

Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama

Edited by Sarah Hibberd

MELODRAMATIC VOICES:
UNDERSTANDING MUSIC DRAMA

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Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>List of Music Examples</i>	xi
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Series Editor's Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxi
Introduction	1
<i>Sarah Hibberd</i>	
PART I MELODRAMA AS GENRE	
1 Music in Pixérécourt's Early Melodramas	15
<i>Katherine Astbury</i>	
2 Operatic or Theatrical? Orchestral Framings of the Voice in the Melodrama <i>Sept heures</i> (1829)	27
<i>Jens Hesselager</i>	
3 Reconstructing Greek Drama: Saint-Saëns and the Melodramatic Ideal	45
<i>Elinor Olin</i>	
4 In a Woman's Voice: Musical Recitation and the Feminization of American Melodrama	61
<i>Marian Wilson Kimber</i>	
PART II MELODRAMA ON THE OPERATIC STAGE	
5 'Si L'Orchestre seul chantait': Melodramatic Voices in Chelard's <i>Macbeth</i> (1827)	85
<i>Sarah Hibberd</i>	
6 Melodramatic Spectacle on the English Operatic Stage	103
<i>Philip Carli</i>	

7	Janáček and Melodrama <i>John Tyrrell</i>	121
8	Dismembering 'Expectations': The Modernization of Monodrama in <i>Fin-de-siècle</i> Theatrical Arts <i>Jessica Payette</i>	137
9	Opera for the People: Melodrama in Hugo Herrmann's <i>Vasantasena</i> (1930) <i>Nanette Nielsen</i>	159
PART III MELODRAMATIC TRANSFORMATIONS		
10	Berlioz's 'Roméo au tombeau': Melodrama of the Mind <i>Violaine Anger</i>	185
11	Be it [N]ever so Humble? The Narrating Voice in the Underscore to <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (MGM, 1939) <i>Fiona Ford</i>	197
12	The Voice-Over as 'Melodramatic Voice' <i>Jacqueline Waeber</i>	215
13	Dismembering the Musical Voice: Mahler, Melodrama and Dracula from Stage to Screen <i>Jeremy Barham</i>	237
	<i>Bibliography</i>	263
	<i>Index</i>	283

List of Figures

- 3.1 Théâtre Antique, Orange. Source: Jules Formigé, *Remarques diverses sur les théâtres romains à propos de ceux d'Arles et d'Orange. Extrait des mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, vol. XIII (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1914), Plate II, facing p. 10. Reproduced with permission from the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library 48
- 3.2 *Cithara Player from the Pantheon at Pompeii*. Source: Camille Saint-Saëns, *Note sur les décors de théâtre dans l'antiquité romaine* (Paris, 1886), facing p. 23. Reproduced with permission from the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library 50
- 4.1 Publicity flier for Jessie Armager Power, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa 66
- 4.2 Title page of B. J. Fernie, *Readings and Recitations for Winter Evenings* (New York, 1895) 68
- 4.3 Emma Griffith Lumm, *The New American Speaker, Elocutionist and Orator* (1910), p. 32 73
- 6.1 Playbill for *The Daughter of St Mark* (1844). Sibley Music Library (Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York) 108
- 6.2 Set design for Act II by the Messrs Grieve for *The Daughter of St Mark* (1844). Sibley Music Library (Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York) 109
- 7.1 Melodrama version (VS2) of no. 3b in Janáček, *The Beginning of a Romance*, autograph (CZ-Bm, Janáček Archive, A 23.517) 130
- 8.1 Bruno Paul, Elf Scharfrichter Programme, date unknown (c.1900–1903) 154

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List of Tables

3.1	<i>Sophocles, Antigone, quatrième épisode: le chœur, Antigone; plus tard, Créon. Saint-Saëns, Antigone, IX – 4e Episode</i>	56
5.1	Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, Act III, scenes 4 and 5	94
7.1	Recitative and arioso numbers in <i>The Beginning of a Romance</i>	128
12.1	Bresson, <i>Le Journal d'un curé</i> : encounter between Doctor Delbende and the priest	232
13.1	Mahler components in the score of Godden's ballet <i>Dracula</i>	245
13.2	Final scene of Act I: the demise of Lucy	248
13.3	Superimposed elements in final defeat of Dracula, 69'26"–72'28"	260

This page has been left blank intentionally

List of Music Examples

2.1	‘Soyez moins cruel pour mon père!’ (Act II, third tableau, scene 7)	35
2.2	‘Délivrez ma patrie!’ (Act III, sixth tableau, scene 4)	37
2.3	‘Ces lumières? attends...’ (Act III, seventh tableau, scene 8)	39
2.4(a)	‘Mon Dieu! Soutiens mon courage’ (Act III, seventh tableau, scene 8)	40
2.4(b)	Mlle d’Armans takes courage (continuation of previous passage)	40
2.4(c)	Mlle d’Armans kills Marcel (continuation of previous passage)	40
2.5	‘C’est moi qui l’ai tué’, censored passage, first eight bars (Act III, seventh tableau, scene 8)	41
2.6	Overture, first 11 bars	41
4.1	Frieda Peycke, <i>Wishful Waiting</i> (c.1947), A82.149, box 2, John Hay Library, Brown University, bars 47–54	80
4.2	Phyllis Fergus, <i>The Usual Way</i> (Chicago, 1914), bars 29–33	80
4.3	Phyllis Fergus, <i>The Usual Way</i> (Chicago, 1914), bars 39–41	81
4.4	Frieda Peycke, <i>Husbands</i> (Chicago, 1942), bars 38–41	82
5.1	Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene, first part	96
5.2	Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene, second part	96
5.3	Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene, conclusion	97
6.1	Myles’s rescue of Eily in <i>The Lily of Killarney</i>	115
6.2	Final bars of <i>The Lily of Killarney</i>	116
7.1(a)	Motif from no. 3b, Janáček, <i>The Beginning of a Romance</i> (VS2), bar 2	131
7.1(b)	Motif from no. 3b, Janáček, <i>The Beginning of a Romance</i> (VS2), bars 5–6	131
7.2	Motif from no. 8b of Janáček, <i>The Beginning of a Romance</i> (VS2), bar 2	131
7.3	‘Ať mám Tě, Tebe horoucí’ from Janáček’s <i>Album for Kamila Stösslová</i> (CZ-Bm, Janáček Archive, D 505 LJ), transcription by Mark Audus	135
8.1	<i>Erwartung</i> , string descents, bars 331–5	144
8.2	<i>Erwartung</i> , disjunct vocal and instrumental phrases, bars 358–64	145
8.3	<i>Erwartung</i> , celesta–harp duet, bars 382–7	147

8.4	<i>Erwartung</i> , convergence of predominant musical devices, bars 418–23	148
9.1	No. 18 ‘Arietta with Duet Recitativo’. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd	174
9.1(a)	Bars 609–617	174
9.1(b)	Bars 622–8	175
9.1(c)	Bars 632–41	176
9.1(d)	Bars 642–52	177
9.2	No. 24 ‘Arioso, Choir, and Duet’. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd	178
9.2(a)	Bars 1510–15	178
9.2(b)	Bars 1516–24	179
11.1	Transcription of ‘Crystal Gazing’ cue. Underscore to <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (MGM, 1939)	206
11.2	‘Over the Rainbow’ and ‘Home, Sweet Home’ quodlibet. Underscore to <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (MGM, 1939)	208
11.3	Cyclone cue, vocal score. Piano/vocal score from <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (London, 1964)	213
11.4	Entrance of Wizard cue, piano/vocal score from <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (London, 1964)	214

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Series Editor's Preface

The *Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera* series provides a centralized and prominent forum for the presentation of cutting-edge scholarship that draws on numerous disciplinary approaches on a wide range of subjects associated with the creation, performance, dissemination, and reception of opera and related genres in various historical and social contexts. The series includes topics from the seventeenth century to the present and from all geographical locations, including non-Western traditions.

In recent years, the field of opera studies has not only come into its own but has developed significantly, going beyond traditional musicological approaches to reflect new perspectives from literary criticism and comparative literature, cultural history, philosophy, art history, theatre history, gender studies, film studies, political science, philology, psycho-analysis, and even medicine. The new brands of scholarship have allowed a more comprehensive and intensive interrogation of the complex nexus of means of artistic expression operative in opera, one that has meaningfully challenged prevalent historicist and formalist musical approaches. Today, interdisciplinary, or as some prefer cross-disciplinary, opera studies are receiving increasingly widespread attention, and the ways in which scholars, practitioners, and the public think about the artform known as opera continue to change and expand. The *Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera* series seeks to move this important trend forward by including essay collections and monographs that reflect the ever-increasing interest in opera in non-musical contexts.

Melodramatic Voices, the second volume to be issued in the *Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera* series, expands the series' remit by treating a genre that has recently aroused notable interest among composers, performers, and scholars – melodrama. The book's editor, Sarah Hibberd, has brought together a varied group of scholars who focus on the idea that the melodramatic aesthetic is central to understanding nineteenth-century musical drama. The essays take multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approaches to the manner in which spoken text, physical gesture, visual image, and music interact to create meaning, dealing with melodrama as a concept and as a process of performance. Although primarily rooted in musicology, the authors borrow methodology from varied disciplines (including film studies, drama, literary studies) and apply them to diverse genres (drama, opera, musical, recitation, film) from disparate countries (for example, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Czech lands) and spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The volume as a whole brings melodrama into debates concerning art music, foregrounding music's role as mediating, disruptive, or autonomous in a multi-

layered narrative. In so doing, it brings to light many once well-known artifacts and places them in a positive relation to history. It thus acts as a valuable corrective to existing historical accounts and provides theoretical background for future study.

Roberta Montemorra Marvin

Acknowledgements

This volume began life as a conference held at the University of Nottingham in September 2008, which was in turn part of a year-long Research Workshop funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to explore ‘Music and the Melodramatic Aesthetic’ through a series of workshops, study days, performances and a festival panel (www.nottingham.ac.uk/music/mma). These events took place under the auspices of the Music Department’s Centre for Music on Stage and Screen (MOSS) and in partnership with Opera North, the British Silent Film Festival (dir. Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon), Lakeside Arts Centre (Catherine Hocking) and a range of participants from different disciplines, including my colleagues at Nottingham – Cynthia Marsh (Russian Studies), Jo Robinson (English Studies), Julie Sanders (English Studies) and Jake Smith (Film and TV Studies) – and from further afield, including Polly Goodwin (London), David Mayer (Manchester) and Susan Rutherford (Manchester), and practitioners Neil Brand (London), Philip Carli (Rochester, NY), Edward Rushton (Zürich) and the ensemble Counterpoise (London). I am extremely grateful to all participants for their enthusiastic support of the project, to staff and students at Nottingham for their involvement and to Roger George, who filmed some of the events for the project website. Further financial support was provided by the Performing Rights Society Foundation for a commissioned ‘modern melodrama’ by Edward Rushton as part of Counterpoise’s specially designed programme of concert and avant-garde melodramas held in the Djanogly Recital Hall. The conference itself was co-organized with Jake Smith, and we had support from Sheila Jones, a team of students, and staff at Hugh Stewart Hall, to all of whom I am very grateful. Above all, I would like to thank the speakers whose papers could not be published here, not only for their presentations, but also for the energy and new perspectives they brought to our discussions and the friendly and collegial atmosphere they helped to create – in the face of the highly melodramatic storm conditions that gave an authentic edge to the weekend. They include Virginia Anderson, Louis Bayman, Gabriela Gomes da Cruz, Robert Dean, Polly Goodwin, Trish Sheil, Jonathan Hicks, Ceridwen Higgins, Ivan Raykoff, Jennifer Sheppard, Jake Smith, George Taylor, Millie Taylor, Sarah Townley and Laura Tunbridge. A practical dimension was provided by Anthony Rooley, who memorably illustrated his paper with live musical examples (with Evelyn Tubb), and Philip Carli, who improvised heroically a historically sensitive piano accompaniment to the (highly melodramatic) film *Within the Law* (1923, dir. Frank Lloyd).

A number of people have contributed in different ways to the preparation of this volume, and I am particularly grateful to Mark Audus, Nanette Nielsen, Nathan Seinen, John Tyrrell and Jacqueline Waeber, and to Roberta Marvin and

Heidi Bishop at Ashgate. Above all, I would like to thank the contributors for their patience and efficiency – and for their enthusiastic and inspiring embracing of melodrama as a *musical* genre and aesthetic.

List of Abbreviations

Sigla

CZ-Bm Brno, Moravské zemské muzeum

F-Pan Paris, Archives nationales

F-Pn Paris, Bibliothèque nationale

F-Po Paris, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra

Other Abbreviations

HHW Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden

YPBC Yale University Paul Bekker Collection (The Irving S. Gilmore Music Library)

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Introduction

Sarah Hibberd

The genre of *mélodrame à grand spectacle*, which emerged in the boulevard theatres of Paris in the wake of the French Revolution, presented its audiences with clear visible and audible signs, expressing the moral struggle between good and evil in dramas of suspense and heightened emotion. In this genre, associated most notably with the dramatist René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, spoken dialogue worked in partnership with physical gesture, *mise-en-scène* and music (usually provided by the theatre's composer). Absorbing (directly and indirectly) the influences of Rousseau's 1770 *scène lyrique Pygmalion*, Georg Benda's monodramas and duodramas written for the French-influenced court of Gotha in 1775 (and performed shortly afterwards in Paris), the technique of obbligate recitative, and aspects of various hybrid musico-dramatic genres including *pantomime dialoguée*, *féerie* and *opéra comique*, melodrama achieved great success in the commercial theatres of Paris in the first decades of the nineteenth century. It was quickly exported across Europe and further afield (establishing itself particularly successfully in England, Germany, the Czech lands and America), and continued to evolve, becoming an important source of inspiration for the creators of opera and other forms of music drama, including early cinema.

The genre has traditionally been ignored by musicologists, owing in part to its simple, clichéd vocabulary (involving such elements as tremolo strings, diminished-seventh chords and swirling scalar runs to convey atmosphere), the ephemeral nature of its materials (scores were rarely published) and scant evidence of its reception (the musical component was largely ignored by theatre and music journalists alike). Indeed, the term 'melodrama' when used in musical circles has tended to refer to the parallel German tradition of 'concert' melodrama – the recitation of highly dramatic poems with musical (usually piano) accompaniment – which derived from Benda's example and evolved in the hands of such composers as Schubert, Schumann and Strauss.¹

This volume is a response to the new musicological interest in melodrama that has emerged since the early 1990s, as part of the discipline's more general embracing of popular and hybrid works outside the canon. The essays take as

¹ My differentiation of French/theatrical/popular and German/concert/élite branches of melodrama (and literary vs musicological interest) is based on Jacques Van der Veen's conception of theatrical and musical or concert traditions outlined in *Le Mélodrame musical de Rousseau au romantisme: Ses Aspects historiques et stylistiques* (The Hague, 1955), and developed by subsequent scholars.

their starting point the idea that the melodramatic aesthetic is central to our understanding of nineteenth-century music drama (arguably even nineteenth-century music *tout court*). In so doing, they offer a counterpoint to Peter Brooks's influential work *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976, reissued in 1995), in which melodrama – specifically the early nineteenth-century Parisian stage genre – is offered as a mode underpinning modern literature.² Brooks argues that such realist novelists as Balzac and Henry James created fiction using the particular rhetoric, aesthetic of excess and moral polarities that characterize melodrama. In contrast to Brooks and his literary approach, the authors in this volume put music and the performance process at the centre of the story, and explore the different ways in which text, visual image, music and interpretation combine to create specific meanings and effects in melodrama (of both theatrical and concert traditions), and trace the evolution and transformation of this relationship through a selection of operas, films and other hybrid musico-dramatic works.

Although musicological interest in melodrama is relatively recent, Brooks's *The Melodramatic Imagination* was part of a rich seam of scholarship in literary, theatre and film studies that viewed Pixérécourt's dramas as embodying the anxieties of modern society, at a time of unprecedented moral, cultural and socio-economic uncertainty. The film scholar Ben Singer has pointed out that Brooks's influential volume was in fact just one of many publications during the late 1960s and early 70s that 'suspended aesthetic evaluation' of the genre and instead focused on melodrama as 'a generic system with interesting psychosocial implications'.³ Moreover, Singer notes, a decade later film historians (often inspired by Brooks) were similarly drawn to the genre: Marxists who looked to 1950s and 60s Hollywood family melodramas (notably those of Douglas Sirk) as critiques of bourgeois culture, and psychoanalytic and feminist critics who focused on their (female) protagonists and audiences. As Singer implies, critical consideration of melodrama's simple though multi-layered aesthetic make-up has proved less attractive to scholars than its ideological and political resonances. In his study of Victorian sensation melodramas on stage and screen, however, he understands melodrama as both specific historical object and pervasive mode spanning different genres and periods, setting its political and aesthetic characteristics in dynamic tension. He opens the way for this process by presenting melodrama not as a fixed genre with specific characteristics (its diverse manifestations in different times and places make this an almost impossible task), but as a 'cluster concept', involving different combinations of two or more constitutive elements applicable to stage and screen: strong pathos, heightened or overwrought emotion, moral polarization, nonclassical narrative mechanics and spectacular effects or

² Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995).

³ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York, 2001), p. 3.

sensationalism.⁴ Such constitutive elements – characteristic of operas, ballets and programmatic orchestral works as well as plays and films – feature in the repertory analysed in this volume, and the ‘cluster concept’ helps to illuminate their common melodramatic essence.

Singer also highlights the characteristic most often associated with melodrama (and focused on by Brooks): its excess. This association was made explicit in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith’s short essay ‘Minnelli and Melodrama’ (1977), in which he argued that melodrama was subject to a kind of textual ‘conversion hysteria’, generating psychic energies which the narrative represses and which are instead siphoned off through other means of expression such as *mise-en-scène* and music.⁵ This idea of excess has proved to be particularly attractive to opera historians, and Peter Brooks has understood the ‘hystericized’ operatic voice as expressing and resolving passion in a manner akin to the bodily contortions of the melodramatic actor.⁶

Critical consideration of music *within* melodrama, however, is rare among literary, theatre and film scholars. Brooks mentions music only in passing in *The Melodramatic Imagination*.⁷ And it is virtually ignored in more recent volumes of collected essays that (ironically) foreground the importance of an interdisciplinary approach: *Melodrama: Stage – Picture – Screen*, edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook and Christine Gledhill (1994), and *Mélo-drames et roman noirs, 1750–1890*, edited by Simone Bernard-Griffiths and Jean Sgard (2000), for example, each contain just one essay dealing specifically with music, and it is virtually ignored as a component of melodrama in the remaining essays.⁸ However, the following quote from a *Traité du mélodrame*, written in 1817 – at a time when the boulevard genre had established itself in France – makes clear music’s importance and function:

Everyone knows the power that music has [had] on the mind, since the Greeks. Today, although less widespread than in ancient times, music still gives great

⁴ Ibid., pp. 7 and 44–9.

⁵ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘Minnelli and Melodrama’, *Screen*, 18/2 (1977): pp. 113–18; discussion in Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, p. 39.

⁶ Peter Brooks, ‘Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera’, in Mary Ann Smart (ed.), *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 118–34: ‘it is as if the hystericized voice of the operatic aria – where voice has become, in the manner of the melodramatic body, symptomatic of an extreme situation, an emotional impasse – expresses and resolves passion, works it through in an internal dialogue of passion and measure, that of song’, p. 126.

⁷ Although he does acknowledge music’s importance to melodrama’s affect and effects, and even suggests that melodrama finds ‘one possible logical outcome in grand opera ... where melody and harmony, as much as the words, are charged with conveying meaning’; Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 49.

⁸ Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook and Christine Gledhill (eds), *Melodrama: Stage – Picture – Screen* (London, 1994); and Simone Bernard-Griffiths and Jean Sgard (eds), *Mélo-drames et roman noirs, 1750–1890* (Toulouse, 2000).

courage to soldiers, awakens enthusiasm in the hearts of the people, carrying them to great crimes or great virtues, it is music that, finally, calms savage mores and imperceptibly prepares the progress of civilization. With such qualities it must naturally be included in melodrama. It is also good at preparing: its sounds are heard at the start of each scene, it announces the characters who will appear. If the whole orchestra, acting together, produces muted lugubrious sounds, it is the tyrant who approaches and the whole auditorium trembles; if the harmony is sweet and soft, the unfortunate lover will appear before long, and all hearts become tender; but if the cadence becomes lively and playful, the naïf is not far away In fights, it is the orchestra that makes some of the loudest noises. In effect, when the heroes come to blows all the instruments thunder, whistle or roar in unison: in general fights, the sounds deliver, as it were, battle; in individual fights, the clashing of arms is heard under the bows of the musicians.⁹

Although music's power is clear, its formulaic use in melodrama to establish atmosphere and character as presented in the *Traité* perhaps helps to explain its neglect in modern academic writing. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have carried out important foundational work, describing the use of music in specific melodramas and speculating about the responses of actors and audiences. Nicole Wild, for example, set out the nature and function of music in Parisian melodramas during the Restoration, using newly discovered orchestral materials from the Théâtre de la Gaîté.¹⁰ She identified four musical forms: the short intervention (underscoring action, punctuating text, or providing breathing space for actors), the instrumental 'air' (a well-known tune whose (unsung) words might comment on the action), the brief aria, and music for pantomime or dance. From the late 1820s, the autonomy of music in these works increased, with more structured and refined interventions and more varied instrumentation. Anne Dhu Shapiro has similarly offered examples of the use of music in American melodramas, noting how the alternation of speech and music gave way in the mid-nineteenth century to 'a more organically conceived – and generally more sparse – use of music within the drama'.¹¹ She discusses the work of the French émigré Victor Pelissier (active in New York and Philadelphia), who was well known for providing new

⁹ A! A! and A! [Abel Hugo, Armand Malitourne and Jean Joseph Ader], *Traité du mélodrame* (Paris, 1817), pp. 54–5. The treatise traces melodrama's roots back to Rousseau (and even further, to the 'genre mixte' of Diderot, Mercier and Retif), emphasizes the importance of the Revolution in creating a demand for heightened emotion and the grandiose, and then continues in the manner of an instruction manual, citing Pixérécourt (the Corneille of melodrama) and Caignez (Racine) as models for young 'mélodramaturges', detailing everything from ideal plot, characterization and conventional devices to music.

¹⁰ Nicole Wild, 'La Musique dans les mélodrames des théâtres parisiens', in Peter Bloom (ed.), *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties* (Stuyvesant, NY, 1987), pp. 589–609.

¹¹ Anne Dhu Shapiro, 'Action Music in American Pantomime and Melodrama, 1730–1913', *American Music*, 2/4 (1984): pp. 49–72, here p. 60. See also 'Nineteenth-Century

scores for the French melodramas that found their way to America via London. More recently, Michael Pisani has elaborated on the ways in which practitioners in London and New York followed French (and German) models, and revealed the flexibility of terminology and the blurring of the apparent divide between theatrical and concert traditions.¹² In London, he claims, the term ‘melodrama’ or even ‘mélodrame’ had a meaning distinct from the genre: it signified music used to underscore any dialogue – including Weber’s four melodramas for the Covent Garden production of *Oberon* in 1826 and Mendelssohn’s melodramas scattered through his *Antigone* at the same theatre in 1844 – and a range of plays in the popular theatres. The theatre and film scholar David Mayer has written widely on melodrama in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America and Britain, and explored the transition from stage to screen.¹³ By this time, theatre composers tended to compile accompaniments to melodramas from pre-existing ‘melos’ to suit the particular mood required. Mayer has also considered the importance of music in helping the actors move: stance and gesture were used to illustrate and heighten the emotional subtext of the drama, while music ‘assisted the fluidity and emotion of the actor’s gestures, allowing performers to create meaning as their gestures extended, withdrew, hesitated, collapsed’.¹⁴ The orchestra’s capacity to convey narrative to the audience has also attracted scholars of film music. Claudia Gorbman, Martin Miller Marks and David Neumeyer have each rooted their analyses of early film music in stage practices of the nineteenth century, demonstrating the continuation of techniques of melodrama and opera (including the use of reminiscence motifs and common topoi such as hunting horns).¹⁵

On the back of this foundational scholarship, since the early 1990s there has been an awakening of a more critical interest in melodrama as a musico-dramatic genre – in its own right, and in relation to other genres. Emilio Sala’s important

Melodrama: From *A Tale of Mystery to Monte Cristo*’, *Harvard Library Bulletin: Bits and Pieces, Music for Theatre*, new series 2/2 (1991): pp. 57–73.

¹² Michael Pisani, ‘Music for the Theatre: Style and Function in Incidental Music’, in Kerry Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 70–92.

¹³ See, for example, David Mayer (ed.), *Henry Irving and The Bells* (Manchester, 1987), with introductions to the use of music in melodrama, and to the score of *The Bells*; and ‘Encountering Melodrama’, in Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, pp. 145–63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152. On ‘melos’, see David Mayer and Matthew Scott (eds), *Four Bars of ‘Agit’: Incidental Music for Victorian and Edwardian Melodrama* (London, 1983). For descriptions of music’s role in specific Victorian melodramas (and contemporary reaction), see David Mayer, ‘The Music of Melodrama’, in David Bradby, Louis James and Bernard Sharratt (eds), *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama* (Cambridge, 1980), 49–64.

¹⁵ See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London, 1987); Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (Oxford, 1997); David Neumeyer, ‘Melodrama as a Compositional Resource in Early Hollywood Sound Cinema’, *Current Musicology*, 57 (1995): pp. 61–94.

study *L'opera senza canto* (1995) combined literary and musical approaches in order to establish the essence of early French melodrama (from Rousseau to Pixérécourt) and its subsequent influence on Romantic theatre of the 1830s.¹⁶ He saw melodrama as a genre in which dialogue leaves space for the body to speak directly, and in which music's primary function is to make such bodies audible. A number of scholars have been drawn more specifically to melodrama's influence on Romantic opera. David Charlton, for example, has explained how the 'logical step' in converting melodrama into opera came as early as 1782, with Jean Frédéric Edelmann's *drame lyrique* for the Opéra, *Ariane*, adapted by Pierre Louis Moline from Benda's *Ariadne*.¹⁷ For Charlton, the 'melodrama model', which he finds in a variety of operas in the 1780s, is 'a type of extended scene not (necessarily) containing speech [that] combined mostly through-composed music with dramatic events, including some element of pantomime, integrally structured towards some climactic moment that was itself theatrically and visually conceived'.¹⁸ A number of scholars have considered the more literal inclusion of melodramatic episodes – musically accompanied spoken passages – in French operas from the Revolutionary decade (including Lesueur's *Paul et Virginie*, 1794) and in subsequent German operas (most famously in the dungeon scene in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, 1805, and the Wolf's Glen scene in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, 1821), together with the use of incidental music in such works as Beethoven's *Egmont* (1810).¹⁹ A particularly rich field in opera studies has focused on melodrama's metamorphoses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: for example, Mary Ann Smart has analysed how the synchronization of music and gesture so typical of melodrama has evolved through the nineteenth century in operas by Auber, Meyerbeer, Bellini, Verdi and Wagner in her monograph *Mimomania* (2004);²⁰ Emanuele Senici has considered the 'melodramatic morality' of *opera seria* in connection with Verdi's *Luisa Miller* (1849);²¹ and Nathan Seinen has explored the influence of melodrama on Prokofiev's *Semyon Kotko* (1939).²²

Alongside such opera-orientated studies, Jacqueline Waeber's *En musique dans le texte* (2005) has established a theoretical framework in which to understand the

¹⁶ Emilio Sala, *L'opera senza canto: Il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice, 1995).

¹⁷ David Charlton, 'Storms, Sacrifices: The "Melodrama Model" in Opera' [expanded from a 1985 article], in *French Opera 1730–1830*, vol. 10, pp. 1–61, here p. 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

¹⁹ See, for example, Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte: Le Mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris, 2005).

²⁰ Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

²¹ Emanuele Senici, 'The Politics of Genre in *Luisa Miller*', in Senici, *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 143–80.

²² Nathan Seinen, 'Prokofiev's *Semyon Kotko* and the Melodrama of High Stalinism', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 21 (2009), 203–36.

technique of melodrama – the interplay of music and text (speech and gesture) – in a variety of hybrid works.²³ She roots her discussion in the eighteenth-century proto-melodramas of Rousseau and Benda and then traces the evolution and transformation of the concert tradition – demonstrating its occasional meeting with staged melodrama and opera – through the imaginary theatre of Berlioz and Schumann, the interiorized dramas of Liszt, Mendelssohn and Massenet, the *Sprechstimme* of Humperdinck and Schoenberg, the hybrid works of Honegger – and the melodramatic recitations of Ernst von Possart and Ludwig Wüllner. The division between concert and theatrical traditions, as Waeber emphasizes, is not always clearcut. While Peter Branscombe has contextualized Schubert's melodramas (and passages of melodrama) in both the music-making culture of the salon and the theatrical traditions of Vienna,²⁴ Laura Tunbridge has offered Schumann's *Manfred* as an example of the ways in which concert and theatrical traditions of melodrama merged or even became alternative performance choices. She asserts that the coupling of spoken declamation and musical accompaniment is an inherently theatrical gesture, and explains how *Manfred* was sometimes presented as a theatrical rendition, sometimes spoken by a single actor. Schumann's realization of Byron's 'metaphysical drama' has even been perceived as belonging neither to stage nor concert hall, but to the imagination – as 'mental theatre'.²⁵

In short, recent trends in musicology have revealed not only the varied manifestations of melodrama during the (long) nineteenth century, but also its generic flexibility and profound influence on theatrical and concert genres and practices. This volume builds on such developments, and aims to theorize melodrama as an aesthetic 'mode' of music drama, revealing ways in which meanings and effects can be constructed in scenes of high emotion and moral conflict through the interrelationship of music and speech, and/or gesture, and/or image. More specifically, it traces the complex and fluid relationships between music and 'non-music', and celebrates the visceral impact of melodrama which is at least as important as the narrative meanings and metaphors it contains. In this manner, the volume confronts through the lens of melodrama two ideas that

²³ Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*. See my review of this work in *Music & Letters*, 91/1 (2010): pp. 112–15.

²⁴ Peter Branscombe, 'Schubert and the Melodrama', in Eva Badura-Skoda and Peter Branscombe (eds), *Schubert Studies: Problems of Style and Chronology* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 105–141. Branscombe emphasizes the fluid boundaries between genres in his consideration of melodrama's reach in Vienna during Schubert's lifetime, noting the melodramatic episodes in biblical dramas, Romantic plays and magic plays, as well as those in Mozart's *Zaide* and *Thamos, König in Ägypten* and Beethoven's contributions to *Egmont*, *Die Ruinen von Athen* and *König Stephan*. Schubert used melodrama in five works (between 1813 and 1826), most extensively in *Die Zauberharfe* (1820).

²⁵ Laura Tunbridge, 'Schumann's *Manfred* in the Mental Theatre', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15/2 (2003): pp. 153–83.

have been a focus of scholarly research in recent years, both rooted in writings by Carolyn Abbate: voice and presence.

The relationship between music and text (speech and/or gesture) in melodrama during the long nineteenth century was essentially one of continuing experimentation and creative innovation that foregrounded the play of competing voices. Music's importance in supporting the narrative as it unfolds in word or gesture has been acknowledged. But melodramatic music can also offer alternative narrative voices (inner voices, absent or imagined characters, the voice of authority), transport us through time or between real and imagined worlds, and tell us how to respond to the actual voices we hear.²⁶ Abbate has emphasized nineteenth-century opera's 'polarity between phenomenal and noumenal music',²⁷ but melodrama – and, as David Charlton has demonstrated, *opéra comique*²⁸ – had begun to establish in the eighteenth century a complex play of levels, dramatic registers and (spoken and sung) voices that were to evolve in the nineteenth century in a variety of hybrid dramatic genres, and further develop in twentieth-century cinema. Different layers of music and text interact, and offer up uncanny disruptions and juxtapositions.

Of course, music – particularly melodramatic music – also operates at a more visceral level, overwhelming our senses and by-passing our critical faculties. Indeed, melodrama positively revels in what Jeremy Barham, in his chapter in this volume, describes as the 'extravagant *jouissance* of its theatricality'. In her 2004 essay 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic?',²⁹ Abbate criticizes the way in which scholarship tends to suppress our direct relationship with music in performance, by elevating a search for meaning above our experience of a work in the present. She reminds us that truths are 'made monumental and given aura' by music. In other words, music's 'drastic', carnal state, its powerful, physical impact, may be unintellectual, but it has value. Of course, these oppositional dimensions – the intellectual and the sensual, interpretation and experience – are not mutually exclusive. The scholarly reception of melodrama has traditionally focused on its 'meanings' and been dismissive of its effects, yet its visceral power in the moment gives force to its political, social and moral significance, and music is central to this alchemy.

As the chapters in this volume demonstrate, then, this particular and powerful combination of meaning and sensation can be understood as the essence of

²⁶ This quality has been discussed in detail, with reference to a variety of works (including most extensively those of Benda), and is seen as a defining characteristic of melodrama by Waerber, *En Musique dans le texte*.

²⁷ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 1991).

²⁸ David Charlton, 'Continuing Polarities: Opera Theory and Opéra-comique' [expanded from a 1992 article], in *French Opera 1730–1830*, vol. 2, pp. 1–50, here pp. 12–13.

²⁹ Carolyn Abbate, 'Music: Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30/3 (2004): pp. 505–536.

the melodramatic, a mode which has rejuvenated opera at key moments in its history, and been an inspirational source for creative innovation in the symphony, film, and modern ballet. The chapters collectively encourage us to seek what is melodramatic within the discourse experienced as a whole, not only within its constituent elements, and in so doing to re-evaluate the relationship between the aural and the visual (can we see with our ears?), and acknowledge the role of the imagination. They do not offer a comprehensive interpretation of the genre and its influence, but rather point to current areas of scholarly interest. They are arranged loosely in three complementary sections: Melodrama as genre, Melodrama and the operatic stage, and Melodramatic transformations.

The first section throws new light on traditions of melodrama in France and America. Katherine Astbury takes a fresh look at Parisian boulevard melodrama, considering contemporary perceptions of music's importance to the genre, and analysing ways in which its role was already evolving in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when it was still in its infancy. She discovers that music does not always appear where one would expect, and that its potential to satisfy the political and emotional demands of the audience was already being recognized. Such musico-dramatic interaction thus provides a useful index of the public mood during the First Empire. In his consideration of Ducange and Bourgeois's melodrama *Sept heures* (1829), Jens Hesselager sets out to understand the quasi-operatic interpretations of the melodramatic voice proposed by Brooks and others. He challenges our theoretical understanding of the melodramatic by examining the music that was actually performed within a melodrama, and proposes that negotiations between operatic and theatrical qualities of the voice were key to the development of the genre at this time. He also reveals that the censors seem to have been far more attuned to music's power in the theatre than we have tended to assume. Elinor Olin considers a very different understanding of melodrama in France, at the other end of the century: namely Saint-Saëns's employment of speech and music in his musico-archaeological quest to de-mystify the secrets of dramatic performance in the ancient world. His setting of Sophocles's *Antigone* (1893) included passages to be declaimed, labelled 'melodrama', supported by 'musical embroidery' in the orchestra and using Lydian and Dorian modes, which Saint-Saëns believed to be most suitable for conveying the ethical and moral situations at stake. His overarching aim was to reshape the physical surroundings of the Théâtre Antique in Orange, where the work was performed, into a cultural artefact via musical expression. Concluding this section, Marian Wilson Kimber focuses on an important American tradition of melodrama – accompanied declamation – and its increasing popularity with women from the end of the nineteenth century. Rooted not so much in the concert tradition but in that of elocution training, and forming a subgenre in its own right, this form of melodrama was widely performed in public and domestic spaces well into the twentieth century.

The exchanges and tensions between opera and melodrama can be understood as a (partial) collapsing of the boundaries between high and low culture in the nineteenth century. On one hand, the techniques of melodrama absorbed by

opera were not only part of an expanding aesthetic palette for music drama, but were also part of the broader project to make opera more attractive to wider and larger audiences (both for financial reasons and for prestige on the national and international stage). On the other hand, melodrama's emergence in the wake of the French Revolution in theatres frequented by the lower middle classes has lent it a dubious reputation, and it has on occasion been seen as a vehicle for subversion, or at least as an expression of democratic sentiments. The second group of essays explores melodrama's role in rejuvenating opera – artistically and politically – in France, England, the Czech lands and Germany.

Sarah Hibberd explains how critics of an experimental *tragédie lyrique* for the Paris Opéra, Chelard's *Macbeth* (1827), recognized the composer's dramatic instincts and ambitions as being rooted in the diverse traditions of melodrama. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene demonstrates Chelard's interest in creating a heterogeneous narrative in which music, voice, gesture and orchestra worked discursively and reached new heights of expressivity and contrast, although it seems that audiences were unappreciative of this innovative approach and bemoaned the lack of musical beauty. Philip Carli analyses the spectacular concluding tableau of Julius Benedict's opera *The Lily of Kilarney* (1862), demonstrating ways in which both the text and the role of music were developed in this adaptation of a pre-existing melodrama, and situating the work in the context of critical attitudes to melodrama in England at this time. John Tyrrell explores the influence of both concert and theatre traditions of melodrama on Janáček (especially via Zdeněk Fibich), and his fluctuating views about its expressive capabilities in different contexts. His sensitivity to the inherently different pacing of words and music, his developing theory of 'speech melody' and his own experiments in the form and technique led him to conclude that melodrama was inferior to opera on the public stage – though intriguingly a final private piece suggests he still valued its power to heighten emotion. Twentieth-century monodramas are often equated with solo operas and melodramas, and rarely acknowledged as coming from a distinct and unified tradition. Jessica Payette's examination of Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung* (1909) foregrounds its progressive musical vocabulary on one hand, and its influences from cabaret sketches depicting eroticized women on the other. The decision to set such a portrait of feminine hysteria as a monodrama – with its 'experiential' effect on the audience, as opposed to the affective impact of melodrama or opera – had profound consequences for the work's reception during the twentieth century. In contrast, Nanette Nielsen explains how the inherent melodramatic qualities of the Sanskrit play on which the libretto for Hugo Herrmann's *Vasantasena* (1930) was based encouraged the composer and the producer – Paul Bekker – to develop the relationship between music, text and stage in order to attract new, younger audiences to opera, as it struggled to hold its own against contemporary mass culture – particularly cinema. Melodrama rather than film was the primary inspiration, as both men believed that opera needed to renew itself from within the world of theatre, and it was seen as a means of bridging the gap between tradition and modernism.

The final section explores some of the diverse ways in which melodrama has influenced the development of other musico-dramatic genres. Violaine Anger explains how the acting style of the English theatre troupe performing Shakespeare in Paris in the 1820s provided inspiration for Berlioz's *symphonie dramatique Roméo et Juliette* (1839). She argues that he translated their physical movement and innovative acting style into music, creating in the sixth scene, 'Roméo au tombeau des Capulets', a 'melodrama of the mind' in which orchestral timbre becomes crucial to differentiating between characters and between spoken and sung voices. Fiona Ford also focuses on the orchestra, tracing the development of orchestral underscore from late nineteenth-century stage melodrama to film, analysing its effect in the 1939 MGM musical *The Wizard of Oz*, and in the first licensed stage production in the 1940s. She contextualizes the melodramatic cliché – the tremolo, the diminished seventh, and so on – in wider Western musical traditions in order to explain its continuing survival, and considers its relationship with the text and movement. Jacqueline Waeber resists a critical tendency to see in melodrama the 'fusion' of music and speech. The fact that melodramatic speech never becomes irrevocably 'musicalized' is the starting point for her discussion of melodrama's legacy to film. The use of voice-over in films by Alain Resnais and Robert Bresson (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961; and *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne*, 1950, respectively) demonstrates the liberation of voice from its musical surroundings. Finally, Jeremy Barham reveals how recent associations of Mahler's symphonies with the Victorian vampire myth are not as surprising as might at first appear. Mark Godden's ballet *Dracula* (1998) and Guy Maddin's filmic reimagining of it, *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary* (2002), harness Mahler's music (and its melodramatic gestural language) to foreground the moral opposition at the heart of the drama. Maddin's self-reflexiveness in returning to a culturally archaic artform echoes that of Mahler himself: melodrama is revealed as 'a postmodern artform *avant la lettre*'.

Collectively, these essays demonstrate some of the ways in which scholars view melodrama as key to understanding the interaction between visual and aural components, and between narrative, sensational effect and wider political meaning, in a variety of thrilling – often highly experimental – music-dramas.

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PART I
Melodrama as Genre

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Chapter 1

Music in Pixérécourt's Early Melodramas

Katherine Astbury

René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt (1773–1844) is generally recognized as both the inventor of popular boulevard melodrama and its most successful exponent. Music is an integral part of his plays, yet its role has only briefly been considered – and mainly in his works of the 1810s, 20 and 30s. Such studies nevertheless point to the potential riches of a systematic study of the music of melodrama in France in the early nineteenth century.¹ This chapter offers a starting point for a broader study by reflecting on the earliest of Pixérécourt's melodramas, and their relationship with existing musical theatre traditions. It will focus on the use of music in two works and consider the degree to which the playwright and the theatrical press of the period explicitly recognized music as an essential element in their success.

Pixérécourt started writing for the theatre during the French Revolution, and the play now recognized as the first melodrama, *Victor, ou L'Enfant de la forêt* (1798), was his first real dramatic success. During the next 30 years or so he would write more than 120 plays, including 94 melodramas, with audience figures totalling 30,000 over the course of his career.² The interrelated political and literary contexts from which Pixérécourt's melodramas emerged are important for our understanding of the characteristics and the development of the genre – not least its emotional charge, which music helped to articulate. The second half of the 1790s was marked by a counter-Revolutionary backlash following the conclusion of the radical phase of the Revolution, the Terror, with Robespierre's execution in July 1794. In 1796, a strong executive known as the Directory was installed to maintain order, but it only succeeded in keeping control of the country by systematically rigging votes in the annual elections, and in the end, in 1799, two members of the Directory asked

¹ See, for example, Nicole Wild, 'La Musique dans les mélodrames des théâtres parisiens', in Peter Bloom (ed.), *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties* (Stuyvesant, NY, 1987), pp. 589–609; Emilio Sala, 'Mélodrame: Définitions et métamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique', *Revue de musicologie*, 84/2 (1998): pp. 235–46; Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, 'Music in Melodrama: "The burden of ineffable expression"', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, 29/2 (2002): pp. 30–39. See also O.G. Brockett, 'The Function of Dance in the Melodramas of Guilbert de Pixérécourt', *Modern Philology*, 56/3 (1959): pp. 154–61.

² Performance totals are included in a *tableau chronologique* at the beginning of *Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt* (4 vols, Paris, 1841–43).

Napoleon to instigate a *coup d'état* and form a consulate. Napoleon subsequently took control and declared himself emperor in 1804.

The plots of many melodramas were drawn from the successful novels of the day. The genre in vogue in 1797–98 was the Gothic novel – English writers like Ann Radcliffe were hugely successful in France, but French writers such as Ducray-Duminil, who wrote the novel from which *Victor* was adapted, also found fame.³ While characteristics of the Gothic abounded in French literature and theatre – castles, convents, ruins, underground passages, dastardly villains, forests, and a general mixture of fear, excitement and suspense – the French tended to take the mode a little less seriously than their English counterparts, employing a more tongue-in-cheek treatment. Matthew Lewis's novel *The Monk*, for instance, was turned into a *comédie* and became a box office hit.⁴ And a critic for the *Esprit des journaux* as early as 1792 mocked the vogue for grim locations 'prisons, prisons and yet more prisons'.⁵

Given what people had lived through, it was widely recognized that highly dramatic works were required in order to have an effect on readers and theatre audiences. This is evident from prefaces and newspaper reviews of the period, as exemplified by the Marquis de Sade's assessment of the situation:

To those acquainted with all the evil that the wicked can bring down on the heads of the good, novels became as difficult to write as they were tedious to read. There was hardly a soul alive who did not experience more adversity in four or five years than the most famous novelist in all literature could have invented in a hundred.⁶

This impression was confirmed retrospectively by Charles Nodier, who wrote the critical introduction to the collected works of Pixérécourt in the early 1840s: 'For these solemn spectators, who could still smell gunpowder and blood, emotions

³ Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* was translated as early as 1794 as *La Forêt, ou L'Abbaye de Saint-Clair*, but she – and Matthew Lewis – did not become widely known in translation until 1797; see Daniel Hall, *French and German Gothic Fiction in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Bern, 2005), p. 66. Ducray-Duminil's *Victor* was also published in 1797; see Hall, pp. 132–9 and Jean Gillet, 'Ducray-Duminil, le gothique et la Révolution', *Europe*, 659 (March 1984): pp. 63–71.

⁴ M.-C. Cammaille-Saint-Aubin, *Le Moine, comédie en cinq actes* (Paris, An VI [1798]). For performance figures see Emmet Kennedy et al., *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris: Analysis and Repertory* (Westport, CT, 1996). Cammaille also apparently reworked the play as a 'mélo-drame en trois actes à spectacle, terminé par "L'Enfer de Milton"' for the Gaîté in the same year; it was published in 1803 by the theatre.

⁵ *Esprit des journaux* (May 1792): p. 204. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

⁶ Marquis de Sade, *Les Crimes de l'amour*, ed. Michel Delon (Paris, 1987), p. 42. Translation from *The Crimes of Love*, trans. David Coward (Oxford, 2005), pp. 13–14.

were required akin to those that the return to order had weaned them off'.⁷ A more modern critical approach has been to understand melodrama as 're-enacting the trauma' of the Revolution.⁸

Victor was in fact labelled a 'drame en prose et à grand spectacle' [prose drama with grand spectacle] in its earliest editions, though it was first conceived as an *opéra comique*, and the text bears a number of hallmarks of this original form. We have Pixérécourt's own account of the genesis of *Victor* from 1831: he describes the play as 'the first-born of modern melodrama', and explains how he had originally written it as an *opéra comique* (a genre with spoken dialogue rather than recitative linking its arias and other sung numbers) for the Théâtre Favart, with a score by Solié, only for the company of actors to overrule the theatre's management and insist on rehearsing another play on the same topic.⁹ In a fit of pique, Pixérécourt took the play to the Ambigu-Comique, 'where it was performed, cutting out only the songs'.¹⁰ He goes on to confirm and reaffirm this sense of what he understood the new genre to be: 'melodrama is nothing other than a *drame lyrique* in which the music is produced by the orchestra rather than being sung'.¹¹ Some modern critics have suggested that, despite the etymological roots of the term, melodrama was used as a label as early as 1800 for plays without music of a certain tone, atmosphere and construction.¹² But it is clear that to early nineteenth-century critics, music was central to their concept of the genre. A definition from 1810 supports Pixérécourt's view: 'melodrama ... is rooted in the lyrical, as the characters talk and act only to the sound of musical instruments'.¹³

It seems that composers found his texts easy to produce music for – Meyerbeer and Méhul both comment on the fact that his plays are 'all marvellously cut for music' – and this testifies to the genre's essential musico-dramatic hybridity.¹⁴ However, as Barry Daniels has shown, until recently modern critics have tended

⁷ Charles Nodier, 'Introduction', *Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt*, vol. 1, p. vii. Subsequent references to reviews and melodramas are from this edition of Pixérécourt's plays unless otherwise stated.

⁸ See for instance J. Paul Marcoux, *Guilbert de Pixérécourt: French Melodrama in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1992), p. 7.

⁹ Pixérécourt, 'Le Mélodrame', *Paris, ou Le Livre des cent-et-un* (15 vols, Paris, 1831–34), vol. 6 (1832), pp. 319–25, here p. 325.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 332. The term *drame lyrique* designated (at the end of the eighteenth century) an opera, or more usually an *opéra comique* – though generally with a tone more serious than the latter, and strongly moralizing. See M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet, 'Drame lyrique', in www.grovemusiconline.com.

¹² See, for example, Marc Régald, 'Mélodrame et la Révolution française', *Europe*, 703–704 (November–December 1987): pp. 6–17, here p. 13.

¹³ *Annales dramatiques ou dictionnaire général des théâtres*, vol. 6 (1810), quoted in Julia Przyboś, *L'Entreprise mélodramatique* (Paris, 1987), p. 19.

¹⁴ Meyerbeer, in Pixérécourt, *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 2, p. 583.

to refer to music only in passing when examining French melodrama¹⁵ – even if some have recognized that Pixérécourt's dramas were 'a theatre made for performance much more than for reading'.¹⁶ One of the reasons for this is that, until recently, critics of French melodrama have almost exclusively been literary specialists focusing on the texts. Where reference is made to the music, most of the comments are in fact just a reworking of Paul Ginisty's assessment from 1910.¹⁷ In his monograph on French melodrama, Ginisty devoted just four pages out of 224 to music. He concluded that music was used primarily to mark entrances and exits, with particular instruments linked to certain character types (a flute for the unhappy heroine, for instance), and to underline climactic moments of drama and emotion. Despite the brevity of this passage, it is in fact one of the most detailed analyses we have of the use of music in French melodrama by a literary specialist. Subsequent critics have done little to further our understanding of the use of music in melodrama. Eise Carel van Bellen summarizes Ginisty's conclusions in a single sentence in her thesis,¹⁸ Julia Przyboś does at least acknowledge her source when drawing on him in her work, and even adds a page on songs, but concludes that the music was utilitarian and 'probably unoriginal' – the 'probably' giving away the fact that she was relying on the texts of the plays rather than the scores.¹⁹ Even French musicologists have tended to dismiss melodrama – Jean Mongrédien's study of music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism makes no mention of melodrama or of boulevard theatres, and confines its coverage of music drama to the more respectable genre of opera.²⁰ Peter Brooks, in his seminal work *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976) – the 1995 edition of which stimulated the new wave of interest in the genre and its aesthetic influence across the disciplines of literary, theatre and film studies and musicology – barely acknowledges the role of music in his survey of the genre in early nineteenth-century France.²¹ Nevertheless – partly in response to Brooks's neglect – Nicole Wild, Emilio Sala, and Sarah

¹⁵ Barry Daniels, 'Mélodrame: La Musique', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 3/2 (1981–82): pp. 167–75.

¹⁶ André Virely, *René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt (1773–1844)* (Paris, 1909), p. 17.

¹⁷ Paul Ginisty, *Le Mélodrame* (Paris, 1910, repr. 1982).

¹⁸ Eise Carel van Bellen, *Les Origines du mélodrame* (Utrecht, 1927), p. 178.

¹⁹ Przyboś, *L'Entreprise mélodramatique*, p. 148.

²⁰ Jean Mongrédien, *La Musique en France: Des Lumières au Romantisme* (Paris, 1986).

²¹ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995). This despite his recognition that 'music is inherent to [melodrama's] representations', a very brief survey of music's various roles – and the assertion that 'melodrama finds one possible logical outcome in grand opera ... where melody and harmony, as much as the words, are charged with conveying meaning', pp. 48, 49. Brooks develops this latter idea in 'Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera', in Mary Ann Smart (ed.), *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 118–34.

Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen have provided us with a more nuanced understanding of 1820s French melodrama by revealing music's important narrative function in addition to its more obvious role enhancing dramatic effect.²² In this article I shall take their reflections on later melodramas and apply them to the earliest Pixérécourt plays to see if it is possible to trace an evolution in the musical contribution to the genre during the first decade of the century, when the genre was still in its infancy.

While early nineteenth-century definitions of melodrama written by practitioners such as Pixérécourt reinforce the centrality of music, theatre critics of the time are often silent on the matter when reviewing performances. They almost always include comments about the score and singers when discussing operas (though, as literary men, they rarely offer detailed insights), but when reviewing Pixérécourt's melodramas, although they often name the composer, they rarely acknowledge the music. One of the reasons for this may be that it was often provided by the 'chef d'orchestre' [leader of the orchestra] of the theatre where the play was to be performed rather than by a recognized composer. In fact, it has been claimed that despite numerous offers from established and well-regarded composers, Pixérécourt was often too impatient to wait the length of time it would take a 'proper' composer to come up with a score,²³ which suggests that there is an unresolved tension at the heart of melodrama between music as an integral part of the performance, and the need to put on plays quickly in order to capitalize on the vogue for 'dramas à grand spectacle' where music was just one of many elements contributing to the overall effect.

Not all critics remained silent about music, though. The *Journal d'indications* praises Gérardin-Lacour's score for *La Femme à deux maris*, performed in September 1802, his first setting of a play specifically labelled a 'mélo-drame' – and the earliest of Pixérécourt's melodramas with an extant score. The critic Babié comments: 'a number of his musical items gave real pleasure, and they are well adapted to the situations'.²⁴ Two years later, another of Gérardin-Lacour's scores received similar approval in the same journal and from the same critic, this time for the melodrama *Les Maures d'Espagne*: 'M. Gérardin-Lacour's music has been crafted agreeably and offers simple and melodious tunes'.²⁵ Babié suggests that, if he continues in this vein, he might even make it as a composer of *opéra comique*, thereby revealing the compositional hierarchy that the limited space accorded to melodrama music in the reviews has already suggested. The views of most critics

²² See note 1 above. See also the work of David Mayer on later nineteenth-century English melodrama, including 'The Music of Melodrama', in David Bradby, Louis James and Bernard Sharratt (eds), *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 49–64.

²³ Méhul for instance offered to produce the score for *La Citerne* in a letter dated 20 December 1808 but said it would take a year. Pixérécourt declined the offer because he wanted the play to appear more quickly than that; *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 2, p. 281.

²⁴ Pixérécourt, *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 1, p. 252.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 14.

do not seem to extend beyond the degree to which the music is ‘well adapted to the subject’.²⁶ The score’s simplicity is regularly mentioned as a positive rather than a negative trait. Ducray-Duminil, for example, praises Bianchi’s music for *La Forteresse du Danube*, ‘the crafting of which is always simple and varied and belongs to the best school’.²⁷ Above all, the scores for melodramas are praised for being pleasant, melodic, charming and capable of giving the audience great pleasure. By 1809, however, critics have almost entirely stopped commenting on the music, which suggests that its effects are by then taken for granted, and that successful melodrama music was not supposed to draw attention to itself – a situation that continued through to the 1820s.

French notions of musico-theatrical hierarchy are apparent in the way in which melodrama is received in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Music is mentioned only in passing because such works are not operas. Nevertheless, Pixérécourt produced librettos for several *dramas lyriques* and *opéras comiques* during these years, and the generic ambiguity of his first melodramas continued to be recognized.²⁸ In 1806, the melodrama *Les Mines de Pologne* was adapted by Joseph Sonnleithner as an opera for Cherubini, under the title *Faniska*.²⁹ More than 30 years later, Eloïse Voïart, writing the preface for *Les Maures d’Espagne* in the 1841 edition of Pixérécourt’s volume of *Théâtre choisi*, confirmed the still acknowledged generic fluidity of the text, saying that this melodrama would make ‘a delicious canvas for a grand opera’ – though here making reference to a type of opera with recitative rather than spoken dialogue.³⁰ Conversely, Pixérécourt’s *drame lyrique La Forêt de Sicile* (Feydeau, 1798) had exemplified his facility for spoken drama with musical accompaniment for the opera house.³¹

While Pixérécourt was involved in the creation of *opéras comiques* and *dramas lyriques*, he also drew on the French pantomime tradition, which by the end of the eighteenth century was rapidly becoming ‘à grand spectacle’. Hapdé and Gebauer’s *L’Enfant du mystère* (Cité-Variétés, 1800), for example, is advertised as ‘à grand spectacle, marches, combats, évolutions militaires’

²⁶ For *La Forteresse du Danube*, see Ducray-Duminil in the *Petites affiches* (5 January 1805), quoted in Pixérécourt, *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 2, p. 86; for *Robinson Crusoé*, see Babié in the *Journal d’indications* (4 October 1805), quoted in vol. 2, p. 182.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 86.

²⁸ For more on this ambiguity, see Mark Ledbury, ‘Sedaine and the Question of Genre’, in David Charlton and Mark Ledbury (eds), *Michel-Jean Sedaine (1719–1797): Theatre, Opera and Art* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 13–38.

²⁹ First performed at the Theater am Kärntnertor (Hofoper) in Vienna (25 February 1806).

³⁰ Pixérécourt, *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 2, p. 11.

³¹ The overture accompanies stage action, dialogue is employed instead of recitative (as was usual for the genre), and there is no singing in Act II until scene 7. Pixérécourt, *La Forêt de Sicile, drame lyrique en 2 actes et en prose* [libretto] (Paris, An VI [1798]); Antoine-Frédéric Gresnick, *La Forêt de Sicile, opéra en 2 actes* [score] (Paris, n.d. [1798]).

[a grand spectacle with marches, fights, military manœuvres] and with 'costumes du temps, incendie, explosion, démolitions, etc' [period costumes, fire, explosion, demolitions, etc.], and clearly suggests a number of parallels with the burgeoning melodrama tradition in which musical and visual elements were arguably more important than speech in conveying the drama and emotion.³² This popular context for melodrama's development is an important element in our understanding of the evolution of the genre, but it has also exacerbated the lack of esteem in which the music was – and continues to be – held.

In fact, relatively few scores have survived from Pixérécourt's melodramas. Because there were only a couple of songs at most in each play, there was little reason to publish the scores as integral works – in contrast to the music for operas. As noted above, the composer was usually the theatre's 'chef d'orchestre' (often simply the principal violinist), which further contributed to the underrating of the music.³³ Although Gresnick's score for *La Forêt de Sicile* (1798) was published almost immediately after its premiere (and survives at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris), those of Pixérécourt's earliest melodramas were not published, and were consequently lost. No score remains for his first six melodramas from 1798 to 1801, and although that of the seventh, *La Femme à deux maris* (September 1802), survives in manuscript form, the next five have been lost. We have two scores from 1805, and from 1808 survival rates improve further. For the purposes of this chapter, I have taken just two works, *La Femme à deux maris*, the earliest melodrama with an extant score (1802), and *La Citerne*, the first four-act melodrama (1809), to see if it is possible to trace an evolution in the codification of melodrama music during this time, and to ascertain whether its role as established by Nicole Wild and others for plays of the 1820s can be understood in the earlier works.³⁴

La Femme à deux maris was announced as a great success following its premiere at the Ambigu-Comique on 13 September 1802.³⁵ It provoked unanimous applause and continual tears from the audience according to the *Journal des Indications*.³⁶

³² J.B. Hapdé, *L'Enfant du mystère, ou Les Amans du XV^e siècle, pantomime en 3 actes* [text] ([Paris, 1800]); François René Gebauer, *Le Troubadour, ou L'Enfant de l'amour / L'Enfant du mystère* [MS score], *F-Pn*: Mat Th. 27. The close relationship between melodrama and pantomime in the development of the visual and musical components of drama has been examined by Emilio Sala. See, for example, 'Musique et dramatisation dans la "pantomime dialoguée": Le Cas de *L'Homme au masque de fer* (1790)', in Jacqueline Waeber (ed.), *Musique et geste en France de Lully à la Révolution: Études sur la musique, le théâtre et la danse* (Bern, 2009), pp. 215–32.

³³ For a list of surviving scores, see Pauline Girardin, *Musiques de scène des théâtres parisiens conservées à la Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra 1778–1878* (Paris, 1993).

³⁴ Gérardin-Lacour, *La Femme à deux maris*, Mat. Th. 17; Alexandre Piccini, *La Citerne*, Mat. Th. 8 (both *F-Pn*). The musical numbers are individually labelled from no. 1 for each act, and indicated in the discussion below.

³⁵ See the *Courrier des spectacles* (29 fructidor An X [15 September 1802]), p. 2.

³⁶ Pixérécourt, *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 1, p. 252.

Adapted from a Ducray-Duminil novel, the plot hinges on Eliza discovering that her villainous first husband, Fritz, had faked his death in order one day to reappear and claim possession of all Eliza has been given by her second husband, Edouard. He is recognized and arrested as a deserter by the uncle of her second husband, who offers him an escape route in order to save his wife's name being connected with a condemned man. Fritz is happy to take the money but determined to kill Edouard nevertheless and arranges for an accomplice to assassinate him. Edouard's concierge, a wily retired corporal, foils the plot and his accomplice kills Fritz by mistake. The score was written by Gérardin-Lacour, who worked with Pixérécourt on six melodramas at the Ambigu-Comique between 1801 and 1804. My comments on the music are based on consultation of the conductor's score.

La Citerne proved equally successful when it was first performed at the Gaîté on 14 January 1809. The increase in length of the melodrama format is testimony to the popularity of the genre. For the *Gazette de France*, it was a giant leap to make the transition from three to four acts successfully.³⁷ The play was appreciated for its dramatic explosion at the end, set to suitably exciting music, but also for its variety, comic moments and overall execution. Don Fernand persuades an imprisoned pirate, Picaros, to impersonate Séraphine's father in order to prevent her from marrying the man she loves, Don Alvar, the son of the governor of Majorca. Unbeknownst to the crooks, Séraphine's long-lost real father Don Raphaël, and her sister Clara, have just been shipwrecked off the island and are able to foil Fernand's plan to marry Séraphine himself for her money – succeeding in part because Picaros repents of his previous lifestyle and helps the two sisters escape from the clutches of his former piratical associates when they fall into their hands trying to escape Don Fernand. The character of Picaros was particularly appreciated by the critics who were full of praise for the representation of a corsair reforming his ways. The score was written by Alexandre Piccini, a prolific composer for a number of boulevard theatres.³⁸ In the absence of a separate conductor's score, it is the first violin part (which was probably used to direct the performance) that has been examined.

The scores have been compared with the texts of the two plays to examine how music is used and to see whether an evolution can be traced in its function. The earlier of the two plays seems to indicate that the full potential of musical intervention has not yet been realized, although a number of devices that would

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 378 (15 January 1809).

³⁸ According to Nicole Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1989), Piccini's music was performed at the Ambigu-Comique (p. 37), the Beaujolais (p. 52), the Cirque-Olympique (p. 85), the Jeunes Artistes (p. 214), the Jeux Gymniques (p. 221), the Panorama-Dramatique (p. 356) and the Variétés (p. 411). He was also a composer attached to the Gaîté (1818–31) (p. 170); an accompanist at the Gymnase-Dramatique (from 1820) (p. 182); accompanist at the Opéra (1803–22) (p. 314) and *chef de chant* and *chef des chœurs* (1822–26) (p. 313); *chef d'orchestre* at the Porte Saint-Martin (p. 367) and composer attached to the theatre (1814–37) (p. 371).

become standard features are already present. The most extensive music in Gérardin-Lacour's score is reserved for moments in the plot which require music, most notably ballet sequences in which the peasants practise their dancing (Act I, scenes 1 and 2), and then welcome Edouard and his uncle with a performance (Act II, scene 7). The latter incorporates a song in honour of Edouard. Music is used to mark entrances and exits, but only those of the two lead females (Eliza, and the actress playing her son Jules) are marked consistently. Just the first appearance of each of the other characters is signalled musically, as a shortcut to understanding their characterization (the major, for example, is introduced with military-style music in Act I, scene 6 (no. 7, p. 264)). There is little music to accompany dialogue – only very occasionally does this happen, and then it serves to contrast what is being said with the situation in which the characters find themselves. For instance, in Act I, scene 8, the audience sees Fritz enter the grounds of the estate, while Eliza expresses her fears that he might find a way of getting in, accompanied by the orchestra (no. 14, p. 270).

