NEW APPROACHES TO EARLY INTERCULTURALISM:

THE WAGON WHEEL AND SAIDIAN INFORMED DRAMATURGY IN OPERA

by

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(Under the Direction of Khalid Long)

ABSTRACT

Bringing together the fields of Intercultural Performance Theory and Opera Studies, this dissertation seeks to develop an analytical tool that allows scholars, directors, and performers to better understand the ways in which a work's interculturalities impact the creation and performance of these works.

Using Edward Said and his theory of Orientalism as a starting point, my work situates itself before contemporary intercultural analytical frameworks like HIT. While HIT is concerned with more contemporary 20th and 21st century works, the framework I put forth is more concerned with 18th and 19th century works.

The foregrounding of Orientalism in my framework creates a dramaturgical lens which I have coined Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy. This dramaturgical lens is the result of the framework I use: the Wagon Wheel model. This framework borrows ideas from Patrice Pavis, Erika Fischer-Lichte and Naomi Andre.

The Wagon Wheel model filters the work through ten spokes of analysis: Commissioning Party/Funding, Source Material, Lived Experience of the Composer and Librettist, Traditions and Norms of the Performance Genre, Musical Style and Influence,

Social and Cultural Struggles at the Time of Creation, Expected Audience, Influence of the Director and Performers, Location of the Premiere, and Commercial Success.

To test my idea of Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy and the efficacy of the Wagon Wheel model I apply both of them to three case studies. First, I turn to Verdi and Ghislanzoni's 1871 opera *Aida,* also taking into consideration the 1952 Broadway adaptation *My Darlin' Aida* and Disney Theatrical's 2000 Broadway adaptation also titled *Aida.* The second case study takes a look at Mozart and Schikaneder's 1791 opera *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), and also considers the Schikaneder and Von Winter 1798 sequel *Das Labyrinth,* the Opera Al Fresco commissioned production of Jordan, Ravenscroft, and Barry's 2018 prequel *Queen of the Night,* and the InSeries Opera commissioned Mozart and Lee's 2022 adaptation *Black Flutes.* The final case study looks at Gilbert and Sullivan's 1885 opera *The Mikado*, and also considers the 1939 Broadway productions of both Gilbert, Sullivan, and Warden's *The Swing Mikado* and Gilbert, Sullivan, Todd, and Cooke's *The Hot Mikado.*

INDEX WORDS: Intercultural Performance Theory, Performance Studies, Theatre, Theatre Studies, Musicology, Ethnomusicology, Opera Studies, Opera, Musical Theatre, Orientalism, Edward Said, Saidian Orientalism, Dramaturgy, Verdi, Aida, Mozart, Die Zauberflöte, Gilbert and Sullivan, The Mikado.

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DEDICATION

For Keri Taggett, the Thunder from Down Under, you wouldn't have cared about a single word in this dissertation, but you would have loved every letter.

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'Universalism is always located in Otherness…without acknowledgement and address of the tensions in translations and transpositions, linguistic or acoustic, these forms of plasticized appropriation will continue to "re-sound" across contemporary intercultural performance.'
-Marcus Cheng Chye Tan, *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Interculturalism and Performance*

'Opera is, after all, something akin to the "foreign policy" of music, the site where it most conspicuously meets the world at large and engages with it.'
-Peter Tregar, *Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style*

Bridging the Gap

The purpose of my study is to demonstrate the necessity and the urgency for a continued probe of the existing fields of Intercultural Performance Theory and Opera Studies. Throughout my work, I will reference and demonstrate the current limits to the literature in both fields as it currently exists. By putting the fields of Opera Studies and Intercultural Performance Theory in conversation with each other through the shared lens which my study has developed helps to create a common vocabulary and theoretical framework which can be tested and applied to opera and musical theatre equally, thus allowing scholars and practitioners of both to have an analytical tool for the study and performance of Othering and Orientalism in opera and musical theatre texts and on opera and musical theatre stages. Not only do I bring together Opera Studies and Intercultural Performance Theory in a direct way, but my work also brings together three operas not seen in direct conversation anywhere else. As I explain in depth below, the case studies I

have chosen represent the first time in the literature that they are used together and not as part of an anthology or larger collection.

Throughout this chapter, I introduce the major scholars who have helped to shape my lens. I define many of the terms I will be using throughout my case studies, and I lay out the analytical frameworks and theories created by others which have been invaluable in the formation of my own ideas and frameworks. My readings of the case study operas, and my interpretation of the Intercultural Performance Theory literature highlight the need for a framework/tool which is specifically designed to interact with works that predate the formalization of the field (roughly the mid-20th century). These works, largely from the 17th and 18th century demonstrate a different type of Intercultural Performance than that described by the leading model, Daphne Lei's Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre (HIT). As defined be Lei, HIT "is a specific artistic genre and state of mind that combines First World capital and brainpower with Third World raw material and labor, and Western classical texts with Eastern performance traditions."[1] Lei states that her "focus on HIT originates in a practical consideration: a recognition of present-day cultural hegemony…despite the germination of various alternative forms of intercultural theatre, the formula of HIT, which relies on the East-West dichotomy, might be the first ticket one has to purchase in order to enter the artistic arena."[2]Lei's definition of HIT serves the current performance landscape well, however I argue that a different approach in needed

[1] Daphne Lei, "Interruption, Intervention, Interculturalism: Robert Wilson's HIT Productions in Taiwan," *Theatre Journal* 63, no. 4 (December 2011): 571.

[2] Ibid, 572.

when dealing with works which fall outside of the boundaries defined by Lei -especially earlier works, works which trouble the traditional East-West dichotomy.

The operas I selected as case studies, Verdi's *Aida* (1871), Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), and Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885), are certainly works that feature othering or some attempt at creating the East onstage but in one way or another fall outside of the boundaries of the current definition of HIT -they predate the style of interculturalism Lei is referencing. They are not based on Eastern traditions or styles and don't rely on any real Eastern artistic traditions. Except for literal visits to a museum, all three case studies were largely created without any direct Eastern influence at all -certainly not in Lei's sense of raw material or labor. Less concerned with an intermingling of styles (East and West) my case studies depict Eastern locations and milieu in a completely Western setting. Using Lei's sense of HIT, there is no Third World raw material or labor; the operas were composed, directed, and consumed by the West, all of the costumes and scenery were built by the West, and the staging completely conforms to Western standards.

My case studies predate the framework of HIT, which imagines intercultural production of theatrical works in a more modern and globalized way. The type of intercultural performance I am seeking to analyze comes temporally before Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, among others. My case studies range from 1791 to 1885, it is crucial to be able to understand/analyze them in a way that presents the meaning they created in their own time as well as the meaning they create now.

Because the works of early intercultural performance I am analyzing were created in periods of coloniality, it is important to be aware of applying postcolonial thought to

colonial works. In order to achieve this, I have concluded that the best analytical course of action is to situate my work outside of/before HIT and develop an independent "cousin" framework. As I explain below, by pulling on older threads in the field of intercultural performance theory (Edward Said, Patrice Pavis, Erika Fischer-Lichte) while introducing new ones (Naomi Andre) I create a model which is more specifically suited for 18th and 19th century works. I use the case study operas to contribute to Lei's understanding of HIT by not attempting to alter the definition of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre, but to create an alternate option for pre-20th century works. Such works largely fall outside of the bounds of HIT yet require a similarly constructed mode of analysis. I will outline and explain further in this chapter why the model I am proposing fills that gap, and how it is best used. Intercultural performance as an analytical framework is so contemporary, how do we talk about early intercultural performance, especially forms of early intercultural performance which don't include a cultural encounter?

As I explain below, much of the literature grows in response to Peter Brook and his 1985 production of *The Mahabharata.* While the post-Brook historiography is vast, the literature on pre-20th century intercultural performance is small. My work speaks to that specific gap, a framework that seeks to analyze works by the West for the West, before Brook, which exhibit ideas that cultural critic and inventor of the theory of Orientalism, Edward Said would describe.

Intercultural Performance Theory

What exactly *is* intercultural performance? As Ric Knowles suggests the term is contested.[3] Whereas Peter Brook saw it as the key to global artistic utopia, other scholars,

[3] Ric Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

namely, Daryl Chin and Una Chaudhuri, viewed it with great suspicion, primarily as a contemporary form of imperialism. As Mary Ingraham, Joseph So, and Roy Moodley expound on the meaning of multiculturalism in opera studies referring to how expressions of ethno- or Eurocentrism are occasionally manifested as racialized practices and sometimes less overt representations of social or cultural hierarchies, and when performed across national and ethnic borders, operatic works continue to carry the attitudes and behaviors of their origins., However, as this dissertation argues, they also acquire new meanings in new spaces and with new experiences.[4]

While opera studies tend to use multiculturalism in favor of interculturalism, I suggest that the functional definitions in key texts are very similar. Ric Knowles prefers "interculturalism" to "multiculturalism" because it focuses more on the contested, unsettling, and unequal spaces between cultures, which functions -in performance- as sites of negotiation, and that interculturalism evokes the possibility of an interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding the binary.[5] Central to both definitions is the word "across", which positions interculturalism (or intercultural performance theory) as a sort of Rosetta Stone to decoding the cultural representations and performances of power in opera. Much like the way the Rosetta Stone's use of Greek, Demotic, and Hieroglyphs were central to unlocking a mysterious and overwhelming past, the interdisciplinary and multifocal approach of intercultural

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[4] Mary Ingraham, Joseph So, and Roy Moodley, *Opera in a Multicultural World* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 4.

[5] Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism*, 4.

performance theory is essential to decoding, discussing, and understanding the layered use of cultural stereotypes, racialized situations, and exoticism in opera.

Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy: The Key to Both Literatures

My work relies heavily on the work of cultural theorist Edward Said. Said's approach is very interdisciplinary, which is how I view my work. I was drawn to Said's work because I recognize a similarity in how he structures his argument. He uses canonical sources which predate his lifetime to identify and describe the ways in which the European gaze defines and organizes the East (in Said's case, specifically the Middle East and the Levant). Said describes the unbalanced relationship between the hegemonic West and the exploited/fetishized East as Orientalism. His use of this term and the outline of his theory have become significant to many other fields.

Said is the foundation of intercultural performance theory, as my work seeks to expand on the literature of that field, it is logical that my work begins at the root of the field. Said's Orientalism theory is concerned with how the West manufactures the East for Western consumption (politically, sociologically, ideologically, imaginatively, etc.). Since my case studies are also concerned with the Western manufacture of Eastern settings for Western audiences, there is an inherent parity between his work and mine. Coincidentally, Said has significant bearing on the musicological analysis.

Musicologists frequently use the terms "orientalism", "exoticism", and "musical othering" interchangeably, often ignoring the baggage that comes with invoking Orientalism in a Saidian sense. By using Said as the root of my interdisciplinary approach I am able to speak to both fields using common terms. In an intercultural performance sense I am returning to the start of the field to develop an alternate mode of analysis

which remains highly conscious of existing models; in a musicological sense I am bringing context back to their current vocabulary not disputing their usage but expanding and contextualizing it.

This philosophy develops a dramaturgical point of view which I call Saidian-informed dramaturgy. This dramaturgical lens reads Said into the work in a way that seeks to explore and expose the way that Orientalist relationships and structures of power are not only exemplified by production but are part of the works themselves. Saidian-informed dramaturgy seeks to clarify the structured hierarchy of social, political, material, and ideological East v. West in every aspect of the dramaturgical process. Saidian-informed dramaturgy anchors the analysis to intercultural performance theory *and* opera studies as an urtext to both fields.

Orientalism

Edward Said, more known for his 1979 opus *Orientalism* than his 1994 follow up *Culture and Imperialism*, was also a published musicologist. Said's interdisciplinary approach to scholarship, as both cultural theorist and musicologist, seem to make him a logical starting point for this project. I begin here because *Orientalism* is supremely important to intercultural performance studies. Said muses on the malleability of identity in the Orient in the twenty-fifth anniversary preface to *Orientalism,* explaining that both the term Orient and the concept of the West have no real ontological stability; each being made up of human effort, affirmation, and identification, and that these fictions lend

themselves to easy manipulation.[6] Controversial though it may be, Said's work represents the emergence of intercultural thought as a legitimate theoretical field.[7]

My exploration of intercultural performance theory is deeply rooted in in Said's work and builds on his assertion that Orientalism is the systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and produce the (broad) Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, and imaginatively as a theoretical framework of postcolonial theory. Said's adaptation of Gramsci, Foucault, and Geertz create an eclectic mix of philosophy and theory which are tested through primary, literary, and (largely) non-canonical sources allows for broad and open-ended applications for his theoretical approach. Said's is influenced, in one way or another, by Gramsci's "Cultural Hegemony" and historicist ideology to explain struggles between classes and cultures. Said's use of Foucault, the concept of Discourse, and the expression of knowledge to become power comes through most clearly, however Geertz and Thick Descriptions have been central to applying Said's theory to postcolonial theory in all scholarship regardless of academic discipline.

A key text in opera studies is Nicholas Tarling's *Orientalism and the Operatic World.* In it, Tarling sets up the term "Globalization" to work as a synonym of Orientalism, carrying the same stigma. This Globalization/Orientalism duality is explored as Tarling establishes that, musicologically, Globalization refers to the centuries of

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[6] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979), xvii.

[7] There have been too many critiques of Said to count, chief among them is Bernard Lewis. Lewis' critique, and a plurality of the others have no bearing on my use of Said's work. I am aware of the scholarship which critiques Said's theory, and do not wish to diminish the work done by those scholars.

contacts and exchanges among the world's peoples as cultures are constituted and reconstituted, contacts which began as stereotyping and homogenizing have given way to interchange and borrowing resulting in the recognition of commonality.[8] As opera is explored as a phenomenon which is both globalized and globalizing, Tarling finds the boundaries of Said's theory. *Orientalism,* Tarling argues, stands for one side of but one of the relationships that have emerged in the long unfolding of the relationships among the regions and peoples of the world.[9]

Ralph Locke explores the use of the word "orientalist" in *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*. Locke laments the lack of specificity when applying the term to music writing, "Orientalism has become for some music critics and scholars – just as for literary critics and such - a curse word -a sharply disapproving substitute for 'exotic'".[10] Locke, in addition to exploring his own work on the topic, cites relatively famous critiques of Said by James Clifford and also by Lisa Lowe.[11]

Locke, along with Tarling's concept of opera as a phenomenon which is both globalized and globalizing, use opera as a vehicle to open and build on to Said's writing in a way which provides far more functionality. First by expanding the focus of Orientalism from Said's narrowly defined Middle East, North Africa, and the Levant, to

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[8] Nicholas Tarling, *Orientalism and the Operatic World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), ix.

[9] Ibid., 73

[10] Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism, Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009),38.

[11] Clifford devotes nearly all of section IV of *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) to commentary on Said. Lowe uses more detailed examples in *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

also include the Far East. As Locke explains, that despite its narrowly focused geographic origins, Orientalism has become a catch-all term that can refer to any world population, regardless of geographic positionality, that differs from what the work of art in question constructs as its mainstream viewpoint.[12] It is for this reason that Locke suggests "Exoticism" as a more comprehensive and accurate word to describe musical Orientalism. Citing operas which feature Incas, Scotsmen, Romani, biblical stories, Pashas, North- and sub-Saharan Africans (and Madagascans), the Chinese, and the Japanese, the list Locke mentions in his introduction essentially becomes the structure of Tarling's entire book. Tarling lays out all of section II, chapters four through ten, by broad geographical region (Bible-based, Arabs and Turks, Egypt, India, China, Japan, and Russia). I assert that this demonstrates that Globalization/Exoticism/Orientalism is not a fluke in the canon, but rather the definition of the canon, opera -especially successful opera- utilizes Othering as a rule not an exception. This makes it impossible to talk about opera in any serious, academic way without first addressing the overwhelming output of canonical Orientalisms.

Opera's inherent interdisciplinary nature and endless production possibilities are proof positive that an analytical framework beyond any single *-ism* is needed; opera's artistic adaptability find Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, or Orientalism to be too rigid on their own to be useful without supplementation. Opera's own globalization contributes to the assessment of Orientalism calls into question its character as an artform as well.[13] So then, if the application of Orientalism on its own needs supplementation, where do we

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[12] Locke, *Musical Exoticism,* 37.

[13] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 21.

as scholars of either opera studies or theatre studies, turn to begin to find a more robust methodology?

Well, the catalyst for change here, the reaction to which was essentially the creation of a new field of study, is director Peter Brook. Although he did work in opera, Brook's nine-hour, 1985 production (and subsequent world tour) of Sanskrit epic poem *The Mahabharata* is what sent academia into a tailspin. As Knowles points out, Brook's *The Mahabharata,* and mid-1980s work by French director Ariane Mnouchkine, was a crucible for the developing discourses of theatrical interculturalism.[14]

Developing Discourse on Intercultural Performance

Peter Brook's work defined the field. It is impossible to overstate his importance in the significant paradigm shift that led to the legitimacy of intercultural performance theory. Every major text about interculturalism and theatre or intercultural performance theory start with or mentions Brook. Brook becomes the starting point for most analyses of intercultural theatre. Knowles devotes nearly ten percent of his entire book to discussion of Brook.[15] In Daphne Lei and Charlotte McIvor's new edited collection on interculturalism and performance, Brook is mentioned in all but two of the book's thirteen chapters.[16] Rustom Bharucha's important text *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* grows out of direct response to Brook and his *Mahabharata.* Critical response to Brook's production was as polarizing as the

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[14] Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism,* 21.

[15] Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism,* 20-30.

[16] Daphne Lei and Charlotte McIvor, editors, *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Interculturalism and Performance* (London: Methuen Drama, 2020).

production itself. In the first chapter of Lei and McIvor's collection, Marcus Cheng Che Tan references a Margaret Croyden article in the *New York Times* which became the foundation upon which Bharucha built criticisms. Croyden wrote in 1985, "[Brook] synthesized all his previous theatrical inventions, did nothing less than attempt to transform Hindu myth into universalized art".[17] Brook staunchly defended his position, "[producing *The Mahabharata*] was like the complete works of Shakespeare that India had kept possessively. Done in every part of India, but never allowed to travel. We felt it our duty to say, 'Sorry India, this isn't only yours.'"[18] This attempt at universalizing cultural mythos as international art sparked a debate which, as its prominence in Lei and McIvor's collection show, still rages. As Knowles points out, and of interesting note, a vast majority of Brook's critics are writing from a marginalized positionality, belonging to groups outside of the 'Western', while many Brook's apologists are European.[19]

Bharucha writes from a colonized perspective, and fiercely challenges most aspects of 'multicultural' theatre. The overarching theme of most of Bharucha's work, and all his work on Brook is the question of cultural ownership. This question reappears many times in the intercultural performance theory discourse, especially in the analytical models of Patrice Pavis and Erika Fischer-Lichte which will be discussed at length

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[17] Margaret Croyden, "Peter Brook Transforms and Indian Epic Poem for the Stage", *New York Times,* August 25, 1985.

[18] Marcus Cheng Chye Tan, "(Re)Sounding Universals: The Politics of Listening to Peter Brook's *Battlefield,*" in *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Interculturalism and Performance,* eds. Daphne Lei and Charlotte McIvor (London: Methuen Drama, 2020), 14.

[19] Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism,* 23.

below, and is summed up quite concisely by Bharucha, "one cannot separate the culture from the text."[20] Performance Studies takes a distinctly intercultural bend witch Bharucha, Schechner is his most central reference when discussing the merging of Western text-based theatre and non-Western ritual. Bharucha's detailed discussion on Brook and his production of *The Mahabharata* makes many damning critiques, chief among them Brook's decontextualization of *The Mahabharata* to make it more universal removes that which made it special, asserting that Brook should have attempted to understand it in its original, Indian context.

The mention of context provides the opportunity to mention the most cited article across my body of work, Tracy C. Davis's *The Context Problem.* Davis borrows a metaphor from the fine arts to describe a problem in the performing arts, this is not that different from the interdisciplinary approach which must be taken when discussing opera, there is no single, effective method -especially within theatre studies or opera studies- to encapsulate the entire dramaturgy *and* historiography of a work in a way that is essential to both scholars and practitioners. Davis ends her article summarizing that she is raising issues about what is taken for granted in historical methodology and explanation because the historicization of theatre and performance presents such a graphic example of the context problem; ending with a question central to my study, "Given that we cannot escape the problem, can we provide innovative approaches to it?".[21]

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[20] Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), 70.

[21] Tracy C. Davis, "The Context Problem," *Theatre Survey* 45, no.2 (November 2004): 209.

However effective Bharucha's takedown of Brook may be, perhaps he over-corrects a little bit. Bharucha becomes as polarizing as Brook, complicating the discourse, implying that Brook should focus his attention on his own cultural artifacts. Rather than settling the question of cultural ownership and the politics of identity, Bharucha simply kicks up the discourse into more of a frenzy, creating now two sides to the argument -scholars have no choice but to side either with Brook or Bharucha- middle ground had eroded. One of the driving forces in the field which grew out of response to Brook v. Bharucha, and a major influence on this study, is Erika Fischer-Lichte. Her analysis of the broad strokes of exchange and the link between postcolonial studies and interculturalism directly engages with Bharucha's bold statements on cultural ownership and the politics of identity. Fischer-Lichte's work is leveraged on the challenging of the way that Western scholars privilege the written text in terms of ownership and authority, rather unlike the more Eastern privileging of production history and tradition. Her model of analysis, Interweaving Performance Cultures, treats different performing cultures as "diverse strands and threads" to be interwoven into a piece of cloth in such a way that these components are no longer recognizable individually and cannot be traced back to its origin.[22] This model introduces a utopian desire at the core of her model, which celebrates the moving between cultures as a state of in-betweenness.

As Fischer-Lichte's model grew out of a paradigm shift in response to Bharucha, so too did the work of Patrice Pavis. Pavis, and *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, grew out of a growing notion that current theoretical models were neither flexible nor

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[22] Erika Fischer-Lichte, Torsten Jost and Saskya Iris Jain, eds., *The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures: Beyond Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1-21.

specific enough to capture the nuance of what occurs through theatre events that can be described as intercultural.[23] Pavis's famous Hourglass Model, eleven steps between the representation of a source culture by a target culture in a theatre event is indeed the most specific of the analytical models to grow out of Bharucha's discourse, among both critics and apologists. As Ric Knowles points out however, the hourglass posits a one-way flow of information, ruling out any sort of fluid interchange.[24] Fischer-Lichte presents a model much more flexible in terms of who is defined as the target culture and who is defined as the source culture, but is rarely -if ever- able to stray from the binary which Pavis suggests. Both Pavis and Fischer-Lichte problematize opera directors like Brook, Wilson, and LePage, but rarely go further, connecting the director back to the works they create. My model is not only interested in connecting the director back to the work but marrying all of the analytical points to contextualize the whole *mise en scene.*

The model I am proposing is more of an extension of Pavis's model, filtered through Ruru Li and Jonathan Pitches who suggest that combining ethnographic *and* dramaturgical methodologies in search of a more individualistic concept of intercultural exchange can be more comprehensive as an analytical tool.[25] My work seeks to propose a model that is not only pliable, but also formulaic enough to engage with the

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[23] Daphne Lei and Charlotte McIvor, *Interculturalism and Performance,* 231.

[24] Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism,* 26.

[25] Ruru Li and Jonathan Pitches, "The End of the Hour-Glass: Alternative Conceptions of Intercultural Exchange between European and Chinese Operatic Forms," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 32, no.2 (2012): 121-137.

problematizations laid out by Pavis and Fischer-Lichte not at the micro level such as the director, but on the macro level such as the work itself.

As these musicological conversations are happening in good faith, many of them could be improved with the introduction of more specific tools and vocabulary to efficiently analyze the context, historiography, and performance histories of musical works through an intercultural lens.

Developing Discourse on Intercultural Musicology

As discussed above, Nicholas Tarling becomes a key figure not only in transcribing Said's theory onto the field of opera studies, but also in terms of musicology's struggle to discuss and analyze works in a deep and critical way such as is done with intercultural performance theory. Tarling's criticisms of Said put him in good company with similarly situated intercultural performance scholars, but like other similar musicological works seems to lack the interdisciplinary vocabulary needed to take a more theory-based approach -both for refuting Orientalism and offering a solution for further study. Tarling, rightfully, builds his argument around the culture changes Europe has experienced throughout opera's centuries-long history; finding the limits of Said's work when it is considered in terms of what Tarling refers to as the Orientalism/globalization duality.[26] The strongest part of Tarling's methodology is chapter three of his first section, where a brief history of Orientalism is explored alongside a brief history of opera (specifically Orientalist operas). Tarling *does* point to a need for a more nimble, interdisciplinary tool to discuss in greater depth the operas he mentions, and his writing

[26] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 19-97.

on the materiality of opera commissioning and production play perfectly into current intercultural performance discourse.

Musicologist Paul Robinson lays out a seemingly more practical way of musical dramaturgy, much more in line with the models proposed by the dominant voices in intercultural performance theory. Simply titled "All Things in Full Context", Robinson asserts that a complete understanding of an opera must come from both the score and the libretto together, and that any analysis which relies on one and not the other is incomplete.[27] While quite noble an idea, and the most robust theory proposed by an opera studies scholar at the time, even Robinson himself struggles to engage with and apply his theory. He falls into a similar trap as does Said, taking an ahistorical approach to libretto analysis and rather neglecting to analyze the score and libretto together. Robinson and I share a key case study: Mozart's 1791 opera *Die Zauberflöte.* Robinson fully explains and considers other relevant critiques and commentary on the opera while completely neglecting to consider othering or the stereotypes of The Enlightenment in his analysis, coming to the soft conclusion that misogyny is the biggest issue modern audiences have with the opera -failing to mention the African stereotypes or Blackface legacy of the opera.[28] Robinson is very well-versed in history and theory, yet his work could benefit from the structure of works like Pavis's Hourglass or Fischer-Lichte's Interweaving Performance Cultures. Without such a structure, Robinson's "All Things in Full Context" model makes it all but too easy to only look at just the libretto, as his analysis of *Die Zauberflöte* does, and not look at the ways in which the score itself can perpetuate

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[27] Paul Robinson, *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 1-31.

[28] Robinson, *Opera,* 71-74.

stereotypes and Orientalist tropes, which are central to the opera and would need to be mentioned in order to be considered "All Things in Full Context". Robinson's work brings musicology closer to the work that intercultural performance scholars are doing, and is supremely interdisciplinary in its setup, but could benefit from the structure, vocabulary, and theory that is more present in intercultural performance works.

The closest that any current musicological work gets to mimicking anything like current intercultural performance theory is the work being done by Naomi Andre. Andre sits at the closest point between opera studies and intercultural performance. Not unlike my framework, hers is built with an interest in pushing Said's work further. Initially her critique follows that of many Said critics, that his work -and works derived thereof- continue the discussion of what orientalism is and why it happens, but rarely focus on *how* it happens. Andre's work makes a clear distinction from many other such works is her discussion of Said's commentary on *Aida* writing, "…even as Said and others were asking questions about orientalism and exoticism in *Aida* the 'on the ground' practical reality of the common practice of blackface makeup was not discussed.[29] This conflation of blackface not only as a mode of performance but as a perpetuation of orientalism has been highly influential in my thought process. Unlike Tarling and Robinson, and other key opera studies texts, Andre's writing is deeply rooted in theory the same way that current intercultural performance texts are. Andre introduces the analytical framework she calls "Engaged Musicology", a highly structured way of "thinking, interpreting, and writing about music in performance that incorporates race, gender, sexuality, and

[29] Naomi Andre, *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 7-17.

nation."[30] What sets this apart from most other opera studies frameworks, even Robinson's "All Things in Full Context" is Andre's emphasis on examining scholarship about the work *in performance* rather than through a reading. Operas are intended to be seen and heard in performance and not just studied from a book; it is this distinction that allows Engaged Musicology to examine both the score and the libretto to get a full analytical picture of the work. Because of opera's interdisciplinary and in-the-moment nature, there will always be new information revealed in performance that a purely textual analysis would miss. Engaged Musicology brings together all aspects of opera in production and views them through a thick lens of historical context, but rather than follow current conventions in opera studies/musicology and look backwards -using the work to reveal more about the life and times of its creators- Andre points her lens forward, allowing the work *and* the history it brings to find new resonance in the present, imagining what a more engaged future could look like.

As far as shaping the intercultural discourse in opera studies, Andre sets the bar. Andre's work in the field of musicology and Pavis' and Fischer-Lichte's work in the field of intercultural performance all have something to say to each other -an effort to close the gap between the two fields. As Andre's work is well positioned at the edge of the cliff between opera studies and theatre studies, when the case studies used by Andre, Pavis, and Fischer-Lichte are pulled back the framework is strikingly similar. Not only could Andre's work be greatly enriched by being placed in conversation with Pavis and Fischer-Lichte, but their works can be deepened and more exhaustive by communicating with Andre's work. Andre's work is keenly interested in being practically applied, noting

[30] Andre, *Black Opera,* 1.

that "opera becomes the locus of critical inquiry, political activism, and social change."[31] The tripping hazard for all three of these theoretical models is the way that they inherently reproduce the East/West binary in one way or another. Since all three frameworks fundamentally grow out of a response to Said they are however unable to transcend any binarism and strive towards a holistically intercultural place where source and target are equally weighted. Therefore, I believe, a hybrid approach which takes the best part of each of these models and tests them through a series of progressively flexible case studies is necessary. Not just to put a bandage on the gash, but to see the healing process all the way through. To quote Gwynne Brown, writing about *Porgy and Bess,* "great wounds come from great intentions."[32]

Certainly, there is far more musicological literature concerned with sonic orientalism than with textual or historical orientalism. While my work does offer descriptions of sonic orientalism (see chapter four), a comprehensive look at the use and creation of sonic orientalism would constitute a different study and therefore lies outside of the scope of my current project. I do, however, cite certain sources for further exploration at times when there is an intersection.

The Hourglass, Interweaving Performance Cultures, and Engaged Musicology

Patrice Pavis's *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* signals a radical movement away from the director and the text, towards the complex relationship between

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[31] Andre, *Black Opera,* 193 and throughout.

[32] Gwynne Kuhner Brown, "Performers in Catfish Row: *Porgy and Bess* as Collaboration," in *Blackness in Opera* eds. Andre, Bryan, and Saylor (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 164.

performance, performer, and spectator.[33] Pavis's book, and ultimately the Hourglass model of analysis comes in response to an unprecedented explosion of non-Western cultures on Western stages. As he recognized that available theoretical models were neither flexible nor specific enough to capture the nuance of what occurs through the theatre event, he built a model in rebuttal.[34] While highly influential, if rather dense, the Hourglass of Cultures can be easily followed thanks to its rigid structure and its diagram nature. Just imagine the two bowls of an hourglass, the upper bowl representing the "source culture" and the lower bowl representing the "target culture". Connecting the two bowls, represented by the sand in the metaphor, are eleven data points which constitute the intercultural theatrical exchange. In the context of the metaphor, between the two bowls the eleven steps are divided even further: steps 1 and 2 reside in the upper bowl representing the source culture, steps 3 through 8 reside in the lower bowl representing the target culture and these steps specifically correspond to the theatrical production itself, and steps 9 through 11 which also reside in the lower bowl and represent the reception of the theatrical event by both the individual audience and the target culture as a whole.[35] It is important to note that Pavis identifies reception by the audience and reception by the target culture as being two separate reactions; one, the immediate reaction of the specific audience viewing the product and, two, the product as the consciousness of the audience links into the social consciousness of the target culture. The first (1) step of Pavis's Hourglass is cultural modelling, this requires the analyst to

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[33] Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), dustcover.

[34] Pavis, *Theatre,* 13.

[35] Pavis, *Theatre,* 185.

start with the entirety of the source culture as it can be examined, pulling together social practices and ritual with philosophical thought and religion and literary or mythic systems. This requires the analyst to view the source culture as it is conceived and formalized before any adaptation work begins. Step two (2) is artistic modelling, appreciating, and understanding the different dramatic forms and performance traditions of the source culture. Pavis elaborates that artistic modelling helps determine how a foreign culture is recognized, what indices, stereotypes, and suppositions we associate with it, and how we construct it from our own point of view *even at the risk of being ethnocentric.*[36] The use of 'stereotypes' and 'ethnocentric' in the same sentence is at once shocking and then rather obvious when you are reminded that Pavis is a Brook apologist, the very creation of the Hourglass is in an effort to lend theoretical credence to Brook and his *Mahabharata.* Step three (3) takes us out of the upper bowl and into the lower one as we are invited to explore the perspective of the adapters. All members of the creative team are adapters in two ways, how they individually (often subconsciously) interpret both the source culture and their role in the creation of the theatrical event, and how the team agrees to view the source culture and divide the labor in producing the theatrical event. They all have a mediating function, adapting, transforming, modifying, borrowing, *appropriating* source text and culture for a target culture and audience.[37] Interestingly, Pavis's definition of the role of the adapter is practically identical to the way Said positions the orientalist in his argument. Said asserts that the role of the orientalist is to present to the West what the East is/can be, producing it in a way that is understandable

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[36] Pavis, *Theatre,* 14.

[37] Pavis, *Theatre,* 191.

and unthreatening for Western diplomats, scholars, tourists, etc.[38] By their very definitions, Pavis's Hourglass is inherently an orientalist tool.

The fourth (4) step is the actual process of adaptation. This establishes that all viewings of a theatrical event are twice analyzed. The performance is the director's analysis of the text, which in turn is analyzed by the audience. This point feels like a callback to Robinson and his assertion that full understanding of an opera requires analysis of libretto and score, best achieved through performance; while a conductor does not (always) adapt the score by changing any of the composer's work *per se*, but a conductor does exercise a great deal of control with tempi, dynamics, and phrasing. Pavis lumps step five (5), preparatory work by the actors, and step six (6), choice of form, together. The steps, Pavis defends, *must* be paired together because the actor must prepare for the specific form of theatrical event chosen.[39] This becomes the most likely pair of steps for the dramaturg's intervention in the rehearsal room and outside of just production meetings. Step seven (7), the theatrical representation of culture, corresponds with the actual performance of the theatrical event. Theatricality offers specific means for transferring a source culture to a target audience: only, Pavis argues, in this context can we speak of a theatrical interculturalism.[40] With step eight (8), the reception-adapters, Pavis once again overlaps Said. Pavis's insistence that, for a smooth transfer of culture, the director must be familiar with the target culture and be able to predict the audience's reaction by arranging the source culture in a predictive way to ensure communication

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[38] Said, *Orientalism,* 40-41, and throughout.

[39] Pavis, *Theatre,* 196.

[40] Pavis, *Theatre,* 200.

between cultures.[41] Pavis explains that until conceptual tools which would work in both a Western and Eastern context are available, intercultural communication needs reception-adapters to facilitate the passage from one world to the other.[42] This definition of reception-adapters and Said's polarizing expounding on the necessity of the orientalist to *produce* the subdominant culture for the enjoyment and exploitation of the dominant are more than cut from the same cloth, but rather belong to the same thread. The lineage from Said to Pavis becomes even more clearly established when you reflect on the dangerous binary they both create. The Hourglass, and especially this eighth step, are trapped, unable to transcend the long-established hegemony. The effect this has on the Hourglass as a mode of analysis is that it will never be able to create truly equitable intercultural theatre.[43] For the Hourglass to work there must always be a source culture (subdominant) and a target culture (dominant); this eighth step reveals the Hourglass's biggest failure in terms of both flexibility and viability in the current social landscape: a rigid adherence to colonialist thought. It becomes impossible to deviate from the "us" verses "them" mentality *ipso facto* Otherness is so inherently a part of Pavis's model that to attempt to decolonize the framework the very model itself falls apart.

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[41] Pavis, *Theatre,* 203.

[42] Pavis, *Theatre,* 17.

[43] For further critique of Pavis's Hourglass's efficacy in creating intercultural theatre and placing it in a wider theoretical context see: Jonathan Pitches and Ruru Li, "The End of the Hourglass: Alternate Conceptions of Intercultural Exchange between European and Chinese operatic forms," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 32, no.2 (2012): 121-137.

With step nine (9), consequences for readability, the Hourglass moves from the theatrical event itself to the reception by the audience. Readability is an act of communication, but effective communication is highly subjective. Pavis even acknowledges this saying that readability implies a mode of alterity which can take many different forms.[44] Following Pavis's steps, the act of modifying the source culture for the target culture is straightforward however Pavis makes several assumptions that current wisdom informs us are false. Working under Pavis's conditions, you start with a source culture. The lack of specificity in defining source culture becomes a great hinderance; is Pavis understanding that his reader understands the lack of existence of a "pure" source culture without needing clarification, or does it matter to Pavis if there are nuances to the source culture? I posit that, due to the directional binary of the Hourglass, the model works the same regardless of whether the source culture is generic or more nuanced. This would mean that the Hourglass is incapable of distinguishing between a generic source culture input, such as Native American or Egyptian, and a much more specific reference source culture such as Cherokee or Coptic. Since both Native American and Cherokee would both be considered source cultures, they would functionally be interchangeable. Since there is no flexibility to distinguish subcultural diversity within a source culture, step nine seems to be the get-out-of-jail-free card Pavis built into his model. This does show that Pavis was at least mildly aware that there could be some negative feedback to both his model and to performances which follow it. The tenth (10) step, reception within the target culture, beyond whether the audience approves or disapproves of the theatrical event, this step is most concerned with audience makeup. In particular, the way in which

[44] Pavis, *Theatre,* 205.

the work proceeds and undergoes modification in the spectator's consciousness.[45] Unlike with the source culture at step one, here in step ten Pavis recognizes that there are indeed social and cultural nuances which can affect an audience's response. The last steps of the Hourglass take on a very different tone than the first seven, words like "risk" and "consequence" start appearing in Pavis's explanations of the steps. This subtle change in tone suggests that while Pavis is quite comfortable with the handling of the source culture he is keenly aware of the lack of understanding he has on the target culture. This again overlaps with Said, both in the canonical diplomat sources Said uses as reference and in critiques of Said. The attaché who is an expert while in country and completely politically inept at home drove the creation of Area Studies departments, as countless examples in both *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* demonstrate. As you map this subjectivity on to performance it becomes even more sticky, as opera and other orientalist performance bloomed (especially during the Enlightenment and then again with the Romantics) orientalism becomes less of a depiction of actual Eastern culture but more a representation of the individual creator's Othered fantasy land.[46] Step ten of the Hourglass removes Pavis from any culpability if the audience should respond negatively. Again, Pavis is one of the major Brook apologists, so he is keenly aware of the mixed reaction to Brook's *Mahabharata* and likely built this step into the Hourglass to provide authority to his indemnity if some audiences were to respond similarly to future works. The eleventh (11) and final step in the Hourglass again has a different tone, given and

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[45] Pavis, *Theatre,* 207.

[46] John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 30-33.

anticipated consequences. This step grows out of pleas for the spectator to welcome forgetfulness. A forgetfulness that Pavis says will eventually mitigate suffering depending on what the spectator has remembered and what they have forgotten. Despite the depth of the performance's penetration into the consciousness of the spectator, it is always culturally pertinent to see what the spectator retains and what the spectator excludes.[47] Ultimately is can be concluded that how much, or how little, of the theater event the spectator remembers and then recirculates into their culture determines the efficacy of the adaptation. The performance becomes an analysis of itself, depending on what elements are remembered and discussed. In effect, with the complete Hourglass there are three competing(?) analyses in play: the analysis of the production team, or adapters, in creating the theatre event; the spectator, and their memory, at the theatre event; AND the interculture performance theorist using the Hourglass to interpret a dramaturgical analysis and a production history. The easy to follow, prescriptive nature of the Hourglass makes it incredibly appealing, however its lack of nuance and rigidity limit its usefulness, especially in the current landscape of intercultural performance.

Erika Fischer-Lichte also looks at the connection between modernism and contemporary intercultural theatre practice, the link between post/colonialism and interculturalism, and the broad strokes of cultural exchange.[48] Similar to a few of Bharucha's points, Fischer-Lichte troubles the assumption of cultural ownership, and challenges the Western privileging of the written text. Her troubling of cultural ownership and the inadequacy of given analytical models is rooted most deeply in the

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[47] Pavis, *Theatre,* 19.

[48] Charlotte McIvor, *Interculturalism and Performance,* 244.

politics of identity, saying in her introduction that the differences between cultures are dynamic and permanently shifting, that they continually reproduce themselves anew and must be recognized as such.[49] At the core of her framework is a "utopian dimension" which celebrates the seamlessness in moving between cultures, and being in a state of in-betweenness. Not unlike Pavis, this utopian core is the biggest clue that Fischer-Lichte is more of a Brook apologist than harsh critic. Like Brook she troubles the notion of cultural ownership, she also develops a clear point of view that current analytical models place too much emphasis on the written text and sometimes ignore oral histories and culturally specific modes of performance. Also, like Brook, the notion of a utopia, a seamless movement between cultures, reads as being in favor of an impossible universality. Universality, and such notions, could perhaps be a moment where opera studies and musicology can be helpful to intercultural performance studies. It is not so simple as "music is universal", yes, music exists everywhere -in every culture we know about, there is some form of music- there is great variance in music across cultures and across time periods. Both Pavis's model and Fischer-Lichte's framework so far allow for little specificity regarding what the source culture is, which can come across as the "music is universal" stance, not allowing any space for additional clarity. Fischer-Lichte does make more of an attempt than Pavis to be more flexible, but that flexibility seems mostly limited to the target culture and not the source culture, saying that intercultural performance is constituted by the relationship between the continuation of the own

[49] Erika Fischer-Lichte, Torsten Jost, and Saskya Iris Jain, eds., *The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures: Beyond Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7.

traditions [target culture] and the productive reception of the elements of foreign theatre traditions.[50]

While not as prescriptive a method as is Pavis's Hourglass, the theory in Interweaving Performance Cultures treats differing performance cultures as diverse strands and threads to be interwoven into a piece of cloth in such a way that these components are no longer recognizable individually, and that each thread cannot be traced back to its origin.[51] It is perhaps most interesting that Interweaving Performance Cultures both comes from Bharucha and is heavily critiqued by Bharucha. Like any piece of intercultural performance scholarship which engages with Brook (i.e. the entire field), the work must also engage with Bharucha. Bharucha, however, is given a turn to ask very heavy, critical questions of Fischer-Lichte, in her own work. The last of three sections in *The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures,* entitled "Failures and Resistances" opens with the chapter "Hauntings of the Intercultural: Enigmas and Lessons on the Borders of Failure" by Bharucha. The questions posed by Bharucha, like: "who are the weavers doing the weaving" and "what are their ownership rights to what is being woven", seem almost purposefully unanswered.[52] Considering such a rigorous and exhaustive approach as Fischer-Lichte takes, questions so obviously intrinsic for the success of her theory would have to be intentionally looked over. In her review of the book, Sabine Sörgel points out that Bharucha raises an even more important question

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[50] Erika Fischer-Lichte, Josehpine Riley, and Michael Gissenwehrer, eds., *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign* (Tübingen, Germany: Gunter Narr, 1990), 5.

