G. Rossini (1792-1868)

- Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin Caron (1732-1799). *The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro, and The Guilty Mother* (play trilogy). 1773; 1778; 1791.

- *IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA* (1782), G. Paisiello (1740-1816)
- *DER BARBIER VON SEVILLE* (1776), F.L. Benda (1709-1786)
- *LE NOZZE DI FIGARO* (1786), W.A. Mozart

BARKOUF (1860), J. Offenbach (1819-1880)

- Blachet, Abbe Francois (1707-1784). *Barkouf et Mani*, from the fourth *Contes Orienteux*. 1860.

BASSARIDS, THE (1966), H.W. Henze (1926-2012)

- Euripedes, *The Bacchae* (play), premiered 405 B.C.E.

BÉATRICE ET BÉNÉDICT (1862), H. Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Shakespeare, William. *Much Ado About Nothing*. Completed 1599; premiered 1600; First Folio, 1623.

- *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* (1901), C.V. Stanford (1852-1924)

BILLY BUDD (1951), B. Britten

- Melville, Herman (1819-1891). *Billy Budd, Foretopman.* Unfinished at Melville's death, 1924; updated version published in 1962.

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE (1918), B. Bartók – See *ARIANE ET BARBE-BLEUE*

BOHÈME, LA (1895), G. Puccini (1858-1924)

- Murger, Henri (1822-1861). *Vie de Bohème,* trans. Norman Cameron. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1949. 1851.

BOHEMIAN GIRL, THE (1843), M.W. Balfe (1808-1870)

- De Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel (1547-1616). *La Gitanilla* (novella), 1613.

BORIS GODUNOV (1873), M. Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

- Pushkin, Alexander (1799-1837). *Boris Godunov* (play). 1831; did not pass the censor until 1866.

CADMUS & HERMIONE (1673), J.B. Lully – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

CANDIDE (1989 Final Version), L. Bernstein (1943-1990)

- Voltaire. *Candide*. 1759.

CARMEN (1875), G. Bizet (1838-1875)

- Merimee, Prosper (1803-1870). *Carmen* (novella). 1845.
- Pushkin, Alexander. *The Gypsies/Цыга́ны* (poem). 1845.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA (1890), P. Mascagni (1863-1945)

- Verga, Giovanni (1840-1922). *Cavalleria Rusticana* (play). 1880.

CENDRILLON (1899), J. Massenet (1842-1912)

- Perrault, Charles. *Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper* (fairy tale). 1697.
- *LA CENERENTOLA* (1810), G Rossini

CENERENTOLA, LA (1817), G. Rossini – See *CENDRILLON*

CHÉRUBIN (1903), J. Massenet

- De Croisset, Francis (1877-1937). *Chérubin: Comedie en trois actes, en vers*. 1901.

CID, LE (1885), J. Massenet

- Corneille, Pierre (1606-1684). *Le Cid* (), 1636.
- De Castro y Bellvis, Guillen (1569-1631). *Las mocedades del Cid* (); 1605, revised 1615.

CLEMENZA DI TITO, LA (1791), W.A. Mozart

- Suetonius (a.k.a. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus; c. 69 A.D.-c. 122 A.D.). *De Vita Caesarum* (), c. 121 A.D.

CONTES D'HOFFMANN, LES (1881), J. Offenbach

- Hoffmann, E.T.A. (1776-1822). *A New Year's Eve Adventure* (short story), 1816.
- Hoffmann, E.T.A. *The Cremona Violin* (short story), 1818.
- Hoffmann, E.T.A. *The Sandman* (short story), 1816.

CORSARO, IL (1848), G. Verdi

- Byron, Lord. *The Corsair* (novel in verse), 1814.

CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN, THE (*Příhody lišky Bystroušky;* 1924), L. Janáček (1854-1928)

- Těsnolídek, Rudolf (1882-1928). *Liška Bystrouška* (novella), 1920.

DAMNATION DE FAUST, LA (1846), H. Berlioz

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von (1749-1832). *Faust: Parts I and II* (play); 1808, 1832.
- Marlowe, Christopher (1564-1593). *Doctor Faustus* (play), 1604.

- *FAUST* (1859), C. Gounod (1818-1893)

DANGEROUS LIAISONS, THE (1994), C. Susa (1935-2013)

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DAPHNE (1937), R. Strauss – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

DAPHNIS ET CHLOÉ (1860), J. Offenbach

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DON GIOVANNI (1787), W.A. Mozart

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DON PASQUALE (1843), G. Donizetti (1797-1848)

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DON QUICHOTTE (1910), J. Massenet

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DONNA DEL LAGO, LA (1819), G. Rossini

- Scott, Sir Walter (1771-1832). *The Lady of the Lake* (narrative poem), 1810.