Rather than accompanying dialogue, music is more generally used by Gérardin-Lacour to enhance the emotional affect of tableaux, such as the concluding scene of Act I (scene 16; no. 19, p. 287), when Eliza collapses into the arms of her chaplain after Fritz has issued his threats, or in Act II, scene 11 (no. 19, p. 311), when we see her on her knees, distraught at her father's intransigence and refusal to forgive her for marrying Fritz. The extensive use of tableaux reminds us of the degree to which early melodrama was indebted to eighteenth-century theatrical aesthetics, with music helping to extend and intensify a static, climactic moment.³⁹ The tension is also amplified by music during more dramatic, active, passages, although perhaps not as often as one might expect. The scene in which Eliza reads the letter telling her that her first husband is still alive takes place to orchestral accompaniment (Act I, scene 3; no. 3, p. 257), and the pact to assassinate Edouard is sealed to music (Act III, scene 7; no. 6, p. 324). But the passage where Fritz's identity is revealed to the assembled company (Act II, scene 10), and his public threats to reclaim his wife and her possessions, contain no music at all – despite Eliza's heightened emotional state and the potentially perilous position in which she finds herself. In dramatic terms, this is the moment of crisis and the point of Eliza's most intense fear in the play; but rather than mark fear as a strong emotion, the orchestra is silent. Instead, the composer chooses to highlight love and forgiveness elsewhere in the play: twice music is used to underscore an embrace, firstly between mother and son in Act II, scene 5 (no. 4, p. 296) – the first time they have been able to recognize the blood ties between them – and secondly in the final scene, where Eliza's father embraces her and her son in reconciliation (no. 10, p. 336). These two moments are the 'tear-jerking' highlights of the play, but the emphasis on love and forgiveness in both of these scenes may also reflect the political context in which the play was performed. In 1802, the divisions

³⁹ See, for example, the discussion in Pierre Frantz, *L'Esthétique du tableau dans le théâtre du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1998).

caused by the Revolution had not fully healed – émigrés were only just being allowed to return to France, for example – and for the sake of social and political stability there was a need for reconciliation and forgiveness, themes which recur time and again in the literary productions of the immediate post-Revolutionary period. The decision to reinforce scenes of love and forgiveness by underscoring them with music perhaps demonstrates how closely attuned the playwright and composer were to public feeling and popular sentiment.

Piccini's score for *La Citerne* reveals that, by 1809, there was a much greater awareness of the variety of ways in which music could be used in a melodrama, and Pixérécourt has also adapted his text to suit. While the ballet music remains the most extensive musical contribution, just as it was for Gérardin-Lacour's score for *La Femme à deux maris*, Piccini also indulges in a long and energetic overture and a lengthy, Gothic-flavoured introduction to Act III. Some of the points in the text where music is openly part of the plot appear rather tenuous, however. In Act IV, scene 7 (no. 4, pp. 122–3), for instance, the pirates come out of their hiding place to marching music, a use of music barely motivated by the plot, even if such a common military topos served more broadly to signal their fighting spirit. The play contains far more pantomime than *La Femme à deux maris*, where there was only one scene – as part of the celebrations welcoming Edouard home, with two simpletons and a monkey performing for comic effect. In *La Citerne* there are numerous examples, and each is accompanied by music. The first four scenes of the play, for example, contain extensive pantomime as we see the locals fishing, the main comic character Don Mesquinos falling out of a boat while trying to fish, and a picnic and dancing interrupted by a storm. Don Fernand has a mute black slave and this leads to several shorter pantomime scenes, especially with Picaros, as the slave tries to pass on instructions. It is clear that in all of the mimed scenes the actions and the music are designed to synchronize. We know from Meyerbeer that in the 1820s the playwright was reluctant to start rehearsals until the score was complete, reinforcing the notion that the music was integral to the whole and indeed shaped the performance on stage.⁴⁰ In the score to *La Citerne* we see confirmation of this: in Act II, scene 1, for instance, when Picaros gives a signal by clapping three times, this coincides with three distinct but *piano* notes in the score (no. 1, p. 49). Similarly, the canon fire in Act I, scene 5, is carefully noted in the score to coincide with specific bars of music (no. 4, p. 32). These indications show us that the score is not mere accompaniment, but carefully stage-managed music that reinforces what the audience is seeing or hearing on stage.

There are a number of scenes where mime is interspersed with snatches of dialogue. It is clearly indicated in the score that the music should stop to allow the line to be spoken and then start up again. When there is a line of dialogue over

⁴⁰ This is revealed in a letter to Pixérécourt of 3 September 1827, reprinted in *Théâtre choisi*, vol. 2, p. 585.

music, this is also carefully noted in the score.⁴¹ The music does not underscore the dialogue but rather the dialogue seems to underscore the music – while the music underscores *action*. Very short snatches of music (often only a few bars) are used by Piccini to highlight dramatic moments in the play, as in Act II, scene 10 (a seven-bar passage comprising scalic motifs and tremolos; no. 6, p. 79), when Séraphine erroneously believes she has found her father and embraces him; or in Act III, scene 15 (a two-bar rising scalic motif in semiquavers; no. 12, p. 115), when Clara announces that the blind man seeking alms is in fact her father, the famous Don Raphaël. The main fight scenes do not have much music, something I found surprising, given that all the pantomime scenes are scored – though there would have been extensive sound effects. In Act IV, scene 15, instead of general and continuous fight music, common in melodramas of the 1820s, the composer has chosen to focus on a pirate seizing Séraphine (17 bars of *allegro* $\frac{3}{4}$ in A minor, no. 9, p. 126) after the fight has been under way for some time, and then on Clara running him through with her sword. A 14-bar *allegro* $\frac{4}{4}$ passage in D major (no. 10, pp. 126–7) accompanies Clara's attack and the pirate's retaliation: 'forcé de se defender, [il] lâche sa proie et combat Clara' (forced to defend himself, [he] released his prey and fought Clara). Piccini initially included a further 16 bars, comprising rising quavers on the beat countered by plunging semiquaver figures, and culminating with *forte-piano* motifs, but these have been crossed out. After some dialogue, a lengthier $\frac{4}{4}$ passage in A minor (no. 11, pp. 128–9) italicizes the moment when 'le pirate tombe percé d'un coup mortel' [the pirate falls, pierced by a mortal blow] – the vocabulary of rising and falling scalic passages and tremolos continues the mood of the previous two numbers for some 45 bars.

The use of music here encourages us to reassess more systematically those scenes that have music (they are not always the ones one would expect), their length (often the music seems too long or too short to fit the stage directions), and consider the different sorts of relationships established between dialogue, stage action, character and music. The main fighting which opens the scene features anonymous pirates and the forces of order, and this is unaccompanied; in contrast, Clara is the principal female role (played by the young actress Caroline Soissons⁴²) and her actions are provided with music. This suggests that music is being used here to reinforce the audience's attachment to a character (and focus their attention in a chaotic scene) rather than to provide incidental, background accompaniment.

In contrast to the score for *La Femme à deux maris*, music in *La Citerne* is used less frequently to mark entrances after the first appearance of each character –

⁴¹ See Act III, scene 14, for instance (p. 114 of the score), where 'on parle' (talking) is written onto the score.

⁴² According to O.G. Brockett, the young Soissons was trained by Pixérécourt for her role in *La Citerne*; as suggested by a review by Dusaulchoy which appeared in the *Journal de Paris* (15 January 1809), she had previously been known only as a pantomime dancer; Brockett, 'Pixérécourt and Unified Production', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 11/3 (1959): pp. 181–7, here p. 183.

although the main female role's appearances are still usually announced in this manner. Instead, the composer's efforts are directed towards marking transitions from one scene to another (which may include an exit) to serve as a reinforcement of what has happened immediately before. Sometimes the music confirms the audience's knowledge that all will work out in the end, as when Clara laughs to the audience, accompanied by a short confident passage in D major, as Picaros takes the pistols from which she has removed the primers (Act II, scene 18; no. 14, p. 90). One exception is the treatment of Picaros: his monologues are each framed by music, perhaps to emphasize the significance of his moral musings as he wrestles with his conscience and turns from villain to reformed character.

It is clear that in these two early melodramas music is being used in a variety of ways to shape the performance and the audience's reactions – and it is also evident that we need to provide more specific contextual detail when describing how music functions. It is not simply that music is being used to mark entrances and exits: in *La Citerne* only certain entrances and exits are marked in order to contribute to the plot or the moral message, or to announce to the audience the arrival of the principal female lead. Similarly, not all moments of dramatic or emotional tension are accompanied by the orchestra, and the choice of scenes that do have music reveals a fairly sophisticated manipulation of audience reactions. At times the music may be considered to be offering a narrating voice.⁴³ In these early melodramas, music does not accompany dialogue systematically, despite this subsequently being seen as 'the identifying element of melodrama' by many modern critics.⁴⁴ Indeed, the comparative examination of the two texts with their scores shows that a number of assumptions about the use of music in early melodrama need to be revised. Above all, this brief survey of the two plays shows that the use of music in Pixérécourt's melodramas evolved over the first decade of the nineteenth century, and that there is a pressing need for a more systematic exploration of the way in which French melodrama as performance rather than text developed from the end of the eighteenth century through to the 1840s.

⁴³ There is a significant body of literature on orchestral 'voice' in opera, in response to Carolyn Abbate's discussion in *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); and a range of scholarship that roots the narrative role of music in film in melodrama and opera of the nineteenth century – see, for example, Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London, 1987).

⁴⁴ See Thomas Forrest Kelly, *First Nights at the Opera* (New Haven, CT, 2006), p. 144.

Chapter 2
Operatic or Theatrical?
Orchestral Framings of the Voice in the
Melodrama *Sept heures* (1829)

Jens Hesselager

It has often been claimed that French boulevard melodrama of the early nineteenth century has strong affinities with opera, not only by latter-day musicologists and historiographers of melodrama, but also by contemporaries. As was also noted in Chapter 1, René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, for one, argued in 1818 that a *mélodrame* was in fact nothing but a *drame lyrique* in which the music was performed by the orchestra instead of being sung.¹ And in 1832 he felt the fact that so many melodramas were routinely turned into operas confirmed the kinship of the two genres: ‘It [melodrama] came, properly speaking, out of *drame lyrique*, tailored to the pattern of Sédaine’s pieces, and what proves it is that the best melodramas have been translated into Italian and German, and set to music by the most celebrated foreign composers.’² The definition of melodrama as a *drame lyrique* in which the music is performed by the orchestra instead of being sung raises more questions than it answers, however. For Pixérécourt hardly meant to suggest that the orchestra in a melodrama performs instrumental versions of lyric numbers. Rather, melodramas tend to leave out lyric numbers altogether, or include only one or two (sung) romances or *couplets*. Melodramas, in other words, do not necessarily display musico-dramatic structures that follow the pattern of opera librettos, providing regular occasions for arias, duets, ensembles and the like. Or do they? What defines the relationship between voice and orchestra in early nineteenth-century French boulevard melodrama? And how, if at all, is this relationship reflected in the structure of a melodrama text? Is a melodrama to be considered a musico-dramatic structure in its own right, rather than ‘merely’ a spoken play, with music added?

If one follows Emilio Sala, author of the most comprehensive studies on the subject, the answer to this latter question is emphatically affirmative: ‘without the

¹ René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, ‘Guerre au mélodrame’ [1818], repr. in *Théâtre de René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt* (6 vols, Paris, [n.d.]), vol. 1, pp. 2–35, here p. 14.

² Pixérécourt, ‘Le Mélodrame’, in *Paris, ou le livre des cent-et-un* (15 vols, Paris, 1831–34), vol. 6 (1832), pp. 319–25, here p. 325.

reintegration of music, the spectacular dynamic of melodrama remains de facto incomprehensible. What we need to start doing, therefore, is to *sonorise*, as it were, the “melodramatic imagination”, defined by Peter Brooks.³ Such a project involves more than just an investigation of the relationship between orchestra and voice in melodrama, to be sure. In fact, orchestral music and vocal performances are mostly kept separate in melodramas, so that the music will typically accompany actions and gestures, rather than vocal utterances. Even so, or perhaps precisely because of this tendency to not let music and voice sound together, it seems crucial to question the relationship between the two. How are these two systems made to coexist and work together, and what is the extent and the nature of their inevitable exchanges, as they rub shoulders in the course of a melodrama – what synergies arise? In this chapter I will consider primarily whether orchestral framings of certain vocal utterances in one particular melodrama – Victor Ducange and Anicet Bourgeois’s *Sept heures*, which premiered in 1829 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin with music by Alexandre Piccini – may possibly testify to a quasi-operatic conception of the theatrical voice at such moments. This may seem like an impossible question to ask – or, in any case, to answer – so, let me start by trying to qualify it.

What might a quasi-operatic voice mean in this context? I take my cue from Peter Brooks, who on a few occasions has discussed the quasi-operatic qualities of melodrama. ‘Operatic qualities’ appears to imply both a heightening of mood and a type of ‘unrepressed speech’ in which a character’s innermost desires are expressed directly. And the two main forms in which such qualities come to the fore, in melodrama and opera respectively, are the soliloquy and the aria. The aesthetic qualities of quasi-operatic moments, may, in other words, seem to become almost synonymous with central melodramatic qualities, as Brooks conceives of them – qualities that are generally quite at odds with, or ‘break through’, as he puts it, ‘everything that constitutes the “reality principle,” all its censorship, accommodations, tonings-down’.⁴ ‘Operatic’ forms a type of antithesis, then, to ‘realistic’. And melodramatic rhetoric of this type is often helped under way by music:

Music seems to have been called upon whenever the dramatist wanted to strike a particular emotional pitch or coloring and lead the audience into a change

³ Emilio Sala, ‘Mélodrame: Définitions et métamorphoses d’un genre quasi-opératique’, *Revue de musicologie*, 84/2 (1998): pp. 235–46, here p. 243. See also his other writings on this subject, including, *L’opera senza canto: Il mélo romantico e l’invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice, 1995); ‘Verdi and the Parisian Boulevard Theatre, 1847–1849’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 7/3 (1995): pp. 185–205; ‘On the Track of “La Pie voleuse”’, *Opera Quarterly*, 13/3 (1997): pp. 19–40; ‘Drame, mélodrame et musique: Victor Hugo à la Porte-Saint-Martin’, in Simone Bernard-Griffiths and Jean Sgard (eds), *Mélodrames et romans noirs (1750–1890)* (Toulouse, 2000), pp. 161–74.

⁴ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995), p. 41.

or heightening of mood. We find, for instance, this stage direction in Joseph Bouchardy's *Les enfants trouvés*: the Maréchal "enters slowly on the last measures of the orchestra and stops at center stage." Then the soliloquy, punctuated: "O terrors! ... hope, remorse, mortal suspicion! ... Why do you fight ceaselessly for mastery of my soul? ... " (II,i). The monologue, we detect, is on its way to becoming operatic aria – and melodrama finds one possible logical outcome in grand opera (which did in fact use many libretti from melodrama), where melody and harmony, as much as the words, are charged with conveying meaning.⁵

Like Pixérécourt, Brooks finds the fact that many melodramas were subsequently recast as opera librettos to be a sign that the two genres are related (although it is a long way from Pixérécourt's *drame lyrique* to grand opera, with which Brooks associates melodrama). Unlike Pixérécourt, however, he seeks to explain this relationship in terms of what melodrama is about to become, rather than in terms of where it comes from. In a short essay from 2000, 'Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera', Brooks again takes up this line of thought:

When one considers how these soliloquies were underlined by the orchestral score, one can say that all that is lacking for them to become operatic arias is melody. And when we reach Romantic drama written in verse – which so often reads as an ennobled melodrama, melodrama with class – the soliloquies often seem to be on the verge of taking off into song.⁶

In this essay, furthermore, the operatic voice is defined not only as a voice that 'speaks the name of desire directly',⁷ but also as a voice that is at the same time physical and embodied in a radical way – it acts as it speaks: 'Freud opposes "acting out" to remembering as recollection: acting out is remembering in the form of repetition, reproduction that abolishes the distance between mental ideation and physical action. Such, I think, may be the effect of the great operatic moment.'⁸ To search for quasi-operatic conceptions of the theatrical voice in this sense, then, involves the examination of moments in which the voice is made to perform and interact with the orchestra, in ways that may or may not have reflected contemporary operatic practices, but which at the same time – and more importantly – may have anticipated, and quite possibly inspired, later developments in opera. In searching for such qualities it is necessary, I believe, to follow Sala's suggestion that we need to confront our theoretical conceptions of the melodramatic with interpretations of the actual music that was performed with the melodrama.

⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

⁶ Peter Brooks, 'Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera', in Mary Ann Smart (ed.), *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 118–34, here p. 121.

⁷ Ibid., p. 122.

⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

I shall try to do that below, but, before I start, a few more words in preparation: Pixérécourt, in his 1832 defence of the genre of melodrama, went a long way to distance himself from what he called ‘Romantic’ melodrama – a development of recent years, in which young writers took far too many liberties in Pixérécourt’s opinion. They tampered with the unities of time and place. They portrayed all sorts of vices and horrors, and showed an unhealthy mania for tableaux, for doubling the number of scenery changes and tripling the number of machinists working in the wings. And they had an annoying tendency to always make political allusions: street scenes are killing the theatre, he complained.⁹ It can be observed that the qualities that Pixérécourt marks as ‘Romantic’ are qualities that fit nicely with our conception of new developments in grand opera at the time. Brooks similarly detects a process taking place around the same time in which the soliloquies of melodrama, and then Romantic drama, gradually seem to approach the operatic. We are dealing with a process of cultural transformation in which the relationship between body and voice, words and music, freedom and discipline seem to be renegotiated, and a process in which, finally, renegotiations of the ‘real’ are also on the agenda. Expressing oneself in an ‘operatic’ manner may at this point in time, if we follow Brooks, mean breaking through the ‘reality principle’, entering the world of (Romantic) ‘aria’ where nothing keeps you from expressing your innermost self. But opera consists not only of such moments of solitary confessions to oneself (and the audience) – opera is more than arias, and even arias are certainly not always soliloquies. And if grand opera during these years starts caring more about realism in terms of costume, decor and historically correct details of plot, then certainly the question of realism – and the question of the ways in which the ‘operatic’ or ‘theatrical’ voice strives to be perceived as ‘realistic’, or ‘true to life’ – must also be revisited, as part of the investigation.

Sept heures

Frédéric Lemaître and Marie Dorval, who created the two leading roles in *Sept heures*, first appeared together in 1827, in the hugely successful *Trente ans, ou La Vie d'un joueur*, by Dineaux and Victor Ducange, with music by Alexandre Piccini – also at the Porte Saint-Martin. *Trente ans* was self-consciously anti-Classical in its violation of the unity of time, distributing the action over 30 years. Its quasi-Faustian theme, furthermore, functioned as a fine occasion to depict, in a provocatively modern fashion, a host of vices, crimes and horrors. So, when Pixérécourt in 1832 complained of such recent tendencies, *Trente ans* was surely one of the plays he had in mind. After *Trente ans*, Lemaître and Dorval starred together in several melodramas at the Porte Saint-Martin, so that by 1829 they were already well-established star-performers at the boulevard theatres. *Sept heures* in other words, clearly belonged to this new, ‘Romantic’ trend. It has three

⁹ Pixérécourt, ‘Le Mélodrame’, pp. 325 and 348–51.

acts, seven tableaux, and the plot, in brief, is this: a political refugee, Count de Senneville, seeks shelter in the home of his old friends, M. d'Armans and his family. Mlle d'Armans (Dorval), the daughter of the house, tells de Senneville that her fiancé, Ferdinand, has been executed since they last met, and that it was a certain Swiss doctor – a horrible man, who once lived in the village and fell in love with her – who had him killed. This was done in an act of vengeance against her, because she refused his advances. The man in question, Marcel (Lemaître), had since become a senior official (an 'agent supérieur'). He arrives in the village in order to capture the count, and sentences M. d'Armans to death when he catches him in the act of helping the count escape. Marcel, however, is still very much drawn to Mlle d'Armans, and therefore gives her the chance to save her father's life if she will give in to his amorous desires that same night. She eventually agrees and visits him, but when Marcel has written the letter of pardon, she kills him instead. People rush in, and she confesses to the murder: 'C'est moi qui l'ai tué' [I killed him]. At the very end, the scene changes to Paris. A crowd is assembled in front of the Palais de Justice, waiting for Mlle d'Armans to appear at seven o'clock, after having, presumably, been sentenced to death for her crime. She appears, and descends the large staircase, slowly.

As a review in *Le Figaro* made explicit, the character of Mlle d'Armans was in fact based on a historical figure, Charlotte Corday, the assassin of the French (Swiss-born) Revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat. Marcel, then, was similarly based on the figure of Marat.¹⁰ So, being inspired (loosely) by real characters and events, the play makes some claim to historical realism – though, much to the annoyance of *Le Figaro*, taking considerable poetic licence. The censor had been hard on *Sept heures*, a fact that was also much commented upon in the review in *Le Figaro*. The surviving orchestral material for the play likewise testifies to this.¹¹ A seemingly complete set of 18 instrumental parts are extant, among these a principal violin part containing 82 musical numbers plus a large dramatic overture, a divertissement consisting of four separate dances, and a concluding solemn march. This principal violin part is clearly that of the leader of the orchestra, containing not only the part of the first violins, but also important melodic material in other instruments. Most of the numbers are crossed out, however, including the overture, the divertissement and the final march (which would have accompanied Mlle d'Armans descending the staircase of the Palais de Justice), leaving only 28 numbers in the censored version. The first of these 28 numbers – a folksy and innocent sounding piece in $\frac{6}{8}$, depicting the lively atmosphere in the kitchen of the d'Armans household as a group of domestic servants are preparing for a large dinner party – was then turned into the new overture of the censored version. The other 17 instrumental parts contain only the 28 numbers that remained after the cuts had been made.

The cuts required by the censor radically changed the play, of course: it appears, for instance, that the entire fifth tableau (taking place in the cellars of an

¹⁰ *Le Figaro* (24 March 1829): p. 2; (25 March 1829): pp. 2–3.

¹¹ Preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (F-Pn): Mat. Th. 163.

old monastery, in which a group of villagers was imprisoned) was omitted. For the purposes of this study, it is particularly thought-provoking that large quantities of music were cut, even where such cuts clearly did not result from corresponding cuts in the text. So, for instance, the overture, with its serious and dramatic music, would naturally have set the tone for the play in a very different manner from the lively, carefree music of the first scene. More than that, it presented musical material that would eventually be heard in the final tableau, beginning *fortissimo*, with the highly dramatic material that appears at the climax of the drama as Mlle d'Armans is about to kill Marcel (I shall return to this situation and the music involved below). Cutting the divertissements and the concluding *Marche lente* also clearly altered the dramaturgy of such situations and their emotional impact.¹² The divertissements may in themselves have been innocent enough, yet in the context they represented a kind of forced joyfulness, as they were in fact performed on Marcel's orders. The fourth dance, furthermore, was aggressively stopped short before its natural end, interrupted by a soldier's drum-roll.

Whether or not these and similar cuts in the music were made because the censors were alert to the potentially 'dangerous' effects of the music in these and other instances, a comparison of the original plan and the performed version of *Sept heures* will demonstrate that music was certainly an integrated element in the dynamics of the play. Removing the music clearly alters the dramatic structure of such situations as well. Furthermore, as will be seen below, cuts also significantly altered the relation between orchestra and voice at certain points. In order to examine the relation between voice and orchestra, however, it is necessary not only to seek out the moments where vocal utterances are framed by music, but also where they are not. So, in what follows, I shall try to account for a few situations in the melodrama where it seems to me that arias or other operatic set-pieces might well have occurred had this been an opera, and look at the ways in which the orchestra is, or is not, brought in to interact with the voice in such situations.

'Ah! Si j'étais plus qu'une femme!'

I will start by considering the first scene in which Marie Dorval appeared onstage. Mlle d'Armans and Count de Senneville are alone together, having a confidential, emotionally intense, and most revealing dialogue – a dialogue in which Mlle d'Armans tells de Senneville of Ferdinand's death and Marcel's role in it. Towards the end of the dialogue, as she gradually gets more animated, Mlle d'Armans exclaims 'Ah! Si j'étais plus qu'une femme! ... mais il est des millions d'hommes qui tremblent!' [Ah, would that I were more than a woman! ... But there are

¹² The review in *Le Figaro* reports that the final tableau had in fact at first been removed by the censor, but that the chief of police himself had intervened and restored it in the performed version – yet, as the orchestral material testifies, without restoring the *Marche lente* to the scene. *Le Figaro* (24 March 1829): p. 2.

millions of men who tremble!].¹³ Had this been an opera this situation might easily have occasioned an operatic duet, or, for that matter, a cavatina for Mlle d'Armans in the Italian manner – a slow cantabile on the subject of Ferdinand, for instance, and a cabaletta motivated by the wish to act. But except for musical transitions that frame the scene by accompanying an exit before and an entry after (the latter cut in the censored version), there is no music at all in this scene. This is worth noting, since the scene clearly marks the dramatic and emotional highpoint of the drama so far, introducing Marie Dorval in a sequence of impassioned, expressive lines, during which she rises, particularly towards the end, to an emotional pitch which would no doubt serve as a vehicle for a somewhat 'heightened' type of vocal performance. The absence of music during the whole of this scene seems to indicate, then, that the composer, Alexandre Piccini, considered that the type of performance that Dorval would deliver in such a situation would come across more strongly on its own, without music.¹⁴ Music may have been felt to disturb, rather than support, the emotionality and the expressive qualities of Dorval's performance, perhaps impinging on the perceived theatrical *realism* that many contemporaries associated with her acting style – for instance as described by Théophile Gautier in his obituary written immediately after Dorval's death in 1849:

[S]he put herself in the situation of the character, she took it on completely, she became the character and acted as it would have done; she made electrifying, unexpected effects pour out of the simplest of phrases, of an interjection, of an 'ah!', an 'oh!' a 'mon Dieu!' ... Never had anyone so alive, so true, so like the women in the audience, let herself be seen in a theatre: it seemed as if one was watching – not on a stage, but through a hole in a wall, in a closed room – a woman who thought herself alone.¹⁵

Often, this realism was thought to stem from a simpler, less overwrought style of acting than was usually encountered at the boulevards. As in Jules Janin's characterization of Dorval and Lemaître, acting together: 'The audience, used to the shrill tones of melodrama with its din of words and voice, all looked at one another in astonishment, moved and charmed by such simplicity and grace ... she excelled in containing her feelings with a murmur of: "Quiet my heart!"'¹⁶

¹³ Victor Ducange and Anicet Bourgeois, *Sept heures* (Paris, 1829), p. 15.

¹⁴ Piccini knew Dorval's acting style well, and had collaborated with her for years – they had even been lovers, Piccini fathering Dorval's youngest daughter, Caroline. See, for example, Françoise Moser, *Marie Dorval* (Paris, 1947), p. 15.

¹⁵ *La Presse* (29 May 1849); quoted in [Anon.] *Marie Dorval 1798–1849: Documents inédits biographie – Critique et bibliographie* (Paris, 1868), pp. 384–5.

¹⁶ Jules Janin, *Histoire de la littérature dramatique* (Paris, 1858), vol. 6, p. 156. Quoted here from the English translation in Robert Baldick, *The Life and Times of Frederick Lemaître* (Fair Lawn, NJ, 1959), p. 54.

Possibly, then, Dorval and Lemaître derived much of their emotional impact from the impression that their acting styles were so true to life that music would be felt to be out of place, precisely in those ‘operatic’ situations where we would in fact most expect it to appear. Three situations occurring later in the play may each in their way serve to nuance, or possibly challenge, this conclusion, however: a dialogue between Mlle d’Armans and Marcel in the third tableau, a soliloquy by Mlle d’Armans at the end of the sixth tableau, and the final encounter between the two protagonists in the seventh tableau.

‘O mon dieu! mon dieu! soyez moins cruel pour mon père!’

The first of these follows on from a dramatic series of events in Act II, third tableau (although the musical cuts suggest that a great number of these were left out in the censored version). A search party has been to d’Armans’s house, from where the d’Armans plan to lead Count de Senneville to Mme d’Armans’s father’s house, two hours away. When the curfew bell tolls, M. d’Armans and Senneville will flee. Mlle d’Armans regrets once more that she cannot take action herself, but must – as her mother explains – obey her father and await the signal passively. When her mother has left, a remarkable scene unfolds: after a relatively short soliloquy, full of anxiety and foreboding, Mlle d’Armans falls to her knees, praying: ‘O mon dieu! mon dieu! soyez moins cruel pour mon père!’ [O my God! my God! Be less cruel to my father!].¹⁷ As she kneels, praying with fervour and with her forehead lowered, sombre music is heard (see Example 2.1).

The first gesture of the music is a descending figure, including the ‘suffering’ interval of the augmented second – a ‘silent’ gesture, in the sense that it is clearly an accompaniment figure, not a melody. An instrumental imitation of a (singing) voice is not heard until the fifth bar, when the first violins on their fourth strings, doubled by a bassoon, play a melodic phrase with a plaintive character. Although this instrumental colour suggests the imitation of a male voice, it may also have been perceived as somehow echoing Dorval’s uttering of the phrase ‘Soyez moins cruel pour mon père!’.¹⁸ Then an exchange between the first bassoon and the oboe takes place, both parts doubled by the violins, and the short musical number comes to a close with a descending gesture in the violins (derived from the ‘plaintive’ melody in bar 6), answered one octave below by cellos and basses. These instrumental exchanges find their analogy in a curious little pantomime, described in the stage directions: as Mlle d’Armans is engaged in prayer, oblivious to her surroundings, the head of Bruno – one of Marcel’s helpers – appears at the window, spying on her (probably in bar 5 or 7). And a moment later (bar 9?),

¹⁷ Ducange and Bourgeois, *Sept heures*, p. 45.

¹⁸ If we can trust George Sand’s testimony, Dorval’s voice was husky (‘éraillée’), so it is not impossible that the tonal colour of the violins’ fourth strings, doubled by a bassoon, would match it well. See George Sand, *Story of My Life: The Autobiography of George Sand* (New York, 1991), p. 965.

Example 2.1 ‘Soyez moins cruel pour mon père!’ (Act II, third tableau, scene 7)

Adagio

Oboe

Bassoons

Strings

pp

sombre

p

pp

4. corde

7

11

Marcel himself enters silently. Marcel, unnoticed by Mlle d'Armans, watches her as she prays, then signals to Bruno that he should disappear, which he does (bars 12–15).

After this musically accompanied digression, Mlle d'Armans takes up her soliloquy again, praying that God will stop the monster who has returned to the village. Marcel overhears this and now reproaches her: ‘Tu ne peux douter, fille implacable, que pour tout autre que toi, cette prière criminelle ne fut un arrêt de mort?’ [You do not doubt, implacable girl, that for anyone other than you, this criminal prayer would be a death sentence?].¹⁹ Then follows a tough, unaccompanied dialogue between the two, in which Marcel threatens her, to break her resistance to him. As she hears the curfew bell, she wrestles herself out of his

¹⁹ Ducange and Bourgeois, *Sept heures*, p. 46.

grip with a cry of triumph. But gunshots, cries and tumult are heard outside, and soon a crowd arrives, among them M. d'Armans, now arrested.

The dialogue – the first scene in which Dorval and Lemaître confront each other on stage – has structural and emotional qualities that, like the dialogue between Mlle d'Armans and Senneville in Act I, may be identified as 'operatic'. A man declares his love in an obtrusive manner. The girl stalls him and awaits the sound of the curfew bell, which, as it is finally heard, triggers a new response (a triumphant cabaletta?). Yet Piccini finds no cause to underscore these events musically. As with the dialogue between Mlle d'Armans and Senneville, the scene seems to call for a 'realistic' rather than 'operatic' mode of representation – indeed the actual 'soundtrack', as indicated in the stage directions, points in the same direction: the scene is accompanied by the 'realistic' sounds of a curfew bell, gunshots, cries heard from outside, tumult.

The prayer-scene by contrast offers an instance of silent action, with a cantabile counterpoint in the orchestra inserted between two passages of soliloquy. Dorval's voice is thereby made to partake in an exchange of musical gestures, and the most important of her utterances is, in this respect, the exclamation that functions as the cue to the music: 'O mon dieu! mon dieu! soyez moins cruel pour mon père!'. It is a phrase that is similar in type to the utterance in the first tableau: 'Ah! Si j'étais plus qu'une femme!'. This time her exclamation does in fact trigger a musical response. But should we read it as an instrumental expression of her silent prayer – a lyric number being played by the orchestra instead of being sung? The appearances of Bruno and Marcel might well disturb such an interpretation as they provide occasions to interpret the melodic phrases as expressive of their own thoughts and gestures as they spy on Mlle d'Armans – and as, eventually, Marcel signals to Bruno to disappear (which he does). Or, it may be argued that the visual tableau that the music accompanies turns the music into an instrumental version of a short ensemble rather than an aria, miming, it may seem, three unsung voices at once.

'Guidez-le, mon dieu! ... délivrez ma patrie!!!...'

The sixth tableau is rather short and may almost be considered a solo for Dorval. Mlle d'Armans has, in a previous scene, struck her deal with Marcel, agreeing to meet him that night. She now asks her mother to bless her, yet revealing nothing about the deal with Marcel, keeping a heroic silence about the sacrifice she is about to make. As she is left alone, she prepares herself for the evening, summoning up courage to do what she has already decided upon, namely to kill Marcel – and consequently to face death herself. While her decision to give in to Marcel was, at the end of Act II, motivated solely by the prospect of saving her father, in her soliloquy she now formulates her project as one with a higher purpose, that of saving her country. It culminates in a heroic and patriotic gesture as she takes up her dagger, exclaiming: 'Guidez-le, mon dieu! ... délivrez ma patrie!!!...' [Guide it, my god! ... deliver my country!!!...], after which she casts a last glance around her and leaves. In the original version this

soliloquy was supplied with music throughout, and in response to her last phrase the orchestra was to have struck up a tune, or at least the first two phrases of it (a simple antecedent–consequence structure), with an unmistakably patriotic ring to it (see Example 2.2).

Example 2.2 ‘Délivrez ma patrie!’ (Act III, sixth tableau, scene 4)

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Délivrez ma patrie!'. The top section, enclosed in a box, shows the original score for Clarinet (Clari.) and Violin (Viol.). The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The Clarinet part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Violin part also begins with *f* and includes a section marked 'Lento' with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, featuring triplets. Below this boxed section, the music is crossed out with a large 'X', indicating it was removed by a censor. Below the crossed-out section, the original music is shown again, but with the 'patriotic' tune removed, leaving only a dramatic passage. This passage is marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and features a melody of quavers with quaver rests, characteristic of a march-like accompaniment.

The censor, however, had removed the music underlining the soliloquy, and the ‘patriotic’ tune as well, leaving only a dramatic, but semantically more neutral, passage to mark the end of the tableau. The ‘patriotic’ phrases of the original version, in contrast, may have carried fresh, possibly problematic, connotations. The style belongs, arguably, to the same category as that of the famous ‘Amour sacré de la patrie’ section of Masaniello and Pietro’s Revolutionary duet in Auber’s *La Muette de Portici*, which had premiered the previous year. Although the principal violin part does not reveal much about the accompaniment, the rhythmic features of the melody – the quavers, separated by quaver rests in most bars – strongly suggest an accompaniment similar to that of Auber’s ‘Amour sacré’; in other words, a short accented chord on every beat of the bar, in a march-like fashion. The *fortissimo* accent on the second beat of the bar, in the violins’ answers between the phrases, similarly finds its equivalent in the accompaniment of ‘Amour sacré’. (In fact other parts of the music in *Sept heures* are also conspicuously close to the music of *La Muette*, such as the beginning of the original overture, which begins, as far as

can be gathered from the principal violin part, on a *fortissimo* diminished-seventh chord – see Example 2.6, below.²⁰)

Operatic or theatrical?

In the original version, then, this seems to be a decidedly ‘operatic’ moment, in which the soliloquy so strongly gravitates towards an aria-like expression that the orchestra responds. But it is, of course, the orchestra that does the singing, not Mlle d’Armans. So how would that affect Dorval’s vocal performance in the soliloquy that precedes and prepares the orchestral response? Again, I think that the most important utterance here is the phrase that functions as a cue for the musicians: ‘Guidez-le, mon dieu! ... délivrez ma patrie!!! ...’.

Utterances of this type seem quintessentially ‘melodramatic’: they express emotions in a drastic way, testifying to a heightened sensibility, or to a state of crisis. They seem, apropos of Peter Brooks, to break through all the accommodation and toning-down that constitutes the ‘reality principle’: they are texts without a subtext. Such words would have been uttered in a raised voice, made to sound more sonorous than usual – a vocal rendering that corresponds to the emotional state of mind implied by the words. Yet, for all the recognizably ‘theatrical’ pathos of such a vocal effect, it may also carry particularly ‘operatic’ connotations. It can be made part of a crescendo, creating a dynamic affinity towards something yet to come: an aria. When achieving this function, it resembles a type of utterance that Verdi would later call a *parola scenica* – in Roger Parker’s interpretation primarily a transitory device that would typically function as a cue for a set piece:

It is entirely in keeping with Verdi’s ambivalent position towards formal conventions that, even as the various ‘movements’ of set pieces became less and less predictable, he sought ever more vivid ways of using the moments of transition between one movement and the next to articulate dramatic turning points. One outward manifestation of this search was his coining of the term ‘parola scenica’, a ‘scenic utterance’ (typically a few short words) that would be declaimed immediately before a lyrical set piece, making verbally manifest the key issues of a dramatic situation (he described it to Ghislanzoni as a device that ‘sculpts and renders clear and evident the situation’).²¹

Paradoxically, however, such a device at the same time connotes, within an operatic context, a swerve towards spoken theatre – it is declaimed rather than sung, pronounced, preferably, in such a way as to render the words clearly audible

²⁰ I am grateful to Philip Carli for suggesting this comparison in a response to my paper at the conference ‘Music and the Melodramatic Aesthetic’ at the University of Nottingham in September 2008.

²¹ Roger Parker, ‘Verdi, Giuseppe: §6 (iii) Dramatic forms’, www.grovemusiconline.com (accessed 18 September 2009).

and understandable, giving priority to meaning over sound. And it is a device often associated with a tendency towards operatic *realism*, rather than its opposite.²²

My last example will pursue this problematic further, and focus on the apparent paradox of a vocal phenomenon that seems to belong to two spheres at the same time: the ‘theatrical’ and the ‘operatic’, creating a dramaturgy of oppositions, where a certain mode of theatrical ‘realism’ and unrestrained self-expression – breaking through all the boundaries of ‘the real’ – seem to meld together.

‘C’est moi qui l’ai tué’

Mlle d’Armans arrives at Marcel’s apartments, they talk a little, and he then turns to write the letter of pardon. She wants to stab him in the back right there, but he looks round and she has to conceal her dagger. He then hides the letter near his heart, from where she must retrieve it. In order to buy time, she asks him to first put out the lights in the bedroom next door. He obeys, and asks her to stay behind (‘Ces lumières? Attends...’ [Those lights? Wait...]), occasioning a short musical number (see Example 2.3). Alone for a moment, she draws her dagger and summons her courage (‘Voilà l’instant! ... Mon Dieu! soutiens mon courage’ [This is the moment! ... My God! Support my courage], see Examples 2.4(a) and (b)). She then follows him into the room next door, stabs him, and returns, dagger in hand (see Example 2.4(c)). The mayor and a group of soldiers rush into the room, alarmed, and she confesses her crime (‘C’est moi qui l’ai tué’ [It is me who killed him], see Example 2.5). The mayor, averting his eyes, orders her arrest. Two red curtains now slowly close on the scene, and a moment later the new setting of the Palais de Justice is revealed.

The music in this scene primarily accompanies action, doubling it with unequivocal musical gestures. The first passage is heard as Marcel walks into the adjoining room, adding to the atmosphere of suspense. The second follows on from Mlle d’Armans’s ‘soutiens mon courage’; in the original version there were three sections here (i.e. Exx. 2.4(a), (b) and (c)), each containing a reference to previously heard material.²³ The music of Example 2.4(a), with its sudden

Example 2.3 ‘Ces lumières? attends...’ (Act III, seventh tableau, scene 8)

Adagio

Strings

Timbales, Voilées

²² See, for instance, Hendrik Johannes Paulus du Plessis, ‘Parola scenica: Towards Realism in Italian Opera’ (PhD dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 2007).

²³ All censored passages (Exx. 2.4(b), 2.5 and 2.6) have been taken from the principal violin part.

Example 2.4(a) 'Mon Dieu! Soutiens mon courage' (Act III, seventh tableau, scene 8)

Musical score for Example 2.4(a). The score is in G minor (one flat) and 3/4 time. The upper staff is a piano part with a *ff* dynamic, featuring a series of triplet chords. The lower staff is a bass line with a *p* dynamic, featuring a timbales part. The score ends with a fermata over a chord.

Example 2.4(b) Mlle d'Armans takes courage (continuation of previous passage)

Musical score for Example 2.4(b). The score is in D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The upper staff is a clarinet part with a *p* dynamic, featuring a melodic line with slurs and accents. The lower staff is a bass line with a *p* dynamic, featuring a simple accompaniment.

Example 2.4(c) Mlle d'Armans kills Marcel (continuation of previous passage)

Musical score for Example 2.4(c). The score is in D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The upper staff is a piano part with a *ff* dynamic, featuring a series of chords and a melodic line. The lower staff is a bass line with a *ff* dynamic, featuring a series of chords and a melodic line. The score is marked with a *5* and includes a *tr* (trill) marking. The score ends with a fermata over a chord.

fortissimo diminished-seventh chord, had been anticipated in the very first bars of the overture (see Example 2.6), and accompanies the dramatic gesture of Mlle d'Armans drawing her dagger. Example 2.4(b) recalls, now in D major and *piano*, the first bars of the patriotic tune heard at the end of the sixth tableau (see Example 2.2) – the only passage of music in this scene with a pronounced vocal, cantabile character. Like the material it quotes, however, it was censored. Example 2.4(c), finally, most likely accompanied first the actual act of murder – the repeated Ds

Example 2.5 ‘C’est moi qui l’ai tué’, censored passage, first eight bars (Act III, seventh tableau, scene 8)

Example 2.6 Overture, first 11 bars

(bars 1–3) – then Marcel’s death struggle,²⁴ then the return of Mlle d’Armans to the living room (bars 4–8), and finally the soldiers and the mayor rushing in to the sound of military fanfares (bars 9–16). This music was also heard in the overture.

In the censored version, however, Example 2.4(c) was relocated, and played only after Mlle d’Armans’s confession, ‘C’est moi qui l’ai tué’. Such a relocation naturally changes the music’s connotations: instead of carving out in sound the physical act of Mlle d’Armans stabbing Marcel, the thrusting Ds are now made to comment on the character of her confession. Rather than carrying violent and threatening connotations, the music of these bars now serves to express a proud, self-confident, defiant, even heroic, gesture. The fanfares may have been interpreted in the same context, or they may have accompanied the immediate scene change, thus turning it into a glorifying soundtrack to the appearance of the Palace of Justice.

The phrase ‘C’est moi qui l’ai tué’ may be seen as a variant of a type of utterance identified by Peter Brooks as typical of melodrama, in which a character announces his or her moral identity directly, in an act of self-nomination.²⁵ For up to this point in the drama, as we have seen, Mlle d’Armans had made a secret of her plans to meet Marcel and kill him. The speaking of the phrase, then, signifies

²⁴ After the murder, a violent cry is heard, the curtain separating the two rooms is torn down, and we see Marcel staggering, trying to get up, before finally dying. Ducange and Bourgeois, *Sept heures*, p. 89.

²⁵ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 39.

the characteristically melodramatic moment when Mlle d'Armans can finally speak her truth.

It is at the same time a phrase that, like a *parola scenica*, sculpts the situation, so to speak. But it lacks the sense of crescendo, the sense that something more – an aria – is on its way. Rather, it has an air of conclusiveness, which may be comparable to operatic last words such as Rigoletto's 'Gilda! mia Gilda! è morta! Ah! La maledizione!'" [Gilda! my Gilda! she is dead! Oh! malediction!] or Tosca's 'O Scarpia, avanti a Dio!' [O Scarpia, we shall meet before God!]. After such utterances no further singing seems possible. Yet simply ending it right there also does violence to the pathos of the utterance – so, characteristically, the orchestra takes over for the concluding bars in both operas (quoting a central motif and offering a final reinterpretation of this motif in the light of the final action). In the original version of *Sept heures*, quite similarly, the orchestra at this point further develops the musical material announced in the first bars of the overture and later associated with the dagger – or rather with Mlle d'Armans's wilful gesture of drawing the dagger (see Examples 2.4(a), 2.5 and 2.6).

This is turbulent music. In the censored version, too, the musical response to the cue consists of agitated music (the thrusting Ds and so on). Yet the stage directions demand that the words are uttered 'avec calme' (calmly).²⁶ So, if the stage directions are to be taken at face value, it seems that Mlle d'Armans has reached a point of serene detachment here, a state of mind expressed also in the ensuing scene, in which she slowly descends the staircase of the Palace of Justice, surrounded by a crowd. The orchestra, on the other hand, simultaneously enjoys a thoroughly 'operatic' moment: it re-enacts – in the original version – a previous event by recalling musically the crime of which 'C'est moi qui l'ai tué' is a confession. As in Peter Brooks's suggestive description of what the 'great operatic moment' effects, the agitated physicality of the music seems to 'act out' the past event of Mlle d'Armans drawing the dagger, rather than merely recollecting it. And it does so, significantly, by employing a musical idiom which is clearly instrumental rather than vocal – physical and bodily rather than verbal and aria-like.

The contrast between the calm serenity of Mlle d'Armans and the agitated wilfulness of the orchestra seems to be indicative of a split between two modes of expression, or of a division of labour between two agents of expression. One of these, Marie Dorval, expresses herself with what may be interpreted as a 'realistic' matter-of-factness: the stage direction 'avec calme' indicates, I believe, a type of vocal performance, characterized by its simplicity and relative understatement (as compared to what was usually encountered at the boulevards), for which Dorval was famous, and which contemporaries such as Gautier and Janin, as quoted above, perceived as particularly moving and true to life. The other agent, the orchestra, serves as a vehicle for expressing directly all the dramatic emotions, which in this context seems to surpass the real, breaking through the toning-down of 'real life'.

²⁶ Ducange and Bourgeois, *Sept heures*, p. 89.

Speaking of *Tosca*, it is hard to overlook, of course, a rather remarkable resemblance between the murder scene of *Sept heures* and the Act II dénouement of Puccini's opera (Act IV of Sardou's play, on which it is based). In fact the similarities become even more pronounced when we consider that Marcel, in a previous scene, had ordered, Scarpia-like, that M. d'Armans be executed in any event. As he explains to his secretary: 'La politique s'inquiète peu des promesses de l'amour' [Politics cares little for promises of love]. *Tosca* was a play before it was turned into an opera, and not the only play that may come to mind when the murder scene of *Sept heures* is considered. Two years after the premiere of *Sept heures*, Marie Dorval played the female lead, Adèle, in Alexandre Dumas's *Antony*, which, like *Sept heures*, ends with a murder. This time, however, Dorval played the victim: Adèle is killed by the Romantic hot-head Antony because, although she loved him, she could not be his. As Colonel d'Hervey and several domestics rush in, Antony confesses, as he throws his dagger at the feet of the colonel: 'Oui! Morte! Elle me résistait, je l'ai assassinée' [Yes! Dead! She resisted me, I killed her] – a phrase that became an instant hit with the Romantic generation.²⁷

In the analyses above, I have sought to map a few specific melodramatic moments onto a distinction – somewhat crudely conceptualized, perhaps – between the 'theatrical' and the 'operatic' voice: the implication being that the 'theatrical' voice belongs basically to the sphere of spoken theatre, the 'operatic' to the sphere of opera. The boundaries between the qualities and implications of these two types of voice, however, must be seen as negotiable rather than stable. The two spheres seem to be engaged in a complex, ongoing process of mutual borrowing and exchange, which contribute to a creative dynamics of genre to which both spoken and sung forms of drama contribute, and from which they both benefit. In this respect *Sept heures* testifies, I believe, to a pregnant moment in the history of melodrama. This was a moment in which such negotiations between the 'theatrical' and 'operatic' qualities of voice – and, at the same time, between the need for realism and the need for transgressing the real – seem to have played a prominent role in the development of the genre.

²⁷ Alexandre Dumas, *Antony*, ed. Pierre-Louis Rey (Paris, 2002), p. 153. Regarding the reception of Antony's final phrase, see also Pierre-Louis Rey's preface in this edition, pp. 8–36.

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Chapter 3

Reconstructing Greek Drama: Saint-Saëns and the Melodramatic Ideal

Elinor Olin

Though his star quality waned considerably during the last century, Saint-Saëns was hailed by his contemporaries in the French press as nothing less than the uncontested leader of the Modern French School and was one of the most celebrated cultural icons of his day. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been renewed interest in Saint-Saëns as a composer, a performer with a lengthy career as pianist and conductor, and a scholar at the forefront of emerging French musicology. Although his leading role in disseminating ideas on French music has been considered by several writers, less well known is Saint-Saëns's response to nineteenth-century theories of archaeology and their connection to historical performance practice. This chapter will consider Saint-Saëns's role at the forefront of the search for musico-archaeological proof to de-mystify the secrets of dramatic performance in the ancient world, particularly through the technique of melodrama.

Exuberant declarations that Saint-Saëns 'contributed voluminously to every genre of French musical literature' notwithstanding, modern scholarship on the composer has clearly given preferential treatment to his instrumental works.¹ By contrast, his contemporaries – according to the aesthetic hierarchy of the day – recognized his contributions to French musical drama as the most significant in his oeuvre. Saint-Saëns's earliest biographers, including Jean Bonnerot (1914) and André Messenger (1907),² gave unambiguous weight to his dramatic works, highlighting the breadth and depth of genres on his work-list. Beyond *Samson*, though, Saint-Saëns's works for the stage are little known to modern audiences.

One contribution to his exclusion from the twentieth-century canon was his anti-modernist stance. In his 1913 memoir *École buissonnière*, Saint-Saëns declared that the reigning compulsion for innovation-at-any-cost was nothing less than 'perfidy'. Indeed, 'the search for originality', he continued, 'is fatal to art'.³ The same cantankerous attitude towards novelty, however, is perhaps what made

¹ Sabina Teller Ratner, *Camille Saint-Saëns 1835–1921: A Thematic Catalogue of his Complete Works* (New York, 2002), vol. 1, p. xiii.

² Jean Bonnerot, *C. Saint-Saëns: Sa Vie et son œuvre* (Paris, 1914); André Messenger, 'L'Œuvre dramatique de Saint-Saëns', *Musica*, 6 (1907): pp. 85–8.

³ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Ecole buissonnière: Notes et souvenirs* (Paris, 1913), p. 146.

Saint-Saëns the ideal – and arguably one of the original – advocates of historically informed performance. His editorial work on the operas of Gluck and the *Œuvres complètes* of Rameau is fairly well known, but it is Saint-Saëns's interest in the music of antiquity that forms a continuous thread through his extensive career. His attempts to re-create scientifically the authentic performance of this music as a synthesis of music, text and gesture set him apart from his contemporaries (performers, scholars and composers). Perhaps ironically, such attempts also revealed unexpected modernist tendencies. Advocating new works realized as artefacts of authentic performance, Saint-Saëns promoted careful research and faithful execution of *la musique antique* to invigorate a sense of cultural lineage and collective memory for a French society looking forward to a new era.

At the close of the nineteenth century in France, a general fascination with Classical Greek culture, particularly Greek tragedy, was in the air. Translations of works by Euripides and Sophocles were performed to great acclaim by the Comédie-Française and the Théâtre de l'Odéon. Weekly public *conférences* were offered by the eminent dramatist Ferdinand Brunetière at the Odéon for several years during the early 1890s.⁴ The latest research on ancient Greek music was widely discussed and excerpted in journals. François-Auguste Gevaert's *Histoire et théorie de la musique de l'antiquité* (published 1875–81)⁵ set the standard for subsequent research by *musicologues* such as Maurice Emmanuel and provided the groundwork for Théodore Reinach's important discovery of the *Hymn to Apollo*, first published in 1892.⁶ Saint-Saëns, too, threw his hat into the ring with the pamphlet *Note sur les décors de théâtre dans l'antiquité romaine*, published in 1886.⁷ His dedication of this pamphlet to 'M. Charles Nutter, archiviste de l'Opéra' provides a datable link between the Opéra, archeological evidence in France, and Saint-Saëns's relatively early interest in ancient theatre.

In 1878, Parisians with an interest in the theatre of antiquity were provided with an opportunity to view a scale model (3cm to 1m) of the extant first-century

⁴ Ferdinand Brunetière, *Histoire du théâtre français* (15 vols, Paris, 1891–92). In his résumé of these conferences, Gustave Larroumet cited Brunetière's connection between history, literature and scientific theories of evolution, or 'la théorie de l'évolution littéraire'. See Gustave Larroumet, 'L'Enseignement au théâtre: Conférences de M. F. Brunetière à l'Odéon', *Études de littérature et d'art* (4 vols, Paris, 1893–96), vol. 1 (1893), pp. 347–76, here p. 359.

⁵ François-Auguste Gevaert, *Histoire et théorie de la musique de l'antiquité* (2 vols, Ghent, 1875–81).

⁶ Maurice Emmanuel, *La Danse grecque antique d'après les monuments figurés* (Paris, 1896); Théodore Reinach, *Le Second Hymne delphique à Apollon: D'une conférence faite à l'assemblée générale de l'Association pour l'encouragement des études grecques, le 3 juin 1897* (Paris, 1897).

⁷ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Note sur les décors de théâtre dans l'antiquité romaine* (Paris, 1886). Other writings by Saint-Saëns include *Essai sur les lyres et cithares antiques* (Paris, 1902), republished as an article in the *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire* (2 parts, 11 vols, Paris, 1913–31), pt 1, vol. 1 (1913), pp. 538–40.

BC Roman theatre (Théâtre Antique) in Orange, located approximately 25km north of Avignon. This model, constructed under the supervision of Charles Garnier (architect of the 1875 Paris Opéra) and Léon Heuzezy (archaeologist and Conservateur du Louvre⁸), was on view for the duration of the 1878 Exposition Universelle and was subsequently moved to the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.⁹ Saint-Saëns's description of Garnier and Heuzezy's work in his *Note sur les décors de théâtre* indicates his familiarity with the Théâtre Antique at Orange as well as with the musico-dramatic festivals first held there during the Second Empire.¹⁰

The earliest of modern outdoor music festivals was inaugurated with a single performance on 21 August 1869 at the as-yet-unrestored Roman theatre in Orange, described in 1914 by architect Jules Formigé as 'one of the most magnificent theatres of the Roman world' (see Figure 3.1).¹¹ An outmoded French opera, *Joseph*, by Etienne-Nicolas Méhul (1763–1817) was introduced by a secular cantata, *Les Triomphateurs*, 'with chorus, orchestra, strophes and apotheoses', written for the occasion by impresario Antony Réal (apparently a pseudonym, dates unknown) and a local Avignonnais composer, Germain Fuzet Imbert (1812–86).¹² A second version of Antony Réal's 'Fête romaine' was held during the weekend of 23–4 August 1875, and it was followed by a series of performances held at the Théâtre Antique in August 1888, this time under the auspices of the Félibres, the regionalist movement founded by poet and activist Frédéric Mistral. The outwardly curious pairing of compositions performed at the original 'Fête romaine' in 1869 set the tone for the first four decades of ongoing productions at Orange. Between 1888 and 1911, under the direction of Mistral's protégé Paul Mariéton (1862–1911) the festival, which became known as the Chorégies d'Orange, staged a repertory of newly composed and established works drawing upon Classical mythology, cultural nationalism and the impressive physical experience described by those encountering this remarkable monument. Works featuring spoken dialogue to be heard in combination with orchestral scores (which, as we shall see, was recognized to be a form of melodrama) were performed before as many as 12,000 people – *paysans provençals*, Parisians and foreigners – and were intended to be educational in the broadest sense.¹³ The festival marquee

⁸ Critobule [pseud. Eugène Vial], *Paul Mariéton d'après sa correspondance* (Paris, 1920), p. 236.

⁹ Gustave Larroumet, 'Au Théâtre d'Orange', *Études de littérature et d'art*, vol. 3 (1895), pp. 1–28, here p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹ Jules Formigé, *Remarques diverses sur les théâtres romains à propos de ceux d'Arles et d'Orange* (Paris, 1914), p. 2.

¹² *Joseph* was first performed in Paris at the Opéra-Comique on 17 February 1807. Short-run revivals were produced there on 11 September 1851 and 18 August 1866. Alfred Løwenberg, ed., *Annals of Opera, 1597–1940* (2 vols, Geneva, 1955), vol. 1, col. 600.

¹³ This high-end estimate is from F. Dignonnet, *Le Théâtre antique d'Orange: Les Spectacles à l'époque romaine – Les Représentations modernes* (Avignon, 1897), p. 26;



Figure 3.1 Théâtre Antique, Orange. Source: Jules Formigé, *Remarques diverses sur les théâtres romains à propos de ceux d'Arles et d'Orange. Extrait des mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, vol. XIII (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1914), Plate II, facing p. 10

announced the participation of the most celebrated performers of the day: stars of the Comédie-Française, the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique, along with the frequent participation of conductor Edouard Colonne and members of his highly regarded orchestra.

In his *Note sur les décors de théâtre*, Saint-Saëns described the site carefully, including the exact dimensions of the theatre's imposing wall (30m in height), as well as citing scholarly theories about stage machinery for manipulating curtains and setting scenery. Saint-Saëns also provided solutions to practical issues posed by the monumental dimensions of the architecture in contrast with the human scale of the drama performed there. Harmony, according to Saint-Saëns, was a vital element:

the wide demographic is suggested by Paul Mariéton, *Le Voyage des Félibres & des Cigaliers (9–14 Août 1894): Compte rendu complet avec tous les documents relatifs aux fêtes rhodaniennes et au Théâtre d'Orange* (Paris, 1895), p. 2.

In order to put the enormous vertical surface, decorated with niches, pediments and statues, in harmony with the dramatic presentation taking place at its base, there could be only one solution: to cover its entire height with decorations of a character [unlike that of today] in harmony with the immense surface on the one hand, and with the actors and the smaller-scale machines on the other.¹⁴

Mixing his archaeological metaphors only slightly, Saint-Saëns continued by admitting that, although they were not of the same genre, ‘the decorative paintings at Pompeii give us the key to the mystery, [and] it must be recognized that the ancients solved the problem with a rare elegance’.¹⁵ Noting that he found the ‘theatrical appearance’ of the figures ‘strolling through the paintings of Pompeii’ nothing less than ‘striking’, Saint-Saëns held up as a prime example a *Cithara Player from the Pantheon at Pompeii* (see Figure 3.2): ‘With passionate gaze, and mouth open evidently to declaim or sing – both of which were the same for the ancients – in front of the public in a vast space, this attitude could not be explained any other way’.¹⁶

In Saint-Saëns’s informed estimation, the gestural evidence shown in this archaeological artefact proved that declaiming words (or singing, or something in between) with instrumental accompaniment in a dramatic setting was not only an authentic mode of performance, but was also the solution bringing into harmony the monumental presence of the theatre with the human scale and delivery of the drama itself.

Saint-Saëns was not the first to suggest connections between the Théâtre Antique d’Orange and the Roman theatre at Pompeii, and to forge links between archaeological evidence and performances of Greek tragedy. In his monumental work *Histoire et théorie de la musique de l’antiquité*, Gevaert acknowledged the enormous lacunae in knowledge of the musical practices of the ancients, but asserted ‘in essence, that which we can surmise about the role of their melody cannot differ substantially from the way in which polychrome paintings are complemented by their architecture and statuary’.¹⁷ In a closer analysis of specific Greek tragedies, Gevaert discussed the relationship between declaimed words, sung text and instrumental forces. ‘Frequently the strophes [in Classical tragedy] were divided equally into two or three sung phrases, between which were interspersed verses declaimed in melodrama’.¹⁸

Gevaert’s use of the term ‘mélodrame’ to denote the simultaneous performance of spoken text and instrumental music is significant. In 1881, melodrama was a loaded term. Most contemporary writers employed the word pejoratively, alluding

¹⁴ Saint-Saëns, *Note sur les décors*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁷ Gevaert, *Histoire et théorie*, vol. 2, p. xiii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 535.



Figure 3.2 *Cithara Player from the Pantheon at Pompeii*. Source: Camille Saint-Saëns, *Note sur les décors de théâtre dans l'antiquité romaine* (Paris, 1886), facing p. 23

to overly simplistic dramatic plots, lacking in subtlety and substance.¹⁹ Very few critics ventured to broach the subject in connection with serious music; even Saint-Saëns had sidestepped the lexicographic issue in his *Note sur les décors de théâtre*.²⁰ As one of the earliest French-language commentators to make a correlation between Greek tragedy and the term melodrama, however, Gevaert stressed that the musical component of Greek tragedy was not to be considered

¹⁹ Of Chabrier's *Le Roi malgré lui*, Louis de Fourcaud complained that it 'stands somewhere between operetta and melodrama ... [Its] banal intrigue, overburdened with conflicts, is weighed down with interminable dialogues and free-for-all music divided into small pieces of all sorts'; 'Musique', *Revue indépendante de littérature et d'art*, 3/8 (1887): pp. 356–64, here p. 363.

²⁰ Critic Camille Bellaigue was one exception, employing the term 'mélodrame' in reference to 'la déclamation et la symphonie' (*Année musicale* (1887): p. 172) and reviewing a performance of Massenet's *Les Erinnyes* (*Année musicale* (1889): p. 75).

as a stand-alone composition, but rather as only one of the ‘arts pratiques ou musique’: music, dance and poetry. ‘Tragedy’, he emphasized,

is based on absolute harmony between the distinct and contrary elements at the very core of its nature: *word* and *song*, *stage* and *orchestra*, *actor* and *chorus*. In order to make the transition from the simple word to choral melody, musically declaimed anapestic verses were inserted between spoken iambic verses and those destined to be sung.²¹

In other words, the union of declamation with simultaneous instrumental underlay was a crucial element in the realization of authentic Greek tragedy.

Saint-Saëns’s longstanding ‘sensitivity toward the music of antiquity and *archaïsme*’ was considered noteworthy by his contemporaries.²² In a 1907 précis of Saint-Saëns’s dramatic works, André Messager wrote that the composer

is still excelling in music that, while not exactly reconstructing [Greek drama], evokes in its line the harmonious vision of Greek bas-reliefs. The *Invocation to Venus* from *Phryné* (1893), for example, gives us the noble impression of a sacred monument against the Attic sky, clear and bright in its eternal azure. The master’s entire œuvre, even his conversations, communicate an irresistible attraction to ancient drama or the renovation of the antique.²³

Significantly, Messager’s remarks clearly define the word antique as a reference to Hellenic drama, circumventing the evocation (as in contemporary discussions of *opéra comique*) of either *ancien* or *ancien régime*.

One of Saint-Saëns’s earlier mature works was *Spartacus*, an orchestral overture written during his professorship at the École Niedermeyer, for the Concours de la Société Sainte-Cécile de Bordeaux in 1863, for which the composer was awarded first prize.²⁴ It is scored for double woodwinds, brass, a full complement of strings, harp and percussion (timpani, cymbals). Despite its titular reference to antiquity, the full-bore orchestral sound of this work bears little resemblance to his later *antique* works for the stage. A slightly later composition, however, was one of ‘two capital works’ identified by biographer Jean Chantavoine: *Le Déluge*, an oratorio written in 1874 on a libretto by Louis Gallet.²⁵ Among a group of Saint-Saëns’s

²¹ Gevaert, *Histoire et théorie*, vol. 2, p. 513.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²³ Messager, ‘L’Œuvre dramatique de Saint-Saëns’: p. 87.

²⁴ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Spartacus Overture*, ed. Pietro Spada (Rome, 1984). Ratner, *Thematic Catalogue*, vol. 1, p. 276 notes that the manuscript of this work (F-Pn MS 20285) was given to Fauré by the composer.

²⁵ Louis Gallet (1835–98) was librettist for seven of Saint-Saëns’s works: *La Princesse jaune*, *opéra comique* (1872); *Les Soldats de Gédéon*, for four male voices (1876); *Etienne Marcel*, *opéra* (1879); *Proserpine*, *drame lyrique* (1887); *Ascanio*, *opéra*

antique-themed works singled out by Chantavoine, *Le Déluge* is praised for the ‘noble candour’ of its vocal lines (‘récits ou chants’), underscored by a reduced orchestra of strings and harps.²⁶ One of the most interesting features of the work is the unison SATB choral declamation, written in melodic and rhythmic notation (as opposed to unnotated text cues), but not varying from a single pitch.²⁷ The subject of this work is, of course, the flood associated with Noah’s Ark rather than themes of Greek mythology, but significant to the discussion at hand is Chantavoine’s highlighting of both the scoring and the ambiguity of vocal style in this work, comparable to those of melodrama, and pertinent to future *antique* works by Saint-Saëns.