[51] Fischer-Lichte, *Politics,* 1-24.

[52] Rustom Bharucha in Fischer-Lichte, *Politics,* 179-200.

about the practical usefulness of Interweaving Performance Cultures, noting that current scholarship on interweaving has not foregrounded how the transformative utopia it strives to create can be at work in the world.[53] For all its faults, Interweaving Performance Cultures positions itself as a sort of theoretical stepping-stone between the more emotional arguments of Bharucha and into the more sterile, scholarly arguments that result from the new paradigm of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre. Its fundamental usefulness comes from its core value that it should be hard to separate cultural markers from a completed work of interculturalism. Meaning, to me, that if an opera incorporates the use of untuned percussion (like a gong or a tom-tom) it should completely feel like a part of that opera rather than feel like a foreign element being used for "exotic affect". A great example of the success of this would be Glass's opera *Akhnaten* which relies heavily on drums and other untuned percussion to evoke Egypt's 18th Dynasty. The continuity of the piece and the care taken by Glass and his collaborators to 'weave' cultures into such a unified modern opera is commendable, and, I believe, a good illustration of how Interweaving Performance Cultures is intended to work.[54]

It feels important to draw once again a parallel with Said, or at least to engage with Interweaving Performance Cultures, the Hourglass, and with Said together. In his new introduction for the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Orientalism,* Said admits to largely leaving Germany and German orientalism out of the discussion. As he reasons

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[53] Sabine Sörgel, "*The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures*," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 25, no. 4 (2015): 584-586.

[54] For more on Philip Glass and his opera *Akhnaten* see: John Richardson, *Singing Archaeology: Philip Glass's Akhnaten* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1999).

there was no sustained national interest in the Orient for the Germans in the 19th century the way that there was for the French and British, that the German Orient was lyrics and novels and fantasies, not *actual* [colonial] like it was for the British or the French.[55] Said points to a German intellectual authority over the Orient in Western culture, but a political one which is automatically ascribed to British and French orientalism. This seems to come through in the varying analytical models for intercultural performance too, when you compare the highly theorized but difficult to practice Interweaving Performance Cultures by the German scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte with the much easier to practice but with bigger theoretical holes as the Hourglass by the French scholar Patrice Pavis. The different colonial legacies and therefore the different application of Said to each scholar becomes very apparent in Pavis's Hourglass with built in "apology" steps, and Interweaving Performance Cultures which stays in the heavy intellectual and leaves too many questions unanswered to be anywhere near as practical as the other.

To add to the mix a third analytical model, this time though, one which comes from the opera studies field that I feel does the most similar job to the two above discussed models. Naomi Andre's theory of Engaged Musicology fits here nicely. Andre's work, out of the available models in opera studies, gets the closest to any of the available models in intercultural performance theory and it is clear they have a similar lineage. Said was a major influence on Andre's development as a scholar; echoing what others have said about Said and his work Andre's work grows out of an interest in refining and defining orientalism for new audiences. In looking for new scholarship within Said's work, Andre recognizes that while Said and continuing discussions cover

[55] Said, *Orientalism,* 17-19.

what orientalism is and *why* orientalism is perpetuated, but almost never *how* acts of orientalism are carried out.[56] Said's clear constructions of power, and insistence that the arts are not innocent of politics inspired Andre start crafting modes of analysis that help bring what is happening onstage into conversation with what is happening in the world.[57] When forming Engaged Musicology, Andre cites Sarah Nuttall and the concept of "Entanglement" -a means to draw into our analyses those sites which what was once thought of as separate -identities, spaces, histories- come together and find points of intersection in unexpected ways.[58] Although Nuttall is the reference for Andre, the way she engages with Entanglement -discussing the integration of opera companies post-Apartheid, and the creation of new, all black opera companies which mix traditional African elements with traditional grand opera elements- is more similar to how Erika Fischer-Lichte likely intended for Interweaving Performance Cultures to be used.

Engaged Musicology is a simple four question formula which seeks to analyze how operas produce meaning for current audiences. Andre is less interested in understanding how music might have had meaning in the past but does concede that the past is important for general understanding. While Andre gives permission to adjust the questions based on the situation of the works being analyzed, the first step (1) is "who is

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[56] Andre specifically mentions blackface as an often-ignored mode of orientalism. Engaged Musicology is designed to be as broad as possible and applicable to many different power structures, not just race. Blackface does not play that much of a role in shaping the framework of Engaged Musicology but is certainly an aspect which is discussed and revealed by following the framework.

[57] Andre, *Black Opera,* 7.

[58] Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2009) quoted in Andre, *Black Opera,* 171.

in the story?", refers to who is onstage, as well as who is not there; relates to the representation of the role being portrayed and the identity of the person playing the role.[59] The second (2) question is "who gets to speak?", far more complicated that just what is seen onstage, the physical presence and the narrative voice are not always embodied together. Third (3) "who gets to tell the story?", is concerned mostly with the voice of the creatives, and how representative their work can be of a specific set of experiences, whether the creator comes from inside the world being depicted or is an outsider, Andre says, warrants careful attention.[60] The fourth (4) step to Engaged Musicology is "who interprets the story?", this places a focus on the audience and how the narrative is perceived, which shifts based on whose experiences are reflected in the interpretation as well as each individual audience member's understanding of the historical facts and a more flexible "imagined past" based on what an audience member *thinks* they know or do not.[61]

Andre applies her framework to four case studies to great effect, but there are many opportunities for improvement through more intentional, interdisciplinary conversations. Such conversations would allow an analytical model to form which would be structured enough to be reproduced yet flexible enough to apply to many different types of operas and musicals alike. Seeking not only how performance creates current meaning, but how past meaning informs current meaning. This allows scholars of intercultural performance to take the individual performance histories of each production

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[59] Andre, *Black Opera,* 21.

[60] Andre, *Black Opera,* 22.

[61] Andre, *Black Opera,* 22.

and run them through an analytical model, and then take all the individual conclusions and run them through the model again to create a unified historiography which speaks to individual performances and the life of the work as a whole. This new analytical model would dramatically help bridge opera studies and intercultural performance studies while reshaping the ways in which these operas and musicals exist within both fields.

Intercultural Wagon Wheel

I am proposing a new analytical model, as explained above, which seeks to combine theories of intercultural performance, musical analysis, and dramaturgical research which will be useful in addressing the othering that persist through operas and musical adaptations. I have created a list of ten variables which must each be addressed to create a full and stable analysis, to this end I am currently referring to this model as the Wagon Wheel model. Like a wagon wheel, my model has ten spokes, and should any one of them be removed or improperly constructed the wheel will not support weight and could collapse. These ten variables come from elements of Pavis's Hourglass, Fischer-Lichte's Interweaving Performance Cultures, and Andre's Engaged Musicology, and have been nuanced to demonstrate how much the past can inform the present, as well as the financial and social cost of producing any performance.

1. Commissioning Party and Funding
2. Source Material
3. Lived Experiences of the Composer and Librettist
4. Traditions and Norms of Performance Genre
5. Musical Style and Influence
6. Cultural and Political Struggles

7. Expected Audience
8. Influence of Directors and Performers
9. Location of Premiere and/or Run
10. Commercial Success

A close look at these ten points provides a rigorous and flexible analytical model which combines elements of musicology with elements of intercultural performance theory to better expose stereotyping, Othering, orientalism, and other hegemonic cultural assumptions in works of opera and musical theatre.

Who is commissioning the work and the sources of funding instantly reveal the politics of the decision, how the commissioning entity plans to use the work, and what goals (hidden or otherwise) that the producing body hopes to accomplish.

Source material can be just as important as funding, is the work based on a novel, play, or folktale and what are the socio-political implications of the source material, do they change as the story migrates into the opera?

What kind of upbringing and education did the composer and librettist have, what circles did they travel in and who did they spend time with, how do those experiences play out in the work?

What is expected from a theatre experience at the time, are there major differences between high-brow and low-brow entertainment, how do previous works by the same composer or librettist look next to this one, how does stagecraft factor into the piece's creation?

Is the music written following the standard of European opera or are there different styles and instruments incorporated, is there clear musical orientalism or other attempts at exoticism?

What culture war or political struggle is playing out in the world as the piece is being written and how does that play out in the work itself, is the work overtly political or is there more of a hidden meaning?

For whom is the piece being written, is it an affluent and educated audience, or is it more of a popular theatre audience, what is the ethnic and gender makeup of the audience?

How much change do the director, choreographer, and performers make on the piece, are parts rewritten for certain performers, does the work change in rehearsal, has a certain performer become known for doing a role a certain way?

Where is the opera or musical premiering, is it a court theatre or a popular house, geographically does the opera's location affect its reception?

Was the piece successful, did it sell its whole run, how often is it revived or restaged, what was the critical response compared to audience response?

These questions form the basis of this study, which seeks to follow the above line of inquiry to test the limits and flexibility of the model I have proposed. By reading, listening, and watching operas and musicals through my new lens the following case studies each will demonstrate that a more complete historiography of these global stories comes from a mode of analysis which fully considers how Othering works in each story which will arm us with new strategies and nuances to cultivate more educated audiences,

stage reconciling and innovative new productions, and to have a more effective scholarly discourse around these works.

Case Studies

I have three case studies which each deal with Othering in very different ways. To demonstrate where Othering is reinforced by production and audience reception, Verdi and Ghislanzoni's *Aida* (1871). To demonstrate where Othering is an essential part of both the score and the libretto, Mozart and Schikaneder's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791). And to demonstrate where Othering is used to comment on the behavior of the dominant culture, Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885). To further test my proposed theory, I also consider adaptations of these canonical operas such as: two Broadway adaptations of *Aida,* Friedman's *My Darlin Aida* (1952) and Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida* (1998), Peter von Winter and Schikaneder's *Das Labyrinth* (1798), Jordan and Barry's *Queen of the Night* (2018), and Jarrod Lee's *Black Flutes* (2022), Warden's *The Swing Mikado* (1938) and Cooke's *The Hot Mikado* (1938). I argue that a greater understanding of how othering/Orientalism works in these canonical operas comes just as much from these adaptations as it does from the original operas themselves.

My case studies are all works that have been plagued by "problematic" productions. The industry has shown that they will continue to produce these works - whether that is the best course of action or not- the Wagon Wheel and Saidian-informed dramaturgy are my attempts to take control of the way in which these works are performed. My proposed model and the resulting analysis not only refocus and nuance the discourse, but creates practical and actionable information for scholars, directors, and producers. To me, my work is a form of activism.

CHAPTER TWO

The Wagon Wheel Model

> 'It is difficult to connect these different realms, to show the involvements of culture with expanding empires, to make observations about art that preserve its unique endowments and at the same time map its affiliations, but, I submit, we must attempt this and set the art in the global, earthly context.'
> -Edward Said *Culture & Imperialism*

> 'What would it mean to apply the more recent insights of a newly configured performance studies, of critical multiculturalism, critical race theory and whiteness studies, diaspora studies, and new cosmopolitanism to the field of intercultural performance?'
> -Ric Knowles *Theatre & Interculturalism*

I have referred to my proposed analytical framework as the Wagon Wheel model because the ten variables radiating out from a single work, when charted, resemble a wagon wheel. The fundamental structure is easy to follow. It combines certain aspects from the Hourglass, Interweaving Performance Cultures, and Engaged Musicology models while simultaneously being more flexible and allowing for more nuance than any of those three on their own. Perhaps the most significant immediate difference between my model and the extant ones is a clear focus on materiality. Noticeably lacking from the earlier models is any concern with commissioning and funding these works. I posit that previous models which begin with the director's concept or the perspective of the adapters, are destined always to be incomplete because they fail to account for the real power behind the project. A more robust approach is to fully consider the positionality of the financiers of the work, not only does this further reveal political and social motives, it also illuminates the work's financial purpose -why did the commissioning party view this

work as a good return on their investment. Beyond the question of funding, previous models don't go far enough to consider commercial success and how that contributes to the work's staying power. Works in the canon are there because they consistently make money for producers today; by examining the commercial success of works in their time, important information about their reception can be catalogued in a more objective way than audience response.

This shift towards materiality -a specific interest in the funding of art- is not, necessarily, novel. Charlotte McIvor defines this shift in intercultural performance theory -an interest in the marketing, dissemination, and economy of works- as second wave intercultural performance theory, which she defines as spanning from the early 2000s to 2010.[1] I suggest that this shift is more theoretical than anything else, and that most of the work being done in the period McIvor identifies (the early 2000s- 2010) are critiques of earlier works. Many of the second wave works outlined by McIvor successfully argue for a more material approach. My work seeks to go further and provide a model which incorporates an eye for the materialisms of theatre making (the financial capital needed, the shipping and creation of physical aspects of a production, etc.). Beyond the critical engagement of earlier works, I am putting forth a new methodology.

Commissioning Party/Funding

The first and potentially most enlightening step in the new model is an analysis of the commissioning and funding of the work from start to finish. Approaching any work the way that I intend to, by examining the text and its creation through a Saidian-

[1] Daphne Lei and Charlotte McIvor eds., *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Interculturalism and Performance* (London: Methuen Drama, 2020), 232.

informed dramaturgical lens it becomes evident that for geopolitical reasons, Othering based on ethnic or cultural markers is bound to be present. For that reason, funding is one of the most critical factors. With any Orientalizing work, especially pieces of music and theatre, knowing where the money is coming from will have a profound impact on how the composer and librettist are allowed to contribute to or comment on othering and stereotypes in said work. Trying to understand why the producer was willing to spend the money on this specific project, and how the funding of this project fits into the positionality of the producer will help to contextualize the influence the producer's agenda has on the composer and librettist. Operas and musical theatre pieces have very different histories with funding and producing: Operas are often commissioned by a single person, or an opera company will commission a composer to write a new work for their theatre, whereas musical theatre pieces generally have huge teams of producers who share the responsibilities; I'll explore both briefly below.

Opera's origins as a court entertainment are pretty evident from the way that operas come into the world. Throughout its centuries-long history in the Global West, until very recently perhaps the 1920s or 1930s, most operas came into being because a royal entity asked for one, as is the case for *Aida*. Rarer are operas which a single producing body or opera company commissioned them, in the way that the *Theatre an der Wein* asked Mozart to compose *Die Zauberflöte* for them to produce. Much rarer still are instances when a composer, or composer and librettist team, can self-produce their works. While this style of self-producing is perhaps most closely associated with Wagner and his *Bayreuth Festspielhaus* however, other examples do exist such as Richard D'Oyly Carte, William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan who produced all twelve of their

operettas at the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company which the three of them owned. This is no longer the case for most new operas or new productions of existing operas today, which have generally been commissioned by two or more large companies and the work subsequently plays a run at both theatres. For example, last season at Atlanta Opera a new production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare* was co-produced by Atlanta Opera and the Israeli Opera.

By comparison, creating musical theatre pieces is often much more convoluted and frequently involves a list of producers upwards of ten or twelve names long. For example, here are two Broadway musicals which both ran in the same theatre: according to the Playbill on the 2013 Broadway production of *Kinky Boots,* Daryl Roth, and Hal Luftig receive top billing out of a total twenty-one producing entities and groups; similarly on the 2019 Broadway Playbill of *Moulin Rouge!*, Carmen Pavlovic, Gerry Ryan, Bill Damaschke, and Global Creatures receive top billing out of a total eighteen producing entities and groups. While there is some fluctuation in number, there are generally many more investors involved with a musical than with an opera. The number of people a composer must please with their work almost certainly impacts the finished work and can be most clearly illuminated when funding streams are fully analyzed.

I suggest this also has an impact on run length. Most musicals have relatively short runs, around twelve to eighteen months. Several productions break through and run for three to six years, long-running productions of fifteen to twenty to thirty years are certainly the exception and not the rule. Since Broadway musicals are very lavish with extensive production needs and high weekly running costs, many producers are needed to raise the capital necessary while keeping every single entity's investment low so that it is

easily recoupable. Conversely, opera companies will use the same production for decades, making repairs to the scenery and costumes, but largely regurgitating the same production repeatedly. Such is the case with many of The Metropolitan Opera's productions. Franco Zeffirelli's 1981 production of *La Boheme* is still beloved by audiences despite being [and looking] forty-one years old, the 1988 Frisell *Aida* will finally be retired this season after thirty-four years of dedicated service on The Met's stage elevators. The incredible longevity of these productions removes the urgency from the producing body to recoup its investment as quickly as possible and therefore fewer investors are required to produce such work.

Source Material

The second step in my analytical model is an understanding of the source material. Source material is extremely important to HIT, in the form of Third World raw material, as I am positioning my work as a framework for analysis of works which come before HIT, the source material is just as important to my model. Source material goes beyond just the chosen story, but a deep and methodical dive into all preceding iterations of the story. Understanding where the story came from allows for greater clarity when considering all the possible directions the story can go through production.

Most of the librettists in the opera canon have turned to plays as their chief inspiration, some have turned to novels; in many instances the plays being adapted into operas are themselves adaptations of novels. Many of the great librettists, Lorenzo Da Ponte, Antonio Ghislanzoni, Emanuel Schikaneder, even Richard Wagner, were themselves dramatists or at least respected poets independently of their work in the opera sphere. The next most common source material would be fairytales or National Epics or

mythology. From sources like this we get most of the early operas, about half of Mozart's operas and almost all of Wagner's output. Much rarer in opera are original stories. Two of the operas I plan to cover, *Aida* and *The Mikado,* are original stories. While their originality frees them from the baggage of a source play or novel, it allows for much greater freedom on behalf of the producing bodies, composer, and librettist to imbue the text and score with whatever meaning and themes they should so choose.

Many musical theatre pieces also pull from existing source material (like a play or a novel), connecting them to a larger conversation. *Oklahoma!,* the 1943 musical which marks the beginning of the musical theatre "Golden Age", is based on a play as are many early musicals. Fairytales, Epic, and mythology appear often also, examples being *Cinderella* and perhaps *Camelot.* Adaptations of films now appear just as often (if not more) than original stories; both *Kinky Boots* and *Moulin Rouge* as mentioned in step one are adaptations of films. Both opera and musical theatre fields borrow heavily from existing popular culture and folklore, all of which has an outcome in the finished work regardless of how much of the original material remains through adaptation.

Lived Experience of the Composer and Librettist

Perhaps most directly influential on the finished work itself are the lived experiences of the composer and librettist. The circles they travel in, their upbringing, their parents and family connections, their geographic homestead all play a role in the style and thematic makeup of the creative. Mozart, a young composer, borrows and builds on whatever trends were fashionable at the time, as evidenced in his music. In contrast, Verdi has a more self-referential style eschewing trends for a proven formula. Librettists have just the same control over shaping the theming of a piece, allowing

stereotyping, othering, and additional social commentary to come through in their lyrics, even if thinly veiled. While there are different levels of collaboration between composer and librettist, we know that Mozart was very involved in the writing of the libretto often providing heavy edits or writing bits of text himself, Verdi would pass ideas and suggestions to his librettists but largely let them write the poetry themselves, none of the collaborations work the way we understand musical theatre collaborations to work today. One of the few exceptions to this will be looked at later, the writing team of Gilbert and Sullivan. Many musical theatre composition teams work together closely while writing the score and text of a piece. Teams like Rogers and Hammerstein, Kander and Ebb, and Comden and Green work closely together sometimes in the same room. This is very different from Verdi and Ghislanzoni as they were working on *Aida,* sending letters back and forth while working completely independently of each other.

These composition teams bring to the work a lifetime of friendships, prejudices, and value judgements which inevitably seep into their works. Unable to escape their childhood friendships, political affiliations, or social turmoil in their personal lives, one way or another those embodied experiences come through in their work. The race relations depicted onstage are products of the lived experience of those who wrote them, the colors and tones result from subtle nuances in the lives of each contributor. Dramaturgically, an understanding, or at least an attempt at understanding, how the world around them shaped the lives of the composer and librettist and how that manifest in the work is essential for understanding the work in it full context, but also for beginning to decode, approach, and understand the ways race and racism work in the work.

Traditions and Norms of the Performance Genre

Tradition certainly plays a much larger role in the creation and staging of operas than in musical theatre, but both fields can occasionally get mired down in the sake of "tradition". Opera composers had come to rely heavily on tradition especially when structuring their work. Most operas are three or four acts long, with a few exceptions. Mozart often wrote in two acts but would make use of the three-act structure (*Entführung aus dem Serail)* and the four-act structure in (*Don Giovanni*) from time to time. Each country developed their own traditions and expectations as each country developed a national operatic style. Italian operas often had ballets, but were not necessarily required to do so, whereas French opera houses required them. This would occasionally pose problems as composers sought to be international, famously Wagner was forced to write a ballet (something his operas are not known for) before Paris Opera would give his *Tannhauser* a production. These local specifics make it challenging to speak about opera in a monolithic way, as it varies greatly not only from period to period, but from nation to nation. Opera has also developed a tradition regarding the actual performance. As Will Crutchfield explores in "What is Tradition", classical music depends upon tradition almost as much as it depends upon the score in performance.[2] Crutchfield explains that, regarding ornamentation, vocalists and conductors rely on what they know will show off the singer best and what has been established by previous singers and conductors rather than what specifically is written in the score. This comes from a Baroque sensibility where ornamentation and cadenzas would largely be left to the discretion of the singer

[2] Will Crutchfield, "What is Tradition," in *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera,* eds. Roberta Marvin and Hillary Poriss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 238-260.

and transcribed for publication. Because of the knowledge that Early and Baroque opera were meant to have a little room for personal interpretation this comes as a direct affront to current vocal pedagogy and overwhelming Western preferencing of the written text. Unlike before, where a composer understood that his work was meant to be in constant collaboration with the vocalist, the current paradigm relies solely on what is written, often sacrificing creativity for the sake of "authenticity".

Musical Theatre is long established as a two-act medium, however increasingly popular are one act, ninety-minute pieces. Vocally musical theatre actors are to strictly adhere to the score, with the only real creativity coming from the actor who originates the role. Any sort of ornamentation is developed in the rehearsal process and then becomes a part of the score to be repeated the same way every time not only by the first actor, but by all subsequent actors. It is my belief that this trend comes from the usually much shorter amount of time a musical theatre actor spends with a role compared to an opera singer. In musical theatre, after the rehearsal process a performer will stay with a successful show for twelve to eighteen months depending on contract status and renewal options, there are multiple exceptions to this rule also. For example, Ryan Lowe, the current Mary Sunshine in the Broadway revival company of *Chicago,* was the first replacement in 1996 and, despite leaving to work on other projects, has been with the primary Mary Sunshine since 2010. Similarly in other long running musicals like *The Lion King* and *Wicked* there are a small handful of original company members still around. I contend that these long running musicals move closer into opera territory because of this. In opera, singers will learn a handful of roles and spend their entire career playing the same five or six roles at companies across the world. The years of time they spend working on, and perfecting,

these roles allow them to completely understand how the music works down to a microscopic level. Because of this they can make tiny changes to the ornamentation while still staying true to the musical intent. A Broadway actor like Ryan Lowe from *Chicago* with almost eighteen years tenure or George Lee Andrews from *Phantom of the Opera* with over twenty-three years in the same role gain an intimate knowledge of every aspect of production, but due to the traditions of their performance genre must continue to sing the role as written, without the freedom to add a high note or massage any of the ornamentation.

I argue that understanding how each work upholds or defies the traditions and norms of the specific performance genre will reveal the thought process behind the structure and shape of the piece, this understanding of the ways in which the creative employ or subvert the norms can be helpful to further the analysis of the work by providing a vital look into the mind of the composer and librettist. Understanding how the work is a genre pushing anomaly or how the work is highly formulaic will have an effect on the overall dramaturgy of the piece. This step in my analysis structure clearly goes hand-in-hand with the previous step looking into the lived experiences of the creatives but will also provide potentially critical depth to all subsequent analytical steps by illuminating how the composer and librettist positioned the work themselves, and how they engaged with previous criticisms.

Musical Style and Influence

For an analytical model to be able to specifically speak to opera and musical theatre, then some point of analysis must be focused solely on the music of the work in question. Step number five in the model I am proposing is the most obvious point of

intersection between the intercultural performance work and the musicology work being done. Coincidentally, it is here that Said offers the most insight. As I have established in the previous chapter, Edward Said is the starting point for the idea of intercultural performance theory. From Said's *Orientalism* grew innumerable works arguing in favor, or vehemently against, Said's theory. The fifteen years between 1979's *Orientalism* and its 1994 companion work *Culture and Imperialism* form a sort of Wild West of intercultural performance. It was in this time that Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* came into being, coming with it Bharucha's work, and starting a never ending point-counterpoint between Orientalists, Interculturalists, and Theatre scholars which ultimately led to where research is now.

Also, a published music scholar, Said's work in Orientalism and his work in Musicology stayed quite separate. In his one text singularly devoted to the examination of music, 1991's *Musical Elaborations,* he does make several tongue-in-cheek references to his more famous work, however, the word "Orientalism" is not indexed anywhere in its nearly two hundred pages. While the book is supremely concerned with the creation of the canon, and thus it *has* to confront topics such as imperialism and colonialism, the book's avoidance of applying Said's theory of Orientalism to his analysis of musical works signals a possible attempt by Said to keep his work clearly separated, in two distinct fields.[3] Said does have a clear voice, and his writing inevitably pulls out similarities, one of the biggest takeaways from this book is:

> "But all we need to do is to look at the whole field of classical music as a mode of dominance in sustaining the structure of the status quo, or in its

[3] Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), xiv.

> fate as a field of human endeavor challenged from time to time by other cultures, other nonelite formations, alternative subcultures, to grasp something of the whole social contest in which music is often involved. To think of music and cultural exoticism in the mid to late nineteenth century (Verdi, Bizet, Wagner, Saint-Saëns, etc.) or of music and politics during the seventeenth and twentieth centuries (Monteverdi, Schoenberg, jazz, and rock culture) is therefore to map an ensemble of political and social involvements, affiliations, transgressions, none of which is easily reducible either to simple apartness or to a reflection of coarse reality."[4]

This echoes similar pull quotes regarding culture and the role of art in a colonizing society not only in Said's other works, but by scholars who push the work further like John MacKenzie and Jonathan Bellman. But to music, Said and his vocabulary are supremely necessary, Said is the key to unlocking conversations about race in music.

When discussing musical Othering, a number of opera studies scholars find themselves employing "Exoticism" or "Orientalism", the vocabulary for discussing the intersections of intercultural works is much less developed on the music side than on the theatre side. Many of the foundational texts in this subfield rely on Said to form the theoretical base of their argument: *Orientalism and the Operatic World; Opera in a Multicultural World; Musical Exoticism; Blackness in Opera; Black Opera; Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters; The Exotic in Western Music; The Singing Turk; Music and the Exotic; Opera in Context; Orientalism, Masquerade, and Mozart's Turkish Music;* and countless articles. While Said and *Orientalism* may have drifted to the background of the

[4] Ibid, 7.

conversation on the intercultural performance theory side of the conversation, on the opera studies side he is very much a current and present figure, in fact, he is *driving* the conversation. Because of Said's role as the chief theorist used in musicological studies discussing musical Otherness, it is important that his work be a major consciousness of my research. In order for me to do close readings of the scores in question, and to understand how they subvert the expected style and the intent behind that subversion, I must approach these works through the same lens that others have used when discussing race and ethnicity and how it is depicted musically.

A comprehensive view of the score, structurally, sonically, musically is essential to understanding and explaining the composer's use of race in music. It is one thing to be able to point to a bit of spoken or sung text and explain how that perpetuates or creates a racialized stereotype, but an important aspect of my research is being able to look at the music itself and demonstrate how the music which accompanies that text reinforces the racialized stereotype being perpetuated. This step in my proposed analysis has, perhaps, the most literature from which to draw, which makes it essential that my research can speak the same language as the important research already done. Understanding how the musical style of a selected opera or musical theatre piece either goes along with the stylistic expectations of the time period, pushes the field in a new direction, or uses stereotypes and broad musical generalizations to depict racialized characters onstage is the key crossover point which brings opera studies and intercultural performance theory together and makes my proposed model innovative.

Social and Cultural Struggles at the Time

A key metric to understanding the subtleties and messaging of any work is a clear picture of what is going on in the world during the time it was written. Step six of my proposed model applies a dramaturgical approach to analysis which is missing from the other models. Perhaps more than any of the other data points I have proposed, this specific point will lead to more questions than answers. This is a feature, not a bug. I believe that the asking and re-asking of questions triggered by this analysis is what makes this step so useful to directors and performers. The more questions which come up during this analysis, the more extra-textural material the creative team has available to work with to explore the works' themes and statements through performance. Because a key aspect of the model I am proposing is that it is useful not only in a scholarly sense, but also a practical one, questions asked and answered here could completely reshape the way a production is crafted and received.

This data point goes together best with point number three, the lived experiences of the composer and librettist. A composer's work is the direct response to the world around them. Unlike how we understand most musical theatre compositions to come together, through the constant and firm hand of a team of producers, opera composers had/have a lot of autonomy over the creation of their work. As I explained in my article "Soliman's Legacy: What Mozart has to Teach Us about Race in Musical Theatre", the role of the opera composer historically is almost dictatorial.[5] As the music is seen as the most important aspect of the opera, the composer could select and veto source material at

[5] Brandon LaReau, "Soliman's Legacy: What Mozart has to Teach Us about Race in Musical Theatre," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 15, no. 3 (December 2021): 241-248.

will. Composers often offered extensive feedback, critique, and occasionally rewrites of the libretto. Many composers would supervise rehearsals personally and often have a role in the staging and designing of the opera. It was also common for composers to conduct the first few performances of their opera themselves. By taking a methodical look at the social and cultural struggles in the world, and how they might have affected the composer and librettist a clearer picture of how race moves throughout the opera (along with aspects like class, gender, and sexuality) will come into focus. All three of the case studies to follow were written into a very specific moment in time, and the political influence of the world at large is very present in all of them. As I will argue later, it is possible that serial misunderstanding of theses operas in context to their time periods has led to the perpetuation of antiquated racial stereotypes, and even the creation of new ones. Discussing Said's *Culture and Imperialism* in his own seminal text *Decolonizing the Stage,* Christopher Balme argues that Said sets up an ideological dilemma, the aesthetics of colonial and post-colonial art are unthinkable without the less than salutary effects of this experience.[6] Because the East has been permanently affected by the West through acts of Colonization and Orientalism, all Western works depicting the East are inherently political. While musical theatre pieces often comment more directly on social and cultural issues than do operas, if a musical has been adapted from an opera, then there is a conscious choice by the adapters regarding how to navigate the politics written into the original work. By taking time to find and understand the politics in these works not only provides audiences with a more thought-provoking and stimulating theatre-going experience but allows performers to create deeper and more thoughtful characters,

[6] Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

directors and designers to create more imaginative and novel productions, and scholars to create fresh scholarship with a new point-of-view which works to move the discourse into the present. To subvert canonical works or find ways to stage them which comment on their racialized and orientalist production histories, we must first understand the work in its original context.

Expected Audience

The existing models upon which I am expanding are all, to some extent, concerned with the makeup of the anticipated audience of the piece. Whether it is referred to as "Reception in Target Culture" such as Pavis uses, or the answer to the question "Who Interprets?" as posed by Naomi Andre, the expected audience can have a profound impact on the shaping of the work itself, and therefore on any subsequent analysis. In fact, opera studies scholar Andre concedes this point to theatre studies research saying, "the context for analyzing a performed work from the standpoint of the audience has a deeper precedence in theatre criticism than in opera studies; however, there also exists the larger umbrella of literary and cultural theory as well as performance studies."[7] This quote from Andre actually does two things, yes it acknowledges theatre's precedence in this matter, but also attempts to situate opera studies into the performance studies historiography. While this resituating doesn't get much more explicit attention, Andre continues the thought (intentional or not) by citing and referencing as many performance studies scholars as she does opera studies scholars in her work. Andre builds her understanding of reception and audiences through Susan Bennett, Jennifer Lyn Stoever, and DeFranz and Gonzales' *Black Performance Theory.*

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[7] Naomi Andre, *Black Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 22.

Susan Bennett is an appropriate place to turn here. Citing a revision for the 1993 edition of *Orientalism,* Bennett zooms in on Said's commentary that studying the power struggle between East and West is a point of entry into studying the formation and meaning of Western cultural practices themselves.[8] Bennett's analysis concludes that recent [performance studies] theory has pointed out the obvious gap within Western cultural (or as I read its meaning, "performance") practices: the failure to represent inclusively in its critical models.[9] Here Bennett is hinting at a much larger issue than I believe she is looking to tackle, the lack of minority, specifically black thought, in any of the existing theoretical frameworks or analytical models. Further evidenced by the next few pages in her book, wherein she is able to reference Pavis, Fischer-Lichte, Richard Schechner, Peter Brook, Marvin Carlson, Michel de Certeau, and Elin Diamond, and the only black theorists being Henry Louis Gates and Ethel Pitts-Walker. What does a lack of diversity in the theorists have to do with analysis?

A lack of diversity among the analytical framers, means a lack of diversity in the analytical frameworks. This becomes extremely troubling in the case of intercultural performance. As Said teaches us, the East/West dynamic is always in play, even when we don't notice it. For my purposes, this means that the existing intercultural performance theory models, and in fact a large part of intercultural performance theory, assume that the "target culture" or the expected audience is homogenously the opposite of the "source culture". There is a multiplicity of truths here. The assumption that the expected audience is monolithic and Western with no diversity would be true in the case of the original

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[8] Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences* (London: Routledge, 1997), 168.

[9] Ibid, 169.

operas I am examining. However, the lack of rook for diversity in the audiences left by the existing analytical frameworks means that the one which I am proposing must be able to account for changing audiences over large spans of time, especially to be equally as effective with musical theatre pieces as with operas. This becomes even more true when an analysis considers out of town previews of musical theatre works, specifically those adapted from operas. As I will explore in the next chapter, consider Elton John and Tim Rice's musical theatre adaptation of *Aida*, went through extensive workshops and rewrites in Atlanta and then again in Chicago both cities in 1998 and 1999 were over sixty percent minority according to United States Census information. The assumption is then that Elton John and Tim Rice were much more concerned with the black perspective and black approval than were Verdi or his collaborators.

Understanding the expectations of your audience, step number seven, compliments understanding the traditions and norms of the performance genre, step number four. An audience's expectations and a creators' understanding of who is going to be his audience can have dramatic effects on the structure and style of both an opera or a musical theatre piece. I speculate that the demands and demographical strata of the audiences each work played a key role in the way the work was ordered, and the way race was either foregrounded or backgrounded.

Influence of Directors and Performers

Step number eight in my proposed model is a rephrasing of similar such steps from all the models at which I am looking. In Pavis's "Hourglass" steps three through five (perspective of the adapters, work of adaptation, preparatory work for actors), in Fischer-Lichte's "Interweaving Performance Cultures" the weaver who combines al the

threads, in Andre's "Engaged Musicology" questions one through three (Who is in the story? Who gets to speak? Who gets to tell the story?), are all versions of the data point I have chosen: the influence of the directors and performers. The fact that an inquiry into what power the director and/or performers exert over the finished project has such a central role in both the existing intercultural performance theory frameworks and my proposed framework is not a coincidence. This says that regardless of the intent of the composer and librettist, the people who tell the story in front of the audience have great authority. Much like how the lived experiences of the composer and librettist (step number three) can have an impact on the work as their lives spill onto their pages, the lived experience of the director will inevitably spill onto the stage. Here the role of the director takes two different paths depending on the genre. Opera directors today have a lot more in common with musical theatre directors than they used to. Throughout opera's history, it wouldn't have been entirely uncommon for the composer himself to take many of the duties a director would have today. While many may be familiar with the term *impresario,* it is important to think of this person as more of a producer than a director in the modern sense. An impresario would work for the theatre owners and with the composer to hire the orchestra, singers, and all necessary scenic and costume elements.[10] The composer would historically have much more say over the stage business and there would be a ballet master or ballet mistress to handle the dance sequences. For my analytical model this means that is some cases the lived experience of the composer and the influence of the director experience overlap. Today opera directors are generally

[10] John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy: from Cimarosa to Verdi: the Role of the Impresario* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

separate positions from any compositional duties. Although as I have stated before, opera productions have a much longer life than most other performing arts, with the same staging being reused over many decades and at many different opera houses. This presents a unique problem in that the lived experience of a director in the 1980s and the lived experiences of the audience in 2020s vary greatly. Rather than be living, breathing creations, large companies have come to treat operas like films, which replay and replay and stay the same as audiences change. While many companies have recently started updating their repertory productions, it is likely that the new productions will be in use for decades also. This makes it extremely important to have a way for scholars and precocious audience members to be able to analyze and explore a director's positionality and how their perspective and beliefs manifest in the work, especially if the time in which you are viewing the work is decade apart from the time the work was created.

Musical theatre directors often join the project from the beginning and have complete control over the scenic and costume elements working with the designers of each. Because of the nature of the current Broadway business model, directors hop from project to project quickly, sometimes developing more than one production at a time. Many musical theatre directors also serve as choreographer, which streamlines the artistic vision while allowing one person to have much more creative control over a show in some cases. How do previous projects, education, or training impact a director's work? This is a major question which needs to be understood and contextualized within the scope of the work being analyzed. Performers offer similar challenges.

Opera performers build careers around a handful of roles. This means that while they both may be sopranos of comparable power and range, singer A will have a very

different Aida than singer B. The notes will be the same, and the production might even be the same, but the nuances and subtleties of each performance will be very different based on the acting ability, training, and experience of each singer. Because opera singers spend so much time with their roles, they seem to dissolve into them, developing gestures and facial expressions over their whole career, the rehearsal period is often very short since the assumption is that the singer arrives with all the work already done. Conversely, musical theatre performers enjoy the luxury of long rehearsal periods, out-of-town workshops, and preview performances to develop and perfect the nuances of their character. And after their run is done, they leave the role and potentially never play it again. I surmise that this variance in process results in much more of the individual personality of the actor shining through the character in musical theatre pieces than in operas. Musical theatre performers do have much more creative input when a production is developing, especially a new musical. A composer might write a new song for, or rewrite an existing song for a musical theatre performer, an actor and director may sit down together to discuss the actor's ideas for costume or wig design, some improved lines or new jokes that develop in the rehearsal room might make it into the book and onto the stage, these are all things which are not unusual in the creation of a new musical, but would be hard to imagine in the opera world, even with contemporary operas. Looking at how a performer influenced and shaped the finished product can provide useful information regarding how the performer sees the character and the themes and politics of the work. Building space in my model to explore the influence a director or performers had on the finished work is not only important as a point of comparison for

the lived experiences of the composer and librettist, but also on how the people telling the story view the story.

Location of the Premiere

An interesting data point which has been left off of other models is how the geographic location of the premiere has left an impact on the work itself. While aspects of this point appear in some of the previous points, the materiality of this point is worth its own exploration. Going beyond the traditions and norms of the performance genre, point number four, this seeks to quantify more than just opera at the time. How does the fact that *Die Zauberflöte* premiered in Vienna effect its creation? Which premiere of Verdi's *Aida* "counts", the one in Egypt or the one in Italy? These questions -and many like them- have an impact not just on the success of the work, but on the structure and form of the work itself. The location of the premiere, step nine, works in concert with the expected audience, step seven, to bring to the foreground an even more specific picture of what audiences at a specific theatre would look like. With opera, the location of the premiere, be it a royal court or a public house, country, language, and even the opera house itself can be an indicator of expected success.

With musical theatre pieces, often there is an out-of-town portion of rehearsal where the work officially premieres and is reviewed. If the work makes it to Broadway, a bit of economic science goes into choosing a theatre. The Broadway house doesn't necessarily need to be empty for a new production to move in; if the producers and the theatre owners are convinced that a new production could bring in more money week-over-week than a longer running, but slower sales production it may be determined to close one production to make room for another. Beyond the geographic location, the

theatre selected, its status (empty or currently running), and its seating capacity all consider -and contribute to- the shape of a complete work of musical theatre. While this point of analysis may not offer as lengthy an examination as some of the others, I feel it is important to discuss how the geography of the work's premiere contributes to an analysis of the work as a whole.

Commercial Success

Taking time to analyze the commercial success of a work makes a fitting final point, as it can only be calculated after a work has been produced. Although, for my analysis, I am less concerned with the financial success of the works and more interested in how commercial success contributes to a production's life after its premiere. As I have already explained, opera companies will reuse the same production repeatedly for decades. The Metropolitan Opera stands alone at the top of American opera companies. Because of The Met's hegemonic positionality, smaller opera companies across the country began to emulate The Met's productions. Opera directors and production companies started adopting elements of The Met's design and staging, which results from being given an abundance of performances at The Met. As follows, the more productions at The Met an opera is given, the more successful that opera is, the longer that production has time to seep into the consciousness of the opera world, the more similarly styled productions result. The same can be said about successful musical theatre pieces. A successful hit on Broadway will spawn hundreds of regional and educational productions attempting to replicate the original production's staging or design elements.

A work's success also defines that work's place in the cultural consciousness. Successful productions of operas like *Aida, Turandot,* and *Don Giovanni* have a much

firmer grasp on the public than the infrequently produced *Semiramide* or *Agrippina.* Even people who would not consider themselves theatergoers are familiar with *Chicago, Phantom of the Opera,* or *Wicked,* but many may strain to recall *Golden Boy* or *Allegro.* A work's commercial success is part and parcel of how the canon is constructed. It is vital to consider commercial success and the effect that a successful production has on the industry as part of my analytical model because the commercial success of the work determines how long the work stays a part of the cultural conversation. Successful works which are revived every few seasons at the big houses, and performed frequently at smaller, regional houses will certainly influence societal thought and culture more than unsuccessful works that are extremely rarely performed.

All ten spokes on the Wagon Wheel (commissioning party/funding, source material, lived experience of the composer and librettist, traditions and norms of the performance genre, musical style and influence, social and cultural struggles at the time of writing, expected audience, influence of directors and performers, location of premiere, and commercial success) all offer avenues to further place the work in context dramaturgically, allowing an attempt at understanding the meaning the work made in its original setting *and* the meaning the work makes in the current setting.

In the following three chapters I will present my case studies of Verdi's *Aida,* Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte,* and Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. The notion of Saidian informed dramaturgy and the Wagon Wheel model further show that my readings of the works and the ensuing analysis is novel and extremely useful in production beyond its scholarly applications.

CHAPTER THREE

O Patria Mia

'*O patria mia, non ti vedrò mai più…*Oh my beloved country, I will never see you again.
*O patria! O patria! Quanto mi costi…*Oh my country! Oh my country! How much you cost me'
-Aida sings in Act III of Verdi's opera

'Aida and Amonasro are given music that is distinguished by its sensuous irregularity, its long lines, its close intervals, and its chromatic harmonies, all of which are signifiers of musical orientalism.'
-Paul Robinson "Is Aida and Orientalist Opera"

Things to Consider

Aida poses a number of questions and challenges for a traditional intercultural performance analysis, especially when considering the coloniality of Egypt at the time. As both Edward Said and John MacKenzie both explore, the opera is largely Orientalized through production. This chapter will couch that idea in a more granular context. How does the production Orientalize the opera?