ELEKTRA (1909), R. Strauss

- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von (1874-1929). *Electra* (play).
- Sophocles (c. 497/6 B.C.E.– 406/5 B.C.E.). *Electra* (play), fl. 401-410 B.C.E.

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- Anonymous. *Parthenopeus de Blois* (epic), 1170s or 1180s.

EUGENE ONEGIN (1879), P.I. Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

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FALSTAFF (1893), G. Verdi

- Shakespeare, William. *King Henry IV, Parts I and II* (play), 1597/8.
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FANCIULLA DEL WEST, LA (1910), G. Puccini

- Belasco, David (1853-1931). *The Girl of the Golden West* (play). 1904.

FANTASIO (1872), J. Offenbach

- De Musset, Alfred (1810-1857). *Fantasio* (play), 1834.

FAUST (1859), C. Gounod – See *DAMNATION DE FAUST, LA*

FIDELIO (1806; rev.1814), L. von Beethoven (1770-1827)

- Bouilly, Jean-Nicolas (1763-1842). *Leonora* (play), 1794.

FLEDERMAUS, DIE (1874), J. Strauss II (1825-1899)

- Meilhac, Henri (1830-1897) & Ludovic Halévy (1834-1908). *La Réveillon* (play).

FLIEGENDE HOLLANDER, DER (1843), R. Wagner (1813-1883)

- Cooper, James Fenimore (1789-1851).
- Heine, Henrich (1797-1856). *Aus den Memoiren des Schnabelewopski* (satirical novel), 1833.
- Marryat, Capt. Frederick (1792-1848). *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (semi-autobiographical novel), 1836.
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FORTUNAS DE ANDRÒMEDA Y PERSEO, LAS (1653), J. Hidalgo – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

FORZA DEL DESTINO, LA (1862), G. Verdi

- Saavedra, Ángel de, 3rd Duke of Rivas (1791-1854). *Don Álvaro, o la fuerza del sino* (play), 1835.

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GIANNI SCHICCHI (1918), G. Puccini

- Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno* (Canto XXX; epic poem). 1472.

GIOCONDA, LA (1876), A. Ponchielli (1834-1886)

- Hugo, Victor. *Angelo, Tyrant of Padua* (play), 1835.

GIOVANNA D'ARCO (1845), G. Verdi

- Schiller, Friedrich von (1759-1805). *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (play), 1801.

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GUSTAVE III (1833), D. Auber – See *BALLO MASCHERA, UN*

HAMLET (1868), A. Thomas (1811-1896)
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet* (play), 1609.

HANSEL UND GRETEL (1893), E. Humperdinck (1854-1921)
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Hansel and Gretel* (fairy tale), 1812.

HÉRODIADE (1881), J. Massenet
- Flaubert, Gustave. *Herodias* (novel), 1877.

L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE (1911), M. Ravel (1875-1937)
- Franc-Nohain (a.k.a. Maurice Étienne Legrand; 1872-1934). L'heure espagnole (play), 1904.

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IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE (1779), C.W. von Gluck
- Euripedes. *Iphegenia in Tauris* (play), 412 B.C.E.

L'ISOLA DI ALCINA (1728), R. Broschi – See *ALCINA*

IT'S A WONDERUL LIFE (2016), J. Heggie
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LOHENGRIN (1850), R. Wagner
- Eschenbach, Wolfram von. *Parzival* (epic poem), 13th century.
- Troyes, Chrétien de. *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal/Perceval, or The Story of the Grail* (epic romance), 12th century.
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LOMBARDI, I (1843), G. Verdi
- Grossi, Tommaso (1791-1853). *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (epic novel), 1826.

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR (1835), G. Donizetti; S. Cammarano
- Scott, Sir Walter. *The Bride of Lammermoor* (novel), 1819.

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- Schiller, Friedrich von. *Kabale und Liebe* (play), 1784.

LYSISTRATA (2005), M. Adamo; M. Adamo
- Aristophanes. *Lysistrata* (play), 411 B.C.E.

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- Belasco, David. *Madame Butterfly* (play), 1900.
- Long, John Luther. *Madame Butterfly* (short story), 1898.
- Loti, Pierre. *Madame Chrysanthème.* (autobiographical novel);1887, written from his 1885 affair.