According to biographer Jean Bonnerot, 1893 was a watershed year in Saint-Saëns’s formation as a *musico-archéologue*. At the end of that year, poet J.-L. Croze (godson of longtime collaborator Louis Gallet, and administrator of the Théâtre des Folies-Marigny) brought to the composer his *Hymne à Pallas-Athèné*, which was ‘destined for the [1894] opening of the Fêtes d’Orange’.²⁸ Saint-Saëns dedicated this work for soprano and orchestra to Mlle Lucienne Bréval (of the Opéra), who would premiere the vocal ode to great acclaim.²⁹

In a special review published after the 1894 festival at the Théâtre Antique, organizer Paul Mariéton carefully included excerpts from Théodore Reinach’s lecture to the École des Beaux-Arts announcing his discovery at Delphi of the *Hymn to Apollo*, dating from the second century BC. Reinach’s *reconstitution mélodique* of the Delphic fragment, orchestrated by Gabriel Fauré, had been ‘solemnly executed’ on 12 August, in accordance with findings of the latest musico-archaeological research.³⁰ But *Pallas-Athèné* and *Hymne à Apollon* were only warm-up acts for the main-stage festival presentations: two tragedies from Sophocles’s great Theban trilogy, *Œdipe-roi* with music by Edmond Membreé (1820–82) and *Antigone* with music by Saint-Saëns.

(1890); *Frédégonde*, *drame lyrique* (1895); *Déjanire*, *tragédie lyrique* (1898, Béziers). Gallet was also the librettist for Massenet’s *Les Erinnyes*, and two other works performed at Orange in 1897.

²⁶ Jean Chantavoine, *Camille Saint-Saëns* (Paris, 1947), p. 42.

²⁷ Camille Saint-Saëns, *The Deluge: Biblical Cantata*, vocal score (New York, 1889). See esp. pt 1, pp. 16–17, 22–3, 45–7.

²⁸ Bonnerot, *C. Saint-Saëns*, p. 150.

²⁹ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Pallas-Athèné, hymne chanté aux Fêtes d’Orange (1894)*, vocal score (Paris, 1894).

³⁰ ‘The musical accompaniment, not extant [in the Delphic fragment], was furnished by the refined and learned M. Gabriel Fauré. The Greek cithara and flutes were replaced by the harp and the harmonium played with the clarinet register’; Émile Ducoin, ‘L’Hymne de Delphes et la musique grecque’, in Paul Mariéton (ed.), *Le Voyage des Félîtres & des Cigaliers (9–14 Août 1894): Compte rendu complet avec tous les documents relatifs aux fêtes rhodaniennes et au Théâtre d’Orange* (Paris, 1895), pp. 40–42, here p. 42.

A surprising number of contemporary commentators spilled ink over the description and analysis of Saint-Saëns's *Antigone*, a mere piece of incidental music originally written for the 1893 Parisian production of Sophocles's tragedy. The title page to the play, adapted for the French stage by Paul Meurice and Auguste Vacquerie, announced that the work had been premiered at the Odéon on 21 May 1844 with music by Mendelssohn, and reprised at the Comédie-Française on 21 November 1893 with music by Camille Saint-Saëns. Criticizing Mendelssohn's music for this work as 'too modern', biographer Jean Bonnerot was pleased to report that Saint-Saëns had approached the compositional process by first studying the gold-standard – François-Auguste Gevaert's 'principles of Greek music' – before embarking on the 'reconstruction, and restoration of Sophocles's masterpiece with a discreet music allowing the listener to discern every word of the verse'.³¹ Disparaging Meurice and Vacquerie's adaptation of the tragedy as 'a sterile pastiche, not more than a conjectural re-enactment', biographer Jean Chantavoine insisted that Saint-Saëns's music was the most valuable element of this piece. In fact, the music made the drama work. In spite of his distaste for the sound of Greek modes, which he found 'of a defective character when contrasted with our modern customs', Chantavoine applauded their use in *Antigone* as highly suitable for the expression of anxiety and anguish: '[t]he music for *Antigone* is so accurate, so spare, and so moving in its nakedness'.³²

The Parisian production of the work was criticized not only for the limitations of its overly confined performance space, but also for the inappropriate performance style of actors whose excessive emoting was deemed unsuitable there. In the context of the *plein air*, however, commentators were more generous in their praise and found the actors' approach to be more of an 'integral manifestation'³³ under the 'space and Hellenic azure of the French skies'.³⁴ Attention was drawn to the archaeologically inspired thespian performance, as in this review of Julia Bartet of the Comédie-Française (as *Antigone*, 1897):

Mlle Bartet has shown us sculptural poses and the amplitude of her magnificent gestures in a new light, with irreproachable diction and without affectation even in the most tragic passages. Seeing her lively stance, the supplicating gestures of

³¹ Bonnerot, C. *Saint-Saëns*, p. 149.

³² Chantavoine, *Camille Saint-Saëns*, p. 65.

³³ 'M. Mounet-Sully, whose shouts seem excessive at times on the scaled-down stage of the Comédie Française, has found at the Théâtre d'Orange the *plein air* he needed for the integral manifestation of his handsome talent'; Digonnet, *Le Théâtre antique d'Orange*, p. 30.

³⁴ 'Destined for seclusion in the airless confines of the Comédie-Française, *Antigone* imprisoned Melpomene and Euterpe. How to liberate them and release them to the Hellenic azure of the French skies? To this end, Saint-Saëns' imagination was excited by his love for the sun and the air of Southern France'; Chantavoine, *Camille Saint-Saëns*, p. 67.

her arms embracing the altar, one might say she is Galathea, ... a Greek statue miraculously brought to life.³⁵

In his preface to the piano/vocal score of *Antigone*, Saint-Saëns was characteristically more circumspect in tone. In order to reproduce the performance of Greek tragedy as accurately as possible, he wrote, passages for the choruses had been written in unison, and the rhythms of the choral expression were scrupulously matched to the verse. Implementing the research of the eminent M. Gevaert, he continued, there was a distinction made between passages of the tragedy that were to be sung, and those intended to be declaimed. Text written in lyric verse was 'supported by incidental music' ('musique de scène') and was 'based on scales more complex than those of the modern major and minor modes' which were the foundation of instrumental music. The supporting orchestra primarily featured three types of instruments: single-reed flutes (represented by four modern flutes), double-reed flutes (represented by two oboes and two clarinets), and harps (standing in for the antique lyre). Violins, violas and cellos completed the pared-down instrumental ensemble. The instruments were employed either in unison with the voices or in 'a musical embroidery' around the singing, following Gevaert's descriptions of the 'rudimentary polyphony practised by the ancients'. Referring to both the illustrations and text of his own earlier writings on *théâtre antique*, Saint-Saëns cautioned the listener not to seek 'the kaleidoscopic effects' ('effets chatoyants') of modern music in this work, but instead to enjoy this 'line drawing, embellished with subtle shades', the extreme simplicity of which was its charm, as it made real the ancient Greeks' union of poetry and music; poetry was given pre-eminence, while music was an auxiliary element.³⁶

In fact, Saint-Saëns's preface was carefully worded both to reflect and to disseminate the research of Gevaert's *Histoire et théorie de la musique de l'antiquité*. The composer's language echoed Gevaert's cautionary advice to avoid comparisons between contemporary music, in which 'music absorbs the literary interest of a composition', and music of the ancients, in which 'the poetic content predominates markedly over the melody and harmony'.³⁷ Similarly, Saint-Saëns perpetuated Gevaert's assertions that wind instruments used by the Greeks were best reproduced by modern flutes, oboes and clarinets in unison with harps to replicate the sound of citharas. The ensemble, advised Gevaert, was not to be compared with the modern orchestra. 'Contrasts of sonority were impossible to achieve with such limited timbres and rudimentary polyphony'.³⁸

Saint-Saëns's score opens with the spare sound of four flutes and two harps in octaves, accompanying the entrance of Antigone, whose stately pace is informed

³⁵ Digonnet, *Le Théâtre antique d'Orange*, p. 29.

³⁶ Camille Saint-Saëns, 'Préface', in *Antigone: Tragédie de Sophocle*, vocal score (Paris, [1893]).

³⁷ Gevaert, *Histoire et théorie*, vol. 1, p. 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 32.

both by stage directions and simple instrumental rhythms. The melody of the entire Prologue is built note-for-note on Gevaert's explication of the Greek *ton lydien*, the two tetrachords of which he outlined as D–E_♭–E_♮–G / G–A–B_♭–B_♮.³⁹ Gevaert's research indicated that the Lydian mode was considered appropriate to convey ethical or moral situations in drama.⁴⁰ Here, the lower tetrachord in descending form both opens and closes the movement, the ending of which underscores Ismène's caution to her sister that she has lost all reason in disobeying Créon's rule of law, but that she is to be admired in her quest to obey the gods and give proper burial to her slain brother. Significantly, these verses are presented in melodrama: spoken verse is performed simultaneously with instrumental melodies.⁴¹ With the entrance of the chorus of 15 Old Theban Men (*Jer Chœur*) several pages later, the orchestra is reduced from the full ensemble (such as it is) to just strings, heard in octaves with the singers. The modal basis of this section is Gevaert's *ton dorien*, also suitable for the depiction of ethics or morality.⁴²

Exploiting the play's alternation of strophes and anti-strophes for two choruses in alternation with soloists, Saint-Saëns's score exhibits a large-scale structural rhythm via changes in modality, orchestration *and* style of vocal delivery. The appearance of the Chorège, the spokesman for the choruses,⁴³ abruptly changes the affect of the drama with a shift from the choruses' ethereal descriptions of the gods' invincibility to more practical information about Oedipus's two sons, who had killed one another at the walls of the seven-gated city of Thebes. The Chorège's spoken monologue is set apart not only by the contrast between choral singing and solo *récit*, but also with the first incidence of harmony. Here, underscoring the melodrama is a first-inversion D minor chord as sustained accompaniment to his spoken pronouncement: 'The two surviving sons of an ephemeral race, offspring of the same father and mother, slit one another's throats'.⁴⁴

Saint-Saëns's structural rhythm reaches a point of climax in the *quatrième épisode* of the tragedy, leading up to the final confrontation between Antigone and Créon, who is sending her to her death. This is Antigone's tragic moment of recognition,⁴⁵ where she chooses martyrdom over capitulation to the forces of despotism (see Table 3.1).

³⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 411.

⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 200.

⁴¹ Camille Saint-Saëns, *Antigone: Tragédie de Sophocle*, orchestral score (Paris, [1909]), p. 6.

⁴² Gevaert, *Histoire et théorie*, vol. 1, p. 258.

⁴³ Saint-Saëns, *Antigone*, orchestral score, p. 13.

⁴⁴ 'Mais les deux derniers fils d'une race éphémère, enfants du même père et de la même mère, se sont entr'égorgés!', *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Bonnie Lubin for this terminology.

Table 3.1 *Sophocles, Antigone, quatrième épisode: le chœur, Antigone; plus tard, Créon.*^a Saint-Saëns, *Antigone*, IX – 4e Episode^b

Antigone

(orch. score, rehearsal no. 29; Sophocles [1893], p. 44, lines 5–8)

L'âtre Pluton vivante et vierge me réclame,
Implacable jaloux!
La plainte que j'exhale est mon épithalame,
L'Achéron mon époux.

[Bitter Pluto reclaims me, living and a virgin,
Cruel jealous one!
The plaint I give forth is my wedding song,
The river Acheron is my groom.]

Mélodrame, 11 bars, quotation of Antigone theme. Gevaert: *Ton lydien*.
Flutes and spoken voice.

Les 2 Chœurs réunis

(orch. score, rehearsal no. 30; Sophocles [1893], p. 44, lines 11–14)

Pour toi plus de joug odieux,
De souffrance et de maladie.
C'est vivante, libre et hardie,
Que tu descends aux sombres lieux.

[For you no more, the hateful yoke
Of suffering and disease.
Living, vigorous and free,
You descend to the dark world.]

Sung, 26 bars, variation of Antigone theme. Gevaert: *Ton hypolydien*.
Oboe, clarinet, strings in 'rudimentary polyphony' with voices.

Antigone

(orch. score, rehearsal no. 32; Sophocles [1893], p. 44, line 15, p. 45, lines 5–6)

Dans un rocher murée! [sic] oh! quelle mort cruelle!
...Et moi, ma vie au deuil sans fin fût condamnée,
Moi, je n'ai pas vingt ans!

[Trapped by a wall of boulders! Oh what a cruel death!
And I, condemned to a life of endless mourning,
I who am not yet twenty years old!]

Mélodrame, 9 bars, Prologue fragments in inversion. Gevaert: *Ton phrygien*. Flutes and spoken voice, increased simultaneity.

Les 2 Chœurs réunis

(orch. score, rehearsal no. 33; Sophocles [1893], p. 45, line 8)

Pour toi, c'est un sort radieux...

[For you, it is a radiant fate.]

Sung, 8 bars, strings in rhythms of Prologue. Gevaert: *Ton hypolydien*

Oboe, clarinet, strings in polyphony with voices.

Antigone

(orch. score, rehearsal no. 34; Sophocles [1893],
p. 45, lines 13, 16–18)

Ô Thébains renommés pour vos chars! ô patrie!
...Sans pitié ni remords,
Dans ma prison tombeau, morte pour ceux qui vivent,
Vivante pour les morts!

[Thebans, renowned for your chariots! O patria!
... Without pity or remorse,
In my prison tomb, [I am] dead for those who live,
Living for those who have died!]

Mélodrame, 8 bars, fragments of
Antigone theme. Gevaert: *Ton phrygien*.
Flutes in octaves, solo harp arpeggio;
each with melodic sequencing alternating
with spoken voice.

Les 2 Chœurs réunis

(orch. score, rehearsal no. 35; Sophocles [1893],
p. 45, lines 19–22)

Honorer les morts est peut-être
Piété; mais il faut d'abord
Respecter le pouvoir du maître,
Et ta révolte a fait ta mort.

[To honour the dead is perhaps
A filial devotion; but above all
One must respect a ruler's power,
And your rebellion has brought about your death.]

Sung, 7 bars, rhythmic augmentation,
motivic references to Prologue. Gevaert:
Ton phrygien. Strings in homophonic
accompaniment.

Antigone

(orch. score, no rehearsal no., p. 55; Sophocles [1893],
p. 45, lines 23–6.)

Je pleurais, je faisais ma plainte à la lumière
Du grand astre sacré,
A la vie, à l'hymen! Mais, torture dernière,
Personne n'a pleuré!

[I wept, I sent forth my grief towards the light
Of the great and sacred star,
To life, to marriage! But, as my final torture,
No one shed a tear!]

Mélodrame, 4 bars, sustained tone and
flute, harp quotes from rehearsal no.
34. Gevaert: *Ton phrygien*. Strings in
sustained open octave D with voice; flute,
harp.

Entrée de Créon

Ritournelle

Instrumental, 4 bars, strings quote
rehearsal no. 35. Gevaert: *Ton phrygien*.
Strings in homophony.

^a Sophocles, *Antigone, tragédie mise à la scène française par Paul Meurice et Auguste Vacquerie*, new edition (Paris, [1893]), pp. 44–7.

^b Saint-Saëns, *Antigone*, orchestral score, pp. 50–55.

During the opening moments of this scene, Antigone declaims her verses, mostly in alternation with the flutes re-introducing the instrumental melody from her entrance in the opening Prologue. The combined choruses then sing a

commentary on her 'odious fate' in unison with the strings, while the oboe and clarinet engage in a very simple counterpoint with the voices, echoing the melodic profile of the Antigone theme in Hypolydian mode. This is an example of the 'rudimentary polyphony practised by the ancients' as noted by Saint-Saëns in his reference to Gevaert's work in his preface to the piano/vocal score of *Antigone*. Antigone's next lines are her most plaintive in the tragedy: 'Dans un rocher murée! oh! quelle mort cruelle!... Et moi, ma vie au deuil sans fin fut condamné, / Moi, je n'ai pas vingt ans!' ['Trapped by a wall of boulders! Oh what a cruel death! ... And I, condemned to a life of endless mourning; I who am not yet twenty years old!'].⁴⁶

There is a modal shift to the *ton phrygien* as the instrumental ensemble is reduced once again to four flutes heard in melodrama with Antigone's lament. The flutes' music is a sequence of their melody from the Prologue, but in inversion – and just as in the Prologue, the section ends with the descending outline of the lower tetrachord. The choruses next engage in a slightly more elaborate 'musical embroidery' with the strings once again in Hypolydian mode. The scene concludes with an increasingly rapid alternation between choral singing and Antigone's melodramas, both now in G Phrygian mode. Antigone's lines are delivered in overlapping alternation with the flutes and harp, competing with each other's sequenced melodic fragments. The instrumental ensemble is reduced to strings alone, in a simple homophonic accompaniment to the choruses' verbal support of Antigone's piety and then in a final sustained tone underscoring her grief.

The structural rhythm and large-scale dramatic construction of the musical score is clearly Saint-Saëns's explication of the tragedy's universal conflicts and themes. The character of Antigone represents hope, piety, loyalty to family heritage, and above all, the inner strength of a self-declared martyr in the face of cruelty and intimidation by a more powerful civil authority. Conspicuously, hers is the voice of melodrama. The choruses' and the Chorège's commentaries represent the voice of reason in support of this stance. Their verses are sung. Alone among the principal characters, Créon – who represents violence, anger, possession, obstinacy and the injustice of human law – has no part in the musical score.

For Paul Mariéton and the Félibres (who programmed multiple revivals of *Antigone* at the Fêtes d'Orange in 1894, 1897 and 1909), the appeal of the work lay in its implied support of the Regionalist ideal: the scrappy resistance of *la petite patrie* against the more powerful and homogenizing efforts of the centralized culture and its rule of law. For Saint-Saëns, it was all about harmony, both aural and metaphysical: between the immensity of the archaeological setting and the intimacy of the human drama, as well as harmony between the tragedy's universal message and the educational values inherent in the accurate performance of reconstructed Greek tragedy. Saint-Saëns was not the first composer or musicologist to express interest in the music of antiquity, but he was arguably the first composer to incorporate archaeological elements into its revitalization, with the clear intention to employ accurate historical performance techniques in

⁴⁶ Saint-Saëns, *Antigone*, orchestral score, p. 51.

a new work. This was not, as he wrote, in the service of some ‘fatal search for originality’,⁴⁷ but rather the deliberate reshaping of physical surroundings and archaeological evidence via musical expression into a cultural artefact.

Saint-Saëns’s conception of *antique* music incorporates the archaeological concept of *artefact*, in addition to broader connotations of the word. Exploring intrinsic connections between artefact and art, Saint-Saëns’s *Antigone* unconsciously foreshadowed the work of twenty-first-century writers such as Paul Bloom and Arnie Thomasson who have investigated the nature of artefact as embodiment of historical intention, and as representation of intrinsic, functional – and in this case, archaeological – expressivity.⁴⁸ Saint-Saëns’s objective in writing *Antigone* was clearly not to produce a stand-alone musical composition. Rather, he saw the complete work in performance as a vehicle for achieving previously unimagined historical realities, brought to life most effectively in exploitation of an archaeological setting such as the Théâtre Antique at Orange. Appropriating the monumentality of physical surroundings there, including the theatre’s impressive wall, performances of *Antigone* at Orange manifested the intrinsic duality of a cultural artefact: reaching into the past to interpret mythology in the service of shaping cultural expectations for the future.

Distancing himself from the prevailing aesthetic of ‘the masterwork’ perpetuated by a musical establishment designating opera as the superlative form of lyric expression, Saint-Saëns made specific references to Gevaert’s work in his preface to *Antigone*, including the appropriate nature of melody, orchestration, modal content, restraint of musical expression to emphasize poetry, and the equivalence of the spoken word underscored by instrumental music as vehicles for ‘awakening feelings and ideas inherent in the poetry [of Greek tragedy], to facilitate a perfect intelligence in the soul of the listener’.⁴⁹ As such, Saint-Saëns not only immersed his composition in the latest Hellenic scholarship, but elevated the technique of melodrama to the level of essential component within the unified triumvirate of what Gevaert called the ‘trois arts musiques’ crucial to the re-creation of Greek tragedy: voice (‘parole et chant’), instrumental music and gesture. Saint-Saëns created what is ultimately an ephemeral artefact that can only be effective as performance, realized with the essential participation of the performer. The composer’s artefact intention was a calculated advancement of Gevaert’s scholarly judgement that ‘in order to be transmitted to the listener, the poetic or musical work [Greek tragedy] needs the special intervention of the virtuoso-performer – singer, actor or rhapsode. This necessitates a process distinct

⁴⁷ Saint-Saëns, *École buissonnière*, p. 146.

⁴⁸ Paul Bloom, ‘Intention, History, and Artifact Concepts’, *Cognition*, 60 (1996): pp. 1–29; Arnie Thomasson, ‘Artifacts and Human Concepts’, in Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence (eds), *Creations of the Mind: Theories of Artifacts and their Representation* (New York, 2007), pp. 52–74.

⁴⁹ Gevaert, *Histoire et théorie*, vol. 1, p. 31.

from the creative acts of the poet and the composer.⁵⁰ Saint-Saëns's elevation of the performer's function, even in subordination of the composer, concurrently elevated the melodramatic element of *Antigone*. The performers' combination of declamation and orchestration, particularly with Saint-Saëns's avoidance of rhythmic notation and unspecified vocal pitches, became a crucial element in the creation of this work. The melodramatic ideal advanced theoretically by Gevaert and validated by Saint-Saëns was that music would embody the ideals of poetry to awaken the native intelligence of the listener's soul. Restraining the impulse towards unfettered 'pursuit of the original', Saint-Saëns nonetheless ventured into modernist territory, exploring the artefact nature of melodrama through the juxtaposition of monumentality via iconic Greek tragedy with a deliberate indifference towards creation of a musical masterpiece. Ceding his compositional authority to the comprehensive forces of performance, Saint-Saëns encouraged the recombination of fragmentary elements evocative of the past into new means of expression rendering equal value to the voices of the performer, the poet and the composer. At the same time, he fulfilled Gevaert's promise that 'one day, Western art will look once more to the spirit of the Greeks for the secret of beauty that is calm, unadorned and eternally young'.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ 'Very restrained with regard to overwrought sensation and the search for novelty, ancient art did not cultivate the seed of its own decadence ... Who knows whether the day might come when, saturated with violent emotions, and having stretched itself to the limits of nervous sensibility, Western art might look once more to the spirit of the Greeks for the secret of beauty that is calm, unadorned and eternally young'; *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 39.

Chapter 4

In a Woman's Voice: Musical Recitation and the Feminization of American Melodrama¹

Marian Wilson Kimber

The increase in American musical melodramas (compositions consisting of accompanied declamation) between 1880 and 1935 stemmed in part from the popularity of accompanied recitation among women. While the best-known performers of melodrama were male elocutionists, numerous women recited poetry accompanied by piano both on the platform and in the domestic sphere. British and American composers' melodramatic settings of Romantic and Victorian poetry by such authors as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow or Edgar Allan Poe were available for reciters, and Americans sometimes performed Richard Strauss's melodrama *Enoch Arden* or Max von Schillings's *Hexenlied*.² In addition, professional and amateur reciters often paired previously unrelated texts and music, creating performances that now fall outside the conception of the musical work.³ In America, the chief practitioners of accompanied recitation were women, and their performances came to influence melodramatic pieces created by female composers well into the twentieth century. Thus, American melodrama can serve as a case study for the intersection of gender and genre, demonstrating female composers' adoption of nineteenth-century practices in creating works that would specifically appeal to women.

Elocution as a Feminine Accomplishment

Women's dominance of American melodrama can be traced to their training in elocution, which began earlier in the nineteenth century. The study of elocution was

¹ Funding for this chapter was made possible by an Arts and Humanities Initiative Grant from the University of Iowa. I am also grateful to Denise Von Glahn, whose invitation to speak to her seminar at Florida State University was the initial impetus for this project, and to Fred Crane, who provided scores of Phyllis Fergus and Frieda Peycke from his personal collection.

² See my partial list of such works in 'Mr Riddle's Readings: Music and Elocution in Nineteenth-Century Concert Life', *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 21 (2007): pp. 163–81, here 171–2.

³ The practice has been discussed by Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le text: Le Mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris, 2005), pp. 253–6.

considered a moral and intellectual requisite, particularly for men, as it prepared them for public careers as lawyers, ministers and politicians. The expectation that women would remain in the domestic sphere made it more difficult for them to acquire rhetorical skills. Authors of nineteenth-century elocution texts frequently felt compelled to offer justifications for women's study of the art with reasons similar to those supporting their study of music. The author of an 1839 reader for young ladies wrote,

A fine reader may contribute as much pleasure to the domestic circle, during the course of life, as a skillful performer on the harp or pianoforte. The instrument for reading is ever at hand, and seldom out of tune When a young lady has acquired this accomplishment, why should she not entertain a circle of friends by reading, as readily as she would sing or play for them? Custom sanctions the one, why should it not the other?⁴

Elocutionary skills would enable women not only to entertain their families but also to contribute to the education of their children. In her 1846 *Elocutionary Reader* for young women, Anna U. Russell declared:

the key note of poetry, seems to have been lent to woman. On the ear of infancy and childhood, her voice was meant to fall, as a winning prelude to all the melodies of nature; the human nerves are attuned, accordingly to the breath of her voice; and through life the chords of the heart respond most readily to her touch.⁵

One etiquette book recommended vocal training in order to enhance feminine and thus domestic virtues.

The study of voice is advantageous . . . in every station in life. Some voices repel, others attract. In the home circle, and in fact everywhere, it is well to remember that 'molasses catches more flies than vinegar.' Sweeten your voices, my fair ones, and it will sweeten your life and your homes.⁶

Nonetheless, contemporary writing on women's vocal education made clear that their speech was to remain within the confines of what was appropriate to 'womanliness'. Russell's description of the ideal female voice suggests that women were not to aspire to the louder dynamic extremes required for public oratory:

⁴ Mrs L[ouisa] C[aroline] Tuthill, ed., *The Young Lady's Reader* (New Haven, CT, 1839), p. iii, quoted in Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen, *Imagining Rhetoric: Composing Women of the Early United States* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2002), p. 116.

⁵ Anna U. Russell, *The Young Ladies' Elocutionary Reader* (Boston, MA, 1846), p. 9.

⁶ [Martha Louise Rayne], *Gems of Deportment* (Chicago, IL, 1881), p. 392, quoted in Clifton Joseph Furness (ed.), *The Genteel Female: An Anthology* (New York, 1931), p. 170.

A sweet voice is indispensable to a woman It is not inconsistent with great vivacity; but it is oftener the gift of the quiet and unobtrusive. Loudness or rapidity of utterance is incompatible with it. It is low, but not guttural, deliberate, but not slow; every syllable is distinctly heard; but the sounds follow each other like drops of water from a fountain. It is like the brooding note of a dove It is a glorious gift in a woman.⁷

As 'elocution' developed as both a discipline and a profession, it was initially a field for men, who served as professors of elocution at colleges and universities and produced scholarly textbooks and recitation anthologies. However, this male domain changed in the final decades of the nineteenth century; the entrance of women into the elocutionary profession parallels the general increase of women in public life at the turn of the century.⁸ *Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms*, an etiquette manual first published in 1873, has a page-long essay describing the 'march of progress' and the 'results of civilization' as the status of woman changed in relation to various professions. It concludes 'the time is not far distant when on the platform, whether engaged in general lecture, moral teaching, political discussion, or legal argument, she will be found the exponent of truth and co-worker with man in reform'.⁹ In spite of the author's optimism regarding women's new rhetorical role in the public sphere, the accompanying engraving depicted the newly emancipated female orator in a parlour-like setting, confirming that her voice would more likely be heard in entertainment – 'recitation, reading, tableau and conversation' – than in political speech. Yet the author was correct that the previously male domain of elocution was changing. The 1889 book by E. B. Warman on vocal training describes the importance of the voice for persons in various professions, using the pronoun 'she' only for the teacher, not for the minister, lawyer or lecturer.¹⁰ Nonetheless the book's full-page illustrations showing correct posture and use of the diaphragm all feature women.

By the end of the century, aspiring female reciters found ready performance venues at literary societies or the women's clubs common to the period, and published recitation materials began to reflect women's tastes.¹¹ Elocution anthologies dating

⁷ Russell, *Young Ladies' Elocutionary Reader*, pp. 13–14.

⁸ On the corresponding increase of women in musical professions during this period, see Judith Tick, 'Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life: 1870–1900', in Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (eds), *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950* (Urbana, IL, 1986), pp. 325–48.

⁹ Thomas Edie Hill, *Hill's Manual. Never Give a Lady a Restive Horse: A 19th Century Handbook of Etiquette*, ed. David MacKenzie and W. B. Blankenburg (Berkeley, CA, 1967), p. 102.

¹⁰ E. B. Warman, *The Voice: How to Train It – How to Care for It* (Boston, MA, 1889), pp. 18–25.

¹¹ See Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890–1930* (Bloomington, IN, 1994), esp. pp. 27–75, and Nan Johnson, *Gender*

from the 1890s and later differ from those of earlier eras: selections from classical oratory and political speeches were replaced with poetry designed to appeal to women performing in their parlours. Not only were women reciters often depicted on book covers and in illustrations, they were increasingly represented as the editors of such collections. Women also entered the professional ranks as private tutors or teachers at music conservatories. When the National Association of Elocutionists had their first meeting in 1893 at Columbia College, the *New York Times* reported that about three-quarters of the attendees were women, describing how ‘their trim costumes and fluttering fans enlivened the deserted campus and made gay the sober interior of the big lecture room’.¹² However, the semi-professional status of many female elocutionists, who made careers accepting engagements at local schools, churches and women’s clubs, made them less visible historically. Karen Blair has described the world of women’s clubs as ‘separate and self-defined, an invisible amateur arts subculture whose members were serious and knowledgeable but invisible’.¹³ The only woman provided with a biography in *Werner’s Directory of Elocutionists* of 1887 is Emma Dunning Banks,¹⁴ whose *Original Recitations with Lessons Talks* appeared in two editions, although the advertisements for teachers and performers in the back of the book are dominated by women.¹⁵ Nonetheless, a female elocutionist was more socially acceptable than a woman who appeared on the stage, the morally questionable actress. When women did appear professionally to read or recite, their publicity materials were careful not to call them actresses, even if they performed monologues in costume; for example, in her publicity brochure, Jennie Mannheimer, whose programmes featured solo performances of selections from plays, stands demurely and beautifully gowned behind a podium ‘reading’, not acting.¹⁶

and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866–1910 (Carbondale, IL, 2002), pp. 19–47.

¹² ‘Public Reader’s Convention: Delegates Present From Every Part of the Country’, *New York Times* (28 June 1892): p. 9.

¹³ Blair, *Torchbearers*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Elise M. Wilbor, ed., *Werner’s Directory of Elocutionists, Readers, Lecturers and Other Public Instructors and Entertainers* (New York, 1887), p. 273.

¹⁵ Female performers who recited to music of their own making are now typically remembered only as composers. Laura Sedgwick Collins (1859–1927), appeared in a one-woman play and advertised that she composed music for recitation, yet today she is recalled primarily as a composition student of Antonín Dvořák at the National Conservatory of Music.

¹⁶ *Miss Mannheimer: Monologues* (Hamilton, OH, n.d.), p. 4; in *Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/mannheimer/1> (accessed 31 August 2009). Male elocutionists on the Chautauqua circuit, which had a strong anti-theatrical bias, also sometimes made it clear that they were not actors. See Charles Underhill’s advertisement reprinted in Marian Wilson Kimber, ‘Reading Shakespeare, Seeing Mendelssohn: Concert Readings of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ca. 1850–1920’, *Musical Quarterly*, 89 (2006): pp. 199–236, here p. 221. On Chautauqua and theatre, see Charlotte Canning, ‘The Platform Versus the State: The Circuit Chautauqua’s Antitheatrical Theatre’, *Theatre Journal*, 50 (1998): pp. 303–318.

Women and Musical Recitation

There is a wide range of evidence to demonstrate that women recited with music both in public venues and in the domestic sphere; at least 100 female reciters, from New York City to Des Moines, Iowa, to Houston, Texas, featured music in their programmes. As early as 1849, an article in *The Home Journal*, entitled 'New Profession for Ladies', noted the popularity of concerts combining recitation with music and suggested that this might be the ideal profession for women for 'distinction and profit' after their rapid 'acquisition of the technical accomplishments'.¹⁷ Henry Northrop Davenport, the editor of several recitation anthologies, described the popularity of music: 'No readings are more popular or more eagerly sought than these. The skilful recitationist of *either sex*, who can express some part of the sentiment by appropriate strains of music never fails to captivate the hearers and meet with hearty applause'.¹⁸ The practice was described in women's magazines, such as *Harper's Bazaar*, which in 1901 suggested that entertainments with 'a good elocutionist' reciting 'to low music' were 'in vogue with New York hostesses'.¹⁹ A 1904 article on 'Midwinter Entertainments' reflected on how to make afternoon social gatherings 'endurable and even entertaining' by including musical recitation:

We are not all such music-lovers that we would rather listen to music than talk, but we are willing to stop talking long enough to listen at intervals to someone who has a charmingly pitched voice recite to a low, harmonious piano accompaniment a German Lied, a French chanson, or a bit from 'Hiawatha' or Browning.²⁰

Because very many of the performances of female elocutionists who recited with music were for women's clubs audiences, their appearances were not open to the public, and thus not advertised; however, events at which they performed were frequently recorded in the society pages of newspapers. For example, Jessie Armager Power, despite her professionally produced publicity flier, appeared in private homes or at social events in turn-of-the-century Chicago (see Figure 4.1).

The combination of music and recitation was made more likely by the fact that contemporary entertainments quite often alternated recitations and musical selections. Recitation books sometimes provided sample programmes suitable

¹⁷ 'New Profession for Ladies', *The Home Journal* (1846–1856), 20/170 (12 May 1849): p. 2.

¹⁸ Henry Northrop Davenport, *The Peerless Reciter, or Popular Program Containing the Choicest Recitations and Readings from the Best Authors* (Atlanta, GA, 1894), p. iv (my emphasis).

¹⁹ 'Questions of Good Form', *Harper's Bazaar*, 34/14 (6 April 1901): p. 943.

²⁰ Anna Wentworth Sears, 'Midwinter Entertainments', *Harper's Bazaar*, 38/1 (January 1904): p. 88.

Jessie Armager Power and Company



(Photo by Maffei, Chicago.)

(The Piano is a Wurlitzer Grand.)

Jessie Armager Power, *Canteuse*

Mrs. Perry J. Power, *at the Piano*

What Booth Lowrey, the noted lecturer, has to say regarding Miss Power's art.

One of the Most Delightful Features of the Chautauqua at Hamilton, Illinois, where I was platform director for the session of 1913, was **Jessie Armager Power**. She is a **Perfectly Delightful Reader** and a most attractive young woman. She seems to be **Inexhaustible**, and to have **Unerring Judgment in making Selections**. Whether in short preludes, or in full programmes, **she struck twelve every time**. There are no "frills" on Miss Power's work. She is sincere and unpretentious, and speaks from the heart, through a musical, magnetic voice, and a free graceful body.

(Signed)

BOOTH LOWREY.

Direction Illinois Lyceum Bureau, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Entire or part company may be engaged for entire or part programmes.

For Terms, Dates and other details, address

Jessie Armager Power, 5407 Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago
Telephone: Hyde Park 6258

Figure 4.1 Publicity flier for Jessie Armager Power

for various holidays or on certain topics: 'Love', 'Temperance' or 'Patriotism'. These programmes inevitably indicate where music should occur and sometimes suggest specific musical numbers to be performed. Emma Griffith Lumm's *The New American Speaker, Elocutionist and Orator* (1910) features a 'Program for Parlor Entertainment', which includes a humorous reading, a story with a moral and a pathetic reading, as well as readings of Longfellow acted out in charade or in

costume.²¹ Its varied musical selections include a piano solo, violin with piano and a whistling solo; the programme concludes with a well-known song for everyone to sing, to be followed by refreshments and a 'rollicking good time'. Professional elocutionists often appeared on programmes that were similar in content to such domestic entertainments. For example, reciter and soprano Nellie Peck Saunders, who taught elocution at the Detroit Conservatory, performed art music, including the melodramas *Hexenlied* and *Enoch Arden* in 1910, and she described her 'reputation of giving high class programs' and 'as a refined artist'.²² However, the audiences she – and numerous others – entertained while touring on the Lyceum or Chautauqua circuit were instead treated to 'a program full of variety: baritone solos, piano solos, pianologues, duets – baritone and soprano, readings, readings with music. And last but by any means not least, the sketch'.²³ Similar kinds of entertainments were performed by and for children, and various kinds of recitation publications were specifically intended for elementary schools and churches. In *Anne of Green Gables*, the popular children's novel by Canadian author L. M. Montgomery, the students of Miss Stacey 'put on a concert'; however, its choral works and vocal solo are only one facet of a multi-dimensional event that centres on 'recitations' and 'dialogues', to the excitement of the dramatically inclined pupil Anne Shirley, who plans to 'groan heartrendingly' in her recitation.²⁴

Given that music and recitation frequently alternated in public and private performance, it was inevitable that they should sometimes be heard simultaneously; the pianist waiting for the reciter to finish, seen on the title page of B. J. Fernie's *Readings and Recitations for Winter Evenings*, could be put to more active use (see Figure 4.2). Musical accompaniment, sometimes improvised, was a means of setting a general mood or enhancing a poem's emotional impact; in 1891, one writer praised the 'union of the reciting voice with delicate strains of music – chords and arpeggios played softly through and between certain lines of the poem'.²⁵ Specific music was typically added if the poem mentioned an actual song or contained a phrase of its text. Contributors to *Werner's Magazine* mentioned almost 80

²¹ Emma Griffith Lumm, *The Twentieth-Century Speaker* [Chicago, IL, 1898] (n.p., 1910), p. 425. Longfellow was particularly popular, as evidenced by one women's club's entire programme of Longfellow. See Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in US Women's Clubs, 1880–1920* (Urbana, IL, 1997), p. 232.

²² Letters of Nellie Peck Saunders to Harry P. Harrison, [September 1910] and 25 September 1910, Redpath Chautauqua Collection (Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City), MsC150, Series 1, Box 295.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15 December 1909.

²⁴ L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (London, 1908; repr. New York, 2008), pp. 186–7.

²⁵ Caroline B. Le Row, 'Recitations with Music', *Werner's Voice Magazine*, 13 (November 1891): p. 300.

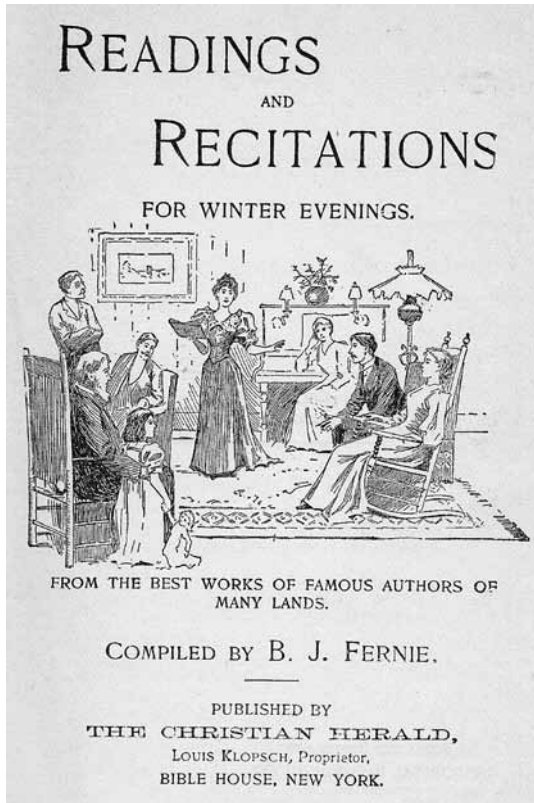


Figure 4.2 Title page of B. J. Fernie, *Readings and Recitations for Winter Evenings* (New York, 1895)

selections that they performed (or had heard performed) accompanied by music.²⁶ Thus, there appears to have been a core repertoire of musically accompanied recitations, even though the practice remained largely unnotated. The poem, *The Drowning Singer*, which contains references to the hymn ‘Jesus Lover of My Soul’, appeared in anthologies first without music, then in several later books with music, as if reciting the poem with the music had become commonplace.

The increase in accompanied recitation coincided with the increase of women involved in elocution. In the 1880s and 90s *Werner’s Voice Magazine*, which was increasingly geared toward women, included poems with accompanying bits of

²⁶ ‘Musically Accompanied Recitations’, *Werner’s Magazine*, 19 (February–May 1897): pp. 122–37, 225–30, 313–16, and 413–19. See my discussion of unnotated practices: Marian Wilson Kimber, ‘The Peerless Reciter: Reconstructing the Lost Art of Elocution with Music’, in Timothy Watkins (ed.), *Performance Practice: Issues and Approaches* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009), pp. 204–208.

music and treated musical recitation in various articles. In 1897 *Werner's* solicited opinions on the practice from performers and teachers nationwide, publishing them in four articles; 70 per cent of the comments were from women. Edgar Werner's company distributed published melodramas and advertised that it could provide 'pieces with music written to order'.²⁷ His magazine also published a regular column detailing recent performances; between 1886 and 1893, musically accompanied recitation is listed every month, even if it was only one number designed to provide variety in a non-musical programme. Further evidence of contemporary practices is found in Werner's 1911 recitation book, titled *Musical Effects*.²⁸ Selections are sometimes listed as being in the repertoire of a particular woman, such as 'Mrs Frederick Pender'; some of the 'arrangements' of poems with music are by women who were probably amateur or professional reciters.

Many recitations with music in 1890s parlour anthologies are obviously intended for performance by women. Their texts often reflect sentimental or feminized values that rhetoric historian Nan Johnson has described as being a product of 'middle-class Americans ... looking back ... to be sure that an idealized homeplace could still be located in which a wise and loving mother was on guard'.²⁹ Within musical recitations, some feminine 'subgenres' emerge; love, courtship and marriage are frequent topics, and there are quite a few lullabies as well as selections related to housework and domestic tasks. Emma Dunning Banks published several versions of what might be dubbed the 'romance at a dance' genre, in which a long-separated couple is happily reunited at a dance. The accompanying music was typically traditional fiddle tunes in simple piano arrangements, chosen in part because they fit the poetic metre of the text, but also for their specific associations. For example, the piece 'The Soldier's Joy' is used when a woman agrees to marry the soldier she had loved years before.³⁰ Another popular recitation, Mary Mapes Dodge's *The Minuet*, was frequently reprinted and sometimes accompanied with music by Johann Nepomuk Hummel; it was performed by at least seven female performers and their students.³¹ The nostalgic tale of a knitting grandmother recalling the stately minuet she danced in her youth would have been less appropriate for a male reciter; several anthologies contain photographs of female performers costumed in Grandma's attire from long ago.

²⁷ *Werner's Directory*, p. 386.

²⁸ Stanley Schnell, ed., *Werner's Readings and Recitations, no. 48: Musical Effects* (New York, 1911).

²⁹ Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space*, p. 31.

³⁰ Emma Dunning Banks, *Original Recitations with Lesson Talks*, enlarged edn (New York, 1908), pp. 72–4.

³¹ As reported in *Werner's Magazine*.

Music and the Delsarte Movement

The rise of the Delsarte system of ‘physical culture’ increased the amount of music incorporated into reciters’ performances. Based very loosely on the teachings of the French singer François Delsarte (1811–71),³² training for ‘physical culture’ and ‘expression’ drew on traditional elocutionary poses, extending them into physical movements undertaken while reciting or in silent pantomimes with music. Genevieve Stebbins popularized the practice of posing as a Greek statue, gowned in a toga; women sometimes posed in scenes depicting female characters from the Bible or myth: Miriam, Jephtha, Ester, Niobe, Isis, Ariadne, Psyche, Ceres, Brunnhilde and Ishtar.³³ Today the Delsarte movement is best known from its satirical treatment in the 1957 Broadway musical *The Music Man*. Nonetheless, Delsartean poses, like music, were for a time, quite popular additions to a recitation. Anthologies added the word ‘Delsarte’ to their titles – the 1890 edition of the otherwise conventional *Delsarte Recitation Book* featured photos of actual Greek statues as models for poses – and elocutionists jockeyed for position as true Delsarte disciples.³⁴ At the 1895 meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists, participants gave five-minute speeches on ‘the relation of statue-posing, musically accompanied recitations and bird-notes to the art of elocution’.³⁵

Practitioners of the Delsarte movement, which had a strongly mystical tinge, aspired to give their ‘expression’ both a physical and a spiritual dimension. Delsarte promised women a new level of physical grace, fitness, beauty and social success.³⁶ In 1892 Emily Bishop claimed that Delsarte could bring a new emancipation for women:

Why do women feel trepidation when they are to read a paper at a literary society, or to give a five-minute talk at the ‘Club’? Because they are conscious of the instruments of expression – conscious of hands, attitudes, voice, even

³² There is evidence that what was taught as ‘Delsarte’ had little to do with the pedagogue’s actual teachings; even during his lifetime Delsarte was described by a colleague as the ‘magnificent sayer of beautiful nothings’. Quoted in Ted Shawn, *Every Little Movement: A Book about François Delsarte*, 2nd edn, repr. (New York, 1974), p. 20.

³³ Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter, *The Cultivation of Body and Mind in Nineteenth-Century American Delsartism* (Westport, CT, 1999), p. 125.

³⁴ All the illustrations are listed in the ‘Index to Illustrations for Tableaux and Statue Posing’, in Elsie Wilbor (ed.), *Delsarte Recitation Book and Directory*, 4th edn (New York, 1905), p. x.

³⁵ ‘Musically-Accompanied Recitations, Bird Notes, and Statue Posing and Their Relation to the Art of Elocution. Five-Minute Speeches’, *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists* (New York, 1896), pp. 120–27. Of the three, more speakers defended musical recitation than the other two entertainments.

³⁶ Taylor Susan Lake, ‘American Delsartism and the Bodily Discourse of Respectable Womanliness’ (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 2002), p. 98.

dress. Fear is born of this self-consciousness, they dare not do what they are capable of doing. When by self-knowledge and self-discipline, women shall gain habitual, easy control of their bodies, they will have achieved an important emancipation.³⁷

Posing was to be personally transforming as well as performative; in aiming at 'expression' through 'physical culture', a Delsarte student would come to feel the emotion expressed.³⁸ Susan Taylor Lake has discussed how Delsarte made the idea of the physical bodies of women in performance respectable by associating it with high culture and emphasizing women's particular claim to the aesthetic realm, a claim which also occurred in musical realms. After all, it is River City's aspiration to high culture that enables Harold Hill to be successful in his musical con game in *The Music Man*.³⁹

Just as music had been freely adopted for recitation, it now accompanied posing women 'physically expressing' certain emotions.⁴⁰ Several Delsarte books on how to perform pantomimes either include music, or suggest specific pieces to employ – as does *Delsartean Pantomimes* by Mrs J. W. Shoemaker (wife of a prominent male author of non-Delsartean elocution books), which has a list of musical works in the back.⁴¹ Werner published sheet music that included a poem and musical accompaniment, along with descriptions of the pantomime to be performed and photographs of a woman performing it, such as a musical setting of Elizabeth Akers Allen's popular poem, *Rock Me to Sleep Mother*, and *The Listening Ear of Night* by Edmund H. Sears, a Christmas poem to a familiar hymn tune. Other recitation books contain generic musical excerpts and, in keeping with Delsarte's supposed rhetorical origins, identifiable musical styles are to be used for depicting particular emotions. Mary Tucker Magill's book of *Pantomime or 'Wordless Poems'* contains one- to three-page character pieces by Leopold Fuenkenstein entitled *Expectation, Affection, Anger, Sorrow, Joy, Fear, Religious Devotion and Farewell*.⁴² Magill describes how 'The music is chosen to suit the sentiment to be expressed: Soft and earnest in expectation and affection, stormy in hatred and fear, plaintive in sorrow, brilliant in joy, and soothing in devotion'.⁴³ Each

³⁷ Emily M. Bishop, *Americanized Delsarte Culture* (Meadville, PA, 1892), pp. 29–30, quoted in Judy Burns, 'The Culture of Nobility/The Nobility of Self-Cultivation', in Gay Morris (ed.), *Moving Words: Rewriting Dance* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 203–227, here p. 216.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.

³⁹ Lake, 'American Delsartism', p. 99.

⁴⁰ Rutyer, *Cultivation of Body and Mind*, p. 106.

⁴¹ Mrs J. W. Shoemaker, *Delsartean Pantomimes with Recital and Musical Accompaniment* (Philadelphia, PA, 1902), pp. 176, 179.

⁴² Mary Tucker Magill, *Pantomimes, or Wordless Poems* (New York, 1882, 1894), pp. 75–86.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

piece is specifically designed to coordinate with actions described in the text of the book and depicted in its photographs of a costumed woman; the combination of pantomime and music is designed to 'express' specific poems included in the instructions but not actually meant to be spoken in performance.

In a similar example, Emma Griffith Lumm's two books feature photographs of her student posing, each accompanied by several bars of characteristic music (see Figure 4.3). The selections include a fanfare-like introduction and music to accompany the expression of ridicule, comedy, prayer, pity, timidity, defiance, impudence, listening, vanity, coquettishness and accusation; presumably these are suggestions for the sort of music one might play to reflect the different moods and events of a specific poem. 'Defiance' is musically expressed with a crescendo of tremolos and dissonant chords, concluding with a diminished seventh sonority; the two *Andante* bars for timidity conclude with hesitant rests between chords and a shift from major to minor.⁴⁴ Only three of Lumm's musical excerpts have texts: 'coquette' uses the song 'Comin' thro' the rye', and 'prayer' consists of eight bars of the hymn 'Nearer My God to Thee'. The final example, not given any heading, is the patriotic 'The Star-Spangled Banner'.

While the toga-clad bodies of women engaged in Delsartism were undoubtedly partly responsible for contemporary critiques of women reciters, women's domination of musical recitation is also suggested by the defensive tone of male elocutionists performing with music, who seemed to feel that their own artistic validity was threatened. Opera singer turned reciter David Bispham could not escape the spectre of amateur female elocution; a review of one of his melodramatic performances described it as 'an evolution of what used to be called a musical and literary entertainment such as is still given in the lecture room of the Keokuk [Iowa] Congregational Church, the proceeds of which are usually expended on a new church carpet'.⁴⁵ Clearly, much of the poetry women were reciting was ephemeral and could not compare to works by Longfellow or Poe, which came to achieve canonical status, even if their melodramatic musical settings did not. However, historically when women enter a profession, it becomes devalued by the patriarchal culture at large; thus contemporary satires of elocutionists, with or without musical accompaniment, often ridiculed female performers, particularly if they aspired to higher elocutionary arts. For example, an 1886 article divided the 'five thousand' female elocutionists in New York into the categories of 'readers, reciters, narrators, and spouters', and likened them to prize-fighters:

Young ladies who give readings of 'Faust' and 'Childe Harold' are ignorant of the capacities of the opposite sex. At the first hour, the male brute begins

⁴⁴ The final example on page 32 is not labelled, but appears to be a pleading or begging gesture, accompanied by quiet *agitato* music.

⁴⁵ 'David Bispham in a Musical and Literary Entertainment', *Theatre* (February 1906), clipping in *Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks* (502 vols, New York Public Library, 1977), microfilm, vol. 72, p. 38.

to groan. The second hour makes him hate his species. These readers have to undergo the most severe training in athletics. They practice with Indian clubs two hours in the morning, walk five miles before breakfast, put on the gloves an hour with their trainer, eat a raw egg, are sponged off with whiskey, and then kept on the parallel till dinner time. They thus acquire staying power.⁴⁶



Figure 4.3 Emma Griffith Lumm, *The New American Speaker, Elocutionist and Orator* (1910), p. 32

⁴⁶ 'Elocutionary Girls', *The Voice*, 8 (December 1886): p. 199. The article is reprinted from the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*. Although this article does not mention music specifically, it does mention several works that were sometimes performed with music: *Aux Italiens*, *Manfred* and *Faust*.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the feminization of elocution was apparently complete, as a 1905 postcard pictures ‘The Elocutionist’ as a somewhat pompous-looking woman above a limerick:

Some reciters are terrible bores
 And drive all their friends out of doors,
 And the patter of feet
 As the listeners retreat
 They take for the sound of encores!

Concert Companies, Women Readers and Moral Uplift on the Chautauqua Circuit

Although the term ‘elocution’ fell from favour in the teens and twenties, women who now described themselves as ‘reading’ to music continued to find a ready venue in the Chautauqua summer tent circuit.⁴⁷ Estimates vary, but at its height, anywhere from nine million to 20 million Americans attended Chautauqua performances in a year, most often in towns with populations under ten thousand. Together with speeches delivered by noted lecturers, musicians and readers supplied rural communities, many in the American Midwest, with ‘culture’ and ‘moral uplift’, in afternoon and evening events that combined music and spoken-word entertainments.

Readers were a standard element of touring ‘concert companies’ on the Chautauqua circuit. Although such companies varied in instrumentation, they were often made up of a singer, a pianist, a reader and one other instrumentalist: a violinist, cellist, harpist or cornettist. An ensemble was sometimes named after the ‘star’ of the group, who might be the reader, or perhaps the singer. Due to the gruelling touring conditions performers faced, many such groups were short-lived; however, there were approximately 130 all-female concert companies, and of the ‘readers’ who appeared with musicians on the Chautauqua circuit, male or female, women outnumbered men approximately three to one.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ A circuit manager’s recollections are Harry P. Harrison and Karl Detzer, *Culture Under Canvas: The Story of Tent Chautauqua* (New York, 1958), 97. Two modern studies of circuit Chautauqua are John E. Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth-Century America* (Jefferson, NC, and London, 1997), and Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* (Iowa City, 2005).

⁴⁸ This rough estimate is based on the publicity fliers of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau held by the Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, available online as *Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*, www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/chautauqua (accessed on 12 June 2011).

Nonetheless, the professional status of female performers was downplayed in Chautauqua publicity photographs, which often depicted them not as platform artists but in fictionalized domestic scenes. For example, vocalists of the Peerless Princess Quartet posed around the 'reader', who held a book, and the three-woman Casford Concert Company's brochure informed potential audiences that they would be 'made to feel like they are being entertained by old-time friends'.⁴⁹ If two or more members of the group were part of a family, the group took their family name, a practice that again emphasized the respectable domestic roots of the kind of entertainment they offered. Women performers' concerts could thus be safely perceived as replications of parlour entertainments, merely transferred to a public setting, not the morally suspect productions of 'show people'.

Chautauqua entertainments varied widely, from concerts of light classics interspersed with readings to revues in which music was a mere excuse for costumed beauties who sang and appeared in dramatic sketches. Most concerts contained at least two 'readings', most often performed unaccompanied, although almost any spoken text typically heard on the Chautauqua platform could be performed to music, most often with piano, or occasionally with harp or guitar. The texts selected for musical accompaniments ranged from well-known poetry to works of little literary merit.

At least 35 female performers specialized in brief 'musical readings' or, if they accompanied themselves, 'pianologues'. Such works ranged from songs that were spoken rather than sung, to recited monologues given with short musical references to readily recognizable works, to popular poems accompanied by compositions created specifically for them. However the small surviving number of notated pieces (such as the handful of published 'pianologues' Chautauqua musician Clay Smith composed for his wife, reader Coyla May Spring), suggest that the majority of musical readings and pianologues were informal arrangements, in keeping with late nineteenth-century practices.⁵⁰

Musical Melodrama and the Female Composer

Because American women had come to lead the field of elocution, they became the primary composers of melodrama, even as Delsarte fell from fashion and elocutionists were relabelled 'readers' or 'oral interpreters'. Over half of

⁴⁹ *The Peerless Princess Quartet* [ca. 1910s?], p. 3, in *Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/peerless/1&page=3> (accessed 17 May 2010); *The Casford Concert Company* [ca. 1925?], p. 3, in *Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*, <http://sdrdata.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/casford/1> (accessed 9 May 2010).

⁵⁰ Clay Smith, *Favorite Musical Readings and Pianologues of Coyla May Spring* (Philadelphia, PA, 1924) and *Popular Pianologues: From the Repertoire of Coyla May Spring* (Philadelphia, PA, 1925).

approximately 500 English-language melodramas that can be documented from the period 1890 to 1935 were composed by women. In America more than 30 female composers came to dominate the genre after World War I. Published as sheet music and performed before women's clubs, the genre continued to flourish.

Instead of setting major Victorian poets' works, female composers drew heavily on popular poetry typical of that found in parlour anthologies. While earlier melodramas featured extended narratives set to music with gestures that reveal their theatrical roots, many works by women are closer to accompanied recitations or to popular song; they are only a few pages long and are occasionally strophic in form.⁵¹ Any storied scenarios typically centre on domestic events, and, like the numerous selections in recitation books designated for juvenile performers, there are frequent settings of poems for or about children. Piano accompaniments are relatively simple and playable by amateurs with limited technical abilities. In general women's compositions for spoken voice and piano are lighter works designed for intimate entertainments – considering them as a group, one can find little remaining in them of a Victorian melodramatic aesthetic. Although similar in style, these works went by a variety of names: 'pianologues', 'cantillations', 'musical recitations' or 'accompanied readings', but never 'melodrama'.

The two most prolific composers can provide examples of women's transformation of the genre. Phyllis Fergus (1887–1964) and Frieda Peycke (1884–1964) both grew up during the heyday of musical recitation, and both had careers as composer-reciters, performing their own works primarily at women's clubs. Fergus resided in Chicago, where she was the most active composer of musical recitations among the several female composers of the genre there.⁵² She was featured in performances for the Cordon Club, Chicago Woman's Musical Club, Lakeview Musical Society and the National League of American Pen Women, among others, between c.1916 and 1949. Frieda Peycke maintained a similarly active career centred in Los Angeles, and performed as late as 1959. Her primary audiences were also women's organizations; an early publicity flier lists 26 clubs, as well as some schools and hotels, at which she had performed.⁵³ In the tradition of earlier elocutionists' 'lesson talks', she published directions for

⁵¹ Some of the works that were designed as musically accompanied recitations were published with pitch, so that they could be either sung or recited. It is therefore possible that many more works notated as songs were also adapted to be performed with speech instead of singing. For example, Frieda Peycke's *A Stray Letter* (Philadelphia, PA, 1927), which has pitch and rhythm in the vocal line, is labelled an 'encore song or musical reading'.

⁵² These included Saidee Knowland Coe (1864–1905), Natalie Whitted Price (1864–1923), Lulu Jones Downing (fl. 1909–49), Vera Brady Shipman and Helen Wing.

⁵³ *Frieda E. Peycke, Composer – Entertainer. Musically Illustrated Poems*, Peycke Collection (John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI), A 86–47, folder 5. On the basis of Peycke's photo on the cover, it is likely that the flier dates from the 1920s.

how to perform her works in *The Etude* in 1947.⁵⁴ Her private studio in Beverly Hills included women and children, for whom she created simplified pedagogical melodramas such as *The Polliwog* or *Pussy Wants a Corner*, to teach them how to recite to music.⁵⁵

Fergus's output particularly demonstrates the changes that occurred in melodramatic compositions in the hands of women composers. She composed only one extended work in an earlier vein, a setting of Alfred Noyes's *The Highwayman*, op. 26, for voice and orchestra, labelled as a 'melodrama' on its title page when it was published in a piano reduction in 1926.⁵⁶ In the poem, the virtuous heroine chooses the moral goodness of a redeeming death, shooting herself to warn her highwayman lover of the soldiers that await him, and thus providing the dramatic tale's decidedly melodramatic flavour. In Fergus's setting specific musical gestures are used to depict events in the poem: the highwayman's whip tapping on the window is created with staccato semiquavers (bar 82), the landlord's daughter's falling hair is heard in tumbling arpeggiation (bar 147), repeated chords sound the clock striking midnight (bar 223) and ostinato figures represent distant horses' hooves (bars 235–6). Longer thematic material in a vigorous $\frac{3}{4}$ metre is heard for the 'riding' highwayman, and an evocative passage returns with the refrain that mentions moonlight, articulating a large-scale form that is directly related to the dramatic action.

However Fergus's approximately 60 'story poems' have music that creates a mood and is closely related to the rhythm of the spoken text, but is primarily accompanimental, not depictive. In these short works, emphasis is instead on the spoken texts, largely contemporary poetry about everyday situations, not extended melodramatic narratives. Although Frieda Peycke's published compositions (about a quarter of her 340 spoken compositions) were labelled 'musically illustrated readings', not 'story poems', they are clearly in the same genre, and their musical accompaniments function in much the same way as Fergus's. Peycke's publicity materials advertised her performances with the phrases 'Music that speaks – Poems that sing'. Her emphasis on the musical aspects of her performances was perhaps to downplay any associations with earlier practices; she was quick to assure potential listeners that 'It is in no way the old fashioned idea of elocution',⁵⁷ and thus an antiquated form of entertainment. Nonetheless, Peycke's professional pedigree had its roots in the earlier era: she studied with operatic baritone David Bispham,

⁵⁴ 'How to Read to Music: From a Conference with Frieda Peycke, Well Known Composer, Pianist, and Diseuse', *Etude* (March 1947): pp. 127–8.

⁵⁵ Peycke's pedagogical works were not published; the manuscripts are in the Frieda Peycke Collection.

⁵⁶ *The Highwayman* was composed during the previous decade, as Fergus programmed it in her concerts as early as 1917.

⁵⁷ Suzanne Martin, 'Counterpoint', *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (24 September 1944).

whose late career centred on an attempt to revitalize melodrama, and with Bertha Kunz Baker, who gave dramatic and poetic readings on the Chautauqua circuit.⁵⁸

Both Fergus and Peycke drew on the sorts of poetry that would have been appropriate for female performers and would have appealed to their women's clubs audiences. Fergus's texts fall into the same kinds of categories found in the recitation books of the late nineteenth century: poems in dialect, religious texts, or poems about grandmother, nature, childhood or women's roles.⁵⁹ Peycke's texts frequently dealt with courtship and love, gender differences, motherhood, marriage, children and domestic life. While some of the poems Peycke set express moralistic or religious sentiments, very many satirize contemporary life with humour. Peycke located the poems for her compositions in newspapers and magazines, such as the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Good Housekeeping* or *Better Homes and Gardens*; the bulk of her settings were of texts by living poets, some two-thirds of whom were women.

The similarities of both composers' texts to poetry found in recitation anthologies from decades earlier can be demonstrated by one example: Peycke's *Mah Lil Bit Sister* by Elizabeth Gordon is remarkably similar to *Charley's Opinion of the Baby*, from *The Progressive Speaker* of 1897.⁶⁰ In both poems a child is jealous of a new sibling, and in both the child's voice is characterized by incorrect pronunciation (called 'child dialect' in contemporary recitation sources). Both texts open with a humorous stanza in which the child denies his nose is broken – he doesn't understand the doctor's expression that his 'nose is out of joint'. Gordon's text, set by Peycke, opens with the text, 'Doctor say, mah nose done broke', while *Charley's Opinion* has this stanza:

Doctor told anoizzer
Great big awful lie;
Nose ain't out of joyent,
Dat ain't why I cry.

Thus Peycke chose a text to perform with music that was similar to poetry that might have been heard in an 1890s parlour entertainment.

The nature of the texts set by both Fergus and Peycke reflects their gender and that of many of their primary audiences; their works were created in part for their own performances, and a large number of them would have been inappropriate for male reciters. The texts' portrayals of women often draw on the gender stereotypes of the period, but they frequently feature ironic twists, which provide,

⁵⁸ *Who Was Who Among North American Authors, 1921–1939* (2 vols, Detroit, 1976), vol. 2, p. 1143. Two of Baker's publicity fliers can be found in the Redpath Chautauqua Collection.

⁵⁹ 'Fergus, Phyllis', in *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1970), vol. 52, pp. 515–16.