Through the utilization of my Wagon Wheel model of analysis, I pull at the threads at which Said only picks. This new type of dramaturgy, Saidian informed dramaturgy, is both informed by Said and responds to Said represents a scaffolding of Intercultural Performance Theory. Not only does this model draw from Pavis, Fischer-Lichte, and Andre, but the nuance it illuminates mirrors the work done by scholars like Min Tian who asserts that a majority of approaches to the Occidental-centered globalization of theatre and performance are driven by a displacement of identities of

culturally differentiated theatrical traditions.[1] My work seeks to introduce Said into the analysis in order to trace the identities through their displacements and demonstrate a more culturally power-balanced analysis.

Sahakian's detailed analysis of Maryse Condé's play *An tan revolisyon* (which borrows its style form Mnouchkine's *1789*) explores the way real history is put on stage, and how its context is so malleable (i.e. the French Revolution meant little to the black citizens in the Caribbean who were purposefully lefts out of the "Declaration of Rights of Man").[2] Just as Sahakian shows that the French "universal" tenets of Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood are only universal from a specific point of view, my analysis of Verdi's *Aida* explores purpose and positionality. *Aida* is very specifically not a history play but is often staged with the same authority and reverence; my use of Saidian informed dramaturgy not only explores the positionality of Verdi and his creative collaborators, but also that of the Pasha of Egypt, the Colonial powers at work within his borders, and the economic and material culture which allowed *Aida* to come into being.

How the characters in Verdi's opera are others (both from each other and from the audience) is one of the keys to unlocking the multiple meanings created by the story. Using the Wagon Wheel and Saidian informed dramaturgy to methodically dismantle the opera and illuminate its utilization of race, othering, history, and power helps to refine

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[1] Min Tian, "The 'Dis-/De-' in the Hyphen: The Matrix and Dynamics of Displacement in Intercultural Performance" in *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Interculturalism and Performance* eds., Lei and McIvor (London: Methuen Drama, 2020), 190-206.

[2] Emily Sahakian, "The Intercultural Politics of Performing Revolution: Maryse Condé's Inter-Theatre with Ariane Mnouchkine", ibid., 28-42.

not only the dramaturgy of the opera but creates space to explore more equitable productions less honor-bound to 19th century production practices of blackface. The case with *Aida* is not so much that the opera itself needs rehab, but rather productions of the opera that need rehabilitation. The following analysis explores and explains the libretto and score in a way that seeks to identify what vague factors Said refers to when he says that it is through production the opera becomes Orientalist, in the hopes that this analysis frees directors from their use of blackface while opening up the opera to new interpretations and audiences.

Rationale, Why *Aida?*

Any opera fan explaining to a novice what opera they should begin their journey with, will almost certainly refer to the so called "ABCs of Opera". Referring to Verdi's *Aida,* Puccini's *La Bohème,* and Bizet's *Carmen*, these juggernaut operas make up a majority of every opera season in every opera house around the world. At The Metropolitan Opera, where *La Bohème* is their most produced opera, the ABCs are at the top of their performance statistics report and have received a combined total of 3,559 performances, nearly 25% of their entire production history since the 1880s.[3] Of that number, *Aida,* represents 1,176 performances and will add another fifteen to its total by the end of this 2022-2023 season. Besides maybe Wagner's Ring Cycle, everything your average "man-on-the-street" knows about opera likely comes from *Aida*'s storied performance history. Verdi's 1871 opera, his twenty-fifth, comes late in his career (only *Otello* and *Falstaff* follow) filling out a compositional history which contains such beasts as *Nabucco, Macbeth, Rigoletto, Il Trovatore,* and *La Traviata,* has earned its place in the

[3] Metropolitan Opera Performance Statistics Report, Met Archives.

opera canon on the backs of literal elephants. The scale and spectacle of the opera have allowed it to achieve legend status, growing bigger and bigger in the minds of audiences over the course of its 151-year life. It is here where we encounter the paradox: *Aida*'s legendary production value is what has cemented its place so firmly in the opera firmament, and it is this excess in production that Edward Said identifies as part of the opera's Orientalist problem. In his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, cultural critic Edward Said discusses Verdi's opera *Aida.* Through his brief discussion, Said concludes that Aida itself is not inherently orientalist but rather through its production becomes Orientalized, writing:

> *Aida* as a visual, musical, and theatrical spectacle does a great many things for and in European culture, one of which is to confirm the Orient as an essentially exotic, distant, and antique place in which Europeans can mount certain shows of force. Concurrently with the composition of *Aida,* European "universal" expositions routinely contained models of colonial villages, towns, courts, and the like; the malleability and transportability of secondary or lesser cultures was underlined. These subaltern cultures were exhibited before Westerners as microcosms of the larger imperial domain. Little, if any, allowance was made for the non-European except within this framework.[4]

What Said is getting to is that the lavish production value mimics dominance within musical works while confirming expectations of the genre and expectations of the cultures depicted. According to Said, the problem is that orientalism is perpetuated

[4] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1993), 112.

through production values. For instance, with *Aida* there is nothing inherently "Oriental" about the score, other than perhaps a light attempt at a vaguely Middle Eastern sound with the priests at the end of the first act, and a singular bang of a gong near the end of act four, the score largely conforms with the rest of Verdi's catalogue. While the libretto specifies that both Aida and Amonasro, her father, are Ethiopian royalty nothing specifically says that they are a darker complexion than the Egyptians. But rather, to Said's point, through production, through directorial worldbuilding, Orientalizing additions such as blackface become the opera's albatross. This idea is expanded on by John MacKenzie in *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts,* concluding that "In so far as the opera can be seen as classically Orientalist in the Saidian sense, it is not through the music at all, but rather through the production values which have ever created a fantasy land of Egypt…in fact, its plot and its musical loyalties are a very backhanded compliment to the Khedive who commissioned it."[5] At the other end of the discourse is musicologist Paul Robinson who refers to Said's analysis as "embarrassing" for failing to include any mention or analysis of the opera's music, devoting a chapter to his book as a rebuttal to Said writing, "…under these circumstances, Said's contention that *Aida* serves to "stage" Egypt for European imperial consumption begins to look rather dubious.[6] "A more natural reading would be to see the opera as an anti-imperialist work, in which the exploitative relation between Europe and its empire has been translates into one between

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[5] John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 156.

[6] Paul Robinson, *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 126-27

expansionist Egyptians and colonized Ethiopians."[7] *Aida* seems far from the rallying cry against Imperialism that Robinson posits, however I strongly agree with Robinson's acknowledgement that any analysis of the opera which fails to consider the music itself is only half-done. The use of othering and race in *Aida's* text and score is functionally minimal. While we are told that Aida is an Ethiopian and therefore culturally different than Radames and the rest of the Egyptians, she is more broadly defined by her class status in Egypt rather than by her status as Ethiopian. To Said and MacKenzie's point, I argue that productions of *Aida* have perpetuated the racial aspects of the story leading to the use of blackface and other stereotypical modes of performance, my analysis and discussion will demonstrate that little of that racial othering is written into the opera, and therefore can be dropped from productions. This will allow the opera to maintain its relevance and status in the opera world while shedding the racist connotations that the use of blackface come with. Opera companies have shown that they will continue to stage productions of *Aida*. The inclusion of *Aida* as one of my case studies offers a solution to new productions so that they may begin staging *Aida* in new, fresh, and reconciling ways.

Synopsis of Aida

Aida opens in a hypostyle hall at the Pharaoh's palace in Memphis (modern Cairo). The libretto indicates that to the right and left through the colonnades are statues and flowering shrubs. At the back a grand gate, from which may be seen the temples and palaces of Memphis, and the Pyramids. Ramphis, the Pharaoh's High Priest, has been

[7] Ibid.

stopped by Radames, captain of the guard.[8] Radames inquires if the goddess Isis has revealed to Ramphis who the next general of Pharaoh's army will be, Ramphis confirms that Isis has made her choice and hurries off to inform the king. Radames opens the opera with one of the most famous tenor arias of all time "Celeste Aida", in which he imagines a future after the war where he and his beloved Aida, Ethiopian prisoner of war and personal slave to the Pharaoh's daughter, can live peacefully in love. Amneris, the Pharaoh's daughter enters and flirts mercilessly, she is helplessly in love with Radames, she is also intensely jealous and questions Radames about his cheerful demeanor. Suddenly Aida enters, and Amneris notices Radames become visibly flustered, her suspicion grows that Aida is her rival for his love. The terzet melts away into a processional march as the Pharaoh, his guards, Ramphis, and the entire priesthood make their way through the hall to the throne where a messenger brings news from the war front on Egypt's Southern border with Ethiopia. The Ethiopians are invading and marching towards Thebes (modern Luxor) led by their king, Amonasro, Aida's father. The Pharaoh commissions Radames as commander of the army and all of Egypt erupts in a bloodthirsty chorus wishing Radames and his army a powerful victory. Aida, alone, curses herself for joining in the chorus, having betrayed her people and father. Torn between love of her father and love of his enemy she invokes the gods to let her die rather than force her to choose. As the stage transitions to the Temple of Phtah, Ramphis and the priesthood bless and anoint Radames, performing a ritual dance (the first of the

[8] Sometimes spelled Ramfis -a holdover from the original French story- I instead use Ramphis throughout, as it is in Italian and the score. Of similar note, the umlaut in *Aïda* is only linguistically necessary in French for diphthong clarity, as such I use the Italian *Aida* throughout.

opera's three ballets) and presenting him with a sacred sword to ensure victory. The curtain falls on act one.

Act two begins in the palace apartments of Amneris, where she and her slaves are preparing for the parade which will welcome Radames back into the city. Following the dance of the Moorish slaves (the second ballet), Aida enters as Amneris resolves to get a confession from her regarding her feelings for Radames. In a powerful duet Amneris first convinces Aida that Radames has been slain in battle. Once Aida is completely wracked with grief Amneris reveals that it was a lie and Radames has survived. The grateful outpouring of love and relief betray her feelings and Amneris confronts her with the truth, and Aida drops to her knees begging for mercy and sympathy. Amneris in a rage taunts Aida that she will have to watch in pain as the Pharaoh gives Amneris's hand in marriage to Radames as a victory prize. The cruelty is interrupted by the fanfare of trumpets, the parade is beginning. The great processional begins as the Triumphal March, often excerpted as a concert suite, makes way for the Pharaoh, Ramphis, the priesthood, soldiers, Amneris, and Radames accompanied with some form of live animal retinue (at the premiere there were famously twelve live elephants on stage and camels and horses, The Metropolitan Opera's current production features two huge, white draught horses pulling Radames's chariot). The opera's third ballet is now in the form of a mock battle, as dancers representing the Egyptians and the Ethiopians recreate for the Pharaoh what the war might have looked like, while soldiers parade by with the fruit of their spoils. As a clutch of Ethiopian slaves enter, Aida sees her father and runs over to him as he begs her not to reveal his identity as the king; the commotion catches the eye of the Pharaoh who listens sympathetically to Amonasro's plea for mercy. Radames, seeing Aida's

sorrow, advocates for the prisoners to the Pharaoh, who is moved by the pleas. Ramphis interjects and warns the Pharaoh about appearing too weak, so Amonasro and Aida are kept as hostages while the rest of the slaves are freed. As a token of Egypt's gratitude, the ungrateful Radames is awarded the hand of a vengeful Amneris in marriage as the curtain falls on act two.

Act three begins on the banks of the Nile as Amneris is arriving at the Temple of Isis where Ramphis and the priesthood will bless her union with Radames. Waiting for Radames in the shadows outside the temple is Aida, who opens act three with her famous aria "O Patria Mia", singing about her childhood home in Ethiopia that she knows she will never return to, then she is surprised by her father who has been listening while hiding in the rocks nearby. He tells her of a way that she can defend her homeland, and that the Ethiopians are ready for another round of attacks on the Egyptian army they just need to know what passage through the mountains the Egyptian army will take. After a passionate fight Amonasro disowns Aida unless she can exploit her love and get Radames to reveal this information. Radames enters to find a troubled Aida, as he attempts to lift her spirits, she implores him to skip his wedding and run away with her to Ethiopia, slowly he agrees and they are planning their flight; asking his which path will be safe to take so they will not be apprehended, he reveals the army's plans to cross the border at the Napata gorge. Hearing this Amonasro bursts from his hiding place as Radames realizes Aida's father's identity and the treasonous mistake he has just made. Amneris and Ramphis, hearing the commotion, emerge from the temple. Amonasro lunges at her with a dagger but is pulled away by Radames who creates enough space for Aida and Amonasro to escape before he surrenders himself to the guards and hands his

sacred sword back to Ramphis. Act three ends as the guards chase after Amonasro, Ramphis has detained Radames while Amneris turns away.

The final act begins with Amneris standing outside of Radames's holding cell in a state of confusion and suffering. She goes to Radames in one final attempt to save him. She begs him to admit his guilt and appeal to the mercy of the priesthood, insisting that her father will intervene if she asks. Radames is angry at Amneris, blaming her for the probable death of Aida. Amneris reveals that only Amonasro was killed in the fight, that Aida escaped and her whereabouts unknown; if he vows to forget about Aida and accept her marriage proposal, his life will be saved. His love for Aida remains to strong and he refuses the offer, ready to face death rather than life without her. Radames is then taken by the priesthood into the Hall of Justice, where a mock trial is to be held. Amneris can do nothing but blame herself and hide in both shame and fear. Ramphis announces the charges and asks for Radames's defense, Radames remains silent the whole trial. Amneris overhears the priests sentence Radames to death by being entombed alive. In a final attempt to save the life of the man she loves, Amneris begs the priesthood for mercy, even crying. The strict view of law and order is what maintains justice in the kingdom and therefore the traitor must die. Amneris curses the priests, vowing her revenge when she is Pharaoh herself one day. The rousing scene ends with the thunderous bang of a gong. The final scene of the opera, famous itself for a horizontally split stage, the upper section being the temple above the tomb, and the lower part being Radames's death chamber. Alone in his tomb, as the final stone is moved over the opening, Radames laments that he will never see Aida again. Suddenly, out of the shadows her figure appears. He is convinced it is an hallucination, yet as she approaches

he realizes that it is his true love. Aida reveals that when she learned of his fate, she searched out the tomb and hid away so that they may be reunited for eternity. Making one last great exertion to attempt to move the stone, Radames collapses in Aida's arms. In the temple above the lovers Amneris weeps, scowling at the priests and throwing herself on the stone door. Amneris's prayer for peace blends with the lovers' final breath as the curtain slowly falls.

To ensure that there is a common understanding between my work and existing work, I will be using the traditional titles of the scenes when referring to them specifically. Act 1, scene 2 – The Consecration Scene; Act 2, scene 2 – The Triumphal Scene; all of Act 3 – The Nile Scene; Act 4, scene 1 – The Judgement Scene; and Act 4, scene 2 – The Tomb Scene/Finale.

Commissioning Party/Funding

The first point on the Wagon Wheel is to discern the streams of funding and the reasons for commissioning the opera, this will be helpful to understand the intended use of the opera as a cultural or political piece by exposing the motives of the funding parties. As both Nicholas Tarling and Clyde McCants point out, to begin to understand *Aida*'s long journey to the stage, one must start with the American Civil War.[9] The first domino to fall, ultimately leading to the premiere of Verdi's new opera was the niche Egypt was able to fill as the American Civil War disrupted cotton production in the Southern United States. The French educated Khedive Ismail was eager to distance himself from the Ottoman empire, was also quite chuffed at the 1856 Treaty of Paris treating Turkey as

[9] Nicholas Tarling, *Orientalism in the Operatic World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 185. Clyde McCants, *Verdi's Aida* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, INC., 2006), 8.

part of Europe famously remarked "My country is no longer in Africa, I have made it part of Europe."[10] This statement greatly troubles Egypt's positionality in a traditional Saidian view. The leader of the weaker (Eastern) country declaring himself part of the stronger (Western) society not only indicates that the Khedive's understanding that Europeans viewed Egypt as being less than, and that Egyptians wanted to be a part of European society and less a part of the Ottoman society. This of course backfires when both Britain and France exploit this Egyptian desire to be European by occupying Egypt for great personal gain. Interculturally there is now a duality between how Egypt views itself and how Europeans view Egypt. Despite Egyptians declaring that they are part of Europe now, and self-identifying, Said teaches us that fundamentally Europeans will always view Egyptians and other. Verdi's personal attitudes towards Egypt (which I explore in depth below) illuminate this point to great effect. To the Khedive Egypt was in Africa, but not of Africa, to Europe Egypt was simply Oriental.

The financial boom the American Civil War provided by a lack of competition in cotton production and the renewed interest of Britain and France in North Africa brought Egypt into a financial and artistic Golden Age. In 1869, when both the Suez Canal and the Cairo Opera House opened it was clear that Egypt had become a strategic part of the European way of life, much to the apparent benefit of the Khedive, although the status of the general populace is more troubled. Wealthy Europeans living in Cairo and Egyptian Cotton Barons now drove the economy which became nearly completely reliant on European stimulus. Appeasement of the French became the only way of life. The

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[10] Hans Busch, *Verdi's 'Aida': the History of an Opera in Letters and Documents* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 6.

commissioning of an opera by Khedive Ismail demonstrates his understanding of how important the arts were to the French.

Beyond welcoming the French to Egypt, the creation of distinctly European cultural institutions in Cairo such as the Cairo Opera House is a very purposeful attempt by the Khedive to make Egypt more *like* France. The opening of the opera house was a performance of Verdi's *Rigoletto,* signaling a true love of Verdi's work by the Khedive; the French enjoyed Italian opera as much as they enjoyed French opera, and while Grand Opera as a formulaic genre was pioneered by the French, it was the Italians, specifically Verdi, who revitalized the genre in Italy as French tastes changed. The commissioning of *Aida* was a political act much more than it was an artistic one. The Khedive was eager to maintain ownership of this act, and even claimed to have assisted French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette in writing the initial synopsis which was sent to Verdi to whet his appetite. When all was said and done, Khedive Ismail retained ownership of the Egyptian rights to *Aida,* while Verdi held the rights everywhere else, along with the uncommonly large amount of 150,000 francs (paid in gold). This is a staggering amount (nearly two million USD when converted to gold and adjusted for inflation) and is more than double what the composer was paid for *Don Carlos,* his most recent opera before *Aida.*[11] While Gounod and Wagner were considered backups, the Khedive's willingness to pay Verdi whatever he asked really serves to reiterate the fact that Verdi was the only real choice. At Verdi's insistence, who flatly refused to travel to Egypt, all the costumes and scenery were made in Paris and had to endure the worst of the Franco-Prussian War before being sent to Cairo for rehearsals. The Khedive spent much more than just the 150,000 francs to

[11] McCants, *Aida,* 23.

the composer for this work, no expense was spared in this great political show of culture. The effort the Khedive was willing to exert to make Cairo as much like Paris or Milan as possible, giving premieres of new operas, welcoming the elite to be seen at the theatre, is as heavy as the elephants famously onstage during the opera's premiere. From its inception at the end of the purse strings, *Aida* is an opera designed to make Egypt look like a dominant European power regardless of any real political agency the country had to exercise.

The Khedive was less interested in depicting Egypt, as he was depicting Egypt's superiority; depicting Egypt as a colonizer instead of as the colonized remains at the heart of the work, it is essentially the reason for commissioning the work in the first place. The Khedive wanted to be seen as European so in his opera he wanted his country to be depicted as the colonizing party, its hard not to see the Saidian influence on that line of thought. Musicologist, Orientalist, and performance scholar Ralph Locke, in his article "*Aida* and Nine Readings of Empire", outlines nine possible ways empire can be read in Verdi's opera, he arranges them most literal to most metaphorical.[12] While it can be argued that up to four of Locke's nine readings are in some way shaped by the Khedival funding of the commissioning and production of the opera. The benefit of establishing this as one of the ten points of analysis is clear, scholarship will be able to have more specificity and more clearly tease out nuances from different readings of the opera.

[12] Ralph Locke, "*Aida* and Nine Readings of Empire", *Nineteenth Century Music Review* 3, no.1 (2006): 45-72.

Source Material

To get a clear picture of the source material for *Aida,* one mustn't look much further than the Khedive once again, or so he would have you believe. While it is very clear that French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette had a major hand in writing the original synopsis which was presented to Verdi as bait, letters between Verdi and Camille du Locle (a friend and collaborator who ultimately wrote the fleshed out French plot that Antonio Ghislanzoni dramatized) suggest that the Khedive assisted in writing the synopsis.[13] The eagerness of the Khedive to receive credit for the very creation of the opera itself again speaks to his desire to elevate not only his country, by hosting the premiere or a major Italian composer's new work, but to elevate himself personally, taking on some vestige of the role of impresario. Although credit was claimed early on, once Verdi accepted the proposal the Khedive's role was reduced to moneybag. Ownership of the story verifiably rests on Auguste Mariette, a scholar and French attaché in Cairo. Collaboration with the Khedive aside, Mariette's plot was liked by Verdi who saw potential in it right away, although still hesitant to accept the job.

Later in life, Auguste Mariette's brother Edouard would lay claim that the story idea was his, evidenced by an idea for an 1866 novel, *La Fiancée du Nil,* which never ultimately materialized.[14] These claims have been followed by Verdi biographer Julian Budden who ultimately agrees, in many sources, that Edouard's claim seems unlikely to impossible. Camille du Locle, French librettist who had just worked with Verdi on his

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[13] McCants, *Aida,* 17.

[14] Busch, *Aida,* 438. And McCants, *Aida,* 16.

most recent opera *Don Carlos,* took the plot outlined by Mariette (and the Khedive) and wrote a more fleshed out story which became the basis for the Italian libretto. Musicologist Charles Osborne suggests that inspiration for the story clearly pulls from Metastasio's libretto *Nitteti.*[15] Metastasio's libretti were all very popular and were all set to music many times through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mariette does not seem to have the familiarity with the genre to be aware of the existing libretto, however du Locle would have likely had at least mild awareness of the story. Osbourne points to similarities between the rivalry of two princesses for the love of the same man, the refusal of a condemned man to accept royal intervention, and the threat of being buried alive. It is very likely that du Locle looked to Metastasio for inspiration, he would certainly be in good company. Verdi scholar Vincent Godefroy, among others, also point to the Racine tragedy *Bajazet* as a possible reference, with two female rivals in love with the same man, one of which shares characteristics with Amneris.[16]

Opera is generally about a soprano who is in love with a tenor while a mezzo and baritone try to keep them apart; at its most fundamental this is the plot of *Aida* too. Any other references to other sources like, as Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, a Verdi biographer, suggests Heliodorus' third-century A.D. short story *Aethiopica,* featuring an Ethiopian princess serving as a slave in the Egyptian palace, likely served as inspiration for the story but had little bearing on the actual plot of the opera. No work develops in a vacuum

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[15] Charles Osbourne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 378-380.

[16] Vincent Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi vol. II* (London: Victor Gollancz, LTD, 1977), 181-182.

so it would be illogical to think that there was no influence on Mariette or du Locle or even Ghislanzoni from some outside sources.

As Ghislanzoni took du Locle's French story and crafted into the prose we see in the finished libretto he worked closely with Verdi and Mariette with an interest in detail and occasional attempts at historical accuracy. For several scenes throughout the opera, but especially the Consecration Scene, Verdi and Ghislanzoni would confer with Mariette about certain details of Ancient Egyptian ceremonies and priestly functions. While he was taking the valuable work of his librettist and designer/archeologist under deep consideration, Verdi was in charge of the creation of the opera. Very similarly to the relationship that Mozart shared with his librettists, sharing text, and editing the libretto himself, Verdi seems to say to Ghislanzoni at times "I think she should say this…". Mariette, who was designing both the scenery and the costumes, offered many suggestions to Verdi about the inclusion of authentic Ancient Egyptian instruments and orchestration.[17] Fortunately for audiences then, and now, Verdi focused more on the famous Egyptian trumpets of the Triumphal Scene rather than Mariette's recommendation of twenty-four stringed harps and double flutes.

This shows us that, while set in Egypt, the story is derived almost one hundred percent form European sources, largely from the separate heads of Mariette and Ghislanzoni. This is a real departure for Intercultural Performance Theory as it has become to be understood in a more contemporary context such as Daphne Lei's Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre which suggests that examples of HIT use First World capital and Third World labor and raw materials. In fact, the case of *Aida* almost seems to

[17] McCants, *Aida,* 32.

invert the idea of HIT, by using Third World capital and First World labor and raw materials. It is for reasons like this that an alternate model of analysis is needed, the Wagon Wheel and Saidian informed dramaturgy are specifically suited to deal with pre-20th century works which often operate in a less clearly defined global powerscape.

Lived Experience of the Composer and Librettist

Verdi was then, as Verdi is now an incredibly popular composer, it is hardly exaggeration to say that at least one of his operas has been programmed at every major opera house for nearly 200 years. The duality of his work to speak to the political moment while also being endlessly entertaining has certainly contributed to his canonical staying power. Four of his operas are in the top ten most produced at The Met according to the Metropolitan Opera repertory report.[18] Few composers have as many operas in the canon as does Verdi, with broad mass appeal anyone on the street is likely able to rattle off at least one or two of Verdi's operas. Like Mozart, Verdi is one of those people who seems to have been prolific his whole life.

Born in 1813, music found Verdi early, at only eight years old, Verdi was the staff organist at his church, he soon went into rigorous education. Two different images of Verdi's childhood emerge: the one he presents in the *Autobiographical Sketch* done for his publisher Ricordi in 1879, and one more based in fact than memory. Despite presenting himself as a struggling, lower-class, barely literate peasants, Verdi's parents were very supportive of his talent and firmly upper-middle class landowners, who owned

[18] The Met Opera Archives

and operated a successful inn.[19] Verdi's interest in cultivating his narrative dovetails with his well-known political activities, and the "Man of the People" attitude that went along with them. Writing and performing his own pieces through his teen years, eventually he studied in Milan. His first opera, *Oberto,* received a successful premiere in 1839. Just as success found Verdi early, so did tragedy. Both of Verdi's children died before their second birthdays (in 1838 and 1839 respectively) and then in 1840 at only 26 years old, Verdi's wife Margherita died. Loss is a key theme in Verdi's works, and the deep sorrow that is colored by the orchestra is certainly informed by the lived experience. Verdi's next opera, *Nabucco,* became an unparalleled hit cementing his fame, but also his political views. Verdi was an early champion of the *Risorgemento,* the movement to unite Italy's many independent kingdoms into one central country. The slave chorus from *Nabucco* became a rallying cry for the movement, heard in the streets, as grassroots campaigns formed across the peninsula. Verdi's name even became a rallying cry, as people marched through the streets with signs reading "Viva VERDI" a convenient portmanteau of **V**ittorio **E**manuele **R**e **D'I**talia. As unification was achieved, Verdi was appointed to the newly formed provincial council, and later the Italian Senate. Traces of Verdi's revolutionary spirit can be found in all of his operas, usually as a critique of abuse of power, railing against the censorship present in the second half of the nineteenth century in Italy; in *Aida* this shows up not only as a fierce critique of the control the priesthood has on the throne, but in an almost anti-Imperial sympathy for the concurred and imprisoned Ethiopians. This overt critique of the priesthood seems to be in line with

[19] Roger Parker, "Giuseppe Verdi", *The New Grove Opera Dictionary* Vol. 4 ed. Stanly Sadie (London: MacMillian Publishers, 1992)

Verdi's complex religious beliefs. Verdi's second wife, Giuseppina Strepponi wrote on May 9, 1871 (while Verdi was consumed with European productions of *Aida*), "I won't say [Verdi] is an atheist, but he is not much of a believer."[20] Verdi's wife clues us into how deep his anti-clerical and -in fact- anti-religion views ran. The villain in *Aida* is unequivocally the priesthood, led by Ramphis. As colloquial opera structure tells us bass=bad, but Ramphis is never explicitly *bad,* it is through the audiences' connection with Radames that Ramphis becomes the villain. As we begin to sympathize with Aida and Radames more and more as the opera progresses, we start to associate Ramphis and his unmerciful priesthood with villainy, in fact even Amneris (an early villain) undergoes a character arc that has the sympathetic audience on her side by the Judgement Scene. The curtain falls on a stage where the entire house has decided that it is Ramphis' fault that both Aida and Radames are dying. For a composer who has a very tenuous relationship with the clergy in his life, this overt discontent in the opera seems logical and not out of place.

With the premiere of *Don Carlos* in 1867, it appeared that Verdi's life as a working composer was through, he continued to expand his estate in Busseto and, ever a man of the people, was content to live the rest of his life a farmer. As detailed above, Verdi was reluctant to take on a new work, and likely the ridiculous sum of money he asked for played a part in his acceptance. Few if any of his other operas demonstrate his personal ideals as much as *Aida* does, in the way that a masterpiece by a legend at the end of his career can accomplish. Only two operas followed *Aida* in Verdi's life, the completion of his Shakespeare obsession *Otello* and then (his only comic opera) *Falstaff.*

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[20] Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 280.

Certainly, we see Verdi's personal beliefs work themselves out in many ways in *Aida.* While raised in the church, and employed by the church at a time, Verdi never "took" to religion and was always anti-clerical to the point that his second wife felt the need to clarify that he was not an atheist but just a non-believer. Verdi's revolutionary political beliefs, and the excess power he saw the Church exert come to life in *Aida* in a very direct and explicit way. The priesthood is very obviously the villain in the opera. Unmoved by the pleas of the people, the injured and desolate slaves, and the princess herself, the priesthood ignores the wishes and counsel of the people they allegedly serve and watch over. Verdi worked through his opinion on the role of the clergy and left no room for redemption; the priests in *Aida* are warmongers, thirsty for revenge with no concept of grace or mercy, relentless in their quest for unbridled power and control, Verdi's lived experience fundamentally shapes the way the clergy is depicted and perceived in the opera. Verdi is as closely identified with the political ruling class of Italy as he is with the artistic class, a fact which bears new significance when viewed through an intercultural performance lens. Verdi's work serves Verdi first, and by extension serves the greater glorification of Italy thus furthering the dominance Europe (and especially Italy) have on global culture in the era before America becomes a superpower. Unlike more contemporary examples of intercultural performance, in which the creator is keenly interested in highlighting or "honoring" a subaltern culture, *Aida* problematizes all forms of categorization because the Third World/First World dynamic is flipped, and the work has little to no interest in highlighting or honoring another culture. This is where new analytical tools can be most helpful.

The opera's librettist, a unification activist himself, Antonio Ghislanzoni, often took much greater risks than Verdi. Young and idealistic, Ghislanzoni was kicked out of seminary for being an atheist, eventually he would write for and even found several short-lived pro-unification newspapers before ultimately being arrested and briefly detained.[21] After, what research suggests was a very brief and practically undocumented, attempt at a career as a baritone he appears to have committed to writing novels and opera libretti. Verdi specifically asked his publisher if Ghislanzoni would be available to write the Italian libretto for *Aida.*[22] Verdi was notoriously hard to work with and Ghislanzoni was the librettist he had most recently worked with, having completed a near complete rewrite of *La Forza del Destino* just a year prior; likely they were already in a working 'groove' and it seemed to Verdi the decision of least resistance. Editing an existing work together would have built a great deal of trust between the two collaborators, in fact, Verdi would again ask Ghislanzoni for edits on a translation of *Don Carlos* from the 1867 French as Verdi originally composed it to the 1872 Italian as it is most known today.[23]

Of the documented eighty-five libretti Ghislanzoni penned, despite having worked with major composers such as Catalani, Petrella, Gomes, and Ponchielli, Ghislanzoni is

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[21] Fortunato et al. Bellonzi, *Arte e società in Italia: dal realismo al simbolismo 1865-1915* (Milan: Societa per le Belle Arti ed Esposizione Permanente, 1979), p.451.

[22] Tarling, *Orientalism*, 188.

[23] In another instance like *Aida* having a French spelling and an Italian spelling, so too does *Don Carlos* (in French) or *Don Carlo* (in Italian).

almost exclusively remembered solely for his *Aida* libretto.[24] Verdi and Ghislanzoni had a healthy working relationship, and worked closely together on the story and the text in a way similar to Mozart and his librettists; with the composer occasionally dictating how the scene should go or in some cases specific lines that the singers should have.[25] Ghislanzoni's experience as a journalist likely fed his hunger for information about the historical setting and Ancient Egyptian people, and his brief turn as a baritone (even having sung, according to McCants, Carlo V in Verdi's own *Ernani* in 1851) would have given him a sense of musicality that writers who are not also singers lack. It's not hard to see how both Verdi and Ghislanzoni's political and revolutionary beliefs play out in their collaboration, also very present is their mutual disdain for organized religion and the leaders therein. To tease out the evidence of the lived experience of both composer and librettist on the opera, one needs only *look* at the opera. From the unease that sets in surrounding the priesthood in the Consecration Scene, to the unwavering and immovable bloodlust that appears in the Judgement Scene, even the attempt to mollify Radames' wishes to the Pharaoh in the Triumphal Scene, both Verdi and Ghislanzoni are sending a clear message about the priesthood which clearly runs deeper than just the opera itself. The fact that there is still debate one hundred and fifty years later about Verdi/Ghislanzoni's intentions regarding coloniality and imperialism in *Aida* is clearly further evidence that personal beliefs and the conceit of the story are so interwoven that the begging of one and the end of the other are indistinguishable. Any analysis that fails

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[24] McCants, *Aida,* 28.

[25] Many letters between composer and librettist back and forth display the nature of their relationship, all printed in Busch, *Verdi's Aida.*

to consider the numerous influences that the creatives' personal beliefs had on the story is missing a very critical and fundamental aspect of this opera's dramaturgy.

Traditions and Norms of the Performance Genre

It is interesting to discuss the traditions of the performance genre in this specific instance since many of those traditions and norms we associate with opera of the period today are *because* of *Aida* not in spite of it. *Aida* simultaneously is an example of tradition while also eschewing tradition. Grand Opera, as a genre, is decidedly French. According to the *Grove Opera Dictionary,* Grand Opera is characterized by its impressive scale: four or five acts, huge casts and choruses, augmented orchestras, ballets, and lavish design and stagecraft. Throughout the 1820s until the 1850s, the term almost exclusively applied to French opera, many times the Palais Garnier in Paris was simply referred to as *le grand opéra.* The opera house in Paris reigned supreme in all of Europe for several reasons, but it's basically bottomless bank account and it's the sheer size of its stage and wing-space really allowed the house to be known for ever increasing spectacle and scale in terms of stagecraft. A whole industry built up in Paris around the creation of opera: scene shops, painters and sculptors, costume shops, riggers, and inventors, all helped make Paris the opera capitol of the nineteenth century. This is evident in Verdi's mind as well, as he was very clear to the Khedive in his contract that all the scenery and costumes for the premiere were to be built in Paris and then shipped to Cairo.

Following the 1848 Revolution in France, opera remained quite popular, but the overly luxurious and opulent productions of the first half of the century were considered outdated and no longer in style with the new France. As French composers looked for

simpler ways to tell their stories, Verdi experimented with the Grand Opera style, having written three operas for the Paris opera house, *Jérusalem* (1847), *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* (1855), and *Don Carlos* (1867).[26] At that time, translations of operas were much more common than they are in today's opera scene, meaning in whatever country the opera was being given it would be performed in that native language. That's how we end up with the French *Don Carlos* and the Italian *Don Carlo* despite being the same opera.

The more well-versed in the genre Verdi became, the more important to the stories the spectacle became. As his style shifted in the 1850s to replicate the oldy style Grand Opera the spectacle was not just a way to produce the opera, but rather necessary for producing the opera. By 1859 and *Un Ballo in Maschera* the spectacle is essential to the drama without interfering in any way.[27] It is now necessary to say French Grand Opera or Italian Grand Opera. By selecting Verdi for this project, the Khedive was signaling to the European world the kind of operatic tradition he wished to establish in Egypt. Grand Opera's connotations of luxury and extravagance, its notions of a unique type of European "sophistication", instantly call to mind the ruling establishment. From Louis XIV in opera's salad days to Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II in Mozart's German heyday, to the elitist label opera struggles to shake off today -the political message extended through opera's traditions illustrates the lineage of leaders of which the Khedive saw himself.

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[26] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 186.

[27] Andrew Porter, "Giuseppe Verdi", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Vol. 19, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980), 635-665.

While the excess in production was expected of Grand Opera -and certainly of Verdi- as a genre, opera is not known for its strict adherence to historical accuracy. While opera has a rich tradition of using folktales, myths, and literature for its inspiration, even historical pieces like Donizetti's "Tudor Trilogy" or indeed Verdi's *Nabucco* more emphasis was placed on drama and storytelling than scenic accuracy. *Aida,* in many ways, bucks that trend, as Egyptologist Auguste Mariette takes over the scenic and costume design. Accuracy and overall *mise* was so important to Mariette that he even insisted that the male singers shave any facial hair they had, "can you see the King of Egypt with a turned-up moustache and a goatee?" he writes to impresario Paul Draneht (whom the Khedive had placed in charge of the new opera house).[28] Based on visual evidence, this seems to be against tradition, as it appears many Mariette wanted complete visual control to ensure that there was a high degree of verisimilitude between the funerary paintings he had studied and the company onstage, his designs still inspire productions today.[29]

With all the extensive writing and even costume renderings which remain from the premiere, it is interesting to note that while blackface is certainly a norm of the performance genre, there seems to be no explicit discussion about its use in *Aida,* at least by designer Auguste Mariette, impresario Paul Draneht, or Verdi himself. Having been used since the dawn of opera, and prevalent in its predecessors like Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and many of the early 17th century ballets and operas of Jean-

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[28] McCants, *Aida,* 42.

[29] Several examples are reprinted in William Weaver, *Verdi: A Documentary Study* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1977).

Baptiste Lully which would occasionally feature "natives" or "Africans". Certainly, one of the most famous examples of pre-*Aida* blackface is Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte,* which, in several letters back and forth to collaborators, Verdi does not seem to be familiar with.[30] Verdi's next opera, *Otello* (1887), will become the most prevalent and persistent perpetrator of operatic blackface. I have come to attribute the lack of writing about or mentioning of the use of blackface in *Aida* to the sheer fact that the use of blackface for a project like this was so standard it didn't bear mentioning. The low-quality, black-and-white photographs reprinted in Nicholas John's ENO guide offer a little glimpse at early productions -the earliest being Nellie Melba at Philadelphia in 1898- it is clear that some kind of bronzing agent has definitely been applied to the skin.[31] I also find it interesting that Verdi, who mentions everything, did not mention its use, not even in the context of the story. It is my belief that Verdi did not see this story as a racialized one, but a political one. For all the reasons mentioned in above sections of the analysis, it seems more plausible to me that Verdi was so engaged with working out his feelings towards the priesthood and Imperialism that he considered those aspects of the story to be far more dominant than any concerning the racialized nature of the story. In fact, it seems most likely that Verdi would have most closely identified with the fiercely patriotic and devoted Amonasro rather than any other character. Surely, if Verdi saw him only as the Black warrior-king of Ethiopia there would be some letter he wrote mentioning this dichotomy somewhere in Hans Busch's nearly 430-page collection of Verdi's letters

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[30] Busch, *Verdi's Aida,* 40.

[31] Nicholas John, *English National Opera Guide Series: Aida, Giuseppe Verdi* (London: John Calder Ltd, 1980).

concerning *Aida.* Of the only definitive mentions one does find: (on page 264) from a letter Verdi wrote to his publisher Giulio Ricordi, a mention about the *little Moors* and wanting them to be in all black (the context of the comment suggests that he is referring to their clothing and not necessarily their skin, but the costume rendering which he is discussing has been lost); and in the Julian Budden anthology on page 192, character descriptions by Verdi's publisher Ricordi, a year after the opera's premiere, describes both Aida and her father as "olive skin, dusky reddish complexion,." It does seem incredibly likely that in his zeal for as authentic a production as possible, Auguste Mariette likely did use makeup to darken the skin of -at least the ballet dancers- and likely Antoinetta Anastasi-Pozzoni and Francesco Steller, the original Aida and Amonasro respectively, and this darkening was repeated and then detailed by Ricordi in his description, however it is still rather speculative. This would also have the important effect of further aligning the Khedive and the onstage "Egyptians" with European powers and further distance themselves from the onstage "Ethiopians" who would clearly be *more African* than the Egyptians. When Teresa Stoltz sang Aida in the European premiere it is clear that she darkened her skin a little, and photographs indicate a costume which reads more Native American than Egyptian (the lack of Mariette's involvement on European productions can be seen in literally any photograph). In all, while blackface is a norm of the performance genre, and almost certainly was used on the production, it is also likely that the story was not initially thought of in an incredibly racialized way. Afterall, whether Egyptian or Ethiopian- to an Italian both are African.

The basic structure of the roles themselves is also not new, rather very traditional, but feels so easily identifiable largely because of *Aida*'s legacy. The trope, a soprano and

a tenor want to be together but are driven apart by a mezzo and a baritone, is highly traditional. Such can be said about many operas, nearly everything post-Baroque. It applies so perfectly to *Aida* that it feels like it originates from this specific opera, but this is another such instance of *Aida* being the example of tradition. While Wagner would be a much better example of someone who uses technology and operaturgy to create his own tradition, Verdi is able to use tradition to his benefit. An evening at a Verdi opera feels like a conversation with an old friend, and I posit that that is not only intentional on his part, but also one of the keys to his operas' enduring successes.

Musical Style and Influence

Verdi's musical style had evolved over his career enough to be placed into four distinct categories: Early, Middle, Late, and Final. Despite the evolution there is a distinct Verdi sound to all of his works, from his earliest success with *Nabucco,* to the back-to-back mega-works which define his middle period: *Rigoletto, Il Trovatore,* and *La Traviata.* The late period is marked more by a structural shift than a tonal one. His operas grow in length and size, with even bigger chorus ensembles than previous works, and multiple ballets -which are successfully integrated into the dramatic storytelling. *Aida* becomes the culmination of all of Verdi's innovation and expansion of Italian opera upon the formula he inherited from Rossini (who indeed inherited it from Mozart). *Aida* is huge, with an orchestra of 70 when performed at The Metropolitan Opera today. The original production potentially used as many as 95 in the pit and possibly additional onstage trumpeters and harps.[32] Verdi scored the chorus for 100 voices; 16 first tenors, 16 second tenors, 16 baritones, 16 basses, 12 first sopranos, 12 second sopranos, and 12

[32] Busch, *Verdi's Aida,* 160-162.

contraltos.[33] These numbers were very important to Verdi, and in contract documents for subsequent productions reprinted in Busch's collection there are very specific instructions about how many of each part can be cut to maintain the integrity of the piece.