MACBETH (1847), G. Verdi
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MAMELLES DE TIRÉSIAS, LES (1947), F. Poulenc
- Apollinaire, Guillaume. *The Breasts of Tirésias* (play), 1917.

MANON (1884), J. Massenet

- Prevost, Antoine Francoise. *Manon Lescaut* (novel), 1731.
- *MANON LESCAUT* (1893), G. Puccini

MARIA STUARDA (1835), G. Donizetti

- Schiller, Friedrich. *Maria Stuart* (play), 1800.

MATRIMONIO SEGRETO, IL (1792), D. Cimarosa (1749-1801)

- Colman, George and David Garrick. *The Clandestine Marriage* (play), 1766.

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MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, A (1960), B. Britten

- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (play), 1596.

MINOTAUR, THE (2008), H. Birtwistle – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

MOBY DICK (2010), J. Heggie

- Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick* (novel), 1851.

MORTE D'ORFEO, LA (1619), R. Landi – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

MOSES UND ARON (1957; 2010), A. Schoenberg; Z. Kocsis

- *The Bible* (Book of Exodus)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (1901), C.V. Stanford – See *BÉATRICE ET BÉNÉDICT*

NABUCCO (1842), G. Verdi

- *The Bible (*Books of Jeremiah and Daniel)
- Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Cornu

NAVARRAISE, LA (1894), J. Massenet

- Claretie, Jules (1804-1913). *La Cigarette.* (novel), 1890.

NORMA (1831), V. Bellini (1801-1835)

- Soumet, Alexandre and Jules Lefevre. *Norma, ou L'infanticide/Norma, or The Infanticide* (play), 1831.

NOSE, THE (1930), D. Shostakovich (1906-1975)

- Gogol, Nicolai (1819-1898). *The Nose* (*Hoc*; satirical short story), 1836.

NOZZE DI FIGARO, LE (1786), W.A. Mozart – See *BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA, IL*

ODYSSEY (2015), B. Moore
- Homer. *The Odyssey* (epic), c. 8th century B.C.E.

L'ORFEO (1607), C. Monteverdi – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

ORFEO (1647), L. Rossi – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

ORFEO (1672/3), A. Sartorio – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

ORFEO ED EURIDICE (1762), C.W. von Gluck – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

L'ORLANDO (1711), C.S. Capece – See *ALCINA*

ORLANDO (1733), G.F. Handel – See *ALCINA*

ORLANDO FURIOSO (1714), A. Vivaldi – See *ALCINA*

ORPHÉE (1690), L. Lully – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

OTELLO (1887), G. Verdi
- Shakespeare, William. *Othello* (play), 1603.
- *OTELLO* (1816), G. Rossini

PARSIFAL (1882), R. Wagner – See *LOHENGRIN*

PÉLLEAS ET MÉLISANDE (1902), C. Debussy (1862-1918)
- Maeterlinck, Maurice. *Pelléas and Mélisande* (play), 1893.

PERICHOLE, LA (1850), J. Offenbach
- Merimee, Prosper. *Le carrosse du Saint-Sacrement* (play), 1829.

PETER GRIMES (1945), B. Britten
- Crabbe, George. *The Borough* (poem), 1810.

PORGY & BESS (1935), G. Gershwin (1898-1937)
- Heyward, DuBose. *Porgy* (novel), 1925.

PRIDE & PREJUDICE (2019), K. Mechem (b.1925)
- Austen, Jane (1775-1817). *Pride & Prejudice* (novel), 1813.

PURITANI, I (1835), V. Bellini
- Ancelot, Jacques-François (1794-1854) & Boniface Saintine, Xavier (1798-1864). *Têtes Rondes et Cavalieres* (play), 1833.

QUEEN OF SPADES, THE (1890), P.I. Tchaikovsky
- Pushkin, Alexander. *The Queen of Spades/Пиковая дама* (short story), 1834.

RAPE OF LUCRETIA (1946), B. Britten

- Obey, André (1892-1975). *Le Viol de Lucrèce* (play), 1933.

RIDERS TO THE SEA (1937), R. Vaughan Williams

- Synge, John Millington (1871-1909). *Riders to the Sea* (play), 1904.

RIGOLETTO (1851), G.Verdi

- Hugo, Victor. *Le roi s'amuse/The King Amuses Himself* (play), 1832.

RING DES NIBELUNGEN, DER; R. Wagner

1. *DAS RHEINGOLD* (1876)
2. *DIE WALKÜRE* (1876)
3. *SIEGFRIED* (1876)
4. *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG* (1876)

- Anonymous. *The Nibelungenlied* (epic), c. 1200.