⁶⁰ W. R. Vansant, *The Progressive Speaker* (Oakland, CA, 1897), p. 83.

if not a feminist perspective, one that is clearly a woman's view of contemporary life and its situations. For example, Fergus's *It Takes*, set in a modified strophic form, is seemingly misogynistic.⁶¹ Each verse documents examples of childish or impractical behaviour by a woman – shopping without intending to make any purchases, returning Christmas presents, dressing in chiffon during winter weather, taking a trip without enough money for food – concluding with the condescending phrase, 'Well, it takes a girl to do it every time!' However, in the final stanza, the male sex comes in for its share of criticism as well, and women are finally vindicated as the speaker concludes with pride that it takes a 'girl' to take care of a household and calm a crying baby:

When a man goes to housekeeping his planning is unique
 His finding work for others is sublime
 But to stop the baby crying, and send it off to sleep? Sh!
 Well, it takes a girl to do it every time!

Both Fergus and Peycke chose texts that treated courtship, marriage and domestic life with humour. Peycke's unpublished *Wishful Waiting* (1947), which she recorded in 1948 but never released, lists the sorts of men that have interested a young woman, beginning at the age of 16, from someone 'strong and tall' and 'blond and lean', to someone 'sophisticated', 'with a mind'.⁶² The final line reveals the speaker's frustration with not finding the man she desires: 'But now, Lord, that I'm Twenty-Five, Oh! Just send me *someone* who's alive!' Peycke emphasizes the punchline of her poem and the transformation in the young woman's psychological state through an unusual harmonic shift from a dominant seventh chord in E_♭ major, to a D major triad (bars 48–9), the first of a series of unexpected progressions, first hinting at a brighter tonality, but, like the speaker's inability to change her predicament, eventually leading back to the F major tonic (see Example 4.1).

Fergus's *The Usual Way* (1914) documents the progress of an understated courtship, emphasizing with the repeated refrain, that it all occurred 'in the usual way'. In the next to last stanza, musical humour reveals that the couple have wed, through a brief quotation (in bars 31–3) of Mendelssohn's well-known Wedding March from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (see Example 4.2). The inclusion of Mendelssohn's music resembles the practices of earlier elocutionists, who drew on well-known music with specific references to accompany their recitations. The final verse asks questions about the couple's ongoing marriage:

⁶¹ Phyllis Fergus, *It Takes* (Chicago, 1919). The text (except verse 1) is also by Fergus.

⁶² Both the manuscript score (A82.149, box 2) and a copy of the audio disc recorded 19 March 1948 are in the John Hay Library, Brown University.

Example 4.1 Frieda Peycke, *Wishful Waiting* (c.1947), A82.149, box 2, bars 47–54

(pleadingly)

But now, Lord, that I'm twenty five, Oh! Just

ten *mp* *subdued and prayerful* *mf*

send me someone who's a - live!

f *eagerly* *mf* *ten* *ff* *fz*

Ped —

Example 4.2 Phyllis Fergus, *The Usual Way* (Chicago, 1914), bars 29–33

this little story ended, as such little stories may,

[Wedding March]

Very much_ in the usual way.

And now that they are married, do they always bill and coo?
 Do they never fret and quarrel, like the other couples do?
 Does he cherish her and love her? Does she honor and obey?

The piano answers these questions, interrupting the refrain, 'Well they do', with pounded tone clusters humorously suggesting that marital strife is, indeed, 'the usual way' (see Example 4.3).

Example 4.3 Phyllis Fergus, *The Usual Way* (Chicago, 1914), bars 39–41

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.3. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and has the lyrics: "honor and obey? Well, they do - In the usual way!". The piano accompaniment is in G major and features a section marked "Play with fist (just noise)" and "ff". The score is for bars 39-41 of the piece.

Peycke also produced 'musically illustrated readings' that depicted various aspects of married life somewhat satirically. In her setting of Edgar Guest's *Husbands*, composed in 1937, a husband is cast as his wife's possession, put on display at concerts and balls 'just to prove she has a man'; the description of his condition is set to a jaunty *Allegretto* accompaniment marked by dotted rhythms, in a bluesy harmonic language.⁶³

He's the chap you see at operas with that vacant, patient stare
 That announces very plainly that his wife has hauled him there!
 You can see the music bores him, and you know the 'dear old grouch'
 Would much rather she had left him to lie snoring on the couch!

She must take him out to lectures, socials, literary teas,
 And display him to the people, tho' he's plainly ill at ease!
 He's the meek and patient mortal with thinning grayish dome
 Who sits idly in some corner 'til it's 'time to take him home'!

Like Fergus's inclusion of Mendelssohn in *The Usual Way*, Peycke's setting of *Husbands* also briefly refers to commonly known music; in this case, the popular song 'Home, Sweet Home' is heard in the accompaniment to the final phrase (bars 39–41), expressing the husband's desire to return home (see Example 4.4). Ironically, the women's world of musical, literary and social events from which the husband longs to escape is the very world in which Fergus and Peycke regularly

⁶³ Frieda Peycke, *Husbands* (Chicago, IL, 1942).

Example 4.4 Frieda Peycke, *Husbands* (Chicago, 1942), bars 38–41

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Who sits idly in some corner 'til it's [Home, Sweet Home] time to take him home!". Above the lyrics, there are performance directions: "(look about eagerly)" above "idly" and "[Home, Sweet Home]" above "time to take him home!". The score is written on a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The melody in the treble clef is marked with accents and slurs. The bass clef part features a "reminiscent melody" with a slur and an accent. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4.

appeared and for which their musical recitations were composed. Thus Peycke's piece reinforces women's aspirations to the world of art and culture that was the root of their entrance into elocution in the late nineteenth century.

Although she continued to compose, Fergus's public performances of her 'story poems' slowed in the 1950s. By the final decades of Peycke's career, what she did professionally required explanation for her audiences. Her publicity fliers billed her first as a 'Composer-Interpreter'; then in later years as a 'Composer-Entertainer', perhaps because it was unclear to prospective listeners what 'interpretation' was. Nonetheless like elocutionists, Peycke's own conception of her performances centred not only on her music, but on her vocal rendition of the texts she was presenting. When she introduced her 1948 recording of *Foes*, she first credited the poet, then added, 'the musical setting and interpretation of Frieda Peycke'.⁶⁴ The 'interpretation' was her spoken performance; in this she followed in an elocutionary tradition.

When accompanied recitation became popular among women performers in the 1890s, it was intended to be, as one woman described it, 'a pleasing and artistic effect'.⁶⁵ Half a century later, Peycke wrote, 'Musical readings make a dramatic, romantic, and humorous appeal to the imaginations of all'.⁶⁶ But because the performers, composers and audiences of recitation with music in America were primarily women, the practice became transformed. Ultimately, women composers 'feminized' melodrama, creating gendered and sometimes sentimental works that led to the genre's eventual neglect. However, musical recitation held an important historical place in American women's culture and became a genre in which many twentieth-century female composers found their voice.

⁶⁴ Side B of 78 rpm disc recorded at the National Radio Shop, Los Angeles, California, 2 March 1948, in the John Hay Library, Brown University. The recording was never commercially released.

⁶⁵ Mabel M. Gormley, New York, quoted in 'Musically Accompanied Recitations', *Werner's Magazine*, 19 (February 1897): p. 124.

⁶⁶ 'How to Read to Music', p. 127.

PART II
Melodrama on the Operatic Stage

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Chapter 5

‘Si L’Orchestre seul chantait’: Melodramatic Voices in Chelard’s *Macbeth* (1827)

Sarah Hibberd

Shakespeare’s threat to French taste and culture had been announced by Voltaire in 1776:

The abomination of desolations has entered the house of the Lord. ... English scaffolds and brothels are winning out against the theatre of Racine and the noble scenes of Corneille ... there is no longer anything majestic or decent in Paris except this Gilles of London ... a prose tragedy is going to be staged in which there will be a gathering of butchers ... I have seen the end of the reign of reason and good taste. I am going to die, and leave a barbarous France behind me.¹

This diatribe was part of a lengthy debate about Shakespeare’s value and influence in France that continued into the nineteenth century. Ideas about artistic genius and democratic appeal were set against concerns over threats to national identity, morality and taste. With his adaptations of Shakespeare’s dramas for the Théâtre-Français in the 1770s and 80s, Jean-François Ducis endeavoured to make the English dramatist more palatable to the French. He explained that he had tried to erase the ‘always revolting impression of horror’ in *Macbeth*, and instead create the effect of ‘terreur tragique’.² His sanitized adaptations held the stage into the 1820s (and beyond), when Shakespeare became more specifically implicated in debates about literary reform between Classicists and Romantics – and

¹ Voltaire, letter to Comte d’Argental (30 July 1776); cited and translated in Peter Raby, *Fair Ophelia’: A Life of Harriet Smithson Berlioz* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 44–5. For more on the French reception of Shakespeare during the late eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth, see also John Pemble, *Shakespeare Goes to Paris: How the Bard Conquered France* (London, 2005), pp. 1–15.

² Ducis, ‘Avertissement’, *Macbeth: Tragédie* (Paris, 1790), [p. 1]. Ducis’s adaptations were based on Pierre-Antoine de La Place’s loose translations in *Le Théâtre anglois* (8 vols, London [Paris?], 1745–48), and Pierre Letourneur’s *Shakespeare traduit de l’Anglois* (20 vols, Paris, 1776–83) – publication of the first volumes of the latter had prompted Voltaire’s outburst, above.

associated with 'popular' culture.³ Not only did the English dramatist's original plays illustrate a 'Romantic' freedom of subject matter and taste, far removed from the ancient stories of duty and honour more usually on offer at Paris's royal theatres, but they were also unconstrained by neoclassical conventions of form and language. These *règles*, established in France during the seventeenth century on the ancient Greek model, included strict versification; the unities of time, place and subject; and the importance of taste and balance. This tradition had been strengthened by the Revolution and by Napoleon, who saw cultural innovation as a threat to the continuity he was establishing with the past. In the early years of the Restoration, defence of the Classical tradition was similarly equated with defence of the national image.⁴ Louis-Simon Auger, the *ultra* director of the Académie française, speaking at a public meeting of the Institut royal de France in 1824, pronounced Shakespeare's dramas 'monstrous', and French adaptations of North European literature – with their obsession with the supernatural – as the nadir of popular taste and vulgarity.⁵ But the emerging school of French Romantics was inspired by the passion and immediacy of such works. Stendhal suggested in his influential pamphlet *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823–25) that dramatists should liberate themselves from the ancient rules of tragedy and, like Shakespeare, write in a style that would appeal to their contemporaries.⁶ In the celebrated *Préface* to his *comédie shakespeareienne Cromwell* (1827), Victor Hugo viewed the English poet as representing the modern age of drama, in which hybridity of genre and tone, juxtaposition of the sublime and the grotesque, and vivid depiction of colour (as well as freedom from the Aristotelian unities) created a more dynamic drama of truth and humanity.⁷

Shakespeare's plays can more specifically be understood as vehicles for introducing techniques and aesthetics familiar from popular drama – above all melodrama – into Paris's royal theatres during the Restoration.⁸ Many of the

³ Letourneur's translations were republished in two new editions in 1821, one of which was revised (and cast in a more demotic language) by François Guizot and provided with a long preface: *Œuvres complètes de Shakespeare* (13 vols, Paris, 1821).

⁴ For a survey of the literary and political developments of the period, see René Bray, *Chronologie du romantisme, 1804–1830* (Paris, 1932).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶ Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare* [1823–25], ed. Michel Crouzet (Paris, 2006).

⁷ Victor Hugo, *Cromwell* [1827] (Paris, 1968), with an introduction by Annie Ubersfeld, pp. 17–51. For more on the relations between Hugo's *Préface* and contemporary drama, see Hibberd, 'Monsters and the Mob: The Grotesque on the Parisian Stage, 1826–1836', in Rachael Langford (ed.), *Textual Intersections: Literature, History and the Arts in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Amsterdam, 2009), pp. 29–40.

⁸ Napoleon's 1807 decree established four state-funded primary theatres (the Opéra, Opéra-Comique, Théâtre-Italien and Théâtre-Français; the Odéon was annexed to the latter) and four unfunded secondary theatres (the Ambigu-Comique, Gaîté, Vaudeville, Variétés), each with an individual repertory, defined in terms of genre. Although the number

‘Romantic’ ideas exemplified by Shakespeare’s plays and welcomed by Stendhal and Hugo had long been practised on the commercial stages by dramatists responding to a post-Revolutionary desire among audiences for greater excitement and heightened emotional expression. Indeed, the affinity between unofficial theatre and Shakespeare is illustrated by the numerous adaptations that appeared at the commercial theatres during the Restoration (*Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello* were particular favourites).⁹ Meanwhile, the continuing presence of Ducis’s adaptations at the Théâtre-Français in the 1820s, the arrival of Rossini’s *Otello* (1816) at the Théâtre-Italien (where it held the stage throughout the 1820s) and Vaccai’s *Giulietta e Romeo* (1825) in 1827, together with Castil-Blaze’s reworking of Rossini’s opera in French (and with dialogue) for the Odéon in 1823, although presenting a more classical idea of Shakespeare, nevertheless helped to persuade audiences of the validity of a more dynamic type of drama on the royal stages that exposed new areas and extremes of human experience and psychology.¹⁰ This process was bolstered by the performances of visiting English theatre troupes in Paris in 1822 and 1827–28. After their first performance of *Hamlet* at the Odéon in September 1827, Dumas noted the naturalistic inflexion, intonation and gestures of the actors, and their absorption in the drama, which contrasted with the more limited (and stylized) interpretations of French actors.¹¹ In this way, they helped to consolidate the appetite for Shakespeare at the royal theatres.

This was the context into which Chelard’s *tragédie lyrique Macbeth*, the first French opera based on a Shakespearean play, was received at the Paris Opéra on 29 June 1827 – just before the second visit of the English actors. At a time of artistic and financial crisis, with a repertory dominated by operas of a previous age or by foreign composers, it was hoped that *Macbeth* – with a libretto by the celebrated author of the *Marseillaise*, Rouget de Lisle – would launch a reform

of secondary – commercial – theatres increased during the Restoration, their repertories remained tightly controlled to protect those of the primary – royal – theatres. For details about the repertories and personnel of individual theatres, see Nicole Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1989). For more on the general influence of the boulevard theatres on opera, see Karin Pendle, ‘The Boulevard Theaters and Continuity in French Opera of the 19th Century’, in Peter Bloom (ed.), *Music in Paris in the Eighteenth-Thirties* (Stuyvesant, NY, 1987), pp. 509–535.

⁹ See Charles Beaumont Wicks, *The Parisian Stage: Alphabetical Indexes of Plays and Authors*, II: 1816–1830 (Birmingham, AL, 1950).

¹⁰ *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* each played at the Théâtre-Français in the summer of 1827 (among a repertory of works dominated by Racine and Voltaire). Rossini’s librettist Berio di Salsa seems to have based his libretto for *Otello* on Ducis’s play.

¹¹ The performances in 1822 were at the Porte Saint-Martin, under the direction of Sampson Penley; they were followed by a more successful season (September 1827–April 1828) under manager William Abbott at the Odéon. See Raby, ‘*Fair Ophelia*’; and Pemble, *Shakespeare*, pp. 8–9, 60.

of the national genre, and attract audiences back to the Opéra.¹² Unfortunately, after just five performances it was withdrawn from the stage (though it went on to enjoy some success in Munich and London). General opinion was that the avowedly 'Romantic', dynamic subject matter was ill-suited to the restricted form of *tragédie lyrique*. The clash of modern and traditional aesthetics (which mapped onto popular and elite models respectively) was most evident at the climax of the opera, in the sleepwalking scene, in which Lady Macbeth reveals that her husband has murdered the king. While the majority of critics were baffled and unnerved by a score that was driven by the alarming psychological disintegration of Lady Macbeth rather than by conventional musical logic, two critics recognized that Chelard's dramatic instincts and ambition were rooted in the genre and technique of melodrama. But melodrama's capacity to express powerful and disturbing emotions through the different components of the drama stood squarely in opposition to the neoclassical aesthetic of clarity, economy and good taste that still governed the repertory of the royal theatres in the 1820s – and to the expectation of lyrical beauty at the heart of French and Italian opera perpetuated by critics.

As explained in the Introduction, melodrama's roots have been identified by modern scholars in Rousseau's *scène lyrique Pygmalion* (1770) and traced forward through the Classical melodramas of Georg Benda (performed in Paris in the 1770s and 80s), and various hybrid genres at the end of the century (including *pantomime dialoguée*, *féerie* and *opéra comique*), to the boulevard *mélodrame à grand spectacle* popularized by René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt in the first quarter of the nineteenth century – and still familiar to Parisian audiences at the commercial theatres in the 1820s.¹³ In all these works, music was combined with speech (and gesture and *mise-en-scène*) to powerful dramatic effect. In an article on melodrama published anonymously in *Le Ménestrel* in 1834, however, there is no mention of the eighteenth-century roots of the genre at all, and Pixérécourt's carefully crafted plays depicting the triumph of good over evil had, it seems, been superseded by morally suspect sensation dramas, often rooted in North

¹² During the summer of 1827 (June–August), the Opéra repertory was dominated by two new works, Rossini's adaptations (of his Italian operas), *Le Siège de Corinthe* (1826) and *Moïse* (March 1827), which pointed to the possibilities of a more dynamic musico-dramatic language. However, the other works staged that summer were of a distinctly more old-fashioned caste: Spontini's *Fernand Cortez* (1809), Catel's *Les Bayadères* (1810), Isouard's *Aladin* (1822), Spontini's *La Vestale* (1807), Lebrun's *Le Rossignol* (1816), Sacchini's *Édipe à Colonne* (1787), Kreutzer's *Aristippe* (1808), and Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779) and *Orphée* (1774); taken from listings in *La Pandore*. For more on the reception of Rossini's operas in Paris, see Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge, 2007).

¹³ For more on the eighteenth-century roots of melodrama, see, for example, Emilio Sala, 'Mélodrame: Définitions et métamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique', *Revue de musicologie*, 84/2 (1998): pp. 235–46; and Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le text: Le Mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris, 2005).

European literature – from which even Pixérécourt sought to distance himself.¹⁴ Indeed, during the 1820s some believed that the easy appeal of melodrama – ‘a bastard, wild child’ – was responsible for the cool reception that ancient and modern tragedies at the royal theatres were enduring as the public flocked to the commercial theatres instead.¹⁵ Yet melodrama’s respectable (Classical) ancestry and inspiration from ancient tragedy had not been entirely forgotten. Critics in *Le Globe* described melodrama as ‘tragédie populaire’, for example, while Charles Nodier viewed the tragic dramas of the new (Romantic) school less charitably as ‘melodrama elevated from the artificial pomp of lyricism’.¹⁶ Although synonymous with – and thus condemned as – popular Romanticism, the genre still implicitly bore the marks of its Classical birth. As we shall see, this double descendency played an important role in the creation and reception of *Macbeth*.

This chapter will demonstrate how the sleepwalking scene – in spite of the fact that Lady Macbeth’s words are sung rather than spoken – has clear roots in the traditions of melodrama. After a brief overview of the opera and its reception, I shall take Jacqueline Waeber’s definition of the genre as a starting point from which to examine ways in which vocal line and orchestra interact discursively to offer a disturbing psychological portrait. This approach was quite at odds with the neoclassical aesthetic of traditional *tragédie lyrique*, and rooted instead in the experimental practices and the generic fluidity of the last third of the eighteenth century, when Classical structures were being adapted to meet demands for more dynamic expression and extremes of contrast – most notably in melodrama.

Rouget de Lisle’s libretto, first submitted to the Opéra’s reading committee in 1824, was modelled on Ducis’s 1784 adaptation of *Macbeth* (in its 1790 revision).¹⁷ In common with the Shakespearean melodramas destined for the

¹⁴ ‘Du Mélodrame’, in a column entitled ‘De La Musique’, in *Le Ménestrel* (19 January 1834); during the 1820s and 30s, the author suggests, music’s importance in creating dramatic effect in spoken drama had begun to decline. See also Pixérécourt’s ‘Derniers Réflexions sur le mélodrame’, *Théâtre choisi* (4 vols, Paris, 1843), vol. 4, pp. 493–9.

¹⁵ See, for example, Alexandre Delaforest, *Théâtre moderne: Cours de littérature dramatique* (2 vols, Paris, 1836), vol. 1, pp. 199–200 (21 May 1823).

¹⁶ *Le Globe* (17 June 1826); Nodier cited in Jean Giraud, *L’Ecole romantique française* (Paris, 1927), p. 101.

¹⁷ This was noted by a number of reviews, including that of the anonymous critic for the *Courrier français* (2 July 1827). Lisle submitted the libretto under the name of his colleague, Charles His, who was attached to the minister for the interior, in the hope it would receive a more favourable hearing; see Théodore Muret, *L’Histoire par le théâtre* (Paris, 1865), p. 297. It was received on 17 March 1824 (AJ¹³ 114); the score was heard on 12 January 1826 and finally accepted on 20 November 1826 (AJ¹³ 117). Details of the opera’s acceptance and subsequent removal from the repertory are documented in the censors’ reports (O³1724) and the correspondence between the Maison du roi and Opéra (AJ¹³114, 115, 117, 119); all documents are held at *F-Pan*. The libretto was published, and manuscript orchestral and vocal parts of the original Paris performance are held at *F-Po*: Mat. 19 [287 (1–122) and Mat. 19 [290 (1–162)]; the revised version, performed in Munich

commercial theatres, the libretto is a greatly simplified interpretation of the play and foregrounds the supernatural. The key points of the action are as follows: the gathered witches summon the spirits of Hell and announce their prophecies to Macbeth (Act I); Lady Macbeth plans the assassination of the king and persuades her husband to commit the deed (Act II); Lady Macbeth reveals in a sleepwalking scene that Macbeth has murdered the king; she stabs herself and Duncan's ghost appears to Macbeth before he is taken away to the scaffold (Act III). Secondary characters – Banquo, Malcolm and Macduff – are omitted, while new ones are added – including Ludovic, an agent of evil and assistant to Lady Macbeth, and a pair of innocent lovers, Douglas and Moïna (daughter of Duncan) – who further emphasize the moral polarity of the story in a manner consistent with melodrama as defined by Peter Brooks.¹⁸

Critics recognized (if not always approvingly) that this was modern, Romantic subject matter. But its form was highly traditional and limited the opera's radical potential. It was agreed that Rouget de Lisle's rather literary libretto provided arias and lengthy recitatives (and space for a ballet) in the approved manner for *tragédie lyrique*, but it allowed for only a few ensembles and choruses to add variety.¹⁹ François-Joseph Fétis highlighted this mismatch of form and content: 'Our authors want Romanticism, but arranged their way, and they won't tackle daring things boldly ... the result is that we have only hybrid productions which are neither reasonable nor piquant'.²⁰

But it was not only the libretto that was the problem; the critics also struggled to understand the music. In *La Quotidienne* it was asserted that 'the thick clouds that the notes throw over the words obscure the action'.²¹ More specifically, in the *Journal des débats*, the witches' scene was declared 'a succession of chords just about combined, and laboriously linked together, evading any sort of analysis

in 1828–29, was published with French and German texts (Munich [1828]). The text in the published libretto is slightly different from that in the MS parts (probably representing an earlier version), and the published score incorporates cuts.

¹⁸ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995).

¹⁹ The published score contains four arias, three duets, a trio and a quintet, together with a prominent chorus and a ballet and entr'acte; there is a large proportion of recitative. The anonymous critic – probably Ludovic Vitet – writing for *Le Globe* (5 July 1827) took the opportunity to rail against *tragédie lyrique* as a viable form for modern composers, in order to highlight Rossini's achievements at the Opéra. For a discussion of Vitet and his music criticism, see Benjamin Walton, 'The Professional Dilettante: Ludovic Vitet and *Le Globe*', in Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart (eds), *Reading Critics Reading: Opera and Ballet Criticism in France from the Revolution to 1848* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 69–85.

²⁰ Fétis, *Revue musicale* (July 1827): p. 522. Similarly, at the Théâtre-Français plays began to deal with what we might term Romantic subject matter, but the acting style and visual dimension of production, as well as the verse construction, remained essentially Classical. See Bray, *Chronologie*.

²¹ M.J., *La Quotidienne* (1 July 1827).

... it is chaos without logic, without connection, without progression’.²² Fétis concluded – in despair – that Chelard ‘had less in mind to make pleasant music than to find dramatic and true effects’ – a view to which we shall return.²³ In sum, the plot was served by an impenetrable musical language, condemned variously as ‘bizarre’, ‘difficult’, ‘harmonic’ – all synonyms for ‘Germanic’, and by implication not sufficiently melodic – which not even the Romantics enjoyed.²⁴ This north European flavour of both plot and music was unsuitable for an old-fashioned *tragédie lyrique* – and by implication for the conservative palette of the Opéra audience. For critics, the baffling quality of the music was at its most extreme in the sleepwalking scene. As Fétis had observed, Chelard had turned away from a harmonically simple, conventional – and thus familiar and pleasing – musical language, and instead created a more dynamic and unpredictable dramatic idiom in which the orchestra provided an important and expressive narrative voice.

The expectations for this climactic scene had been raised by memories of actresses in the role on the spoken stage. The critic for *La Quotidienne* observed that the Opéra’s Mme Dabadie had a fine singing voice, but lacked the terrifying gestures and imposing presence displayed by Mlle Raucourt as Lady Macbeth at the Théâtre-Français in 1784.²⁵ He recalled that Raucourt had produced such an effect that there was no purchase for the music, which had difficulty accommodating itself to the large silences of ‘great sorrow’.²⁶ The (anonymous) critic of the *Courrier français* remembered Mme Vestris, whose talents in the sleepwalking scene had apparently secured the success of Ducis’s play at its 1790 revival: ‘what terror! what silence!’. This was also the opinion of Ducis himself, as reported in his preface.²⁷ In fact, it seemed that a good singing voice was easily dispensable for this scene in the opera: two critics recommended that the text should be spoken (in short phrases) rather than sung, to free the gestures from a continuous text, to allow for dramatic silences and to enable the orchestra to lead the musical development of the narrative and convey more powerfully the heroine’s psychological collapse. For Fétis,

These interrupted words, this pantomime – capable of a great effect in a tragedy if the role is given to a talented actor – lose their character if they become the

²² C., *Journal des débats* (2 July 1827). Though others enjoyed this number.

²³ Fétis, *Revue musicale*, p. 523.

²⁴ This vocabulary is familiar from similarly confused descriptions of the operas of Spohr, Winter and Weber in the 1820s; see Hibberd, ‘“Cette diablerie philosophique”: *Faust* Criticism in Paris c.1830’, in Parker and Smart (eds), *Reading Critics Reading*, pp. 111–36.

²⁵ M.J., *La Quotidienne* (1 July 1827).

²⁶ *Courrier français* (2 July 1827). I have been unable to find any trace of the music that accompanied performances of Ducis’s play at the Théâtre-Français, but the theatre had a substantial orchestra, of 34 players by 1792, under the direction of Antoine-Laurent Baudron for the period 1766–1822; see Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens*, pp. 97, 99.

²⁷ Ducis, *Macbeth* [pp. 1–2].

foundation for a [sung] air. I could imagine the effect of this scene only if it were treated as melodrama, that is to say if the orchestra alone sang, and was interrupted by spoken phrases. Perhaps this innovation would be found to be too much for the Opéra.²⁸

Similarly, for the critic of the *Gazette de France*,

She should utter only fragmented words, in muffled tone, and it should be the orchestra – such an eloquent interlocutor in the hands of those who know how to make it speak – that expresses what the character can only point to Lady Macbeth's singing is too sustained, too measured; whatever name one wants to give it, it is an air and does not belong here.²⁹

Melodrama had emerged from the utopian nostalgia of Enlightenment linguists for the common origin of language and music – as encapsulated in ancient Greek chant. However, Jacqueline Waeber has explained that the renunciation of song in favour of word and gesture can be understood as a form of defiance against the expressive powers of music.³⁰ Rousseau believed that the French language had lost its intrinsic musical quality, and in *Pygmalion* he effectively tamed music's excess by alternating *ritournelles* with excerpts from the actor's monologue. The musical sequences should be understood in this context not as isolated fragments, but as part of the preceding speech: rather than being driven by tonal logic they are constructed from repetition, rupture, juxtaposition, in response to the text. In this manner, a dialogic exchange between actor and orchestra creates not a fusion of speech and music, but a dynamic 'discursive continuity'.³¹

For Waeber, melodrama reached its height with the Bohemian Georg Benda's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Medea* (written for the French-influenced court at Gotha in 1775, and performed shortly afterwards in Paris), in which the narrative logic still emerges from the interaction of music and text, although complex motivic work is bound closely to changes of affect, and declamation is occasionally superimposed on the music to create specific dramatic effects.³² The orchestra emerges as central to the narrative process in such works: not only does it communicate a shifting interior drama (through chains of modulations, changes of metre and tempo, and the use of motifs), its non-specificity also allows an ambiguity of voice and subject position and a blurring of the boundaries of time and alternate worlds. Waeber demonstrates some of these ideas in her description of *Medea's* role: realizing the

²⁸ Féti's, *Revue musicale*, p. 525.

²⁹ L., *Gazette de France* (2 July 1827). The same critic, in a manner that suggests he might be Berlioz, notes that Gluck's *Orestes* (*Iphigénie en Tauride*) does not sing, but rather lets out intermittent cries and murmurs during the chorus of furies and the orchestra.

³⁰ Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*, chap. 1, 'Paroles, musique et geste', pp. 17–50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 51–98.

nature of the crime she must commit to secure vengeance for her abandonment by Jason – murdering their children – the heroine behaves as if in a dream.³³ She effectively ‘animates’ Jason before the audience’s eyes, and projects herself into the scene. As she enters the palace, dagger in hand, she disappears from sight in the darkness, and a lengthy passage of *allegro furioso* (underpinned by tremolos) is heard: ‘the heart of the drama unfolds in music alone: in its horror, Medea’s crime goes not only beyond speech, but beyond any form of visual representation’; this moment of ‘sublime horror’ takes place in an imaginary space – her psyche.³⁴ Thus, Waeber argues, music is not simply a backdrop to what we see, rather, it *becomes* visual, sustaining and expanding the moment of crisis beyond the frame of the narrative – and beyond the stage.

My analysis of the sleepwalking scene in Chelard’s *Macbeth* will reveal its hybrid nature, and the extent to which the orchestra similarly invites the audience into the psyche of the heroine, and interweaves past with present, memory and imagination with actuality, in order to dramatize and heighten the moment of crisis. The scene consists of two contrasting lyrical sections in which Lady Macbeth expresses her guilt and recounts the murder of King Duncan. These sections are framed and punctuated by comments from onlookers – Douglas and Moïna, and a chorus of courtiers (the text is given in Table 5.1).

The dramatic function of this bipartite form is comparable to that of an Italian double aria – a model that was used to powerful effect for mad scenes in Italian operas.³⁵ A *cantabile* section in which Lady Macbeth describes the (imagined) blood on her arm as symbolic of her guilt is interrupted by the onlookers, who realize that she is about to disclose something awful. They trigger a more urgent section in which Lady Macbeth returns to the past and reveals her husband’s murder of Duncan; the horrified response of the onlookers brings her back to the present and to her senses. During the narrative, then, Lady Macbeth’s text switches ambiguously between past and present, between remembered action and present anxiety, between the real and the imagined, vividly evoking her confused state of mind. The music drives this sense of confusion, expressing not only the heroine’s thoughts and emotions, but also those of the other participants in the scene.

Lady Macbeth’s first exclamations at the significance of the blood (apparently) on her arm (‘signe accusateur, disparais’) are accompanied by four diminished-seventh chords, rising chromatically by semitone over a dominant B, pedal, which

³³ Ibid., pp. 91–3.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 66–7.

³⁵ The classic discussion of the form is Harold S. Powers, “‘La solita forma’ and ‘The Uses of Convention’”, *Acta Musicologica*, 59/1 (1987): pp. 65–90; and Mary Ann Smart has explored its use in mad scenes in ‘The Silencing of Lucia’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4/2 (1992): pp. 119–41. Composers of grand opera (including Auber, Halévy and Meyerbeer) also used the form.

Table 5.1 Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, Act III, scenes 4 and 5

Lady	Là ... là, toujours du sang!	There, there, still blood!
Douglas	Écoutons en silence...	Let's listen in silence...
Lady	Disparais, signe accusateur, disparais donc...	Vanish, accusing mark, vanish...
Moïna	Je frémis!...	I tremble!...
Lady	Ciel vengeur!...	Vengeful heaven!...
Lady	Ineffaçable empreinte, Qui me glace de crainte, Que fait-tu sur mon bras? Du crime épouvantable Mon cœur seul fut coupable: Cette main ne l'est pas.	Indelible mark, That chills me with fear, What are you doing on my arm? Of this terrible crime, My heart alone was guilty: This hand is not.
Moïna	Quel souvenir, ô ciel, quelle angoisse l'opresse?	What memory, oh heaven, what anguish weighs on her?
Douglas	Quel est ce grand forfait dont le remords la presse?	What is this great crime, the remorse for which is driving her?
Lady	Minuit... c'est l'heure... Allons... Eh! pourquoi m'arrêter, Macbeth? qui te fait hésiter?... Âme faible!... suis-moi... Quoi! la peur te surmonte... Comme il est pâle... un guerrier, quelle honte!	Midnight... it is time... Let's go... Eh! why stop me, Macbeth? Who makes you hesitate? Feeble mind!... follow me... What! fear is overcoming you... How pale he is... a soldier, what shame!
Douglas	De ces mots nous effrayans le crime enveloppé Va-t-il se révéler?	The crime shrouded in these frightening words Will it be revealed?
Lady	Le grand coup est frappé Maintenant!... Qui viendra nous en demander compte, Qui l'osera?	The great blow is struck Now!... Who will come and hold us to account, Who will dare?
Douglas	Le grand coup!	The great blow!
Moïna	Je me meurs!...	I'm dying!...

Lady	Que parles-tu, que crains-tu des trois sœurs?	What are you saying, what do you fear from the three sisters?
	Enfance!... Encor ce sang!... Exécrable souillure! Cette main... cette main ne sera jamais pure!	Infancy!... Still this blood!... Vile stain! This hand... this hand will never be pure!
Moïna	Je succombe à mon effroi mortel À l’instant, vers le roi, Douglas, au nom du ciel...	I succumb to my mortal fear Now, to the king, Duncan, in the name of heaven...
Lady	Le roi!... qui, roi? Duncan?... il ne l’est plus	The king!... who, the king? Duncan?... he is no more
Moïna and women	Ciel!	Heaven!
Lady	Où suis-je... notre sort se décide!	Where am I... our fate is decided!

Note: This version is taken from the published libretto (Paris: Barba, 1827), pp. 38–41. The MS parts are similar to this version; the published score has some cuts and re-ordering of the words. The translation is mine.

leads to Moïna’s hushed exclamation.³⁶ In the first lyrical section, she examines the blood: a confident diatonic melody (plunging immediately from e₂” down to b), doubled by cor anglais and supported by alternating tonic and dominant pedals, is destabilized by ominous chromatically inflected tremolo chords and diminished sevenths. The section reaches its climax with the declaration ‘mon cœur seul fut coupable du crime épouvantable’ (see Example 5.1).

Here the orchestra carries Lady Macbeth – slipping chromatically from the tonic of E₂ major through E₂ minor and G major – to the extreme tonal area of G₂ major. The vocal line rises through a G₂ arpeggio on the third syllable of ‘épouvantable’ to g₂” – the climax of the section – before descending rapidly through a D₂ minor scale and beginning a more angular journey – with repeated leaps and obsessive oscillations – which builds back to the tonic (E₂). The voice then traces a descending diminished-seventh arpeggio through an octave and a half before a rallying leap and final collapse. The passage concludes with the chorus of onlookers – supported by tremolo tonic chords – expressing their fear of what she is about to reveal. This section is dominated by a strong, diatonic lyrical voice that, until its final moments, is distractingly at odds with the unsettling chromaticism and modulatory restlessness of the orchestra.

The second lyrical section opens with an abrupt shift to C major that transports us back to the past. After a brief introduction dominated by tremolo horns, the

³⁶ In the published score, a chorus of onlookers joins Moïna in a more extended description of her staring eyes and troubled mind; Chelard, *Macbeth*, pp. 15–18.

Example 5.1 Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, first part

mon_ cœur, mon cœur seul fut cou-pab - le du

sim.

cri - me é - pou - van - ta - ble, mon cœur seul fut cou - pab - le

Example 5.2 Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, second part

al - lons

f

pour-quoi donc m'ar-rê-ter Mac-beth

p

word 'Minuit', repeated on a rising fourth, launches Lady Macbeth's reliving of the moments leading up to the murder. As she cajoles her husband, the vocal line this time doubled by bassoon, her words disintegrate into fragmentary phrases consisting of chromatic motifs and diminished-seventh arpeggios that are anticipated and echoed by the orchestra in a manner much closer to the melodramatic effect – and dialogue between voice and orchestra – recommended

Example 5.3 Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene, conclusion

que par-les - tu, que crains-tu des trois sœurs? en-fan - ce!

en - cor ce sang! ex - é - crab - le souil - lu -

re! ja - mais, ja - mais cette main ne se - ra pu - re! oh! (elle sanglotte)

fp *fp* *p* *f*

by the two critics. The double basses introduce a graphic illustration of Macbeth’s hesitating steps (see Example 5.2). Although in some ways this recalls Medea’s ‘animation’ of Jason before our eyes, it feels rather comic and knowing, like the intrusion of a boulevard melodrama villain onto the stage of the Opéra, and disrupts the building tension somewhat. Douglas’s realization that she is about to reveal the crime, however, is delivered as conventional recitative and the number then moves swiftly to its conclusion. Lady Macbeth’s impatience with her husband’s fear of the witches is intercut with clarinet flourishes (see Example 5.3) that suggest his growing courage (perhaps even his first attempts to stab the king – although chromatic scalic figures rather than arpeggiated diminished sevenths, they nevertheless seem to echo the demisemiquaver irruptions that interspersed Lady Macbeth’s words during the murder scene itself (discussed below)).

The phrase ‘cette main ne sera jamais pure!’ is underscored by a final insistent diminished-seventh chordal motif (*forte*), which suggests the stabbing itself, then a moment of silence is followed by Lady Macbeth’s sobbing sigh. Her confirmation (in response to Moïna) that Duncan is dead unleashes the horrified realization of

the onlookers – ‘Ciel!’ – on a dominant ninth that reverberates and grows into a rising *fortissimo* chromatic scale in the orchestra. This discharge of affect seems to evoke simultaneously the horror felt by Macbeth within the narrative, Lady Macbeth’s guilt in the present, the revulsion of the crowd of onlookers, and the evil nature of the crime in more abstract terms. When Lady Macbeth whispers ‘Où suis-je?’ over another diminished-seventh chord, this marks her emergence from her dream to face its consequences. Her final words, ‘notre sort se décide’, seem to be touched by the supernatural with their trombone doubling.³⁷

The fact that the musical development was driven above all by drama and effect was what seemed to disorientate – and annoy – the critics, as we have seen. Indeed, their confusion may have been compounded by the disjunction between voice and orchestra for much of the scene, by the lack of silence and opportunity to catch one’s breath, and by the shifting narrative perspectives implied by the orchestra. The use of non-functional harmony and the proliferation of diminished sevenths, the lack of a regular phrasal structure and cadential formulas, and the frequent (unexpected) modulations mean that there is little conventional harmonic development to orientate the listener at a purely musical level. Fundamentally, the music is propelled by repetition, rupture and juxtaposition, and the texture is dominated by low-register instruments (the vocal line is doubled variously by cor anglais, bassoon, clarinet and trombone). This saturated vocabulary of ostinatos, tremolos, chromatic, scalar and arpeggiated motifs, pedals, abrupt changes of tempo, dark textures and unstable tonality was more characteristic of melodrama (from the 1770s to the 1820s) than of Classical *tragédie lyrique*.³⁸ However, David Charlton has suggested that this language had already begun to be absorbed into operas and *opéras comiques* in the 1780s: growing acceptance of the orchestra’s narrative capacity led to ‘an expectation that the interior life of operatic figures would be complexly symbolised by orchestral means ... to the extent that their consciousness, inner contradictions and imaginations might be depicted from moment to moment so clearly that we might envision them as separable characters’.³⁹ More specifically, Charlton contends that operas in the 1780s were already employing a ‘melodrama model’, in which the orchestra, with or without voices, was ‘responding with a realistic speed and variety to a wide gamut of

³⁷ The impact of this climax is heightened by the fact that, unlike the spectators in Shakespeare’s original, the onlookers are still unaware of the king’s death at this point (an unforgivable dramatic flaw for most critics). Although critics allude to Mme Dabadie’s effective pantomime, no detail is given.

³⁸ Such techniques featured in the scores of boulevard melodrama, as we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, although (given the demands of commercial theatre) they were not necessarily worked through in the sustained and complex manner we find in Benda’s melodramas, for example.

³⁹ David Charlton, “‘Envoicing’ the Orchestra: Enlightenment Metaphors in Theory and Practice” [expanded from a 1997 article], in *French Opera 1730–1830: Meaning and Media* (Aldershot, 2000), vol. 5, pp. 1–31, here p. 31.

interior human ... imagery’.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, during the Empire and Restoration a simpler and more Classical idiom dominated the operas and *opéras comiques* being staged at the royal theatres, in keeping with the broader cultural return to neoclassical models mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

The rapid unfolding of the complex narrative and the uncompromising depiction of such a monstrous heroine also had more in common with melodramas and operas of the end of the eighteenth century than with works at the Opéra in the 1820s. Perhaps most obviously, Lady Macbeth’s portrayal recalls that of Medea. As we have already seen, in Benda’s melodrama the orchestra dominates the complex and appalling narrative: the nature of the heroine’s vengeance is beyond words or visual representation, both in its anticipation (the unthinkable is only hinted at in the fragmentary spoken phrases which alternate with emotionally charged music), and in its unfolding (the murder is carried out wordlessly on a darkened stage and thus purely through the music – and the audience’s imagination).⁴¹

In Chelard’s opera, the murder in Act I is not represented on stage either (in line with censorship requirements). Instead, we wait outside the king’s apartments with Lady Macbeth: ‘Quel siècle qu’un moment! ... D’où vient que je frissonne? / Rien ... rien encore ... pourrait-il ... s’il allait ... ’ [What eternity in a single moment! ... Why am I shivering? Nothing ... still nothing ... could he ... if he ...].⁴² Demisemiquaver arpeggiations on a rising sequence of diminished sevenths punctuate this last line and suggest very graphically his stabbing of the king. Then: ‘Macbeth rentre sur la scène éperdu, poursuivi par les Sorcières et des flames qui jaillissent de l’appartement. Il traverse le théâtre et va tomber sur les marches de l’estrade’ [Macbeth returns to the stage distraught, followed by the Witches and flames that shoot out of the apartment. He crosses the stage and collapses on the steps of the dais]. Here, eight bars of tremolo strings in F minor are followed by the witches’ exclamations of delight, and then 73 bars of *pianissimo Allegro*, incorporating swirling scalic figures and dotted figures to paint his horrified realization of what he has just done, accompany a lengthy pantomime, during which ‘Un orage épouvantable se déclare’ [a terrible storm breaks]. Finally, Lady Macbeth leads him off stage, and the storm carries on raging into the entr’acte. The orchestra both evokes the physical action – too terrible to represent on stage – and depicts Macbeth’s psychological turmoil, which is made tangible through the metaphor of the storm (a common device of boulevard melodrama as well as eighteenth-century opera). In this scene, voice and orchestra interact in a manner that brings to mind Benda’s melodrama.

⁴⁰ David Charlton, ‘Storms, Sacrifices: The “Melodrama Model” in Opera’ [expanded from a 1985 article], in *French Opera 1730–1830*, vol. 10, pp. 1–61, here p. 30. This ‘melodrama model’ is discussed in the Introduction to this volume.

⁴¹ See Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*, pp. 60–67, 91.

⁴² Chelard, *Macbeth* [vocal score], no. 17 (comprising Act II, scenes 8, 9, 10), pp. 1–12, the section discussed here takes place on pp. 9–12.

During the sleepwalking scene, as we have seen, Lady Macbeth's voice is much more prominent, though description of the murder is again avoided as she re-enacts her wait outside the door of the king's apartment. Like Benda's Medea, she 'animates' her husband before our eyes/ears and we 'see' his hesitation. The orchestra evokes the deed and Lady Macbeth's psychological disintegration, and discharges the emotional affect on the onlookers following the revelation. Simple, formulaic musical devices extend the moment and increase the tension. In Waeber's conception, melodrama, a genre of reaction more than action, contains the excess of passions in a fixed image, while simultaneously supporting its unfolding.⁴³ Here, maximum emotion is similarly wrung out of the situation: the orchestra both amplifies and intensifies the expression of emotion and conveys the narrative from different viewpoints. However, as the critics noted, the continuous vocal line running through the scene spoiled the effect: the orchestra was not allowed to 'speak' in its own right, and the listener's attention was split between competing – if complementary – narratives. Recreating such events for the operatic – rather than melodramatic – stage necessarily involved some adjustments.

When in 1797 F.-B. Hoffmann adapted *Medea* as an *opéra comique* for Cherubini, melodrama was not a conscious influence on him (indeed he perceived it as a threat to both the Théâtre-Français and the Opéra for its easy appeal and generic hybridity). Rather, he approached the task with the aim of refreshing *tragédie lyrique*, taking inspiration from spoken theatre's focus on action rather than narration.⁴⁴ Cherubini responded with a musical language that was predicated on dramatic effect rather than melodic beauty and, as Michael McClellan has demonstrated, was frequently criticized as 'noisy' – journalists could not rationalize its harmonic idiom in purely musical terms.⁴⁵ Although there are clear similarities with both the creation and the reception of *Macbeth* and the musical language of Benda and Chelard, Cherubini's orchestral idiom does not attempt to 'speak' for the heroine in the same way.⁴⁶ Having already poisoned Jason's fiancée, Médée tells him that her vengeance is not yet complete as their children are still alive. This is communicated in an athletic aria in which the vocal line incorporates powerful scalar surges and upward flights to b², supported by a swirling accompaniment (reminiscent of the conclusion to *Don Giovanni*, with its repeated pounding of three brass chords that similarly invokes supernatural forces), and concluding with a lengthy passage of reiterated tonic–dominant alternation. In contrast to Lady Macbeth's aria, there is only limited modulation, and the orchestra supports her throughout in a more conventional manner; nevertheless, her vocal prowess

⁴³ Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*, p. 426.

⁴⁴ Paolo Russo, 'Visions of Medea: Musico-Dramatic Transformations of a Myth', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 6/2 (1994): pp. 113–24, here p. 121.

⁴⁵ Michael McClellan, *Battling over the Lyric Muse: Expressions of Revolution and Counter Revolution at the Théâtre Feydeau, 1789–1801* (2 vols, PhD, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 226–7.

⁴⁶ Nor does spoken dialogue (a feature of *opéra comique*) feature in this scene.

and force – like that of Lady Macbeth – communicates her determination. At the conclusion of the aria she rushes off to the temple with a dagger. On stage – presumably as the murder is taking place – we see Jason and the chorus dashing about ‘en tumulte’. Their fragmented phrases – repeated, sequenced, out of phase with one another and so providing a continuous texture – are underpinned by a spare, dark orchestration (mainly sustained chords and tremolos) that gradually expands, drawing in the higher woodwind, and with a crescendo conveys the rising sense of panic, culminating in a diminished-seventh chord and the maid Nérís’s entrance. She confirms that the children have been killed, which prompts a unison ‘o ciel!’ (on the dominant) from Jason and the people, and a brief discharge of emotional affect in the orchestra as Médée appears. Although the atmosphere provided by the orchestra is consonant with murder, there is no suggestion that it is doing anything other than supporting the voices of Jason and the chorus and their feeling of foreboding. Unlike the accompaniment to Lady Macbeth outside the door of the king’s apartment, it does not develop the narrative by negotiating between on-stage and off-stage action, between past and present, between reality and the imagination; it accompanies the singers on stage.

Different stages in the adaptive process from melodramatic to operatic stage can thus be understood in Cherubini’s and Chelard’s operas. In Benda’s work, the orchestra ‘visualizes’ the action, drawing us into Medea’s psyche, while the occasional (spoken) words root it in the ‘real’ world and orientate the audience. The orchestra thus takes on a crucial role in evoking the unrepresentable and taking us into the mind of the protagonist. In Cherubini’s opera, voice and orchestra narrate the visible action together: although the orchestral idiom includes some of the devices employed by Benda and Chelard, its prime role is to support the text and the contour and emotional colour of the voice(s); it does not depict off-stage action or add extra information to the narrative, and it remains in the present. In Chelard’s opera, voice and orchestra seem to be saying complementary things: while Lady Macbeth describes the before and after stages of the remembered murder, the orchestra suggests the off-stage action (including the murder) and evokes her psychological disintegration, in a manner consistent with melodrama. However, voice and orchestra sound simultaneously and the musicalized voice is inevitably drawn into the musical texture, albeit rather uncomfortably. Particularly in the first section, Lady Macbeth’s vocal line is superimposed over the orchestra, and the audience’s attention is effectively divided between their very different contributions to the story. In other words, voice and orchestra neither support each other in a homogeneous musical texture (as in Cherubini) nor enter into dialogue as distinct elements (as in Benda): they compete. However, the conclusion of the scene is more successful: a fragmentary and often recitative-like vocal line (closer to the effect suggested by the two critics), interwoven with a similarly disconnected accompaniment, creates a much clearer and more powerful continuous narrative in which voice and orchestra alternate, leading to the full horror of the murder expressed by the orchestra and the reaction of the onlookers, which is given space to register and reverberate.

Lady Macbeth's scene sits amid the interlocking histories of melodrama and opera. Its idiom has clear antecedents in the scores of melodramas by Rousseau, Benda and Pixérécourt, and also in the *opéras comiques* of Cherubini (and other late eighteenth-century operas), although there is no evidence to suggest Chelard was consciously imitating his predecessors. Rather, these works show evidence of a common interest in creating a heterogeneous narrative in which voice, orchestra, gesture and *mise-en-scène* work discursively to reach new heights of expressivity and contrast – whether depicting the forces of nature or the supernatural, or human experience. *Macbeth* was an early experiment during the 1820s in breaking down the barriers between popular theatre (melodrama) and elite opera, and between aural and visual representation, anticipating the more successful and sustained incorporation of melodramatic techniques into serious opera that was to characterize French grand opera (and to influence European opera more generally) in the next decade.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ For more on the influence of melodramatic practices on nineteenth-century opera see Emilio Sala, *L'opera senza canto: Il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice, 1995); Sarah Hibberd, 'La Muette and her Context', in David Charlton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to French Grand Opera* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 149–67; and Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

Chapter 6

Melodramatic Spectacle on the English Operatic Stage

Philip Carli

In nineteenth-century English stage melodrama, scenic and dramatic spectacle played a crucial role. In many plays, particularly between 1850 and 1870, it was virtually a *raison d'être* for the entire production, and this was reflected in the approaches to composition, construction, dramaturgy, staging and publicity. This characteristic is well documented in studies of the nineteenth-century English stage,¹ but is less well examined in relation to English-language operas of the period. Indeed, these operas and their librettos are often held to different standards than straight plays, even though both were created for popular audiences.

In much of the critical writing, the literary quality of Victorian opera librettos is repeatedly damned. The serious musical and literary press of the period – as well as later critics such as George Bernard Shaw and Winton Dean – have questioned why such obviously talented and intelligent composers as Michael Balfe, William Vincent Wallace and Julius Benedict set these texts. This is, on the face of it, an old argument: in the standard European operatic repertoire there may be fewer than two dozen librettos with good literary reputations, and the Canadian polymath Robertson Davies even criticized Arrigo Boito's celebrated adaptations of Shakespeare for Verdi (and Verdi's literary taste itself).²

With English operatic librettos, however, and Victorian librettos in particular, it seems to be generally accepted that new depths were reached. Cecil Forsyth's 1911 study *Music and Nationalism: A Study of English Opera* fills 32 pages with contempt for the previous two centuries' literary production: '[t]he history of English Opera Books is, to say the best of it, dismal'; by the time he reaches librettos of the Victorian period, he defines the form as 'Opera of no-where and no-time; of men and women who have never existed and never can exist; an Opera of sham sentiment and sham motive, of artificiality and bunkum' – and illustrates

¹ See, for example, Kerry Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge, 2006).

² Robertson Davies, 'Some Reflections on *Rigoletto*' and 'Opera or the Man who Reads *Hamlet*', in *Happy Alchemy: On the Pleasures of Music and the Theatre* (London, 1997), pp. 186–206.

this with 17 pages of textual examples, all carefully footnoted, and all described with the same heavy-handed irony.³

Forsyth's study, however, is a product of its time, when music, drama and art of the preceding 60 years was being systematically rejected with intellectual vitriol, and this approach itself was held as a critical norm for the next half-century. Until recently, most Victorian serious drama has been viewed as historically peripheral and critically suspect, and opera librettos barely registered as literature at all. However, this degree of virulence is not echoed in evaluations of contemporary French, Italian or German librettos. Why do Edward Fitzball and Alfred Bunn receive so much more critical scorn than, say, Salvatore Cammarano or Eugène Scribe?

George Biddlecombe tries to address this in his study of English Romantic opera, noting that 'melodrama has become a pejorative term for excessive gestures unsupported by an adequate plot, of effects exceeding causes, of exploitation of our responses to external stimuli ... [but] its place requires an unbiased approach'.⁴ Nevertheless, Biddlecombe still betrays unease with the stagecraft of these pieces, and other modern critics tend to concentrate on intellectual and dramatic methods in these works, rather than evaluating their effect on the audiences. Some earlier critics at least mentioned this dimension, albeit somewhat backhandedly. In his review of an 1885 performance of Wallace's *Maritana* (first produced 40 years earlier), for example, George Bernard Shaw admits 'its infinite blarney may keep its hotch-potch of bluster and sentiment alive longer than many more thoughtful works'.⁵ In fact, Forsyth rather contradicts himself when examining the more 'literary' librettos of operas written in the 1880s and 1890s, describing them as insufficiently theatrical texts, 'all foredoomed to failure on the operatic stage where a single "Ha, ha!" aside (and in the right place) has more value than the finest string of poetical images and philosophical reflections (in the wrong place). Thus the ungrammatical Bunn and all his tribe are, in a way, avenged on their less practical, if more widely accomplished, successors.'⁶ Within the framework of a single essay we cannot create a new criticism of effect as it pertains to melodrama and English opera, but we can examine some salient connections between the two and illuminate not only the effects on Victorian authors, composers and audiences, but also the potential effects today when the conventions are more creatively understood.

The principal authors of English opera librettos were Alfred Bunn and Edward Fitzball. Bunn (1796–1860) was a theatrical impresario and playwright who was engaged in theatrical management from the 1820s until the final collapse of his

³ Cecil Forsyth, *Music and Nationalism, A Study of English Opera* (London, 1911), pp. 152, 163.

⁴ George Biddlecombe, *English Opera from 1834 to 1864 with Particular Reference to the Works of Michael William Balfe* (New York and London, 1994), 18.

⁵ George Bernard Shaw, 'English Opera at Drury Lane', *Saturday Review* (11 April 1885); repr. in Shaw, *How to Become a Musical Critic* (New York, 1960), p. 66.

⁶ Forsyth, *Music and Nationalism*, p. 179.

fortunes in the mid-1850s. In his florid manner, his habit of adapting French texts freely (with little regard for their authors), and his extraordinary ability to mount spectacle on a shaky budget – not to mention his precarious financial dealings with everyone he knew – he was conceivably the model for the character of Vincent Crummies in Charles Dickens's early novel *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39). Bunn's literary output was almost exclusively operatic or lyric (in terms of ballad texts). Fitzball (1792–1864) was a much more variegated literary man: he wrote melodramas, comedies, and opera librettos, and brought considerable invention to his work. His melodrama *Jonathan Bradford* (1833) was the first to use a split-level multi-room set on the English stage, and he was the librettist for several of the most important English operas: Balfe's *The Siege of Rochelle*, Wallace's *Maritana* and *Lurline*, Edward Loder's *Raymond and Agnes* and George Macfarren's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Both Bunn and Fitzball adapted melodramatic sources (often French) for their librettos; some of the most notable are Bunn's *The Bondman* for Balfe (1846, from a Mélesville and Saint-Georges play) and Fitzball's *Maritana* (1845, after d'Ennery and Dumanoir's *Don César de Bazan*). English sources included adaptations from the works of Matthew 'Monk' Lewis: Fitzball's libretto for Edward Loder's *Raymond and Agnes*, and Palgrave Simpson's libretto for Balfe's *Bianca, or the Bravo's Bride*.

One important component of both stage melodrama and English (as well as European) opera of the period, regardless of the poetic quality of their texts, was spectacle. From the 1790s English melodramas and other theatrical entertainments were quite spectacularly staged, and it was something that audiences came increasingly to expect and relish as the years went on, as stage machinery and lighting became more sophisticated. This spectacle was both visual and musical. Such works required considerable singing skill and very large orchestras on the scale of the most lavish French and Italian Romantic operas. In some ways, the lack of inhibition and wildness of the texts anticipated the strictly pleasurable (and unintellectual) gratification of the senses in terms of sheer sound and visuals that the stage machinery and lavish musical resources provided, and this is an argument that could be extended right through to the 1860s. The earliest English Romantic operas from the late Georgian period rooted their dramatic spectacle in fantastic, exotic and supernatural situations, possibly deriving at least in part from the success of Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821) in English translation (and heavily adapted to further highlight its supernatural elements), and his last opera *Oberon* (1826), commissioned for Covent Garden to an English-language libretto by James Robinson Planche. Their English successors included Ferdinand Ries's *The Sorceress* (1831) with a text by Fitzball, Loder's *Nourjahad* (1834) with a text by S. J. Arnold, and most intriguingly Charles Edward Packer's *Sadak and Kalasrade, or The Waters of Oblivion*, with a libretto by the novelist Mary Russell Mitford. *Sadak*, taken from a story in James Ridley's Oriental pastiche *Tales of the Genii* (1764), was considered a sufficiently well-known story to draw audiences in the early 1830s. Scenically, audiences' expectations were probably shaped by the paintings of the visionary and architectural fantasist John Martin,

whose monumental 1812 oil painting *Sadak In Search of the Waters of Oblivion* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1812, and achieved wide popularity (like many of Martin's overtly theatrical paintings) in mezzotint form. These 1830s operas tended to depend on exotica and the supernatural more than on the strong emotional thrust of contemporary melodrama for their visceral impact. There are a few exceptions, however. Fitzball's libretto for Balfe's *Joan of Arc* (1837) turns the story of France's patron saint on its head, employing the convention of the last-minute rescue in a story that seems immutable to us. In Fitzball's telling, Joan is literally rescued from being burned at the stake, but there is a long build-up to this point and Balfe's setting presents a grim picture of her situation right up to the rescue. The great effect of joyous triumph over adversity, spectacularly set up, was Fitzball's objective – and in truth it is only slightly less unusual than Temistocle Solera's libretto for Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* (1845) – derived from Schiller – in which Joan dies of battlefield injuries.⁷

This approach to spectacle took a new direction when Bunn assumed the management of Drury Lane from 1843 to 1846. His naturally flamboyant instincts were encouraged by two specifically musical factors: Balfe had just returned from a two-year sojourn in Paris where he had been exposed to the latest and most lavish productions of the Paris Opéra (notably at that time under the general artistic direction of the Opéra's former chief scenic designer Henri Duponchel); and the exotically travelled composer-polyvirtuoso Wallace had recently arrived in England. Bunn took over Drury Lane with an eye to presenting English opera on a hitherto unprecedentedly extravagant scale. This, of course, would require pieces that could be presented, acted, sung and played lavishly, incorporating the latest Continental advances, while tying in to themes and formats already familiar to the British public. A more Parisian approach became evident, with more derivations of texts from French originals. Scenic design and grandeur was touted as heavily as the musical aspects, if not more so; by association, the music and dramatic elements were to be of commensurate splendour. However, not all of Bunn's productions were necessarily lavish or indeed conventionally melodramatic: his first success (and the longest-lived), Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (27 November 1843), is a comparatively modest work scenically and dramatically, more domestic than spectacular in its story of bereaved parents and lost children. The gypsy themes, the major exotica of the work, derive from the opera's original ballet scenario source, *La Gipsy* by Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges. The runaway success of this opera prompted Bunn and Balfe in their next work to essay a much grander and overtly spectacular piece building on Balfe's recent Parisian experiences. Bunn's libretto for *The Daughter of St Mark* was derived – and mostly directly translated – from Saint-Georges's libretto for Halévy's *La Reine*

⁷ Balfe does not always respond to Fitzball's historical fiction with equal triumph; the rondo finale he provides to close the opera is so jolly it could almost be seen as a joke, though it was certainly not intended as such. William Tyldesley bemusedly examines the opera, noting it was never revived, in *Michael William Balfe* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 75–9.

de Chypre, first staged at the Paris Opéra in 1841. It is an elaborate work, one of the very few all-sung nineteenth-century English operas, with quite elaborate formal structures throughout, culminating (as in the French original) with a large-scale confrontation scene at the end of Act II between the four principals in the usual multi-section ensemble finale form, concluding with a quite violent stretta in B, minor. Bunn's libretto is described by Winton Dean as bathetic,⁸ and Biddlecombe also points out the strained nature of Bunn's reliance on heroic couplets, particularly in the recitative, and Balfe's apparent inability to cope with this uncongenial poetic form convincingly.⁹ However, Biddlecombe does note that Bunn takes considerable dramaturgical trouble with the motivations of the villain, Moncenigo, in a way superior to the French original – and in English melodrama the villain was the character audiences wanted to follow most, exulting in his strong language and moral depravity.¹⁰ In this Bunn showed that he truly was attuned to British popular, rather than intellectual, theatrical tastes. In a playbill for the opera (see Figure 6.1) the Messrs Grieve, from the leading mid-Victorian scene-designer family (also known for their dioramas), are prominently credited, with a full list of settings they created.

Contemporary engravings give an idea of the Messrs Grieve's work and Bunn's expectations; Figure 6.2 shows the set for the grand procession of the heroine, Caterina Cornaro, as she arrives in Cyprus in Act II. Grandeur was all. *The Daughter of St Mark* has not been considered one of the more successful works of the period, and indeed Bunn's bombastic text was widely criticized, but it was successful enough to merit a run that attracted a wide cross-section of theatre goers.¹¹

Popular melodramatic spectacle in English opera reached its culmination in the productions of the Pyne–Harrison company, formally known as the Royal English Opera and active under the management of soprano Louisa Pyne and tenor William Harrison from 1857 to 1864. The operas they staged in their winter seasons at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, were as lavish as those of the Royal Italian Opera (which had the house for the summer, and intrinsically more fashionable, 'season'). The first opera of any kind to premiere at Covent Garden after its rebuilding in 1857 was Balfe's *Satanella* on 20 December 1858, with a text by Edward Falconer and the soon-to-be theatrical impresario Augustus Harris. Michael Hurd used this work as a 'typical' example of Balfe's English operas, but in reality it is quite unusual in his output.¹² It is a kaleidoscopic cross-genre piece, with Gothic melodramatic trappings such as a gloomy German castle in

⁸ Winton Dean, *The Musical Times*, 114 (1973), col. 815.

⁹ Biddlecombe, *English Opera from 1834 to 1864*, p. 117.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹ Biddlecombe is particularly dismissive, *ibid.*, pp. 115–18, while Tyldesley takes more time to dissect the work dramatically and musically, noting the element of visual spectacle in Act II, *Michael William Balfe*, pp. 115–24.

¹² Michael Hurd, 'Opera: 1834–1865', in Nicholas Temperley (ed.), *Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800–1914* (London, 1981), pp. 307–339, here pp. 318–20.