While stylistically very true to Verdi's style, the overall score for *Aida* does, at times, attempt a more exotic sound. Musical Orientalism is very familiar with Grand Opera as a genre, but far more associated with French Grand Opera than Italian. Many of the great French composers developed an "invented Orientalism" building on the triangle, cymbals, bass drum, and piccolo from earlier operas. Félicien David, Camille Saint-Saëns, Georges Bizet, Giacomo Meyerbeer were all pioneers of French operatic Orientalist music, playing around with orchestrations and keys to find an exotic sound in their works.[34] Verdi takes it a step further, yes he plays around in D-flat , and certainly the triangle gets plenty of use as do the cymbals, but there is a more refined quality to Verdi's imagined orientalism. Oboes almost always accompany Aida's presence, seeming to suggest that the breeze around her head always reminds her of her homeland. This is exploited by her father, Amonasro, in act three as he appeals to her longing for homeland -oboes are joined by rich bassoon and violas- when she refuses him, her father goes into a rage, no longer supported by woodwinds, but angry trumpets and trombones accented by the 'imagined exotic' piccolo. Hurling his final insult at Aida, Amonasro disowns her saying, "*Non sei mia figlia. De' Faraoni tu sei la schiava! … You are not my daughter. You are a slave to the Pharaohs!"*[35] Verdi's orchestrations paint a scenic

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi, Vol. 3* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 198.

[35] Act III, Duet – Aida and Amonasro

picture of an angry and embattled warrior-king using the full orchestra to its greatest potential to guilt Aida until her cry dissolves into heartbroken violins and sorrowful bassoons. Throughout the entire opera Verdi accomplishes a tremendous duality with both Aida's voice lines and the orchestrations around her. Verdi never forgets that Aida is just as much a princess as Amneris, although there is a more exotic quality to Aida's music than to Amneris' music, it never loses that regal quality. Unlike *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* or *Die Zauberflöte* where the exoticism helps to identify the "villain" in the story, *Aida's* exoticism never loses sight of the fact that these are two princesses of equal royal standing. As Paul Robinson reminds us, the closest Verdi gets to evoking the French-style orientalist music, the music of Saint-Saëns and Meyerbeer, (evocative of snake-charmers) is in the ballet sequences.[36]

The second and third ballets, the "Dance of the Little Moorish Boys" and the "Spoils of War" respectively, each represent the Ethiopian people. The eponymous little Moorish boys are Ethiopians, imprisoned in Amneris' apartments to dance and serve her, the spoils of war occurs during the Triumphal March immediately following the army's return to Egypt from Ethiopia and they are displaying their loot and reenacting a battle. It follows that these musical sequences would be more exoticized, similar to Aida's music as they are meant to make similar meaning for the audience. This makes the first ballet, during the Consecration Scene, unusual. I posit that Verdi's distaste for the clergy is at work here, sowing the seed of mistrust in the audience's ear by creating distance between the music we hear from the priesthood *outside* of the temple and the music we hear from

[36] Paul Robinson, "Is Aida and Orientalist Opera" in *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 129.

the priesthood *inside* the temple. This would be an interesting musical distinction, since this is the only time we see the priesthood in their temple performing one of their rituals. The ritual nature of the ceremony is Othering enough to justify the use of more exotic sounding music while performing the ritual itself, but the employ of more classical sacred sound when not in the temple.

Verdi's influences are apparent, the French operatic orientalists who came before him, but Verdi's use of vaguely exotic music is far more strategic and skilled than in other cases. Overall, the style is more distinctly Verdi than anything else, although music critics in Cairo more readily compared *Aida* to the works of Wagner than earlier works of Verdi's. Either way Robinson, as do I, continues to trouble Said's analysis of the opera because of his failure to pay sufficient attention to the opera's music, which is both complex and multi-faceted and at times creates nearly the opposite ideological construct.[37]

Social and Cultural Struggles at the Time of Creation

The world into which *Aida* was born is full of very complex political tensions. As I have detailed above, Verdi was a highly political creature, devoting a majority of his life -willingly and occasionally hesitantly- to the building of a nation, as was Ghislanzoni. It is this point that challenges assumptions about who the creatives would have identified with as analysis turns toward the ideological universe on display in *Aida.* Again, Paul Robinson makes some very aplomb observations noting:

> "…I would suggest that we look not to Europe's oriental expansion in the late nineteenth century bot to the politics of the Italian Risorgimento in the

[37] For more on Robinson's explanation see: Robinson, *Opera,* 123.

1840s. *Aida* is in fact the last of the operas in which the imprint of Verdi's deep commitment to the Risorgimento can still be detected. It is heir to the tradition of operas like *Atilla, I Lombardi,* and, above all, *Nabucco,* in which the political repression of Italy by the Austrians is metaphorically represented by the subjugation of the ancient Hebrews under the Babylonians. In Verdi's imagination, Italy was always a colonized country, the victim of Hapsburg imperialism. In writing *Aida,* I would contend, he associated Ethiopia with Italy, just as he associated Egypt wit Hapsburg Austria. The ideological heart of *Aida*, so to speak, lies in the magnificent outburst of Amonasro in his duet with Aida, where he calls on her to remember her people "*vinto, straziato…conquered and tormented*". Verdi sets Amonasro's plea on one of those great arching phrases of which he was the supreme master, carrying the voice upward in an arc of passion to a high G flat, and then bringing it back down to rest in the sonic territory from which it began. It identifies Amonasro and the Ethiopians with all those conquered and divided nations that people Verdi's Risorgimento operas of the 1840s and that stand for his own "conquered and tormented" Italy. In spite of its sophistication and refinement, *Aida* is still at heart a traditional number opera, whose musical language looks backward to *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore* rather than forward to *Otello* and *Falstaff,* just as its politics look back to the Risorgimento rather than forward to the fully realized European imperium."[38]

[38] Robinson, *Opera,* 132-133.

Robinson's thinking here is in-line with suggestions I have made in earlier sections, drawing comparison between Amonasro's lyric in Act II and Verdi's fierce patriotism, "*se l'amour della patria è delitto siam rei tutti, siam pronti a morir! … if love of one's country is a crime, we are all guilty, we are all ready to die!"* Robinson's asserts that Verdi would have identified more with Ethiopia than with Egypt, and claims that this troubles beyond repair Said's argument. I would be remiss if I didn't attempt to reshape Robinson's claim here. Robinson presents a very glossy version of Verdi's political career in that he doesn't mention it at all. The failure to fully consider the full context of how politics may have shaped Verdi's thinking is especially glaring when reminded that the analytical model Robinson is proposing is titled "All Things In Full Context". The active role Verdi played in unifying Italy and establishing a government, as well as Italian interests in Ethiopia and Eritrea as early as the mid-1860s greatly trouble Robinson's point. The Italian world post-*Aida,* for over sixty years, is hyper fixated on Ethiopia. Further troubling the opera's relationship with imperialism, but it is important to separate the world in which the work was wrought from the world in which the work was released.

The political situation in Egypt is just as fraught as that in Italy. Far removed from the great pharaohs of the dynastic periods, Egypt had long been a colonized power itself; the Romans, the Ottomans, a French invasion at the turn of the nineteenth century. Following French expulsion, Egypt is largely independent from Ottoman rule, but it's not until the 1860s -as Egypt was coming into its own financially- that it was given Khedivate status by the Ottomans, essentially releasing it to its own sovereignty. This independence from the Ottomans and Egypt's newfound financial stability invites both

French and English participation in affairs both economic and political. This is the Egypt in which *Aida* was presented in 1871, an Egypt which is very vulnerable to European influence led by a European-educated Khedive eager to assert his freedom after centuries of Ottoman babysitting. The Egypt presented in the opera is exactly the Egypt the Khedive wishes to bring about -a powerful nation, dominant it its sphere- and that is part of the work being done by *Aida.* With as much revolution and global turmoil as is found in the long nineteenth century, the Khedive finds himself in a very precarious cultural struggle. The opening of the Suez Canal two years prior to *Aida*'s premiere permanently ties the Egyptian economy to France (at first) and then to England. In fact, the English would move in in 1882 and not leave until 1922. The Khedive has the difficult task of demonstrating the ways in which Egyptian culture is similar to European culture, hence the building of an opera house and the commissioning of a new work, while also showing the Egyptian people that Egypt is a powerful and independent country with a deep pride in its native culture and ruled by its own sovereignty. As it would turn out, he is only able to achieve one or the other, but not both.

The great delay in the premiere of *Aida,* something very unpredictable for any of the opera's stakeholders, was the Franco-Prussian War. As much of an effect that Italian unification had on Verdi and his work, German unification would exert its force upon the production of the opera as well. Neither the history of the Franco-Prussian War, nor its causes are necessarily relevant to this analysis, but the major disruption of supply-chain and communication infrastructure in Paris as a result of the war nearly derailed the entire production. As Paris was known to the Khedive as the epicenter of fine art and culture, it was decided that all the scenery and costumes for the Cairo premiere would be

constructed in Paris, under the watchful eye of *Aida* puppet master extraordinaire (this time serving as scenic and costume designer) Auguste Mariette. As the Siege of Paris broke down infrastructure and labor demands in the city, Mariette was effectively stuck in Paris, and the scenery hadn't been finished yet because there aren't enough workmen.[39] The original premiere date in February of 1871 came and went as the Germans underwent unification as a result of the Franco-Prussian War. Supply lines and workforce returned and the *mise-en-scene* for *Aida* was finished and sent to Cairo where rehearsal could finally begin. *Aida* becomes a work covered in the fingerprints of revolt, the smudges of European pridefulness, and the pockmarks of war. It is no great surprise that scholars and critics are able to keep making and remaking meaning in *Aida* when there was so much social unrest as the work struggled to be born.

Expected Audience

Verdi had the great luxury of knowing that his new opera would be a hit whether it was any good or not, owing to the fact that he was one of -if not the most- renowned composers of the Romantic/Grand Opera period. *Aida* is the twenty-sixth out of twenty-eight total operas by the composer, his name had been well established, which makes audience demographics challenging to tease out. Certainly, many thousands of patrons who only rarely attended the opera would flock to see a new work by the master composer, which creates for a very different audience make-up than the subscription holders and box owners who see everything. A very comprehensive survey of opera audiences and ticket prices in Paris from 1830 to 1870 draws a similar distinction between audiences in general, that there is the core audience of very wealthy who make

[39] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 190.

up the majority of subscription holders and premium ticket buyers and then a second more causal audience who fills the rest of the theatre and only attends certain productions.[40] We see the same trends in opera attendance today, many thousand more attend *Carmen* or *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* than do *Semiramide* or *Peter Grimes.* Far from being a value judgement on the quality of the work, opera-going is arduous and time consuming, if you are going to spend four or more hours in the theatre there is great incentive to make sure you enjoy the work you are seeing. Audiences love familiarity, and by 1871, audiences were very familiar with a name like Verdi.

The audience in Cairo for the premiere (which Verdi did not attend) was populated with the Khedive's harem taking up three boxes, as well as foreign visitors and critics and invited guests.[41] McCants goes on to say that Verdi was greatly troubled by the fact the audience had mostly been hand selected, as he preferred for his operas to earn their success from the opera-going public; it is also noted that the audience was almost entirely European.[42] A largely European audience is not entirely surprising given both the political affect the Khedive was attempting to exert with the premiere, but also the simple fact that this is the first (?) and only (?) opera house in Egypt -there simply is no opera-going public yet. Opera as a formal event is new to the country, so the residents of Cairo had not been exposed to the European ritual of "a night at the opera" yet, though they would eventually be. It is unknown how the Egyptian audience responded to the use of

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[40] Steven Huebner, "Opera Audiences in Paris 1830-1870," *Music & Letters* 70, no.2 (May, 1989): 206-225. JSTOR

[41] McCants, *Aida,* 43.

[42] Ibid.

blackface or skin darkening. Colorism, judgements or classifications based on how dark someone's skin is, are deeply present even in communities of color. As Christopher Gaulthier and Jennifer McFarlane-Harris remind us, "coming to terms with race in *Aida* requires that we move beyond viewing imperialism as an exclusively European phenomenon."[43] Still today, Egypt has a great appetite for opera.

Verdi's inclination that his work should become successful through the opinions of the opera-going public and not the celebrity elite is completely aligned with his political views and his "man of the people" persona.

The audience in Milan is just what you would expect from a championship team playing a home game, according to reports every seat and standing room spot was taken and extra chairs had been added to the boxes.[44] There exists then (as there does now with most entertainment) a disconnect of sorts, critics were unimpressed, and audiences loved it. Julian Budden, the most preeminent Verdi scholar, writes, "it was said that ticket prices had been a matter of speculation on the stock exchange."[45] Unlike the analysis of most other new works, even works by more established musical theatre artists, Verdi had essentially a guaranteed hit. His expected audience was Verdi fans. Secondary to the politics involved in commissioning a Grand Opera, the Khedive made it very clear that Verdi was his first (and, indeed, only real) choice because at the end of the day Khedive

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[43] Christopher Gaulthier and Jennifer McFarlane-Harris, "Nationalism, Racial Difference and 'Egyptian' Meaning in Verdi's *Aida*," in *Blackness in Opera,* ed. Naomi Andre, Karen Bryan, and Eric Saylor (Urbana: university of Illinois Press, 2012), 69-70.

[44] McCants, *Aida,* 50.

[45] Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 192.

Ismail was a Verdi fan. Opera producers use this logic when season planning today as well, the casual operagoer is pretty unilaterally a Verdi fan. Even compared to other such successful composers as Donizetti or Poulenc, there is a built-in audience with Verdi operas that seems to have been the case since very early in Verdi's twenty-eight opera career.

Influence of the Directors and Performers

Just as I explained above that there was essentially a built-in audience for Verdi which greatly lowered any of the risk associated with the premiere of a new opera, unlike with some premieres, the original performers had little impact on the shape of the production. I would attribute half of that to the respect and admiration that the singers had for their great composer and half to Verdi's unrelenting control over every aspect of production. Verdi made it clear that this was his vision and his alone, as he and Ricordi were discussing options for conductors of both the Cairo Opera House and at La Scala, Verdi wrote: "I want only one creator…I don't concede the right to '*create'* to singers and conductors.[46]" Beyond hand-selecting the conductor and cast in both the 1871 Cairo premiere and the 1872 Milan premieres, Verdi wrote out very specific stage directions, blocking, and motivations for all the singers and chorus. This greatly facilitates Verdi's vision as chief creative officer of the production, by giving the blocking he ensures that the singers are doing whatever it is that he pictured them doing when he was writing the score. It is unclear if these are the staging notes which were used for the Cairo production, I have found almost no mention of that rehearsal process. It seems likely that rehearsing in Cairo did not seem momentous enough to document, we know that Verdi

[46] Busch, *Verdi's Aida,* 150.

was so little concerned with the Cairo production that he never set foot in Egypt, and was uncharacteristically distant from the production process there, which is also likely why he and impresario Paul Draneht struggled to agree on a conductor -it took a lot of trust for Verdi to hand his opera off and step away.

Ultimately, for the 1871 Cairo premiere the score was in good hands:

Conductor	Giovanni Bottesini
Aida	Antonetta Anastasi-Pozzoni
Amneris	Eleonora Grossi
Radames	Pietro Mongini
Amonasro	Francesco Steller
Ramphis	Paolo Medini
Pharaoh	Tomasso Costa
Messenger	Luigi Stecchi-Bottardi
Priestess	Marietta Allievi

With a cast such as that and Auguste Mariette's attention to detail in his scenic and costume designs, Verdi was far more interested in the Italian premiere than the Egyptian one. After all, Milan simply made more difference for the future of *Aida* than did Cairo.[47] Verdi exerted his full control over the European productions, leaving precious little room for the singers to find their own way through the text. The delay in production because of the Franco-Prussian War meant that Verdi had to accept some compromise when choosing singers for the 1872 premiere at La Scala. Very similarly to the industry today, opera singers book out a year or two in advance -whenever seasons are announced- and

[47] McCants, *Aida,* 45.

contracts are near impossible to get out of. War and compromise be damned, Verdi ended up with one of the best assortments of artists possible at the time. For the 1872 Milan premiere the bill read:

Conductor	Franco Faccio
Aida	Teresa Stoltz
Amneris	Maria Waldmann
Radames	Giuseppe Fancelli
Amonasro	Francesco Pandolfini
Ramphis	Ormando Maini
Pharaoh	Paride Pavoleri
Messenger	Luigi Vistarini
Priestess[48]	

The surviving libretto with Verdi's hand-written stage directions and diagrams is particularly interesting. From the production at Parma in April 1872, just two months after the February premiere at La Scala, it is the only known libretto with Verdi's stage directions. Currently held by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, it was

[48] I can find no mention of who sang the minor, offstage role of the Priestess for the Milan premiere. My first thought was that it must have been Marietta Allievi again, since it was the only role I couldn't find mentioned in any text it is also possible that the role was just sung by a soprano chorister (as it was planned in early production drafts) I was able to track down reviews and announcements from the 1872 premiere, which strangely mention the name of the tenor singing the role of Messenger and not the equally sized role of Priestess. I have now concluded that since the Messenger appears onstage, he was mentioned, but since the Priestess is an offstage role she was not. It is possible the only reason the singer was mentioned in Cairo is because she was the first person ever to sing the role. My search for her name continues.

exclusively reprinted in Hans Busch's collection and is exhaustive.[49] It is not only concerned with who moves where and when, but also notes on the emotion and motivation singers should be portraying at certain times. These annotations show Verdi's deep understanding of lyricism and acting – they also show how much control he liked to have over the production of his works. The Verdian tradition of directorial control of *Aida* is taken up by its frequent conductor Franco Faccio. Detailed notes and diagrams about the stage business survive in Faccio's hand which he allegedly made during the La Scala premiere and used for directing at least the Padua and Trieste productions.[50] Likely the Venice production at La Fenice, as well. In a further effort to thwart the influence of directors and performers, the Ricordi firm published, in July 1873, a complete production book with detailed descriptions of each scene. The clear intention of this publication is to be used by stage directors, choreographers, and conductors as they stage subsequent productions of *Aida*, presumably to ensure each production is as close to Verdi's intention as possible. Incredibly detailed and thorough it would be very feasible to follow them still today and have a very "authentic" production of *Aida*; however, as is such the case with performance, the farther from the original production subsequent productions get, the more they deviate from the authorial intent. For the purpose of this analysis, that is case closed on this analytic point, directors and performers had very little influence on the original production. In fact, many of the first productions were strict tintypes of the

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[49] Busch, *Verdi's Aida,* 499-553.

[50] Ibid, 554. The provenance of these production notes is not made clear in Busch's text. The original is likely held by the Ricordi Archives although I am unable to confirm as much. If it is held by the Ricordi Archives it is not a part of their digital collection, and I am currently unable to travel to Milan.

La Scala production, it is unfortunate that information is so scarce regarding the 1871 Cairo premiere.

Location of Premiere/Run

One of the more material influences on the production of a work is its location. Geographically, how does a works positionality signal its use. As discussed at length in the first section of this analysis, the Khedive's building of an opera house and commissioning of an opera were highly political decisions. With, by my count, over 400,000 francs invested in the commissioning and funding of the Cairo premiere of *Aida*, this was a very expensive political statement. I have already detailed the relative independence Egypt enjoyed as a Khedivate prior to British occupation, but how did Egypt get wealthy enough to throw its weight around in the European arena? Why did Egypt have financial resources that Libya or Israel didn't have at the time? The answer lies a lot closer to home: the American Civil War. Both McCants and Tarling pull at this thread, connecting the global disruption of cotton supply from the Confederate States to Egypt's financial surge. Long-Staple Cotton, *Gossypium barbadense,* or as every American Southerner knows it: Sea Island Cotton, was industrialized in Egypt by French entrepreneur and inspiring cotton magnate Louis Jumel around 1819.[51] Together with Jumel, Khedive Muhammad Ali (Khedive Ismail's grandfather) devoted over 600,000 acres of land to the cultivation of this new, modified cotton cultivar. Its longer staple (the white fibers) were a noticeable improvement on the cotton which had been cultivated in Egypt for thousands of years; allowing for a much finer thread and higher count than

[51] Edward Earl Mead, "Egyptian Cotton and the American Civil War," *Political Science Quarterly* 41, no.4 (1926).

either the French or the Egyptians expected and by 1835 there were thirty cotton mills employing over 12,000 people.[52] Khedive Said continues his father's expansion of Egyptian cotton production as news of the American Civil War reaches Egypt; as Ismail takes it is the height of both the American Civil War, and the Egyptian cotton boom. Generations of families are lifted out of poverty as money pours into Egypt consistently for over fifty years; Egypt's outlook on modernity and political positionality are forever changed. Edward Earl Mead writes, "one cannot study the history of Egypt during the last half of the nineteenth century, without being impressed by the importance of the American Civil War in the making of modern Egypt."[53] To add my own extension to Mead's point, one cannot study the history of *Aida* without fully understanding the situation which allowed Egypt to thrive financially thus allowing an opera house to be built and a new work to be commissioned. Despite its economic importance on the global scene, Egypt hardly seemed to impress Verdi; so, while the Egyptian audience was the first in the world to hear this new opera, Verdi and his publisher Ricordi were far more concerned with the location of its European premiere. The "real" premiere.

The scholarship sets up a clear contrast between the Egyptian premiere and the Italian one, and their importance on the future of the opera. I have not yet decided if the scholarship is simply mirroring Verdi's feelings or if the Egyptian premiere is of little interest to modern scholars also. Even Clyde McCants can't help himself from using preferential language with the Italian premiere, "Christmas Eve 1871 marked the

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[52] John P. Dunn, "King Cotton, the Khedive, and the American Civil War," *South Writ Large RSS,* 2015. https://southwritlarge.com/articles/king-cotton-the-khedive-and-the-american-civil-war/

[53] Mead, "Egyptian Cotton".

premiere of *Aida* in Cairo, Egypt; and February 8, 1872, its introduction to the rest of the world in Milan, Italy."[54] As if to say that Egypt exists in a vacuum with no autonomy or outside communication at all, and the opera becomes real only after it is performed in Europe. This is the definition of Saidian orientalism, wherein the distant Orient requires European mediation to be acceptable. Such is, perhaps, the perpetual trap when writing about *Aida*, is how much more everyone seems to care about the Italian production than the Egyptian production.

La Scala then, as it is today, is as revered and respected as an opera house can become. A bad experience in 1845 soured Verdi to the house, and he effectively withheld his works from production there for the next twenty-four years.[55] New management and promising productions lured Verdi back with the revised *La Forza del Destino* in 1868 which was well received and repaired his relationship with the house.[56] Despite Verdi's hesitancy, for Ricordi, La Scala was the only option. As early in the process as July 1870, Ricordi was beginning to sell Verdi on his vision of an Italian premiere at La Scala. A new opera from a composer with Verdi's stature at La Scala after nearly three decades of no Verdi operas at all would mean a huge bump in subscriptions for La Scala -trading in not just on the novel opportunity for a Verdi premiere, but the promise of the return of Verdi's catalogue to the opera house after a generation of hiatus. The mending of the

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[54] McCants, *Aida,* 45.

[55] McCants, *Aida,* 46.

[56] From what I can tell La Fenice in Venice and Teatro Apollo in Rome were his go-to locales for a premiere in La Scala's stead. After *Aida* repaired the relationship, Verdi's last two premieres, both *Otello* and *Falstaff* were held at La Scala.

relationship between Verdi and La Scala not only helped La Scala, but Ricordi and the Ricordi Firm stood to make a great deal of money by finally licensing Verdi's catalogue back to La Scala. The music community in Europe saw La Scala as the crown jewel, and Verdi the king, audiences were eager to reunite the two. Opera tickets have always been expensive, legend has it that for the *Aida* premiere tickets had been a matter of speculation on the stock exchange.[57] The elite were out at the theatre that February night, if the speculation about ticket prices wasn't enough, Verdi's fans in the audience presented him with a gem-studded gold scepter, symbolic of their appreciation and his place as operatic "royalty".

Place plays a major role in the discourse around the opera. This duality of the Egyptian premiere and the Milan premiere and which is the 'real' premiere. Biting the bullet here, eschewing apotheosis, and admitting that Verdi was a man of his time plays right back into Said's hand. Said feels, "some sense on Verdi's part of an opera written for a place he cannot relate to."[58] Tucked away in another Said writing is a direct admonition of Verdi, referring to his "his callous disengagement from the place [Cairo] for which the piece was intended."[59] While the Khedive may have commissioned Verdi to write an opera to commemorate Cairo's new opera house, Verdi was very consciously writing an opera for La Scala. The first performance could have been given on Mars it doesn't seem like Verdi would have cared any more than he did about the first

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[57] Budden, *The Operas of Verdi,* 192.

[58] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 140-141.

[59] Edward W. Said, *Music at the Limits: Three Decades of Essays and Articles on Music* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 40.

performances in Cairo. To be fair, he travelled to Mars as many times as he travelled to Egypt. Likely, in Verdi's eyes, La Scala commissioned *Aida*, Egypt was just footing the bill.

Commercial Success

The final point of analysis in my proposed model takes a look at the success of the opera, and how its legacy has shaped its historiography. To say that *Aida* was successful feels like an understatement. According to Clyde McCants, Verdi received thirty-two curtain calls.[60] It was certainly a financial hit, Verdi wrote to both Camille du Locle and Verdi's French publisher, Léon Escudier, that *Aida* seemed to be doing very well if you judged the enormous box office receipts and the increased price of admission.[61] While critics were rather ambivalent about the opera -a fact which endlessly bothered Verdi, who was rather unusually prideful about this particular work- audiences couldn't get enough of it. Even in Egypt, where little is known about the success of the opera beyond opening night, the opera was a resounding success. In a letter dated just ten days after the Milan premiere, Paul Draneht, the impresario at the Cairo opera house, congratulates Verdi on his Italian success and mentions that they have already given ten performances of *Aida* in Cairo.[62] Ten performances, plus the premiere, over two months is impressive for the fledgling opera house, and likely did a great deal to legitimize it in European eyes and stabilize it financially. Although not much information, it is part of the precious little I have found surrounding the Egyptian success of the opera, especially due to the fire in

[60] McCants, *Aida,* 50.

[61] Busch, *Verdi's Aida,* 283.

[62] Ibid, 282.

1971 which completely destroyed the Cairo Opera House and her archives within. I am surprised it is not mentioned in any of the scholarly sources I encountered -it is almost all that exists. It does seem that the new Cairo Opera House, inaugurated in 1988, has a section of the onsite museum dedicated to *Aida,* including a few costume and jewelry pieces, scores, and historical documents/reviews but they have not been digitized and I am currently unable to travel to Cairo. Ever the stickler for perfection, Verdi remained very involved in the approval process as theatres across Europe applied to Ricordi for permission to perform the opera; he essentially withheld the rights from any theatre that didn't have what he considered the proper elements for success.[63]

The opera was given in other theatres soon after La Scala, however. In April, two months after the Milan premiere, Verdi directly oversaw the Parma production at the Teatro Regio. The opera was given in Padua and Trieste, directed by its La Scala premiere conductor Franco Faccio; it flew through Italy, playing Naples, Venice, Turin, Rome, and Bologna. Eventually it made its way to Buenos Aires, Berlin, and Vienna. A much-beleaguered production in Paris at the Théâtre des Italiens in 1876 left a cloud over the city in Verdi's mind, but a triumphantly grand production in 1880 at the Paris Opéra (with the first five performances conducted by Verdi himself) made *Aida* a hit in French opera houses also.[64] Aida made her way to the United States of America in November of 1873, first at the New York Academy of Music, and then on tour to Philadelphia, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Boston.[65] The Metropolitan Opera mounted *Aida* first in 1886

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[63] Budden, *The Operas of Verdi,* 192.

[64] Ibid, 197.

[65] McCants, *Aida,* 51.

– in German. From 1884 to 1891, the newly formed Metropolitan Opera was struggling financially (a perpetual problem for the company) and as a cost cutting measure only hired German singers instead of the much more expensive Italian ones, to make it easier on their German workhorses, The Met only staged operas in German. On December 28, 1891, the much *eingedeutscht* company of The Met presented *Aida* in Italian for the first time on its stage.[66] What cements this opera as being worthy of such intense study *is* its insane proliferation. Critical acclaim found the opera, perhaps later than did popular acclaim, but in the opera landscape today, there is no more easily recognized or feted opera than *Aida.*

While there are hundreds of operas in the modern repertoire, there are *hundreds* more which have fallen out of production, out of print, and out of the minds of operagoers in the artform's nearly 400-year history. If *Aida* had flopped, it could have ended up like Verdi's *Alzira,* based on the Voltaire play, which received only four performances and has essentially been scrubbed from performance; or even Verdi's *Atilla,* which saw infrequent productions through its whole existence and was not given a production at The Met until 2010. Not everything Verdi wrote was a commercial success, but there can be no doubt that the key to *Aida*'s unshakeable staying-power -then, as now- is how quickly a production of *Aida* can sell out an opera house.

Conclusions

Through this ten-point analysis Said's troubling of *Aida* comes into clearer focus. The spectacle of the production informs the meaning of the production. The audiences are handicapped both by what they *expect* to see, and by what the director thinks they *should*

[66] Metropolitan Opera archives.

see. This logic has been used as the defense time after time when opera houses get caught in a little too much bad press about their use of blackface as a mode of performance. As recently as July of 2022, the Arena di Verona's (one of the largest and most celebrated outdoor opera festivals in the world, which takes place inside an ancient Roman amphitheater) made the argument that blackface was acceptable because that is how the opera should be seen. The whole argument calls back into mind the Will Crutchfield article asking "what is tradition" which is cited in the first chapter. Opera's resistance to change is not necessarily ignorance of wrong doing, but rather a deeply seeded feeling that they have an obligation to carry on the work of their predecessors. Their response to outrage over perennial blackface user Anna Netrebko's blacking up for the role reinforces the negative the stodgy reputation opera companies have received, while also de facto proving Said's point. In an exclusive statement to OperaWire a spokesperson writes:

> "The point is that as long as we do a historical *Aida* in the Arena, it is very difficult for us to change something. We have two '*Aidas*.' One is a copy of the one that opened the Arena di Verona in 1913. The second one is the Zeffirelli *Aida* which was made when these sensitive topics were not such an issue. Everywhere in the world used to have what you call Blackface. So as long as we have a historical production, it is very hard to change them because it means changing something that was designed that way. Somehow, the Arena di Verona is a theatrical museum. We don't have new productions every year. We want our history to feel like it is living. We decided to have a philological approach and as long as we don't have a new production, we follow that philological approach. We must respect

> the historical truth. We follow what was made in 1913 and many decades ago when Zeffirelli staged his first *Aida*. We are following what they decided to do in that era. Our season is like a historical museum of the theatrical taste during the last century."[67]

This statement is proof positive of this production-begat-orientalism conversation. Because blackface has always been used, blackface will continue to be used. Neither the score nor the libretto is responsible for the Orientalizing of the Arena di Verona's *Aida.* The Arena di Verona's *Aida* becomes Orientalized through production. An analytical model like the one I have proposed and used above in my analysis of Verdi's opera is one of the many tools which can help better inform the discourse around *Aida* and make opera companies more comfortable with making hybrid decisions based on research and scholarship rather than production history alone.

Over one hundred and fifty years of production history has had such an effect on global opera audiences that *Aida* is not viewed as a tale of two warring African nations, an essentially "black on black" story, but rather, because blackface usage persists, audiences have collectively come to view the story as a highly racialized; Amneris and Radames are recognized as white, while Aida and Amonasro are recognized as black. This adds a layer of coded interraciality to the story that, as the above analysis shows, Verdi either was relatively unaware of -or more likely- didn't even consider. Verdi obviously understood ethnicity, but 'race' was used differently in his circle. We see an

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[67] Francisco Salazar, "(Exclusive) Arena di Verona Responds to 'Aida' Blackface Controversy," *OperaWire,* July 22, 2022. https://operawire.com/exclusive-arena-di-verona-responds-to-blackface-controversy-in-aida/

example of this when he is writing about the Franco-Prussian War, he refers to the German race as being descended from the Goths, and are "proud, harsh, intolerant of anything not German, rapacious without limit; men with heads but without hearts; a strong but not a civil race."[68] My argument here is that, Verdi's understanding of race influenced the writing of the piece, and perhaps even the first few productions, but has little to do with how the opera needs to be produced. I firmly believe that a solid analysis like what I have conducted above supports this. Verdi was clearly not change-averse at all. His views on politics evolved throughout his life, his writing style and orchestral style changed over time, even modes of performance evolved. Verdi composed operas over such a great span of time, from 1839 to 1893, he experiences dramatic changes in theatre production; his early operas would have been in theatres lit by oil lamps, or some still using candles, later works (like *Aida*) would be in theatres with gas fixtures and elaborate chandeliers, and by *Falstaff* in 1893 theatres were using electric lighting.[69] What we know about Verdi through analysis leads scholars to believe that Verdi embraced such change. Verdi didn't insist that, since he wrote *Nabucco* in 1840 when theatres were using oil lamps, that oil lamps *had* to be used every time *Nabucco* was performed, regardless of the theatre's electric lighting capabilities. Analysis of Verdi's work leave no reason to believe that he would resist the shift away from blackface usage, especially for the sake of "this is how it's always been done".

Nevertheless, musical theatre adaptations of *Aida* have reinforced the racial aspect of the story in ways that have further cemented the obligatory feeling of blackface in the

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[68] Busch, *Verdi's Aida,* 72.

[69] For a specific example, La Scala was wired for electric lighting in 1883.

opera. In 1952, at Broadway's famous Winter Garden Theatre, a new musical opened with book and lyrics by Charles Friedman and music by Giuseppe Verdi. *My Darlin' Aida* closed after 89 performances, and very little remains. I've only been able to find even one review, Brooks Atkinson was not kind to the musical. The action of the play takes place on General Farrow's slave plantation between May and September of 1861 near Memphis, Tennessee. The way the "Big House", its grounds, and slave quarters are described, it seems clear that Friedman was picturing Louisiana or Mississippi but was really interested in the harmony achieved having Verdi's opera set in ancient Memphis (modern Cairo/Giza) and his musical set in Memphis, Tennessee. The ironic sidebar here, of course, is that the Egyptian word 'pharaoh' literally means 'great/big house', however it is unclear to me if Freidman was aware of this as he was writing or not. Credit where credit is due, elements of the script are quite clever, specifically the naming of the characters. It is apparent that thought was given to each name so that the syllables of the American names match those of the Italian names when sung: Ramphis becomes Rumford, Radames becomes Ray Demarest, Amneris becomes Jessica, Amonasro becomes Adam Brown, even the king -in Italian *Il Re*- becomes Gen'ral. By building new book scenes around certain arias, Friedman is able to add numerous additional slave characters as well as extended members of the Southern Gentry. I have been unable to locate a score but do have a copy of the script which was reprinted in the June 1953 edition of *Theatre Arts Magazine.* Using context clues it is relatively easy to determine which of Verdi's songs were interpolated (with a little imagination, if you sing the title in Italian first and then in English you will see what Freeman is going for); Radames' love song *Celeste Aida* becomes *My Darlin' Aida,* the mighty Egyptian battle hymn *Su Del*

Nilo becomes *Me and Lee* and when it is reprised becomes *Sing! South! Sing!,* Aida's homesick aria *O Patria Mia* becomes *Land of Mine.* Despite the clever syllabic matching, what is most shocking about the script is just how racially offensive it is. Even when judged against other entertainment pieces from 1952, *My Darlin' Aida* stands out not even because of its derogatory language, but just how lazy its racism is. I believe that its profane laziness and opulent race-based hatred are what doomed the musical to close after just three months. In a Broadway environment populated with such musicals as *Guys and Dolls, The King and I, Kiss Me Kate* ,and *Pal Joey* New York audiences were likely unmoved by preening Confederate officers in tuxedoes (p.37), the monuments and elephants of the Triumphal March replaced with giant Confederate battle flags with a tramp steamer [?] and shrimp trawlers [?] floating in the background (p.51), the somber grief of the Judgement Scene as Ramphis and his priesthood condemn Radames to death for accidentally revealing state secrets to the enemy is replaced with a Klan rally where the Knights of the White Cross in full robes and hoods condemn Ray Demarest to death for being complicit in the planning of a slave rebellion (p.59).[70]

Even as controversial a subject as interracial relationships had been handled with more tact and equipoise is musicals such as *Show Boat* (1927) and as far back in Broadway history as melodramas such as Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859).[71] Friedman's

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[70] Charles Friedman, photographs by Eileen Darby "My Darlin' Aida," *Theatre Arts Magazine* (1953): 36-61.

[71] Coincidentally, *The Octoroon* also played at the Winter Garden Theatre, however they are two different theatres. Boucicault's Winter Garden burned in 1867, and the current Winter Garden was completed in 1911.

musical failed to offer anything to the social climate. Verdi's opera has such wide and timeless appeal because the love triangle is foregrounded; everyone in the audience at any moment in time has either been in love or been jealous that someone didn't love them. While *Aida* is very specific in time and place, it exists in an imaginary liminal zone which manages to find a certain, I use this word at great risk, universality that allows everyone to identify with the story. Friedman's musical reinforces the paradigm that *Aida* is a black and white story by literally making it a black and white story, he sets it in such a specific five-month period right at the start of the American Civil War. Through time and region-specific language and directorial worldbuilding, Friedman manages to create a story so specific to the characters in it that the audience is left out. While *My Darlin' Aida* was not around long enough to have any measurable effect on the zeitgeist, it typifies how quickly Verdi's Egyptians and Ethiopians have been simplified to white and black.

Said's point about *Aida* being Orientalized through production has a lot to do with the spectacle that has come to be associated with the opera. The spectacle and Grand Opera production value associated with *Aida* has become a tacit conclusion that ancient Egypt on stage always has to be full of thirty-foot colossi, golden carriages, and live animals. This equation, Egypt=Spectacle, haunted The Met when they moved to their current location in Lincoln Center. Much like the Khedive's wish for a Grand Opera showpiece to christen his new house, so too did Rudolph Bing and The Met. To open the new house in 1966, The Met had commissioned American composer Samuel Barber to write *Antony and Cleopatra* as a vehicle for Leontyne Price. Marian Anderson has only integrated The Met 10 years prior, and under Bing's tenure as director The Met had

amassed a deep bench of the greatest black singers in the country. The spectacle and scale of Zeffirelli's production has become legend in the opera community, making use of the new stage he designed a barge which took the whole depth of the stage -146 feet from footlights to back wall- there were revolves in the floor and several live camels. Folklore tells of the giant metal pyramid in which Cleopatra entered glitched and wouldn't open and Leontyne Price allegedly had to be cut out of it onstage. The opera has never been revived at The Met. I have no doubt that Zeffirelli, who has staged and designed countless productions of *Aida*, was chosen to helm *Antony and Cleopatra* because of his work on *Aida.* Bing and The Met were hoping to land an *Aida* of their own, but just as blackface dooms Aida, spectacle dooms Cleopatra.

In March of 2000, after an Atlanta and Chicago workshop, Disney Theatrical brings Aida back to Broadway, with the type of spectacle only the Walt Disney Corporation can conjure up. In a way that reinforces the racialized aspect of production but resists the easy oriental spectacle which had doomed Egypt-set works. The source material for the Disney musical, new story elements and characters, is not Verdi's opera, but rather a children's book telling the story of Princess Aida by Leontyne Price. With music by Elton John and lyrics by Tim Rice, the book is put together by Linda Woolverton, Robert Falls, and David Henry Hwang. Through its many workshops the musical evolved into a very approachable and quite beloved reworking of the Aida story, using elements of rock, jazz, and gospel. To my point, and indirectly, Said's, the musical has permanently ingrained in the minds of the theatre community that *Aida* is a black and white story. From the beginning in Atlanta, all the way through the Broadway run, Aida is a black woman (originally Heather Headley) and Amneris is a white woman (originally

Sherie Renee Scott). This casting choice taps into the same feeling of obligation that opera companies have to continue to use blackface as a mode of performance. A Broadway revival is currently in pre-production, directed by original cast member Schele Williams. Williams has shown an interest in revisiting aspects of the story and approaching the material in a fresh, historically informed manner. Casting has not been announced, it is unknown at this time how the revival will use race as an aspect of the story.

Audience expectation is a story about a white Radames, a black Aida, and a white Amneris. Opera companies deliver on this expectation by employing blackface rather than black sopranos. Despite the fact that, as my ten-point analysis illuminates, Verdi's opera is relatively neutral when it comes to race. The opera sets Egypt and Ethiopia apart musically, yes, but there is no racialized language in the libretto. Modern directors are much more responsible for how their audiences view and understand race in their production than the opera itself is. While not every production can be reduced down to this (I have been involved with productions that had a black Aida and a black Amneris), as Grace Bumbry and Shirley Verrett will attest. However, because production is the most public facing aspect of the opera, for many people that is all they know. As productions make use of blackface, and as adaptations of the opera make use of strict racial casting, Said's prophecy will keep repeating. *Aida* will continue being Orientalized through production because production continues to eschew research. Modes of analysis such as the one I am proposing could prove to be one of the most impactful and accurate tools available to reshape the collective historiography around *Aida* and bring new, more approachable, more accurate, and less racially profane productions to audiences across

the globe for another one hundred and fifty years. Now I will turn my attention to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, an opera with a much more complex and overt relationship with race and orientalism.

CHAPTER FOUR

Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden

'*Bin ich nicht ein Narr, dass ich mich schrecken liess…*Wasn't I a fool to be frightened?
*Es gibt ja schwarze Vögel in der Welt, warum den nicht auch schwarze Menschen…*There are black birds in the world, so why not black men?'
-Papageno says of Monostatos in Act I of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*

'Monostatos is one of the few black characters in the entire standard operatic repertory…the opera's stereotypical portrayal of its one black man as dishonest and sexually violent poses an inevitable problem for modern-day stagings'
-Ralph Locke, *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart*

Things to Consider

The oldest of the three operas I am exploring, *Die Zauberflöte,* is even farther removed from contemporary intercultural performance than is *Aida.* This temporal distance, and the complete lack of any input -or even consideration- of the actual Eastern people or places further serve to highlight the need for a theoretical framework which expands the boundaries of HIT as defined by Lei. Further complicating this opera are the deep questions about a fantasized East in the European imagination, which play out onstage in the form of the much-stereotyped blackface character Monostatos.

Existing analyses of the opera, many of which are discussed and explored at length in the below application of the Wagon Wheel, serve to further highlight why an interdisciplinary approach in terms of Said's theory is so necessary. Several of the musicological studies cited below us the terms "orientalism", "exoticism", and "musical othering" to all mean the same thing (i.e., music which in some way subverts or deviates from the established Western norm). In a literary or performance studies context, the

mention of orientalism immediately conjures up Edward Said, and the associated baggage. However, in many of the below instances, musicological studies use the term simply as a marker of difference rather than in a true Saidian sense. The interdisciplinary nature of my study allows me to use the vocabulary and literature from the field of intercultural performance theory to bring Said back into the conversation on the musicological side, adding greater depth and context to the opera studies literature while adding new applications and building on the work of musicologists like Peter Branscombe, E.M. Batley, Nicholas Tarling, Ralph Locke, Paul Robinson, and Jonathan Bellman among others. In fact, through Said both fields are united, now acting like one single literature instead of two separate conversations.