ROBIN HOOD (2017), B. Moore

- Anonymous. *Robin Hood* (folk story/ballads), fl. 13th-/14th centuries.

ROBINSON CRUSOE (1867), J. Offenbach

- Defoe, Daniel (1660-1731). *Robinson Crusoe* (novel), 1719.

ROI CAROTTE, LE (1872), J. Offenbach, V. Sardou

- Hoffman, E.T.A. *Die Königsbraut* (story), 1821.

ROSENKAVALIER, DER (1911), R. Strauss

- Louvet de Couvrey, Jean-Baptiste (1760-1797). *Les Amours du chevalier de Faublas* (novel), 1790.
- Moliére. *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (play), 1670.

ROMEO ET JULIETTE (1867), C. Gounod

- Shakespeare, William. *Romeo & Juliet* (play), 1597.

SALOME (1905), R. Strauss

- Wilde, Oscar (1854-1900). *Salome* (play), 1891.
- *The Bible*, New Testament, Matthew 14:1-12, Mark 6:1 14-29.

*SAMSON ET DALILA (*1877), J. Massenet

- *The Bible*, Old Testament, Judges 16: 4-31.

SAPHO (1896), J. Massenet

- Daudet, Alphonse (1840-1897). *Sapho* (novel), 1884.
- Daudet, Alphonse. *Sapho* (play), 1885.

*SCHWEIGSAME FRAU, DIE (*1935), R. Strauss

- Jonson, Ben (1572-1637). *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman* (play), 1609.

SEMELE (1744), G.F. Handel – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

SIMON BOCCANEGRA (1857), G. Verdi, F.M. Piave

- Gutiérrez, Antonio García (1813-1884). *Simón Boccanegra* (play), 1843.

SIR JOHN IN LOVE (1928), R. Vaughan Williams – See *FALSTAFF*

STERBENDE EURYDICE, DIE (1698/9), R. Keiser – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

TABARRO, IL (1918), G. Puccini

- Gold, Didier (1874-1931). *La Houppelande* (play), 1910.

TANCREDI (1813), G. Rossini – See *ARMIDE*, also

- Voltaire. *Tancrède* (play), 1760.

TESEO (1713), G.F. Handel – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

THAÏS (1893), J. Massenet

- France, Anatole (1844-1924). *Thaïs* (novel), 1890.

THREE DECEMBERS (2008), J. Heggie

- McNally, Terrence. *Some Christmas Letters* (play), 1999.

TOSCA (1900), G. Puccini

- Sardou, Victorien (1831-1908). *La Tosca* (play), 1887.

TRAVIATA, LA (1853), G. Verdi

- Dumas *fils*, Alexander (1824-1895). *La dame aux camélias/The Lady of the Camellias* (novel), 1848.
- Dumas *fils,* Alexander. *La dame aux camélias* (play), 1852.

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE (1865), R. Wagner

- Strassburg, Gottfried von (d. 1210). *Tristan und Isolt* (epic romance), 11th century.

TROILUS & CRESSIDA (1954), W. Walton (1902-1983)

- Chaucer, Geoffrey (c.1340s-1400). *Troilus & Criseyde* (epic poem), fl. 1380.

TROVATORE, IL (1853), G. Verdi

- Garcia Gutierrez, Don Antonio. *El Trovador* (play), 1836.

TROY (2019), G. Hoinic – See *KING PRIAM*

TROYENS, LES (1858), H. Berlioz – See *DIDO & AENEAS*

TURANDOT (1926), G. Puccini

- Gozzi, Carlo (1720-1806) *Turandot* (play), 1762.
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TURN OF THE SCREW, THE (1954), B. Britten, M. Piper

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- Zywulska, Krystyna. *I Survived Auschwitz* (non-fiction), 1946.

VENUS & ADONIS (1683), J. Blow – See *ACIS & GALATEA*

VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE, LE (1875), J. Offenbach

- Verne, Jules. *Voyage to the Moon* (novel), 1865.

WAR & PEACE (1946), S. Prokofiev (1891-1953)

- Tolstory, Leo (1828-1910). *War & Peace* (novel), 1869.

WERTHER (1892), J. Massenet

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (novel), 1951.

WOZZECK (1925), A. Berg

- Büchner, Georg (1813-1837). *Woyzek* (drama), unfinished 1837.

ZAUBERFLÖTE, DIE (1791), W.A. Mozart

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