BALFE'S
GRAND OPERA, THE
DAUGHTER OF ST. MARK,
 IS
ONE BLAZE OF TRIUMPH
 Throughout its entire Performance, and, in consequence thereof,
WILL BE PERFORMED EVERY EVENING.
*All Privileges, excepting those of the Public Press, must
 be suspended.*

This Evening, **TUESDAY, Dec. 15th, 1844,**
Her Majesty's Servants will perform (for the 17th time)
A GRAND OPERA SERIA,
 (IN THREE ACTS) entitled the
DAUGHTER OF ST. MARK

The Music by **M. V. BALFE.** The Libretto by **A. SUNO.**
 The Scenery by the Messrs. **ORLIVE.** The Dresses by **Messrs. ALBERT.**
 The Rings and Jewels by **Mrs. W. WEST.** The Properties by **Mr. BLANCK.**
 The Costumes by **Mr. PALMER & Mrs. BULL.** The Machinery by **Mr. SLOWAN.**

**The Messrs. GRIEVE have painted the following
 Scenery expressly for the occasion:**
Festal Hall in the Villa Andrea,
In which is introduced a
BRIDAL DIVERTISSEMENT.
Catarina's Oratory.
 AN APARTMENT IN
THE MONCENIGO PALACE.
BATTEMENTS OF THE CASTLE,
WITH A VIEW OF THE
PORT AT FAMAGOSTA,
IN WHICH IS SEEN, IN THE MIDDLE,
THE CORTEGE OF THE KING,
(On a scale of Magnitude hitherto out of the power of even this Theatre to attain.)
GARDENS of a CASINO
 AT NICOSIA, IN CYPRUS,
 WITH A
CHARACTERISTIC CYPRIOT AND VENETIAN DANCE.
Apartment in the King's Palace.

Figure 6.1 Playbill for *The Daughter of St Mark* (1844)

Act I, supernatural effects in the demonic underworld depicted in Act II, and exotica in the Tunisian slave-market scene in Act III. This mixture of scenic wonders is capped at the end of the opera, when in fewer than 24 bars the scene shifts from a reprise of the Gothic castle set to the hellish underworld of Act II, as Satanella releases the hero and heroine from her powers and condemns herself to eternal doom. At the same time, she pleads for salvation, and the scene transforms (accompanied by off-stage organ) as she rises to heaven, with a vision of the two lovers' union visible at the top centre of the stage. Coupled with Balfe's music played by the 70-player Covent Garden orchestra, this transformation scene must have provided marvellous theatre.¹³

¹³ In *Michael William Balfe*, Tyldesley reproduces a playbill from *Satanella's* original run (Plate 9, 148) showing 'A NEW LITTLE PANTOMIME for Little People'; *Little Red Riding Hood, or, Harlequin & the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* was also played as an afterpiece. If it really was designed for children, it would have come on very late indeed after *Satanella's* four acts.

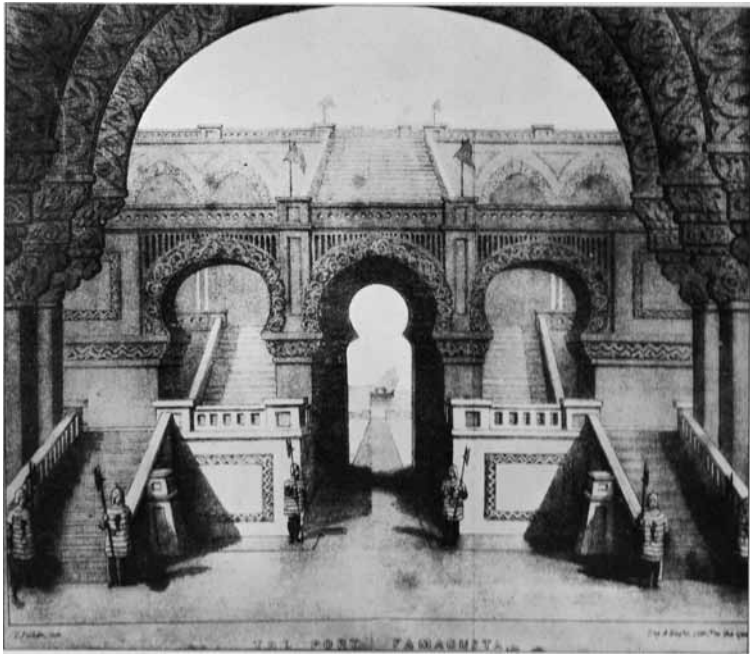


Figure 6.2 Set design for Act II by the Messrs Grieve for *The Daughter of St Mark* (1844)

The Pyne–Harrison penchant for lavish spectacle continued with its next major production, Wallace’s *Lurline*, which premiered in early 1860.¹⁴ Fitzball’s text was widely derided by contemporary critics for its extravagant language, but it does have a solid dramatic basis in putting an English melodramatic twist on the tale of the Lorelei. It has as many scene changes as *Satanella* (nine in three acts), but they have more dramatic relevance than those in Balfe’s opera; there are also some highly spectacular scenes such as the shipwreck, which closes Act I, and the underwater grotto in Act II. Fitzball and Wallace had written *Lurline* in 1847–48, and personal and professional circumstances prevented its staging for over a decade, but its scenic and musical richness fitted in perfectly with Pyne and Harrison’s production philosophy.

The most melodramatic opera of the Victorian stage, in all visual, textual and musical aspects, was Benedict’s *The Lily of Killarney* (1862), to a text by John Oxenford and the celebrated playwright Dion Boucicault, who adapted it from his own melodrama *The Colleen Bawn* (1860).¹⁵ Boucicault’s experience was unique

¹⁴ Edward Fitzball, *Lurline* (London, [1860]); William Vincent Wallace, *Lurline*, vocal score (London, [1859]).

¹⁵ Dion Boucicault, *The Colleen Bawn, or The Brides of Garryowen* [1860] (London, 1865); Boucicault and John Oxenbury, *The Lily of Killarney*, libretto (London, 1862); Julius

– no other Victorian dramatist of equal stature wrote an opera libretto – and it fostered in him a blistering hatred of opera in general (as discussed below), even though the type of opera he collaborated on had an unusual level of Classical dramatic integrity thanks to his participation. What is more, he did not understand the dramatic integrity of his composer, who synthesized text and music in this opera in a way that did both elements considerable justice.

In the late 1850s, after writing nearly 100 stage works for English and American theatres in the preceding 15 years, Boucicault (1823–90) turned to writing plays based on a romanticized view of his native Ireland, adding more textured characters, colourful dialogue, and rudimentary approaches to social problems – notably class conflict and the British presence in Ireland – to the violent twists of plot and elaborate scenic effects that featured in his earlier melodramas. *The Colleen Bawn*, the second and most successful of these nationalistic plays, is based on the 1829 novel *The Collegians* by Irish author Gerald Griffin – a brutal tale of an impoverished squire who lures a rope-maker's daughter into a false marriage and then later arranges her murder in order that he might wed a wealthy heiress. In Boucicault's melodrama, the marriage is real, but secret, and the squire, Hardress Cregan, is torn between love for his low-born wife Eily and his need to save the family name. Indeed, the estate's principal creditor suggests a marriage between himself and Hardress's widowed mother in order to eradicate the debts on the property – putting forward the added social horror of a union between a tradesman and an aristocrat. Hardress becomes an unwitting party to the attempt on his wife's life because of his moral vacillation and a complicated misunderstanding between him and Danny Mann, his faithful but deranged boatman who ultimately undertakes the murder. The most radical departure from Griffin's novel was Boucicault's own acting part, the jovial poacher and moonshiner Myles-na-Coppaleen, a comic character whose motivations and actions raise him to hero status. In love with Eily, though he knows her heart belongs to Hardress, Myles protects Eily from the chicanery of her desperate husband and foils Danny Mann's attempt on her life; at the end of the play, Myles brings Eily back from the dead, reuniting her with Hardress after he has not only grieved for her apparent death but been charged with her murder.

Music was central to *The Colleen Bawn* from the moment of its conception; the actress and theatre manager Laura Keene remembered that Boucicault had sent her a printed collection of Irish songs with the tunes he wanted to use already marked for the theatre orchestra conductor to score, even before she had heard him read the first act.¹⁶ Boucicault's melodrama contains 19 directions for music, including four directions where the music ceases, as well as two song texts, and two directions for specific melodies. Music occurs at the beginning of each act, underscores crucial dialogue, and accompanies exits. In two episodes the music

Benedict, *The Lily of Kilarney*, vocal score (London, c.1871).

¹⁶ See, for example, Chris Morash, who cites Keene in *A History of Irish Theatre, 1601–2000* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 89; he also includes a photograph of Boucicault in the role of Myles, p. 88.

is continuous and is directed to change at specific points in the action. Despite his specific instructions regarding music within this play (which he provided in most of his stage works), Boucicault apparently disliked composers taking this approach, and felt he was being dictated to. His only direct experience with opera prior to *The Lily of Killarney* had been in the 1840s, early in his career, when Michael Balfe approached him with the prospect of a collaboration. When Balfe gave him a list of the type of numbers and ensembles he wanted and their place in the libretto, Boucicault took offence at what he perceived to be a cut-to-order approach and withdrew from the project. Twenty years later, when Benedict (1804–85) approached Boucicault with the prospect of turning *The Colleen Bawn* into an opera shortly after the play's hugely successful London premiere in 1861, Boucicault told Benedict bitterly about his earlier experience.¹⁷ Benedict genially persisted, however, and eventually Boucicault agreed, taking on fellow playwright John Oxenford as collaborator to write poetic texts for the sung portion of the opera.

Despite Boucicault's assertion that his part in writing the libretto consisted of 'witnessing how my lamb was butchered into a marketable shape', his personal attention shows in the fidelity of the adaptation to his play.¹⁸ Admittedly the plot was considerably simplified, but much of the original play text appears in the opera as spoken dialogue, and in the two most dramatic musical sections the sung text mixes poetry with the original play's prose, the two sometimes being sung side by side. Most importantly, Boucicault's original play and the opera libretto contain more ambiguous and complex characters than the stock characters found in most contemporary English and Continental operas. Eily appears to conform to the concept of a pure maiden maltreated by the men in her life, but her moral conviction shows her to be a stronger person than her husband (and many mid-nineteenth-century operatic heroines), and neither Hardress Cregan nor Danny Mann conforms with stereotypical operatic heroes and villains. Myles is perhaps unique in opera annals (possibly excepting Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger*): he acts as a plot catalyst, and, even though the plot machinations ultimately do not affect him either positively or negatively, he is nevertheless responsible for all that happens.

Undoubtedly, Benedict, who had studied composition with Weber, saw in Boucicault's play a coupling of national flavour and strong dramatic situation similar to that found in his teacher's most famous opera, *Der Freischütz* (which Benedict had watched Weber compose and prepare for performance in 1821).¹⁹ *Der Freischütz* is ostensibly a supernatural tale of a peasant who sells his soul to a demonic agent in an exchange for seven bullets that will never miss their mark, but Weber subordinated the libretto's supernatural features to German folk-song elements and atmospheric sense to produce a distinctively 'German' opera. Indeed, the celebrated Wolf's Glen scene is not only a depiction of a horrific event but an

¹⁷ See Richard Fawkes, *Dion Boucicault: A Biography* (London, 1979), p. 122.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁹ Benedict subsequently wrote an important biographical sketch of the composer, *Weber* (London, 1881).

evocation of a specifically desolate and malevolent place. Weber also changed the original opening of the opera from an episode dealing with the Devil's agent Caspar to a peasants' chorus, a deliberate decision to focus the drama on a specific locale for both colour and dramatic import. Evoking Weber's model, Benedict responded to the atmosphere and romanticized nationalism of Boucicault's play with a musico-dramatic idiom that is, for the most part, convincingly Irish, with a deliberately folk-like idiom integrated with authentic Irish melodies which evokes both rural beauty and mystery. His compositional technique also included a sophisticated use of recurring music in original and altered form, not only linking characters and actions throughout the opera but occasionally showing motivation as well.

Benedict's own schooling after his time with Weber was in Italy, where he thoroughly absorbed the formal structures used in the *ottocento* operas of Rossini, Donizetti and others, and applied them fluently in his earlier English operas (as did his contemporaries Balfe and Wallace). These forms – based on a two-part model, a lyric cantabile section and a rapid-tempo cabaletta section – sometimes forced the text and dramatic import of plays into rigid structures at the expense of dramatic clarity, source fidelity and (in the florid English employed by early Victorian librettists) verbal accent. Benedict's earlier English operas use these forms extensively, but in *The Lily of Killarney* he went much further, complementing musical evocation of motive and locale by either adapting existing musical forms to fit the text, showing marked attention to the verbal sense of Boucicault's play, or letting the fixed structures of English melodrama – especially the obligatory sensation scene, where plot and stagecraft culminate in a traumatic event (usually a rescue or natural disaster in the central act) – dictate new musical structures, thus often placing music and text on a nearly equal level.

Two scenes in particular show how Benedict accomplished this. In the first, where Hardress tries to coerce Eily into giving up their marriage contract so that he may destroy it and marry the wealthy heiress Ann Chute, the situation becomes a musical set piece that differs marginally in setting and characters from the play but follows the dramatic spirit of the original. In the second, the scene on the lake where Danny Mann attempts to murder Eily, the music serves as 'ultra-melodrama', following the original staging very closely and underscoring both spoken and sung text while providing musical links with the rest of the opera.

The end of the first act of *The Colleen Bawn*, which corresponds to the Act I finale of *The Lily of Killarney*, concerns Eily's refusal, at the urging of Father Tom and Myles, to turn over her marriage contract to Hardress. Entering Eily's cottage, Hardress remembers, with displeasure, Eily's former relationship with Myles – 'nice company for my wife – a vagabond'. Boucicault emphasizes the class difference between the Anglo-Irish nobleman and the Irish peasant girl by Hardress's exasperation with Eily's brogue and her confused attempts to improve her pronunciation. In the course of this exchange, Hardress asks for the marriage contract, which Eily tearfully offers; Myles then steps in, denouncing the ploy. Hardress accosts Myles, and hurls insults, but to no avail, and he leaves without

the contract. The curtain falls as Eily kneels before Father Tom, solemnly repeating an oath never to part with the contract.

In the opera, Hardress is not nearly so brutal a character, though he is certainly desperate for money to save his family estate. Benedict compensates for the loss of Hardress's brutality in the libretto by substituting hints of a sly, nervous duplicity. Eily agrees to give up the contract to her husband and then the two sing a duet (the only one in the opera for the romantic leads) expressing their love for each other – and perhaps Hardress's nervous exultation – because of this selfless act. Benedict evokes Hardress's motivations using several devices. In the first part of their duet, roughly corresponding to a Rossinian *tempo d'attacco*, Hardress modulates from Eily's C major to E_b, and the section ends with the two voices united in 'his' key rather than closing in the original tonic; as Hardress is trying to convince Eily to give up the marriage contract, he persuades her to come to his point of view musically as well. Normally, a *cantabile* section would follow in which the two sing of their unity; in this instance, a *cantabile* is inappropriate given the urgency of the situation and the fact that Myles and Father Tom are watching the proceedings with undisguised suspicion. Benedict therefore skips the *cantabile* and goes straight to a breathless *cabaletta* that more effectively sums up the tension and the passions between the couple. Here Benedict also gently underscores Hardress's faithlessness by setting the ostensibly rhapsodic utterance 'oh never! thou'rt dearer now than ever' in the minor mode, giving the apparent bliss a darker undercurrent.

Instead of closing the act with Eily swearing to Father Tom alone, as in the play, the opera has a full-scale Italianate quartet. Eily begins by pledging her steadfastness to the company and begging Hardress's forgiveness for her apparent cruelty in not giving over the marriage contract, then the others join with their own thoughts – Hardress contemplating his ruin in a high lyric line, Myles excitedly chuckling that the foul plot seems thwarted, and Father Tom solemnly telling Eily to swear that she will never give over the contract. Unlike Italian (and most English) ensemble texts, however, the characters' lines do not apostrophize the situation but address it directly. Eily, who holds the plot at this point in her hands, sings first with an assertively rising major-mode phrase in her first four bars powerfully underlining 'Before thee I solemnly swear / That naught from my bosom this treasure shall tear', and clearly portraying her resolution. As she turns to address Hardress, Eily shifts to the minor mode at 'Oh Hardress forgive me, I cannot rebel', not only reflecting her regret and internal stress, but also exactly pointing out her moral inability to comply with Hardress in the fleeting reference to E_b on 'rebel' – Hardress's key in the duet section. This moral strength and emotional tension culminate at the cadential major-mode 'I love thee! oh say not farewell!'. Thus Benedict sums up the stage action in one sweeping eight-bar melody that retains gestural consistency and melodic continuity while accurately reflecting both whom she addresses and her conflicting emotions. Of course, the idea of a quartet at this point undoubtedly violates the original staging and concept of Boucicault's relatively intimate play, and Boucicault no doubt had this episode

in mind when he wrote his vituperative essay on opera (discussed below), but it is the best place to satisfy operatic convention and musically define character motivations. Though Boucicault's differentiation of character is not as powerful, say, as Verdi's in the famous quartet from *Rigoletto*, each of his vocal parts maintains a distinct personality and the quartet works as drama.

The end of Boucicault's Act III is the great sensation scene, which takes place at twilight in a large grotto on the lake. Myles first appears on the shore of the lake and climbs off into the surrounding rockland for a bit of poaching. Eily and Hardress's servant Danny Mann appear in a small boat; Eily had been lured by Danny's promise that he is taking her to Hardress. They stop in the midst of the cave, and Danny demands the marriage contract, as he means to save his master from ruin. Eily refuses and Danny tells her that she must die; a struggle ensues, and Danny throws Eily into the lake. A gun fires and Danny falls into the lake himself; Myles enters on a rocky promontory, scanning the water for the otter he thinks he has shot. He sees Eily floating senseless in the water and dives into the lake to save her. The curtain falls as Myles drags Eily to safety.

Benedict's setting of this scene as the opera's Act II finale is a complete break from European operatic tradition in that it follows Boucicault's text and structure nearly to the letter.²⁰ The mythic qualities of the lake and cave are set apart from the rest of the opera – and by implication, the rest of the world – by framing the scene with an off-stage chorus that sings of the cave's namesake, the great Donohue. Repetitions of the choral music separate the character entrances, unifying them within this scene, in a way reminiscent of Weber's Wolf's Glen scene in *Der Freischütz*. Benedict also marks each principal's entrance with music associated with the specific character and crucial action that has been heard before – particularly a motif which Benedict repeatedly uses throughout the opera to signify the presence of the lake – underlining Boucicault's original dialogue in the manner of true melodrama.

Benedict goes on to meld the spoken prose into song, as Danny's first sung passage, 'Step out on this rock / Come, come now, be quick / The boat is leaking!' is not conventional libretto poetry at all, but Boucicault's play text. Danny's explanation beginning 'No boy in all Kerry was brighter than me' is a very lightly altered poetic version of the play's dialogue, the open octave accompaniment emphasizing the text. (Comparison of the excerpts from the play and libretto (see Appendix) demonstrates their close correspondence, both textually and dramatically.) Eily refuses Danny's demand for the marriage contract with her music from the Act I quartet; Danny attacks her with the same music heavily altered, not only depicting the fury of the stage action but perhaps suggesting the similarity of both Eily's and Danny's devotion to Hardress – but Danny's is brutal, misguided and consequently unnatural. Benedict emphasizes Myles's heroism by using music not originally associated with him: the violent chords where he

²⁰ See Benedict, *The Lily of Kilarney*, pp. 178–98 (no. 16: Finale); excerpts from this are given below.

recognizes Eily in the water are an alteration of a melody that Eily originally sings as she awaits Hardress's arrival in Act I, as is the orchestra's quiet playing of the tune unaltered (see Example 6.1), followed by the recurrence of the off-stage chorus and the 'lake motif' in the bass instruments as he brings her to shore and the curtain falls (see Example 6.2).

This music ties Myles and Eily together symbolically at this crucial moment, as Myles not only proves that he should be Eily's husband instead of the unworthy Hardress, but also usurps the dramatic function of a conventional hero. In Benedict's hands – his Romantically pictorial and evocative approach – the scene not only provides a framework for the *coup de théâtre* of Myles's plunge to save Eily, but also summarizes the plot, characterization, music and atmosphere of the entire opera.

Example 6.1 Myles's rescue of Eily in *The Lily of Killarney*

stop, wheugh!

What is this? 'tis a some-thing that's white

trem. *pp* *fff* *pp* *trem.*

(Catches Eily's dress, lifts her out of the water.)

Allegro agitato assai

Ei - ly!

(Frighten'd, lets her drop again.)

Ei - ly!

Allegro molto

p *cresc.*

Example 6.2 Final bars of *The Lily of Killarney*

The image shows a musical score for the final bars of *The Lily of Killarney*. It consists of two systems of music. The first system features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line includes a tremolo marking. The second system continues the piano accompaniment, marked with *crescendo assai* and *fff* (fortissimo). The score concludes with the text "END OF ACT II".

Boucicault's experience as a librettist turned his initial distrust of opera into downright hatred, and towards the end of his life he vented his disgust in an article for the *North American Review*.²¹ In this piece he attacked without respite what he saw as the intrinsic dramatic absurdity of the form, opening with the call '[Opera] is no more a Drama than a Mermaid is a Woman! It is no more a Drama than a Centaur is a Man!' He goes on bitterly to recount his attendance (in the company of co-librettist John Oxenford) at *The Lily of Killarney*'s Covent Garden premiere on 8 February 1862:

All the sentiment, all the tenderness, all the simple poetry were swept away. I could have cried over it, but it was so drolly burlesque that as I sat and watched the attempted murder of Eily, laughter got the best of us both. 'Yes,' said John, 'but listen to that!' The house was on its feet, and amid enthusiastic shouts the singers were called out to receive an ovation.

Boucicault (and evidently Oxenford) obviously could not respond to Benedict's multi-layered treatment of his characters or his musically oriented approach to dramatizing a scene. However, Boucicault's presence and egotism in keeping his play as intact as possible strengthened the ultimate product, making it the closest thing to a true music drama in English opera up to that time.²²

²¹ Dion Boucicault, 'Opera', *North American Review*, 144 (April 1887): pp. 343–4. He lived in America 1853–60, and then returned for further visits from 1872, during which time he wrote 13 articles for the *North American Review* in which he explained his dramaturgical approach; see Don B. Wilmet, *The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2007), p. 123.

²² Biddlecombe also responds to the dramatic strength of *The Lily of Killarney*: 'spurred by a good libretto, he produced a work whose quality is rare in the English repertory. The focus on the main dramatic issues, clearly illustrated in the characterization

The Lily of Killarney must have been something of a catharsis for Benedict; although he lived a further 23 years, he never wrote another full-length work for the stage. Boucicault continued writing plays, with decreasing success, until his own death five years after that of Benedict. It may be argued that the success of *The Lily of Killarney* arose from its large-scale transference of Boucicault's theatrical formulae to the operatic stage, where grand gestures and situations – two of classical melodrama's greatest strengths – acquire greater credibility in opera's larger-than-life context. However, it may also be said that Boucicault's superior dramatic craftsmanship inspired Benedict to compose an unusually cohesive and compelling opera, in which Ireland is made more romantically mythic than the playwright could comprehend. Indeed, *The Lily of Killarney* is the last English opera closely allied with classical melodrama and sensational spectacle – an apotheosis of a sort. In a way, composer and playwright each did the other a service – though they may never have realized it themselves.

Appendix

Texts from the melodrama and the opera; bold passages indicate points of reference between the two works.

Dion Boucicault, The Colleen Bawn, melodrama, end of Act II

[Music..]

EILY: What place is this you've brought me to?

DANNY MAN: Never fear – step out on that rock – mind yer footin'; 'tis wet there.

EILY: I don't like this place – it is like a tomb.

DANNY MAN: Step out, I say; the boat is laking. [EILY steps out onto rock, R.C.]

EILY: Why do you spake to me so rough and cruel?

DANNY MAN: Eily, I have somethin' to say t' ye; listen now, and don't tremble that way.

EILY: I won't, Danny, I won't.

DANNY MAN: Wonst, Eily, I was a fine brave boy, the pride of my ould mother, her white-haired darlin' – you wouldn't think it to look at me now. D' ye know how I got changed to this?

EILY: Yes, Hardress told me.

of the four main personalities – Myles, Eily, Danny, and Hardress – and the emotional impact of the crucial scenes involving Danny testify to Benedict's grasp of dramatic effect. *The Lily of Killarney* represents a considerable contribution to nineteenth-century opera as a whole', *English Opera from 1834 to 1864*, pp. 148–9.

DANNY MAN: He done it – but I loved him before it, an’ I loved him after it – not a drop of blood I have, that I wouldn’t pour out like wather for the masther.

EILY: I know what you mean – he deformed your body, ruined your life – made ye what ye are.

DANNY MAN: Have you, a woman, less love for him than I, that you wouldn’t give him what he wants of you, even if he broke your heart as he broke my back, in a moment of passion? Did I ax him to ruin himself and his ould family, and all to mend my bones? No! I loved him, and I forgave him that.

EILY: Danny, what do you want me to do? **[DANNY MAN steps out on rock.]**

DANNY MAN: Give me that paper in your breast! **[Boat floats off slowly, R.]**

EILY: I can’t – you know I’ve sworn never to part with it! You know I have!

DANNY MAN: Eily, that paper stands between Hardress Cregan and his fortune; that paper is the ruin of him. Give it, I tell yez.

EILY: Take me to the priest; let him lift the oath on me, Oh, Danny, I swore a blessed oath on my two knees, and would ye ax me to break that?

DANNY MAN **[seizes her hands]**: Give it up, and don’t make me hurt ye.

EILY: I swore by my mother’s grave, Danny. Oh! Danny dear, don’t. Don’t, acushla, and I’ll do anything! See now, what good would it be? sure, while I live I’m his wife. **[Music changes.]**

DANNY MAN: Then you’ve lived too long. Take your marriage lines wid ye to the bottom of the lake.

[He throws her from rock backwards into the water, L.C.; she reappears, clinging to rock.]

EILY: No! Save me! Don’t kill me! Don’t, Danny, I’ll do anything – only let me live.

DANNY MAN: He wants ye dead. **[Pushes her off.]**

EILY: Oh heaven, help me! Danny – Dan – **[sinks]**

DANNY [looking down]: I’ve done it – she’s gone.

[Shot is fired, L.U.E.; he falls – rolls from the rock into the water, R.C.]

[MYLES appears with gun, L.U.E.]

MYLES: I hit one of them bastes that time. I could see well though it was so dark. But there was somethin’ moving on that stone. **[Swings across to R.U.E.]** Divil a sign of him. Stop! **[Looks down.]** It’s a woman – there’s something white there. **[Figure rises near rock, R.U.E.; kneels down; tries to take hand of figure.]** Ah! That dress – it’s Eily! My own darlin’ Eily.

[Pulls off waistcoat – jumps off rock. EILY rises R; then MYLES and EILY rise up C.; he turns, and seizes rock, R.C.; EILY across left arm.]

Boucicault, Oxenford / Benedict, The Lily of Killarney, opera, Act II finale

(Enter DANNY MAN and EILY in a small boat.)

EILY: What place is this you have brought me to, Danny? – It is like a tomb.

DANNY MAN: Step out on this rock, – come, come now, be quick, the boat is leaking! Eily, I've a word to say to ye; listen now, and do not tremble.

No boy in all Kerry was brighter than me,
I was straight as a dart
And fitted to win any young Colleen's heart;
This is but a wreck of myself that you see,
You know how it chanc'd?

EILY: Yes, from Hardress I heard!

DANNY MAN: It's a might sad tale but it's true, every word,
He made me a cripple – I bear him no ill –
I lov'd him before and I doat on him still,
He might crush me to pieces, my last parting breath
Would be to declare that I lov'd him till death!
But you, a fond woman, his darling, his wife,
Withheld what he prizes more dearly than life!

EILY: What would you have?

DANNY MAN: That paper you wear
In that fair bosom – faith, a pow'r too fair!

EILY: You know I have sworn never with it to part!

DANNY MAN: I, too, have sworn from the depths of my heart
To have it – destroy it – my oath I'll obey!

EILY: Never!

DANNY MAN: That paper, I say!

EILY: No; sooner the life in heart you may take!

DANNY MAN: Then down with ye both to the depths of the lake!

(Pushes her off – she clings to the rock.)

EILY: Spare me, for Hardress' sake alone!

DANNY MAN: He wants you dead and gone!

(He pushes her in – she sinks. A shot is fired, and he falls in the water.)

(Re-enter MYLES-NA-COPPALEEN)

MYLES: There is but one Colleen Bawn and she does not love me.

Come, that was a pretty shot you will agree.

As sure as the taxes the otter I hit;

But faith I can't see him. No, divil a bit.

Yet here he was moving. No; nothing's in sight –

Stop, wheugh! What is this? 'Tis a something that's white.

(Catches EILY's dress. Lifts out of water. Frightened, lets her drop again.)

MYLES: Eily!

(MYLES plunges into the water and reappears with EILY, during following Chorus, clinging to the rock.)

CHORUS OF BOATMEN (behind scenes):

When innocence suffers the good king is nigh,
He ne'er from the helpless averts his kind eye.
The rich he protects, but he most loves the poor,
And often he knocks at the sad peasant's door;
My brothers, we'll trust in the brave Donohue,
To the sons of old Erin a friend ever true!

End of Act II

Chapter 7

Janáček and Melodrama

John Tyrrell

Janáček was trying to explain to his pupils what he meant by his theory of ‘*komplikace*’ [complication] in music. It was, he said, ‘*always a cross-section of life*’,

whatever the role of the environment, and to what extent it is subjective, whether more or less *general*, national perhaps – or purely *something belonging to the composer ...*

The *union of arts* occurs when other notions (of movement, mime or scenic) *move into the clearest consciousness*, so that we also *feel* them.

On its border is *melodrama*; near to the *actor’s art*. *Operatic* works are sovereign.

In such a connection a process of mutual suppression from one’s consciousness takes place. In *opera* one sees the *action* – and doesn’t hear the music!

Here it is necessary to *value* musical expression. This *valuing – limiting* – is a *basic trait* also in complicational composition.¹

Janáček’s musings on the mutual interference and interconnections of music and other elements of art date from 1919–21, at a time when his compositional career was suddenly beginning to take off with the four operatic masterpieces of his old age, and they contain his final thoughts on melodrama, chiefly that it was a lesser genre than opera, nearer the world of drama than the world of music. He was returning to ideas formulated a decade earlier, when his compositional career was much less assured and, on the other hand, his teaching career loomed larger in his life. Whereas the 1919–21 comments come from lecture notes containing pithy and seemingly unconnected aides-memoires, his earlier account of melodrama is more continuous, captured in a shorthand transcription of one of his lectures at the Brno Organ School by a student there, Miroslav Hanák, in 1909. Here, in a section on singing given the rousing heading ‘The most important singing is in opera’,

¹ Leoš Janáček, *Teoretické dílo (1877–1927)* [Theoretical Works], *Souborné kritické vydání děl Leoše Janáčka* [Complete Critical Edition of the Works of Leoš Janáček], 1/2–2 (Brno, 2007–8), p. 186; the passage comes from a collection of lecture notes headed ‘Skladba’ [Composition], with dates between 1919 and 1921.

Janáček elaborated his thoughts on melodrama before moving on to opera itself. This, according to Hanák's transcription, is what he said:

Melodrama. This is the spoken word and the music to it. Next to melodrama, where the words are spoken, there is *ballet* and *mime*, where there is no spoken word at all. In ballet, music links dance and people's actions. It's more of a *madhouse on stage* than art. If there are people around why must they be silent on stage? It is justified in the opera *La Muette de Portici*.²

If in mime there is an element of artificiality then there is an *element of musical crudity in melodrama*.

If one goes down the path of the evolution of opera looking in human speech for models for the reasons for singing, one could come to the wrong conclusion: that with simple speech accompanied by the orchestra (expression) [i.e. melodrama] we are at the peak of the evolution of opera. However, on careful consideration we see:

1. The composer of melodrama has not composed the whole work;
2. Melodrama remains incomplete up to its performance;
3. If the work is then performed there occurs every instant for the listener an embarrassing moment when he hears harmonic nonsense, i.e. *that the tune of the spoken word is momentarily linked without justification with the music heard in the orchestra*.

Singing must be notated in opera whereas in melodrama, where the notation is not prescribed, we hear recitation with a high voice, then a low one, and so on, which together with the orchestral accompaniment makes harmonic nonsense! As a composer I must know and be aware of everything, what and how exactly it will sound in my work! – If in melodrama we are not aware of unfavourable harmonic impressions, the reason for this is merely the habit from childhood of observing and taking in only the sense of speech and not however its melody!

Small melodramas are consequently simply amusing toys. Melodrama is never a serious artistic work.

Besides the possible harmonic dissonance reflected particularly in simple, ordinary combinations of sounds, melodrama suffers also from the disadvantage that the composer isn't able to keep up providing a real, fully musical expression to go with the rapid words of speech. In melodrama we meet with a flabbiness in expression that easily borders on the ridiculous.³

Melodrama was a favourite Czech genre in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, cultivated notably by Zdeněk Fibich, who wrote three full-evening

² In Auber's opera (1828), when the heroine, Fenella, is a mute played by a dancer and has to convey her thoughts through gestures.

³ Janáček, *Teoretické dílo*, 1/2–2, p. 404.

stage melodramas and several popular concert melodramas. Most of Fibich's Czech contemporaries and successors (including Janáček's pupils such as Jan Kunc) had a go at melodrama and Janáček would have had plenty of exposure to the genre to make up his mind and sort out his theoretical stance on it. To some extent his viewpoint would have already been guided by his detailed study of the work of the leading Czech aesthetician of the time, Josef Durdík. As a formalist Durdík disapproved of the union of arts and he mentioned melodrama only briefly in his *General Aesthetics*. It can, Durdík conceded, have a 'nice effect', especially in lyrical moments when music can find more space for itself.⁴ But generally the genre was of little concern to him and hence Janáček was more or less on his own.

Janáček had two main theoretical objections to melodrama:

1. that the composer does not have control over all elements, thus resulting in unintended and possibly unsuitable combinations of the 'melody' of the spoken voice with whatever is going on in the orchestra; and
2. that the spoken word goes too fast at times for the music to keep up with it.

The first objection connects with a Janáček speciality: his 'theory' of speech melody. This covered such aspects as his close observation of the melodies of ordinary speech he heard around him (Janáček took down speech melodies at every opportunity for the last 30 years of his life), the effect of emotional and environmental aspects on them and the way such aspects could be understood from notated speech melodies. All this informed his setting of voice parts in his operas. His preoccupation with the sound of speech meant that he was especially sensitive to the sound of the spoken word, a point he touched on above when complaining that people concentrated on the meaning of the words rather than their melody.

If, given Janáček's views, it seems surprising that his earliest large-scale composition was a melodrama, it should be borne in mind that his ideas on speech melody came together only in 1897, almost 20 years later.⁵ *Smrt* [Death], for reciter and orchestra, JW X/3, was given on 13 November 1876 at the third concert that Janáček conducted with the Beseda brněnská [Brno Beseda], the chief Czech concert-giving organization in Brno, founded in 1860. Still only 22, Janáček had moved there as music director in the spring of 1876, having served a three-year apprenticeship at 'Svatopluk', a smaller male-voice organization for workers and apprentices. Apart from a sabbatical year spent studying in Leipzig and Vienna (1879–80) he would continue as music director at the Beseda until his resignation in 1888.

Janáček's ambitions for the Beseda were evident by his second concert (13 May 1876) with the first outing of its new, mixed-voice choir and the inclusion of

⁴ Josef Durdík, *Všeobecná aesthetika* [General Aesthetics] (Prague, 1875), p. 325.

⁵ John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life* (2 vols, London, 2006–7), vol. 1 (2006), p. 479.

a Beethoven string quartet among the increasingly serious repertory.⁶ Although the first few concerts under Janáček included the usual ‘overture’ and ‘conversational music’ played by a military band under its conductor Eduard Horný, what was remarkable about the second concert was the scheduling of Rubinstein’s Third Piano Concerto, conducted by Janáček himself with his piano teacher Amalie Wickenhauser as pianist.

It is in the context of increasingly ambitious and serious concerts that Janáček’s *Death* for reciter and orchestra was given. He had written a complicated male-voice chorus, *Zpěvná дума* [Vocal Duma], JW IV/10, for his first Beseda concert and *Death* was his first new piece since then, and his first that included an orchestra. So far his compositions had been choruses, mostly written for ‘Svatopluk’, and liturgical, organ and string pieces, written during his year of study at the Prague Organ School (1875–76). *Death*, for orchestra and reciter, was thus a new and ambitious departure, and one with a high profile as Janáček’s second composition in his post at the Beseda. This trend towards larger works written for Beseda concerts would continue after *Death* with multi-movements compositions for string orchestra, his Suite, JW VI/2, given in 1877, and Idyll, JW VI/3, given in 1878.

Recitation was a popular feature at the mixed-media Czech concerts of the time and, within a musical context, it was logical to upgrade this to an accompanied recitation, in other words a melodrama. Early melodramas, for instance those by the Czech composer Georg Benda, were intended for stage performances, but by the nineteenth century the genre was beginning to be employed more in concert contexts. The earliest Czech concert melodrama by Zdeněk Fibich, his *Štědrý den* [Christmas Day] for voice and piano, had been written and performed in 1875. Its great success in Prague⁷ would have been noted in Brno,⁸ and may well have influenced Janáček’s choice of genre. Janáček, however, went one better, by using an orchestra to accompany the voice rather than a piano.⁹

What sort of orchestra Janáček used, and how he used it, is, alas, unknown, as the piece is lost. One can merely speculate that Horný’s military band was also pressed into service for Janáček’s new piece, presumably augmented by a few strings. The text survives, since it was printed in the Beseda programme, and is one of the three poems written in 1830 by the Russian poet, Mikhail Yur’evich Lermontov with the identical title, *Smert’*. The one that Janáček set begins ‘Zakat gorit ornistoy polosoyu’ and is dated 9 October 1830 on Lermontov’s manuscript. Janáček set it in the Czech translation by Alois Durdík (brother of the aesthetician),

⁶ Janáček’s concerts in his early years at the Beseda are summarized in Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, pp. 114–15, Table 12.2.

⁷ See Vladimír Hudec, *Zdeněk Fibich* (Prague, 1971), p. 56, n. 11.

⁸ Reviews were published in several musical journals, e.g. *Hudební listy*, 6 (1875): pp. 24, 200; and *Dalibor*, 3 (1875): pp. 389–92.

⁹ Fibich orchestrated *Christmas Day* only in 1899, a year before he died.

published in 1872.¹⁰ Here are the lines Janáček used, set out as in Durdík, but with the symbol ‘/’ showing the line division as printed in the programme. In the third line the programme replaces the older/dialect form of ‘zejtra’ [tomorrow] with the more modern form ‘zítra’.

Západ se leskne září rudotemnou; /
 naň s tichou radostí u okna / zřím.
 Možná že zejtra / zaskví se nade mnou
 mrtevцем / ledovým a bezduchým. /
 Jen jedna дума v srdci pustém plane /
 myšlénka o ní, ach! je vzdálená /

[The sunset glows with a dark-red glow; I gaze at it from the window with quiet joy. Tomorrow possibly it will shine upon a corpse, icy and without spirit. A single thought blazes in my desolate heart, a thought of her, oh! she is far away.]

The choice of text is unsurprising: Janáček’s fascination with the Russian world is well documented and goes back to his school days. *Death* was his earliest piece with a Russian text or inspiration, a process that continued up to his final opera *From the House of the Dead*.

What little is known about *Death* comes from the Beseda’s committee minutes, the programme and one newspaper review. At a meeting of the committee on 27 July 1876 Janáček had suggested an ‘Introduction to a melodrama on Lermontov’s *Death*’.¹¹ Janáček’s biographer Vladimír Helfert surmised that this referred to an already completed piece, thus taking back the date of composition by several months. However, the title suggests two elements: an overture (‘introduction’) and the melodrama itself. It seems more likely that Janáček was merely contemplating writing the piece at the time and, encouraged by the committee’s endorsement, went on to compose it in his summer holidays, during the course of which any separate ‘introduction’ was dropped or scaled down. In fact, by the time the piece was presented, the printed programme announced that only the ‘first part’ would be given, a formulation which invites further uncertainty: was this ‘first part’ merely an extract from a larger whole, or all so far of a work in progress? As in the case of his later *Pohádka* [Fairy Tale] for cello and piano, JW VII/5, Janáček was not averse to performing works in progress; the fact that only six lines of *Death* (arranged as seven) out of 16 were printed in the programme suggests that Janáček may still have been working at the piece: a ‘second part’ might have been provided by the remaining ten lines. Disappointingly, the reviewer of *Moravská orlice* withheld judgement, or indeed any detailed commentary, ‘until the whole piece

¹⁰ *Básně Lermontova* [Lermontov’s Poems], trans. Alois Durdík (Prague, 1872); the poem is printed on an unpaginated page, two pages after p. 85.

¹¹ Vladimír Helfert, *Leoš Janáček: obraz životního a uměleckého boje* [Leoš Janáček: A Picture of Struggle in Life and Art] (Brno, 1939), p. 334, n. 4.

is before us'. All that the reviewer revealed about the piece is that it consisted of alternations of orchestral and recited text, rather than simultaneous reciting against the orchestra.¹²

Eleven years later, in his capacity as reviewer for his music journal *Hudební listy*, Janáček published a review of a performance of Smetana's opera *Dvě vdovy* [The Two Widows] given by the fledgling Czech opera company in Brno.¹³ In his review Janáček admitted that he had not heard the work before. Nor did he have access to a score. But he had no trouble, on a single hearing, producing a series of critical comments on the work. Janáček's relationship with Smetana's music was generally cool, but *The Two Widows* comes off particularly badly in his review: of the eight points that he makes about the music, six are hostile. And one of them concerns Smetana's rare use of melodrama where Ladislav reads out a letter against an orchestral background, a common device in nineteenth-century opera (e.g. in Verdi's *Macbeth*). The melodrama in Act II of *The Two Widows*, Janáček wrote, 'aroused resistance'.

Whatever the nature of Janáček's unspecified 'resistance', within eleven years of composing and performing his own concert melodrama Janáček had taken exception to its use by his famous countryman. This single event does not of course explain Janáček's later hostility as a theorist to the genre as a whole, but it nevertheless marks a significant moment along the way. It is perfectly possible that Janáček had made up his own mind straight after the performance of *Death*. No other performance of the work, let alone a complete one, was ever given. That it figures in the worklist that Max Brod compiled for his biography in 1924¹⁴ is not necessarily because Janáček remembered it, but because his pupil Jan Kunc did and mentioned it in his early biographical study of Janáček.¹⁵ Kunc himself probably located it from the list of Beseda concerts published by Karel Sázkavský.¹⁶ Janáček's brief comments were included in Brod's worklist, and about *Death* he said 'it was lost'.¹⁷ Janáček did not destroy his juvenilia as a matter of course. It is true that few of the student works that he wrote in Leipzig and Vienna in 1879–80 survive, but all of the works before and after *Death* composed for his concerts at

¹² Review quoted in *ibid.*, p. 242, n. 2.

¹³ Leoš Janáček, 'Opera Prozatímního národního divadla' [Opera of the Provisional National Theatre in Brno], *Hudební listy*, 4/1 (1 November 1887): p. 14 [JW, XV/77]; modern reprint in Leoš Janáček, *Literární dílo* [Literary Works], *Souborné kritické vydání děl Leoš Janáčka* [Complete Critical Edition of the Works of Leoš Janáček], 1/1–1 (Brno, 2003), pp. 137–8.

¹⁴ Max Brod, *Leoš Janáček: život a dílo* [Life and Works] (Prague, 1924), pp. 73–6.

¹⁵ Jan Kunc, 'Leoš Janáček', *Hudební revue*, 4 (1911): pp. 121–34, 185–9; *Death* is mentioned on p. 129.

¹⁶ Karel Sázkavský, *Dějiny filharmonického spolku Beseda brněnská od r. 1860–1900* [The History of the Brno Beseda Philharmonic Society from 1860 to 1900] (Brno, 1900); *Death* is mentioned on p. 136.

¹⁷ Brod, *Leoš Janáček*, p. 73.

the 'Svatopluk' and the Beseda are extant, a fact which suggests that the 'loss' of *Death* was deliberate, and may indeed signal an early disillusion with the medium.

If this guess is correct then it is odd that when in 1891, four years after the *Two Widows* review, Janáček came to write his second opera, *Počátek románu* [The Beginning of a Romance], JW I/3, he toyed, at least briefly, with employing melodrama within it. This one-act opera stands outside the rest of his operatic oeuvre in its extensive use of folksong and adaptations of his earlier orchestral arrangements of folk dances. In this respect the work can best be understood as one of Janáček's many attempts during this period to promote Moravian folk music: from 1889 to 1893 he composed almost no original music and devoted himself instead to the collecting, publishing and arranging of Moravian folk music for public and home performance. As far as stage music was concerned *The Beginning of a Romance* followed the approach of Janáček's ballet *Rákoš Rákoczy*, JW I/2, which consists of a series of folk dances arranged for orchestra (plus a few folksong numbers). But whereas in *Rákoš* Janáček had simply followed a scenario, selecting appropriate dances as he went along, for *The Beginning of a Romance* he had to work with a specially written libretto (by Jaroslav Tichý, based on a story by Gabriela Preissová). In several numbers Janáček set Tichý's words by adding voice parts to existing materials, mostly his arrangements of Moravian folk dances.¹⁸ But not all the words, especially the dialogue exchanges, could be accommodated in this way and were consequently composed from scratch. Such numbers are shown in Table 7.1.

In essence one could see this as four sections (nos. 2–5: 511 bars; nos. 8b–10: 191 bars; no. 12: 43 bars; nos. 14b–15: 169 bars) in which much of the essential action of the opera is transacted. The simple plot concerns the short-lived love affair between Baron Adolf and the village girl Poluška. Encouraged by her godfather Mudroch, Poluška's parents (Jurásek and Jurásková) see this an advantageous match, only to be quickly disabused by Adolf's father (Count Halužanský). Adolf is paired off with the aristocratic Irma, and Poluška returns, a little wiser, to her humble swain Tonek.

Janáček did not originally conceive the opera as through-composed, and in three of the four sections listed above he included spoken dialogue: it was in effect a *Singspiel*. The evolution of the opera is best seen from Janáček's manuscript sketch, written in piano-vocal score,¹⁹ originally on blank foolscap sheets on which he ruled the staves himself; these sheets were later bound up into a tall thin volume. Here, uniquely, Janáček composed a first version on the right-hand (recto) sides (VS1), leaving the left-hand (verso) sides of each opening blank. A second stage was to revise the work, either by correcting the existing sheets or by writing a new version on the opposite left-hand sides (VS2). When Janáček came to revise the work in VS2, he replaced the spoken dialogues with melodramas in which dialogue was now spoken over an instrumental background. A final version

¹⁸ Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 1, pp. 386–9.

¹⁹ *CZ-Bm*, Janáček Archive, A 23.517.

Table 7.1 Recitative and arioso numbers in *The Beginning of a Romance*

Number	Bars	Description
2 ^a	134–444 ^b	Poluška: extensive solo number with many tempo and metre changes to accommodate arioso sections and several marked recitative sections; it culminates in the folksong ‘Žalo dívča’; Adolf enters and sings four bars from the end.
3 ^c	445–75	Poluška, Adolf: marked recitative at first but with a more melodic section (from bar 457) marked <i>Andante</i> . spoken dialogue in VS1;^d melodrama in VS2; sung in FS1
4	476–557	Poluška, Adolf: mostly arioso, with one marked recitative.
5	558–644	Poluška, Adolf: marked recitative passages at beginning and end, otherwise arioso.
8b–9 ^e	900–989	Halužanský, Irma, Adolf: ^f <i>Moderato</i> , marked recitative for first two entries; from bar 955 Irma and Adolf alone (no new tempo mark). spoken dialogue in VS1;^g melodrama in VS2; sung in FS1
10	1–101 ^h	Jurásková, Mudroch, Jurásek: many tempo changes (<i>Allegro</i> , <i>Adagio</i> , <i>Andante</i> , Tempo I, <i>Andante</i> , Tempo I, <i>Moderato</i> , <i>Allegro</i>); no marked recitative.
12	198–240	Poluška, Mudroch, Jurásek: <i>Allegro moderato</i> (<i>meno</i> for final 4 bars), arioso.
14b–c ⁱ	434–542	Poluška (only briefly, bars 438–9), Mudroch, Jurásek, Jurásková: <i>Moderato</i> , <i>Più mosso</i> (bar 477); no marked recitative, some simultaneous singing. spoken dialogue in VS1; melodrama in VS2; sung in FS1
15	543–602	Halužanský, Mudroch: <i>Allegro</i> ; one quasi-recitative and one recitative.

is provided by an orchestrated version (FS1),²⁰ differing in some cases quite considerably from VS2. In this version the three melodramas were transformed by setting the spoken dialogue for singing.

It is easy to provide an explanation why the first setting included spoken dialogue. Janáček seem to have regarded the opera as a short task (the first version took him from 15 May to 2 July 1891), just another part of the folksong project, and the passages which did not obviously fit into this folksong framework were not worth his while spending much time on. However, the resulting *Singspiel* with its mixture of spoken dialogue and long recitative-like sections was inconsistent. *Singspiel*, furthermore, was frowned on in Czech circles as a ‘German’ genre: although *The Bartered Bride* and *The Two Widows* initially included spoken

²⁰ Copy by Josef Štross, CZ-Bm, Janáček Archive, A 29.920 (Janáček’s autograph does not survive).

Notes to Table 7.1

^a Final numbering (as shown in Dilia 1978 piano–vocal score); discrepancies with Janáček’s earlier versions noted where significant.

^b Bar numbers taken from Dilia 1978 piano–vocal score.

^c Janáček designated this as no. 3b and marked it as ‘scene 2’; later no. 4 became scene 2.

^d See below for explanations of these abbreviations.

^e Janáček divided 9 into 9a (7 bars; Irma alone) and 9b (Irma and Adolf).

^f Originally Count Bergthall (Irma’s father) was one of the cast here, but in the revisions his tiny part was scrapped and his lines given to Halužanský.

^g Unlike in the two other comparable instances, Janáček did not write out this spoken dialogue in VS1. However, in his handwritten libretto (Moravské Zemské Muzeum, Brno (CZ-Bm), Janáček Archive, L I, 2) all three passages are marked with the same wavy line down the side, and designated as ‘prosa’ [spoken dialogue], to which the adjective ‘melodramatický’ has subsequently been added in brackets. This was later crossed out and ‘Rec.’ added.

^h Bar numbers in the Dilia 1978 score start again at 1 in no. 10.

ⁱ Janáček originally designated this purely as 14b. Later a 14c division was made at bar 513, though for no obvious reason.

dialogue, Smetana decided – or was prevailed upon – to upgrade the resultant *Singspiele* into through-sung operas by turning their spoken dialogue into recitative. In turn, Janáček followed suit in *The Beginning of a Romance* by replacing the spoken dialogue with what is in essence recitative (only one number was described as a ‘recitative’ in its headings, but the direction frequently crops up in individual sections). It is puzzling, however, that the three passages went through a melodrama phase in between (see emboldened sections in Table 7.1), and for this there seems no explanation other than the fact that Janáček, despite his theoretical reservations, was experimenting. Significantly these sections did not remain in this state for long but were in turn upgraded to recitative by the final orchestral version (by December 1891).

For the present purposes, it is worth investigating what Janáček regarded at the time as acceptable music for melodrama. The first melodrama (no. 3, see Figure 7.1) is 23 bars long and, after a single bar of octave tremolo, consists of seven bars of *Moderato*, eight bars of *Allegro*, then *Tempo I* for seven bars. Both the *Moderato* and *Allegro* sections are motivic – leitmotivic in fact. The *Moderato* quotes two distinctive rhythmic figures (see Examples 7.1(a) and 7.1(b)) that are heard later in the opera (in no. 6a, a duet for Poluška and Adolf based on the *Starodávny II* [Old-Fashioned Dance II]; the *Allegro* consists of a four-bar phrase in the bass, repeated with a countertune. This is a reference to another dance, the *Troják lašský* [Lachian Triple Dance], associated with Mudroch and heard in no. 6b and most clearly in no. 11, a trio for Mudroch and Poluška’s parents. Both motivic references are justified by the text. In the first the words ‘How long have you been waiting for me, my girl?’ ‘Not long, just a moment’ (the opening of the exchange between Poluška and Adolf)

Výstup II.
(is. 3. b.

Sopránka: *Moderato* *Mám klásko ve jasném dohledu. Přemýšle se mi snít*

Alta: *by ji ne píše, proč takhle. To klásko čeká, nevstává. Těm hrůzám rad*

Sopránka: *Přemýšle, ustará si tě! Já - chvilka jasněji - má klásko - Strachem. Má jsem nespět, a si, že k tomu jsem přijde asi!*

Alta: *Teď klásko! To klásko má dělá!* *Proč?*

Sopránka: *Šel bych s tím kláskem a s tím by to bylo podoblé. Já si z ní, když přijímá sm.* *(Chce vzít si dítě)*

Alta: *Nebýt se těle, přispívá k dítěti, u mě s tím, a nic k tomu podobnému.* *Tempo II*

Sopránka: *Ach, ustará si těle, šel jsem* *(Chvilka a klásko je podobné)*

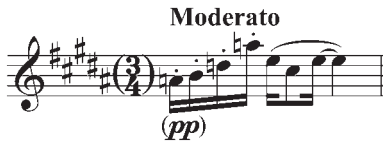
Alta: *nechtěl jsem, proč máš? Ach, ustará si těle. Klásko má dělá, a nic k tomu podobnému. (Má si vzít si dítě)*

Sopránka: *Spíše k tomu, klásko je podobné. Klásko má dělá, a nic k tomu podobnému. (Slyšelo o selavci)*

Alta: *Chci k tomu, klásko je podobné. Klásko má dělá, a nic k tomu podobnému. (Slyšelo o selavci, který se naučil a naučil se hned)*

Figure 7.1 Melodrama version (VS2) of no. 3b in Janáček, *The Beginning of a Romance*, autograph (CZ-Bm, Janáček Archive, A 23.517)

Example 7.1(a) Motif from no. 3b, Janáček, *The Beginning of a Romance* (VS2), bar 2



Example 7.1(b) Motif from no. 3b, Janáček, *The Beginning of a Romance* (VS2), bars 5–6

Example 7.2 Motif from no. 8b of Janáček, *The Beginning of a Romance* (VS2), bar 2

(Moderato)

are heard against an anticipation of their formal duet (no. 6a). And when Poluška worries about being overheard this anticipates precisely what will happen: Mudroch listens in on their duet (no. 6a) and immediately expresses his anger in no. 6b. The first *Moderato* section is topped and tailed by held tremolos; the second *Moderato* section is looser, the syncopated rhythmic figure and triplet figure of Examples 7.1(a) and 7.1(b) providing meagre thematic links from time to time.

Unlike *Death*, which allegedly alternated music and recitation, this melodrama in *The Beginning of a Romance* presents them simultaneously and, as can be seen from the facsimile, the delivery of words is fairly relentless, with no gaps for silent reflection. So when Janáček upgraded his melodrama music into sung music there was frequently not enough room to attach sung lines to the existing music as it stood, and he found he had to let out the musical seams to accommodate all the

words, a process that extended the original 23 bars to 31. This was carried out at structurally weak points – a pause bar extended, or bars inserted before an *a tempo* – or by interpolating separate bars here and there.

The additional bars were usually unmotivic – often just sustained notes – so when sung notes replaced spoken, the new voice parts were left to their own devices. For the remaining, more motivic, sections much was borrowed from the instrumental accompaniment. In this respect Janáček's technique of composing voice parts is little different from that used in those numbers based on existing dances and so on, and thus quite against the spirit of his later speech-melodified system. This short number is entirely typical of Janáček's melodrama technique in the opera. The rather longer second melodrama (nos. 8b–9) is based on similar principles; the outer sections quote a theme that Jaroslav Vogel identified with Adolf's flirtatious feelings for Poluška (heard in the third bar of no. 2).²¹ The fact that it is now pressed into service in this exchange between Adolf and Poluška's aristocratic rival Irma suggests a rather wider remit than merely a signature tune for Poluška. In the middle, as in no. 3, there is a regular four-bar folksong-like passage, immediately repeated. The rest of the melodrama is based on a tiny new motif (Example 7.2) or is conducted against held, but rhythmically animated, chords or octaves.

The third, even longer, melodrama follows the same pattern. After initial non-motivic background, it becomes increasingly motivic, especially from the *Più mosso* when the melodrama is based on the Mudroch-associated *Troják lašský* with its pattern of alternating two $\frac{2}{4}$ bars and two $\frac{3}{4}$ bars (this was modified in Janáček's final redaction). Its repetitive structure is very evident in Janáček's autograph with his frequent use of repeat signs for multi-bar sections in the accompaniment.

It is hardly surprising that the melodramas were not written with entirely new melodic material since they represent a distinct second stage of work, by which time Janáček had already composed most of the music. It made sense to base the newly composed music as much as possible on existing material, especially that with leitmotivic associations where appropriate. And because of this melodic integration with the rest of the opera it is equally unsurprising that when Janáček came to replacing the melodramas with sung vocal lines, he retained much of the original melodrama music. It could be argued that the melodramas that Janáček wrote for the second stage of work in *The Beginning of a Romance* are consequently more an example of a musical continuation of an existing work in melodrama format than an example of what Janáček might have written as a melodrama conceived as such from the start.

By the time Janáček returned to writing melodramas more than 20 years had elapsed, and in his regular lectures (e.g. those taken down in 1909) he had come to firm conclusions about why he disapproved of the medium. The use of melodrama in *Výlety páně Broučkovy* [The Excursions of Mr Brouček], JW I/7, should

²¹ Jaroslav Vogel, *Leoš Janáček: A Biography* (London, 1981), p. 99.

consequently be seen in this light: that this, his only surviving use of melodrama in a public work is intentionally satiric, and is used only for comic effect.

The Excursions of Mr Brouček, Janáček's fifth opera, was originally conceived as a single excursion, *Výlet pana Broučka do měsíce* [The Excursion of Mr Brouček to the Moon], JW I/6. He began work on it in 1908 but he had huge problems in acquiring a suitable libretto and began drafting Act III (where the melodrama passage concerned occurs) only from 18 February 1910. Although most of Janáček's operas contain satiric moments *Brouček* is unusual in that its overall intention and genre is satiric (the single Moon Excursion is described on the original title page as a 'burlesque opera'). It concerns the 'visit' (actually a drunken dream) of the Prague landlord Mr Brouček to the moon, which he finds to be a hotbed of artistic endeavour, inhabited by puzzling artistic creatures who, unlike him, hardly go in for eating or drinking but exist instead on a diet of high art: literature, painting and music.

The satire which Janáček inherited from Svatopluk Čech's novel seems at first to be directed against the typically bourgeois, property-owning landlord who has no appreciation of artistic things. But the doings of the artistic beings on the moon are so absurd that very soon one's sympathies tend to go with Brouček, for all his grossness. Čech directed his satire against the Prague representatives of the *l'art pour l'art* movement. Janáček's musical setting has a more personal animus. His opera was written at a time when he was encountering obstacles in getting his masterpiece *Jenůfa* staged in Prague (he waited 12 years for that to happen, finally, in 1916) and in getting his next opera *Fate* performed there (he gave up). *The Excursion of Mr Brouček to the Moon* can be seen as an expression of his frustration with the fancy people in Prague who had their own ideas about what opera should be, and who despised the offerings of the provincial Janáček.

Act III (Act II of the final, two-excursion version) opens at the Temple of All Arts where the patron Čaroskvoucí is holding court. Brouček, with the amorous Etherea in his wake, arrives and is welcomed. One of the entertainments provided for the benefit of this visitor from Earth is the recitation by the lunar poet Oblačný of '100 ghasels' of his poem, *Mlhoviny hvězdné* [The Starry Nebulae]. This is a substantial section of the act, taking up almost 200 bars, divided into three verses. The musical backbone of the whole number is a waltz, consisting of a banal tune on the strings with a prominent and persistent waltz accompaniment. Oblačný delivers the first two verses as a melodrama recitation against the waltz music, with occasional desperate comments from Brouček himself, who eventually falls asleep. Oblačný's poem is held together with a constantly repeated phrase or word, 'od věků' [from ages] in the first verse, 'zánikem' [with extinction] in the second. In these two verses, these repeated words prompt a momentary freezing (in artistic ecstasy?) of the moon audience; in the third verse the repeated phrase 'v nedohlednu' [out of sight], is at first sung by the chorus and after a while Oblačný himself changes from reciting to singing.

The satiric intention is obvious from the start, from the overblown verse and its disjunction with the banal waltz, reinforced by the exaggerated reactions of the

moon audience specified in the stage directions. This is reinforced musically not so much by the music itself (waltz rhythms are used elsewhere in the Moon Excursion to emphasize the lightweight movements of the moon inhabitants) but simply by the fact that this, exceptionally, is a melodrama. Unlike the stop-and-go melodrama in *Death*, or the densely packed melodrama in *The Beginning of a Romance*, this one proceeds sedately at a very even pace, easily accommodating the slightly varying-length verse lines that Janáček took over from Čech. The transition to singing in the final verse provides a climax interrupted by Brouček, now dreaming, and demanding another beer. The scene may well have taken Janáček back to the early Beseda concerts with their public, though unaccompanied, recitations.

After *Brouček* there were no more melodramas in Janáček operas: he had made his feelings clear enough in his transcribed lecture about how it was at the most an amusing toy (which is why he could use it in this way in *Brouček*) and inferior to opera. But he had not quite finished with the genre. In the last year of his life, when his relationship with Kamila Stösslová intensified, Janáček asked her to keep an album and, every time he visited her in Písek, he would write a few words, sometimes a little music, often both. This was much in the spirit of the albums of the time, receptacles for fine sayings and other artistic demonstrations. And on one memorable occasion, Janáček wrote what was in effect a prose poem about his beloved Kamila:

Let me have you burning, since living fire comes from you.
 No, you're like the warm spring breeze; everything in the field bows down to it,
 everything waits for it, everything wants to kiss it.
 You're like the moisture which for the first time bedews the meadow and revives
 every little flower, opens out the calyxes and makes them bloom with joy.
 You're like the silver moon, which the night is already waiting for with desire
 You're like the red deer who ran from the forest in amazement and looks all
 around because secret new life slumbers within her.
 You're like the warm earth just give birth, give birth and give joy to him who
 longs for your smile, who longs for life from your womb.

11 December 1927²²

On Janáček's next visit to see Kamila in the New Year he remembered his prose poem and, taking the first two lines conceived a little melodrama, which he accordingly wrote into the album. At least, this is one way of interpreting the 12-bar piece with music written on two staves and words written above it, or in the middle (see Example 7.3).

However, since it has a distinct tune written in the right hand (the accompaniment is mostly confined to the left hand) and since the number of syllables corresponds to the number of notes, it is equally possible to argue that Janáček had instead

²² Leoš Janáček, *Album for Kamila Stösslová*, ed. Jarmila Procházková, trans. John Tyrrell (Brno, 1996), p. 19.

Example 7.3 'Ať mám Tě, Tebe horoucí' from Janáček's *Album for Kamila Stösslová* (CZ-Bm, Janáček Archive, D 505 LJ), transcription by Mark Audus

1. [23]

Ať mám Tě, Te-be ho - rou - cí,

vždyť jsi ži - vý o - heň

2. [22]

Ne Tys jak jar - ní ví - tr,

vše se mu u - klá - ni, vše ho zlí - bat chce

rit.

Písek
 má zlatá Kamila
 9. ledna 1928
 [Písek
 my dear Kamila
 9 January 1928]

written a little song, though one arranged on two staves rather than three. One can't be sure, but it is nevertheless rather easier to imagine the piece performed by Janáček for Kamila with the words spoken. And there is another reason for considering it a melodrama. Janáček had just been reading Zdeněk Nejedlý's study of Fibich's 'erotic diary', his *Nálady, dojmy a upomínky* [Moods, Impressions and Reminiscences] for piano.²³ In his book Nejedlý had traced, through Fibich's unpublished annotations, the inspirational connections between his mistress Anežka Schulzová and these pieces. On a visit to Písek, Janáček had passed on the book to Kamila, encouraging her to read it, and perhaps to see her relationship with Janáček in a similar way to that of Fibich and Anežka.²⁴ Fibich's 'erotic diary' contains no melodramas, but this genre was so associated with Fibich one wonders whether this may have prompted Janáček to try something similar.

Janáček's piece could not be simpler. There are six bars of tune over tremolo chords. At bar 7 the metre changes from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{2}{4}$ as the left hand takes over a version of the four-note motif heard against 'jarní vítr' [spring breeze] in the previous bar. And this four-note motif provides the backbone for the rest of the piece, with the words petering out after three bars. If we wish to consider this tiny piece a melodrama we need to consider how much it went against Janáček's theoretical precepts, and indeed against his practices of the previous 20 years. But, for Kamila, Janáček broke all the rules and instead produced an 'amusing toy', using the medium seemingly to heighten emotion rather than to poke fun at it.