Die Zauberflöte is an opera that has had every dramaturgical approach applied to it and has been interpreted a million different ways. Just this season, 2022-2023, at The Metropolitan Opera they are retiring American auteur Julie Taymor's production (which has become rather iconic for The Met and is discussed in the chapter below) with a new production by English auteur Simon McBurney; comparing images from Taymor's production (which I have seen) with stills from rehearsals of McBurney's (which opened May 19, 2023) it is clear that both interpretations are wildly different. As I will show, this resetting of the opera is supremely necessary, as the text of the libretto, the characterization of Monostatos, and indeed the score itself perpetuate harmful race-based stereotypes. From this information one can draw two distinct schools of thought -equally valid. On one hand, the obvious line of inquiry is simply drop the opera from the canon. Yes, that is an option, and doing so would immediately solve every problem I explore below. However, the popularity and endurance of the opera over its 232-year life have

shown that the opera is unlikely to be removed from the repertoire of any major opera company. The name of the opera and the name of the composer are too well-known and sell too many tickets. Ticket sales being the primary goal of opera companies, rather than drop the opera from their roster, companies are forced to manufacture production concepts which distort and unequivocally alter the opera's context and setting due to audience demand.

I suggest that by applying the Wagon Wheel and using a Saidian informed dramaturgical approach to *Die Zauberflöte,* directors and designers will have a better and more concrete understanding of the opera, which will allow for small, well-crafted edits to the text and characterization that update the opera to current societal mores and taste levels while simultaneously protecting the *mise en scene* that Mozart and librettist/director Emanuel Schikaneder created.

My work acknowledges the fact that even with these changes and edits the work and its stereotyping are indicative of Classical Music's and Opera Studies' deep-seeded diversity problems, and the ongoing conversations around racial reconciliation all fields are experiencing.

Rationale, Why *Die Zauberflöte?*

In the cultural consciousness of most of the world, Mozart sits alone atop a pedestal that other composers/geniuses can only look up to and hope for. The apotheosis of Wolfgang Mozart is not to be taken lightly, for better or for worse, his name conjures an image in everyone's mind, anecdotally serving as shorthand for sophistication and elegance. Pierre Bourdieu, in *Distinction,* recalls a survey wherein participants were

asked to identify composers and pieces of music.[1] The study shows that the more education a person has, the more likely they are to be able to identify various classical composers and works. Mozart's short life and the sheer number of works he left behind help to shape not only the contemporary conversation around music's evolution, but his legacy also serves to reinforce problematic assumptions on class, refinement, education, and cultural capital. Mozart has become a sort of patron saint of child prodigies, one of the few people recognized as a genius in scholarship by a great number of scholars including Simon Keefe, Bertil van Boer, and Martin Harlow, and by fellow composers chief among them being him immediate contemporary Haydn.[2]

Mozart is one of the most produced composers in the world. A quick survey of next year's season at some of the nation's most prominent opera companies, including Houston Grand Opera, Opera San Francisco, and Los Angeles Opera, have at least one Mozart opera programmed. Three of his operas are among the most produced at The Metropolitan Opera: *Don Giovanni, Le Nozze di Figaro,* and *Die Zauberflöte.*[3] Despite the imposing role his legacy occupies in the halls of music schools and on concert and opera stages around the world, many of the works he leaves behind directly contribute to and uphold long-held societal assumptions about race while reinforcing harmful negative stereotypes.

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, trans. Richard Nice, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984), 6-10.

[2] Quoted in *Mozart in Context,* ed. Simon Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 44-45.

[3] The Metropolitan Opera Repertory Report

In the interest of full disclosure, I love Mozart. I especially love *Die Zauberflöte, The Magic Flute.* The opera's unique blend of "down home" humor, adventure, murderous plotting, and soft romance combine with the unforgettable melodies to create something which deeply resonates with me. I also find it very uncomfortable at times to enjoy certain productions of the opera because of clumsy dramaturgical and directorial work around the casual use of stereotypes and Othering. Two of Mozart's operas present specific challenges to their staging. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail,* Mozart's exploration of Turkish music and Enlightenment-era Orientalism, and *Die Zauberflöte,* Mozart's final and most racially insensitive opera, require more creativity and passion than other operas of his because of necessary changes in order to make them produceable. The challenges that *The Magic Flute* present to opera companies, directors, and performers are indeed much more prohibitive to production than those posed by *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) and require skillful dramaturgy and innovative directorial world building to overcome. While certainly pulling these operas from the repertoire is an option, the rate and frequency with which opera companies stage new productions of *The Magic Flute* call for a more immediate solution.

Trevor Gillis's aggregate study of the global opera scene indicates that three of the ten most performed operas in the world that belong to Mozart and that *The Magic Flute* was the third most produced opera in the world for the 2017-2018 season.[4] With The Metropolitan Opera's opening of a new production this Summer inevitably means that smaller companies will open new productions -copying the best elements of The

[4] Trevor Gillis, "Most Popular Operas in the World by Performance Numbers," OperaSense, January 15, 2019, www.operasense.com/most-popular-operas/.

Met's production. If companies are going to continue to produce the opera, and they have shown they will, in order to be a part of the ongoing conversation I feel a conviction to bring new dramaturgical and analytical skills to the table so that new productions continue to shift the discourse in more productive ways. Rather than pull *The Magic Flute* from the canon, I suggest using deep analysis and research to help better contextualize the opera within an Enlightenment milieu and provide a pathway for well-informed, necessary edits to the opera in order to make it a more enjoyable for a wider audience and a more socially responsible work. My proposed Wagon Wheel model, and the idea of Saidian informed dramaturgy are the specific tools needed to help contextualize and rehab *The Magic Flute* for companies who choose to continue producing the work.

The opera's positionality as an artifact of the Enlightenment is one of the biggest hurdles, especially when applying Said's theory. Said largely dodges the Enlightenment Era.[5] Said has a relatively narrow scope throughout *Orientalism,* rarely deviating from the end of the 19th century. In the first chapter, "The Scope of Orientalism", Said does

[5] I am using the common terms Enlightenment Era, Age of Enlightenment, and The Enlightenment interchangeably, but they all refer to the same period of time. From Descartes and Newton in the middle of the 17th Century until around 1800. This period is noted for the proliferation of philosophical thought and scientific reason, causing great stress on the Catholic Church and any other perceived authority. Occasionally the end of the period is also referred to as the Age of Revolution due to the American Revolution led by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams; Haitian Slave Rebellion led by Toussaint Louverture wherein the island now known as Haiti gained independence from France; and the French Revolution led by Danton, Sieyès, Marat, Robespierre, and Lafayette during which the French monarchy was toppled and years of political unrest in France began.

refer back to ancient history, citing *The Iliad, The Persians,* and *The Bacchae* as some of the earliest examples of the demarcation between Orient and West.[6] Though he does little to explore the structuring of power through any other time on a more holistic level. This further illustrates the need for an intercultural performance theory model which makes allowances for works which would be considered "Early Orientalism"; such works originate in the 18th and 19th century and often have unspecified or Imperial power-balances which preclude their inclusion in the current HIT model.[7] I posit, that the origins of Orientalism as a theory, and indeed intercultural theatre itself, can be traced back to The Enlightenment and the emergence of raced-based pseudo-science.

For Mozart, however, orientalism equates to the *alla turca* or Turkish style that he frequently used, from chamber music like his very famous *Rondo alla Turca,* to his German operas, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and *The Magic Flute.* As I explored in a previous chapter, one of the limiting factors of Orientalism is that it requires a binary. Said even says that one of the defining features of Orientalism is that it is always "us" and "them."[8] It is the familiar which defines the otherness. The *alla turca* style achieves otherness by reversing or negativizing "normal" musical processes and expectations.[9] Larry Wolff points out that *Abduction* was Mozart's most successful opera during his

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[6] Said, *Orientalism,* 56.

[7] As mentioned earlier, Daphne Lei's idea of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre (HIT) requires First World power and capitol and Third World raw material and labor.

[8] Said, *Orientalism,* 45.

[9] Mary Hunter, "The Alla Turca Style in the late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio", in *The Exotic in Western Music* ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998): 73.

lifetime.[10] Mozart became closely associated with the orientalist style, Matthew Head notes that Mozart's use of comedy and Orientalist satire "produce (through the rhetorical device of antithesis) the very notion of the European Self."[11] While the musical orientalism in *Abduction* may be used for some loftier goal, some commentary on Enlightened absolutism, in *The Magic Flute,* the musical orientalism is coded little more than comedic stereotype. When combined with the spoken and sung text, the work as a whole creates a very clear picture of an intentionally stereotyped, nefarious black caricature. Monostatos stands out in the opera canon not only because he is one of the few expressly black characters in opera, but because he becomes the locus of many converging stereotypes and raced-based assumption Enlightenment Europeans had about Africans, specifically African men. Through the analysis my Wagon Wheel model provides, and with the benefit of a Saidian informed dramaturgy, I call into question the way that Mozart and Schikaneder create Egypt onstage, especially in the person of Monostatos, who was originally and is still frequently portrayed by a white singer in blackface. The opera's racially insensitive attitudes and non-stop barrage of Enlightenment-era stereotyping is so hard to edit out, because in many ways it is an intrinsic part of the opera's plot.

The Magic Flute's thin plot and lack of conventional story structure have allowed for the opera to be reimagined in many unusual ways as directors attempt to find a producible solution to the opera's racial stereotypes. The edits the opera needs, however,

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[10] Larry Wolff, *The Singing Turk* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 149.

[11] Matthew Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music* (London: Royal Musical Association, 2000), 93.

are more than cosmetic as the racial stereotypes, Othering, and musical orientalism are a part of the opera on every level. When it premiered in September of 1791, he had no way of knowing that he would die three months later at only thirty-six. Although *The Magic Flute* is Mozart's final opera, as I will show, it represents his musical style very well, and clearly demonstrates producer/librettist/star Emanuel Schikaneder's deep understanding of Viennese popular theatre.

Synopsis of Die Zauberflöte

The two-act singspiel opera is in the German singspiel style, which means it is comprised of scenes of spoken dialogue interspersed between the usual arias, duets, and trios. The opera is loosely set in Egypt and opens on a rough, rocky landscape where Tamino -a prince in Javanese attire- is being pursued by a giant serpent.[12] He faints and three mysterious ladies kill the beast, when he awakens, he sees Papageno, the bird catcher, and assumes that Papageno killed the snake. Papageno takes the credit and the three ladies who we now know are attendants to the Queen of the Night punish him by placing a padlock on his mouth. They also give Tamino a portrait of Pamina, the daughter of the Queen of the Night, and he instantly falls in love with her. Seeing an opportunity, the Queen appears and offers him Pamina's hand in marriage if he can rescue her from Sarastro, the High Priest of Isis and Osiris, who has kidnapped her. Papageno is allowed to assist Tamino on his journey and his padlock is removed. To protect them from all sorts of mysterious evil, Tamino is given a magic flute and Papageno receives a set of

[12] This description, and the following synopsis uses the standard Schirmer score for reference, which features an English translation by Ruth and Thomas Martin, and is based on their translation for the Metropolitan Opera's 1951 season.

silver bells. Three spirits lead the duo to the temple where Sarastro is, and Papageno goes ahead to get a lay of the land and report back to Tamino. In the temple he discovers Pamina who is being harassed by Monostatos and his band of slaves. Here Papageno mutters the infamous line "*Es gibt ja schwarze Vögel in der Welt, warum denn nicht auch schwarze Menchen?...There are black birds in the world, why not black people?* " as he comforts himself from being afraid of seeing Monostatos and thinking he was the devil. Meanwhile, Tamino is playing his flute and the animals around the temple are dancing. He goes into the temple to look for Papageno and Pamina, the three are united and they come face-to-face with Sarastro. Sarastro turns out to be logical and understanding and concedes that Tamino can take Pamina if he can prove that he is worthy to do so by passing the ritualistic trials.

Act two begins with everyone preparing for the trials. Sarastro reveals that he kidnapped Pamina from the Queen because he knows that she and Tamino are meant to be together, but the evil Queen would have prevented it. Papageno, ever girl-crazy and depraved, is promised a wife if he completes the trials and as long as neither he nor Tamino speak until after the trials are over. Elsewhere, Pamina is napping under a tree while Monostatos sings his only solo aria "*Alles Fühlt der Liebe Freuden…"* and just as he is about to sexually assault her, the Queen appears in a might fury and sings her famous aria, "*Der Hölle Rache*…", urging Pamina to kill Sarastro with a magic knife she is happy to provide. Although the Queen turns out to be as evil as Sarastro warned, her efforts are in vain and Pamina returns to Tamino and Sarastro. By using the magic flute Tamino is able to complete the trials of water and fire and is able to marry Pamina. Papageno plays his bells and out of the wilderness appears Papagena, his soul mate. As

everyone rejoices, the Queen returns in one final attempt to destroy the temple, but is cast out, and the sun rises on a stage full of happy couples.

Unlike in the previous chapter where I was able to use agreed upon titles for each of the scenes in Verdi's *Aida,* due to the story structure, and the dialogic nature of singspiel, the scenes in *The Magic Flute* are less easy to define by standard names. To this end, throughout my analysis and discussion I will establish a standard of identifying each aria by the first phrase -such as *Der Hölle Rache*- rather than by No. 14 Aria, as it is referred in the score.

Commissioning Party/Funding

Mozart's final opera, *The Magic Flute,* found its commissioning fee and its production funding from very different sources than his preceding operas, which were funded by the highly restrictive Holy Roman Emperor for the royal theatre. *The Magic Flute* and the requisite funding grew out of personal connections; Mozart's longtime family friend Emanuel Schikaneder, and his wife Eleonore, had been placed in charge of the resident company at the Theatre auf der Weiden -or Wiednertheatre- in Vienna. The relationship between the Mozart family and the Schikaneder family led to frequent exchange of work, but the specific situation surrounding the production of *The Magic Flute* may have arisen out of financial need for both parties. Peter Branscombe suggests that Schikaneder might not have needed the money as much as he needed the legitimacy of a Mozart success, suggesting that potentially the need for the success was partially to dispel rumors of financial insolvency, but the theatre was stable and successful by this point.[13] Mozart may have indeed been in serious financial need, as folklore suggests,

[13] Peter Branscombe, *W.A. Mozart: Die Zauberflöte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 145.

further evidenced by the sale of an organ in his possession -likely to create some quick, liquid cash.[14]

Mozart had deep connections to Viennese popular theatre, often writing songs or whole suites for various "low" works; based on what we know of Mozart's personality it is unsurprising that he fit right in with the theatre community outside of the Emperor's commissions. Peter Branscombe points this out, saying that Mozart's ties to popular theatre in Vienna tends to go unremarked, but are very heavily present in works such as *The Magic Flute* which of course was written for the popular theatre.[15] Freihaus auf der Wieden, the complex which contained the Wiednertheatre, had apartments above the theatre which were occupied by most of Schikaneder's company. The homespun, community theatre feel of *The Magic Flute* in many ways is what makes it so special but was necessary. Mozart wrote for the specific voices in the company and the work was completely produced in house.

History tends to remember Mozart as a penniless artist, who died without anything to show for his success, which seems to be a romanticization of the actual financial situation the Mozart family found themselves in. Mozart did make decent money, most new estimates suggest potentially as much as 10,000 florins annually, in a letter to his father (of which there are many) he confirmed that at some point in the 1780s he made at least 1,000 florins for a single concert.[16] At a time when the average annual wage was between 100 and 500 florins, a very different financial picture of Mozart

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[14] Ibid, 145.

[15] Ibid, 6.

[16] Barbara Maranzani, "How Mozart made -and lost- a Fortune," *Biography* (July 15, 2020).

emerges.[17] The most obvious answer is that Wolfgang, Constanze and their two surviving sons simply lived well above their means; an extravagant lifestyle and frequent health problems for all members of the family placed heavy financial burdens on the Mozarts. The opportunity to write and stage an opera and work with a close-knit group of friends while also making some money is everyone's dream, one can hardly fault Mozart for being allured.

Schikaneder's involvement on nearly every level of the writing and producing the opera is potentially the cause for the different power dynamic between composer and librettist. As I will explain further below, Schikaneder worked closely with Mozart throughout the opera's creation, and Mozart had much more of an influence on the final libretto than in a traditionally composer/librettist relationship. Far from the political motivation behind the commissioning of *Aida*, all signs point to the immediate need for success, validation, and cash being the driving factor behind *The Magic Flute.*

Source Material

As simple as the plot is, its origins are more convoluted and mysterious. As early as 1794 there were claims that Schikaneder's role in the writing of the libretto was greatly exaggerated in its original production. Schikaneder's theatre troupe had made a habit of performing a certain type of opera, and several members of the company were

[17] Peter Passell extrapolates in his December 11, 1991, article for the New York Times, "Economic Scene, Mozart's Money Misunderstanding", that Austrian florins in the 1780s had the equivalence of approximately $10 in 1991. Using the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator (available at bls.gov) $10 in 1991 has the same buying power as $21.82 in 2023. With this information I can estimate that Mozart being paid 1,000 florins for a concert has the approximate buying power of over $21,000 in 2023.

used for the translation of operas into German for Schikaneder's use in production. Among the frequent translators was Karl Ludwig Giesecke. A member of the chorus, Giesecke had adapted the libretto of the opera *Hüon und Amande* into *Oberon, König der Elfen*.[18] More an act of plagiarism than adaptation he failed to give any credit for his plot to Sophie Seyler, the original librettist. The similarity in plot, structure, and characters from *Oberon* to *The Magic Flute* are indeed suspicious and prove only that the origin of the libretto definitely originated with Schikaneder's company but does not prove that they originated with Schikaneder. Letters from 1817 remain of exchanges between Giesecke and old acting buddies.[19] Giesecke was a respected academic and professor in Dublin at the time, on sabbatical in Vienna and felt the need to clear his conscious, as it were, of the fact that he should be credited with the plot of *The Magic Flute* and not Schikaneder. A journal entry from Julius Cornet years later recounts some of the facts from Giesecke's conversations:

> On this occasion we discovered a lot about old times; amongst other things we learnt to see in him [as] the real author of *The Magic Flute*…I'm relating all this according to his own statement which we had no reason to doubt. ... Many thought that the prompter Helmböck had collaborated with Schikaneder. But Giesecke corrected us on this point too; only the figure

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[18] David Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: the Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theatre (*Chicago: UC Press, 2008), 293.

[19] Emil Karl Blumml, "Ausdeutungen der Zauberflote," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (WorldCat, 1923): 111-146.

> of Papageno and the latter's counterpart Papagena did he attribute to Schikaneder.[20]

The evidence has been sufficient to the extent that most modern editions of the score (including the Schirmer edition, to which I consistently turn) list both Schikaneder and Giesecke as librettists. Setting the issue of authorship aside, a quick survey of Mozartian scholarship presents a number of other possible sources for elements of the plot. Parts of the story mirror fairytales published in a collection called *Dschinnistan*, from which previous productions for Schikaneder's troupe had been created. Interestingly, the other two major sources of influence on the piece are works of pseudo-archaeology and amateur Egyptology. The Abbé Jean Terrasson published a novel in 1731 called *The Life of Sethos, Taken from Private Memoirs of the Ancient Egyptians*. This mashup of historical fiction and fantasy became extremely popular and not only revolutionized the way fiction was written but changed the way people thought about the usefulness of historic records. While Terrasson acknowledged that his work was a complete fiction, he makes frequent use of Herodotus' Histories to add credence to his work.[21] This novel was almost immediately available in English and German as well as the original French and was widely read; it is considered to be a source text for much of the Freemasons' mythos and should feel right at home in this paper. One of the most influential members of the Vienna Freemasons was Ignaz von Born. Born published the essay "On the Mysteries of

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[20] Edward Joseph Dent, *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study*, (London: McBride, Nast & Company, 1913), 345.

[21] Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrist Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History,* (New York, BasicBooks, 1996) 111-12

the Ancient Egyptians" in a Masonic journal, there are parallels in the mythos he describes here, and the mythos described in Terrasson's novel.[22] Born is also the person credited with introducing and inducting Mozart into the Freemasons, so any contribution to the literature by Born would have certainly had a direct impact on Mozart and his thinking. Indeed, *The Magic Flute* is not the first piece Mozart worked on with an Egyptian setting. Over the course of five years from 1773 to 1780, Mozart worked with playwright Tobias Gebler on creating musical settings for Gebler's play *Thamos, König in Aegyptian*. One of the singing roles in Mozart's score is a high priest named Sethos, indicating the influence that Terrasson's novel had over work with an Egyptian setting. Here the question first presents itself, and will be revisited throughout this analysis: the limited knowledge 18th century historians had of Ancient Egyptian religion and lifestyle means that both the Freemasons as an organization, and *The Magic Flute* as an opera share certain elements of source material; does that automatically mean that one is the product of the other, or that they developed in parallel? As I will continue to explain in following points of analysis, the general acceptance of the analysis that *The Magic Flute* is a Masonic romp is critically underexamined and functionally incomplete. I posit that Mozart's interest in Egyptian mythology grew out of his involvement with the Freemasons, but his work on *The Magic Flute* is inspired by Herodotus via the Terrasson novel and the Born essay than any specific Masonic ideology. In the eighteenth-century there was a finite amount of knowable information about Ancient Egyptian society and culture. Both Masonic Rites and *The Magic Flute* explore facets of the archive as it existed at the time, however there is no definitive proof that Mozart wrote *The Magic*

[22] Eckelmeyer, *Cultural Context* (vol. 1) 11.

Flute with the intention of being interpreted as a Masonic opera. Quite the opposite, in a 1791 letter to his wife Constanze, Mozart describes watching his new opera with a group of Masons.[23] In the letter he expresses his surprise that the group seemed to miss the point of the story. It seems unlikely that, if *The Magic Flute* was written exclusively to be a Masonic work, that Masons would not recognize the similarities to their organization. Rather than provide his brothers with an explanation, Mozart lamented them all as being "just like Papageno" and walked away. Musicologists like Peter Branscombe, E.M Batley, and David Buch have been feverously publishing works which refute the claim that the opera is strictly Masonic, only to be countered by the works of Jacques Chailley, Herbert Weinstock, and Paul Nettl who all argue for a strictly Masonic interpretation. Short of Mozart explaining it to us, there will always be scholars on both sides of the debate.

Lived Experience of Composer and Librettist

Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Holy Roman Empire on January 27, 1756. Although he lived only 36 years, he leaves behind more than 800 compositions -an incredibly prolific number when compared with other composers; for instance, Giuseppe Verdi (rather long-lived at 88) left behind fifty-six completed compositions, perhaps a more apt comparison is Ludwig Beethoven. An immediate contemporary of Mozart, (though not as short lived as Mozart, only made it to 56) with his twenty extra years to compose that Beethoven had which Mozart did not, Beethoven leaves behind a similarly prolific number of total works just north of 800. This

[23] Jay Macpherson, "The Magic Flute and Freemasonry." *University of Toronto Quarterly*76, no. 4 (2007): 4.

level of output really highlights the rate and speed at which Mozart was composing; and while there is no singular system for consolidating all of Beethoven's works into one list, Mozartian scholars have the benefit of being able to reference the Köchel Catalogue .[24]

As David Buch, who penned Mozart's entry into the *Oxford Music Biographies* notes that Mozart's entire catalogue pushes the field in new directions; while there is evolution present in his works, Mozart never leaves the feeling that he is trying to figure something out, but rather each of his works is regarded as the pinnacle of its form - symphonic, concertante, chamber, opera, or choral.[25]

The youngest of seven children, only Wolfgang and his older sister Maria Anna "Nannerl" survived past infancy. Mozart's father, Leopold, an accomplished composer, and Kapellmeister in his own right, recognized the natural talent and prodigious nature of his son's skill on both violin and keyboard and took him on tours through Austria, France, England, the Netherlands, and Italy from as early as 1761 until around 1773

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[24] Mozart's works are catalogued using what is called the Köchel-Verzeichnis, or Köchel Catalogue which assigns an abbreviation (K. or K.V.) and number to each of Mozart's works to allow for easy reference and commonality across scholarship. There have been eight editions of the Köchel Catalogue, the first in 1862, and the most recent edit in 1983, while the most recent edit is the standard, changes will be noted by superscript number indicating what edition is specifically mentioned (i.e., K or K^6). In my experience, the number always follows the title of the piece, such as *Don Giovanni* (K. 527) or Piano Sonata 11 [*Rondo alla turca*] (K.331) or *Die Zauberflöte* (K.620). Although his Requiem (K.626) is the last piece he wrote, the catalogue continues on through addenda and new discoveries quite a bit.

[25] David Buch, "Mozart, Wolfgang", *Oxford Bibliographies: Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), introduction.

when the seventeen-year-old Mozart began to seek a more permanent position.[26] Leopold would remain a constant and dominant force in the younger Mozart's life from the time Wolfgang composed his first opera around the age of five until Leopold's death in 1787, just four years before Wolfgang would die himself. For his whole childhood into adolescences, Leopold was Mozart's only teacher, not only in music and composition, but also languages and other academic subjects; once Mozart's skill as a composer became clear, Leopold gave up composing and focused all his attention on his son.[27] Mozart was famous, internationally, from age five until his death. Despite leaving behind letters and plenty of writing, and even with biographies written by people who knew him personally, rumors about who Mozart "really" was (i.e. sexual deviant, or penniless) continue to swirl even in contemporary popular culture; I posit than many of the rumors and speculations currently held about Mozart -stem from the Peter Shaffer play and then highly successful film *Amadeus,* which has certainly helped shape the way many people think about or remember Mozart the person.

The Magic Flute's librettist/director/star/producer, Emanuel Schikaneder, was educated as a child at the Jesuit Regensburg Gymnasium. Born in Straubing on September 1, 1751, he spent his youth as a cathedral chorister for the Jesuits. As I mentioned above, certain scholars have claimed to see evidence of his Jesuit upbringing in his work. Little is known about Schikaneder's childhood, but by 1773 at the age of

[26] Mozart, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera.*

[27] Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A Life* (New York City: Harper Collins, 1995), 33-49.

twenty-two, he joined F.J. Moser's troupe of travelling actors.[28] Between 1773 and 1786 Schikaneder toured Europe receiving much acclaim as an actor in straight plays -even a much-celebrated stint as Hamlet in Munich in December 1777. That previous February he had married another traveling actor Maria "Eleonore" Hermannstadt, although their marriage went through periods of estrangement, they managed to run the theatre company themselves ultimately leading them to becoming the resident troupe at the Wiednertheatre. Despite his fame as an actor in straight plays, Schikaneder placed a much heavier emphasis on opera when the company moved into the Vienna Wiednertheatre.[29] Over the years, the skills Schikaneder developed touring and staging plays across the continent had made him a very accomplished dramatist, director, actor, and manager who even dabbled in singing and composition; it is no surprise that the Schikaneders became friendly with the Mozarts in September of 1780 when F.J. Moser's troupe had a lengthy residence in Salzburg following success in Ljubljana.[30] By 1791, Mozart and Schikaneder were not only frequent collaborators, but were old friends, a factor which likely played a role in their easy writing relationship and their mutual willingness to take suggestions as they worked out the details of the plot and staging of *The Magic Flute* together for its premiere in the Wiednertheatre.

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[28] Peter Branscombe, "Emanuel Schikaneder", *The New Grove Opera Dictionary* ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1997), 220.

[29] Ibid. 221

[30] Across the scholarship, this is when Mozartians believe that the two families met and formed a friendship.

Mozart, who seems to have enjoyed taking complete control in his work and left nothing to chance, took an unusually active role in the selecting, writing, and staging of the libretti he supplied music for. His most celebrated collaborations were with poet Lorenzo Da Ponte. Known by many opera lovers as the 'Da Ponte Operas' *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così Fan Tutti* stand as some of the finest examples of what fully integrated musical storytelling can be. Mozart wrote, as he began courting Da Ponte, 'the best thing is when a good composer, who understands the stage enough to make sound suggestions, meets an able poet'.[31] Between the Prague and Vienna premieres of *Don Giovanni* Mozart made changes himself to the libretto. This back and forth with Da Ponte suggests that the composer understands the importance of a well-placed word and would make edits and suggestions freely throughout the process. Unlike his relationship with Da Ponte, where Mozart had to court the poet, by 1780 the Mozart family and the Schikaneder family were well known to each other.[32] Mozart played an active role in the selection of source material for *The Magic Flute*, Mozart actively participated in the staging of the opera at Schikaneder's theatre and was close friends or family (by marriage) with most of the cast, this, along with the collaborative nature that Schikaneder's theatre company was known for suggests an atmosphere were suggestions and discussion would have been very present. In a letter to Mozart, Schikaneder writes "meanwhile I send back your Pa – Pa Pa Pa, which will do pretty well".[33] Although the letter is dated 5 September 1790, over a year before the premiere, Egon von

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[31] Heartz, "Mozart", 705.

[32] Dent, "Schikaneder", 16.

[33] Ibid, 21.

Komorzynski's 1901 biography of Schikaneder suggests that it is a forgery. I argue that the legitimacy of the letter is not immediately relevant for illuminating the type of relationship Mozart had with his librettists. For the forgery to be taken seriously, the reader would need to understand that Mozart was in the habit of making suggestions to his librettists, even, as the letter suggests, some of the most well-known sequences from the opera. So unlike Verdi, who did take an interest in scene structure, but ultimately was presented with the libretto for Aida by Antonio Ghislanzoni, or even the working relationship between Gilbert and Sullivan, Mozart was involved, to a varying degree, in the creation of the text – before, during, and even after he had set it to music.

Since the beginning of scholarly analysis of the opera, in the mid-19th century, the opera's ties to the tenets of Freemasonry have been closely connected. Mozart, and his librettist Emanuel Schikaneder, were indeed both Freemasons, and there is no doubt that their membership influenced every aspect of their life. Perhaps the most well-known of secret societies, the Freemasons are an ancient fraternity extolling the merit of helpfulness and fellowship, to which many of the most globally influential men in history have had membership. While both Mozart and Schikaneder made no secret about their Masonic memberships, however the extent to which that colored their work is up for debate. I wish to challenge the well-established narrative that *The Magic Flute* is strictly Masonic in derivation.[34]

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[34] The Masonic interpretation is the most dominant in Mozartian studies, and is championed by most of his scholars, among many others, the following are included: Eckelmeyer, Judith A. *The Cultural Context of Mozart's Magic Flute: Social, Aesthetic, Philosophical*. Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1991. Everist, Mark. *Mozart's Ghosts: Haunting the Halls of Musical Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

There are a growing number of scholars who have been working to expose and bring to light new readings and evidence which suggest that there is much more to the opera's analysis than purely Masonic iconography, I tend to align most frequently with these scholars.[35] So, where does the narrative come from that *The Magic Flute* is Masonic in nature? The answer seems to be at some point in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, more than 60 years after Mozart's death. Scholars and biographers working in the 1850s and 1860s like Leopold von Sonnleithner, Georg Daumer, and Otto John began to craft this narrative. This narrative seeks, to make *The Magic Flute* more than it was, searching for some deeper hidden meaning, by reasoning that Mozart and Schikaneder wrote it as a way to defend and glorify Freemasonry which was suffering world-wide because of suspicions raised by the French Revolution. If we consider, as I mentioned above, that Mozart had to literally explain the plot to members of his local lodge, and the fact that there is no scholarship supporting a Masonic view dating from Mozart's lifetime it becomes obvious that any parallels between Freemasonry and *The Magic Flute* are more

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Keefe, Simon P., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Keefe, Simon P., ed. *Mozart in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

[35] There is an equal number of Mozartian scholars who are attempting to shift away from the purely masonic interpretation: Buch, David J. "Fairy-Tale Literature and 'Die Zauberflöte.'" *Acta Musicologica*64, no. 1 (1992).

Buch, David J. "Die Zauberflöte, Masonic Opera, and Other Fairy Tales*." *Essays on Opera, 1750–1800*, May 2017. Macpherson, Jay. "The Magic Flute and Freemasonry." *University of Toronto Quarterly*76, no. 4 (2007).

Humbert, Jean-Marcel, Michael Pantazzi, and Christiane Ziegler. *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art, 1730-1930*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994.

coincidental than purposeful. Undeniably, there is influence of Masonic thought on the opera, but the claim that the opera was written to be Masonic in nature does not stand up against the evidence provided. Rather than writing a Masonic love letter, Mozart was using all of the available knowledge of ancient Egypt to create a prescient foreshadowing of Egyptomania, societal obsession and craving over information and materialisms regarding ancient Egypt. The first wave of Egyptomania begins with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone eight years after the opera's premiere and Mozart's death. Had Mozart lived longer, and composed *The Magic Flute* at least eight years later, scholars would likely have considered it to be the byproduct of Egyptomania rather than Freemasonry.

It is more likely that a Masonic interpretation allows scholars, and operagoers, a chance to distance themselves from the more racially insensitive elements of the libretto. In a scholarly attempt to demystify and reconcile Monostatos's problematic appearance, Helmut Perl consolidates the Masonic meanings of a blackface character. Rather than being a racist stereotype, Perl suggests that there is a much more ethereal meaning behind Monostatos' black skin, by reasoning that the black skin is a reference to the Jesuits in Vienna who would wear black vestments.[36] In Jacques Chailley's very strict Masonic interpretation each of the characters represents the elements, with Monostatos representing earth, rationalizing that his skin represents the darkness of earth.[37] In their attempts to reconcile Monostatos with social standards, scholars reach for any way to

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[36] Helmut Perl, "*Der Fall 'Zauberflöte': Mozarts Oper" Brennpunkt der Geschite* (Darmstadt: Buchgesellschaft, 2000): 70-71.

[37] Jacques Chailley, *The Magic Flute, Masonic Opera: an Interpretation of the Libretto and Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 108.

indicate that the eighteenth-century audiences would have seen a metaphorical reason for the black skin.

My analysis directly counters this narrative. Monostatos has black skin because he is meant to be representative of people from Africa. Neither Mozart nor Schikaneder ever even suggested that he stood for anything contrary to that statement, Monostatos was *designed* to be a stereotype. By implying that all of Europe would have understood Monostatos as an esoteric reference to anything other than Africans from Egypt is giving too much social credit to a highly racist and racialized society. The fact that there were Black people living in Vienna cannot be used as a testament to the idea that the Viennese people would have been desensitized to the rest of the world's racist attitudes.

It is important to take a moment to analyze all aspects of Mozart and Schikaneder's life to even begin to understand the use of racial tropes in *The Magic Flute.* Not only is an analysis of Angelo Soliman necessary for the specific lived experience of both composer and librettist, but it is also needed to show how the collaborative nature of both musical theatre and opera performance influences creators personally, the situations in which they work, the work itself, and audience perception. An examination of Angelo Soliman and Mozart's connection helps to shine light not only on how Europeans constructed blackness, but also on the way black people viewed what it meant to be European. Born around 1721, and taken as a slave in 1730, Soliman was baptized in Sicily eventually becoming the right-hand man to, and most prized possession of, prince Johann Lobkowitz. Upon the death of the prince in 1755, Soliman received his freedom. Well-known through the Viennese aristocracy, Soliman accepted a job in the household of prince Wenzel Liechtenstein, a position which brought him in frequent

contact with Emperor Joseph. Soliman's marriage to the widow Kellermann, a white woman, led to his termination from the Liechtenstein household.[38]

Soliman began crafting a persona drenched in Turkish symbolism and capitalizing on Orientalist stereotypes, he was able to mold how the public would comprehend his identity. By blending the modern Viennese styles with heavy-handed Orientalist iconography, Soliman's Africanness disappeared into an ethnically confusing Eastern Otherness. His education, financial stability, and material possessions allowed him to participate in a daily becoming, allowing Vienna to see him as a member of the social elite. Years after initially being removed from his position, Soliman found himself back in the employ of the Lichtenstein family, his path finally intersected with Mozart's. While their initial meeting is unrecorded, the most likely scenario is that Mozart met Soliman while visiting the emperor and formed a friendly relationship. Not limited to court, the two became further bonded through the brotherhood of Freemasonry, as members of the same lodge.

Wherever their two names are present together, in Masonic attendance records, they are listed next to each other, implying that they usually arrived together.[39] Soliman's influence on Mozart's work is easily seen in both *Abduction* and *The Magic Flute* has been documented by Malcolm S. Cole, Steffen Lösel, and Naomi Andre, among others. Soliman almost certainly attended the operas' premieres and receptions as a member of Mozart's lodge, it is also easy to suggest that Soliman was likely the only black person in attendance which would feel even more conspicuous at *The Magic Flute* -with its

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[38] Nettl, "Angelo Soliman" 44

[39] Ibid, 45.

blackface and stereotyping- than any of the other premieres.[40] Death arrived for Soliman on November 21, 1796. He was given Catholic last rights, and his family was visited by emissaries of the Emperor, Francis II.[41] Among those sent by the Emperor was the sculptor Franz Thaller, who set about skinning and tanning Soliman's corpse; the skin was stretched over a wooden mold and prepared for display. Having triumphed over his otherness in life, Soliman in death was once again reduced to be ogled as a talisman of the exotic otherness which was always his fate. Few metaphors serve this situation better than the hard truth of it all. A man who spent his life beating the system and finding success where no black man could, is forced to spend eternity phenomenologically aware of that, no matter how far he rose in society, he would never be a part of society. For fifty-two years, Soliman's body stood on display, at the Austrian Imperial Natural History Museum, in a large glass case set amongst a mixture of African feathers and beads along with birds and swamp rodents native to the American South. Also in the case were a six-year-old mixed-race girl and another older man, collectively labeled "Representatives of the Human Race".[42] The imagery in the case: three exceptional black

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[40] Tradition in Vienna at the time dictated that the first three performances were dedicated as the premiere, and special posters were made for them. These performances were given as close together as possible (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, for example) with a break of a few weeks before a title was played again. For operas, the first three performances were conducted by the composer himself, and then the kapellmeister would take over for the rest of the run. Further information can be found in: Dorothea Link, 'The Fandango Scene in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 133, no. 1 (2008): 69-92.

[41] Gregoire, "De la…", 137.

[42] Fitzinger, "Geschichte…", 1025

people who lived exceptional lives reduced to befeathered African bead peddlers, represents the cognitive dissonance of a society struggling to build conceptions of race; it is easy to trace the roots of white supremacy. During the 1848 Revolution, the museum was struck by cannon fire, in an ending more like Wagner than Mozart, Soliman became encircled in fire and finally disappeared from this world, 127 years after entering it. It is through Mozart's work, and his legacy, that we are most easily able to reach back and touch Soliman. However, while Mozart's first German opera, *Abduction*, can be read as a touching tribute to Enlightenment ideology -far from the idea of the 'noble savage', the Pasha represents an established 'civilized' culture, and the Ottomans- Mozart's last German opera, *The Magic Flute*, presents a racist pastiche of blackness. How did Mozart's thoughts on race evolve in the eight years between the two operas? I suggest that one of the changes to Mozart's use of race in his works is his association with actor, librettist and theatre-owner Emanuel Schikaneder. Schikaneder's presence as librettist and producer of *The Magic Flute* adds a dark bite not seen in Mozart's other works.

Morally devastating racial stereotypes had widespread influence throughout Enlightenment popular culture, from travelogues to philosophy to the stage. The influence of these stereotypes was unstoppable.[43] European Enlightenment-era stereotypes like Monostatos certainly laid the foundation for hundreds of years of such similar ones; it is quite possible to trace Al Jolson's vaudeville shows, the traveling minstrel shows of the Reconstruction era, 'Tom shows' in antebellum America, and even Tyler Perry's modern Blaxploitation Madea plays/films back to artifacts of the Enlightenment, which establish and perpetuate race-based stereotypes the same way that

[43] Lösel, "Monostatos", 300.

The Magic Flute does. Schikaneder's influence is further evidenced thusly, as he comments in a letter that "while [*Zauberflöte*] was liked by audiences, it would have been an even greater success if Mozart had not spoiled so much of it for me".[44] The collaborative process for Mozart and Schikaneder is also revealed here, but so is Schikaneder's business acumen, which I will explain below along with his marketing scheme which made sequels very successful at the Wiednertheatre.

It is hard to imagine a society so elevated that they are able to find hidden symbolism in the painted black skin of a fictional character from a fantasy opera, yet they mummify the most respected Black man in the country and ignore fifty years of requests of family members to enter the body. Monostatos is black because Africans are black. Both Mozart and Schikaneder fall victim to the faulty anthropological paradigm that Black people were both anatomically and psychologically different from White people. Monostatos is an amalgamation of every stereotype and falsely attributed quality assigned to Black people in the eighteenth-century, that has nothing to do with Salieri's black hair, or the Jesuit's robes.

While it is possible to analyze *The Magic Flute* in a strictly Masonic lens, it fails to be a well-rounded interpretation. The Egyptian symbolism and groups of three make a compelling argument for a Masonic interpretation, however, to look at only those elements and ignore the racializing through the character of Monostatos is not comprehensive. There is no Masonic reason for a blackface character, the only interpretation is that Monostatos's black skin is the Enlightenment era's way of indicating the inexplicably African setting of *The Magic Flute*.

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[44] Castelli, "Memoiren…", 233.

Traditions and Norms of the Performance Genre

Mozart began to shy away from the unaccompanied recitative that Baroque composers had used so heavily in favor of spoken dialogue. Mozart's major contribution to the genre, though, is the formalization of the singspiel. Singspiel seamlessly incorporates music, singing, acting, and stagecraft in traditionally light, comic opera settings; they are most easily recognizable by their spoken dialogue and clearly resemble contemporary musical theatre pieces. Indeed, the precursor to Gilbert and Sullivan style operetta and even full-blown musical theatre, Mozart pioneered this form of storytelling on a large and international scale. Mozart left his footprints in the powdered sugar of the Vienna music culture in paths that every one of his contemporaries can trace elements of their work back to elements of his.

The influence of Viennese popular theatre on *The Magic Flute* is evident in many ways. Monostatos's othering is not just through the use of the alla turca style and unusual melodies. His blackness is not only of deed, but of skin. Setting the story in Egypt and maintaining that link in the audience's mind to Africa was so important to Schikaneder and Mozart that they felt the need to have Monostatos in blackface. In the libretto, many spoken lines refer to the black skin Monostatos has. Already quoted earlier in this paper is the quip that Papageno makes after realizing how foolish he was to think Monostatos was the devil upon seeing him ("there are black birds in the word, why not black people"). Monostatos asks Pamina if she is trembling because she is scared of his black skin or the fact that he is trying to kill her, and later Sarastro announces that he knows everything, including that "[Monostatos's] soul is as black as his face." Besides the evidence which the libretto provides of the use of blackface, there is a painting,

"Backstage Preparations for *Die Zauberflöte* at the Weimar Court Theatre, by Georg Melchior Kraus.[45] As the actors are preparing for the production you can clearly see the different characters, Tamino at center being helped into his costume, to the right of center is Papageno, seated, having feathers attached to him, in the far right corner looks to be the three spirits who guide Tamino and Papageno to the temple, left of them appears to be Sarastro. In between Papageno and Sarastro, seated at a table is a clearly White actor using a mirror and paintbrush to apply blackface. While this is not from the premiere, and no specific date is given, it is not indicative of exactly what the premiere would have looked like. Since we are given enough information about the Weimar Court Theatre and its staff, it is safe to estimate that the painting is from within ten years of the premiere.