²³ Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Zdeňka Fibicha milostný deník* [Zdeněk Fibich's Erotic Diary] (Prague, 1925).

²⁴ Tyrrell, *Janáček*, vol. 2, p. 763.

Chapter 8

Dismembering ‘Expectations’:
The Modernization of Monodrama in
Fin-de-siècle Theatrical Arts

Jessica Payette

If one feature serves as the clear index of modernism – from Strindberg to Kafka, from Munch to Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* – it is the emergence of the figure of the hysterical woman, which stands for radical disharmony in the relationship between the two sexes.¹

To build on Slavoj Žižek’s assertion, if a single twentieth-century musical genre serves as the showcase for the enactment of hysteria by women, it is the monodrama. In the twentieth century, voices of conflicted, traumatized or brutalized individuals are captured in monodramas, not melodramas. Twentieth-century monodrama crystallizes into a gender-conscious musical genre that is overwhelmingly concerned with the condition and consequences of female imprisonment. Yet monodramas by composers as diverse as Jean Barraqué, Peter Maxwell Davies and Roger Sessions are often equated with melodramas and solo operas, and rarely acknowledged as comprising a distinct unified tradition. All of these composers acknowledge that their participation in this tradition was fuelled by their admiration of Arnold Schoenberg’s monodrama *Erwartung* (Expectation), his first large-scale, free atonal work, which through consistent historiographical determination also came eventually to be regarded as the canonic exemplar of musical Expressionism.² But how does hysteria morph from a medical condition that, in reality, is commonly diagnosed by the patient’s muteness into one that, on stage, is denoted by rapid verbalization and vocal distress? Furthermore, why are male composers so captivated by *Erwartung* as a watershed moment in the development of progressive musical vocabularies that they immerse their own compositional transformations in assaultive sonorities – at odds with traditional treatments of the female voice – in order to manufacture the sense of urgency that

¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Opera’s Second Death* (New York, 2002), p. 134.

² Take, for example, Sessions’s comments about *Idyll of Theocritus* (1954): ‘In a way, it belongs to the general realm of opera – it’s a monodrama. I think if Schoenberg hadn’t written *Erwartung*, I wouldn’t have had the courage to write this, I don’t know’. See Andrea Olmstead, *Conversations with Roger Sessions* (Boston, 1987), p. 114.

historiography demands for pivotal ventures in the careers of individual artists and in the history of music?

The early reception of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, arguably the first modern musical monodrama, sheds some light on these matters and reminds us that twentieth-century composers' generic indications should not be treated lightly. The term monodrama was reintroduced and redefined in progressive theatres and cabarets at the beginning of the twentieth century precisely to distinguish it from melodrama, the more ancient and theorized genre, and to draw attention to its depiction of 'inner processes'. Both spoken word and musical monodramas attempt to transplant the audience into the protagonist's psyche, largely through a breakdown of language, in order to gauge the transpiring action and an understanding of the past exclusively from the protagonist's perspective.³ The 'mental theatre', to invoke Laura Tunbridge's seminal idea characterizing the compositional priorities of Schumann and Berlioz, is pushed to the extreme by *fin-de-siècle* monodrama's radical production of temporal distortion, linguistic fragmentation, and hyper-expressivity.⁴

Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, composed in 1909 for soprano and orchestra, follows the disoriented course of a delusional protagonist, identified only as 'the Woman' (die Frau), scrambling through the dark forest in search of her departed lover, who could very well be the corpse she stumbles upon at the climax of the piece. In order to reflect the chaotic nature of this flurry of activity, the libretto (written by Marie Pappenheim) and the music are through-composed, in a stream-of-consciousness idiom in which short and often incomplete phrases prevail. *Erwartung*'s generic subtitle 'monodrama' is often ignored or viewed as equivalent to other descriptors

³ Generally, melodrama and monodrama are distinguished by music that alternates with declamation (melodrama) or simultaneously underscores spoken or, less frequently, sung text (monodrama, duodrama, etc.). The musico-dramatic oeuvre of Georg Benda (1722–95), which atypically includes both melodramas and monodramas, generally complies with this classification scheme. For further information on German musico-dramatic compositions by Benda, Engelbert Humperdinck and Max von Schillings see Edward Kravitt, 'The Joining of Words and Music in Late Romantic Melodrama', *The Musical Quarterly*, 62/4 (1976): pp. 571–90. In pre-twentieth-century compositions (German and French alike) featuring emotionally conflicted protagonists, it seems to be inconceivable, perhaps even distasteful, for a character to appear to be talking to him- or herself for the entirety of an extended piece – generic subtitles notwithstanding. Commentary by others (generally a confidante, a rival, or a chorus), even if very brief, always occurs in these scores. Composers are not seeking to transmit the scenario to the audience entirely through the lens of the protagonist's psyche as they do in modern monodramas. It was only after *fin-de-siècle* novels (such as Arthur Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*) and theatrical performances popularized the usage of unframed direct interior monologue that composers began to emulate this mode of delivery. See Vladimir Tumanov, *Mind Reading: Unframed Direct Interior Monologue in European Fiction* (Amsterdam, 1997).

⁴ See Laura Tunbridge, 'Schumann's *Manfred* in the Mental Theatre', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15/2 (2003): pp. 153–83.

such as 'melodrama' (despite the fact that the vocal line is sung, not spoken), 'one-act opera' or 'vocal monologue'. Even serious musicological literature conflates the generic categories of melodrama and monodrama, most strikingly in the usually meticulous *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG) where the entry, or in actuality the non-entry, on monodrama offers readers a simple visual instruction: 'Monodram → Melodram'.⁵ This has not gone entirely unnoticed by scholars: Diane Penney's 1989 dissertation, for example, investigates *Erwartung's* specific musical connections to the melodramatic and Lied traditions that preceded it.⁶

This arena of scholarship has been further hindered by confining speculation on *Erwartung's* prehistory to elevated musical traditions, without considering possible contemporaneous influences from theatre and popular entertainment. In fact, *Erwartung's* generic specification 'monodrama' suggests that Schoenberg and Pappenheim incorporated theatrical and musical elements from cabaret into the work – in the same spirit as was achieved in *Pierrot lunaire* (a melodrama), which premiered in 1912. However, the distinction between monodrama and melodrama these works represent is significant, not only in terms of their popular models, but also in terms of their contrasting effects on the audience. The twentieth-century tradition of monodrama centres on exposing the state of mind of a traumatized individual to listeners. Melodrama and operatic monologues or arias are primarily affective, while the early twentieth-century understanding of monodrama is as an experiential mode that seeks to provide the audience with the opportunity to have a 'co-experience' with a protagonist.⁷ This gives rise to a phenomenon that is largely foreign to opera and melodrama: the spectator is required to piece together a fragmented plot, or, in extreme cases, to construct one.⁸ The linguistic and

⁵ Monika Schwarz-Danuser, 'Melodram', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 6 (Kassel, 1994), pp. 67–99.

⁶ Diane Penney, 'Schoenberg's Janus-work *Erwartung*: Its musico-dramatic structure and relationship to melodrama and Lied traditions' (PhD dissertation, University of North Texas, 1989). Penney suggests that the common erasure of *Erwartung's* generic designation of monodrama, in discussions that classify the work as an opera, has drawn attention away from the work's uniqueness and how it connects to earlier vocal traditions (p. 16). I am taking Penney's approach in a different direction and proposing that it is meaningful that the piece's descriptive subtitle also resonates with popular traditions.

⁷ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995), p. 35. Brooks uses various words to characterize melodrama's underlying qualities, 'affective' being one of them, along with 'hyperbolic', 'expressionistic' and 'articulative'. I am indebted to Laurence Senelick's work on monodrama in early twentieth-century Russian theatre and cabaret; the term 'co-experience' appears in his translation of Nikolai Evreinov's 'Introduction to Monodrama' [1908], in *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists* (Austin, TX, 1981), pp. 183–99.

⁸ This is similar to the effect created in Classical and Romantic works that anticipate modern monodramas, such as Karl Siegmund Seckendorff's *Proserpina* and Hector Berlioz's *Lélio*. Both works display an equivocal relationship with their assigned generic labels:

physical disjunction that is characteristic of modern monodramatic protagonists often makes this task a rather daunting one.

Temporality in *Fin-de-siècle* Monodramas

Theatre scholar Laurence Senelick attributes the theorization of monodrama to the Russian Symbolists, who appropriated the philosophically inflected German model of cabaret, rather than the more improvisatory French variety, and views its deliberate avoidance of supplying the audience with a definitive message or conclusion as one of its chief qualities:

Russian symbolist poet Fyodor Sologub prescribed a theater in which the author sat beside the platform, reading his text, stage directions and all, while the actors mimed to his words. The shadow play and the puppet show were perfect realizations of this theater, and the concurrent innovation of monodrama, a play in which the audience was to observe the action and form its opinions by ‘co-experiencing’ the reactions of only one character, shared the same goals.⁹

This aspect of ‘co-experience’, or the creator’s desire to facilitate an unmediated transfer of the protagonist’s reaction to a situation to the audience, appears to be a crucial – defining – difference between literary or theatrical monodrama and melodrama. Peter Brooks describes the latter as ‘expressionism of the moral imagination’ because ‘characters repeatedly say their moral and emotional states and conditions’ and the work ‘typically seeks total articulation of the moral

Seckendorff plainly calls *Proserpina* (1778) a monodrama, but even in recent literature it is referred to as a melodrama, while Berlioz changed *Lélio*’s subtitle from *mélologue* (1832) to *monodrame* (1855). These are exemplary cases of composers’ deliberate efforts to challenge generic conventions as they sought novel means to depict a protagonist’s internal conflict and endeavoured to prove that music could do justice to text derived from literary masters (Goethe and Shakespeare). Pertinent recent literature includes Annie Janeiro Randall’s ‘Music in Weimar circa 1780: Decentering Text, Decentering Goethe’, in Burkhard Henke et al. (eds), *Unwrapping Goethe’s Weimar: Essays in Cultural Studies and Local Knowledge* (Rochester, NY, 2000), pp. 97–121; and Jacqueline Waeber’s *En Musique dans le texte* (Paris, 2005). Waeber’s discussion of works that are not technically melodramas with those that are is not arbitrary as she interrogates Max Steinitzer’s definition in *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Melodrams und Mimodrams* of 1919, which states that musical melodrama is a form of dramatic discourse where music must coexist with something else that is not music (i.e. recitation or pantomime), and proposes that melodrama can be understood as a particular mode of putting a text into music (p. 15).

⁹ Laurence Senelick, ‘Text and Violence: Performance Practices of the Modernist Avant-Garde’, in James Harding (ed.), *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. 15–42, here p. 20.

problems with which it is dealing'.¹⁰ Brooks offers melodrama's psychic, ethical and formal terms as the principal reason to categorize it as an 'expressionistic' genre, recognizing early on in his discussion that it ignores the psychological dimension on which 'Expressionistic' genres centre:

But it is important that, in talking of affective structure (which has most caught the attention of the best critics of melodrama), we not be deluded into thinking we are referring to the psychological structures of melodrama's characters. There is no 'psychology' in melodrama in this sense; the characters have no interior depth, there is no psychological conflict.¹¹

The spectator's participation in a 'co-experience' is the central premise of Nikolai Evreinov's 1908 treatise entitled 'Introduction to Monodrama'. The seeds for the essay grew out of a lecture delivered to Moscow's Circle of Art and Literature in 1908. It was then published as a pamphlet in the same year, and excerpts of the essay served as the introduction to Evreinov's 1909 play, a monodrama entitled *A Representation of Love*.¹² Evreinov was a reasonably famous playwright, director and theatre scholar, active primarily in St Petersburg in the years prior to the Russian Revolution. In the years after 1925, when he emigrated from the Soviet Union, Evreinov's influence waned and his work was increasingly viewed as decadent nonsense. Through a close reading of Evreinov's plays and critical texts, Sharon Carnicke's monograph on Evreinov's role in early twentieth-century Russian theatre demonstrates that his overriding interest was to investigate the raw materials and nature of theatre, an undertaking that she considers anticipatory of Antonin Artaud's work by roughly three decades.¹³ Evreinov sought to create a vocabulary to explain both the formal and the theoretical processes of theatre, replacing the literary-derived language that was commonly employed. In the introduction to *A Representation of Love*, Evreinov's first and only full-length monodrama, the playwright claims that he wrote the work before developing his theory of monodrama. In *A Representation of Love*

¹⁰ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹² See Laurence Senelick's introductory note to his translation of Evreinov's 'Introduction to Monodrama', in *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists* (Austin, TX, 1981), p. 183.

¹³ Sharon Marie Carnicke, *The Theatrical Instinct: Nikolai Evreinov and the Russian Theatre of the Early Twentieth Century* (New York, 1989), p. 2. Evreinov and Artaud both sought to remove the barrier (often referred to as the invisible fourth wall) between the actors and audience. David Graver observes that 'the result is "cruel" in that now the actions in the spectacle have immediate consequences for the audience and cannot be enjoyed and dismissed as images contained in a separate (aesthetic) world'. Graver, 'Antonin Artaud and the Authority of Text, Spectacle, and Performance', in James Harding (ed.), *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. 43–57, here p. 51.

the sight of the sea transports an old man back to his youth, and he recalls the emotional turmoil caused by unrequited love. Evreinov's interest in generating a convincing representation of the protagonist's flashbacks, and his coordination of colour symbolism in the lighting with particular states of mind in this work, parallels that of Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky around the same time. In the 'Introduction to Monodrama' treatise, Evreinov poses a penetrating question: 'What constitutes this inner imitation of another person's psychic state, which I call co-experiencing?' He answers this by first stating his preference for being immersed in the narrative of a single character – because it is impossible for the spectator to co-experience the emotions of two active protagonists simultaneously – and then offers the following vivid description: 'monodrama requires each of the spectators to stand in the protagonist's shoes, to live his life, i.e. to feel as he feels and have an illusion of thinking as he thinks, and therefore to be the first to see and hear the same thing the protagonist does'.¹⁴

It is not unreasonable to speculate that Evreinov, who was a Nietzsche devotee and generally attuned to German culture, may have been familiar with one of the earliest and most famous theatrical cabaret monodramas, Hanns von Gumpenberg's *Der Nachbar* [The Neighbour]. Gumpenberg wrote the piece in 1901 for the Elf Scharfrichter [Eleven Executioners] cabaret, giving it the subtitle 'monodrama in one sentence'. It became one of the Scharfrichter's wildly successful productions and was frequently performed.¹⁵ The play's only speaking character is a meddling civil servant who enters the home of his neighbours, a family of seven, and discloses, over the course of one 500-word sentence, the dark secrets (including adultery, theft and incest) of individual members of the gathered family. As he reveals these scandalous tidbits, the seven silent family members pantomime their shocked or incensed reactions, and subsequently their deaths, which result variously from natural causes, murder, poisoning and suicide. *Der Nachbar* was probably the first popular turn-of-the-century German monodrama to combine a single speaking character, a drastically unrealistic representation of time – as the play was fast-paced to hold the audience's attention – and gratuitous violence.

Critics routinely label Gumpenberg's usage of temporal compression as a satirical jab at modernist art, asserting that he was uninspired by both Gerhart Hauptmann's tedious naturalism and Maurice Maeterlinck's overly obscure symbolism.¹⁶ Yet at the same time it is crucial to recognize that Gumpenberg was – as Schoenberg would be a few years later – responsive to avant-garde tendencies that aimed to unfold temporality in a manner that did not correspond to 'real time'.

¹⁴ Evreinov, 'Introduction to Monodrama', *Russian Dramatic Theory*, p. 185.

¹⁵ Hans von Gumpenberg, *Der Nachbar* [1901], in Laurence Senelick (trans. and ed.), *Cabaret Performance*, vol. 1: *Europe 1890–1920* (New York, 1989), pp. 110–16.

¹⁶ Harold Segel sees *Der Nachbar* specifically as a parody of Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (Before the Sunrise), 1889. Segel, *Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret* (New York, 1987), p. 162. See also Peter Jelavich, *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwrights, and Performance 1890–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), p. 176.

After watching *Der Nachbar*, spectators would have been hard pressed to reconstruct accurately the sequence of events leading up to the heap of dead bodies that lay strewn over the stage – just as listeners are left scrambling to recall the order of denotative passages of *Erwartung* once the startling realization that the piece has concluded has set in.

Temporal distortion and pantomime were also fundamental to the construction of Schoenberg's Expressionistic monologic vocal pieces: he described the aim of *Erwartung* as 'represent[ing] in *slow motion* everything that occurs during a single second of maximum spiritual excitement', whereas in *Die glückliche Hand* 'a major drama is compressed into about 20 minutes, as if photographed with a time exposure'.¹⁷ Schoenberg's conception of *Erwartung* as a temporal suspension, representing an expansion of the purported real time ('a second'), seems to be realized musically through the simultaneous layering of previously isolated devices in the concluding bars – which persuades the listener to perceive the piece as a stretched-out, blow-by-blow account of the frenzied mental processes of an individual who is filled with trepidation.

Schoenberg endows these textures and patterns – ostinati, trills, tremolos, chord planing and flurried chromatic scalar figurations – which comprise the musical foreground, with structural background functions. In so doing, Schoenberg essentially constructs a background that links register, gesture and sonic quality, rather than harmonies or leitmotifs, to the protagonist's reactionary emotions to symbolic objects – in effect mimicking the pantomimic spasms of cabaret performers that will be discussed below. At the same time, the constant alternation of gestures and textures produces a sense of disorientation through the ambiguity of meaningful stopping points. That is not to say that conspicuous stopping points do not exist in *Erwartung*; there are plenty, owing to the fragmentary vocal utterances and accentuated introduction of new *Hauptstimmen*, but many are indistinguishable from one another and they obscure any sense of conventional musical progress. For all we know, the lurching between anguished incomprehension and reflective remembrance will continue ad infinitum.

The gestural formulae of scene 4, which comprises 70 per cent of the composition, emphatically illustrate that Schoenberg invented a kind of compositional freeze-frame technique that elongates real time by isolating, rewinding and replaying particular poetic and accompanimental devices. For example, in addition to recollecting exposed tremolos and ostinati, Schoenberg returns to gestures from the previous three scenes, including weighty descents in the strings and brass for gravitas (see Example 8.1¹⁸) and soloistic phrases out of phase with the voice to give the illusion of a spatial expanse (see Example 8.2¹⁹). The frequent harp and

¹⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, 'New Music: My Music', in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley, CA, 1984), pp. 99–105, here p. 105.

¹⁸ See also bars 153–8, 245, 251–7, 313–15.

¹⁹ See also bars 169–71, 201–203, 263–5 and 367–8.

Example 8.1 *Erwartung*, string descents, bars 331–5

wieder sehr lebhaft

I. Gge.

II. Gge.

Br. *pizz.* *pp* deutlich

Vcll.

Ktrbss.

molto rit. (mäßige) *wieder sehr rasch*

H₁ *arco* *f*

H₂ *arco* *f*

Br. *pizz.* *f*

Vcll. *pizz.* *ff*

Ktrbss. *pizz.* *ff*

ff *ff* *ff*

celesta duets are an example of integration on a global scale and create tiny spells of tranquillity throughout the work (see Example 8.3²⁰).

In the concluding bars of *Erwartung* (see Example 8.4), the convergence of textural and sequential features prompts a sensory overload in the listener denoting

²⁰ See also bars 14–17, 66–7, 160, 209–211, 225, 259–60, 318, 412–13 and 417–18.

Example 8.2 *Erwartung*, disjunct vocal and instrumental phrases, bars 358–64

$\text{♩} = 92$
fließend ♩

1.2.gr.Fl. —

1.2.Ob. — *H* *molto espress* *pp* *pp*

E.H. *p* *H* *pp*

D-Klar. — *p*

1.Klar.(B) —

2.3.Klar.(A) — *p* *p* *pp* *pp*

Bss.-Klar.(B) — *p* *pp*

3.Fg. —

4.Pos. — *sehr weich und gebunden*
o. Dpf. *p* *pp* *pp*

Hrf. —

Frau *(sinkt nieder, weinend)*
Wie lieb, wie lieb, ich dich ge-habt hab'...

I. Gge. —

II. Gge. — *alle*

Vcll. *H* *p* *pp* *pp*

Ktrbss. *p*

continued

Example 8.2 concluded

2

♩ = 104
etwas fließender

1.2. *pp*

1.2.

E.H. *pp* <

D-Kla.

1.K.

2.3.

Bss.-Kla. *pp*

3.F.

4.P.

Hrf. (etwas vorausschlagen) *pp*

Fra. *pp*
Al - len Din - gen fer - he leb - te ich.. al - len
(in Träumerei versinkend)
am Griffbrett

I. Gge. *pp* sehr zart

II. Gge. *pp*

Vcl. *pp*

Ktr. *pp* zart

Example 8.4 *Erwartung*, convergence of predominant musical devices, bars 418–23

1.2. kl.Fl. *pppp* H

1. gr.Fl. *ppp*

1.2.3. Ob. H

1.2.3. Klar. *pp* < > *pp*

1. Fg. *ppp*

1.2. Trp. *pppp* N

1. Hr. *pppp* N

Celesta *ppp* *p* N

Hrf. *ppp*

Frau *ppp*
 Es ist dun' kel, dein Kuß _____ wie ein Flam - men zeichen in meiner Nacht...
 m. DPf. trem am Steg...
 col legno m. DPf. geschlagen *pppp*

I. Gge. *ppp*

II. Gge. *ppp*

Br. *ppp*

Vell. *ppp*

Ktrbss. m. DPf. *pp*

Ktrbss. m. DPf. *pp*

2

1.2. kl.Fl. *pppp*

1. gr.Fl.

1.2.3. Ob. *pppp*

1.2.3. Klar. *pppp*

1. Fg.

1.2. Trp.

1. Hr. *H*

Cel. *pp*

Hrf.

Frau *p*
 mei ne Lip-pen-brennen und leuch-ten... dir... ent-ge-gen.

I. Gge. *pppp*

II. Gge. *pp*

Br. *col legno geschlagen* *pp*

Vcll. *col legno geschlagen* *pp*

Ktrbss.

Ktrbss.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for an orchestral and vocal work. The score is arranged in a standard Western format with staves for various instruments and a vocal line. The instruments listed on the left include woodwinds (flutes, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, horn), strings (cello, double bass, violins I and II, viola), and percussion (bass drum). A vocal line for a female voice (Frau) is also present. The score is divided into three measures. The first measure shows the beginning of the piece with various instruments playing. The second measure continues the orchestration. The third measure features a vocal entry with the lyrics 'mei ne Lip-pen-brennen und leuch-ten... dir... ent-ge-gen.' and a more active orchestral accompaniment, including a horn and strings playing a rhythmic pattern. Dynamic markings such as *pppp* and *pp* are used throughout. Performance instructions like *col legno geschlagen* are provided for the brass and woodwind sections. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

Die glückliche Hand, a 'Drama mit Musik', at the Krolloper, Berlin, though this event has attracted little scholarly attention.²¹

In the reviews of early performances of *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand* staged between 1924 and 1930, the most direct reference to cabaret comes from Victor Lederer, a respected musicologist, writing in the *Neues Wiener Journal*. Lederer likens the horror of *Erwartung* to the entertainment at the Scharfrichter cabaret, which was founded in Munich in 1900. The style of cabaret that the Scharfrichter perfected, incorporating avant-garde theatre into the varied programme, was the first to arrive in Vienna.²² Lederer writes: 'No less strong was the impression of Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung*. Fifteen years ago the stage work was considered unperformable. Its contents? – A chilling episode, a sketch of horror, a lingering sound of the Elf Scharfrichter!'.²³ Lederer's reference to the Scharfrichter is rife with interpretive possibilities as he could be alluding to two very different, and extremely gendered, performative gestures, both of which were routinely on display in cabarets in Berlin, Munich and Vienna. Either he is implying that the scenario and Gutheil-Schoder's delivery are reminiscent of the sketches of Marya Delvard, the Scharfrichter's stunning lead *diseuse*, or he is recalling the spirit of violent masculine protest that inspired the founding of that cabaret and was proclaimed at the start of each show with the 'Executioner's Song'. As will be discussed below, the early reviews of *Erwartung* repeatedly praised the work as a courageous protest against operatic drivel, and the Woman was only rarely referred to as a hysteric, a diagnosis she increasingly received as the twentieth century progressed, in part encouraged by Theodor Adorno's discussion of Schoenberg's atonal works in his *Philosophy of Modern Music* and, more generally, by the escalating perception in Western societies that, to quote

²¹ This may be because the critical editions for these works, which include a compilation of all of the early reviews, appeared only in 2005. A note on primary sources: the critical edition of *Erwartung* (ed. Ullrich Scheideler, Series B, Band 6, vol. 2, 2005) reprints 28 reviews of the work's 1924 premiere and the 1930 premiere of the companion pieces together at the Krolloper from many major European newspapers and music journals. The critical edition of *Die glückliche Hand* (ed. Ullrich Scheideler, Series B, Band 6, vol. 3, 2005) reprints 34 reviews from the 1924 Vienna premiere and the 1929 German premiere in Duisberg. See Arnold Schoenberg, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Josef Rufer and Rudolf Stephan (Mainz, 1966–2006). All translations of reviews are the author's unless otherwise noted.

²² Lisa Appignanesi, *The Cabaret* (New Haven, CT, 2004), pp. 51–2. The Elf Scharfrichter was founded in April of 1900. In 1903 the original group disbanded and several members moved to Vienna, opening the Cabaret Nachtlicht in 1906, which later became Cabaret Fledermaus. Although in 1901 Schoenberg was briefly employed at Ernst von Wolzogen's *Überbrettel* cabaret in Berlin, the theatrical sketches performed at the Elf Scharfrichter cabaret will be more pertinent to this discussion.

²³ Victor Lederer, 'Review of *Erwartung*', *Neues Wiener Journal* (12 June 1924). The first sentence is a comparison to Maurice Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole*.

Mark Micale, 'hysteria is not a disease; rather, it is an alternative physical, verbal, and gestural language, an iconic social communication'.²⁴

Feminine Performance Acts

As mentioned above, the influence of cabaret on Schoenberg's music is most often cited in relation to *Pierrot lunaire*, a topic that was recently revisited by Jennifer Goltz in her 2005 dissertation.²⁵ In general, discussions about Schoenberg's desire to implement a 'new form of expression' by amalgamating different kinds of singing are also primarily focused on his development of *Sprechstimme* notation in *Pierrot* because the motivational factors of this event are explained in primary-source documentation in his diaries and correspondence with Albertine Zehme, the actress who commissioned the work. Goltz, however, argues that Schoenberg's interest in crafting unique vocal and musical configurations that embrace gender fluidity through double-entendre and drag performance actually begins with the 1901 *Brettl-Lieder* and reaches its zenith with *Pierrot*. *Erwartung* does not feature prominently in Goltz's work, but it is logical to view *Erwartung's* experimental vocal style and fragmentary poetic and instrumental syntax as another earlier stop on the road to *Pierrot*, especially since the topics addressed in the hyperbolic monologues of cabaret stars were strikingly similar to those in *Erwartung*.

Lederer and others could very well be equating *Erwartung* to feminine cabaret spectacle, as the top cabaret singers – *diseuses* – devised performances of hysteria as a means to showcase their virtuosic emotional ranges. Although most early reviews of *Erwartung* do not explicitly label the Woman a hysteric, it is probably safe to assume that audiences understood that she was suffering from some kind of psychological affliction, especially as critics frequently commented on Schoenberg's musical portrayal of her solitude. This is underscored by reviewers that connect terminology associated with cabaret, most notably the term 'epileptic', to *Erwartung*. A critic for the *Deutsche Zeitung*, for example, employs the term when voicing his exasperation with the Woman's tirade: 'This offence is enough, for her to whimper for longer than a half hour, and indulge in hysterical fits and epileptic convulsions. Because nobody else is on the stage. The scene is carried by this Woman alone'.²⁶ Comparative literature scholar Rae Beth Gordon's research considers the role of pantomime and other styles of dance in popular entertainment in Paris between 1870 and 1910. She has found that a convulsive and frenetic style of pantomime, described by the cipher 'zigzag', was popularized in Paris beginning in 1875, when a new type of café-concert performer, the Epileptic

²⁴ Mark Micale, *Approaching Hysteria* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), p. 182.

²⁵ Jennifer Goltz, 'The Unsingable Note: The Roots of *Pierrot lunaire* in Cabaret' (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2005).

²⁶ Paul Zschorlich, 'Review of the Krolloper Performances of *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*', *Deutsche Zeitung* (10 June 1930).

singer, emerged.²⁷ Pantomime communicated the extreme physical complications of hysteria and was also utilized to invoke morally questionable or sexual themes that the censors would not permit to be directly addressed in the texts of songs or monologues. The majority of first-wave cabaret performers in the original Parisian cabarets, such as the Chat Noir and Le Mirliton, were male and did not shy away from gesticulating in convulsive and frenetic manners.²⁸ Yet cabaret owners and spectators increasingly sought female talent, as reported in 1904 by Hanns Heinz Ewers. Ewers's comments indicate that cabaret venues were public spaces that valued female spectacle above male.

Montmartre certainly had no prejudice against women, all doors and hearts were wide open to you; they looked for talented women and were thankful for all who rose only slightly over the average. Salis's (the founder of Chat Noir) words are famous ... : 'If you were a woman, I would immediately take you and pay you more than all the others combined'!²⁹

Parisian singer Yvette Guilbert (1865–1944) was undoubtedly the cabaret performer who opened the door for widespread female participation and also accelerated the geographic expansion of the art form as she toured extensively throughout America and Europe. Guilbert's histrionics were fully amplified in songs in which she feigned being subjected to violence or victimization. For example, in a song called 'Quand on vous aime comme ça' [When they love you like that], Guilbert transformed herself into a battered lower-class woman who embraces her boyfriend's beatings as 'love tokens'. Her delivery was punctuated with moaning and groans, vocalized gut reactions that captured the agony of being hit in the face.³⁰

Goltz demonstrates that the performance styles in the Munich and Vienna cabarets were heavily influenced by Guilbert's mordant style of delivery. This was transmitted to Germanic cultures primarily through the vocal style of Marya Delvard, who emulated Guilbert and readily proclaimed that she was Guilbert's stylistic heir.³¹ Delvard was raised in Paris and moved to Munich to study classical voice technique, joining the Scharfrichter cabaret in 1901. In a 1906 satirical piece in *Die Fackel*, the Viennese serial edited by Karl Kraus, in the context of mocking Delvard's habitual tendency to namedrop, Kraus quotes Delvard recounting how Guilbert, 'who speaks nasally like a Parisian street lass', advised her to move to Berlin, because the glory days of French cabaret were numbered: 'Oh, dear Miss

²⁷ Rae Beth Gordon, *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema* (Stanford, CA, 2001), pp. 63–5 and pp. 121–3.

²⁸ Appignanesi, *The Cabaret*, p. 28.

²⁹ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Das Cabaret* (Berlin, 1904), p. 21.

³⁰ Senelick, 'Text and Violence', p. 21.

³¹ Jennifer Goltz, 'Pierrot le diseur', *The Musical Times*, 147 (Spring 2006): pp. 59–72, here 68–9.

Delvard, if only I could speak German as well as you and if I could sing like you! Do go to Berlin!'.³²

Although the integration of hysteria and epilepsy into cabaret was conventionalized by male performers, the press viewed enacted feminine hysterical outbursts as erotic and was fascinated by the women who fabricated madness easily. Alfred Kerr notes that green and purple lighting transformed Delvard into a ghastly creature: 'Marya Delvard sings in the green light of child murder'.³³ Guilbert was described as 'a waxworks woman of Edgar Poe'.³⁴ Emmy Hennings, a *diseuse* at the Simplizissimus cabaret in Munich, was constantly praised for her erotic 'infinities', a voice that 'hops across the corpses', and her 'ravaged' drugged-out look. It was typical for male writers to monumentalize the allure of feminine emotional eruptions, as is apparent in this assessment of Hennings: 'Who can prevent this girl that possesses hysteria, that incendiary quality, the brain-tearing intensity of the literati, from swelling to an avalanche?'³⁵ What women thought of this sensationalism is less one-sided.

An image on a Scharfrichter programme, depicting a crowd of frowning women gazing at a nude woman on stage, implies that mainstream feminine society vehemently disapproved of the placement of physically – and probably psychologically – exposed women on stage. Figure 8.1 expresses emerging tensions among European women about the degree to which public acts of sexual liberation, such as seductive stripteases *à la* Salome, and prostitution, were successful in combatting repressive gender roles.³⁶ In contrast, Pappenheim imbued *Erwartung* with erotic suggestiveness, especially in the lengthy fourth scene, as the Woman appears suddenly in disarray – bleeding, wearing shreds of a dress, with snarled hair and divested of the sparkling jewellery and flowers that she wore when first seen on stage. Elizabeth Keathley delineates the differences between Pappenheim's first handwritten draft of the libretto and the final version of *Erwartung*, and suggests that, although the initial version contained more sexually explicit text and gestures, necrophilic eroticism still plays a defining

³² Karl Kraus, 'Antworten des Herausgebers', *Die Fackel* (19 April 1906): pp. 27–8.

³³ Bryan Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg* (Oxford and New York, 2000), p. 135.

³⁴ Yvette Guilbert, *La Chanson de ma vie* (Paris, 1927), p. 166.

³⁵ Michel Herbert, *La Chanson à Montmartre* (Paris, 1967), 64–5, 70–73; quoted in Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club* (Chicago, IL, 2002), p. 72.

³⁶ Paul's lithograph of a nude woman holding a mirror bears a strong resemblance to Gustav Klimt's *Nude Veritas* of 1898. Kevin C. Karnes interprets the nudity in Klimt's drawing as the artist enabling the woman to reveal her inner self and suggests that the outward orientation of the mirror, toward the viewer, is encapsulating Schopenhauer's assertion that the 'gifted poet is the mirror of mankind, and brings to consciousness what it feels and does'. Kevin C. Karnes, 'Wagner, Klimt, and the Metaphysics of Creativity in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 62/3 (2009): pp. 647–97, here pp. 657–8.



Figure 8.1 Bruno Paul, Elf Scharfrichter Programme, date unknown (c.1900–1903)

role in the work. For example, in the manuscript libretto the Woman's expression of her sexual desire borders on excessive, as Pappenheim envisioned her wildly throwing herself upon the corpse and opening her dress in the middle of the piece, all the while pleading for the corpse to be revived by her warmth and 'satisfy' her.³⁷ Pappenheim and Schoenberg's final product by no means obliterated these carnal moments, instead they were toned down, probably to endow *Erwartung* with additional ambiguity and to avoid pure shock value, thus perhaps concealing the fact that they were modelling the work on a cabaret sketch. Gordon argues that

³⁷ Elizabeth Keathley, "'Die Frauenfrage" in *Erwartung*: Schoenberg's Collaboration with Marie Pappenheim', Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (eds), *Schoenberg and Words* (New York, 2000), pp. 139–78, here pp. 157–9. For example, after bar 224, the manuscript libretto originally read: 'Wird sie nicht warm an meiner Brust? (*Sie öffnet das Gewand, flehend*): Mein Herz ist so heiß vom Warten' [Doesn't [your hand] become warm at my breast? (*She opens her dress, pleading*): My heart is so hot from waiting.]

the 'rhythms, movements, and abnormal sensations of hysteria that Max Nordau, a physician and social critic who popularized the psychiatric theory of degeneration, perceives in "modern art" underlie nearly all that is new in the arts of the fin de siècle'.³⁸ The similarities between the delivery of cabaret performers and the overall articulation and syntax of *Erwartung*, in which the accompaniment features frequent shifts in texture and pacing and the soprano is instructed to change her affective intonation every couple of bars, certainly validate Gordon's claim.

Masculine Creative Acts

Re-reading Victor Lederer's review while thinking about the varied subject matter of the Scharfrichter sketches and musical numbers underlines the ambiguity of *Erwartung*. Lederer could be commenting exclusively on compositional intent and highlighting *Erwartung*'s affinity with one of the most masculine objectives of cabaret and modernism: the pursuit of artistic truth. The founders of the Scharfrichter met through the Goethe Alliance for the Protection of Free Art and Science, which opposed the Lex Heinze, a law allowing for censorship and police intervention in performances which 'without being obscene, grossly injured feelings of shame and morality'.³⁹ They staged a protest during the 1900 Carnival celebration, and then decided to form a cabaret whose aim was to 'execute' social hypocrisy. An evening at the Scharfrichter often began with the group of eleven parading around the stage in bloodied robes and singing the 'Executioner's Song', the closing lyrics of which ended with the group's credo: 'Any enemy of the time / Will meet the executioner's axe / Any friends of death and crime / We'll adorn with song and rhyme'.⁴⁰ The ambiance was not exactly upbeat either, as the decor was embellished with instruments of torture and execution.

The adventurous quality of *Erwartung* was also interpreted as retaliatory in the early reviews by being labelled 'a protest'. Felix Adler, identified as an obsessive Schoenberg faddist, appears to be the source of this idea as he was quoted or paraphrased in several articles which characterized *Erwartung* as 'breaking in a revolutionary manner with all past ideas of operatic drama' and 'a protest against opera's old schemes'.⁴¹ Paul Riesenfeld echoes Adler most forcefully:

³⁸ Gordon, pp. 96–7.

³⁹ Appignanesi, *The Cabaret*, pp. 42–3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

⁴¹ It is unclear whether Felix has any relation to Guido Adler, the famous Viennese musicologist and advocate for the Second Viennese School's music. See Carl Johann Perl [review of *Erwartung*], *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten* (13 June 1924): 'The work is in every respect esoteric and breaks in a revolutionary manner with all past ideas of operatic drama.'

This is protest against operatic kitsch. The composer has gone about it through mental stimulation. More important than the plot are the psychic impulses of the Woman. However, Schoenberg protests so much against operatic kitsch that he leaves his so-called music without any connection with mental animation or scenic procedures. He scoffs at the attainments of modern dramatic musical art, which above all are, and must be, expressive music.⁴²

In line with this, and reflective of the unstable political climate after World War I, are some powerful comparisons of Schoenberg's individualistic musical portrayals with the qualities of political revolution. As can be gleaned from Ernst Rychnovsky's review for the *Neue Freie Presse*, this reveals that right from the start *Erwartung*, because it was interpreted as a testament to artistic truthfulness, was invested with an enduring political and social significance:

This music cries out, when horror seizes the lonely wanderer, when the voices of the forest torment her roused senses, it is a transparency, which betrays most individual artistry, when the woman again finds herself as a woman and forgives the unfaithful beloved. ... It [this music] is a statement of belief whose truthfulness no one will doubt. When and whether will such music become common property? Who could dare to answer this stark question. Must one affirm or negate it? Political revolutions, just as revolutions in art, have always boldly demolished the existing and substituted the unheard-of for the old and the well-loved new.⁴³

Erwin Schulhoff's review in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* is similarly insistent, as he stresses that Schoenberg devised both a new harmonic practice and sonic terrain: 'With sonically frightening means, anxiety, fear, and resignation are truly represented. Still today Schoenberg stands alone not only as the inventor of a new harmonic practice but also as the inventor of a completely new sound.'⁴⁴ Interpretations like those of Schulhoff and Rychnovsky undoubtedly signal that *Erwartung*'s radical sound is perceived as serving a higher purpose, and it is this pursuit of compositional truth seeking to encapsulate extremes of the human condition that inspires later twentieth-century composers to write monodramas.

The reception of *Erwartung* as an emblem for artistic and social reform receded as Theodor Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*, one of the twentieth century's most important critical texts about music, garnered widespread attention in the post-war era. Adorno's descriptions of Schoenberg's first atonal works as 'psychoanalytical dream case studies' caused *Erwartung*'s stylistic make-up to

⁴² Paul Riesenfeld [review of *Erwartung*], *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, 82/28 (9 July 1924): p. 1106.

⁴³ Ernst Rychnovsky [review of *Erwartung*], *Neue Freie Presse* (11 June 1924).

⁴⁴ Erwin Schulhoff [review of *Erwartung*], *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, 51/27 (4 July 1924): p. 530.

become more explicitly applied to psychoanalytic contexts.⁴⁵ It was certainly not Adorno's intention to downplay *Erwartung's* potential to spur revolutionary action, but this agenda faded into the background as the Woman increasingly became viewed as a Freudian specimen.

Once Adorno's evaluations, in *Philosophy of Modern Music* and elsewhere, had become highly valued by artists and intellectuals alike, the deployment of the style of Expressionism was invoked primarily as psychoanalytic music exploring the underlying motivations for violence between the sexes, the condition of hysteria, and dramatizing 'the talking cure'. Owing to its incorporation into film music scores and choreographic music, the style of *Erwartung* was no longer routinely characterized as a testament to compositional virtue and veracity through its creation of an abstract orchestral discourse, in which the orchestra is both personified (it, as well as the Woman, 'cries out') and offers 'new sound', 'protest' and 'truthful sound'. Indeed, as Adorno and others began to contextualize Schoenberg's atonal works with respect to contemporaneous Viennese intellectual and social issues, particularly realizing in hindsight historical parallels with the theories of Sigmund Freud, *Erwartung* was increasingly classified as a straightforward portrayal of hysteria. As a result, examination of the work's early reception and generic lineage has not figured prominently in the scholarship on Pappenheim and Schoenberg's intent to engender a Freudian persona or the post-war resurgence of monodrama.

⁴⁵ Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* [1948], trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York, 1973), p. 46. In the liner notes accompanying a 1962 American release of *Erwartung* on Columbia Records, Robert Craft also perpetuates a Freudian reading: 'This broken manner of speech suggests a patient on an analyst's couch remembering in discontinuous bits and snatches'. *The Music of Arnold Schoenberg: Volume I*, Columbia, M2L 279.

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Chapter 9

Opera for the People: Melodrama in Hugo Herrmann's *Vasantasena* (1930)¹

Nanette Nielsen

Relationships between melodrama and modernity are complex and many. As a 'fundamentally modern cultural expression',² melodrama has been described as 'the form both to register change and to process change, in particular mediating relations between a lost but problematic past and the present'.³ This particular view includes the recognition of 'melodrama's key role in modernity as a mediator of social and political change through the diverse and personalized forms of popular culture'.⁴ In the following, I explore melodrama's involvement with modernity via one example in the particular context of operatic developments during the Weimar Republic. In Hugo Herrmann's little-known opera *Vasantasena* (1930), classic melodrama bridges the gap between tradition and modernism, providing a point of reference for both the composer and his collaborator, the music critic and opera producer Paul Bekker (1882–1937), as they sought to create 'a new type of opera which harkens back to original models'.⁵ By mediating relations between past, present and a potential future, melodrama plays an important role in the hoped-for rescue of opera as it struggled to hold its own against contemporary mass culture. Moreover, the employment of melodrama in *Vasantasena* offers an insight into intersections between melodrama, cinema and opera in the early twentieth century, an area yet to receive due attention from scholars. By describing the circumstances surrounding the opera's creation and assessing the melodramatic elements it contains, I hope to demonstrate how *Vasantasena* was conceived as an attempt to create a new kind of opera that was at the same time rooted in existing ideals for the medium. In order to show how *Vasantasena* combined modernist

¹ I would like to thank Nathan Seinen for his insightful comments and offered during the process of creating this chapter.

² Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York, 2001), p. 2.

³ Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook and Christine Gledhill (eds), 'Introduction', *Melodrama: Stage – Picture – Screen*, (London, 1994), pp. 1–8, here p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵ Letter from Bekker to the Ministry, dated 3 December, 1930, p. 4. From *Opernpreisausschreiben Hugo Herrmann*, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden [HHW] 428/1410.

and conservative features, I first offer a brief account of how the mass culture of the Weimar Republic provided a fertile environment for a rethinking of operatic aesthetics. Bekker's and Herrmann's responses to the contemporary development of cinema and the so-called 'opera crisis' serve as background to the claim that *Vasantasena*, with its debt to melodrama, can be regarded a significant if not wholly successful attempt at creating a new 'opera for the people'.

Melodrama and Mass Culture

Benjamin Goose has shown how critics in Germany in the 1920s increasingly presented opera as part of mass culture – against which they nevertheless attempted vehemently to defend it.⁶ Before 1927, operas had attracted only isolated comparisons with cinema, operetta, cabaret and revue, but following the premiere of Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* [Jonny Strikes Up] in Leipzig that year, frequent connections were made.⁷ Indeed, by the end of the 1920s there was an open exchange between opera and mass culture in terms of materials, production and reception.⁸ This contributed to the so-called 'opera crisis', the manifestation of anxiety among critics about the future of the art form.⁹ By 1925, opera was perceived to be under threat not just because cinema was attracting far larger audiences (and thus income) while opera was struggling, but also because opera composers and producers were taking inspiration from such popular forms.¹⁰ Examples include the premiere of *Jonny spielt auf* in 1927, which employed film projection to create the impression of a car chase; the film sequences in the score of Kurt Weill's *Royal Palace* (completed in 1926); and the use of silent film inter-

⁶ Benjamin James Goose, 'Opera for the Masses? Opera and Mass Culture During the Weimar Republic' (PhD dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2005). Goose discusses the relationship between mass culture and opera in light of the following works in particular: Schreker's *Der Schatzgräber*, Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, Strauss's *Intermezzo* and d'Albert's *Der Golem*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁹ As Goose has argued (*ibid.*), the crisis was first and foremost in the *language* employed by critics. Whether or not opera was in an actual crisis, it was certainly described to be so in the latter half of the decade.

¹⁰ See, for example, Hans Schorn, 'Aktuelle Opernfragen', *Die Musik*, 17 (1925); Arnold Schoenberg, 'Gibt es eine Krise der Oper?' repr. in *Anbruch*, 8 (1926); Willi Aron, 'Opernkrise, Opernreform, Opernregie', *Die Musik*, 20 (1928); Julius Kapp, 'Gibt es eine Krise der Oper?', *Blätter der Staatsoper*, 9 (1929); Erik Reger, 'Die Krise des Opern-Repertoire', *Die Musik*, 22 (1929); Hans Tessmer, 'Zeitfragen des Opertheaters. Die Oper am Scheidewege', *Zeitschrift für Musik*, 97 (1930).

titles in the production of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Darmstadt in 1930–31.¹¹

Early cinema was indebted to a range of popular theatrical genres, particularly melodrama, for its plots, acting styles and visual effects – indeed in some ways it has been understood as the natural progression of the techniques and aesthetic of melodrama. In his account of how an ‘aesthetics of embodiment’ is ‘encoded in melodrama, and renewed by the silent cinema’,¹² Peter Brooks points out that Griffith’s cinema is ‘technically similar to that bastard form that precedes and prepares melodrama, *pantomime dialoguée*, in that the intertitles offer a skeletal structure of verbal meanings which the film enacts and embodies’.¹³ Mervyn Cooke reminds us of a direct connection between melodrama and early film in his description of the latter’s musical devices: ‘[s]ince many influential silent-film directors had been schooled in melodrama, the transferral of its characteristics to the silver screen was inevitable.’¹⁴

Moreover, as Peter Brooks has observed, early nineteenth-century French boulevard melodrama (which was to be exported across Europe and enjoy considerable popularity and influence) shared conventions with film regarding the employment of music: ‘music is inherent to [melodrama’s] representations, as to those of cinema, its inheritor in this convention’.¹⁵ This close relationship, together with melodrama’s identity as a form of popular culture – perceived as

¹¹ See Bryan Gilliam, ‘Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s’, in Bryan Gilliam (ed.), *Music and Performance During the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1–12, here p. 7. He examines cinematic techniques in *Der Protagonist*, *Royal Palace* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*.

¹² Peter Brooks, ‘Melodrama, Body, Revolution’, in Bratton et al., *Melodrama: Stage – Picture – Screen*, p. 23. Early in the chapter (p. 11), Brooks states that ‘it is by now well known that silent cinema in general, and Griffith in particular, reaches out to melodrama for the stylistic features that allow meanings to be conveyed without words’.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 20. It is also worth noting that pantomime had a presence in Weimar opera (especially that of Weill). Unlike France and England, however, Germany had no strong nineteenth-century pantomime tradition, and Bryan Gilliam has argued that the pantomime that we find in Weill stemmed from expressionist theatre and silent film; see Gilliam, ‘Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s’, p. 6.

¹⁴ Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 10. For more on the relations between stage melodrama and film, see, for example, Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London, 1987); Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (Oxford, 1997); Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*.

¹⁵ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995), p. 48. As Cooke summarizes, these musical representations include the use of string tremolos for tension and *pizzicato* for secretiveness, *A History of Film Music*, p. 10. See also Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, ‘Music in Melodrama: “The burden of ineffable expression”?’ , *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film*, 29/2 (2002): pp. 30–39.

being intrinsically less worthy, aesthetically, than high-art opera¹⁶ – meant that the genre was often invoked alongside film in discussions that sought to rescue opera from mass culture.¹⁷ For example, the conservative critic Julius Korngold, writing in 1920, called Franz Schreker's 1918 opera *Die Gezeichneten* (The Marked Ones) 'unmusical' because it suffered from a tendency towards disconnected dramaturgy and incoherence – resulting from 'film and melodrama effects'.¹⁸ According to such formulations, an opera's incorporation of a cinematic aesthetic, with its associative links with melodrama, would reduce the work to a product for consumption and exploitation.

But not everyone saw such hybridity as a threat to bourgeois values and elite cultural ideals. Richard Strauss, as part of his endeavour to create 'new opera', described his *Intermezzo* (1924) as an attempt to develop and modernize foundational operatic principles of the past – including the use of melodrama as a technique.¹⁹ For Strauss, only Beethoven and Marschner employed 'atmospheric melodrama at significant points in their operas ... to highly impressive effect', and he concludes that '[n]one of our Classical composers felt the need to draw on the subtle nuances that might be produced by the transition from pure prose to melodrama, *secco* recitative, *recitativo accompagnato* and, thence, to the veritable tidal wave of full-blown vocal melody'.²⁰ In *Intermezzo*, Strauss claims to create a new vocal style that builds directly on such developments of the past. For others, popular stage melodrama – as opposed to its operatic and concert incarnations – could also be part of this renewal process. Indeed, Bekker recognized in mass culture a potential source of novelty that could inspire a new operatic aesthetic altogether, attracting a larger audience and leading to financial viability – and, most importantly, enabling new social possibilities.²¹

¹⁶ As Ben Singer puts it, '[f]or most of the two centuries in which melodrama has been identified as a dramatic category, it has been a target of critical ridicule and derision', *Melodrama and Modernity*, p. 2.

¹⁷ See also Goose's argument that the 'treatment of cinema's relation to opera from the mid-1920s closely resembles critics' previous references to operetta and other early mass entertainments', 'Opera for the Masses?', p. 94.

¹⁸ Julius Korngold, *Deutsches Opernschaffen der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1921), pp. 322–3.

¹⁹ See Goose, 'Opera for the Masses?', p. 182. At the same time his expressed wish to structure *Intermezzo* somewhat 'like cinematic pictures' resulted in an opera that employed filmic 'montage technique'; see Gilliam, 'Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s', p. 2. As Gilliam shows, Weill's suggestions for operatic reform reveals his perception of a close connection between music for the stage and music for silent film. Although distancing himself from melodrama (p. 5), he invoked pantomime in several of his works.

²⁰ Richard Strauss, preface to *Intermezzo* (Vienna, 1996), unpaginated.

²¹ See also Willi Aron, 'Opernkrise, Opernreform, Opernregie', in *Die Musik*, 20 (1928), for an indirect admission of mass culture's contribution to the future of opera. For a useful discussion of Aron's article, see Goose, 'Opera for the Masses?', pp. 95–7.

Paul Bekker, Opera and Film

When *Vasantasena* was premiered in 1930, Bekker had been active as a critic and writer on music for a quarter of a century, producing numerous books, articles and reviews, and was frequently cited as an authority by contemporary critics, intellectuals and composers. Furthermore, he bridged the gap between aesthetic theory and practice by holding positions as *Intendant* at two Prussian theatres – at Kassel between 1925 and 1927, and thereafter at Wiesbaden, where he was to remain until its closure in 1932. Bekker was active in political and cultural debates of the period, but had both conservative and modern aspirations that did not translate neatly into political policies (one might cautiously label him a Social Democrat – i.e. a political conservative, in Weimar terms – with clear modernist sympathies). In his influential volume of 1916, *Das deutsche Musikleben* [German Musical Life], he demonstrated a modernist impulse to create a better world by developing a music sociology that would promote the rebuilding of a shattered society through recognition of music's 'society-shaping power' (*gesellschaftsbildende Kraft*).²² He was also a fervent proponent and active supporter of 'New Music', and his debate with Hans Pfitzner in 1920 – a famous clash between radical and conservative thinking – bore witness to the wider tensions between internationalism (represented by Bekker) and nationalism (Pfitzner) in the immediate aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles (1919).²³

Bekker's combined modern and conservative ideals for music-making fed into his views on mass culture's relationship to music. Early on, he was cautious about the commercial, uncritical, 'mindless entertainment' aspect of mass culture, displaying both his debt to the high-minded Wilhelmenian ideal of *Bildung* and his sympathy with modernist attitudes.²⁴ However, although he maintained progressive standards, his democratic outlook led him to believe in the social potential of music – in line with his music sociology of 1916 – through its power to *unify* the masses.

In a 1919 article on film, Bekker had already recognized that theatre and opera had begun to interact with silent cinema.²⁵ With his positive description of the influence of film on the playwright George Kaiser, as well as his call for more critical and informed discussion of its impact on opera, Bekker challenged the boundaries between high and low culture. He made a further connection between opera and film in his lengthy and influential review of Franz Schreker's opera *Der Schatzgräber* [The Treasurehunter] (1920). In this, he pointed approvingly to the work's rejection of Wagnerian music drama and rediscovery of 'opera',

²² Paul Bekker, *Das deutsche Musikleben* (Berlin, 1916).

²³ See Hans Pfitzner, *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz* (Munich, 1920) and Bekker, 'Impotenz oder Potenz?', *Frankfurter Zeitung* (15 June 1920).

²⁴ Goose discusses Bekker's cultural standards in relation to the *Bildungsideal*, 'Opera for the Masses?', p. 41.

²⁵ Paul Bekker, 'Der Film' [1919], *Klang und Eros* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 166–71.

with its intoxication of music and joy of the senses, with all its illogical unreality, the playful fantasy of its events, the joy of colourful change of the scenes, of the flow on purely feeling-related musical ground, this path that the Italians, the young French composers, d'Albert, most recently Richard Strauss have tried to blaze – it has been found.²⁶

For Bekker, Schreker succeeded through his 'equally strong creative power for music and feeling for the stage'.²⁷ We can see in this quotation the description of features that correspond to the appeal of the cinema, as well as an acknowledgement of a level of theatricality, of action and visual interest, that opera should strive to incorporate.

By linking cinema and opera in this way, Bekker broke down the aesthetic barrier between the two media. He maintained this critical approach, and did not come to perceive film as a threat to opera as others were to do. Although a few years later, in *Das Operntheater* (1931), he lamented contemporary modernist staging tendencies that drew on cinema, he also criticized the opportunistic link made by some critics in the mid-1920s between the advance of film and the perceived wane of opera.²⁸ In other words, while he did not approve of operatic stagings that drew on film, he did not perceive film to be a competitor to opera as such; he was acutely concerned with maintaining opera's autonomy as a genre that could develop beyond this so-called 'crisis', alongside mass culture. Essentially, Bekker assigned film and opera separate spheres: the 'opera crisis' was, for him, certainly not the fault of Weimar mass culture, despite their complex interaction.

Bekker's attitudes to modern and conservative approaches to musical and cultural life were also reflected in his practice as a theatre manager and opera producer, and they would inform his influence on Herrmann and the creation of *Vasantasena* at Wiesbaden. He sought to uphold a balance between history and contemporaneity, and planned accordingly: when he put standard works on the programme, he also added unusual novelties.²⁹ Furthermore, by mounting a work

²⁶ Bekker, 'Der Schatzgräber (Uraufführung in Frankfurt am 21. Januar 1920)', *ibid.*, pp. 44–5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁸ 'The music press, though, got so carried away that it even forgot the opera crisis over the sound-film problem. Suddenly, though, it occurred to [the press] that these two things were practically made for one another and could be deployed contrapuntally with countless reversals and counter-movements'. Paul Bekker, *Das Operntheater* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 122.

²⁹ For example, during his tenure at Wiesbaden (1927–32), the repertory was remarkably varied, and included works such as (to mention only those by Austro-German composers) Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Wagner's *Lohengrin* and *Rienzi*, Rudi Stephan's *Die ersten Menschen*, Busoni's *Dr Faust*, Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, and Krenek's three one-acters (*Der Diktator*, *Das geheime Königreich* and *Schwergewicht, oder Die Ehre der Nation*) and *Jonny spielt auf*. Bekker's contract outlined the particular

such as Kurt Weill's *Die Bürgschaft* [The Pledge] in 1932, Bekker proved himself to be one of those 'few opera producers' that Erik Levi claims 'were still prepared to take risks at a time of great social and political upheaval',³⁰ when the repertory was taking an increasingly conservative turn. Bekker did not consider himself a conservative opera producer, but in the highly experimental environment of the Weimar Republic his staging choices – which included a preference for static display – would have come across as much less modernist than, for example, the concurrent stagings at the Krolloper. Indeed, he often criticized more adventurous approaches: Berlin was harshly criticized for its 'Prominentenmethodik und Bluff-Inszenierungen' [dazzling techniques and sham productions],³¹ and in fact he blamed the opera crisis partly on incompetent producers who obscured operatic works by subjecting them to radical stage experiments.³²

The Making of Hugo Herrmann's *Vasantasena*

In September 1929, Hugo Herrmann (1896–1967) was officially commissioned to write an opera for the Staatstheater in Wiesbaden with the financial support of The Ministry of Science, Art and Education in Berlin.³³ The opera was *Vasantasena*, based on a play by Lion Feuchtwanger, and the commission was the result of an opera competition (*Opernpreisausschreiben*), for which the Staatstheater was provided with 10,000 Reichsmark to cover the salary of the winning composer for one year.³⁴ *Vasantasena* was a unique opportunity for Bekker to realize his vision of improving contemporary theatre life, and to advise a composer on a work for his theatre (in accordance with his approach to staging). In the following, I use the correspondence between Bekker and Herrmann, and other documents surrounding the *Vasantasena* project, to explore the processes involved in the creation of the

demand that the theatre at Wiesbaden should be a model institution, and support both popular culture and fine art. See HHW 428/2098, § 3. It is worth noting the extent to which Bekker's superiors in Berlin did not dictate his choices: this independence was formulated very clearly in his contract.

³⁰ Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (London, 1994), p. 170.

³¹ Paul Bekker, 'Das Staatstheater', in Richard H. Grützmacher (ed.), *Wiesbaden: Seine Schönheit und Seine Kultur* (Wiesbaden, 1929), p. 80.

³² See especially Bekker, *Das Operntheater*, pp. 102–109. Of course, the lack of money was another reason for the crisis (see pp. 117–25).

³³ Herrmann was an organist and choral conductor involved with the educational and communal musical life of Germany. After the war, he studied at the Stuttgart Conservatory, and then at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik.

³⁴ This was not a conventional competition: Bekker simply selected the composer.

opera and its reference to melodrama as a means to negotiate the gap between high and low art at this crucial point for opera in the Weimar Republic.³⁵

The initial vision for the project can be traced back to an article by Bekker from 1927.³⁶ In ‘Rückkehr zum Auftragssystem der Theater’ [A Return to the ‘Commissioning System’ of the Theatre] he presents what he believes to be the most important task of the contemporary theatre establishment: to create a closer relationship between composer and stage. This task would be accomplished if the theatre establishment were to return to a system similar to that which existed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the composer worked directly for a particular theatre, and wrote music tailored to its technical capabilities and the available actors and musicians. The commissioning of the opera was thus an expression of Bekker’s vision for the theatre establishment as a whole. The contract – between him, the Minister and Herrmann – reflects the intentions stated in the article. The opera was to grow out of a close working relationship between *Intendant* and composer, and would be written with the technical resources and personnel of the theatre in mind.³⁷

Bekker and Herrmann had met for the first time at the Baden-Baden Chamber Music Festival in 1928, a meeting that had sparked off their written correspondence more than a year before the official contract was signed.³⁸ On 18 April 1928, Herrmann wrote the first letter, in which he responded positively to Bekker’s suggestion (made at Baden-Baden) that he consider composing an opera for the Staatstheater. His stated aim for the composition was very much in accordance with Bekker’s critical approach and concern for contemporary opera. Perhaps owing largely to their recent conversation, Herrmann was familiar with Bekker’s critical stance, and he seems to have shared his aims. Herrmann wrote, ‘I have also studied and pursued the newest paths of opera more exactly and hope to be able to write a play that will arise completely from the innermost (and not only outer) essence of our time and please us all’;³⁹ this echoes Bekker’s view that the project, in spite of its potential appeal to the masses, should not be a superficial, mass-cultural enterprise.

³⁵ Bekker was based in Wiesbaden, and Herrmann lived in Stuttgart during the correspondence (he moved to Wiesbaden for a year when he took up the position as ‘in-house composer’ in October 1929).

³⁶ Paul Bekker, ‘Rückkehr zum Auftragssystem der Theater’, *Wiesbadener Tageblatt* (September, 1927); see also The Bekker Collection, MSS 50, The Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University Paul Bekker Collection [YPBC], 41/507.

³⁷ ‘Vereinbarung’ (17 September 1929), *Opernpreisausschreiben Hugo Herrmann*, HHW 428/1410. Wiesbaden had secured the rights for the first performance.

³⁸ Herrmann recalls this first meeting in ‘Kleine Selbstbiographie’, in the Wiesbaden Staatstheater programmes, 1930/1931, pp. 33–4, YPBC 57/720.

³⁹ ‘Vereinbarung’, letter from Hugo Herrmann to Bekker dated 18 August 1928, HHW 428/1410. All letters considered here can be found in this folder.

Clearly aware of the influence of film on the public's viewing habits, Bekker demanded that the opera should not be more than two hours long, to avoid taxing the audience's ability to concentrate.⁴⁰ During the course of the correspondence, other demands were made which related more directly to Bekker's aesthetic views. Responding to Herrmann's suggestion of composing a work that would make use of advanced staging techniques, he distanced himself from the vogue for creating a 'scenic milieu' that drew on 'modern technique', a method that (in the light of *Jonny*) he believed had been exhausted.⁴¹ In accordance with a practice he would later formulate in *Das Operntheater*, Bekker required that the staging as well as the plot be simple, in order to communicate the opera in the best way possible: 'I am of the opinion that it is necessary, particularly in opera, to get back to the *most intensive simplification possible* of both the scenic apparatus and particularly of the action and structuring of ideas'.⁴²

Much of the correspondence concerns the choice of libretto. Many texts were considered carefully, and it was by no means a straightforward decision.⁴³ Universal Edition had organized a concurrent competition for the writing of a libretto that could potentially be used for the Wiesbaden opera. It is clear that Herrmann and Bekker discussed these texts,⁴⁴ but when in June 1929 Herrmann came across Lion Feuchtwanger's *Vasantasena* (1915) – a translation and reworking of a Sanskrit play by the legendary Sudraka – his enthusiasm was immediate: he outlined the structure of the opera, and wrote that the music was already in his head.⁴⁵ Less

⁴⁰ Letter from Bekker dated 3 September 1928.

⁴¹ Letter from Bekker dated 5 December 1928.

⁴² *Ibid.* (my emphasis).

⁴³ Librettos considered include Pedro Calderon *Der wundertätige Magus* and *Zingarella* (author not specified). Bekker and Herrmann nearly chose Friedrich Wolf's *Der arme Konrad*.

⁴⁴ Bekker mentions the Universal Edition competition in his first letter to Herrmann on 3 September 1928. The Universal Edition libretti are first considered by Herrmann in a letter dated 10 January 1929. The discussions of the texts centre around whether they are suitable for operatic stagings, and include considerations of narrative, length, dramatic effect and popularity with the audience.