Musical Style and Influence

Mozart's musical style is one of the most studied personal styles in the classical music canon. The best way to demonstrate how *The Magic Flute* fits in to Mozart's catalogue is to look at the ways in which it is different musically, rather than focusing on its similarities to other works of his.

The score has a musically homogenous sound and speaks with the same voice from start to finish, with the exception of one character, the leader of the slaves, Monostatos. Monostatos's inclusion in the story is part of what makes inexplicably Orientalist. To be clear, if you removed the references to Isis and Osiris from the libretto

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[45] Roger Parker, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press INC, 1994), 112. The painting appears to be in private hands, and this is the only printing I have been able to find. There is a black-and-white copy reproduced on the French website https://sites.google.com/site/mozartfluteenchantee/lacreationdelafluteenchantee

there could be an argument that the action takes place in the woods behind Mozart's house. However, Mozart and Schikaneder decided to bake the Egyptian references into the text. Tamino is not just any prince, he is an Egyptian prince, Sarastro is not just any priest, he is a priest of Isis and Osiris, it's not just an elaborate room, it's an elaborate Egyptian room. These are deliberate choices by the creators to further distance the audience from the action of the story. The inclusion of the character Monostatos not only further distances the audience from the action, but serves as a constant reminder to indicate that the action of the story takes place in Africa. The audience's interactions with Monostatos are the one marker to always remind them that the story is set in a faraway land. Whenever the audience may start to feel that they are watching a love story or a buddy-adventure in their backyard, they are reminded that this story takes place somewhere else.

Schikaneder reveals in the libretto that Monostatos is a character not only dark of skin, but dark of morals too. Mozart supports this musically by orchestrating all of Monostatos's music differently. Monostatos has only one solo aria, and it is dramatically different from the rest of the music. The tempo is even but left to the conductor who may choose to beat the piece as fast as he feels necessary. As indicated the dynamics are instructions to play as quietly as possible. This is a reference to the brief monologue Monostatos is giving before he breaks out into song, where he remarks that he should be as quiet as he can so Pamina does not wake up before he can have his way. Unlike the rest of the score which follows a familiar and comfortable four- or eight-measure phrase pattern, Monostatos's aria "*Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden…All the World is Full of*

Lovers" has no discernable phrase pattern at all.[46] Jumping between seven- three- and five-measure phrases, the aria has an uneasy and strange feel to it. It's technical challenges also require a very skilled singer.

Schikaneder himself played the role of Papageno in the original production. The technical differences in the way the vocal line is orchestrated in Monostatos' music compared with that of Papageno suggests that Schikaneder was a less technically skilled vocalist. Mozart doubles the voice line in the orchestra so that it was always easy to find, and writes straightforward and simple, comedic melodies for the character. Even though Monostatos exists as a foil to Papageno, their styles are completely different. Papageno's music and the character's foibles (i.e., telling lies and being sneaky) are familiar to the audience, perhaps even comforting and amusing. Monostatos's music and foibles (i.e., attempted rape and attempted murder) are shocking and foreign to the audience. To illustrate this musically Mozart crafted simple, easy to remember melodies for Papageno and complex, challenging tunes for Monostatos. In musical theatre parlance, the audience is not supposed to leave the theatre humming his songs, but Papageno's humming is heard buzzing around the auditorium as the audience exits. This is by design.

To accomplish this, Mozart makes use of his signature *alla turca* style. With Mozart, and other Orientalist composers, *alla turca* style almost always means woodwinds. Chief among them: the piccolo.[47] Monostatos's entire aria is meant to be accompanied by a piccolo, indeed it is the only use of a piccolo in the entire

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[46] Malcolm Cole, "Monostatos and his 'Sister': Racial Stereotype in *Die Zauberflote* and Its Sequel", *The Opera Quarterly* 21, no.1 (2005): 10.

[47] Cole, "Monostatos", 10.

orchestration.[48] This is evident on any recording and even present in the piano score as indicated by the ottava markings encouraging the accompanist to create a piccolo sound on the piano as best they can. The comedic effect of the *alla turca* style is further indicated in the staccato eighth notes in the piano reduction middle staff and the bouncing sixteenth notes in the bottom staff. The inclusion of the character Monostatos may have been more for the audience's satisfaction than the personal convictions of Mozart himself, as I explored in an above section; the question is open for debate, and most evidence is largely speculative on both sides. Beyond being necessary to illustrate the balance of good and evil (Sarastro represents a good leader, while the Queen represents and evil one, Papageno represents a fundamentally good knave, Monostatos represents a fundamentally evil knave) Monostatos is needed to be a constant reminder that the story you are watching is foreign. Audiences would know that Egypt is in Africa, and, likely, to Viennese audiences African means Black. The blackness of Monostatos is indeed far more than skin deep but is an undeniably purposeful addition to inexplicably link the story of *The Magic Flute* with Africa. Monostatos is Othered not just through the outcries and admonitions of other character in spoken and sung text, but the very music itself others him.

[48] Steffen Lösel, "Monostatos: Racism in *Die Zauberflöte" Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* vol.102, no.4 (2019): 283.

Social and Cultural Struggle at the Time

The Enlightenment is characterized for its search to quantify everything scientifically.[49] The age of 'enlightened thought' brought with it the idea of the Noble Savage. The Americas had been claimed by Europe by the time The Enlightenment begins, and large-scale settlement and exploration were under way. Constant encounters with indigenous North, South, and Central Americans led to exploitation and genocide in the Colonies, but utter fascination back in Europe. As the enslavement of indigenous Americans and the Transatlantic trade became a way of life for Colonial Americans and the domestic British/French/Spanish/Portuguese the fascination with Otherness begins to play out in stage and musical works. A great early example is French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764), who dappled in Orientalist works depicting various Native Americans. As early as 1725 at the Théâtre-Italien in Paris Rameau had staged the harpsichord piece *Les Sauvages* which imagined the Huron Indians of Canada doing

[49] I am using the common terms Enlightenment Era, Age of Enlightenment, and The Enlightenment interchangeably, but they all refer to the same period of time. From Descartes and Newton in the middle of the 17th Century until around 1800. This period is noted for the proliferation of philosophical thought and scientific reason, causing great stress on the Catholic Church and any other perceived authority. Occasionally the end of the period is also referred to as the Age of Revolution due to the American Revolution led by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams; Haitian Slave Rebellion led by Toussaint Louverture wherein the island now known as Haiti gained independence from France; and the French Revolution led by Danton, Sieyès, Marat, Robespierre, and Lafayette during which the French monarchy was toppled and years of political unrest in France began.

dances of war and peace.[50] Rameau's capitalized on the French theatre-going crowd's fascination with Otherness again in his 1735 opéra-ballet *Les Indes Galantes,* which was revised several times to ultimately include four *entrées* and a prologue. The original two *entrées* included Le Turc Généreux (The Generous/Magnanimous Turk) and Les Incas du Pérou (The Incas of Peru) but was expanded to include Les Fleurs: Fête Persane (The Flowers: A Persian Festival) and Les Sauvages (more freely translated by scholars as The American Indians).[51]

While blackness and Africans are not new to the Western stage, seen all through the 17th century with early examples like William Shakespeare's *Othello* (~1603) and Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and *Masque of Beauty* (1608) and Lully's opera *Armide* (1686) through to the 18th century when "African Slaves" appear in the Le Turc Généreux section of Rameau's opéra-ballet, even perhaps Mozart's *Abduction* (1782) and many other examples -some lost in the shuffle of time- the characteristic plea for tolerance which The Enlightenment is looked back on for extolling seems to be at odds with its proliferation of hierarchical performing arts. And while plays and operas pushed the Enlightenment themes of "the despot rebuked" or "the truth revealed through science" as European society began to focus on reason and logic more than superstition and tradition, stereotypes about people of color began to be codified in pseudo-science in ways that would have lasting effects even on society and culture today. Phrenology, mapping the topography of the cranium to indicate personality traits and habits, began in

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[50] Ralph P. Locke, *Music and the Exotic: From the Renaissance to Mozart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 236.

[51] Ibid.

earnest in between 1775 and 1778 by Swiss philosopher/theologian Johann Kaspar Levater.[52] The effects that phrenology had throughout the 19th century during the slave trade and throughout post-Reconstruction America are well known, and used as an attempt to further codify prevalent racial fears. Scientific fascination extended deeper than the cranium also. As I explained above when discussing Angelo Soliman, the (occasional public) dissection and taxidermy of African and mixed-race people was heavily prevalent through the 18th and 19th centuries. There were two other "mummified" bodies on display in that glass case with Angelo Soliman, one belonging to a six-year-old girl. The speed and efficiency in taxidermy and display leads me to suspect that this was a type of specialty career. When one considers the sheer size of the Holy Roman Empire in the 1790s, this display was only in the Austrian Imperial Natural History Museum in Vienna, it is unknown how many other of museums across the Empire and Europe had similar such displays, but it could mean nearly one hundred Africans and mixed-race children taxidermized and put on display in the name of science and understanding. This trend of taxidermizing or other preservation and display would continue beyond the Age of Enlightenment with possibly the most famous instance of public dissection and scientific display in 1815 with the exhibition of Saartje Baartman -the Hottentot Venus- and subject of Susan-Lori Parks' 1996 play *Venus.*[53] The Enlightenment comes to

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[52] J. Arianne Baggermann, Rudoph M. Dekker, and Michael James Mascuch, *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 250.

[53] Born in 1789, Saartje (sometimes Sarah) may have been coerced to travel to London in 1810 to display her Steatopygic physique in freakshows. After a life of touring Europe and being exploited for cash, upon her death French scientist Georges Cuvier made a body cast of and dissected Baartman in an autopsy

represent the duality of Western scientific thought, the double consciousness of being able to hold truth, reason, and science as ideals above superstition, tradition, and unfounded belief while simultaneously inventing science and reason and reshaping truths to find ways to justify long-held superstitions and unfounded beliefs. While Mozart and Schikaneder scratch the surface of this thought process with Monostatos in *The Magic Flute,* Schikaneder and Peter von Winter take this duality of thought to the extreme in *The Magic Flute*'s sequel *Das Labyrinth* written after Mozart's death. I will further detail the impact and legacy of *Das Labyrinth* in a later section along with other adaptations and spinoffs of the original *Magic Flute* plot and characters.

Expected Audience

I have mentioned several times above that, more than any of Mozart's other works, *The Magic Flute* taps into Viennese popular theatre in a way which was very specifically engineered by Schikaneder and his theatre company. Viennese theatrical tradition developed as many others did, by evolving from travelling companies who then set down roots in more developed and metropolitan areas. There is evidence of touring troupes throughout the late history of the Holy Roman Empire, with more permanent resident companies -like Vienna's famous Kärntnertor-Theatre- around 1710.[54] Joseph Anton Stranitzky made signature the wildly popular character of Hanswurst (Johnny Sausage, in English) around 1712, in the long line of Commedia dell'Arte caricatures,

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theatre and preserved her skeleton, brain, and genitals. First on display at the Natural History Museum of Angers, the exhibit was moved to the Museum of Man in Paris in 1937, where it remained on display until 1976.

[54] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 4.

Hanswurst is an enterprising buffoon who makes frequent use of sexual and scatological humor.[55] Branscombe notes that the stock character of Hanswurst descends from 16th and 17th century carnival and touring troupes; the character lives on in German theatre in current forms, which now mostly are limited to puppets. Other such characters across Europe include Jack Pudding (England), Pickelhering (Netherlands), Jean Potage (France), and Signor Macaroni (Italy).[56]

Stanitzky and his successor Gottfried Prehauser steeped Vienna in a rich theatrical tradition of plot outlines called *Haupt- und Staats-Aktionen,* plays about kings and queens, their court, and generals, who experience sudden changes of fortune heavily populated with the comic and extemporized antics of the servant class.[57] The music, dance, stagecraft, and physical comedy which these outlines employ allow the public companies to deftly satire and lambast the Court theatre or the Jesuit productions. From this formula grows a healthy and diverse low, comic theatre tradition of drama and singspiel in Vienna. During the reign of Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa, imperial attitudes toward these low styles of theatre had shifted in favor of scripted, Enlightenment drama and the Court seized control of all theatres in Vienna, leaving only two -under strict imperial control. These restrictions were rolled back in 1776 and troupes popped up overnight, reviving traditional comic Viennese theatre (and Hanswurst) on temporary

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[55] Richard Pischel, *Home of the Puppet Play* (London: Luzac and Company, 1902), 22.

[56] For more on these characters, the development and importance of Hanswurst to Viennese popular theatre, and formulization of the singspiel in German traditional theatre see Edward Malcolm Batley, *A Preface to the Magic Flute* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1969), 13-93.

[57] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 4.

stages in adapted buildings.[58] It is in this post restriction boom suburban theatres, including the Wiednertheatre, were built to stage popular low comedic dramas and singspiels. By the time Schikaneder and his wife took over the Wiednertheatre in 1789, these theatres had well-cultivated audiences with clearly predictable tastes.

Audiences at the Schikaneder's Wiednertheatre were treated to a formulaic season selection: light singspiel operas alternated with comedies and tragic plays, supplemented with a military play and concerts to fill out the season -eventually ballets were added to the programming- most of the offerings were written by Schikaneder or a member of his troupe.[59] Judging from the list of dramatists and composers at Schikaneder's theatre, it is hard to ignore the success that this structure brought with it: Schiller, Goethe, and Iffland, as well as composers Teyber, Schenk, Guglielmi, Dalayrac, Haydn, Süssmayr, Gluck, von Winter, and Wranitzky. Here again the facts contradict the legend. Schikaneder and his theatre were thriving, near constant programming and even occasional attendance by members of the imperial court stands in stark contrast to the urban legend that *Die Zauberflöte* was the magic bullet that saved the Wiednertheatre. There was even construction and an expanded lobby and front entrance which now allowed carriages to drive right up to the doors of the theatre in the same year as the premiere of *The Magic Flute.*[60] The evidence suggests not that Schikaneder and Mozart were at the end of their financial tether, but rather knew exactly the type of singspiel and characters with which Viennese audiences would connect.

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[58] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 5.

[59] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 143.

[60] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 144.

Nicholas Tarling points to audiences with a renewed interest in medieval romance and fairy tales.[61] This overlap creates the perfect environment for the unique hodge-podge of sources Schikaneder and Mozart cobble together to confect the plot of *The Magic Flute.* Characters like Papageno and Monostatos, who represent the undisguised human traits synonymous with the traditional *Haupt- und Staats-Aktionen* of German folklore and traditional performances grow out of the performance history of unscripted stock characters like Hanswurst. Both Monostatos and Papageno represent a sort of Hanswurst-like everyman: easily frightened, enterprising, lazy, lusty but unsuccessful, etc. But as Ralph Locke points out, Monostatos is also a direct descendant of the Vice figures in medieval and Early Drama.[62] While Falstaff remains theatre's [and opera's] most frequently produced/recognizable Hanswurt/Vice Figure, audiences in 1791 clearly would have recognized German tradition in, not only the Papageno/Monostatos foils, but also the Sarastro/Queen of the Night dynamic and the elements of the supernatural and fantastical all as being exactly what they expected to see upon going to the theatre.

The opera found an unlikely audience among Adolph Hitler and high-ranking Nazi officials. While Nazi Germany effectively destroyed the Freemasons and any such vestiges, Hitler publicly defended *The Magic Flute.* At the Nüremberg rally of 1937, Hitler declared that it would be "nationally disrespectful to condemn Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte.*"[63] Later, in 1943 reiterated that *The Magic Flute* is much more of a fairytale

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[61] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 175.

[62] Locke, *Music,* 315.

[63] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 181.

and should be staged more like a review than anything else.[64] Hitler's defense of the opera further indicates the deep connection of the Germanic theatrical tradition to the opera and to the new sense of German Nationalism which builds since the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. *The Magic Flute* is simply one blip on the long spectrum of evolution by which German theatrical traditions can be measured. From Vice figures in medieval drama to Hanswurst and his deep permeation into the popular culture, Mozart's expected audience was well-versed in the tropes and character they were seeing and had the financial stability to support it. Audiences were very intimately acquainted with plots similar to *The Magic Flute,* from the legendry of Weiland to that of a Thousand and One Nights, Viennese audiences had remained true to their unpretentious origins.[65] Between its premiere in September of 1791, and the second production -in Prague- in October of 1792, *The Magic Flute* had been performed and the Wiednertheatre eighty-three times. The opera has never left the repertoire.

Because Mozart had written for Schikaneder's theatre previously, and because Schikaneder was so well versed in the field, their expected audience *was* their actual audience. They knew how to write for Vienna, and they knew how to write for the Wiednertheatre. Letters and correspondence suggest they even knew which lines would get reactions and their total lack of surprise at the opera's success is further proof that there was little doubt in either of their minds regarding whether audiences would react to their work or not. While Schikaneder's name is not as synonymous with performing arts as is Mozart's, they each needed each other; Mozart needed Schikaneder's business

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[64] Erik Levi, *Mozart and the Nazis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 40-47.

[65] Batley, *Preface,* 124.

knowledge to help stage his opera without the court theatre, and Schikaneder needed Mozart's musical talent. Together they created a piece that audiences have never stopped enjoying. A new production opens at The Metropolitan Opera in spring of 2023.

Influence of Directors and Performers

Mozart made opera a cottage industry, he would create roles for his friends, who would perform, direct, design, and produce his operas.[66] Because the company at the Wiednertheatre were so close and worked together so frequently it is quite challenging to determine how much of each character was a compositional or directorial choice by Mozart and Schikaneder or how much of it came from the actors in rehearsals. Because Schikaneder not only wrote the libretto, but also directed the opera and played the role of Papageno it almost makes it redundant to include this section in the analysis.

Mozart wrote each role for the cast member who performed it, keeping their voice and abilities in mind. Schikaneder, like every good actor/director/librettist/theatre owner, gave himself the largest role. His Papageno was well received, and although reports from early in his career call his voice melodious and pure and that he can sing with insight and taste, Papageno's part is quite simple and usually doubled in the orchestra possible suggesting that he needed help finding his pitch. The famous Ignaz Alberti engraving of Schikaneder in his Papageno costume at the premiere in 1791 has served as inspiration for countless subsequent productions -some of which flat out copy the original design. Sarastro was sung by the obviously talented bass Franz Xaver Gerl. I say obviously talented because Gerl had sung Osmin in the original *Abduction* and that is easily the

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[66] Ian Woodfield, "Mozart's Compositional Methods" In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge UP, 2010), 35-47

most challenging non-Russian bass role in the entire opera canon. Gerl's wife Barabra Reisinger Gerl sang the role of Papagena. Tamino was sung by Benedikt Schack, who in addition to being an accomplished tenor was also a skilled musician, and Peter Branscombe postulates that Schack may have actually played Tamino's magic flute.[67] Schack's wife, Elisabeth Weinhold Schack sang the role of the Third Lady. The spoken role of the Priest (who speaks to Tamino at the end of Act I) was played by the stage-manager of the theatre Herr Winter. Schikaneder's older brother, Urban Schikaneder, sang the First Priest, and company members Johann Michael Kistler and Herr Moll sang the Second Priest and Third Priest respectively. Famously, Josepha Hofer, who sang Queen of the Night, was Mozart's sister-in-law. Her coloratura soprano voice, with its supernatural ability to jump from one note to the next without losing its crisp staccato, was written into the Queen's music and is a career challenge for many coloratura sopranos today -records indicate that Hofer sang the role throughout the long run at the Wiednertheatre, it was likely a challenge for Schikaneder to find anyone else who could sing the part. Pamina was sung by Anna Gottleib, an occasional Mozart collaborator who had previously sung the role of Barbarina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at just twelve years old. The First Lady and Second Lady were sung by company members Klöpfer and Hofmann. Johann Joseph Nouseul sang Monostatos, and while he had great acclaim as an actor little is mentioned about his singing voice, he was likely a capable singer who had a rather small voice -which would be in line with the indication that the orchestra should play

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[67] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 148. We know through letters that Schikaneder did not play his magical glockenspiel himself, and that at least once, Mozart snuck backstage and played a joke by surprising Schikaneder by playing a variation on the melody.

quietly during Monostatos' aria. In 1794, Nouseul is mentioned in an almanac as a portrayer of traitors, exaggerated roles and comic old men.[68] This would be in line with his portrayal of Monostatos and his career as an actor in straight plays prior to *The Magic Flute.* Carl Ludwig Giesecke, who I mentioned earlier as having laid claim on writing the libretto, played the First Slave; new company members Wilhelm Frasel and Herr Starke played the Second and Third Slaves. The roles of the Three Boys, or Three Spirits, are not marked on the premiere playbill, it is possible that Urban Schikaneder's daughter Anna sang one of them, but other sources and memoirs offer only speculation.

Joseph Gayl likely designed and painted the scenic elements and stage technology, and Herr Nesslthaler likely designed the costumes, but I am unable to confirm either of those. Company kapellmeister Johann Baptist Henneberg presided over rehearsals while Mozart was in Prague staging *La Clemenza di Tito* and took over conducting the orchestra after Mozart had conducted the premiere performances.[69]

From the premiere playbill it is discernable that this cast was the core company of the Wiednertheatre. Many members married to other members, related by blood or marriage, this group knew each other well and understood their strengths and weaknesses. Unlike Verdi composing *Aida* and hoping that Ricordi and Draneht could put together a suitable cast, Mozart not only knew the voices of each cast member well, but also their personalities -which I posit are also very clear when you look at each character individually.

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[68] Ibid., 151.

[69] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 152.

Location of Premiere

In the Weiden suburb of Vienna, the history of the Freihaus district dates back to 1647 when Conrad Balthasar von Starhemberg's sprawling estate was granted tax exemption status -hence the name Freihaus or Free House.[70] Over the next one hundred and forty-four years the property is expanded and expanded to ultimately be comprised of nearly one hundred apartments, thirteen shops, eight workshops, fruit- vegetable- and flower gardens, and a theatre with seating for nearly one thousand spectators.[71] By the time Schikaneder and his wife took over as directors of the theatre, the Freihaus was a thriving suburb with a century and a half of history in the community.

Vienna represents the cultural center of, if not only the German-speaking world, the Holy Roman Empire. On a scale similar to Paris, London, or Milan, Vienna then -as now- was a sophisticated city with an insatiable appetite for music, theatre, art, and hedonism. Although born in Salzburg, Mozart is most easily associated with Vienna where he lived for most of his professional life (helped along by the fact that the non-initiated general only know what the Peter Shafer movie *Amadeus* tells them). And while *Don Giovanni* and *La Clemenza di Tito* did have their premieres in Prague -another favorite city of Mozart's- and his early *Idomeneo* had its premiere in Munich, the balance of Mozart's full-length operas had their premieres in Vienna at the imperial Burgtheatre: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786), and *Così fan Tutte* (1790). The tone of *The Magic Flute* and its deep roots in Viennese popular theatre and

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[70] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 142.

[71] Else Speisberger, *Das Freihaus, Wiener Geschichtsbücher* vol. XXV (Vienna: Zslonay, 1980), 39-60.

the German theatrical tradition are further emphasized by its production at a public theatre and not the court's Burgtheatre.[72]

While being a smash hit at the Wiednertheatre in Vienna, the opera was slow to receive other productions. I suggest that Schikaneder had a hand in ensuring that his theatre was the only one producing the opera for as long as he could manage, but eventually the opera spread. First to Prague in October of 1792, almost exactly a year after its Viennese premiere.[73] Then German productions in Leipzig, Munich, Dresden, Hamburg, and many others, the opera spread across Europe to Poland and even Russia and France. Interestingly, England was very slow to pick up the opera and didn't see a production until perhaps 1829. Today the opera is often presented in translation, The Met stages the opera in English almost as often as it does German, and this seems to have been the case early on, with Dutch, Russian, Polish, Danish, Italian, and English translations being presented as early as 1799. A detailed list of nearly every production from 1791 until around 1954 can be found in Loewenberg's 1955 second edition of *Annals of Opera,* and countless other places, the opera's production history is well

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[72] Vienna's Burgtheatre is one of the oldest continually operating theatres in Europe. First installed in an old tennis court in the imperial residence (as many theatres, especially French ones were), the purpose-built theatre opened in 1741 under the vision of Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa. There has been programming every season since 1741, with only a ten-year break between its defacement in 1945 by air raids, and its reopening in 1955. It was at this theatre in 1943 that the Nazi controlled theatre, under the direction of Lothar Müthel, staged the infamous Werner Krauss production of *The Merchant of Venice* - which has been studied at length in many publications most notably by Alexandra Bassey. The theatre is the national theatre of Austria and is currently helmed by theatre and opera director Martin Kušej.

[73] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 162.

documented. Vienna was Mozart's home, these were his friends, and he knew these audiences very well, but Mozart could have written the music anywhere; it is Schikaneder's involvement and his deep connection and understanding of Viennese popular theatre that makes the opera's dramaturgy permanently linked to Vienna.

Commercial Success

In its day, as I have stressed in several places above, the opera was a hit that any theatre would die to have. Although I maintain my argument that it was *not* a surprise hit, Schikaneder, Mozart, and the Wiednertheatre company engineered a singspiel that would be a guaranteed success. It ran constantly at the Wiednertheatre for years, and when Schikaneder's company moved in 1801 to the Theatre an der Wein, it ran there as well. Immediately after the theatre troupe relocated the Wiednertheatre was razed to make room for an apartment block, the Theatre an der Wein remains one of Vienna's preeminent theatres in the tradition that Schikaneder started -the theatre is perhaps best known to modern audiences as the long-time home of the German production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *CATS,* which was directed and choreographed by original choreographer Gillian Lynne and ran for almost a decade.

The opera's success and many dozen productions over the next ten-year period foreshadow the love that modern audiences would have for the work. As I stated above, the opera never left the canon, and while it has earned its place as one of the most beloved operas in the repertoire, it presents great challenges in contemporary stagings.

It is Monostatos that makes both director and designer get creative in modern productions, and it is his problematic nature that keeps directors from setting the opera in Egypt as it is intended. Likely out of fear of being accused of anything, directors will set

the opera in outer space, or everyone will be bugs, or doomsday preppers in a post-apocalyptic world. Monostatos today is far from the character he is in Mozart's score. He has become a demented clown-type character, capable of being hated equally by black and white audience members alike. To remove the racism from the libretto requires more work than a costume change, however. Extensive changes must be made to the dialogue and some of the libretto. The fact that a dramaturg and the music director have to sit down and determine the edits to the libretto and book prove that race is not just a casual addition to the opera, but is an integral part of how Monostatos and the slave characters are to be interpreted. If Monostatos's skin was meant to represent anything other than Black people there would be no reason to change it, there would be no reason to edit the libretto, there would be no need of lengthy dramaturgical notes in the playbill. Monostatos's blackness is what ties the opera to Egypt. If you remove Egypt, you can then remove the blackness.

Conclusions

Shortly after the premiere of Die Zauberflöte, in September 1791, Mozart fell very ill. The thirty-five-year-old composer was dead by the start of December. Schikaneder's company had a long history with milking successful characters as much as they can. July of 1789 saw the premiere of a successful comic opera *Der Dumme Gärtner aus dem Gebirge, oder die Zween Anton…The Stupid Gardener from the Mountains, or the Two Antons* which was such a success for the company that is spawned no less than six sequels between 1789 and 1795.[74] Turning again to this process of serialization, Schikaneder, along with composer Peter von Winter, wrote a sequel, *Das Labyrinth oder*

[74] Branscombe, *Mozart*, 143.

Der Kampf mit den Elementen, Der Zauberflöte Zweyer Theil…The Labyrinth or the Struggle with the Elements, The Magic Flute's Second Part, in 1798.

In this sequel, Schikaneder pens a libretto even more inclined to play to the baser elements of Viennese popular theatre than before, and far more racially insensitive. Papageno is no longer the logical, rational sprite he used to be, frustrated with Monostatos, he is generally racist throughout. Monostatos is a far more sinister character in *The Labyrinth* than in *The Magic Flute*; openly seeking to brutally rape, murder and torture the white women he encounters, especially Papageno's mate, Papagena. Ensnared in Papageno's trap, and after his bribes of silver and gold provide no recompense, Monostatos offers Papageno the opportunity to sleep with his sister in a last-ditch plea for freedom. Ultimately Monostatos is bound to a tree and set to be executed by bow and arrow when his sister (the silent) Gura, a black woman, enters and becomes the new object of Papageno's fetishizing gaze.[75] It would have been easy for Schikaneder to interest and excite his audience here by choosing the stereotype of black female ugliness; the paradigm of the Hottentot would have been universally known by audiences as the epitome of sexual lasciviousness, hideous in form and face, offensive in body size and odor.[76] When we finally meet Gura, however, she eschews the stereotype of the Hottentot by being shockingly gorgeous. Here she falls into another pseudo-scientific stereotype characterized by not only Montesquieu and Buffon, but also the Marquis de Sade. Quoted

[75] Gura is not a common German name, nor does it have a German direct translation. The German verb gurren means "to coo" and could be one such option; however I suggest an alternative: in Romanian it could mean lips, mouth, entrance/opening, or orifice.

[76] Gilman "Difference", 82.

in Malcolm Cole's comprehensive article (of which I cannot shout the praises loudly enough), Buffon writes about the Jalofe women between the rivers of Senegal and Gambia saying, "usually they [African women] have very beautiful figures, are very cheerful, lively, and disposed to love; they have a liking for all men and especially for whites…" later describing the nubile body of a very dark-skinned twelve-year-old who "performs the most obscene actions at the mere sight of a man."[77] Enticed and baited Papageno seems interested, but before he is able to have his dalliance with Gura, he must once again rescue Papagena from Monostatos. This time, Papageno locks Monostatos in a giant birdcage where he can be constantly watched and surveyed. In an ending which recalls the fate of Angelo Soliman, entombed in glass to be observed and studied, audiences potentially would have even drawn such conclusions seeing Monostatos in a cage with feathers and beads in an attempt to look more like Papageno, and Soliman in a glass case with feathers and beads in an attempt to make him look more African. It is almost too on-the-nose.

Schikaneder without Mozart is nothing but ugly stereotypes and chain-rattling which call attention to the Enlightenment's dark underbelly. Coincidentally, we can critique Schikaneder's libretto for *The Magic Flute* in the same manner once it has been stripped of Mozart's music. It is by comparing these two operas that we learn potentially just how much of a mitigating factor Mozart was on the racism in *The Magic Flute,* it calls into question the letter I quoted in an above section where Schikaneder bemoans that *The Magic Flute* would have been even more successful if Mozart hadn't "spoiled so much of it for him". Perhaps this extremely racially insensitive language is what

[77] Malcolm S. Cole, "Monostatos and his 'Sister'," *Opera Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2005):15-16.

Schikaneder had in mind when collaborating on the original too. This is not to say that Mozart wasn't uncorrupted by the racist thinking of the time, but it is through Schikaneder and his relationship with Mozart that a wide spectrum of attitudes start to emerge.

The Wagon Wheel analysis of *The Magic Flute* exposes the opera's inseverable ties to Enlightenment-era racism, musical Orientalism, and the low comedy of the Viennese popular theatre. The analysis also sheds more light on the issues directors face when attempting to put the opera onstage, and their choice to edit or present without any changes the full text of the singspiel opera. Coincidentally, for a great portion of the scholarship, the issue of the racist language and attitudes does not appear as an obstacle. Opera director Anthony Besch, who worked from 1954 until 1999, details in the back of Branscombe's book all of the problems he sees and how to approach them as a director. Besch and Branscombe point out every inconsistency in the plot and every trio that perhaps got moved at some point in the opera's history, but what is most of interest to me is how utterly out of date Besch's defense of Monostatos is, even for 1991:

> "Monostatos is a subtly conceived portrait of a man coerced by circumstances, colour [sic] and creed into resentful isolation and neurotic repression. No one else can exceed his efficiency as overseer to the work-force of the temple, but in order to take up his position he has to leave his own country. If there had been women of his own race in the temple he might never have felt the urge to rape Pamina, though his predicament also reflects the fascination felt by black for white. He is no mere

> blackavized villain, but a man of human emotions and desires, as his fastidious aria suggests."[78]

Besch's understanding of the character, demonstrates the shoddy dramaturgy which results from the failure to perform a holistic analysis of the work, such as one using the Wagon Wheel model I have proposed. Interestingly, Paul Robinson lays out his own analytical theory which he calls All Things In Full Context, insisting that the full context, or complete understanding, of an opera comes from an examination of the libretto and the score together; arguing that you cannot understand an opera just by reading its libretto. I wholeheartedly support Robinson's theory, and agree with his argument, however he misapplies his own theory to *The Magic Flute,* either because he did not feel equipped to handle the racist subject matter or because he failed to recognize it as a challenge.

Robinson neglects to even consider race or racial histories in his analysis, fully explaining his understanding of critiques of *The Magic Flute* and concluding that misogyny is the only issue for modern audiences. My argument is that the racism is as structurally significant to the opera as is the misogyny and presents far more of an issue for modern audiences. Furthermore, my conclusion is supported more by Robinson's own theory than is his. As my analysis shows, the racism is certainly present in both the score and the libretto. I am not arguing against Robinson that misogyny is present, but he fails to provide examples or compositional notes which suggest that the misogyny is present in the score as well. Despite asserting that any analysis taken solely from the libretto is

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[78] Branscombe, *Mozart,* 198.

incomplete, he fails to demonstrate how misogyny is the only problem using anything other than just the text.[79]

Recently, there has been great interest in more freely adapting the plot of *The Magic Flute* and its characters to make them more accessible and sensitive. More than feeling like modern composer/librettists are trying to "reclaim" Mozart and Schikaneder's work, there is a sense that the compelling and comedic characters deserve to be set in stories unencumbered by the racialized history of the original opera and its sequel. The 2018 opera *Queen of the Night* with a book by Andrew Ravenscroft, libretto by Amy Quan Barry and music by Chicago-based composer Jordan Jenkins was commissioned by Madison, Wisconsin company Fresco Opera Theatre, serves as a prequel to *The Magic Flute.* The story imagines the events leading up to Pamina's capture by Sarastro and sheds light on the business relationship between the Queen of the Night and Papageno. Noticeably missing from the dramatis personae is Monostatos. The work represents a desire to create new works imagining the fantastical world Mozart and Schikaneder created in a context that allows more freedom while also providing space for new composers and librettists to work safely with characters that already have an audience.[80]

In spring of 2022, InSeries Opera in Washington, D.C. commissioned librettist Jarrod Lee and playwright Sybil Roberts to use Mozart's music in what became *Black Flute,* a completely reimagined setting of *The Magic Flute.* Setting the story in the iconic

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[79] Paul Robinson, *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 52-74.

[80] My thanks to Amy Quan Barry, Fresco Opera Theatre, and my dear friend Jen Plants for providing me with the libretto, score, and information about this production.

neighborhoods of Washington, D.C., the opera attempts to reimagine the rough plot of the opera in a way that cries out that black lives matter and exploring what it means to be black in America. Obviously Monostatos is missing from this dramatis personae as well. Lee and Roberts' retelling of *The Magic Flute* deserves more exploration and space than I can devote to it here but suggests a deeper connection to black artists and *The Magic Flute* than might be readily observable.[81] Monostatos's position as one of only a couple expressly black characters in the opera canon, for better or for worse, inspires interest in the story by black composers, librettists, playwrights, performers, and scholars alike.

This paradox of appreciating a work while simultaneously condemning its racially insensitive history elucidates the conversation taking place around musical theatre and its race problem. How can we celebrate *Show Boat* for its beautiful music while also condemning the original production for using blackface performer Tess Gardella to create the role of Queenie? Are we able to marvel at the stagecraft of *Miss Saigon* while being disgusted that the London production used prosthetic eyelids to allow a white actor to play the Engineer, a French-Vietnamese character? There is no clear answer, but Mozart and his connections are certainly germane to the conversation about the purity of a field that was never really pure to begin with. In many cases, the only way to get *Die Zauberflöte* onstage is through study, analysis, and smart dramaturgical triage.

[81] The opera was offered virtually as part of InSeries Opera's Invision program, and is viewable for free here: https://invision.inseries.org/productions/black-flute

CHAPTER FIVE

The Japanese Equivalent to 'Hear, Hear, Hear'

'*If you want to know who we are, we are gentlemen of Japan, on many a vase and jar, on many a screen and fan, we figure in lively paint, our attitude's queer and quaint, your wrong if you think it ain't. If you think we are worked by strings, like a Japanese marionette, you don't understand these things, it is simply court etiquette! Perhaps you suppose this throng can't keep it up all day long, if that's your idea: you're wrong*'
-The opening chorus, as the nobles are "discovered standing and sitting in attitudes suggested by native drawings" Act I of *The Mikado*

'For countless people who had never been to Japan, never met anyone of Japanese descent, or never seen or heard anything of Japanese culture, *The Mikado* served as the basis of knowledge of what "Japanese" meant. In this, *The Mikado* is no different from a host of other plays, operas, or stories that bring to life a vision of the Orient. But it is the manner in which the "oriental" is imagined and performed that seems to distinguish it. The opera brings into being a fantasy of Japan that easily outperforms the real country…'
-Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention*

Things to Consider

My final case study, Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* not only probes the boundaries of my application of intercultural theatre, but also tests Said's work in an interesting way. Specifically, orientalism applied to the Far East. While rarely used in modern discourse, use of the label "the Orient" colloquially refers to China, Japan, or Korea. However, Said's work on Oriental v. Occidental relations is laser focused on the Near/Middle East. Reading Said into *The Mikado* provides a unique opportunity to find novel uses of Orientalism in a way that builds on the work that Josephine Lee, the preeminent *Mikado* scholar, is doing. Here, again, Said becomes the bridge which connects my readings of the musicology literature and the performance studies literature.

The Mikado, in the repertoire, occupies a very contentious space. On one hand, the blanket stereotyping and race-based generalizations are so heavy-handed even opera

houses which continue to stage other identifiable insensitive operas will not stage *The Mikado.* Occasionally a major house abroad will venture a new production, the most recent which made international new being Opera Australia's 2011 production (which I will discuss further below). That production spawned a cast album, DVD, and Australian national tour, but was potentially the last major production the opera could see. The ENO has an old production which is occasionally revived, however the opera is currently almost exclusively performed by Gilbert and Sullivan Societies. Small, intimate companies with carefully curated audiences who know what to expect and see themselves as acolytes to the Gilbert and Sullivan legacy. These performance groups, and a number of musicologists cited below, agree however that *The Mikado* is likely the best of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

This paradox frames *The Mikado* as a museum piece. A work worthy of study, which people are free to enjoy, but it is somehow separate from the rest of the canon. It is the *Gone With the Wind* of operas, a reminder of skill and achievement in the past, but a relic and reminder of how far society has progressed. More than either of the previous examples, *The Mikado* wrestles with the question "should we put this onstage?" Is it responsible to mount productions of this opera? Unlike the case with Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, which seems unlikely to ever be dropped from the canon, *The Mikado* essentially *has* been dropped from the canon. For a number of reasons, whether onstage or not, the opera remains critically important specifically to musical theatre scholars. The success of *The Mikado,* both financially and stylistically (as I detail below) not only permanently established Gilbert and Sullivan as a writing team, but literally and

physically changed the theatre business in London -permanently reshaping the genre and forecasting the modern musical theatre piece.

Analysis of *The Mikado,* especially via the Wagon Wheel, peels back the wallpaper of the entire genre of musical theatre, adding to the ongoing conversation about race and performance while wholeheartedly wrestling with the fact that perhaps the most important artistic steppingstone between opera and the modern musical has become unproduceable. While most paradigms of intercultural performance theory grew as reactions to works being actively performed, or are designed to engage with performative events, my analysis and work on *The Mikado* seeks to push intercultural performance even further, as a method of analysis and understanding of works which have become essentially readers theatre. What about *The Mikado* is so important for the development of the modern musical? Why is *The Mikado* so much harder to stage than *Aida* or *Die Zauberflöte*? What happens to Said's theory when applied to the Far East rather than the Near/Middle East? *The Mikado* asks and answers many questions which not only reveal why this type of intercultural performance theory work is so relevant, but also extremely urgent.

Rationale, why *The Mikado?*

Few names loom as large in the conversation of operetta (read, Musical Theatre) than do W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. While Verdi was redefining Grand Opera in Italy, Gilbert and Sullivan were -in essence- carrying on Mozart's legacy of low comedy and singspiel in England. Of their twelve collaborations, *The H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878) and *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879) are perhaps their most well-known, but it is their 1885 collaboration -their third most produced work- *The Mikado,* which has the most troubled

and complex history. It is this complex structure, the layered use of local satire and foreign stereotypes, which make the Wagon Wheel model supremely interested in *The Mikado.* Unlike the use of race in *Aida* which is largely perpetuated only through production to subtract from a potentially unrecognizable political message, or the use of race in *The Magic Flute* which demonstrates how much more complicated it can be to engage with a work with material which intentionally employs racial stereotypes in the text, music, and characterization, *The Mikado* is a work which intentionally makes use of stereotypes and racist tropes while also having a recognizable, nonracial, political subtext.

Also different from the previous two case studies presented is Said's engagement with the Far East as opposed to the Near East. One of the first things he does in *Orientalism* is make this distinction. He writes that Americans will have a different relationship with the Orient because of the absence of imperial colonialism in American history, for Americans the Orient invokes China or Japan as opposed to the French and the British (Said also implicates the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss) who have a long history of Orientalism -a way of coming to terms with the Orient based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience.[1] Said's lack of concern with the Far East has left the scholarship applying his theory to situations outside of his original purview with more flexibility than comes with using Saidian informed dramaturgy when discussing Egypt or the Levant. I suggest that it is for this reason Asian stereotypes have persisted much farther into modern popular culture than many other raced-based stereotypes have. As I will show below, there is almost one

[1] Said, *Orientalism,* 1.

hundred- and forty-years' worth of apologetic scholarship, attempting to reason *The Mikado* out of the moral quandary it now occupies. I argue that the missing element here is one that only Carolyn Williams gets closest to.[2] Yes, Gilbert and Sullivan are mocking and lambasting the stodgy English ways, but ultimately the point they are making is that these English ways are just as unusual and odd as those of foreign countries. I offer that, in *The Mikado,* Japan is not just a comic setting which allows Gilbert and Sullivan to mock England with impunity, but rather Japan is the absolute strangest culture Gilbert and Sullivan could think of and their use of Japan is to compare the strange English way to the strange Japanese ways. Fundamentally, this line of thought is just as exploitative and Orientalist as anything related to *Aida* or *The Magic Flute.* Furthermore, the fact that Far Eastern stereotypes are often left out of the Saidian definition of Orientalism, there has been little development of tools and theory to analyze and quantify similar such stereotypes and exploitative behaviors. Including *The Mikado* as a case study serves to further demonstrate the necessary flexibility of my Wagon Wheel model. While complex a times, the plot of *The Mikado* is easy to follow, and studded with well-known songs and choruses.

Synopsis of *The Mikado*

Prior to the start of the opera a great deal of action has taken place, which we slowly learn about in the first few arias. Nanki-Poo, in an attempt to escape marriage with an elderly widow, Katisha, has fled the court of his father, the Mikado -or Emperor. He assumes the disguise of a musician and he has fallen in love with the beautiful, young

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[2] Carolyn Williams, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, Parody* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

Yum-Yum, but has been prevented in marrying her by her guardian Ko-Ko who wishes to marry her himself. Flirting, by decree of the Mikado, has been made a capital offence however, and Ko-Ko has been condemned to be beheaded. Just before the curtain rises, Nanki-Poo has been hastening to Ko-Ko's court in Titipu to again seek Yum-Yum's hand in marriage. Here is where the opera begins, as Nanki-Poo encounters the Gentlemen of Japan at Ko-Ko's court. Pish-Tush, a high-ranking nobleman explains to Nanki-Poo that, the town of Titipu has found a way around the Mikado's decree that all people found to be flirting, leering, or winking be put to death by beheading. In order to prevent the bloodshed, Titipu has made Ko-Ko -formerly a cheap tailor- Lord High Executioner, following the logic that until he figures out a way to cut off his own head, he will be unable to cut off anyone else's. The election of such a low-born individual to such a high office was seen as an affront to all other members of the public staff, leaving all offices open to be filled by Pooh-Bah (Lord High Everything Else); among Pooh-Bah's jobs are: First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, Lord High Admiral, Master of the Buckhounds, Groom of the Backstairs, Archbishop of Titipu, Lord Mayor - both acting and elect, Lord Chamberlain, Attorney-General, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Privy Purse, Private Secretary, Solicitor, Leader of the Opposition, Paymaster-General, Lord High Auditor, and First Commissioner of the Police. Pooh-Bah's holding of every other office in town has made him pridefully corrupt. Nanki-Poo learns that Ko-Ko and Yum-Yum are to be wed that very afternoon.

Ko-Ko's wedding preparations are interrupted by a message from the Mikado that there have been too few executions in Titipu, and that Ko-Ko must execute someone immediately or else he will lose his position. Unwilling to execute himself, he and Pooh-

Bah are musing about the legality of using a so appointed Lord High Substitute to be executed in Ko-Ko's place, as Nanki-Poo appears -overcome with grief that he cannot marry Yum-Yum- and plots his suicide. Ko-Ko and Nanki-Poo make a deal that Nanki-Poo may marry Yum-Yum for exactly one month if he concedes to allow Ko-Ko to publicly execute him when the time has passed. The town of Titipu celebrates as Ko-Ko's wedding becomes Nanki-Poo's wedding, when, at the height of the celebration, Katisha appears. She has been searching -town to town- for Nanki-Poo who she wishes to marry as he will one day become the Mikado. Katisha attempts to reveal Nanki-Poo's secret but is thwarted by Yum-Yum and driven away but exclaims that she is on her way to warn the Mikado about the situation in Titipu. So ends act one.

As act two opens, Yum-Yum, and the other two of the three little maids -Pitti-Sing and Peep-Bo- are preparing for the wedding. For a brief moment it seems as though all is well, until Ko-Ko discovers that there is a law which states that when a man is beheaded, his wife must be buried alive. Nanki-Poo, wishing to save Yum-Yum from this fate offers himself for immediate beheading before the wedding takes place. Ko-Ko, aware that the Mikado is currently on his way to Titipu, finds himself unable to perform the execution without a bit of practice. To satisfy all parties, Pooh-Bah makes a false affidavit that Nanki-Poo has been executed which affords Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum the opportunity to leave the country with their love and their heads.

The Mikado arrives in Titipu, accompanied by his "daughter-in-law elect' Katisha. Under the impression that the Mikado is in town to ascertain about the execution Ko-Ko, Pitti-Sing, and Pooh-Bah describe the execution in great detail and present the Mikado with the affidavit. Katisha is enraged, and it is all revealed that Nanki-Poo is the

disguised son of the Mikado. Ko-Ko, Pitti-Sing, and Pooh-Bah are declared guilty of compassing the death of the Heir Apparent. The three of them rush to Nanki-Poo and urge him to admit the falsehood of the affidavit and stand before the Mikado. However, in the time that has passed, Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum have been quietly married, and so he would be unable to marry Katisha -who would certainly call for both Nanki-Poo and his new bride to be executed out of spite. Under great duress and seeing no other way to solve all of the compounding problems, Ko-Ko offers his hand in marriage to the elderly Katisha. She accepts his offer, they marry, and Katisha begs the Mikado for mercy on Ko-Ko, Pitti-Sing, and Pooh-Bah. Nanki-Poo reappears, and the Mikado is confused. Ko-Ko recites his famous line:

> "It's like this: when your Majesty says, 'let a thing be done', its as good as done -practically, it *is* done- because your Majesty's will is law. Your Majesty says, 'kill a gentleman', and a gentleman is told off to be killed. Consequently, that gentleman is as good as dead -practically, he *is* dead- and if he is dead, why not say so?"

The Mikado is more than pleased with this answer, and the opera concludes with a great celebration that all loves are spared, and the lovers remain united.[3]

While the opera does not follow the strictest of formulas, roughly every third number is an ensemble chorus, interspersed with solo arias and terzets. There are only two duets in the opera, one for each married couple. Because of the performance

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[3] The above summary is my own, assembled from both the G. Schirmer, Inc. score and the Hal Leonard score, as well as the Opera Australia teaching outline. As it is the most recent major production, and it was professionally filmed, I will often be returning to the 2011 Opera Australia production.

tradition, as I will detail below, has been to adapt and freely change some of the text, there are several versions of the score. I will be referencing the 2002 Schirmer score edited by Bryceson Treharne. While not a critical edition, it does contain additional materials by Marie Eggold. As is the custom of the field, when I need to reference a specific musical number, I will refer to it by the first phrase of the song (e.g. "Three Little Maids from School are We") rather than score title (e.g. No.7, Trio and Chorus).

Commissioning Party/Funding

Gilbert and Sullivan were under contract by Richard D'Oyly Carte. The contract had provided well for Gilbert, Sullivan, Carte, and Carte's Comedy Opera Company - which he had founded specifically to produce Gilbert and Sullivan's works. Through this working arrangement the team wrote, directed, and produced all the surviving Gilbert and Sullivan operas. At the Opera Comique in London, where D'Oyly Carte and the Comedy Opera Company first worked, *The Sorcerer* (1877), and *HMS Pinafore* (1878) premiered, following the opening of *Pinafore,* Carte, and his current investors parted ways. Carte, Sullivan, and Gilbert would self-fund the creation of the new D'Oyly Carte Opera Company which still made its home in the Opera Comique while Carte built his own theatre. *Pirates of Penzance* would open in 1879, and then *Patience* would follow in 1881. Carte's new theatre, The Savoy Theatre, purpose-built for Gilbert and Sullivan operas opened in October of 1881 when *Patience* moved from the Opera Comique to The Savoy.[4] The Savoy Theatre, the first public building in the world to be lit entirely by electric light, was the new home of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, and produced the balance of Gilbert and Sullivan's new works including *Iolanthe* (1882), *Princess Ida*

[4] Clemence Bettany, *D'Oyly Carte Centenary 1875-1975* (London: D'Oyly Carte Opera Trust, 1975).

(1884), *The Mikado* (1885), *Ruddigore* (1887), *Yeomen of the Guard* (1888), *The Gondoliers* (1889), *Utopia Limited* (1893), and *The Grand Duke* (1896). In several cases, D'Oyly Carte had a second company in rehearsal at the same time as the premiere company, so that he could open with a New York premiere literal days after the London premiere -D'Oyly Carte, as I will detail, fought an uphill battle with copycat productions and slow-to-adapt international intellectual property laws.

The Mikado comes right in the middle of Gilbert and Sullivan's careers as collaborators, and arguably at the peak of their (and D'Oyly Carte's) fame. Because each opera was so successful, by the time the opera currently playing was to close, a new opera would have been written, rehearsed, built, and ready to open. Lagging ticket sales for *Princess Ida* foretold an unusual situation wherein D'Oyly Carte would have to close one opera without having another one ready to open, the first time since 1877 that the company had been in this situation. On March 22, 1884, D'Oyly Carte pulled rank and sent a notice of contractual obligation to both Gilbert and Sullivan that a new opera would be required in six months' time.[5] This rank-pulling on Carte's behalf started a two-month-long war between Gilbert and Sullivan. Sullivan refused to set any of Gilbert's ideas to music, Gilbert refused to write new plots at Sullivan's behest. When the internal bickering was resolved, and work began on *The Mikado* in earnest, D'Oyly Carte was satisfied that the contract was being met and preparations began for the new opera right away. Not only did *The Mikado* have the longest run of any of the so-called Savoy Operas, but it was also the most revived, appearing in every season of the D'Oyly Carte

[5] Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan, a Victorian Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 187.

Opera Company from 1885 until the company dissolved in 1982.[6] The opera proved so successful for Richard D'Oyly Carte, that its handsome profits allowed him to build the, still famous, Savoy Hotel.

The flexibility of producing everything "in house", having a single man who controlled the money, and the theatre is very similar to the situation Mozart found himself in with Schikaneder. Although unlike Mozart and Schikaneder, Richard D'Oyly Carte's relationship with W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan seems to be largely predicated on their business arrangement and contractual obligations rather than friends doing favors for friends. Through their arrangement together, Sullivan, Gilbert, and Carte became very wealthy, household names. While the libretto and book may be all Gilbert, and the music may be all Sullivan, the impresario who brought -and kept- them together should be recognized for his keen business acumen. The financial success of the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations through the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company made the Carte family very wealthy. The generational wealth created as a result of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, though the construction of the Savoy Theatre, the construction and sale of the Royal English Opera House, and the Savoy Hotel, kept the opera company afloat until 1982. Following the 1961 entrance of Gilbert's lyrics and text into the public domain, Bridget D'Oyly Carte created a charitable trust to manage the opera company, which

[6] Cyril Rollins and John Witts, *The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in Gilbert and Sullivan Operas* (London: privately printed).

survived competing productions for the next twenty-one years, until it was not financially feasible to keep the opera company together.[7]

Gilbert and Sullivan wrote *The Mikado,* after months of bickering about the subject of their new work, because they *had* to. D'Oyly Carte reminded them of their contract, and they had to grind out an opera. There is nothing inherently special about the commissioning or the funding of the opera other than the fact that it was a contractual obligation. *The Mikado* could have ended up like *Ruddigore* or *Princess Ida,* just another in a series of collaborations, but I maintain that it is the opera's combining of a highly original, satirical storyline and the exotic and unusual (especially for opera) setting of Japan which have been key to the opera's century-long staying power. Although infrequently produced today, for a number of reasons which will be enumerated below, *The Mikado* was the most successful and popular of all fourteen of the pair's collaborations.

Source Material

William Schwenck Gilbert was rather singularly responsible for the entirety of the text of his collaborations with Arthur Sullivan. And while, to the best of historical recollection, Sullivan had almost no input in the libretto, or even the plot for that matter, if he felt strongly enough against it he could, in effect, hold the libretto hostage. We see that with the aforementioned contractual dispute surrounding the genesis of *The Mikado.* By all accounts, despite their close working relationship, Gilbert and Sullivan were not close friends -barely even acquaintances according to Marie Eggold- they referred to each

[7] Ian Bradley, *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture! The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.

other always by their surnames, and despite living near one another their communication was all conducted through direct letters or messages from D'Oyly Carte.[8]

Sullivan was knighted in 1883, about halfway through his partnership with Gilbert, right before *Princess Ida* would open at The Savoy. Newspaper headlines suggest that Sullivan was viewed as England's next big hope to break into the international music scene -not since Purcell had England really competed on the same level as France, Italy, or Germany/Austria in terms of operatic composition.[9] Some such comments, like the *Musical Review,* echoed the sentiment, "some things that Mr. Arthur Sullivan may do, Sir Arthur Sullivan ought not to do."[10] Sullivan took this to heart, and became very dispassionate regarding the prospect of writing another Savoy Opera. By the time Sullivan and Gilbert are given their contractual warning by D'Oyly Carte, Sullivan was ready to focus solely on more serious opera; his being presented with Gilbert's plot-in-progress seemed the final straw.

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[8] Marie Eggold, "The Mikado", *The Mikado* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 2002), x.

[9] Henry Purcell (1659-1695) is arguably England's most important composer until Arthur Sullivan comes along, and then later, Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughn-Williams. Purcell is the "Father of English Opera", and his chamber opera *Dido and Aeneas* dates back to at least 1688 -possibly earlier and is the first of very few English operas. Around 80-years after Jacopo Peri "invented" opera with *Dafne* in 1598 and *Euridice* in 1600 and Claudio Monteverdi solidified the genre with *L'Orfeo* in 1607, England was very slow (largely due to censorship) to pick up opera as an artform. While George Handel and his operatic works of the early 1700s are occasionally mentioned in the same breath as Purcell, it is important to remember that Handel was born a German and became a Briton through naturalization in 1727. Like Mozart, Purcell only lived a short 35 years, but nationalistic Brits claim him with as much zeal as do nationalistic Austrians claim Mozart.

[10] Eggold, *Mikado, x*.

Rather famously, as has been retold and retold in popular culture, is W.S. Gilbert's obsession with the so-called "magical lozenge". This episode is recounted many different ways, referred to as "dodging the magical lozenge" or "the lozenge of topsy-turviness" or simply "the infamous lozenge plot", but they all recount the same story. Unlike Sullivan, who was disturbed by the press' jostling, Gilbert embraced it. Gilbertian topsy-turviness, he reasoned, had worked many times before, so his writing of the "lozenge plot" would have seemed commonplace for Gilbert. Unlike Mozart and Schikaneder who turned to folklore and fairytales for inspiration, Gilbert only seemed to search his childhood.

Prior to his collaboration with Sullivan, Gilbert had begun publishing whimsical short stories and amusing lyrical ballads -often with illustrations- using the pen-name Bab, his childhood nickname. These collected stories and ballads foreshadow the topsy-turvy worlds he enjoyed creating in his opera plots.[11] The plot Gilbert presented to Sullivan, in an attempt to satisfy their contractual obligation, consisted of characters who become transformed by eating a magical lozenge which causes them to take on characteristics opposite of their own (shy becomes bold, good becomes evil),and through this transformation they fall in love against their will but nevertheless end up happily ever after.[12] Sullivan's rejection of Gilbert's plot called it both improbable and artificial, and rejected it outright. Over the next month Gilbert made edits (which I have not found cited or mentioned in any source) to the plot and submitted an altered version in hopes of

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[11] W.S. Gilbert, *The Bab Ballads* ed. James Ellis (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 1970).

[12] Michael Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan, a Dual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 230-231.

winning Sullivan's approval. This new plot was presented to Sullivan near the end of April 1884, soliciting only the reply "I do not like the Lozenge, I stick to my objection".[13] The stalemate was renewed with Gilbert refusing to write a new libretto and Sullivan refusing to set the current one to music.

The details surrounding the Japanese inspiration on W.S. Gilbert have been much dramatized and overstated. Urban legend and a flair for the fantastic are to blame for the likely familiar story of Gilbert up late one night pacing in his study, when a decorative Japanese sword falls of the wall and he gets the idea to visit the Japanese exhibition at Knightsbridge, which gives him the idea for *The Mikado.* This origin story does fit nicely into the world of topsy-turvydom which Gilbert curated, likely why the man himself perpetuated this mythos on at least one occasion. Gilbert was interviewed about his inspiration several times, and he did mention the sword, but it would appear that every time he told the story the details got more and more exciting.[14] Long considered an authority, the 1914 history of the Savoy Operas by Francois Cellier and Cunningham Bridgeman, is the first to document Gilbert's telling of this story.[15] But factually, the details do not add up, the Japanese village at Knightsbridge, according to Joseph McLaughlin did not open until January of 1885.[16] This comes as many as seven months

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[13] Ibid., 232.

[14] Brian Jones, "The Sword That Never Fell", *W.S. Gilbert Society Journal* 1 no.1 (Spring 1985): 22.

[15] Francois Cellier and Cunningham Bridgeman, *Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1914), 186.

[16] Joseph McLaughlin, "The 'Japanese Village' and the Metropolitan Construction of Modernity", *Victorian Internationalisms* 48 (November 2007).

after Gilbert had sent Sullivan the plot outline for *The Mikado,* and at least two months after Gilbert had finished writing the first act. Though the village was an inspiration to Gilbert when it did open, and he made frequent visits and took many photographs (some of which have survived); during rehearsals Gilbert even hired some of the ladies from the exhibition in an attempt to teach the English actresses how to be more "Japanese".[17] The exhibition was open until June of 1887 and likely benefitted greatly from the immediate success of *The Mikado.* It does seem likely that the sword in Gilbert's home library did give him the idea for the plot, whether it fell off the wall or simply served as a well-mounted inspiration is, thanks to Gilbert's penchant for telling tall tales, lost to history.

By early May of 1884, Gilbert had outlined the plot to *The Mikado.* All that was left was for him to convince Sullivan that it was worthy of setting to music. The approach taken was one of coy humility, Gilbert writes, "…am I to understand that if I construct another plot in which no supernatural element occurs, you will undertake to set it? ... a consistent plot, free from anachronisms, constructed in perfect good faith and to the best of my ability."[18] Gilbert continued to woo Sullivan with the exciting staging and costuming opportunities and musical possibilities afforded by the Oriental setting. This, I suggest, was likely the winning lot for Sullivan, who has been itching to stretch more legitimate compositional muscles and likely saw this as an opportunity to connect with the great Orientalist production traditions of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* and even Verdi's *Aida.* Sullivan's reply to Gilbert was equally as terse, "…if I understand you to propose you will construct a plot without the supernatural and improbable elements, and on the

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[17] Jones, "Sword, 25.

[18] Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan,* 232.

lines which you describe, I gladly undertake to set it without further discussing the matter or asking what the subject is to be."[19] With this truce satisfactory to D'Oyly Carte, Gilbert delivered the plot of *The Mikado* to Sullivan on May 20, 1884, and almost exactly ten months later the opera would open at the Savoy Theatre.

With source material so definitively Orientalist, *The Mikado* is already painting itself into a corner. While much of its cultural references and parodistic nature were biting and relevant in Victorian England, they have lost their teeth on modern audiences. That is the great problem with the specific source material of "Japanese antics" used to veil a critique of structured English society. Carolyn Williams attempts to throw *The Mikado* a lifeline, arguing that Gilbert and Sullivan's aesthetic use of "Japan" should be distinguished from the Orientalism described by Edward Said, for Gilbert and Sullivan make fun of an insular, absorptive projection of Japan as cultural other.[20] I couldn't disagree more, however. The aesthetic use of Japan, the inspiration from the Japanese sword, and the opera's close history with the Knightsbridge Japanese Village Exhibition is exactly the type of Orientalism Said describes. Throughout both *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism,* Said mentions specifically similar such travelling exhibitions; in John MacKenzie's companion book, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts,* this style of travelling exhibition (and detailed technical drawings) feature in every chapter. Here a distinction feels necessary, that while the story lampoons structured English society, the source material is highly Orientalist, and rooted in an almost meanspirited

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[19] Ibid., 233.

[20] Carolyn Williams, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, Parody* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 260-261.

"aren't they a queer lot" sentiment. The fact that the source material is not somehow also connected to the popular theatrical traditions of the day, like was the Mozart, or rooted in historical verisimilitude, like was the Verdi, when the jabs at Victorian society no longer work on modern audiences, all that's left is hollow Orientalism. That is the uphill battle the story has been facing in the current theatrical landscape.

Lived Experience of the Composer and Librettist

They are mentioned in the same breath so frequently, it could be possible to forget that W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan are two distinct individuals. Much more collaborators than friends, the fourteen light operas the duo crafted together *have* had a more lasting impact on the creation and mainstreaming of the modern Broadway musical than perhaps any other singular entity. Both men were obviously shaped by the world around them, and their Victorian sensibilities appear frequently in their work. Their attitudes towards ethnic minorities and any other cultural other closely reflects the viewpoint of Victorian England.

William Schwenck Gilbert, the elder of the two men, was born November 18, 1836, in London. His father, Dr. William Gilbert, had spent his youth first working for the East India Company and then as an assistant surgeon for the Royal Navy -studying both at Guy's Hospital and the Royal Academy of Surgeons.[21] A large inheritance near the time of the younger William's birth, William received a large inheritance which gave the family newfound financial and social standing, it appears that he gave up his post as surgeon and raised his family while travelling and publishing countless novels and short stories. Gilbert's father's travels afforded him many educational opportunities, his

[21] Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan,* 14-16.

childhood was spent in France, where he kept his diary in French so the serving staff could not read it, later enrolling in the King's College London. After graduation in 1856, the end of the Crimean War dashed Gilbert's dreams of a military career, and he entered civil service in the Privy Council Office before studying law and eventually serving as -albeit an unsuccessful- barrister.[22] For additional money during his days practicing law, Gilbert published stories, articles, parody, and illustrations in various established London papers; Gilbert's famous razor-sharp wit was clearly well-honed from an early age and most of what he published -under his pseudonym Bab- was republished and collected into volumes. It is easy to see how a character like Pooh-Bah, bogged down in corrupt civil service, or Ko-Ko, an elected official with no ability or understanding of his position, came into shape throughout Gilbert's years in the Privy Council Office and the few cases he tried as a barrister.

In 1870, Gilbert's interest in military affairs and journalism overlap, and he is sent by *The Observer* to France to cover the Franco-Prussian War.[23] It is not entirely unlikely that the young Gilbert encountered embattled Egyptologist August Mariette as he was stuck in Paris along with the scenery and costumes for Verdi's *Aida.* Some of Gilbert's first works on the stage were parodies of opera seria, again further defining his genre, his wit and skill made him a popular pantomime collaborator. His first big success, in 1866, *Dulcamara, or the Little Duck and the Great Quack,* a pantomime burlesque parody of Gaetano Donizetti's 1832 opera *L'Elisir d'Amore,* was a major success and ran for 120

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[22] W.S. Gilbert, *The Lost Stories of W.S. Gilbert* ed. Peter Haining (London: Robson Books, 1985), 1-5.

[23] Jane W. Stedman, "Gilbert, Sir William Schwenck (1836–1911)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

performances.[24] Other such parodies of opera seria included *La Vivandière; or True to the Corps!* (1867), again parodying a Donizetti opera -this time *La Fille du Régiment*- and, his most successful of these parodies, *Robert the Devil, or The Nun, The Dun, and The Son of a Gun* (1868), a parody of Meyerbeer's 1831 grand opera *Robert le Diable.* And again in 1869 with *The Pretty Druidess, or the Mother, the Maid, and the Mistletoe Bough,* a burlesque send up of Vincenzo Bellini's 1831 opera seria *Norma.* With *Robert the Devil*, as with the others, Gilbert set his own lyrics to popular arias and tunes across the genre. Gilbert's parodies were so popular, that eventually composer Frederick Clay sought to write an original comedy together. Their 1869 collaboration *Ages Ago* would go on to be successful, and the pair would collaborate on other pieces in the years to come, but *Ages Ago* is especially germane to this study; it was during rehearsals for this comic opera that Clay first introduced Gilbert to his friend Arthur Sullivan.[25] Throughout this time, Gilbert continued to also write, direct, and produce many straight plays, also often parodies of classic works, by the time he started to collaborate with Sullivan in 1871, Gilbert was already a well-established and famous playwright.[26] Their first collaboration the next pantomime season, *Thespis, or The Gods Grown Old,* has been lost.

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[24] The Gilbert and Sullivan Digital Archive

[25] Andrew Crowther, *Gilbert of Gilbert & Sullivan: his Life and Character* (London: The History Press, 2011), 84.

[26] For further information (biographical or literary) specifically regarding his experience as a dramatist and director reference: Michael Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan – A Dual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); William Cox-Ife, *W. S. Gilbert: Stage Director* (London: Dobson, 1978); Sidney Dark and Rowland Grey, *W. S. Gilbert: His Life and Letters* (London: Methuen, 1923); and Jane W. Stedman, *W. S. Gilbert, A Classic Victorian & His Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Gilbert and his wife, while social, were comfortably sheltered in the Victorian aristocracy. His father's writings about the poor and destitute, telling the stories of the common people, are in stark contrast to the sugary and light works Gilbert published. It is well documented that he and his father had a highly tumultuous relationship, it is not hard to draw conclusions about the differences in their chosen subject matter leading to arguments about "legit work" or "light frivolities". It is from this unexposed, Victorian lifestyle that a clearer picture of Gilbert's worldview starts to emerge. Beyond the hollow orientalism of the Japanese setting of *The Mikado,* the libretto is studded with lines which further highlight the casually racist and misogynist attitudes of Victorian popular entertainments. Ko-Ko's famous solo aria "As Some Day It May Happen (also known as "I've Got A Little List") is one of Gilbert's signature list arias. Ko-Ko rattles off all sorts of people and professions who would not be missed if he needed to execute them.[27] Most are quite humorous even for contemporary audiences such as "people who have flabby hands and irritating laughs" or "people who eat peppermint and puff it in your face", but the aria also contains much darker lyrics such as "the nigger serenader, and the others of his race" and "that singular anomaly, the lady novelist". As with many lines from the show, in current performance these lyrics are changed, but they suggest a very clear hierarchy in Gilbert's theatrical worldbuilding. A comedic song about the people who could be executed without anyone missing them *is* the perfect set up for biting satire, which the song does contain, but the implication that "the nigger serenader and the others of his race" could all be executed without being missed, and the lyric being laughed at night after night of *The Mikado*'s long run hints at the much more complicated

[27] Number 5a, page 56 in the Schirmer score.

relationship to race the opera has besides its orientalist setting. A similar such lyric occurs in the Mikado's only solo aria "A More Humane Mikado", also a list aria. Here, the Mikado is listing various comedic crimes and their equally comedic punishments as he reveals his stance on criminal justice in an attempt to punish and reform wrong doers.[28] He pledges that the punishment for any old lady who dyes her hair "chemical yellow" or "puce" or who squeezes into a corset in an attempt to "pinch her figger [sic]" is to be "blacked like a nigger with permanent walnut juice". Since it is a piece of its time, and that time is the 1880's, I am hesitantly overlooking the multiple uses of the word "nigger", but whether he uses nigger, negro, darkie, African, or black, the sentiment is the same. Not only is this the type of humor Gilbert exercised, but this is the type of humor that Gilbert knew his audiences enjoyed. This is the lyrical world into which *The Mikado* was born, and since Gilbert also directed the opera, this is the style of directorial worldbuilding that went into the creation of Gilbert and Sullivan's most successful opera.

Arthur Sullivan, the younger of the duo, was also born in London, on May 13, 1842. Sullivan's father Thomas was a military bandmaster at the Royal Military College and taught private music lessons on the side. Mirroring the elder Mozart's position as kapellmeister and the younger Mozart's prodigious musical talent, Sullivan had written his first anthem by the time he was only eight years old.[29] While a member of the Chapel Royal, Sullivan showed great skill as a young composer and arranger for sacred music, and at the age of fourteen in 1856, he enrolled at the Royal Academy of Music with the help of the first ever Mendelssohn Scholarship. At the Royal Academy of Music,

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[28] Number 17, page 172 in the Schirmer score.

[29] Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan,* 100.

Sullivan studied under John Goss, whose own music teacher, Thomas Attwood had studied under Mozart himself.[30] The Mendelssohn Scholarship was renewed four times, and his final two years of formal training were spent at the Leipzig Conservatory -which had been founded by Mendelssohn- where he went on to further study the music of great classic and contemporary composers, such as Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Verdi, and Wagner. This deep education in the style and aesthetics of such a wide variety of composers clearly had a great effect on Sullivan and can be heard throughout much of his compositional output, especially the Savoy Operas which purposefully parody the styles of many composers who came before him.

Sullivan worked as a church organist and freelance composer through the 1860s, trying his hand at opera composition for the first time in 1863 with *The Sapphire Necklace,* the score of which has been lost.[31] He would go on to write additional choral works, ballet, and many pieces of sacred music and hymns (the most enduring being "Onward, Christian Soldiers"), in 1870 his orchestral work *Overture di Ballo* premiered at the Birmingham Festival.[32] Besides his collaborations with Gilbert, *Overture di Ballo* is Sullivan's most frequently performed piece. Perhaps this fact is also fortuitous, it was during its premiere at the Birmingham Festival that Sullivan was introduced to W.S. Gilbert by mutual friend, composer, Frederick Clay. Following the success of their first collaboration, the pair wouldn't work together again until Richard D'Oyly Carte brought

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[30] Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 13-16.

[31] Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan,* 42-43.

[32] Percy M. Young, *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1971), 99.

them together in 1875 for *Trial By Jury*. For the next fifteen years, Sullivan would only collaborate with Gilbert.

As I mentioned above, Sullivan was knighted in 1883, a full twenty-four years before Gilbert was to be knighted. This rift in their relationship, and Sullivan's almost childlike holdout to consider any of Gilbert's edits prior to the submission of the plot of *The Mikado* created a highly charged environment in which to compose. I argue that it was because of this additional strain, and the internal pressure Sullivan imposed on himself, that make the score of *The Mikado* stand out among all of the other Savoy Operas. I am inclined to agree with Marie Eggold, one of the editors of the Schirmer score, that "with the exception of the 'Mi-ya Sa-ma' Japanese military march, all the music in *The Mikado* is really quintessentially British.[33] This sentiment is echoed by a collection of scholars cited in Tarling's *Orientalism and the Operatic World,* usually said in defense of the opera. Sullivan's melodies in many places are simple and easy to hum, while maintaining that slightly pastoral, workhorse quality that has come to be associated with English music, but the orchestrations are never thin or stingy and at times echo sacred music, calling back to Sullivan's years spent playing the church organ. My attempts to describe how music can "sound" English have all fallen short, but in this footnote, I explain how I approach the matter.[34] Upon listening to the score of *The*

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[33] Schirmer score, page xii.

[34] At first I tried to describe this feeling using Elgar or Vaughn-Williams, who both make use of simple and persistent melodies which find themselves applicable to many different circumstances, but felt dissatisfied with this explanation. Sonically the most prominent composer of that country at that time becomes, more or less, the "sound" of that country. Wagner's operas "sound" German because Wagner was such a

Mikado, the music definitely suggests that Sullivan felt as though he had something to prove. As with the other Savoy Operas, especially *H.M.S. Pinafore,* Sullivan demonstrates his mastery of orchestral scenery, the unique skill which allows for the composer's music to sync so perfectly with the libretto and the plot that the music seems to become the set.

Either as an appeasement for writing another collaboration with Gilbert, or out of genuine business interests, Richard D'Oyly Carte commissioned Sullivan to compose a Grand Opera, *Ivanhoe*, with librettist Julian Sturgis. *Ivanhoe* was the only project during all of the Savoy years on which Sullivan did not collaborate with Gilbert. D'Oyly Carte was building a new theatre, with which he had hoped to establish an English tradition of Grand Opera. The Royal English Opera House opened with Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* in 1891, but in an amateurish mistake, had no other operas with which to fill his season.[35] The lack

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domineering force in German composition all who followed incorporated aspects. Italian opera, I would say is very similar, while Verdi's operas have a definitively Italian "sound" they tap into the evolution of the Italian "sound" via Rossini via Donizetti via Mozart's Italian works via Salieri all the way back to Monteverdi and Peri. I urge you to listen to Wagner's overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer* to hear how the sound is built with the French horns and trombones above a froth of strings, in a way that you can only describe as "German sounding". Next listen to Verdi's overture to *Aida* to hear how the playful and inviting violins and violas give way first to the cello and then to the woods and horns to build a sound that -although meant to evoke Egypt- is distinguishably Italian. Now listen to the overture to *The Mikado,* after the opening section which incorporates the "Miya Sama" melody the use of flittering strings and arpeggiating flutes is punctuated with brass and percussion, which melts into the original melody supported first by an oboe and English horn, and then low brass and high strings join in an altogether very English sounding piece of music.

[35] Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *The Theatres of London* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 99-103.

of programming caused D'Oyly Carte to sell the theatre, which still operates today as the Palace Theatre, and Sullivan seemed to be content writing light opera with Gilbert.

The two men have vastly different backgrounds; Gilbert an aristocratic, Victorian gentleman who enjoyed curiosities and light frivolity which came at no cost to him, and Sullivan a firmly middleclass working man who was highly educated in musical style and technique and spent his formative years singing, composing, and playing sacred music. Beyond the emblematic Victorian racial stereotyping seen in Gilbert's libretto, other elements of both Gilbert and Sullivan's life poke through. Gilbert's time as a barrister shows up in the opera's plot, regarding a nonsensical and vague law which works its way in circles allowing for nearly any evidence to suggest both innocence or guilt at the same time; we also see here (as is present in almost all of the Savoy Operas) Gilbert's distaste for corrupt civil servants with no knowledge or skill over the office they become appointed to. Sullivan's desire to "go legit" and compose for more serious opera comes through in the opera's lush score. Although the story, and indeed the libretto itself, is a step backwards in terms of the realism Sullivan craved, his skills as a composer best shine through, not in the famous and memorable melodies, but rather in the large ensemble chorus numbers. Modelling the Grand Opera style reformed by Verdi, Sullivan captures the frenzied emotions of multiple factions in the crowd at once, with four or five voices, woven together almost on the verge of cacophony as a great deal of organ music tends to be. They each brought their experience to bear with *The Mikado,* all they really added, outside of what they had used before, was the Japanese caricature-like setting. As was the case with both Verdi's *Aida* and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte,* it is less about what

makes the opera different from the other Savoy Operas, and much more about the many ways in which it was the same.

Traditions and Norms of the Performance Genre

The style of light opera perfected by Gilbert and Sullivan grows out of their participation in the holiday season pantomimes and burlesques. Beyond the Victorian choral traditions and burlesque pantomimes, there was no real English operatic tradition to speak of, especially in terms of operetta, or light opera, which describes the work of Gilbert and Sullivan. England certainly had opera houses, and often mounted productions of new and revival works by French, Italian, and German opera composers, but the history of light opera in England largely begins with the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations.

As a musical form, operetta emerged as an identifiably separate style in France in the early middle nineteenth century. As the opera scene in Paris grew increasingly serious and ambitious, short comic operatic-style entertainments began popping up as a sort of "easy listening" alternative to the opera seria. While there is an observable connection between the German singspiel which Mozart perfected and the operetta, there are two main distinctions between the terms: time and place. A singspiel specifically refers to any such German light opera, which combines spoken dialogue and sung text, limited to the eighteenth century; whereas an operetta specifically refers to any such light opera from the nineteenth century -when the term "musical" largely takes over at the turn of the twentieth century. Geographically, singspiel is exclusively used in describing German language works, while operetta can be used to describe a light opera work regardless of

language or country of origin.[36] Jacques Offenbach could be called the "father of operetta" really engineering the field with 98 operettas like *Orphée aux Enfers, Robinson Crusoé,* and *Le Roi Carotte.* Offenbach's popularity outside of Paris inspired similar such works in German by Johann "the Waltz King" Strauss, also inspired a revival of the Zarzuela style entertainments in Spain. England embraced Offenbach but wasted no time in creating a homegrown version of operetta, the Grove Opera Dictionary cites Arthur Sullivan's 1866 composition *Cox and Box,* with librettist F.C. Burnand, as the first English example.[37]

Rather unusually, the traditions and norms of the performance genre, which are dictated by previous works in the genre, are in fact still emerging. Since Gilbert and Sullivan *are* the creators of the English operetta, their works establish the traditions and norms of the genre. That is to say that *The Mikado* follows the expected norms of the genre of operetta because the genre of English operetta is defined by the success of *The Mikado.* The Savoy Operas become a type of Ur-text for English language light opera, setting the boundaries which subsequent works would push. Also interesting is that *The Mikado* comes squarely in the middle of the duo's creative output, which I argue is far too early in the formation of the genre to have any real identifiable traditions or expectations beyond the usual working norms for the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the Savoy Theatre. The overwhelming international success of Gilbert and Sullivan's light operas spawns a host of English-speaking light opera composers: Alfred Cellier,

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[36] These definitions have been adapted from the New Grove Opera Dictionary, and hardly convey the full context regarding the intricacies of classification, in both cases.

[37] New Grove Opera Dictionary, vol. III: 711.

Sidney Jones, Leslie Stuart, and Edward German all owe some small debt to the Savoy Operas' popularity. Indeed, the Broadway musical, as a stylistic form, can trace an almost straight line from Gilbert and Sullivan to its current form. The lack of any real copyright laws meant that there were dozens of unauthorized copycat productions, especially in the United States, D'Oyly Carte's repeated attempts to quell this issue will be further detailed in following sections. The appetite for light opera worldwide was voracious, and a large contributing factor to that hunger is exclusively Gilbert and Sullivan.

The Mikado pushes their work both forward and back at the same time. While the level of artistic cohesion achieved in *The Mikado* is probably the greatest out of any of the Savoy Operas, despite the wittiest and more creative libretto of Gilbert's career the plot *is* regressive in terms of the ever more realistic trajectory their work was heading down. Sullivan agreed to compose the score for any plot Gilbert provided as long as it didn't include any supernatural elements, which it does not, but it is hardly the heavy realism the freshly knighted Sullivan was craving.[38] The silliness of *The Mikado* is even more over-the-top than in *Pirates of Penzance* or *H.M.S. Pinafore,* both pieces known more for being clever than being silly. Musically, however, *The Mikado* pushes the Savoy Operas in a new direction, as Sullivan -now Sir Arthur Sullivan- becomes contented again in his partnership, his compositional style reaches a new level of complexity and reference.

[38] Not until *Ivanhoe* would Sullivan get to scratch this gritty, historical itch. Sullivan's only attempt at Grand Opera trafficked in medieval historicism and understood that the audiences would already be familiar with the characters and plotlines of this great English legend.

Musical Style and Influence

The Mikado is regarded by many, David Russel Hulme suggests, because the music is unrelenting in supporting the text.[39] The score is complex by any standard, and especially among the Savoy Operas. Incorporating elements of traditional British music alongside an actual Japanese military march allows for an unusual blend of melodic and tonal sensibilities. Sullivan makes no real attempt to provide any real "local" color or musical orientalism throughout the opera.[40] Much of the score the music is an appropriation of the English madrigal. Madrigals are characterized by their polyphonic nature, which general features two to six different voice parts which each sing different melodic lines to create one textured super melody. Sullivan builds on this by incorporating tunes which resemble traditional English music, as well as sacred songs. The tune for Ko-Ko's entrance march "Behold the Lord High Executioner" is intentionally reminiscent of the old English song "A Fine Old English Gentleman".[41] Other such examples of Sullivan quoting other styles include a very obvious reference to Bach's Organ Fugue in G Minor during the Mikado's solo aria "A More Humane Mikado" and the clever use of winds and horns to create a sound reminiscent of a fox-hunt during the terzet wherein Ko-Ko, Pooh-Bah, and Pitti-Sing recount the beheading of Nanki-Poo during "The Criminal Cried".

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[39] New Grove Opera Dictionary, vol III: 386.

[40] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 267.

[41] Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 167.

Sullivan's signature pulsating strings and bouncing clarinets make their appearance throughout the score and are on supreme display during terzet and chorus "Three Little Maids From School" and the following "So Please You, Sir" quartet. These two numbers are doubly important to the overall style of the light opera as a whole because they were the first thing Sullivan wrote.[42] With these songs, and indeed the balance of them, Sullivan demonstrates his supreme skill is actually rhythm over melody. Sullivan takes the lyric given to him by Gilbert and restructures the rhythm, regardless of the meter Gilbert wrote it, to fit whatever the right feel is for the song. He alters which syllable is stressed or unstressed, he ignores breaks in stanzas and powers through, the overall effect is one that if you were unfamiliar with the score and you just attempted to read Gilbert's lyrics- ignorant of the score- the meter in which they are read and the meter in which they are sung would be totally unrecognizable. This is what makes *The Mikado* the musical flagship of the Savoy Operas. Sure, Sullivan has his own musical style, but he goes so far beyond what is expected and builds an entirely unique, but aware, score.

Besides attempts at musical orientalism through orchestration, the usual drums and cymbals/gongs and flute/piccolo combination which I have discussed at length throughout the previous case studies, the only effort to include Japanese music is the military march "Mi-ya Sa-ma". There are, subjectively, more subtle hints at a more pentatonic sound and possible nods to more Eastern sounding rhythms, like the running sixteenth-note figuration preceding "If You Want to Know Who We Are" or the oboe's

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[42] Robert Fink, "Rhythm and Text Setting in *The Mikado*", *Nineteenth Century Music* 14, no.1 (Summer 1990): 38.

countermelody in Yum-Yum's solo aria "The Sun Who's Rays are All Ablaze".[43] On its own, the "Mi-ya Sa-ma" march is very tuneful, but again Sullivan inverts expectations and constantly plays with tempo and harmony, allowing the "Mi-ya Sa-ma" melody to become an almost-leitmotif throughout the piece. Representing authority, duty, the law, and power all at once, the march appears unaltered with its original text only once, preceding the Mikado's first entrance in act two. Lord Algernon Mitford, First Baron Redesdale, a friend of Sullivan's, had worked in the British Embassy in Tokyo and brought Sullivan some musical inspiration.[44] Lord Mitford provided Sullivan with the music for "Mi-ya Sa-ma", and potentially other tune fragments. I am intentionally vague here when I say that there could be potentially other tune fragments interpolated into the score, while I haven't found any scholarship which teases out any other melodies besides the military march, it is possible that Sullivan inverted them or used orchestration to Anglicize them so much that they are almost imperceptible.

The "Mi-ya Sa-ma" march occupies a very prominent position in the score, besides reappearing as a mock-leitmotif, the entire opening allegro section of the overture is a setting of the march. The overture is structured in three parts, the third is the longest an *allegro con brio* of traditional potpourri style-overture. While *allegro con brio* is a common tempo distinction, it is rather infamous for being the tempo marker of Beethoven's universally known 5th Symphony, a sort of Easter egg that Sullivan likely

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[43] Paul Seeley, "The Japanese March in *The Mikado*", *The Musical Times* 126, no.1710 (August 1985): 456.