⁴⁵ *Vasantasena* is first mentioned in a letter from Herrmann dated 24 June 1929. The Sanskrit story (*Mricchakatika*) is believed to originate from the second century BC, though Feuchtwanger dates the version on which his play was based to AD 450–650; see *Vasantasena* (Potsdam, 1927), p. 5. A translation by Arthur W. Ryder was published in 1905 as 'The Little Clay Cart', and this became a hit in 1924 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York (*New York Times*, 22 March 1938), a production later exported to Los Angeles. One critic's summary of the play is worth quoting: 'The plot is about the murder of a courtesan, who isn't murdered after all; the blame is thrown on the wrong man, who isn't held to blame in the finale, and the only person who is more or less at outs with himself and the world is the one guilty of the crime which never actually took place'; Edwin Schallert, "'Clay-Cart" Hero Wins. Twas ever thus – even in the Sanskrit', *Los Angeles Times* (9 December 1926): p. A9. The play has been made into a Hindi Bollywood film (*Utsav*, dir. Girish Karnad, 1984).

than a month later, Herrmann provided Bekker with an overview of voice parts for the roles, and offered his participation from October of that year.⁴⁶ In a letter of 15 July, he detailed his plan to retain the overall structure of Feuchtwanger's play, and demonstrated his familiarity with the characters, which he perceived were 'melodramatic' and should be portrayed as such. They included the secondary characters (*Nebenfiguren*), who are comical and parodic, 'as characters appearing in a melodrama'.⁴⁷ Herrmann's awareness of the melodramatic elements of *Vasantasena* also had a bearing on the music, as we shall see. They had previously agreed that this new opera would be neither 'revue' nor 'oratorio',⁴⁸ and their pre-composition correspondence suggests that melodrama had already become part of their idea for the work, in response to the qualities of the play. In a letter of 15 July, Herrmann detailed his plan to retain the overall structure of Feuchtwanger's play, and pointed out that some of the 'comical and parodic secondary characters behave like actors in melodrama'.⁴⁹ Critics and scholars, including those writing in the 1920s, have recognized how Sanskrit drama in general and Sudraka's play in particular contained elements that correspond to those of Western stage melodrama.⁵⁰ It is not without relevance that Feuchtwanger makes a direct connection between *Vasantasena* and contemporary film in his introduction to the play, when he describes Sudraka's dramatic technique as employing a rapid pace and the freedom to switch suddenly between different times and places – qualities that were often identified as being shared by melodrama and film in critical discussions of the 1920s.⁵¹

In his contribution to the programme book, published in November 1930, Herrmann emphasized that the suitability of Feuchtwanger's text was rooted in

⁴⁶ Letter from Herrmann dated 12 July 1929.

⁴⁷ Letter from Herrmann dated 15 July 1929, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Letter from Herrmann dated 19 December, 1928, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Letter from Herrmann dated 15 July 1929, p. 1.

⁵⁰ The reviewer of the 1926 production in Los Angeles wrote: 'Frankly, I didn't expect such a fascinating melodrama, nor so much gay comedy, nor so embellishing a mood of fantasy in a dream so ancient', Schallert, "'Clay-Cart" Hero Wins'. Edwin Gerow notes '[O]ur tendency [is] to equate the Indian drama as plot with dramatic forms in our tradition that are not serious (melodrama, etc.)', in 'Plot Structure and the Development of Rasa in the Sakuntala, Pt. 1', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 99/4 (1979): pp. 559–72, here p. 559. And Virginia Saunders observes, 'In spite of the fine qualities of many of the Sanskrit plays we are almost sure, in reading those which are essentially potential tragedies, to find ourselves wishing they had continued so to the end. The effect upon us is that of the modern melodrama – the heart may be satisfied but the artistic sense suffers a shock', in 'Some Literary Aspects of the Absence of Tragedy in the Classical Sanskrit Drama', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 41 (1921): pp. 152–6, here p. 153.

⁵¹ This was also, to an extent, adopted by Herrmann in the opera. Feuchtwanger, *Vasantasena*, p. 8. For American critics of this nonclassical narrative melodramatic structure, see Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, pp. 46–8.

the close relationship between music and theatre – and music and text⁵² – that it offered:

The apparent lack of intentionality and power of illusion of the action, the moving, complete art of romance with the epic and lyrical foundation, which rises at any time to the dramatic with changing elasticity, must be regarded as the best textual source for an opera. This is play in the ultimate sense of the word and music can combine with it in a unity. I wrote my work out of this idea in conjunction with the practice and study of opera theatre.⁵³

Bekker explained his contribution as producer in ‘Zur Uraufführung “Vasantasena” [On the Premiere of *Vasantasena*], an article that has a clear connection with ‘Rückkehr zum Auftragssystem der Theater’ (1927).⁵⁴ Many of the same points concerning his aim to rebuild a close relationship between work and stage are repeated, although upon reflection Bekker recognizes that the ideal method had by no means been achieved in *Vasantasena*. The following passage departs from the 1927 article in revealing the nature and consequences of putting his ideas into practice. Here Bekker also expresses a wish to return to forms of the past that favoured the physical over the metaphysical (and psychological): ‘opera as song and dance’, rather than symbolist drama (e.g. Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*) or expressionist ‘opera as a nightmare’ (e.g. Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*). The melodramatic qualities of *Vasantasena*, as we shall see, were well suited to fulfill this goal.

This reuniting of creative individual and stage was the guiding idea. Otherwise, the old commissioning method was not copied in any way. That is, a book was not forced on the composer, but he preserved full freedom to make his own decision. The only thing suggested was to follow the opera type as sketched in the masterworks of the past: opera as song and dance, the work of art of conscious unreality of life.⁵⁵

Vasantasena was well advertised, and the programme book appeared more than a month before the first performance, which took place on 11 November 1930.⁵⁶ Herrmann’s contribution can be understood as part of an attempt to prepare

⁵² On this point, see also Bekker, ‘Moderne Oper’ [unpublished talk, 1922]. YPBC 45/595.

⁵³ In ‘Über die Entstehung meiner Oper “Vasantasena”’, in the Wiesbaden Staatstheater programmes, 1930/1931, pp. 29–31, here p. 30. YPBC 57/720.

⁵⁴ Paul Bekker, ‘Zur Uraufführung “Vasantasena”’, in the Wiesbaden Staatstheater programmes, 1930/1931, p. 41. YPBC 57/720.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The opera had four performances, which was an average run for the 1930–31 season at Wiesbaden.

audiences for their radical approach, and he offered a statement that defined it against recent failed attempts to create new opera.⁵⁷ He began by considering contemporary discussion about opera: ‘Our time puts opera at the centre of a fierce problematic’.⁵⁸ He lamented how opera had failed to renew itself: critics were still calling for an opera that would interest the younger generation, and the attempt to introduce new genres such as *Gemeinschaftskunst*, *Gebrauchskunst*, *Laientanz* and *Lehrstück* had not been successful; not even *Zeitoper* had achieved success, despite its incorporation of topical elements from modern life. Opera as a genre had nevertheless survived, and despite his criticism Herrmann believed that it had a future. But this future would have to come from *within* the theatre establishment, and his appointment to write for the performance conditions at Wiesbaden was an example of the sort of practice that should be encouraged.

His critical approach and grasp of the advantages of a closer relationship between composer and *Intendant* certainly demonstrate Herrmann’s attentiveness to the theoretical aims of the project. After a brief description of the unified relationship between the music and narrative of the opera, and the way in which the music encompasses a variety of forms and styles that result in a new ‘unity of style’ (*Stileinheit*), he gives further evidence of his historical awareness and hopes for the future of opera:

This [new unity of style] also necessitated structuring the musical form and its means of expression. Action and music complement each other to produce playfully fantastic theatre. I wrote the opera in an endeavour to fulfil the fundamental conditions mentioned above and to give a new form to everything in historical opera that is capable of development.⁵⁹

It is not known whether he made suggestions for Herrmann’s contribution to the programme book, although it is certainly likely. It *is* clearly evident that Bekker’s aims for the renewal of opera found a positive recipient and participant in a composer who embraced his ideas both in his creative work and in his written communication to the public. Herrmann, meanwhile, was grateful for the experience: the score of *Vasantasena* was dedicated to Paul Bekker ‘with gratitude’.

It is against this backdrop – the shared aims of producer and composer as well as the wider cultural context – that we can explore the use of melodrama in *Vasantasena*. If as a critic Bekker was open to new artistic possibilities, we

⁵⁷ Apart from reflecting contemporary discussions about opera, Herrmann’s approach also echoes the critical comments made in his very first letter to Bekker (above). ‘Über die Entstehung meiner Oper “Vasantasena”’, the Wiesbaden Staatstheater programmes, 1930/1931, pp. 29–31. YPBC, 57/720. Herrmann was further made known to the Wiesbaden audience via a performance on 15 October of his *Symphonie für grosses Orchester*, Op. 56, for which he had written an article almost immediately preceding this one.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

have seen that as a producer he remained relatively conservative in comparison with his contemporaries. He therefore did not turn to cinema for a rejuvenation of operatic staging. Instead, he demanded simplicity in both staging and plot. From the observations on the narrative and music below, we can ascertain that one result of using melodrama as a substitute for cinematic effects in creation and production was that it could communicate directly – through Bekker’s requirement of ‘the most intensive simplification’ – to a popular audience, while still maintaining opera’s integrity as a medium belonging to the theatrical stage. The lens of melodrama also helps to clarify Herrmann’s expressed wish that new opera would need to come from *within* the world of the theatre, echoing Bekker’s descriptions of opera as the union of two art forms (music and theatre), offered in 1922.⁶⁰ Finally, if (as we saw above) Herrmann acknowledged that the opera embraced ‘a variety of forms and styles’, an examination of the score demonstrates that it can be understood through one musical-dramatic form in particular, namely melodrama, which often tended towards an eclectic mix of genres and styles.

Melodrama in *Vasantasena*

As he had proposed, Herrmann retained the overall structure of Feuchtwanger’s play in six scenes. Bekker and Herrmann had agreed on a two-act opera, however, so while the play has three acts (the sixth scene being Act III), Herrmann included the sixth scene in his second act. As he indicates in the score, a longer pause can be inserted between the fifth and sixth scenes to allow for a scene change (and a second intermission). On this last point, it should be noted that the opera would have been longer than Bekker’s proposed two hours, and probably nearer to three. As one would expect for the transposition of a play text into an opera libretto, Herrmann reduced the number of characters, and shortened the dialogue and narrative of Feuchtwanger’s play. Both these changes allowed the action to assume a more direct course, in line with both Bekker’s and Herrmann’s aims.⁶¹ Finally, the scenes were subdivided and identified as ‘numbers’ according to genre, as was common practice in operetta. The orchestra was of a modest size, matching the available resources at Wiesbaden, although a large amount of percussion was included to enhance the ‘exotic’ character of some of the music (appropriate to the setting).

It is clear that Herrmann was seeking a means by which to reach a wider audience, though not via popular tunes or cinematic references. He draws from musical traditions in a progressive way, without being self-consciously modernist (his approach is very different from, for example, the irony and satire employed

⁶⁰ Bekker, ‘Moderne Oper’.

⁶¹ One example is towards the end of scene 5: whereas Feuchtwanger’s play has the Hofmeister return to have a conversation (an argument) with the Prince before the Barber arrives, this is excluded from the opera where only the Barber appears, as the Prince runs away.

by Hindemith in *Neues vom Tage* [News of the Day], 1929]. The orchestral accompaniment features clear formal structures, self-contained episodes, and regular periodicity, to which the vocal parts, in a form of heightened declamation, are added. There is also a great deal of parlando, and speech either on its own or declaimed over music – a standard technique of nineteenth-century melodrama.⁶² Tuneful vocal lyricism is rare, although the choruses are more songlike, and there is at least one detachable number in the Pucciniesque love duet in scene 3. The harmonic language is reminiscent, variously, of Hindemith, the Russian late Romantics (especially Skryabin and Rachmaninov) and Debussy (notably the use of the whole-tone scale in some scenes for ‘exotic’ local colour). The fact that Herrmann was an organist may explain the very dense textures (especially in the middle register), the bass-led harmonic movement, and a frequent reliance on held ‘organ’ pedals underneath shifting harmonies. Overall, Herrmann’s experimentation with overtones in this opera results in an incessantly clangorous sonority, with emphasis on the intervals of the fourth and the fifth.⁶³

The libretto of *Vasantasena* contains a wide range of what we recognize as quintessential melodramatic elements, as identified by Peter Brooks, among others. These include the moral opposition between pure good and evil that is embodied in the main characters, who are differentiated by class and by their contrasting democratic and autocratic positions; comic secondary characters, who add ‘picturesque’ traits that are missing from the main characters;⁶⁴ a selection of highly contrasted and strikingly juxtaposed settings, images and events; false accusations, acts of violence, threats of death, pathos-laden laments and moments of comic relief; plot twists involving mistaken identity, disguise and sudden recognition; and, in the fast-paced finale, last-minute reprieves, truth revealed, victim saved and rewarded, poetic justice delivered, and peace returned. In the staging (as specified in the score) there is a strong reliance on non-verbal means of expression, including gesture, dance, frequent and extended pantomime and physical action;⁶⁵ encounters with dangerous natural forces; and the use of props that are essential to the drama (e.g. lost jewellery).

⁶² These are especially performed by the Barber/Monk and Rohasena.

⁶³ This compositional intention is clear from Bekker’s letter to the Prussian Ministry, dated 3 December 1930. From *Opernpreisausschreiben Hugo Herrmann*, HHW 428/1410.

⁶⁴ In his summary of the description of melodrama’s core properties by the Russian formalist Sergey Balukhatiy, Daniel Gerould writes: ‘primary figures are surrounded by secondary characters who are connected with the complications and share the peripeties of the “suffering” characters (as “devoted servant”) or act the role of “tool” for the vicious characters (innocent or willing helper of the villain). Comic and picturesque elements are introduced into melodrama by these secondary characters who have traits lacking in the principal characters’; see ‘Russian Formalist Theories of Melodrama’, *Journal of American Culture*, 1/10 (1978): pp. 152–68, here p. 161.

⁶⁵ For a theatrical and gestural moment, see, for example, no. 19 ‘Litanei und Pantomime’, which ends with the Barber/Monk offering a ‘Pantomimisches Spiel in frommer Versunkenheit’.

The music serves principally to define character in a physical, one-dimensional and non-psychological way, and to enhance moments of violence, surprise and pathos. The following discussion focuses on a few pertinent melodramatic features of *Vasantasena*, to show how Herrmann's wish to unify theatre and music was carried out via this particular dramatic form.

The opera opens with a display of what Peter Brooks calls 'virtue as innocence', soon interrupted by an evil force that will remain a threat throughout.⁶⁶ The honourable Brahman merchant Tsharudatta and his trusted friend Maitreja are reflecting on their life of poverty when the noble courtesan Vasantasena suddenly enters, chased by the villain, the sinister Prince Samsthānaka. She repels his advances and escapes into Tsharudatta's house.⁶⁷ A Barber is introduced here – a comic character who will have an important role to play. As the opera unfolds, Tsharudatta and Vasantasena fall in love, and she helps the Barber escape his creditors by disguising him as a Monk (scene 2). There is an elephant hunt, a dance by lower-caste youths and their girlfriends, lost jewellery that is retrieved (all in scene 2), and a powerful display of natural forces in a rainstorm (scene 3).

A melodramatic struggle between pure good and evil in this opera is symbolized by individual characters, within a moral universe that carries implications for the reinstatement of democracy.⁶⁸ The people's hero, the shepherd Arjaka, escapes the prison in which he had been confined by the King (scene 4), and the following scene takes place in a fantastic park where coincidence and mistaken identity lead the hero and heroine unknowingly to save Arjaka from recapture. Here, as elsewhere in the opera, the theatrical moment of surprise and disappointment is depicted directly through the music: when the mistaken identity is revealed there is a *sforzando* moment of surprise, a performance indication calling for 'vigorously agitated' movement, while *fortissimo* minor chords in the low brass denote deep disappointment for Tsharudatta when he does not find Vasantasena in Arjaka's place.⁶⁹ Violence and threats of violence follow, as the 'good' characters are victimized by the villainous ones. The plot and portrayal of the characters are simple and unambiguous. There is no psychology underpinning the characters, and all elements – verbal and non-verbal – support each other within the narrative. Such clarity on all levels, including that of music, is central to nineteenth-century melodrama.⁷⁰ Overall, Herrmann's compositional choices tally with his stated

⁶⁶ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, pp. 27–9.

⁶⁷ I have used the German spellings of the Indian names, as they appear in Herrmann's score.

⁶⁸ As Brooks notes, whether conservative or revolutionary, melodrama is always 'radically democratic', see p. 15. Furthermore, a clear-cut opposition between good and evil is essential for melodrama; see, for example, Hibberd and Nielsen, 'Music in Melodrama', pp. 33–6.

⁶⁹ Scene 5, no. 16, bars 331–2.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Hibberd and Nielsen, 'Music in Melodrama', p. 35.

aim of linking music to action. The result is a close gestural relationship between music and the physical action and emotional expression on stage.

Two examples will suffice to make this point.⁷¹ In a particularly dramatic moment in scene 5, Vasantasena resists the Prince's attempts at seduction, and causes him to bristle with rage as she declares her love for Tsharudatta. The Prince then orders his Steward to kill her, but the Steward refuses and runs away. After yet another failed attempt at seduction, the Prince strangles her himself and leaves her for dead, singing a song of mockery as he covers her body with leaves (see Example 9.1(a)). Vasantasena is not quite dead, however, and is later found and aided by the Barber.

Example 9.1 (a)–(d) No. 18 'Arietta with Duet Recitativo'

(a) Bars 609–617

[Prince: I give you gold, / I give you pet names / And I lay my head and turban at your feet. / Little strumpet,]

609 Prinz
Ich ge-be dir Gold, ich geb dir Schmei-chel-na-men und le-ge Haupt und Tur-ban
cresc.

614 Pr. (Sie wehrt ihn ab) *f* *p* *mf* etc.
dir zu Fü-ßen. Hu-ren-kind,

Etwas rascher

⁷¹ When physical movements as well as emotional states are given directions in the score, they are consistently accompanied by heightened musical 'description' (e.g. change of texture and motivic movement), so the examples here are abundant. See, also no. 17, bars 463–5. The direction for the Prince is: 'Prinz steigt auf, erschrickt, springt ab und schmiegt sich ängstlich an die Brust des Hofmeisters' [The prince climbs on [a cart], is frightened, jumps off and presses himself anxiously against the Hofmeister's chest]. The performance marking is 'Sehr lebendig' [very lively], and he is accompanied by rapidly descending demisemiquaver motivic figures, developing from *piano* to *sforzando*. Hugo Herrmann, *Vasantasena*, vocal score (Berlin, 1930), p. 173.

(b) Bars 622–8

[(*Vasantasena is anxiously on the lookout*) He [Tscharudatta] would rescue me]

(*Vasantasena ängstlich ausschauend*)
cresc.

622 *mf* *cresc.*

624 *Breit* *f*

626 *rit.* *Vasantasena* *a tempo* *f* *etc.*
 Er brächte Rettung,

cresc. *ff*

In this scene, the music follows the dramatic action, so that when Vasantasena becomes concerned (after the Prince's moment of sham lyricism), the music intensifies its motivic movement accordingly, even before any vocal expression on her part. This happens first in her active rejection of his advances (see Example 9.1(a)), and second as she 'fearfully' (stage direction) searches for rescue (see Example 9.1(b)). Vasantasena's voice appears strong and determined in $\frac{4}{4}$, but not for long: the Prince's $\frac{3}{4}$ metre is reinstated, and in a dramatic climax he strangles her, accompanied by a menacing fanfare motif from trumpets and trombones in stacked fourths (see Example 9.1(c)). Through a broken staccato, an already uneasy tempo intensified by the mixture of paired quavers and triplets, and scattered trills, the music then contains a dark parody as the Prince mocks her lifeless body (see Example 9.1(d)). Finally, after a moment of falsetto, which in context is weird and ominous rather than comic or emphatic, the music depicts his careless covering of her body with leaves. The scene concludes with an accelerated version of the 'strangling' motif.

Example 9.1 (c) Bars 632–41

[Prince: With these, my hands, I strangle you. (*He strangles her*) / Are you still thinking of him?

Vasantasena (*with a choking voice*): Tscharudatta! (*She falls motionless to the ground*)

Prince: Die, you slave!]

632 Prinz
f
 mit die - sen mei - nen Hän - den er - würg ich
 (Tromp.) 3 3 *marc.*

635 Pr. (er würgt sie)
 dich. Denkst du ihn
 (Pos.) 3 3

638 Vasantasena (mit erstickter Stimme) **Rascher werden** (Sie sinkt reglos zur Erde nieder)
 Tscha - ru - dat - ta! *sfz.*

Pr. noch? Stirb, du Skla-ven-mensch!
 Tr. *ff* *molto sfz*

The final scene of the opera is set in the Court Hall against the background of a scaffold on a square. The Prince has falsely accused Tscharudatta of Vasantasena's murder and, along with his friend Maitreja, also of robbery. The beginning of the march to the scaffold includes a choir of hangmen, court servants and jurors, and it is accompanied on stage by gongs, drums and trumpets. The hollow soundscape

(d) Bars 642–52

[Prince: Yes, she is quite dead, stone-dead. / I'll cover her up with the withered leafage / that the wind has randomly gathered here. (*He does so*)]

Arietta
642 Leichtes parodisch grazioses Tempo *rit.* *p* a tempo

Pr. (sie komisch betrachtend) Ja die ist schon

646 tot. maus - tot. Ich dek-ke sie mit dür - rem Laub -

649 (Falsett) *parlando* (er tut es)
- werk zu. wie's wahl-los hier der Wind zu-sam-men- leg - te.

and on-stage instruments add to the dramatic tension of this death march. As Tscharudatta is led to the scaffold to be executed, the Prince's steward rushes in to tell the truth about the murder, but is not heard.

Example 9.2(a) shows the moment just before the attempted lynching of Tscharudatta: a ghoulish episode with a description of macabre corpses by a unison choir of hangmen. As the executioners prepare, Vasantasena suddenly appears just in time to save her lover: she rushes onto the stage and halts proceedings, accompanied by trumpets and gongs. The unambiguous contrast in the musical material (see Example 9.2(b)) bears witness to the sudden change from sorrow to joy: the multiple voices of the people's choir joyfully replace the

Example 9.2 (a)–(b) No. 24 ‘Arioso, Choir, and Duet’

(a) Bars 1510–15

[Choir of Executioners: the other [half of the corpse] is still impaled on the stake and grins.

(*Movement among the people*)

The Monk (*rushes in*): Vantasena lives!]

1510 Chor des Volkes

Sopr.
Alt
Ten.
Baß

die an - de - re steckt noch am Pfahl und grinst.

Tempo quasi marcia
(Bewegung im Volk)

1513 Bettelmönch: (hereinstürzend) Vasantasena lebt!

Tr. a.d. Bühne
Gongs

p

menacing unisons, and exuberance erupts in the sonorous textures accompanying Vasantasena’s triumphant voice.

The end of the opera proceeds as follows: as all is explained, it becomes clear that the people’s hero Arjaka has overthrown the King, and he is declared King instead; the Prince is to be brought to justice, but then Tscharudatta pardons him; a massive ‘Pantomime’ finale ensues and the opera is brought to a grand and happy end. The victims have been shown to be virtuous, following the revelation of the truth, and the (democratic) community has been restored after the elimination of tyrants and villains.

Vasantasena is a twentieth-century opera and we need not assert that it is pure melodrama in order to acknowledge that it employs the melodramatic mode. Indeed, in spite of the above description of the opera, it should also be noted that the work is far from electrifying in terms of its drama, and it suffers from long sections of static and undistinguished music. For example, Act I, no. 4 (‘Recitativ

(b) Bars 1516–24

[Choir of the People: It's a miracle! Vasantasena lives!

Vasantasena (*rushes in*): Step back, step back people, executioners, stop! It's me! I'm alive!]

Sehr bewegt
Chor des Volkes

1516 Sopr. *ff*
Alt Wun - der! Va - san - ta -
Ten. *ff*
Baß *ff*

ff agitato

1519 (Vasantasena stürzt herein)
se - na lebt!

cresc. *cresc.* *3*

1522 Vasantasena *f*
Zu - rück, zu - rück ihr Leu - te, Hen - ker hal - tet ein! Ich bin's! Ich le - be!
fff *rit.* *sfz* *sfz*

und Lied') is dominated by a pedal throughout and lacks harmonic movement, and Act II, no. 15 ('Pantomimische Szene und Königswache') could potentially have been an exciting scene (Arjaka escapes and hides from the guards), but instead is protracted and ponderous, and the attempt to link music and action is ineffectual. Indeed, in the opera as a whole the music lacks the melodic distinction, textural, harmonic or rhythmic variety and strong development that we would expect from a well-crafted and compelling work of music theatre based on melodrama.

***Vasantasena*: Opera for the People?**

From Bekker's feedback on the project to the Prussian Ministry for Arts and Culture in December 1930, we can glean that the general reception had been unkind to Herrmann. Although Bekker's own evaluation of the opera is positive overall, his tone in this letter is defensive from the outset, and he acknowledges the opera's less than accessible harmonies and orchestration, and the fact that Act II was too long. But he maintains strong support for the composer and clarifies that the fundamental aim of the project had been to achieve a successful working relationship between composer and the Wiesbaden Staatstheater, regardless of the final quality of the work. Quoting from the initial contract, he recalls that no guarantee had been made of a masterpiece. Through the employment of old forms and theatrical traditions, *Vasantasena* is a successful step on the way to new opera, he argues, and he concludes that the goal of the project had been achieved, even if the opera were not to remain in the repertory: 'As a whole, the work doubtlessly presents a significant step towards the acquisition of a new type of opera which harkens back to original models, even if it is admittedly impossible to record long-term profit for the practical programme.'⁷²

In addition to its clear borrowing from nineteenth-century theatrical traditions, the opera's modernist impetus and contemporary relevance can also be linked to melodrama. As Brooks argues, melodrama belongs to a post-sacred universe, in which moral absolutes have been dislocated and new moral boundaries need to be established, but on an individual human scale, not imposed by church or autocratic regime.⁷³ Although melodrama has been seen as conservative in its frequent return to the status quo in its final scenes, its democratic universe is key to its appeal to the general public – together with its non-verbal signs that are easily legible and confirmed on all levels, and its creation of strong, pure, emotional reactions. Needless to say, these overall characteristics suited the post-war, post-empire and – in the aftermath of Nietzsche – post-sacred Weimar Republic, a period that is in some ways comparable with the historical context of post-Revolutionary France from which melodrama first emerged.

⁷² Letter to the Ministry, dated 3 December, 1930, p. 4. From *Opernpreisausschreiben Hugo Herrmann*, HHW 428/1410.

⁷³ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 15.

Vasantasena drew from the traditions of popular theatre in an attempt to secure the 'new' for 'new opera', using popular art to reinvigorate high art. Its anticipated appeal to a mass audience derived in part from its foundation in melodrama, which it shared with contemporary cinema, rather than from mere imitation of film's visual techniques. Although not as popular as had been hoped, Herrmann's opera offered a bridge between conflicting modernist and reactionary tendencies within the political and artistic arena of the Weimar Republic. This achievement owed much to the involvement of Bekker, whose ideals for Weimar opera – including his programming for Wiesbaden – reveal the blending of seemingly opposite approaches. Bekker recognized the social potential of mass culture, and his engagement with this opera demonstrates his ethical, modernist, leftist aspirations of shaping a better world through music's power to *unify* the masses. By understanding the processes surrounding the creation of *Vasantasena*, we gain valuable insight into melodrama as a player in modernity – its potential to mediate between past and present, as well as bridge the gap between high and low art – and its role in establishing a future for opera in Germany. Unfortunately, however, together with the modernist momentum that drove so many musical developments in the 1920s, this particular operatic narrative was suppressed only a few years after *Vasantasena* had been brought to the stage, with the rise to power of a new political regime.

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PART III
Melodramatic Transformations

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Chapter 10

Berlioz's 'Roméo au tombeau': Melodrama of the Mind

Violaine Anger

Roméo et Juliette (1839) is unique: Berlioz termed it a *symphonie dramatique* – that is to say, lying somewhere between a symphony with pure music and no representation, and a drama, a stage work.¹ It consists of seven movements, some with voices (in the form of arias, recitatives and choruses), others purely instrumental. Berlioz wrote it in 1839, after *Lélio* (1832), 'mélologue'; *Harold en Italie* (1834), 'symphonie à programme'; *Benvenuto Cellini* (1834), 'opéra'; and before *La Damnation de Faust* (1846), 'légende dramatique'. An examination of Berlioz's artistic evolution reveals a logical progression in this continuous questioning of representation.²

When the double death of Romeo and Juliet is evoked towards the end of the work, in movement no. 6, 'Roméo au tombeau des Capulets', Berlioz imagines something that has much to do with melodrama, but has neither actors nor speech. The stage of this melodrama is interior, created in the mind of each listener. Thus, it is a melodrama where 'voice' is an ambiguous object: although the voices of Romeo and Juliet are present, we do not hear them as such. Therefore, the usual definition of melodrama as a genre that mixes the spoken voice with music no longer applies. In this chapter, I shall explain why this scene from *Roméo et Juliette* should nevertheless be understood as melodrama, and then demonstrate the nature of the 'voices' we hear.

The Layout of the Work

In order to understand how the scene operates as melodrama, we need first to have in mind Berlioz's actual staging of the whole piece. Its first performance was at the

¹ In his preface to the published full score, he explains 'although voices are often employed, it is neither a concert opera nor a cantata, but a symphony with choruses', Berlioz, *Roméo et Juliette, symphonie dramatique, Op. 17* [miniature score] (London, n.d.), p. vii (no bar numbers are provided; page numbers are given in the references below).

² For more on Berlioz's attitude to opera, see Julian Rushton, *Roméo et Juliette* (Cambridge, 1994); Michel Faul, *Louis Jullien: Musique, spectacle et folie au XIXe siècle* (Biarritz, 2006); and Rémy Stricker, *Berlioz, dramaturge* (Paris, 2003).

Paris Conservatoire on 24 November 1839, and his instructions published with the score are a useful guide to its physical appearance:

In a large theatre ... a platform will be constructed over the space usually occupied by the orchestra; this platform will be a foot and a half lower than the stage. The footlights should be extinguished. On the stage a large *closed room* will be placed, whose back wall will extend to the *sixième plan* more-or-less; behind this scenery [there are] four terraces, each two and a half feet high. In front of these terraces the rest of the stage will be free to a depth of about ten meters.³

From the beginning, Berlioz created various levels of incarnation, and we must distinguish between the stage and the platform. The stage itself is used for instrumental and non-personal music performed by the orchestra; the two soloists (alto and tenor), who are voices but not characters; and the Prologue chorus, which narrates events in a manner familiar from Shakespeare's plays. The platform is reserved for the characters. At the conclusion, the split chorus of Capulets and Montagus comes onto the platform, as does the chorus from the Prologue, now representing the citizens of Verona, or perhaps just mankind (Berlioz refers to them as 'the crowd'), witnesses to the oath in which they also participate. In this way, the action takes place on the platform, though it is a staging without costumes or scenery. The gap between the symphony (the music) on stage and the drama (the characters) on the platform also maps onto the gap in the work's subject matter, between absolute and real love. The unfolding of the drama – and its incarnation of absolute love – thus takes place with a precise use of visual space, as follows.

1. Introduction – Prologue – Strophes – Scherzetto

Everything takes place on the stage: the Prologue chorus narrates the entire story in recitative, and we hear the main musical themes of the work. We see and hear the orchestra and the choruses and soloists, but no characters. Although the singers are physically present, they do not represent specific individuals, and so it is not quite like an oratorio.

2. Roméo seul – Tristesse – Concert et bal – Grande Fête chez Capulet

The story begins: in this instrumental movement the orchestra plays the ball and banquet music and the plot is evoked in the manner of a narrative poem (comparable to the technique employed in the *Symphonie fantastique*); we hear the Capulets offstage as they leave at the end. In this scene there are implied people and characters, but we do not see them.

³ Berlioz, *Roméo et Juliette*, p. vii.

3. *Scène d'amour*

We hear the choruses in the distance, and the love duet played by the orchestra. We do not see Romeo or Juliet: it is as if they are too ideal to have substance, and exist purely as characters in the music.

4. *La Reine Mab, ou La Fée des songes*

This is the most private moment of the whole work. The music offers us a vision: we dream. There are no longer any characters, either on-stage or in the music.

5. *Convoi funèbre de Juliette*

The chorus returns, but stands immobile on the platform, physically separate from the funeral procession being depicted by the orchestra behind them on the stage. Representing the Capulets, they sing as part of the funeral march. This episode is closer to an oratorio.

6. *Roméo au tombeau des Capulets – Invocation – Réveil de Juliette*

The music for this scene is played by the orchestra, while the chorus remains (silently) on the platform, the sopranos seated. The scene takes place in our mind, like the *Scène d'amour*; but the people on the platform hear it too.

7. *Finale*

Father Laurence rushes on stage with the Prologue chorus (now described by Berlioz as 'the crowd'). He explains everything, pointing to the (invisible) dead bodies of Romeo and Juliet: 'leur sang fume encore' [their blood is still steaming]. The chorus (representing Capulets, Montagus and the crowd) apparently sees the bodies of the two lovers. The conclusion is a great moment of contrition and reconciliation, ending with an oath of eternal friendship.⁴

There is a gradual shift through the work from the visible but impersonal singers introduced at the beginning, through the purely orchestral dream sequence, to a conclusion in the style of a grand opera, but without the *mise-en-scène*. Thus, the gaps between ideal and real, absolute love and actual bodies, stage and platform, are delicately filled with all possible transitional states, from the physical appearance

⁴ Some of the moments from Berlioz's version of the story are drawn not from Shakespeare, but from the version created by David Garrick, which – as discussed below – was performed in Paris in the 1820s. For more on the relationship between Berlioz's version and his sources, see Ian Kemp, 'Romeo and Juliet and *Roméo et Juliette*', in Peter Bloom (ed.), *Berlioz Studies* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 37–80.

of singers who are not characters to the presence of characters without costumes. At the end Father Laurence, the only real character who we actually see (but who will eventually incarnate the voice of God), is on stage with the orchestra, and faces the Capulets, the Montagus and the crowd on the platform. The point of this confrontation between absolute and real, through the sacrifice of innocent people and pure love, is to show a story of redemption, first for the Capulets and the Montagus, and then for everybody who joins them in song at the end.

This extended moment at the culmination of the work can be understood as an example of Berlioz's experimentation with the boundaries between real and imaginary worlds in a manner reminiscent of melodrama. Specifically, he uses music to negotiate between the real and the absolute, between inner and outer worlds, in a manner that Jacqueline Waeber has identified as central to melodrama as forged in the late eighteenth century by Rousseau, Benda and others, and as continuing through the nineteenth century. Indeed, *Roméo et Juliette* is comparable in this respect to his 1832 'mélologue' *Lélio*, an example of what Waeber terms 'théâtre imaginaire',⁵ in which the main character is depicted in the grip of his own imagination in a succession of six tableaux each comprising a monologue and a musical episode. A tale is created from different (real and imaginary, speaking and silent) voices that suggest different temporalities, and spatial distancing is employed to suggest reminiscence and contemplation. The orchestra carries the characterization and expression. Waeber concludes that the work oscillates between past and present, real and imaginary spaces, autobiographical and artistic sublimation, offering a 'doubleness' perceivable at all narrative and structural levels. Although *Roméo et Juliette* is structured rather differently – and incorporates sung rather than spoken words – it nevertheless explores similar territory, negotiating between real and imagined people, and inner and outer worlds.

'Roméo au tombeau des Capulets': A Melodrama with neither Speech nor Actors

Berlioz was inspired by the Shakespeare performances of the visiting English troupe in Paris in 1827–28, where he first saw his future wife Harriet Smithson playing Juliet opposite Garrick. In contrast to Shakespeare's original play, in which the lovers each believe the other to be dead, in Berlioz's version Juliet

⁵ *Lélio* was a 'mélologue' when it was conceived in 1832 as a sequel to the *Symphonie fantastique* rather than a 'mélodrame' (perhaps to avoid the popular theatrical connotations of the latter), though Berlioz relabelled it a 'monodrame' when he revised it in 1852. See Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte: Le Mélodrame de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris, 2005), pp. 135–63. In addition, Waeber discusses Schumann's 'dramatic poem with music' *Manfred* (1852) as another example of 'théâtre imaginaire'; see also Laura Tunbridge, 'Schumann's *Manfred* in the Mental Theatre', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15/2 (2003): pp. 153–83.

wakes just at the moment when the poison Romeo has taken begins to have its effect, and they speak. Of course this changes the play's meaning completely, as the lovers realize that Romeo did not need to poison himself, and that they are thus the victims of fate. (Moreover, for Berlioz, this must have had a highly autobiographical resonance.⁶)

This tomb scene in Berlioz's drama shares broad characteristics with melodrama, most obviously its Gothic situation and heightened emotions: two innocent young people face their deaths in a dark vault; in an excess of delirious joy, they confront their fate.⁷ As was typical of popular theatrical melodrama of the period, atmosphere, stage movement and narrative are conveyed through extremely descriptive – often graphic – music. We first hear an orchestral *allegro agitato e disperato*, signalling Romeo's arrival at the tomb. There are a few short silences and the musical discourse is disrupted, corresponding perhaps to the moment when Romeo drinks the poison. After a longer silence, seven augmented chords sound (p. 254). The tomb echoes with silence. An 'Invocation' (p. 255), an accompanied melody without words, is 'sung' by cor anglais, bassoons and horn, suggesting Romeo's sadness. With a *crescendo molto*, he drains the poison from the cup (p. 257). Then, with a single *dolcissimo* note on the clarinet, Juliet wakes up (p. 260). This triggers orchestral exclamations as Romeo sees her, and a small fragment of the love theme as Juliet responds. A tutti *allegro vivace ed appassionato* signals their ecstatic realization that they are both alive *assai* (p. 261). But suddenly dissonant chords herald Romeo's collapse: the strings indicate his stumbling, and repeated high notes in the woodwind suggest an exclamation from Juliet (p. 271). Falling seconds in the bassoon suggest his answer as he calls out, suffering. Silence. With three exclamations in the strings, he stumbles once more and dies (pp. 274–5). After a long silence, a heroic descent in the violins (p. 275) signals Juliet's decision: accompanied by four *tutti* chords and a descending A major scale in the violins, *con fuoco*, she takes the dagger, and stabs herself (p. 276). We hear her last cry in the oboe, *perdendo*, and a peremptory cadential V–I (A major) in the cello. Although the mood and setting, and the detailed programmatic relationship between music and drama, are characteristic of melodrama, in what sense can this imaginary action be understood as melodrama?

⁶ In 1832, while in Italy, he learned that his engagement to Camille Moke had been broken off by her mother, who had decided she should marry Camille Pleyel instead. Berlioz planned to return to Paris and shoot Camille, her mother and Pleyel (reserving a bullet for himself as well), though in the end he failed to carry out his plan. See David Cairns, *Berlioz: The Making of an Artist, 1803–32* (London, 1989), pp. 457–9.

⁷ Berlioz, *Roméo et Juliette*, pp. 248–76.

Creating Musical Characters without Voices

Although there are no actors, there are certainly musical characters. As in the earlier ‘Scène d’amour’, the lovers in ‘Roméo au tombeau’ exist only through the instrumental characterization of their voices. Their contrasting timbres are roughly suggested by lower strings for Romeo, and woodwind for Juliet. But Berlioz goes beyond this naive stylization. Romeo’s great ‘Invocation’, for example, is a long *cantabile* line played by cor anglais, two bassoons and horn in unison (sometimes joined by viola and second and third horns). They are accompanied by regular *pizzicato con sordini* chords in (divided) double basses, and a delicate filling in by the violas and cellos (also *con sordini*), which gives way to violin tremolos. We recognize a voice here because of the *cantabile* (recalling song), and the use of operatic exclamation (p. 260). Like the cellos at the beginning of the finale in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, the instrumental imitation of vocal stylistic features is enough to suggest the possible existence of speech, and, therefore, of a voice. But in contrast to Beethoven, who uses only cellos, Berlioz suggests the voice through a combination of instruments, which conveys the emotional variation of the timbre and the intimate and unique qualities of the voice. In a similar way, Juliet’s clarinet transforms into two flutes, oboe and cor anglais when she seems to ask Romeo anxiously to find out what has happened; and Romeo’s three sighs are represented by two bassoons, and then, when he falls, bassoon and trombone in unison (pp. 271–2). When Juliet presses him with questions, her voice is suddenly evoked by high strings (violins and violas), and the response of a dying Romeo is provided by double basses (pp. 272–4). The heroic nature of Juliet’s final decision is conveyed by the stylistic imitation of an *opera seria* ‘aria eroica’ by the violins.

But the characters are suggested not only by melody and thus an implied voice. The mutual recognition of the lovers triggers an *allegro vivace ed appassionato* (p. 261) by the whole orchestra, in which we do not know who is singing, or even whether there is a song at all. The reference to individual voices is completely lost, in favour of what we might call an outburst, an explosion of energy, where the notion of an individual (originating) subject no longer exists. In other passages – such as the ‘duet’ towards the end of the scene – the same instrumental textures similarly shift seamlessly from the suggestion of voice to the suggestion of movement. For example, when Romeo stumbles, we hear the strings that previously expressed his ‘joie délirante’. The instruments here unite utterance and movement.

A similar instrumental suggestion also unites utterance and movement with scenery: it happens on many occasions in the ‘Scène d’amour’, and we also find this effect at the beginning of ‘Roméo au tombeau’, where ascending scales *allegro agitato e disperato* transport us from the inner anxiety of the hero to an evocation of the cave in which he finds himself. The long, slow chords (p. 254) hint at both the impressive and grandiose silence of the tomb and the hero’s despair. We might even conclude that the music suggests a subject position in the orchestral development: the scenery is not musically described in itself, as an impersonal setting, but is instead presented through the eyes of Romeo. We follow his reactions, rushing into

the tomb, nervously searching for Juliet, and then looking around and taking in the oppressive vault (pp. 248–54). If this scene were visible, it would not be theatre, but cinema: the audience sees with an eye that is presented as a stylized voice. Here, Berlioz fully advocates the view of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that music can describe everything, even silence, because it is the expression of an inner reaction to the world.⁸ In this sense, voice is primary, in contrast to other conceptions of music – for instance, that of Herder, who considered sound vibration as the first element in music.⁹ But Berlioz was also influenced by his teacher Jean-François Lesueur, who reinterpreted the tradition of *tragédie lyrique* and its description of events in the sense of Rousseauian interiority.¹⁰ By integrating symphonic descriptive devices from the eighteenth century (an evocation of the tomb can also be heard in Gluck's *Alceste*, for instance), Berlioz offered a strictly musical point of view as a narrative device. Furthermore, by creating the infinite varieties of the timbre of voice, he suggested the origin of the world around him.

A Musical Melodrama without Actors

As we have seen, the role of music in 'Roméo au tombeau' is comparable to that in late eighteenth-century melodrama as described by Waeber. It is not organized around a specific form or genre as elsewhere in the work – the dance in the ball scene, Queen Mab's scherzo, the operatic idiom of the finale. Rather, it is the counterpart to the 'Scène d'amour', which also offers the purely instrumental representation of voices. But whereas that scene offers a variation on one main theme – the love theme – and is thus akin to a symphonic poem, here we have an idiom that comprises a succession of small cells, moments, which are musically unrelated to each other, and which foreground movement and effect. For this, Berlioz borrows stylistic elements from other musical traditions and juxtaposes them: accompanied melody, *opera seria*, types of musical exclamation, descriptive music in the tradition of *tragédie lyrique*, quotations of melodies from earlier in the work (including the love theme). It does not rely on imitation in the narrow, descriptive, eighteenth-century sense. We understand what happens because it is all these things combined – that is to say, because of stylistic allusions to discourses that are considered to be independent, and that already exist musically.

⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Imitation', *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris, 1768), p. 361; see also revd edn (Paris, 1832) pp. 295–7.

⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre sur la musique française* (Paris, 1753), p. 261; Johann Gottfried Herder (cited in French translation), in Violaine Anger, *Le Sens de la musique, 1750–1900: Vivaldi, Beethoven, Berlioz, Liszt, Debussy, Stravinski* (2 vols, Paris, 2005), vol. 1, p. 184.

¹⁰ Jean-François Lesueur, *Exposé d'une musique une, imitative, et particulière à chaque solennité*, (Paris, 1787), cited in Anger, *Le Sens de la musique*, vol. 1, p. 128.

Music alludes to *music*, not to something else; through this way of writing, we understand the reality it depicts.

Such a structure cannot be analysed according to pre-existing rhetorical or musical systems. For example, there is a tonal coherence around A major, but this coherence is in fact the basis for incoherence and extreme disparity. The importance here is not the coherence of musical discourse, and its dramatic or rhetorical organization, but the succession of images it creates – as Berlioz states in the score. The precursors of this kind of writing are to be found not only in the melodramas of Benda (as demonstrated by Waerber), but also in the Fantasies of C. P. E. Bach (including the *Freie Fantasie* H75 (*Hamlet*), 1753), and the technique continues in Meyerbeer's writing for the voice in *Le Prophète* (Jean's dream aria in Act II, 'Sous les vastes arceaux d'un temple magnifique', 1849) – though with text. Such writing demands the listener's complicity: affective participation in each note leads to the construction of the whole dramatic scene. As Berlioz makes clear in his preface, he requires a level of imagination and poetic feeling from the audience:

[T]he instrumental scene ['Roméo au tombeau'] ... [must be] cut every time this symphony is not performed for an elite audience extremely familiar with the fifth act of Shakespeare's tragedy with Garrick's denouement, the poetic feeling of which is very elevated. That is to say, the piece must be cut 99 times out of 100.... Thus, after the 'Convoi funèbre de Juliette' a moment of silence will be marked, and the Finale will begin.

The audience must know what is happening from the beginning; but its pleasure does not come from the recognition of musical imitation matching an abstract and relatively clear idea. Nor does it arise from the musical evocation of great moments in a story. Rather, it emerges from the mental and affective elaboration of image, feeling and movement constructed through music.

Berlioz's stylistic elaboration is subtle throughout *Roméo et Juliette*. As alluded to above, he references six types of music, which are all dramatic but with different implications for the body: dance (ball scene); symphonic poem with musical characters implied ('Scène d'amour'); scherzo representing interior music and a dream ('La Reine Mab'); march accompanying movement ('Convoi funèbre de Juliette'); melodrama supporting implied action ('Roméo au tombeau'); and, finally, opera, involving Father Laurence's recitative and aria and the choruses (Finale). As he removes the actors, he removes the effect of redundancy, whether visual or aural (identified as a trait of melodrama by some commentators). For Berlioz, each style of music conveys to the audience a different image of the bodies and emotions of the characters. Moreover, the bodies have various possible stages of incarnation. Music becomes a privileged place to analyse this, because it happens only in the mind of the listener – and indeed it might not happen, as Berlioz suggested (above). *Roméo et Juliette* thus conjures action through the imagination of the audience.

Berlioz's experimentation with what can be represented was inspired by the performances of Shakespeare in Paris in 1827–28 by the English troupe.¹¹ As noted in Chapter 5, French audiences at the Théâtre de l'Odéon were rediscovering *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*, which they had previously known only in Lemercier's rather sanitized adaptations for the French stage. The English actors had a different way of acting, and offered a new sort of theatrical illusion, with a more expansive and direct way of representing violence. The duel between Macbeth and Macduff and the brutal death of Desdemona were shocking for French audiences unused to seeing such physical acts on stage. The English actors effectively challenged the limits of what could be depicted: how should such violence – and its effect on the body – be represented? This sort of subject matter and acting style was, of course, familiar at the popular boulevard theatres, particularly in melodramas. But the English actors demonstrated to the French that this 'popular' way of acting could also be appropriate for interpreting the works of such 'great' authors as Shakespeare, for elite audiences. Neoclassical conventions vacillated between the demands of reality and representation: what should be presented on stage, what should take place off stage; what should be visible, what should remain invisible. The English troupe – who greatly influenced the Romantics in search of a new definition of reality – were challenging such conventions. Critics were moved by Harriet Smithson's 'mute' way of acting; her gestures were eloquent; they noted that she really cried, with real tears, and that the imitation was almost too exact.¹² She mixed outbursts of tears with laughter. Of course the actors exaggerated their expression because English was not well understood by French audiences (moreover, they were individual stars rather than members of a fixed company, used to foregrounding their own talents). But it has generally been acknowledged that their acting style was allied more broadly to an attempt to clarify every nuance of emotion and heighten the effect of the drama – in other words, to make the inner workings of the mind visible.

In *Roméo et Juliette*, Berlioz faces a similar problem of expressing what cannot be represented in his depiction of absolute love. Deeply moved by the achievements of the English actors, he turned to the representative power of music. By removing the actors, the image, the voice and the words from the 'melodrama' of 'Roméo au tombeau', he gave music a new function: to create an internal theatre, and blur the boundary between imagination (orchestra) and reality (song).

¹¹ For more on the English troupe in Paris, see Jean-Louis Borgerhoff, *Le Théâtre anglais à Paris sous la Restauration* (Paris, 1912); Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odeon, 1824–1828* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Peter Raby, *Fair Ophelia: A Life of Harriet Smithson Berlioz* (Cambridge, 1982); John Pemble, *Shakespeare Goes to Paris: How the Bard Conquered France* (London, 2005). See also Julie de Pharamond's unpublished paper on the press reception, presented at the Société d'histoire du théâtre, Paris, 4 December 2007.

¹² See, for example, the reviews in *Le Constitutionnel*, *Le Journal des Débats*, *La Quotidienne* (January 1828). See also Jean-Louis Borgehoff, *Le Théâtre anglais à Paris sous la restauration* (Paris, 1912), p. 212.

He thus encouraged a new way of listening, and redefined the role of the self and of our emotional response to music. The English actors coming to Paris in 1827–28 brought melodramatic ways of acting to the respectable stage, and thus blurred the distinction between what can be represented and what cannot. Berlioz created a melodrama of the imagination and transposed the distinction to that between stage and symphonic music. Each musical style becomes one possible solution to musical incarnation (depending on the subject), and preserves the contradictory possibilities of presenting a singing body on stage and of leaving the audience completely in a dream world. We can deduce from this technique Berlioz's implicit expansion of the possibilities of melodrama. He offers a pluralistic, interactive image of reality: there is no abstract stylistic truth; each style is related to one particular experience. The body does not receive a coherent definition: only the empathy of the audience can provide its unity. This highly subjective way of representing reality requires the intense emotional and imaginary participation of the audience, which gives, so to speak, a body, a sensory unity, to the ruptured discourse. The setting of 'Roméo au tombeau' demonstrates this idea: we see the orchestra, the Capulets and the Montagus are on the platform (the men standing, the sopranos sitting, in order to have the right balance), and everybody is listening to the music. After hearing the scene, the singers embody the repenting Capulets and Montagus in the 'Finale'. This 'melodrama' encourages a collective emotion, even if it is aimed at the imagination of each individual.

The Voice of a Melodrama without Actors

Berlioz thus writes a musical melodrama in which the characters exist through the orchestral suggestion of the timbre of the voices, mixed with their movements and reactions to the world in which they move. In so doing, he arguably pushes the boundaries of the genre, implicitly rejecting the practice of alternating music and declamation. He says in the preface that words are too precise, and bridle the imagination: '[i]nstrumental language, a language that is richer and more varied, less fixed, [is] by its very non-specificity incomparably stronger in such cases.' Thus, he does not want speaking characters on stage, yet writes a whole work exploring incarnation and the strength of love.¹³ The successful removal of not only words but also the singing body attests to the fact that 'voice' exists beyond the actual sound emitted: it is the subjective reaction to the world, be it spoken or sung. Like Rousseau, he considers the spoken voice to be a sort of music, and works on the opposition between spoken and sung word. But he goes further than Rousseau, who was concerned with imagining music that would convey emotion, rather than description or imitation: Berlioz does not consider that a voice is rooted in its physical source. Where Rousseau reminds us that, on hearing a cry, we

¹³ Violaine Anger, 'Roméo et Juliette, ou représenter l'irreprésentable', *Hera's Peacock: An International Thematic Interdisciplinary Journal*, 3 (2007): pp. 51–67.

immediately know that the person is there, even if we do not see them,¹⁴ Berlioz anticipates modern experience: we hear a recorded voice without assuming the immediate presence of its owner. In other words, the envisaged voice as a sign can be released from its source. There is no necessary continuity between the two, and so a voice can be recreated. On hearing the signifier, we are then led to recreate, in our mind, the signified. 'Voice' is not a closed entity for Berlioz: he creates it using orchestral timbre, combinations of instruments, and techniques of playing. The materiality of the 'voice' thus belongs to the mental sphere. This does not mean that we do not physically hear the sound of a voice or the sound of the orchestra that recreates it, but it has no existence in itself. It is intimately linked to the mental image of the sound to be recreated. Vocality, as the intrinsic quality of voice, does not exist.¹⁵ What interests Berlioz is the possibility of recreating a voice, and creating a fictive person. In this manner, he leads us also to reconsider the definition of 'body'.

As established above, the relationship between voice and body in 'Roméo au tombeau' is neither direct nor immediate: it is created by the imagination of the audience. In other words, the link between physical presence and idea, on stage and off stage, can always be recreated, because the two terms of the opposition are not fixed. The link that the composer establishes is also an appeal to participation from the audience. Thus, Berlioz invites us to consider the experience of a work of art as active, as a process of creation.

Melodrama as Re-Composition

Voice, says Berlioz implicitly, does not exist as such. It is not the crystallization of sounds through an individual, nor is it direct access to the self; rather, it is the sign of individuality. In 'Roméo au tombeau', voice reconstructed through its timbre can equally be a *cantabile* line, an exclamation, the quotation of a former love declaration or a cry of suffering. Embedded in the orchestral fabric, it becomes a means of exploring the world as well as a reaction to it. Voice can be everything, as long as it has a psychological quality. The opposition is no longer between spoken voice and music, or between voice and instrumental music: the real opposition exists somewhere between a reconstructed voice (where the distinction between music and speech is not clear), and a real voice. This happens to a degree in the 'Scène d'amour' as well as in 'Roméo au tombeau', but in the case of the latter it is taken to its limit, in that all possibilities are offered in quick succession.

¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine des langues* (Amsterdam, 1755), chap. 1, p. 1.

¹⁵ Violaine Anger, 'Réflexion sur la nature de la vocalité dans le duo d'amour de Roméo et Juliette', *Musurgia* 11/2: 'Images de la voix', ed. Marie-Noëlle Masson (2004): pp. 53–65.

Melodrama is arguably the art that appeals most to the imagination of the audience, through juxtaposition of its component parts, as this study of 'Roméo au tombeau' has suggested. But rather than as an opposition of speech and music, we might understand melodrama as a genre that questions the usual oppositions. Where precisely does the boundary between music and speech lie when they are juxtaposed? In other words, if music can imitate speech, or can become speech, then where is the new frontier? The traditional distinction between declamation and song concerns pitch: the difference between recitative and aria is one of regularity of movement and melodic contour, which in turn define 'music'. Might melodrama be considered the genre in which this opposition is reorganized? We might conclude that in 'Roméo au tombeau' timbre is revealed as the most important parameter that distinguishes music from speech.

Chapter 11

Be it [N]ever so Humble?

The Narrating Voice in the Underscore to
The Wizard of Oz (MGM, 1939)

Fiona Ford

In the eighteenth century the term ‘melodrama’ signified a specific musical technique whereby a section of monologue or dialogue within a play alternated with (or occasionally was accompanied by) dramatic music. During the nineteenth century the term broadened to refer to ‘a whole type of drama, whether musically accompanied or not’ with ‘certain dramatic features in common – stereotyped characters, sentimental and/or terrifying plots with ample opportunity for action scenes or emotionally charged mimed scenes’.¹ There are relatively few remaining examples of melodramas with musical accompaniment, and it can only be conjectured whether their scores are truly representative of the large number that were performed. Our general impression from these extant scores is that such accompaniments were entirely apposite to the requirements of the plot, and by the end of the nineteenth century in England and America they typically consisted of a series of short, flexible musical passages or ‘cues’ (both original and pre-existing), which could be tailored to the length of the stage action as required.² It was common for musical directors to have their own collections of such cues, or *melos*,³ categorized according to dramatic function: for example hurries, *agitatos*, *misteriosos* and music suitable for battles and storms. In a manner still recognizable in British pantomimes today, the entrances and exits of stock characters were

¹ Anne Dhu Shapiro, ‘Action Music in American Pantomime and Melodrama, 1730–1913’, *American Music*, 1/4 (1984): pp. 49–72, here pp. 58–9.

² See, for example, David Mayer, ‘The Music of Melodrama’, in David Bradby, Louis James and Bernard Sharratt (eds), *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama: Aspects of Popular Entertainment in Theatre, Film and Television 1800–1976* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 49–63.

³ The term ‘*melos*’ can refer to either singular or multiple music cues, although ‘*melo*’ is used to describe individual cues in David Mayer and Matthew Scott (eds), *Four Bars of ‘Agit’: Incidental Music for Victorian and Edwardian Melodrama; Authentic all-purpose music by Alfred Edward Cooper and other nineteenth-century theatre musicians, with instructions for use*, with a preface by Sir Peter Hall (London, 1983), p. 11.

accompanied by short character pieces, the villain, for instance, was typically announced by tremolo strings sustaining diminished triads.

These collections of melos were the antecedents for the numerous collections of music published to accompany silent films – indeed, many of the music directors in cinemas were experienced in the art of compiling and composing incidental music for stage dramas. The arrival of film sounded the death knell for stage melodramas, but, as Ben Singer's study has shown, the same sensational melodramas that formed the staple of American popular theatre in the late nineteenth century – where typically the terrified heroine was tied to a rail track or the hero was strapped to a log and heading towards the teeth of a whirring buzz saw – had a new lease of life as film melodramas in the 1910s.⁴ While the term 'melodrama' in film studies has come to designate a body of American films aimed primarily at a female audience, with banal domestic plots and the display of excessive emotion – such as the films of Douglas Sirk from the 1950s – a more general feature linking such filmic melodramas with their nineteenth-century stage predecessors is their lowbrow connotations. The label 'melodramatic' is shorthand for something vulgar, aimed at unsophisticated audiences, and characterized by 'a seemingly archaic excess of sensation and sentiment, a manipulation of the heartstrings that exceeds the bounds of good taste'.⁵ These are qualities which disrupt the flow of the classical, goal-orientated narrative, yet have a fundamental appeal to a wide audience. Recently, Linda Williams has proposed that the disruptive nature of melodrama is the norm rather than the exception in American cinema, and that it is the underlying cultural mode which 'most often typifies popular American narrative in literature, stage, film, and television when it seeks to engage with moral questions'.⁶ Singer, whilst acknowledging Williams's hypothesis, has situated melodrama 'somewhere between a specific, fixed, coherent single genre and a pervasive popular mode spanning many different genres', proposing instead:

a definitional scheme that analyzes melodrama as a 'cluster concept' involving different combinations of at least five key constitutive elements: strong pathos; heightened emotionality; moral polarization; nonclassical narrative mechanics; and spectacular effects. Just a couple, and perhaps even just one, of these elements might prompt the designation of a play or a film as a melodrama. The meaning of the term *melodrama* is so ambiguous because there have been so many different historical combinations of these five elements.⁷

⁴ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York, 2001), p. 11.

⁵ Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, p. 7 (original emphasis).

The Wizard of Oz (MGM, 1939) is an ideal vehicle for examining the defining characteristics of melodrama, since its narrative contains each of Singer's five key concepts. David Neumeyer, discussing the significant amount of dramatic feature music in the film musical *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944), has already noted that 'the merger of melodrama and musical is exactly what characterizes the MGM cycle of the "integrated musical", a cycle that is particularly associated with high-budget Technicolor productions and whose first instance is thus, arguably, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)'.⁸ Moreover, L. Frank Baum's original novel has spawned a complex network of stage productions, silent and sound films (both live action and cartoon), in addition to re-interpretations (such as *The Wiz* for stage and screen in the 1970s, for solely black actors), further adventures in Oz by several authors (including Baum), and 'back stories' (such as Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* novel from 1995 and subsequent hit stage show). This enables us to examine *The Wizard of Oz* across three media: novel, stage show and film. The main focus of this chapter will be the incidental music between Arlen and Harburg's hit songs in the MGM musical in 1939, and (to a lesser extent) in the first licensed stage production in the early 1940s. Some of my examples are sections of underscored dialogue, a technique rooted in nineteenth-century stage melodrama. David Neumeyer has already shown how the former Broadway composer Max Steiner drew on melodramatic technique for underscored dialogue in his score to *The Informer* from 1935, and made compelling connections between Steiner's scoring practice, the grave-digging scene in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and examples from early twentieth-century operettas by Romberg and Friml.⁹ I will show how other music cues in *The Wizard of Oz* (in both the film and stage versions) correspond closely to the functional incidental music found in later nineteenth-century stage melodrama. To that end I will be examining music cues that either accompany physical action or herald the entrances and exits of important characters with appropriate chordal flourishes.

Although Baum wrote 14 full-length novels and numerous short stories about the Land of Oz,¹⁰ he is most famous for the first novel in the series, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, published in 1900. Mark Evan Swartz has written a history of the various stage and screen adaptations that existed before the MGM film, and his research (summarized below) highlights how these laid the groundwork for much of the iconography and extraneous plot elements in the MGM film.¹¹ The success of his first Oz novel prompted Baum to write his own stage adaptation, and to write the music he enlisted Paul Tietjens. Their concept emulated a Gilbert and Sullivan

⁸ David Neumeyer, 'Merging Genres in the 1940s: The Musical and the Dramatic Feature Film', *American Music*, 22/1 (2004): pp. 122–32, here p. 129.

⁹ David Neumeyer, 'Melodrama as a Compositional Resource in Early Hollywood Sound Cinema', *Current Musicology*, 57 (1995): pp. 61–94.

¹⁰ Michael O. Riley, *Oz and Beyond: The Fantasy World of L. Frank Baum* (Lawrence, KS, 1997), p. 7.

¹¹ Mark Evan Swartz, *Oz Before the Rainbow: L. Frank Baum's 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' on Stage and Screen to 1939* (Baltimore, MD, 2000).

comic opera with the songs integrated into the plot. Fred Hamlin, producer and manager of Chicago's Grand Opera House, agreed to stage their proposed show, but his chosen director, Julian Mitchell, rejected both Baum's scenario and most of Tietjens's music. In its place Mitchell created a musical extravaganza, a lavish hybrid form of popular musical theatre combining elements of comic opera, farce, pantomime, vaudeville, burlesque and minstrelsy, with ambitious spectacle and lavish costumes.¹² In common with many contemporaneous forms of musical theatre, extravaganzas had loosely structured plots connecting a variety of songs, dances and routines with little or no relevance to the story. The promise of racy clad chorus girls was one of the main selling points. The show that opened in Chicago on 16 June 1902 – called simply *The Wizard of Oz* – was only peripherally related to Baum's fairytale and differed drastically from his original dramatization. Mitchell altered and expanded the cast, for example introducing Cynthia Cynch, the former paramour of the Tin Woodman and a lunatic Ophelia-figure, and replacing Toto with a pet cow, Imogene. Of the original cast, the vaudeville double-act Fred Stone and David Montgomery, who performed the roles of the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman respectively, were the most fêted for their stage antics. The show was packed with musical numbers, only a handful of which derived from Baum's and Tietjens's original ideas. The rest were newly composed ethnic and novelty songs or, as was common in musicals of the time, interpolations from other shows. The stage show was immensely popular and profitable, enjoying extended runs in major cities and nationwide tours for well over a decade. The songs changed frequently every season to boost a particular character's appeal, or to reflect the abilities and demands of new cast members.