[44] John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 194.

placed on purpose. The middle section, a comfortable andante, bridges the two main sections, and the opening allegro which features the "Mi-ya Sa-ma" melody three times. The first time it is almost unaltered. I argue that the first twenty-four bars of the operetta are the "most Japanese" of the entire score from a strictly musical standpoint. The second interpolation of the melody is accentuated with showy brass taking a traditional Japanese military march and placing it in a much more traditional English military march style. The third refrain of the "Mi-ya Sa-ma" melody is in that signature Sullivan style with pulsating, arpeggiating strings underpinning bouncing clarinets, in truth, the last sixteen bars of the opening allegro section sound *so* much like a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta if you heard them elsewhere you could assume that the composer was mocking the duo.

The other major significance of the "Mi-ya Sa-ma" military march is that it is the only instance of actual Japanese language in the entire operetta. The lyric, as it appears in the libretto, is: "Mi-ya sa-ma, mi-ya sa-ma, on n'm-ma no ma-yé ni, Pira Pira su-ru no wa Nan gia-na, To-ko ton-ya-ré ton-ya-ré na!" The authentic Japanese lyric demonstrates the effects of translation: "Miyasan, Miyasan, Omma no mae ni, Hira-hira suru no wa nanjai-na, Tokoton-yare, ton-yare-na!" Attempting a direct translation of the passage as it appears in the libretto is difficult, but if you turn to the original Japanese, the song reads: "Prince! Prince! What is that which flutters there in front of your horse?" The ending refrain, "tokoton-yare, ton-yare-na", are an attempt to transliterate the sounds of a military band.[45] The translation, I posit, has no bearing on the story at all -in fact, it is possible neither Gilbert nor Sullivan knew what the words meant, other than the fact that they were a traditional Japanese military march. To further evidence this fact, there is a

[45] Seeley, "Japanese", 455.

second couplet, which answers the question asked by the first, in the usual call-and-response formant many military musical traditions tend to be. However instead of using the second couplet to finish the phrase, Gilbert and Sullivan choose to repeat the first part again. If a real attempt at authenticity mattered to them, it is likely they would have tried to complete the phrase with the second part of the authentic song. Since the song is there to provide the appearance of authenticity, and not actual authenticity, it doesn't matter if the phrase is complete or not as long as the music suggests Japan. This is the real heart of the operetta's musical orientalism. This is picked up on by reviewers, one review is specifically relevant here, suggesting that *The Mikado* is hardly the Japan of Sir Harry Parkes [famous British diplomat to Japan in the 1860s and 1870s], but a very interesting Japan created in Gilbert and Sullivan's inner consciousness that had little to do with the real Japan.[46]

Stylistically, Japan did not matter very much to the music at all beyond the inclusion of "Mi-ya Sa-ma". Little details will pop out, but there is no real way to be sure if Sullivan meant for *that* phrase to sound like *this* specific Japanese phrase. Far more attention to accuracy and detail way paid in terms of costumes, scenery, and movement. But there is a clear distinction here. Unlike Verdi who set out to write an "Egyptian" opera, Gilbert and Sullivan were writing an English operetta that happened to be set in Japan. Authenticity mattered very little musically or even textually, which leaves the operetta open for a slew of Orientalist critiques. Perhaps that is the chief reason why productions of *Aida* and *Die Zauberflöte* are almost nonstop, while it is a very rare treat to see *The Mikado* onstage today.

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[46] *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,* March 28, 1885. Reprinted in MacKenzie, *Orientalism,* 195.

Social and Cultural Struggles at the Time

As I have detailed above, the creative process around bringing *The Mikado* into existence was relatively insular. Gilbert looked to his past employment in the Privy Office and as a barrister for fodder to spoof the stodgy way of the working aristocracy of Victorian England; Sullivan looked to his past as well, mining his deep training of the music of Mendelssohn, Bach, Spohr, and Beethoven. Japan's willingness to engage in policy and trade deals with the West after long-held isolationist principles led to increasing interest in the island nation and its culture throughout England as early as the 1840s. It is difficult to tell if *The Mikado* is what caused the biggest wave of Japanomania or if *The Mikado* is the result of the biggest wave, but the two are very closely linked.

The Meiji Restoration in early 1868 is directly responsible for the rapid modernization which quickly caught Japan up to speed with European countries.[47] By 1870, owning any Japanese artifacts, bonsai trees, or having a Japanese garden was a major status symbol bolstered by travelling exhibitions depicting slices of Japanese life including a tea ceremony, Kabuki show, and samurai demonstrations. These exhibitions had extended visits in towns all across Europe, in Paris and Milan, or the village which came to Knightsbridge right as *The Mikado* was being written (which went to Berlin before returning to Knightsbridge for nearly three years).[48] Many of the surviving photographs from that exhibition were taking by W.S. Gilbert. *The Mikado*, and the extended London visit of this exhibition, made sure that this wave of Japanomania didn't

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[47] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 262.

[48] Joseph McLaughlin, "The 'Japanese Village' and the Metropolitan Construction of Modernity", *Victorian Internationalisms* 48 (November 2007).

go away. Similar to the wave of Egyptomania which swept up London, but surely the whole world, following Howard Carter's discovery of KV62, the undisturbed tomb of the "Boy King" Tutankhamun in 1922, which caused the Art Deco movement, Japanomania caused the Japonaiserie seen in aptly named "Mikado Rooms" in both English and American estates. Japanese silks, ceramics, and cultural artifacts had been very popular in England for years prior to *The Mikado*'s premiere, even the famous ceremonial sword in Gilbert's library which had given him the idea in the first place is evidence of the far reach the English obsession with Japan had. The adornment of Japonaiserie parlors, so dubbed "Mikado Rooms", is tied specifically to the immediate international success of *The Mikado* by Marie Eggold.[49]

In this sense, *The Mikado* is both in response to- and the cause of- a cultural obsession. Through this lens we are able to view *The Mikado* as the biproduct of Orientalism, and the vehicle through which the Japanese are Orientalized at the same time. Recalling Said's insistence that a fact immediately relevant to Orientalism is the humanistic tradition of involvement in a national culture or literature not one's own.[50] This creates a unique paradox in *The Mikado.* Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta grows out of a national involvement in a culture which is not their own, when read as Japanese. However, many, especially English critics, have made it very clear that they do not view the operetta through a Japanese cultural lens, but specifically a Victorian one. Quoted in multiple sources is the standard quote by G.K. Chesterton, "there is not, in the whole length of *The Mikado,* a single joke that is a joke against Japan. They are all, without

[49] Schirmer score, page xiii.

[50] Said, *Orientalism*, 259.

exception, jokes against England."[51] This quote makes it possible to excise the history of Japanomania in England from the operetta's historiography. This give license to say that Japan is a setting with no real bearing on the plot itself, it becomes the naval vessel, or pirate ship, or Gothic Scotland of the other Savoy Operas. By reducing the operetta's setting in Japan to this sort of unnecessary trifle provides for the argument that it is nothing more than a colorful backdrop for a satire on Victorian British life. This move only accentuates the extent to which the representation of Japan actually enables this particular mode of satire.[52] The opera's setting is not as inconsequential as all that, but rather serves to exemplify Saidian Orientalism. It is not in spite of, but because of the Japanese setting that the English are made to realize how "queer and quaint" their attitudes are. The opera relies on the Orientalizing racial fantasy define who the English are by comparing them to the Japanese. The "ordered" West made "disordered" through comparison with the mysterious Orient. Had Said not have eschewed the Far East in favor of the Near East, he almost certainly would have mentioned the damaging cultural effects of letting *The Mikado* define what a Japanese person is or how their culture functions.

Easy to miss are the libretto's multiple mentions of black Africans and blackface. Mentioned first in Ko-Ko's famous "As Some Day It Should Happen" aria, and then again in the Mikado's solo aria "A More Humane Mikado" the casual use of the word "nigger" feels startlingly out of place, given the setting and milieu of the operetta.

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[51] G.K. Chesterton, "Gilbert and Sullivan," in *The Eighteen Eighties,* ed. Walter de la Mare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 152. Quoted in both Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention*, 161, and in Tarling, *Orientalism,* 262.

[52] Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 161.

Josephine Lee brings these references into sharp focus with what she calls the shared spaces of blackface and yellowface.[53] Although they were slower to catch on in Victorian England than in Reconstruction America, by *The Mikado*'s premiere in 1885, blackface minstrel performances had become a popular form of low entertainment in Britain as well.[54] Both Gilbert and Sullivan had taken in minstrel shows prior to their collaboration.

In 1860, in a letter to his brother Fred, Sullivan notes his excitement at having participated in "a grand nigger performance" while he was still a Mendelssohn Fellow at school in Leipzig; in the same letter he mentions having gone to see the Christy's Minstrels at some point earlier with his brother and father.[55] It is clear from his enthusiasm that Sullivan found the entire situation amusing, describing the fits of laughter that had gripped the theatre during performance, and the boys during rehearsal. The banjo also must have made quite an impression on Sullivan, he mentions it several times, also interesting to note that the line "the nigger serenader, and the others of his race" was first changed to "the banjo serenader, and the others of his race". This change is highly indicative of the close relationship the banjo has with black American culture and how the banjo had been appropriated to serve as an icon of minstrelsy. Gilbert, ever the society gentleman, records in his diary having attended a benefit on March 6, 1877,

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[53] Lee, *Japan,* 87.

[54] For more on the spread of specific minstrel traditions from America to England see: Robert Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface Comic Traditions, From the Old World to the New* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[55] Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life Story, Letters, and Reminiscences* (Chicago: H.S. Stone, 1900), 42-43.

by G.W. Moore, proprietor of Moore and Burgess Minstrels.[56] The evening included a performance, a supper party, and a ball. Gilbert and Sullivan would attempt to recreate the feel of a minstrel show in their penultimate collaboration *Utopia, Limited*, writes Josephine Lee, where in act two the libretto requires the characters to arrange their chairs across the stage like Christy's Minstrels and produce a banjo, set of bones, and tambourines.[57]

In *Blacking Up,* Robert Toll notes that the structure of blackface minstrel shows allowed for a quick succession of different ethnic types such as Chinese, German, Dutch, Irish immigrants, and American Indians.[58] As *The Mikado*'s success spread, so too did imitations of the Japanese-isms depicted therein. As early as November of 1885 the American Thatcher, Primrose, and West Minstrels had created a show they called *The Mick-ah-do,* similar such shows opened by both Haverly, McIntyre and Heath's Minstrels and Carncross's Minstrels throughout the late 1880s.[59]

Regardless of whether you view *The Mikado* as an artifact of the late Victorian era, strictly panning the stodgy English ways, or if you see the operetta as an Orientalist mockery of Japanese culture, the way in which "Japan" is performed in *The Mikado* has

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[56] Jane Stedman, *W.S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 146

[57] Lee, *Japan,* 88. Lee makes two errors in this citation however, she says the title is *Utopia Unlimited,* which is not correct, and she says that it was their last operetta together, when they did one more collaboration after.

[58] Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), throughout chapter 6.

[59] Ibid., 172.

serious cultural implications. Through British Orientalism during its creation, to the exhaustive use and reuse of the subject matter by countless blackface minstrel troupes in the immediate wake of the premiere, it is very clear that ethnicity and race are created in *The Mikado* in the same way that they are created in blackface performances. While yellowface is a more recent term, largely used at first to describe cinematic traditions, Josephine Lee's subheading "the shared spaces of blackface and yellowface" is a perfect example of the stickiness of intercultural performance traditions, while also evidencing the deep connection that not just *The Mikado* has with the history of blackface as a mode of performance, but how this connection ties both *Aida* and *Die Zauberflöte* together with *The Mikado* in relation to the far-reaching historiography of blackface in performance.

Expected Audience

By the midpoint in their career as collaborators, both Gilbert and Sullivan would be well acquainted with their expected audience. Despite being firmly members of the upper echelon, either by birth or by fame, Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte were solidly interested in a middle-class audience. D'Oyly Carte even designed his Savoy Theatre with this in mind. Unlike the interior design of the other prominent theatres in London at the time, Carte wanted a clean white and gold interior with red boxes and deep navy seat cushions; he also eschewed any of the baroque cherubs or gaudy designs that many English theatres are known for so that he did not intimidate or make uncomfortable his target audience.[60] The demographics of the audience during the run are unclear, reviews are the most reliable source here and they rarely comment on the makeup of the

[60] Regina Oost, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Class and the Savoy Tradition, 1875–1896* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 59.

audience unless it was particularly unusual. It would be safe to assume that the subscription holders for the Savoy Theatre would have been the upper class and upper-middle class, while the solid middle would have been a majority of the walk-up ticket buyers. As Carte did not have other investors in the theatre, he maintained control over the management of the theatre, and there were no patronages or Royal sponsors.

The immediate and enduring success of *The Mikado* would have likely brought many to the theatre who would not have otherwise attended, but the theatre building itself played a role in shaping the audience experience. In addition to being the first public building in the world to be completely lit with electric light, the theatre also introduced many things which are commonplace in theatres today, such as numbered seating, free program booklets, and multiple bars throughout the theatre.[61] The word-of-mouth success of *The Mikado* and the interest in seeing the capabilities of electricity at work could have potentially drawn even lower-class families to the theatre later in the operetta's run. *The Mikado* ran for 672 performances during its original run at the Savoy Theatre, which had an 1885 seating capacity or 1,292 patrons. The seats were arranged over three levels: the pit and orchestra level, the dress circle and balcony level, and the amphitheater and gallery level, with 18 private boxes. According to a price structure I found in an original 1885 playbill, the most expensive box seat cost three pounds three-shilling (or around 500 pounds adjusted for 2023 prices) and the cheapest seat at the top of the gallery was as low as one shilling (or around 2 pounds adjusted for 2023 prices. Most of the seats had a price range from seven-shilling sixpence to just four shilling. According to the Dictionary

[61] Robin Wilson and Frederic Lloyd, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The D'Oyly Carte Years*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 29.

of Victorian London the annual income is difficult to pin down due to so much wage discrepancy and periods of inflation and stagnation, however a fair assessment could be as low as one hundred or so pounds annually to as high as seven or eight hundred - leaving room for many outliers on both ends of that spectrum. Regardless, the tickets were priced to be within the relative range of affordability for almost the entire cross-section of London society.

With touring productions and American companies, the audiences shifted, but Gilbert and Sullivan enjoy the same comfort as does both Verdi and Mozart in this respect as well. They were well established and proven talents. The Savoy Operas had a built-in audience thanks to the non-stop hit parade that the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company produced. Thousands would have turned up to see the operetta regardless of its setting in Japan or its biting satire of Victorian society. It was a Gilbert and Sullivan property so people would see it. I get the sense that Gilbert and Sullivan both wrote based on their own taste, it his hard -after reading their letters and diaries- to imagine them writing for any audience other than themselves. It is due to Richard D'Oyly Carte's business acumen as a producer that made the operas not only beloved, but also accessible to as many people in London as possible.

Influence of Directors and Performers

It would be impossible to consider the analysis of *The Mikado* anywhere near complete without discussing the regular players in the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. Like Mozart and Schikaneder when crafting *Die Zauberflöte,* Gilbert and Sullivan knew who would be playing each of the parts in their finished *Mikado*, and wrote the parts accordingly. Each performer specialized in a certain type of role based on their

mannerisms and voice part. It is very easy to look across the Savoy Operas and pick out which parts were all played by the same singing actor. The cast of *The Mikado* included: Richard Temple as the Mikado, Durward Lely as Nanki-Poo, George Grossmith as Ko-Ko, Rutland Barrington as Pooh-Bah, Frederick Bovill as Pish-Tush, Leonora Braham as Yum-Yum, Jessie Bond as Pitti-Sing, Sybil Grey as Peep-Bo, and Rosina Brandram as Katisha. Because the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company used a such a formulaic model in casting and producing their works, many scholars use the name of the leading comedian to delineate time periods in the company's over a century long history.[62] *The Mikado* falls firmly in the heyday of the Grossmith era of the company.

For a few examples of the stock casting the company engaged in, turn to other well-documented Savoy Operas. Richard Temple might be best known for creating the eponymous role in *The Mikado,* but he had a well-established history working at the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. In fact, he was so beloved by the company that, when Gilbert famously decided to cut his only solo aria "A More Humane Mikado", the entire company rallied without Temple's knowledge to petition Gilbert to restore the number - the aria has gone on to be one of the more well-known from the operetta.[63] Over the course of his career with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, Temple would create roles in ten of the fourteen Savoy Operas, including Dick Deadeye in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and the Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance.* Perhaps most synonymous with *The Mikado* is the performance of George Grossmith as Ko-Ko. Grossmith originated the lead roles in

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[62] Wilson, *Gilbert and Sullivan,* throughout.

[63] This story is recounted almost exactly in almost all of the scholarship around *The Mikado.* See also: Tony Joseph, *The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company* (Bristol: Bunthorne Books, 1994), 260.

nine of the fourteen Savoy Operas, however his legacy is shrouded in mystery about his use of recreational drugs. Roles such as Sir Joseph Porter in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and the fast-talking Major General in *The Pirates of Penzance* were his bread and butter; both those roles, and Ko-Ko, are known for their lightning-fast list patter songs, clearly a specialty of his which both Gilbert and Sullivan exploited to great acclaim. Grossmith was always plagued with nerves in performance.[64] In 1935, twenty-three years after Grossmith's death, biographer and actor Hesketh Pearson claimed that Grossmith would inject himself with drugs to calm his nerves, which had been aggravated by Gilbert's incessant pursuit of perfection.[65] Rosina Brandram quickly became the favored contralto of both Gilbert and Sullivan, either originating or quickly usurping the originating singer in all fourteen of the duo's collaborations.[66] Her performances as Little Buttercup, Ruth, and Katisha (in *H.M.S. Pinafore, The Pirates of Penzance,* and *The Mikado* respectively) were widely praised, but she was just as well known for her mezzo roles (Lady Sangazure in *The Sorcerer,* or Dame Carruthers in *Yeoman of the Guard*). Brandram might have the longest history with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, having joined as a chorister and understudy in 1877, she didn't leave the company until 1903, at several points throughout her time with the company she would go on American tours, introducing her signature roles to American audiences.[67]

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[64] Eggold, the Schirmer Score, xii.

[65] Hesketh Pearson, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Biography* (London: House of Stratus, 1935), p. 158

[66] Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan,* 405.

[67] *The Times*, obituary, March 2, 1907.

The performers had a major hand in the success of the Savoy Operas. Their personalities and performance abilities were written into their roles by the creative team, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the performances are set in stone. Over the long performance history of *The Mikado* there have developed many deviations from the original libretto which are now considered -to harken back to Will Crutchfield's article- tradition. In his article about the shifting expectations of opera audiences, conductor Crutchfield asks, "what is tradition?"[68] Listeners of contemporary recordings of *The Mikado* may be familiar with the now-standard "evil laugh" done by the Mikado in his solo aria. While the laugh is now performed by almost everyone who takes up the mantle of the Mikado, and in many cases is expected by the audience, it was not added until Darrell Fancourt made the role his signature from 1925 until 1951. This can be heard on the official 1926 D'Oyly Carte Opera Company recording of *The Mikado,* which features Fancourt. Despite having been recorded more than any other Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, many of those recordings are by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, and even with recordings dating back as early as 1917, the only recording of an original cast member which I have been able to locate and verify is Richard Temple singing "A More Humane Mikado" in 1902. This recording of Temple, singing songs he introduced to the world, is not only further evidence than Fancourt added the laugh during this aria, but

[68] Will Crutchfield, 'What is Tradition?', *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* eds. Roberta Marvin and Hillary Poriss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 239.

also serves as the only instance where we have a clear record of the tempo and cadence of the song as it was originally performed.[69]

Not only were Gilbert and Sullivan similar to Mozart and Schikaneder in the sense that they wrote for a specific company, but they also oversaw the staging of their operas personally. In this respect, W.S. Gilbert served as staging director of all of his operettas, including *The Mikado.* Gilbert enjoyed complete control of the staging his operas, and by all accounts was a ruthless perfectionist. If little attention was paid to "authenticity" when writing the operetta, the opposite is true regarding its staging. Gilbert, and his frequent collaborator and choreographer F. John d'Auban, were so concerned with authentic Japanese movements that they famously brought some of the Japanese women from the Knightsbridge exhibition into rehearsal to demonstrate "authentic Japanese movements".[70] D'Oyly Carte even went as far as to write "management desires to acknowledge the valuable assistance afforded by the directors and natural inhabitants of the Japanese Village at Knightsbridge" in the playbill.[71] This only slightly complicates the narrative. Did Gilbert and Sullivan view the participation in creating *The Mikado* by native Japanese people living in London at the time as a sort of blessing or approval? It is ultimately unclear what the motives were of the company when including these Japanese visitors in their rehearsal process, but it must have seemed important enough to them to include a special thank you in the playbill, very prominently

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[69] Richard Temple, *The Art of the Savoyard,* for the Gramophone and Typewriter Company, 1902, rereleased by Pearl Record in 1973. To listen, search GEMM CD 9991.

[70] Reginald Allen, *The First Night Gilbert and Sullivan* (London: Chappell & Co. Ltd., 1975), 239.

[71] D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, 1885 playbill for *The Mikado.*

just below the cast listing. Gilbert as director was also highly interested in accuracy of costume. The costumes for the ladies of the company were furnished by Liberty and Company, a famous clothing atelier with royal appointments by Queen Victoria, the Princess of Wales, and the Empress of Russia. Reporting is unclear, but at least some - possibly all- of the ladies costumes were authentic Japanese kimonos which Liberty and Co. had altered and embroidered to make more appropriate for the performance of *The Mikado*; some accounts even mention that some of the ladies' costumes were over two hundred years old.[72] The menswear for the production was designed by William Charles Pitcher (who went by the working name C. Wilhelm) and constructed by the fashion house Auguste and Company, here the playbill dictates that they were copied from "Japanese authorities".[73] Grossmith as Ko-Ko even carried with him the famous sword from the wall in Gilbert's library. All the costumes, and the scenic designs by innovative scene-painter Hawes Craven, were used not only for the premiere, but for many years in revival. The costumes were redesigned in 1926 by Charles Ricketts and remained in use until the end of the D'Oyly Carte Company in 1982; Craven's scenic designs were used until finally replaced sixty-seven years later in 1952 with designs by Peter Goffin.[74]

Gilbert as director had just as much influence on the operetta as did Gilbert the librettist. As king of his topsy-turvy worlds, it is fitting that he not only write the worlds into being, but create them through directorial worldbuilding too. Gilbert's intentions are called into question when the racially and culturally insensitive language of his libretto is

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[72] Cellier, *Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte,* 192.

[73] Ibid., 193.

[74] Rollis and Witts, *The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company,* appendix.

held up next to the playbill which goes out if its way to ensure the audience that authentic attention has been paid to the details. The key here might *literally* be Saidian informed dramaturgy. Said makes clear in both *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* that the orientalization of a culture relies on the assurance of authenticity to preserve the value of the imported objects. These objects, which Josephine Lee calls "strategically identifiable Japanese details" are just real enough to help Gilbert create a kabuki mask behind which he can disguise his witty take-down of Victorian patrician culture. The fact that he was himself a member of the Victorian patrician culture, or that he was perpetuating the long history of English patrician orientalism never seems to register with Gilbert. Although, to his credit as director, more than the witty lines or complex music is ever mentioned in a review, critics could not stop singing the praises of the beautiful and "authentic" costumes and scenic painting.

Location of the Premiere

Many of the great composers have complex relationships with the theatres they work in. Richard Wagner built his own theatre, the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, perfectly designed for the production of his operas; Verdi had his favorites, but his work found a home in any theatre; Mozart, when working with Schikaneder, had the advantage of having a permanent company and a permanent theatre, but it was one that they had inherited not built. Richard D'Oyly Carte takes a page out of Wagner's book in this instance and builds Gilbert and Sullivan the Savoy Theatre.

Construction began a little over halfway into the collaboration between Gilbert and Sullivan, and the Savoy Theatre was purpose built for Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. *The Mikado* was the first new opera to have its premiere in this luxurious new theatre. As

I had explained above, there were plenty of reasons for audience members to come and see an operetta at the Savoy beyond the artistic enrichment. The theatre's use of a completely electric lighting system meant that the temperature was much cooler and more comfortable than in every other theatre in London at the time, the elimination of the use of gas and oil lamps also meant that the air was clear and not laden with the heavy smell of burning oil. Both the temperature and the smell are mentioned in multiple reviews from its inaugural 1885 season, some even mention the perfume factory nearby on the Embankment and the sweet smells which made their way to the theatre.

As D'Oyly Carte was the sole investor in the theatre, it made him extremely wealthy. The theatre's manager, George Edwardes, worked closely with Carte to keep luxury high and expenses low. The theatre's daily operating costs were half of the possible daily earnings, guaranteeing a solid fifty-percent profit margin for each performance.[75] This wealth enabled two things: it gave Gilbert and Sullivan the safety-net they needed to write whatever they desired without being in financial jeopardy should a flop occur, and it allowed D'Oyly Carte to pursue other major construction projects.

I mentioned earlier the construction of the Royal English Opera House, built as a venue for Sullivan to explore more of the real of opera seria. While *Ivanhoe* was successful the theatre struggled to put together consistent programming ultimately leading to the sale of the building, which continues to operate today as the Palace Theatre.[76] The most influential project, besides the Savoy Theatre, is certainly D'Oyly

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[75] Sidney Dark and Rowland Grey, *W. S. Gilbert: His Life and Letters* (London: Methuen, 1923), 85.

[76] The Palace Theatre London has continued to occupy a very important place in British theatre. It was the home of *The Sound of Music* for six years from 1961-1968, it was the home of *Jesus Christ Superstar* for

Carte's Savoy Hotel. Still regarded as one of the finest hotels in London, the Savoy Hotel was almost completely financed with earnings from *The Mikado.*[77] Beyond the electric lighting and elevators, which were themselves groundbreaking, the hotel was the first to include private bathrooms in each suite; the hotel was also the launching point for César Ritz, who would go on to become one of the biggest names in hotel management, and Auguste Escoffier, the internationally famous French chef and cookbook author. The Savoy Theatre and its next-door neighbor the Savoy Hotel have become just as synonymous with London as have Gilbert and Sullivan, but D'Oyly Carte was not exclusively interested in London premieres.

A major factor in the Savoy Theatre's success was that it owned the exclusive rights to all of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. In England, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company were the only company licensed to present any of the Savor Operas from their premieres until the official end date on the copyright, in 1961.[78] Weak international copyright laws however, meant that Carte was constantly attempting to thwart spies who would copy down the music and lyrics and open American productions faster that the D'Oyly Carte company was able. With *The Mikado,* Carte had intended to be the first

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eight years from 1972-1980, and it was the home of *Les Misérables* for nineteen years from 1985-2004. Since 2016, it has been home to the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.* The Savoy Theatre presented Gilbert and Sullivan operettas until the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company closed in 1982. After hosting a series of short run play premieres, the Savoy is the frequent home of revivals of musicals, often ones which transfer from Broadway and play a year or two; it is the current home to *Pretty Woman: the Musical.*

[77] From the official website of the Savoy Hotel.

[78] Ian Bradley, *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture! The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.

company to open a production in New York as well, his intent was October 1855, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre.[79] The introduction to the Schirmer score details the personal war that D'Oyly Carte fought against a New York Producer mentioned here and in Carte's diary only as Mr. Duff. I believe this to be James C. Duff, son of John A. Duff, one-time proprietor of the Standard Theatre at 6th Avenue and 33rd, which was demolished in 1909 for Gimbels department store.[80] In an attempt to thwart Duff, upon hearing that he had sent a buyer to London to purchase Japanese silk, Carte used his influence to persuade shop owners not to sell it to American buyers. In Paris, Carte sent a team to buy "all the Japanese silk in Paris".[81] The expense to stop Duff and his company indicates how profitable Carte suspected the American premiere to be. Duff had intended for his production to open in late August, Carte decided to cancel the tour of the Provinces and secretly send his touring company, which had already been in rehearsals, and orchestra to New York instead; Carte beat Duff in the end, opening the authorized production a week before the unauthorized one on August 19, 1885 -the production would run for 430 performances, the longest run at the Fifth Avenue Theatre from its construction in 1868 to its demolition in 1939.[82] Carte was motivated by financial opportunity and Gilbert was motivated by a need to have total creative control over his works, the D'Oyly Carte

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[79] Several sources mention a secret name used for the reservation of the theatre to further thwart other production companies, but I have been unable to confirm this or tease out what the assumed name may have been. It is possible it was booked in as an older one of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas.

[80] Thomas Allston Brown, *A history of the New York stage from the first performance in 1732 to 1901*. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1903), 246.

[81] Schirmer Score, xii.

[82] Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan,* 200.

Opera Company fought hard to continue to ensure that American premieres were by the official company and not unauthorized productions. In fact, many of the current copyright laws regarding intellectual property and performance have their beginnings in the wars which D'Oyly Carte was waging.[83] Ultimately, the success of *The Mikado* and the total saturation of both authorized and unauthorized productions, even its translation into German, Hungarian, French, Russian, Swedish, Dutch, and Italian had very little to do with the location of the premiere. More than any other of their operettas, *The Mikado* assured the financial future for the Gilberts, the Sullivans, and the D'Oyly Cartes. The location was less important to the creation, but became far more important to the legacy, the history of the Savoy Theatre, the construction of the Savoy Hotel, the careers of César Ritz and Auguste Escoffier, and indeed the years-long success of the Japanese village at Knightsbridge owe a great debt to *The Mikado*; perhaps it would be simpler to make the connection here that has been made a thousand times: British wealth, at every level and moment in history, is the direct profit of some form of colonialism or Orientalist imperialism.

Commercial Success

The operetta's overwhelming commercial success is well documented above. *The Mikado* was the mega-hit which permanently placed Gilbert and Sullivan on the pedestals where they are viewed today, the success bolstered the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company for the 97 years it would keep producing works after *The Mikado*'s premiere. Through the

[83] A revolutionary study about the impact of the Savoy Operas on copyright law, and the impact of copyright law on the Savoy Operas: Kenneth Anderson, "G&S: The Copyright Aspect", *Library Review* 22, no. 2 (Winter 1969): 62-66.

constant noise of hundreds of authorized and unauthorized productions there emerge some trends. Major American opera companies, and all English opera companies, followed very traditional guidelines when staging *The Mikado* until the English copyright on the works expired in 1961. Post-1961, without the pressure from D'Oyly Carte to maintain the traditional staging, as Nicholas Tarling points out, there is a huge boom of directors applying their concept to the production.[84]

Two major productions helped bring *The Mikado* closer to playable when considering modern sensibilities, Peter Sellars' 1983 production at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Jonathan Miller's famous 1986 staging for the English National Opera. The Sellars production, Josephine Lee notes, reused many set pieces from *Madama Butterfly.*[85] While the production was careful to remove some of the traditional stereotypes, it unconsciously added new ones. By attempting to create a setting of international cooperation by reframing the story in the context of a multinational company the production Orientalizes Japan again, but through an American Capitalist lens rather than a Victorian English one. The unbalances in power by depicting a Japanese company which presented itself through pastiches of Western (specifically American) popular culture references celebrates the global dominance of American culture without acknowledging the hierarchy of cultures involved in the exchange creates a crisis of intercultural performance. A review quoted in Lee comments, "this *Mikado* is set in our own time -in a Japan so smitten with Western society that it has joined it."[86]

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[84] Tarling, *Orientalism,* 269.

[85] Lee, *Japan,* 152-153.

[86] Ibid., 152.

This picks at the fundamental problem with the success of the operetta, the final word on production, reached through this style of Saidian informed dramaturgy: since the exchange of cultures was so imbalanced during the creation of the opera, any attempt to stage the opera in any modern setting will be just as imbalanced. It is fundamentally impossible to present Japan in *The Mikado* in any form without accidently falling victim to some kind of cultural stereotyping. So how does a contemporary production become as successful as the original? Jonathan Miller and the 1986 English National Opera do seem to get closer than the Peter Sellars production. Beyond its setting in an English seaside resort in the 1920s (a time period itself far enough removed from the Victorian era, but still firmly at the center of English Orientalism), the ENO production carefully removes - either directly or through sleight of hand- all references to Japan and plays the story like a Marx Brothers film. Audiences may be familiar with the filmed version of this production which starred Eric Idle, who had also played the role onstage at the ENO. The key innovation which makes this production more playable than many others is that it introduced the tradition of changing the lyrics for Ko-Ko's "As Some Day It May Happen" aria. Although the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company officially removed the twice appearing "nigger" from the libretto, convention followed that the songs be performed as written while incorporating these new "modern" changes. Since Idle's performance as Ko-Ko with the ENO, tradition has become that every actor singing Ko-Ko has the freedom to write his own verses for the song; generally, the actor playing the Mikado is also given such freedom.[87] Interesting to note about the performance history of the ENO

[87] Some of Idle's lyrics include "There's weightlifters and bodybuilders, and people of that sort, bank robbers who retire to Spain the minute they get caught…" and "The people with pretentious names like

production, only two actors have played Ko-Ko since its 1986 premiere: Eric Idle and Richard Suart. Suart has sung Ko-Ko in every revival of the operetta from 1989 to 2019, in many interviews claiming that he has different lyrics to Ko-Ko's list song every time. In 2008, Suart published many of his lyrics in a semi-biographical work, further lending credence to other performers to update and change the lyrics as they see fit.[88] Despite every effort to avoid offense, there is a palpable disconnect between the black and white seaside resort *mise* created for the ENO production, and Gilbert and Sullivan's libretto and score. A further removal from the work. It is quite the paradox that, in order for the operetta to have success among audiences today, additional distance must be placed between the work and the audience. For the same reason the operetta was such a success when it premiered, is what dooms it for modern audiences. *The Mikado* relies heavily on the hegemonic authority that Orientalism brings to the story to provide the "authenticity" that makes the jokes funny and the satire to work. Because that patrician orientalist worldview is baked into both the libretto and the score, productions which attempt to remove the "authenticity" feel hollow and lack the bite of Gilbert's wit. Perhaps the best place to stage new productions of *The Mikado* is in academic theatres, where the stakes are lower and there is more of an interest in trying new approaches with the security that

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Justin, Trish, and Rolfe; the gynecologist, I've got him on my list…". When I teach this opera in my Musical Theatre class, one of the best received activities all semester is tasking my students to come up with University and pop culture specific references. As a matter of opinion, I think that the Opera Australia production has the best updated lyrics, but they are finely tuned for an Australian audience.

[88] Richard Suart and A. S. H. Smyth, *They'd None of 'em Be Missed* (London: Pallas Athene Publishers, 2008).

comes with academic freedom. Ultimately, there is no safe way to produce *The Mikado,* yet in spite of all of this, it continues to endure as the most recorded and best-selling of all the Savoy Operas.

Conclusions

The two major attempts to adapt *The Mikado* into something new, beyond just staging the operetta as written, both occur in 1938. In discussing the idea of setting the story using an all-black cast, at first Harry Minturn and the Federal Theatre Project seemed to doubt the ability to convince an audience of what they were seeing. Minturn came around to the idea after hearing some of the singers at the Chicago Musical College, which trained black singers. Writing that, "the Japan of *The Mikado* is not a real Japan, but a mythical barbarous land that Gilbert might just as well have called Zanzibar or Nyasaland. If we change the costumes, the dances, and even dared to tamper with the music by adding some primitive rhythms, then we had something do to for our Negro players."[89] Through rehearsal, pianist Sammy Davis Sr. and the ensemble improvised swing-versions of the score, giving the piece its edge; the Negro Unit of the Federal Theatre Project opened *The Swing Mikado* on September 25, 1938.[90] The Great Northern Theatre in Chicago, the home of *The Swing Mikado* was also connected to a luxury hotel, mirroring the production situation of the Savoy Theatre and the Savoy Hotel. Josephine Lee refers to *The Swing Mikado* as the biggest financial hit for the Federal Theatre project, running for five months and grossing over $35,000 (roughly $750,000 when

[89] Bernard Simon, "He Had a Lot of Negroes Handy, So He Heated Up Sullivan Music," *New York Herald Tribune,* March 26, 1939.

[90] Research Center for the Federal Theatre Project, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.

adjusted for inflation).[91] Minturn was very protective of his new work, and his cast, and refused to sell the commercial rights to any producers not a part of the Federal Theatre Project; in the congressional hearings on the Federal Theatre Project specifically cited the loss of potential profit by not selling the rights to *The Swing Mikado* was as evidence of mismanagement, this led congress to close the Federal Theatre Project.[92]

This exclusive hold on the rights of such a successful adaptation made New York producers anxious to bring their own adaptation of *The Mikado* to Manhattan. Producer Michael Todd had attempted to buy the rights from Minturn and the FTP several times, after being unsuccessful he took to making his own adaptation. *The Swing Mikado*, now under the purview of the Works Progress Administration and not the FTP, opened at the New Yorker Theatre in Manhattan on March 1, 1939. Todd's adaptation, *The Hot Mikado* opened on March 23, 1939, down the street at the Broadhurst Theatre. *The Hot Mikado* attempted to outdo *The Swing Mikado* in every way it could, bigger sets, better costumes all done in an Afro-Futurist style, Todd had even cast tap-dance legend Bill "Bojangles" Robinson as the Mikado. To be more competitive, the government relinquished control of *The Swing Mikado* to commercial producers Ulrich and Ericson; their first decision as producers was to move the show from the New Yorker Theatre to the Forty-Fourth Street Theatre, directly across the street from The Broadhurst where *The Hot Mikado* was running.[93] The star-power and large scale of *The Hot Mikado* continued to outperform *The Swing Mikado* which closed after 24 performances at its new home. However, When

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[91] Lee, *Japan,* 84.

[92] Rena Fraden, *Blueprints for a Black Federal Theatre, 1935-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 187.

[93] Lee, *Japan,* 85.

you consider the run of *The Swing Mikado* at both the New Yorker Theatre and the Forty-Fourth Street Theatre, it ran a total of 85 performances, exactly the same number of performances that *The Hot Mikado* gave. Neither show was more successful than the other, in fact, I find it surprising that both were able to run as long as they did. They likely split an audience and would have been far more successful without such direct competition but having two all-black companies performing adaptations of *The Mikado* at the same time across the street from each other is certainly testament to the unique ability Gilbert and Sullivan operettas have to be successful anywhere regardless of the situation.

These tandem adaptations confirm much of the racial suspicion around *The Mikado* by casting race in a different light. By removing the Japanese setting and placing the story in some other exotic and Orientalist locale, the stereotypes become even more clear. The operetta is not concerned with Japanese culture, just any other culture the dominant culture finds interesting. It is easy to read about Sammy Davis Sr. and the company improvising and devising the adaptation and draw parallels to Bert Walker and George Williams working on *In Dahomey*. However, *The Hot Mikado* is a far cry from what Ric Knowles calls "strategic reappropriation".[94] I argue that it is impossible to perform any type of strategic reappropriation on *The Mikado,* because it has no culture to be reappropriated to. While *The Mikado* is a tool of orientalism imperialism, it does not attempt to represent Japanese culture in any way that makes it definitively Japanese enough to repatriate to Japan; it also doesn't quite represent Victorian England one hundred percent either. Despite all attempts at adaptation, *The Mikado* occupies a very unusual liminality with regard to Orientalism. It borrows from a less dominant culture,

[94] Ric Knowles, *Theatre and Interculturalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 63.

but not necessarily in a tangible or real enough way to be able to remove the Orientalism and return it to that culture. The conundrum of *The Mikado* is that it both *is* and *isn't* an Orientalist operetta at the same time. If the two options are: perform *The Mikado* or never perform *The Mikado,* I will always find myself in favor of performance. With deep dramaturgical analysis, and frequent health interactions with the audience, it is hard not to enjoy Arthur Sullivan's music. Even W.S. Gilbert's wit still feels sharp at times. In short, a wagon wheel style analysis, steeped in Saidian informed dramaturgy can solve nearly any problem, not just for Gilbert and Sullivan, but for Mozart and Schikaneder and even Verdi as well.

CODA

My project initially grew out of an interest in opera's reluctance to abandon blackface as a mode of performance. While theatre and film have essentially eliminated the practice since the 1960s, when we see images of actors in blackface the images feel old and offensive, no longer acceptable, not performances you would see in a theatre today. Blackface, however, endures as a mode of performance in opera, often supported by claims of "tradition" or "that's just how opera is done". In spite of relatively constant criticism, opera has been largely immune from institutional change. There are countless examples or recent blackface performance in opera, specifically the operas discussed in my above study.

As I explored above, Said's exploration of *Aida* searches for elements of production which Orientalize the opera. To Said's point, in *Culture and Imperialism,* directorial worldbuilding and large-scale production Orientalize the opera much more than the score or libretto. It never really clicked for me what Said meant exactly, he only briefly mentions the opera. And he doesn't elaborate beyond his initial point. And then Instagram changed everything for me.

In 2019, Russian soprano Anna Netrebko went live on Instagram as she was darkening her skin to sing Aida at The Metropolitan Opera. As fans called out the practice in the comments, Netrebko responded individually to critiques saying things like, "I am NOT going to be white AIDA" and "Black Face and Black Body for Ethiopien [sic] princess for Verdi greatest opera! YES!"

All of a sudden, I understood Said's point. Neither the music nor the text are what makes this opera an Orientalist work, but through the use of blackface the production is Orientalized. The resulting analysis is what constitutes Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy, a form of dramaturgical analysis which considers the structure and organization of power and the mediation of ideas that Said outlines in *Orientalism*. How can Said's analysis of production be applied to other operas? How can Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy be scaled up to include adaptations and musical theatre pieces? This is the idea which becomes the underpinning of my entire project.

My quest to understand and explain Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy led me to Intercultural Performance Theory. My project contributes to the growing body of work reexamining intercultural performance through a more culturally aware and sensitive lens. Across the literature, Said is references or critiqued by nearly every analytical model. The two which I found the most helpful were Pavis' "Hourglass" and Fischer-Lichte's "Interweaving Performance Cultures". This study intervenes by putting together intercultural performance studies and ethnomusicology -not so much starting this conversation, but instead activating a new discussion and reenergizing a new crop of scholarship through theory and praxis.

Recent trends in Ethnomusicology seek to lay out a much more practical and effective form of musical dramaturgy rather than just analyze structure. Despite hearty overlap, there is little scholarship which puts Ethnomusicology so directly in conversation with Intercultural Performance Theory. Any serious investigation of an opera or musical theatre piece must have the requisite tools and vocabulary to discuss the score and libretto adequately. Naomi Andre's theory of Engaged Musicology is

foundational to my project by proposing a way to think, interpret and write about music in performance which incorporates race, gender, sexuality, and politics.

My project grew from an almost obsessive interest in Edward Said's work and an understanding of how he fits in the evolving discourse, especially today. My project seeks to develop an accessible mode of research for theatre scholars, practitioners, students, and lovers. By exploring models from Intercultural Performance Theory side-by-side with models from Ethnomusicology my project proposes a new, hybrid methodology. My use of Saidian-Informed Dramaturgy, and my development of the Wagon Wheel model serve as only the beginning, the jumping-off point for many future studies and continued work bridging the gap between these two fields.

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