The silent film versions of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* reflect the evolution of film technology and changes in presentation. Again Baum was involved with the first short films, made in 1908 by the Selig Polyscope Company as part of a multi-media touring show known as *Fairylogue and Radio-Plays*. In the manner of an illustrated lecture, Baum presented a travelogue about his fairylands, using a series of hand-coloured films, slides and orchestral accompaniment. This novel entertainment was popular but unprofitable, and to offset some of his debts Baum gave Selig the rights to make new motion pictures based on three of his books. Selig released their one-reeler film *The Wizard of Oz* in 1910 with a condensed narrative closer to Baum's novel than to the stage extravaganza. Finally in 1925, the Chadwick Picture Company released *The Wizard of Oz*, a full-length silent feature based on a scenario by Baum's son, in which Dorothy's adventures are seen via a framing story where a toymaker is reading Baum's novel to his granddaughter; some of the Oz story is made out to be the little girl's dream.¹³

This brief overview reveals the free and varied manner in which Baum's original novel had been treated before the 1939 film musical, a trend that continued with MGM and beyond. It was inevitable that the memory of the stage extravaganza

¹² Ibid., pp. 35–6.

¹³ See Swartz, *Oz Before the Rainbow*, pt. 2, for more detailed information.

would have a strong impact on its silent-screen adaptations, but the MGM musical was not immune to the influence of its predecessors either. Swartz concludes that the extravaganza had the strongest impact, being not only the chief impetus for MGM's conception of the project as a musical from the outset, but also the source for various details including the Kansas farmhands; the cyclone scenes of whirling people, animals and objects; the Good Witch sending a snowfall to freeze the deadly poppies; the corny vaudeville banter of the Scarecrow and Tinman; and even Dorothy having a surname, Gale.¹⁴

A contemporaneous review by Pare Lorentz in *McCall's* complained that the MGM film was 'not a fantasy but a Broadway musical comedy, unfortunately equipped with a score by Broadway musical-comedy writers'.¹⁵ Although this jibe was probably aimed at Arlen and Harburg, it is also an accurate description of Herbert Stothart, music director at MGM from 1929 to 1947 and the person responsible for most of the background score.¹⁶ Stothart had a Broadway background as conductor, composer and arranger, and went on to transform many operettas of the 1910s and 20s into sound films for Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy.¹⁷ This Broadway connection is a vital link with practices in popular music theatre and the nineteenth-century world of Viennese operetta. As was typical of most Hollywood studios, little time was left for adding the underscore once shooting and editing had been completed. The only practical solution was to divide the tasks between a team of composers, arrangers, orchestrators and copyists. According to the film credits, Stothart was assisted by George Bassmann, Murray Cutter, George Stoll, Paul Marquardt and Ken Darby, but there were others, including Roger Edens and Robert Stringer. Together, this team elaborated 35 or 40 minutes of songs into 76 minutes of music, with the result that about three-quarters of the film has accompaniment.¹⁸ Hugh Fordin has provided a fairly comprehensive list itemising who was responsible for particular cues, based on surviving documents in the MGM archives.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the original handwritten orchestral score and parts for *The Wizard of Oz* were discarded in the late 1960s during MGM's fateful clear-out; only some piano-vocal manuscripts of the songs and keyboard reductions of the underscore survive.²⁰ Unless I have found information to the

¹⁴ Swartz, *Oz Before the Rainbow*, pp. 244–5.

¹⁵ Cited in Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of 'The Wizard of Oz', Movie Magic and Studio Power in the Prime of MGM – and the Miracle of Production #1060*, Special Edition (New York, 1989), p. 22.

¹⁶ This score was Stothart's only Academy Award for 'Best Original Score'.

¹⁷ Stanley Green, *Encyclopaedia of the Musical Film* (Oxford, 1981), p. 270.

¹⁸ Harmetz, *The Making of 'The Wizard of Oz'*, p. 98.

¹⁹ Hugh Fordin, *M-G-M's Greatest Musicals: The Arthur Freed Unit* (New York, 1975, repr. 1996), pp. 528 and 551–2.

²⁰ Laura Lynn Broadhurst, 'A Note on the Sources', in E. Y. Harburg and Harold Arlen, *The Wizard of Oz 70th Anniversary Deluxe Songbook*, ed. Tod Edmondson and Ethan Neuburg (Van Nuys, CA, 2009), p. 14.

contrary, I have assumed that Stothart was chiefly responsible for instigating the material in the cues under examination. He made copious use of Arlen's melodies, weaving fragments throughout his underscore (particularly 'Over the Rainbow'), both pre-empting and echoing their use as songs. In this manner, they functioned as leitmotifs, the audience making additional associations as the film progressed. This technique added further to the integration of the songs and plot. Some examples will be discussed below.

When the total soundtrack is experienced, many of the detailed nuances in the underscore are inaudible because the volume of the music was deliberately lowered during dubbing sessions to guarantee the prominence and intelligibility of the dialogue, a common practice in American films during the 1930s. Fortunately, more recent DVD releases of the MGM film enable the underscore to be heard without the dialogue.²¹ The following discussion of the underscore is not always chronological, but makes use of the basic tripartite structure of the film (the brief prologue and epilogue in Kansas framing the longer central section in Oz) for purposes of orientation.

Use of Pre-Existing Material

Just as a nineteenth-century music director may have consulted his collection of pre-existing melos, Stothart and his team made at least three direct borrowings from the classical repertoire, each of which function as 'hurry' music and involve Toto. The focus in these scenes is on action rather than dialogue. For the Kansas prologue when Dorothy is running after Toto, and later when Toto escapes from the basket on Miss Gulch's bike, Stothart adapted a Schumann piano piece, 'Fröhlicher Landmann, von der Arbeit zurückkehrend' [The Happy Farmer] from *Album für die Jugend* [Album for the Young], Op. 68, No. 10. This jaunty little number fits the antics of the scampering dog and also shares its opening motif with that of 'Come out, come out, wherever you are'. The second borrowing, Mendelssohn's Scherzo for piano (*Trois fantaisies ou caprices*, Op. 16, No. 2), accompanies Toto's later escape from the Witch in Oz.²² Whereas in Baum's novel an assertive Dorothy, enslaved by the Witch, overcomes her captor and rescues her friends, in the MGM film this quintessentially American fairytale becomes a 'conventional Princess Rescue Story' in which Dorothy is rescued by her friends.²³

²¹ For example, *The Wizard of Oz* (MGM, 1939), dir. Victor Fleming; *Restored and Remastered: The Definitive Three-Disc Collector's Edition* (Warner Home Video, 2006). On the first disc the dialogue can be removed by selecting the 'Music-and-Effects-Only' track; the dialogue can be followed silently, if desired, by selecting subtitles. The third disc includes some of the silent film adaptations discussed by Swartz.

²² The opening is reproduced in Harburg and Arlen, *The Wizard of Oz 70th Anniversary Deluxe Songbook*, pp. 90–91.

²³ Salman Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, BFI Film Classics (London, 1992), p. 55.

This rescue scene is furnished with music from Mussorgsky's *St John's Night on Bald Mountain* (in Ravel's version), specially adapted for the purpose by Roger Edens.²⁴ There are also several popular songs in the underscore. The presence of talking apple trees provides an obvious excuse for Van Alstyne's 'In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree' (1905), a tune easily turned into 'hurry' music when Dorothy and the Scarecrow are forced to flee the angry trees, which are pelting them with their apples. 'Gaudeamus Igitur' is similarly apposite for the mock graduation ceremony held by the Wizard. These two examples are both blatant, single-use quotations, inspired by particular scenes in the film, whereas the use of 'Home, Sweet Home' is more subtle and pervasive.

'Home, Sweet Home'

Stothart was inspired to use 'Home, Sweet Home' by both textual triggers and Dorothy's emotional undercurrents. The song comes from an early nineteenth-century stage melodrama, and its lyrics were composed by the prolific American playwright John Howard Payne for a ballad in his play *Clari* (or *The Maid of Milan*), adapted from a French ballet-pantomime and first staged in London, at Covent Garden, in May 1823. The musical director at that time, Henry Bishop, provided the incidental music, re-using a melody from one of his earlier stage works for 'Home, Sweet Home'.²⁵ The song became universally popular and was a particular favourite during the American Civil War. Over time it has become a cliché for a whole network of imagery and associations with 'home' and was a standard much used by Carl Stalling in his scores for Warner Bros. cartoons, as for example at the end of *No Parking Hare* (Bugs Bunny, 1954). Baum made one reference to 'Home, Sweet Home' in his novel, paraphrasing the well-known line from the last verse, 'be it ever so humble'. When the Scarecrow expresses his surprise that Dorothy wishes to return to her grey Kansas home, Dorothy explains 'No matter how dreary and grey our homes are, we people of flesh and blood would rather live there than in any other country, be it ever so beautiful. There is no place like home'.²⁶ By comparison, the screenplay makes several direct uses of the line 'There's no place like home' during the transition from the central Oz section to the Kansas epilogue. Its inclusion in the screenplay was due either to two of the screenwriters, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf, or to the associate producer Arthur Freed.²⁷ Quotations from the 'Home, Sweet Home' melody in the underscore at these points are therefore to be expected and will be

²⁴ Fordin, *M-G-M's Greatest Musicals*, p. 552.

²⁵ Nicholas Temperley and Bruce Carr, 'Bishop, Sir Henry R.' in www.grovemusiconline.com (accessed 1 August 2011). The article discusses possible antecedents and variants of the melody.

²⁶ L. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz* [1900] (London, 1994), p. 27 (my emphasis).

²⁷ Harmetz, *The Making of 'The Wizard of Oz'*, p. 51.

discussed below. There are also numerous instances of less explicit allusions to the ‘Home, Sweet Home’ melody when Dorothy is thinking about home (either wanting to leave it or to return to it). For example, in the prologue after Auntie Em says ‘find yourself a place where you won’t get into any trouble!’, when Dorothy decides to leave home with Toto, and during her encounter with Professor Marvel; and in Oz when Dorothy half-recognizes the Scarecrow and the Tinman (‘And it’s funny, but I feel as if I’ve known you all the time’), and – after the Wizard has distributed his symbolic tokens to Dorothy’s three friends – as the Scarecrow asks the Wizard, ‘Hey, what about Dorothy?’.²⁸ One of these less explicit examples, Dorothy’s encounter with Professor Marvel, is analysed below. The opening of the cue for this scene (‘Crystal Gazing’), composed by Stothart with the performance indication ‘Mysterioso’, has recently been published.²⁹ The transcription in Example 11.1 expands on this opening to provide the entire cue and associated dialogue (Professor Marvel and Dorothy are indicated by the abbreviations ‘PM’ and ‘D’ respectively).³⁰ The cue, lasting approximately 90 seconds, contains some original pastiche compositions, allusions to and quotations from ‘Home, Sweet Home’, and a quotation from an Arlen/Harburg song. Just as in the original technique of melodrama, the cue underpins and reflects the characters’ changing emotions.

Dorothy, in her innocence, regards Professor Marvel as an exotic sorcerer because he wears a turban and knows all about her just by gazing into his crystal ball. To the audience he is a charlatan, who obtained his ‘knowledge’ from a photograph purloined from Dorothy’s basket while he was instructing her to close her eyes ‘in order to be better in tuned with the infinite’.³¹ This combination of exoticism and untrustworthiness was a common trope. The accompaniment to Professor Marvel’s description of Dorothy’s home begins with a pastiche of Russian Orientalism in the style of Borodin, an arching oboe melody incorporating the characteristic augmented second interval over a syncopated accompaniment. In between these opening Oriental flourishes is a quotation of the ‘Merry Old Land of Oz’ theme. This may be foreshadowing Dorothy’s imminent adventures, but it is more likely a reference to Professor Marvel’s alter ego in Oz, namely that other charlatan, the Wizard. This hypothesis is confirmed by the brief reprise of this Oriental theme near the end of the film when Dorothy and her friends realize that the Wizard is a fake (the Scarecrow crying indignantly, ‘You humbug!’³²). The Kansas prologue contains familiar faces – Miss Gulch, Hunk, Hickory, Zeke

²⁸ See Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf, *The Wizard of Oz’: The Screenplay*, ed. Michael Patrick Hearn (London, 1991, repr. 2001), pp. 8, 13, 14–18, 49 and 100.

²⁹ Harburg and Arlen, *The Wizard of Oz 70th Anniversary Deluxe Songbook*, p. 88.

³⁰ In Examples 11.1 and 11.2 all transposing instruments have been notated at sounding pitch; the suggested orchestration contains some guesswork.

³¹ Langley et al., *The Wizard of Oz’*, p. 16.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 98. The ‘Crystal Gazing’ cue in Harburg and Arlen, *The Wizard of Oz 70th Anniversary Deluxe Songbook*, p. 88, also has an alternative title of ‘The Wizard’s Exposé’.

and Professor Marvel – who would all reappear in Dorothy’s ‘dream’ about Oz as different characters (or ‘day residue’ to use the Freudian term); these were the Wicked Witch, the Scarecrow, the Tinman, the Lion and the Wizard respectively. Musically, only those relationships between Miss Gulch and The Wicked Witch, and Professor Marvel and The Wizard, are reinforced in the central section of the film through repetition of their respective prologue themes. Ultimately, the travelling conjuror’s intentions towards Dorothy are kindly, and he persuades her to return home by painting an emotive image of her broken-hearted aunt, collapsing on her bed. This is represented in the second part of the cue (from bar 17 onwards) through subtle harmonic and melodic suggestions of ‘Home, Sweet Home’. While the first few notes of the opening refrain line ‘Home, Home, [sweet, sweet, home]’ are quoted directly (see bars 17–19 and 25–7 in Example 11.1), the closing refrain line ‘There’s no place like home’ is first alluded to harmonically (bars 28–35) before crystallizing into a direct quotation towards the end of the cue (bars 40–42) as Dorothy runs back to the farmhouse. The second part of the cue expands earlier material linking Auntie Em’s request to Dorothy, ‘and find yourself a place where you won’t get into any trouble!’, to Dorothy’s poetic monologue before ‘Over the Rainbow’. From the outset of the film, the underscore is therefore insinuating that ‘home’ is where Dorothy ‘won’t get into any trouble’.

In comparison with Baum’s novel, the MGM musical has considerably more indications that Dorothy wishes to return to Kansas. Her conflicting emotions – yearning to be either away from or back at home – are embodied in the underscore in the frequent references to ‘Over the Rainbow’ and ‘Home, Sweet Home’ respectively. By the end of the film, her desire to return home is made concrete through textual reiterations of the line ‘There’s no place like home’: for example by Glinda and Dorothy just before Dorothy leaves Oz; by Dorothy as she awakens in her own bed; and by Dorothy at the end of the film when she says ‘And ... oh, Auntie Em, there’s no place like home!’³³ Phrases from the ‘Home, Sweet Home’ melody (with only slight variation) appear in the underscore during the farewell scene before these textual triggers, further cementing the notion that home is the place where Dorothy wants to be, the place where she won’t get into any trouble. For example, a solo violin plays the phrase ‘Be it ever so humble’ before Dorothy leaves Oz (as she hugs and kisses the Scarecrow) and again before Glinda and Dorothy begin their repetitions of ‘There’s no place like home’. The same melodic fragment is heard for a third time as Dorothy gradually awakens in her own bed, still chanting ‘There’s no place like home’. The matching melodic phrase for ‘There’s no place like home’ is only played once Dorothy is fully awake. Just before the end credits, the underscore beneath Dorothy’s closing speech combines the refrain from ‘Over the Rainbow’ (violins) with the longest melodic extract from ‘Home, Sweet Home’, a modification of the opening phrase ‘Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, Be it ever so humble, There’s no place like home’, the latter played by a solo horn. As Paul Nathanson states, ‘[A]s she wakes

³³ Langley et al., ‘*The Wizard of Oz*’, pp. 106–107 and 109.

Example 11.1 Transcription of 'Crystal Gazing' cue. Underscore to *The Wizard of Oz* (MGM 1939)

[PM]: We'll gaze into the crystal! Ah ... what's this I see? A house ... with a picket fence and a

Mysterioso

Ob. *mp*

Hn. *mp*

Vln. *mp*

Cl. *mp*

Vc./Db. *mp*

barn with a weather vane and a ... of a ... of a ... running horse. [D]: That's our farm! [PM]: Yes, yes ... there's a ... there's a woman

7

Oboe

she's ... she's wearing a ... a polka-dot dress ... her face is careworn ... [D]: That's Aunt Em!
[PM]: Yes, her ... her name is Emily [D]: That's right. What's she doing?

13

Molto Rit. **Molto rubato**

Hp. *mp*

Str. *mp*

Hn. *mp*

[PM]: Well ... I ... I can't quite see ... Why she's crying! [D]: Oh!
[PM]: Someone has hurt her. Someone has just about broken her heart ... [D]: Me?

17

Meno mosso

Fl. *rit.*

Ob. *rit.*

Vlns. *rit.*

Hn. *rit.*

Vla. *rit.*

[PM]: Well, it's ... it's someone she loves very much. Someone she's been very kind to. Someone she's taken care of in sickness.

25 **A tempo** **Rit.**

Vlns.

30 [D]: I had the measles once ... and she stayed right by me every minute! [PM]: Uh-huh. [D]: What's she doing now?

30

Vc./Db. *pizz.*

[PM]: Well, she's ... What's this? Why she's ... she's putting her hand on her heart. Why, she's ... she's dropping down on the bed!

34 [D]: Oh, no! No!

A tempo

Ob.

B. Cl.

Vc./Db. *pizz.*

[PM]: Well, that's all. The crystal's gone dark.

[D]: Oh, you ... you don't suppose she could really be sick, do you? Oh, oh, I've got to go home right away!

40 **Rit.** **Piu largo**

Fl.

pp

Hrn.

pizz.

[PM]: But what's this? I thought you were going along with me!

[D]: Oh, no, no! I have to get to her right away! Come on, Toto, come on, come on!

44

up back in her own bed, both Dorothy herself and the background music make it very clear that “home, sweet home” lies “over the rainbow”.³⁴ This quodlibet is transcribed in Example 11.2, its resolution interrupted by the closing credits music (based on ‘Glinda’s Theme’).³⁵

Example 11.2 ‘Over the Rainbow’ and ‘Home, Sweet Home’ quodlibet. Underscore to *The Wizard of Oz* (MGM, 1939)

[Dorothy]: *And they sent me home!* [Everyone else laughs] *Doesn't anybody believe me?*
 [Uncle Henry]: *Of course we believe you, Dorothy ...*
 [Dorothy]: *Oh, but anyway, Toto, we're home – home! And this is my room – and you're all here –*

Moderato Hn.

Vins.

and I'm not going to leave here ever, ever again, because I love you all!
And ... oh, Auntie Em! There's no place like home!

Ritenuoto [attacca Closing Credits]

For many, the textual (and musical) references to ‘There’s no place like home’ appear hackneyed and mawkish. For example, Salman Rushdie detests this ‘cutesy slogan’,³⁶ and remains unconvinced why Dorothy should prefer drab Kansas over the colourful Oz:

Anybody who has swallowed the scriptwriters’ notion that this is a film about the superiority of ‘home’ over ‘away’, that the ‘moral’ of *The Wizard of Oz* is as sickly-sweet as an embroidered sampler – ‘East, West, home’s best’ – would do well to listen to the yearning in Judy Garland’s voice ... What she expresses ... [in ‘Over the Rainbow’] is the human dream of *leaving*, a dream at least as powerful as its countervailing dream of roots. At the heart of *The Wizard of Oz* is a great tension between these two dreams; but as the music swells and that

³⁴ Paul Nathanson, *Over the Rainbow: ‘The Wizard of Oz’ as a Secular Myth of America* (Albany, NY, 1991), p. 276.

³⁵ ‘Glinda’s Theme’ is reproduced in Harburg and Arlen, *The Wizard of Oz 70th Anniversary Deluxe Songbook*, p. 87.

³⁶ Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, p. 14.

big, clean voice flies into the anguished longings of the song, can anyone doubt which message is the stronger? ... 'Over the Rainbow' is, or ought to be, the anthem of all the world's migrants ... It is a celebration of Escape, a grand paean to the Uprooted Self, a hymn – *the* hymn – to Elsewhere.³⁷

Neil Earle does not regard Oz as an unblemished Eden, since both the Munchkins and the Winkies were enslaved by wicked witches until Dorothy inadvertently killed them; neither is the Emerald City what it seems, thanks to Baum 'playing with the theme of Utopia and its simultaneous ironic undercutting by the fact that the citizens of Oz were deluded and manipulated' by a phoney Wizard.³⁸ Earle would therefore classify Rushdie as someone who misses 'the dominant reading that the Wizard is a humbug and that both he and Dorothy want to get back home'.³⁹ More recently Rushdie has been directly criticized in a collection of philosophical essays on the topic of Baum's novel and its offshoots:

Rushdie argues that two dreams compete in *The Wizard of Oz*, the dream that 'home's best' and the dream of escape, and that the latter dominates ... It can't be denied that Dorothy does yearn to leave Kansas when she sings ['Over the Rainbow'] ... What she doesn't realize, though, is that the leaving that she yearns for in this song would also involve leaving behind the persons whom she loves. Once she arrives in Oz, the land over the rainbow, and recognizes that her family has been left behind, she'll spare no effort to return to Kansas. These two dreams will be combined. Dorothy will realize that what she yearns for, when she dreams of escape, is available at home ... Her heart's desire may never be beyond her own backyard, but her backyard may eventually include the world.⁴⁰

Rushdie's claim that the dream of 'escape' is the dominant theme is not supported by the evidence in the music, discussed above. The underscore's narrating voice reinforces unequivocally the film's ultimate message, 'There's no place like home'.

Clichéd Musical Gestures

A verbal cliché has been described as 'an expression that does your thinking for you: an expression so well established ... that you know exactly how it's going

³⁷ Ibid., p. 23 (original emphases).

³⁸ Neil Earle, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' in American Popular Culture: Uneasy in Eden* (Lewiston, NY, 1993), pp. 70 and 112.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 195.

⁴⁰ Gina Altamura and J. M. Fritzman, 'Very Good, but Not So Mysterious: Hegel, Rushdie, and the Dialectics of Oz', in Randall E. Auxier and Phillip S. Seng (eds), *The Wizard of Oz' and Philosophy: Wicked Wisdom of the West* (Chicago and La Salle, IL, 2008), pp. 33–48, here p. 37.

to end once someone has started saying it'.⁴¹ In musical terms, this equates to a quotation or a musical gesture that conveys its meaning instantly in a concise and efficient manner, crucially requiring little effort on the part of either composer or auditor. As the use of 'Home, Sweet Home' showed, a fragment can suffice to invoke the appropriate sentiment. Western music has a long tradition of such musical gestures or 'figures' in the compositions of European composers from at least the early sixteenth century onwards (reaching its peak in the Baroque era) and particularly in music associated with a text (for example, the Renaissance madrigal). The purpose of such figures was to illustrate or 'paint' particular words and ideas, so that the affections could be both represented and aroused, drawing the listener into the dramatic presentation. They were codified by mostly German theorists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who borrowed their terminology from the stock linguistic devices used in Classical rhetoric. The compositional method is known as 'Figurenlehre', after an essay published by Arnold Schering in 1908.⁴² Just as Linda Williams has detected stock melodramatic situations running through American literature, stage, cinema and television, so Peter Williams has traced a lingua franca of musical stock devices in Western music going well beyond the Baroque period and vocal music: 'The more one is alerted to the idea of *Figurenlehre*, the more the *figurae* can be seen as powerful undercurrents below the stream of music right into the 19th century and in some cases beyond'.⁴³ These musical figures found fertile ground wherever music was still conceived dramatically and was generated quickly under pressure, that is anywhere (notably Baroque and Classical opera) where exaggerated emotions were encouraged within a shared public space rather than a private sphere. Hence they survived particularly in genres now dismissed as lowbrow, such as stage melodramas and, more recently, film music.

Claudia Bullerjahn has commented on the similarity between *Figurenlehre* and conventions in descriptive silent-film music, finding three figures particularly common: *anabasis* (ascent), *catabasis* (descent) and *kyklosis* (circular motion).⁴⁴ There are many examples of the ascent and descent figures in the underscore of *The*

⁴¹ Julia Cresswell, *Penguin Dictionary of Clichés* (London, 2000), p. vii.

⁴² George J. Buelow, 'Figures, Theory of Musical' in www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 1 August 2011).

⁴³ Peter Williams, 'Figurenlehre from Monteverdi to Wagner. 1: What is "Figurenlehre"?', *Musical Times* 120/1636 (1979): pp. 476–9, here p. 476. Dietrich Bartel found Peter Williams's claim contentious, stating categorically that Baroque terminology should not be used to explain Romantic expressiveness. See Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln, NB, 1997), p. 86, n. 69.

⁴⁴ Claudia Bullerjahn, 'Von der Kinomusik zur Filmmusik. Stummfilm-Originalkompositionen der zwanziger Jahre', in Werner Keil (ed.), *Musik der zwanziger Jahre* (Hildesheim, 1996), pp. 281–316, here p. 290; for a full list of Baroque figures, see Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pt 3.

Wizard of Oz, for example the ascending chromatic scale as the cyclone begins;⁴⁵ ascending and descending scales for the farmhouse as it is carried into the air by the tornado and then lands in Oz (and similarly on its return to Kansas); the upward flourish every time the Wicked Witch disappears in a puff of red smoke; the upward flourish as the witch conjures up a ball of fire and the descending scale as she throws it at the Scarecrow; a descending scale for the trickling red sand in the supersized hourglass counting down the time remaining before the Wicked Witch plans to kill Dorothy. These scales are simultaneously isomorphic representations, showing motion and direction, and sound effects. As such they are brought to the foreground through an increase in volume to heighten their effect. Trickling sand is not normally audible; by making it so, the accompaniment encourages us to share Dorothy's fear. Another figure also common to melodramatic situations is *auxesis* or *incrementum* (incremental intensification through repetition of a musical phrase rising by step). Such a figure can be put to many uses depending on the characteristics of the musical phrase (whether major or minor, for instance). In *The Wizard of Oz* this figure is reduced to its simplest form: a sustained, tremolando minor chord rising by chromatic steps, each step accentuated. Via this simple 'agitato', the underscore communicates to the audience the rising terror experienced by Dorothy and her friends when they are being threatened by the Wicked Witch or are nervously entering the Wizard's Palace for the first time.

The topics of mimesis and word-painting in music have always been contentious:

The representation of either a physical effect or an object (up to heaven, down to hell, flying, languishing, battle scenes etc.) was increasingly ridiculed by eighteenth-century composers and commentators as musical taste changed. Opinions were divided on the value of word-painting in the accompanying musical material and some writers regarded it as rather childish and even laughable.⁴⁶

Today, such musical gestures are often dismissed as mere mickey-mousing, but Mickey had inherited an ancient tradition. What is an ascending scale accompanying Mickey Mouse up a staircase if not an *anabasis*? The use of musical clichés was part of the dramatic immediacy and clarity required of incidental music in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century popular theatre, of which melodrama was merely one genre – alongside pantomime, burlesque, operetta, vaudeville, and so on. It was the practices emanating from these theatre pits that helped to determine how music was used in early film, both silent and sound.

⁴⁵ Opening reproduced in Harmetz, *The Making of 'The Wizard of Oz'*, p. 96.

⁴⁶ Judy Tarling, *The Weapons of Rhetoric: A Guide for Musicians and Audiences* (St Albans, 2005), p. 92.

Continuity of Melodramatic Practices Beyond the Rainbow

Prior to the most recent stage production of *The Wizard of Oz* (Andrew Lloyd Webber and Bill Kenwright, London Palladium 2011), there were two stage productions of *The Wizard of Oz* licensed to use the Arlen and Harburg songs. John Kane's production (1987) for the Royal Shakespeare Company, London, adhered closely to the MGM film dialogue and used some of the underscoring from the film. More interesting for the purposes of this chapter is a production for the St Louis Municipal Opera (MUNY), which was first staged in the 1940s with an original script by Frank Gabrielson,⁴⁷ using some plot elements from the film but no actual dialogue. The 'Jitterbug' song – excised from the film – was reinstated and Dorothy had an additional sentimental ballad, 'Evening Star'. There were also several interpolated character dances, some based on Arlen's tunes, others newly composed or borrowed. Such interruptions to the dramatic flow fit with the description of the show as a 'musical extravaganza'⁴⁸ and hark back to Baum's original stage production. The term 'melos' is included in the titles to three of the numbers in the published vocal score where new sections of dialogue begin once the accompaniment is under way.⁴⁹ Crucially, the intervening incidental music cues – except for those that use Stothart's music for the Wicked Witch – were newly written by an anonymous composer in a typically melodramatic vein, as the following two examples from the vocal score demonstrate. Example 11.3 represents the 'twister' which carries Dorothy and the farmhouse to Oz and is an isomorphic representation of the swirling cyclone, combining the *kyklosis* and *incrementum* figures through a simple rising and falling chromatic ostinato over a tremolo bass-line, which ascends sequentially as the wind intensifies.⁵⁰ Example 11.4 contains the entrance music for the Wizard and is suitably marked *moderato drammatico*. After a timpani roll, the same dissonant ninth chord (comprising in its piano reduction a perfect fourth and an augmented fourth over a perfect fifth) rises in parallel motion and increases in volume, culminating in a *fortissimo* inverted thirteenth chord. Such parallel extended harmony was typical of both Debussy and Gershwin; its use here is evocative of the Wizard's grandeur and mystique.⁵¹

These brief examples from the MUNY production show how the traditions of stock incidental music continued beyond the MGM musical. Over time, the MUNY production has evolved, partly because of the dated and politically incorrect humour in the script. The latest score (MUNY) has been considerably

⁴⁷ Information from www.tams-witmark.com/wizard_score.html (accessed 3 September 2009).

⁴⁸ See 'Notes on Costumes and Scenery' in *The Wizard of Oz* [libretto, adapted from the book by L. Frank Baum] (London, c.1964).

⁴⁹ Harold Arlen, *The Wizard of Oz*, vocal score (London, 1964), pp. iv ('Musical Contents'), 5, 28 and 73.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 'No. 3. Cyclone', p. 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 'No. 24. Entrance of Wizard', p. 114.

Example 11.3 Cyclone cue, vocal score. Piano/vocal score from *The Wizard of Oz* (London, 1964)

Cue: DOROTHY (spoken) Oh – wait, I forgot something!

Allegro vivo (♩ = 132)

Flute
mp
Strs. trem.
Clar.

AUNT EM: You come back here, Dor'thy Gale!

UNCLE HENRY: Dor'thy! Come

away, d'ye hear?

DOROTHY: But I forgot something in the house!

AUNT EM: Landsakes – what?

DOROTHY: The flowers – for Uncle Henry's birthday – ! AUNT EM: Dor'thee! Dor'thee!

UNCLE HENRY: The house! It's blowing away – !!

AUNT EM: Dor'thee! Dor'thee!

TUTTI sempre cresc.

f
fff
sffz

Example 11.4 Entrance of Wizard cue, piano/vocal score from *The Wizard of Oz* (London, 1964)

Cue: (*Spoken*) LION: What did he look like?
GROWLIE: He was invisible.

Moderato drammatico ($\text{♩} = 108$)

The musical score is for a piano/vocal score. It is in 4/4 time and marked **Moderato drammatico** with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 108$. The score begins with a piano (*mf*) dynamic, which increases to *f* and then *ff*. The music features a complex piano accompaniment with many triplets and accents. A timpani part is indicated by a 'Timp.' marking and a drum symbol. The score includes various performance markings such as 'TUTTI', slurs, and accents. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

revamped with new arrangements of all the songs and the dance interpolations updated with popular numbers from Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns and Gounod.⁵² The incidental cues have been re-written, again with the exception of those incorporating Stothart's Wicked Witch music. This chapter has only hinted at the nature and the extent of the music in *The Wizard of Oz* which has demonstrable roots in nineteenth-century stage melodrama. There is sufficient material for a separate study of the musical accompaniments used in the numerous stage and screen forms of *The Wizard of Oz*, stretching along the Yellow Brick Road that connects Baum's 1902 stage extravaganza to the present day.

⁵² Available for hire from Tams-Witmark, see www.tamswitmark.com/wizard_score.html (accessed 3 September 2009).

Chapter 12

The Voice-Over as ‘Melodramatic Voice’

Jacqueline Waeber

The opening sequence of Joel Coen’s *The Man Who Wasn’t There* (Working Title Films, 2001) presents an aural configuration that has become one of the most clichéd features of *film noir*: a voice-over narration. It is not the first element to be heard: to begin with, we hear the noises from an urban environment – the chirping of birds, the rumbling of cars (against a black screen) – then some music – the beginning of the slow movement of Beethoven’s Archduke Trio – and, finally, the voice-over. There is nothing unusual in this configuration, except that, as so often with the Coen brothers, there is a twist in the way the cliché is so painstakingly presented: the choice of Beethoven’s music alludes to the register of classical music, which one would not expect within the codes of *film noir*.

It would be tempting to view the ‘expressive’ qualities of the slow movement as the reason for its choice. Beethoven’s music is employed throughout the movie, and especially during these voice-over narrations, which are all uttered by the character Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton).¹ Providing a cosy aural wrapping, the music seems to work as an expressive marker for Ed’s emotions (the score as maternal envelope for the voice would be a tempting, psychoanalytical reading). Music expresses what he feels – or, rather, what he is not able to say: the music takes over the verbal discourse, it becomes Ed’s own inner voice. As a recent commentator puts it, this is perhaps ‘why Ed Crane adopts for his inner voice or, more precisely, his real voice the slow movements of the piano sonatas, “utterances in the first person directly expressive of the speaker’s own feelings”’.² However, this trope of a music that ‘speaks for’ a character is one that is too easily invoked, and recently Michael Long has addressed this quasi-obsession with meaning that characterizes many musicological approaches to film music.³

¹ Except in this opening sequence, only slow movements of his piano sonatas are used: Opp. 13, 27/2, 28, 57, 79 and 109.

² Kristi Brown, ‘*Pathétique noir*: Beethoven and *The Man Who Wasn’t There*’, *Beethoven Forum*, 10/2 (2003): pp. 139–61, here p. 152 (original emphasis); Brown quotes Bruce Crowther, *Film Noir: Reflections in a Dark Mirror* (New York, 1989), p. 8.

³ ‘Scholars involved above all in film-music criticism continue to privilege music’s role as a bearer of “meaning”, a formulation that has survived for several decades’, Michael Long, *Beautiful Monsters: Imagining the Classic in Music Media* (Berkeley, CA, 2009), p. 19. It is worth mentioning here that if ever music spoke for Ed, then the use of Beethoven’s music in *The Man Who Wasn’t There* inflicts the cruellest irony on this fantasy: music

My intention here is not to discuss Beethoven's music; what interests me in this sequence are the moments of juxtaposition, of heterogeneity, or even mismatch, caused by the proximity of the music, the voice-over and the other aural elements – the sounds of cars, birds and, at the end of the sequence, the conversations between patrons and Frank Raffo, the owner of the barber shop in which Ed Crane is employed. These different aural elements are all evolving on different levels: the music's quiet pace is established – like the calm regularity of the barber's pole (the first image of the film after the black screen, appearing as the Archduke's slow movement starts), which seems to have been turning forever – and the voice narrates 'over' the music. But music and voice-over actually coexist, and unfold like two parallel lines that will never meet. As already mentioned, the Coens' intention was simply to mimic (at a distance) the narrative codes of *film noir*, but in so doing they unwittingly created the conditions for a good melodramatic recitation: an instrumental work (however canonic it may be) behind a voice that speaks. Such a configuration could have happened in the nineteenth century.⁴ It is this speaking voice I intend to scrutinize: it stands here disembodied (several minutes will pass before we eventually hear Ed's voice emanating from his (visible) body, as voice-in), but the immateriality of his vocal presence is highlighted by the extraordinary accuracy of its restitution (as if Billy Bob Thornton were speaking into a microphone). We really hear the cracks, the hisses, the tongue against the teeth, of this voice – even the noise of the cigarette burning when Ed draws on it. The intensity of this aural plasticity puts us in contact with its materiality – Barthes's 'grain of the voice'. This is what can be defined as truly melodramatic in *The Man Who Wasn't There*: the emphasis given to a voice that acquires an overwhelming presence, detached from the other aural elements. This 'melodramatic voice', and the way in which it is surrounded by music, is the subject of this chapter.

Melodrama's legacy to film music has been broadly acknowledged. Yet I want to reconsider the nature of this legacy. I argue first that attention has been paid to some aspects of melodrama at the expense of others, and second that the legacy of melodrama goes beyond the field of film music, since this restricts the influence specifically to the score, thus excluding other aural parameters. Melodrama is a complex dramatic construct: it is composed of heterogeneous features, and has a

here is pure fallacy. Ed will realize that Birdy (Scarlett Johansson), the young girl who plays piano, is just a mediocre, untalented teenager and a precocious sexual predator. Beethoven is principally used here for the enjoyment of trivializing him: it is about playing with the cultural codes attached to such music. Ed is also fooled by this 'music speaking for': his fascination for Birdy is not caused by the music she plays, but by what he thinks he hears in it.

⁴ Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*, Beethoven's *Andante con moto* from his Fourth Piano Concerto, an instrumental arrangement of the 'Miserere' from Verdi's *Trovatore*: these were examples, among many others, of 'background music' used for recitations; see Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte: Le Mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris, 2005), pp. 254 and 297.

natural propensity to narrate through the juxtaposition of languages (music, speech, pantomime). As I have explained elsewhere, melodrama can be described as the sum of 'music + non music', the latter being a text, whether rendered through spoken declamation or pantomime – or both.⁵ The present chapter will deal with spoken declamation, and consider the voice-overs in two films, by Alain Resnais and Robert Bresson.

Melodrama as 'Proto-Film Music'?

The melodramatic score is often understood as part of a *commentary*, announcing or illustrating the text, either flowing uninterrupted under speech, or intervening in short sequences, framing the text. It is principally this conception of melodrama that scholarship retains when it considers the legacy of the genre,⁶ but it departs from two ideas that need to be scrutinized more seriously. First, the notion of melodramatic score as 'proto-film music'; second, the amalgamation of melodramatic music and opera. When dealing with the history of film music, scholars rarely miss an opportunity to remind us that the musical practices of nineteenth-century opera and melodrama were already 'cinematic', and thus impacted on the development of film music. Rick Altman was the first to nuance this supposed legacy, stressing the still negligible amount of scholarship on nineteenth-century dramatic music (other than opera), and 'the tendency to treat the entire nineteenth century as a single unbroken musical period'.⁷ For David Neumeyer, the melodramatic technique used in Beethoven's dungeon scene from *Fidelio* displays 'a number of features [that] are common to cinematic underscoring as well', and 'many of the conditions necessary for cinematic underscoring a century later'.⁸ Royal S. Brown relies largely on Hans-Christian Schmidt, who cites 'an excellent example appropriately entitled "Melodrama", during which the spoken words of *Egmont* [sic] are punctuated and sometimes underscored by brief phrases of sostenuto chords from a string orchestra'.⁹ For Claudia Gorbman,

melodrama called for music to mark entrances of characters, to provide interludes, and to give emotional coloring to dramatic climaxes and to scenes with rapid physical action. Musical cues appear abundantly in 'acting editions'

⁵ See Waeber, 'Introduction', *En Musique dans le texte*, pp. 9–15, esp. pp. 13–15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 10–11.

⁷ Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York, 2004), p. 10.

⁸ David Neumeyer, 'Melodrama as a Compositional Resource in Early Hollywood Sound Cinema', *Current Musicology*, 57 (1995): pp. 61–94, here pp. 72 and 73.

⁹ Hans-Christian Schmidt, *Filmmusik: Für die Sekundar- und Studienstufe*, Musik aktuell, Analysen, Beispiele, Kommentare, no. 4 (Kassel, 1982), quoted in Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), p. 14.

of British melodramas. From them we can see that the clichés of film music arose directly from those of melodrama, too.¹⁰

Similarly for Royal S. Brown, ‘the [cinematic] cue has its most immediate predecessor in the use of music in melodrama’.¹¹

Focusing solely on the melodramatic musical score and its conventional vocabulary reveals only the most superficial traits that film music and melodrama share. And to narrow the melodramatic legacy to this single element also reduces film music largely to the illustrative function of mickey-mousing – the (redundant) emphasis of dramatic action. Interestingly, earlier twentieth-century commentators were already well aware of this. Gorbman’s summary of the legacy of melodrama unwittingly matches Georges Auric’s 1919 description of ‘*musique de scène*’ – that is to say, music accompanying silent films, the function of which was to provide ‘aural inter-titles’: “‘Cinema music’ will not be at all the same as that classed as incidental music [*musique de scène*], a *bastard genre and one without inner resources* which uses the orchestra to fill silences, underline stage action, accompany moonlight or embellish entractes’.¹²

Melodrama is also frequently viewed as an offshoot – a rather debased one – of nineteenth-century opera: it shares the same vocabulary, replete with musical topoi from the tremolo to the diminished seventh. The ease with which commentators tend to relate melodramatic music to opera, and see it as proto-film music, can be demonstrated by Peter Kivy, to whom melodrama and the use of spoken declamation was a way to achieve the dramatic verisimilitude that escaped operatic song – the ‘conversation in musical tones [that] seemed an absurdity’.¹³ For him, ‘melodrama was the answer to that difficulty, keeping the music in the pit, speech on the stage. The idea of film music, then, existed fully fledged, some hundred or more years before the invention of moving pictures’.¹⁴ One could hardly find a more eloquent statement of the clichéd ‘division of labour’ between

¹⁰ Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington, IN, 1987), p. 34. Gorbman’s passage from which this quote is taken is itself extensively quoted (with the same purpose of confirming the legacy of melodrama on film music) in Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, p. 50.

¹¹ Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, p. 50.

¹² George Auric, responding in 1919 to a survey from the monthly magazine *Le Film*, quoted in Lionel Robert, ‘Les Enquêtes du film: La Musique et le cinéma’, in Emmanuelle Toulet and Christian Belaygue (eds), *Musique d’écran: L’Accompagnement musical du cinéma muet en France, 1918–1995* (Paris, 1994), pp. 21–38, here p. 36 (my emphasis). All translations are the authors, unless noted otherwise.

¹³ See the section on ‘Melodrama’, in Peter Kivy, ‘Music in the Movies: A Philosophical Inquiry’, *Music, Language, and Cognition* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 62–90, here p. 66; orig. published in Richard Allen and Murray Smith (eds), *Film Theory and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 308–328.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

speech and music, with 'music in the pit' and 'speech on the stage' – in other words, music is relegated to a supportive role as a backdrop for speech.

Melodrama vs. Opera

Our perception of melodrama still suffers from its association with opera, the latter casting the prestige of its canonical shadow over the former. What needs to be identified more precisely is what makes melodramatic music different from opera. From its origins, and as demonstrated explicitly in Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, melodrama adapted a specific operatic model, accompanied recitative, which was characterized by short alternations between song and instrumental *ritornelli*.¹⁵ However, the historical and aesthetic conditions that produced melodrama at the end of the eighteenth century also established it in opposition to opera – not as a development of operatic verisimilitude. Melodrama presents speech as it is, unsung and devoid of any musical artifice. As in the example above, of *The Man Who Wasn't There*, speech never becomes irrevocably 'musicalized' – and this despite being surrounded by music that threatens to subsume the word. Thus melodrama confronts us aurally with the continuous juxtaposition of speech and music, two elements that have nothing in common, but which could at any moment merge with each other. Its heterogeneous construction forces our listening to be critically engaged: the uncanniness of the melodramatic voice ensures that – being unsung – it is not drawn into the musical texture like an operatic voice.

To abandon song in favour of speech is no innocent gesture, nor could it have been justified simply for the sake of variety or as an idiosyncrasy. It may be a truism to assert that the spoken voice is a voice that does not sing, but this does not explain why the melodramatic voice refuses to be musicalized. This brings us back to the conditions that favoured the emergence of melodrama at the end of the eighteenth century as a reaction against opera. Through its aural realization, the melodramatic voice resonates as a sung voice that has been torn from song. The understanding of melodrama as a *renunciation* of singing challenges the myth built on the latent musicality hidden in speech, a remnant of the linguistic theories on the supposed common origins of music and language developed during the Enlightenment,

¹⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Horace Coignet, *Pygmalion: Scène lyrique*, ed. Jacqueline Waeber (Geneva, 1997). Coignet's music for Rousseau's *Pygmalion* consists of very short sections, many of them not exceeding three or four bars ('ritournelles'), which often conclude with a half cadence. The sections of *Pygmalion*'s monologue are interpolated between these *ritournelles*; thus music and declamation are never superimposed. David Neumeyer seems keen to exclude any connection between the technique of the *recitativo accompagnato* and Rousseau's conception of melodrama: 'it was in the German melodrama that a compositional link between melodrama and the *recitativo accompagnato* was established'; see 'Melodrama as a Compositional Resource': p. 66.

notably by Rousseau.¹⁶ But to view melodrama in this light also precludes the possibility of finding some sort of ‘unity’ in the juxtaposition of music and speech. At stake here are the motivations that led composers to reject the sung voice for speech within a purely musical context. Rather than trying to excuse melodrama for its heterogeneity, we should accept this as being its principal defining quality. The melodramatic voice creates an abrupt juxtaposition of the musical and the non-musical, a juxtaposition that has proved to be unsettling for commentators. Unable to accept de facto this heterogeneity, commentators have tried instead to find a well-hidden homogeneity that draws on the potential musicality of speech. To rephrase Cesare Scarton, what defines the melodramatic in music is not the ‘ideal fusion’ between music and declamation ‘despite [their] diversity’, but rather the impossibility of such a fusion between music and declamation, because of their diversity.¹⁷

Re-evaluating the Melodramatic Voice

By restricting the legacy of melodrama to the musical score, we ensure that the melodramatic voice remains a marginal object of scrutiny. Any attempt to identify what is melodramatic within the aural dimension of film should seek what is melodramatic within cinematic discourse as a whole. In other words, we should reconsider the melodramatic repertoire not so much from the perspective of the score, but from that of its *other* aural component, the voice – and its carrier, the melodramatic narrator or speaker (‘Rezitator(in)’ in German, ‘récitant(e)’ in French). This re-evaluation of the aural may appear to be a diversion from melodrama’s strong visual element, since the genre was originally intended to be performed, and thus seen on stage. However, the excess of aurality characteristic of declamatory, concert melodrama rather detracts from the visual.

Although originally intended for the theatrical stages, melodrama quickly moved into the concert hall and the salon, assimilating itself within the genre of musical recitation – and thus suppressing its theatrical paraphernalia.¹⁸ Such a progressive stripping-down of the visual is key to the genre’s historical evolution.

¹⁶ Speech is supposed to contain deep within itself its own musicality, awaiting the interpretive genius of the melodramatic speaker, whose voice will bring back the buried musicality of speech. It was the strong belief in such a myth that fuelled the extreme level of artificiality characteristic of the declamatory style of melodramatic speakers until the early twentieth century. I have discussed extensively this myth of melodrama viewed as ‘the song of language’ since the late eighteenth century in Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte*, esp. chap. 8, ‘La Récitation mélodramatique’, pp. 299–342.

¹⁷ See Cesare Scarton, *Il melologo: Una ricerca storica tra recitazione e musica* (Città di Castello, 1998), p. 119.

¹⁸ For a thorough overview of musical declamation, see Bernd Trummer, *Sprechend singen, singend sprechen: Die Beschäftigung mit der Sprache in der deutschen*

Through its highly artificial declamatory style, able to match the theatricality of a musical score replete with descriptive and illustrative effects, the melodramatic voice almost transcends the purely aural limits within which concert melodrama is confined. What is presented to our ears through the aural manifestation of the voice is the potential visuality of the text. This was, to give one telling example, the greatest talent of the very last melodramatic Rezitator, Ludwig Wüllner (1858–1938): 'He forgets that he recites, that the concert podium cannot any more be a theatrical stage. Never mind. With him, the concert podium becomes a theatre'.¹⁹

The dramatic potentialities of concert melodrama are no weaker than those of staged melodramatic works. There is a complementarity of parameters at work here, since the loss of the visual urges a relocation of melodramatic excess to the only representational space available – the aural – saturating it with dramatic overstatement. 'Melodramatic excess' resonates with the now standard definition of the melodramatic aesthetic by Peter Brooks, but what I am arguing here is that this form of aural melodramatic excess is the consequence of the exclusion of the visual dimension.²⁰ (Though, of course, one cannot ignore the visual dimension of a concert performance, that is to say the stage (the piano, the accompanist) and the highly conventionalized presence of the speaker.)

It is no coincidence that the 'century of the novel', with its formidable multiplicity of narrative voices, was also the period that saw the rise and the highest achievement of melodrama. The predilection for the 'Rollengedicht', a poetic genre in which the narrator's voice gives way to those of the many protagonists, necessarily releases the melodramatic voice from any firm source. The voice of the performer is not simply 'the speaker's voice'. In Liszt's *Lenore*, the voice is by turn that of the narrator, Lenore, her mother and Death. Here, the melodramatic voice cannot be reduced to the synecdoche of an unseen body. Nor is it an acousmatic voice, momentarily wandering away from its source, or even lured by the promise of reunification with it. Like Plutarch's nightingale, it is 'a voice and nothing more' that has always existed in this purely aural state. The closeness of music and voice results in a clash of irreconcilable aural entities that reduces the presence of the voice to sound per se. Floating over the music, the melodramatic voice never integrates itself into the musical texture. Rather, it reveals itself as another texture, set against the musical one. Such proximity is the mark of the disturbing uncanniness of melodrama that cannot so easily be dismissed by appealing to speech's 'musicality'.

In order to reassess melodrama's legacy to film, we should first approach melodrama as a genre of dramatic discourse fuelled by the contemplation of this

gesangspädagogischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts (Hildesheim, 2006). However, during the first half of the nineteenth century melodramas were still largely conceived for the stage.

¹⁹ Franz Ludwig, *Ludwig Wüllner: Sein Leben und seine Kunst. Mit vierzehn Beiträgen zeitgenössischer Persönlichkeiten* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 206.

²⁰ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination. Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995).

strange voice-object. In so doing, melodrama reconfigures voice-as-speech and voice-as-sound in such a way that it magnifies their differences – whereas in opera, the condition sine qua non for such reconfiguration lies in the inevitable musicalization of the voice and the chimeric ideal of reconciliation. Melodrama with spoken declamation aims not to establish an ‘ideal union’ or ‘syncretic bond’ between voice and music: rather, such a bond derives from the signified of the text being grafted onto the music, rendering the latter ‘meaningful’ and adequately ‘expressive’. This is where melodrama departs radically from opera: its voice escapes music, gaining something new that does not fit with music, but that is not enslaved to the signified either. Through its confrontation with music, the unsung voice magnifies its aural quality – its ‘grain’ – and its presence acquires devastating potential as pure signifier, generating the anxiety proper to melodrama.

A similar anxiety seized cinema in relation to the ambivalent function of ‘voice-as-speech/voice-as-sound’. In film, voice is more than just ‘speech’: what audiences quickly realized with the emergence of the talking picture was that it could contain a disturbing aural quality, competing with the music. The fiercest resistance to talking pictures emanated not so much from commentators who were convinced that film as an art form did not need synchronized sound, but rather from those who had already embraced the sound film, but were repelled by the bastardized use of speech in film. With synchronized speech, the main danger for film was that it would be perceived as nothing more than filmed theatre – as demonstrated by the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello, who first rejected the talking picture by describing it as ‘a pale copy of theatre’.²¹ This tension is further illustrated by the use, in the early twentieth century, of two distinct expressions: ‘sound film’ and ‘talking picture’ (or ‘talkie’). Although such debates took place in both the United States and Europe, it was in France that resistance was strongest, especially from defenders of the sound film (‘film sonore’) against the talkie (‘film parlant’). Indeed, it is among French commentators from the 1920s such as Jean Epstein and Germaine Dulac that the distinction between ‘film sonore’ and ‘film parlant’ is most carefully observed. Some texts even specify ‘film sonore et parlant’.²²

²¹ Luigi Pirandello, ‘Se il film parlante abolirà il teatro’, *Corriere della Sera* (16 June 1929), quoted in Francesco Cällari, *Pirandello e il cinema: Con una raccolta completa degli scritti teorici e creativi* (Venice, 1991), p. 123. For a similar point of view, see also Dorothy Richardson, ‘Continuous Performance 4: A Thousand Pities’, *Close Up*, 1 (October 1927): pp. 60–64.

²² See Edouard Arnoldy, *Pour une histoire culturelle du cinéma: Au-devant de ‘scènes filmées’, de ‘films chantants et parlants’ et de comédies musicales* (Liège, 2004). Arnoldy provides a thorough exploration of the stylistic divergences between the ‘film sonore’ and the ‘film parlant’. The former category is represented by the movies of Eisenstein, Dulac, Epstein and Abel Gance, in which the aural emphasis is on the voice and ‘the film’s musicality’; the latter by movies in the footsteps of *The Jazz Singer*, which establishes speech and musical accompaniment (p. 21). Arnoldy is to my knowledge the

As Dulac put it in 1929,

If I reject the *talking picture*, I am for *sound film*. ... The ideal talking picture will be one in which there is only one word, one cry, some exclamations that will strengthen the image. ... Whereas ... we treat the talking picture now as we did silent film at its birth: instead of directing discovery towards originality, towards the new, as cinematographers we treat dialogues uniformly. ... To extract speech and sound and not be overwhelmed by one or the other, such should be the ideal for the cinema industry.²³

At stake here was not so much the redundancy created by the relation between sound and image as the one between voice and body. It took time, indeed two decades or so, to escape the torpor that talking pictures had promoted. After the first state of wonderment caused by sound synchronization came awareness of the tautological entanglement it involved, the price to be paid for such technical advancement. Cinema became truly modern not at the moment it became 'talking', but when it became fully aware that 'talking' would enable it to use the voice as a distinct element of the film's aural dimension, equal in importance to music.²⁴ Mary Ann Doane points out that 'the use of voice-off or voice-over must be a late acquisition, attempted only after a certain "breaking-in" period during which the novelty of the sound film [i.e. the talkie] was allowed to wear itself out'.²⁵ The consequence was the arrival of the 'off-screen', a space in which the voice could (re)gain its autonomy in relation to the image.²⁶ Pascal Bonitzer has described the off-screen as a space that 'becomes a dimension of the scene, dramatized and peopled. Something happens there, in parallel to the image with which it is interwoven, yet which it is detached from. The voice is simply laid over the image.'²⁷ And Gilles Deleuze (himself indebted to Bonitzer's text) has evoked the

only author who has paid constant attention to the different uses of expressions such as 'film sonore' and 'film parlant', 'musique d'accompagnement' and 'musique de cinéma'.

²³ Germaine Dulac, 'Jouer avec les bruits', in Prosper Hillairet (ed.), *Écrits sur le cinéma (1919–1937)* (Paris, 1994), pp. 128–9, here p. 128.

²⁴ Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1940) is often credited as the first movie to set the voice free from its allegiance to image. See Barthélémy Amengual, 'Naissance d'un cinéma: *Citizen Kane*', *Études cinématographiques*, 24–5 (Summer 1963): pp. 51–69, esp. pp. 66–7.

²⁵ Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space', *Yale French Studies*, 60 [Cinema/Sound] (1980): pp. 33–50, here p. 34.

²⁶ Soviet film theorists were the first to theorize and apply these aesthetical positions, by defending the idea of a sound source located off-screen, and thus avoiding the tautology caused by doubling the sound with the image of its physical source. See Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov, 'Manifeste de 1928', in Eisenstein, *Le Film: Sa Forme, son sens* (Paris, 1976), pp. 19–21. See also Sergei Eisenstein, 'Statement on Sound Film', in Jan Leyda (ed.), *Film Form* (New York, 1949), pp. 257–9.

²⁷ Pascal Bonitzer, *Le Regard et la voix: Essais sur le cinéma* (Paris, 1976), p. 42.

notion of the ‘interstice’ as an elusive space: ‘sound itself becomes the object of a specific framing which *imposes an interstice* with the visual framing’.²⁸ It is a locus that should rather be defined as a non-space, one that is filled by neither sound nor image – the gap that has been left between them.²⁹ Morphologically, the melodramatic voice is a voice-over located in such an off-screen space. Refusing to be musicalized, it is not a voice that can claim to be anchored in the musical space, and the only place in which it can reside is the interstice.

The melodramatic voice did not disappear with the decline of melodrama in the early twentieth century – it simply passed from melodrama to film, since the advent of the latter took place in the same time period. I can mention only in passing the importance of the role played by live commentators responsible for the narration during the projection of silent films. In Europe and America, the transition from the ‘bonimenteur’ (or ‘barker’) to the voice-over in film has only recently been explored by the film historian Alain Boillat. In his thorough enquiry, he reveals that the origins of the cinematic voice-over owe much more to nineteenth-century practices of recitation during vaudeville shows and other para-theatrical entertainments (including, of course, melodrama), than to the literary tradition (a myth that Sarah Kozloff had already started to undermine in *Invisible Storytellers*).³⁰

The Melodramatic Voice-Over and French Filmic Tradition

My introductory example was taken from an American movie, and one relying on the Hollywood tradition of the *film noir*. It may appear far removed from what follows, as the two cases I will discuss are drawn from Alain Resnais’s *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) and Robert Bresson’s *Le Journal d’un curé de campagne* (1951). However, both film directors had a decisive influence on the French *nouvelle vague*, which was also indebted to the narrative style of American *film noir*, especially in its use of the voice-over. *Nouvelle vague* film-makers

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London, 1989), pp. 174–5 (original emphasis).

²⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, pp. 266–7. For a thorough discussion of Deleuze’s interstice in film see Dork Zabunyan, *Gilles Deleuze: Voir, parler, penser au risque du cinéma* (Paris, 2006), pp. 205–214.

³⁰ Alain Boillat, *Du Bonimenteur à la voix-over: Voix-Attraction et voix-narration au cinéma* (Lausanne, 2007). Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers. Voice-Over Narration in American Fiction Film* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), pp. 17–22. Japanese film had a similar tradition of a narrator for silent films, the *benshi*, whose origins draw from kabuki. The *benshi* was an institution maintained until the late 1930s, and its role in the failure to Americanize Japanese film during the 1920s has been studied by Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in Japanese Cinema*, revd and ed. by Annette Michelson (Berkeley, CA, 1979), esp. pp. 93–9.

expanded the function of the classical voice-over of *film noir*, employing it as an analeptic narrative device (i.e. prompting flashback), and this specifically French treatment of voice-over already appears in Resnais's and Bresson's films.

In this respect, *film noir* shares a trait with the tradition of French film, one that has been frequently discussed and studied – namely, a saturation of narrative effects, including the voice-over. But there is also the French predilection for the voice as pure aural presence to be considered. Commentators have often mentioned this 'exception française' in the importance given to speech and the voice in French cinema.³¹ Sarah Kozloff has stressed the long tradition of narration exemplified by Cocteau, Guitry and even the German-born Max Ophuls and the film directors influenced by the *nouvelle vague*, whose filmic aesthetic 'was towards self-consciously analyzing and foregrounding, as opposed to effacing, their narrative techniques'.³² This effacement was more characteristic of the Hollywood tradition, with the exception, perhaps, of *film noir*. Pascal Bonitzer also addressed this specific French filmic tradition: 'All modern cinema since, let's say, Godard on one side, Bresson on the other, opened up a questioning not only of the classic status of the filmic image as full, centred, with depth, but also of voice as homogeneous, in harmony with the image.'³³ Centred: precisely. The melodramatic voice and the voice-over are not centred any more; they become peripheral objects that can never be correctly adjusted.

Alain Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*

This peculiar French attraction to voice in film, and especially to the maladjusted voice, is exemplified by the opening sequence of Alain Resnais's and Alain Robbe-Grillet's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, which demonstrates the melodramatic mismatch resulting from the confrontation between music and voice. The aural texture is a collage of two heterogeneous elements: Francis Seyrig's organ music,³⁴

³¹ In his most recent book, Michel Chion has also referred to the 'Reign of the Verb' proper to French cinema. As noted by Chion, the prominence of language in French film owes much to the function of the 'dialoguiste' (not to be confused with the screenwriter), which has for many decades been among the most important roles in the making and success of a French film. See Chion, *Le Complexe de Cyrano: La Langue parlée dans les films français* (Paris, 2008), pp. 69–74.

³² Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers*, p. 38.

³³ Bonitzer, *Le Regard et la voix*, p. 44.

³⁴ The musical style is of a written-out improvisation, not atonal, but in an expanded tonality, with no recurring motif. Robbe-Grillet and Resnais had from the start dismissed the traditional option of synchronizing music and image. The only exception is a waltz during which X and A dance in a ballroom sequence – the waltz has a well-defined melodic, tonal profile. The choice of Francis Seyrig as composer (Delphine Seyrig's brother) was Resnais's idea. Robbe-Grillet originally wanted 'serial music', and had approached Olivier

and the voice-over of X (Giorgio Albertazzi). Rather than a narration, the voice-over presents X's description of the wandering of a visitor through the hallways of a palace. The wandering is itself mirrored by the loops in which the recitation is stuck (fragments of the text are repeated) and by the seemingly aimless meanders of the tracking shots on the ceiling and the walls of the residence:

[E]mpty halls overloaded with ornamentation from another century – empty halls where the sound of footsteps is absorbed by carpets so heavy, so thick that no sound reaches the ear – as if the ear itself were very far away ... from the man walking on once again, down these corridors, through these halls, these galleries, in this structure from another century – this enormous, luxurious, baroque, lugubrious hotel where endless corridors succeed silent, deserted corridors – silent, deserted, overloaded with a dark ornamentation of woodwork.³⁵

The voice-over unfolds while the organ plays without interruption. Who accompanies whom? Is it really possible here to reduce the organ to musical wallpaper? The visual element generates the impression of never-ending circularity through tracking shots following the Baroque frescoes on the ceiling, the rococo intricacies and other 'rocaille' effects on the walls, the chandeliers, framed engravings and mirrors in which these architectural and ornamental features are reflected, performing a visual 'mise en abyme'. It is not only the music's lack of directionality, but also that of the voice, which contributes to this effect. As for the recitation, in which frequent repetitions of words and expressions occur, it too manages to create during these few minutes a strong feeling of aural 'déjà-vu'. At five distinct moments the sound level of the voice slowly diminishes until it is almost silenced, while the volume of the organ music remains constant. When the voice reappears, its level is slowly increased until it is on a par with the music. The voice buries itself, yet without being fully absorbed by the music. They do not find a point where they merge. On the contrary, the re-emergence of the voice after its brief disappearances only reinforces its mismatch with the music. Here, Resnais also departed from Robbe-Grillet's original description in his *ciné-roman*, where he wanted the voice to start during the opening credits, accompanied by 'a

Messiaen, who declined. Royal S. Brown describes Seyrig's music as having a 'Phantom of the Opera-ish stratum of self-reflectivity' (*Overtones and Undertones*, p. 186), thus betraying Robbe-Grillet's original screenplay. More fruitfully, Jean-Louis Leutrat reminds that Resnais has always been fascinated by the organ and its capacity to sustain sound without any alteration. Leutrat parallels Resnais's fascination for the instrument with his typically slow tracking shots: the sound never fades, while the tracking shots, in their painstaking continuity, are used as 'visual pedals', creating a feeling of immobility and permanence. See Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Hiroshima mon amour* (Paris, 2008), p. 72.

³⁵ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Last Year at Marienbad: A Ciné-Novel*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1961), pp. 18–19. I have slightly adapted the English translation to mirror the French version of the film.

romantic, passionate, violent burst of music, the kind used at the end of films with powerfully emotional climaxes'.³⁶ More specifically, Robbe-Grillet wanted X's voice-over to result from the music:

Parallel to the development of the image during the credits, *the music has gradually been transformed into a man's voice* ... This voice speaks continuously, but although the music has stopped altogether, the words are not yet understood (or in any case, are understood only with the greatest difficulty) because of a strong reverberation or some effect of the same sort (two identical sound tracks staggered, gradually superimposing until the voice becomes a normal one).³⁷

In Resnais's filmic adaptation, the voice-over starts immediately and without any music after the post-Romantic orchestral introduction played during the opening credits. X's voice is first heard at a very low level at the beginning of the first tracking shot on the ceiling. The voice-over's volume is then progressively increased as the organ music starts (during the passage 'which opens in turn on empty halls, halls overloaded with an ornamentation from another century').³⁸ The result of this manipulation and succession of aural events is that the voice does not emerge from – and is not even transformed by – the orchestral music, as desired by Robbe-Grillet. A voice emanating from the music would have suited the old trope of the 'musicality' of speech, but Resnais's rendition eliminates any sense of a consubstantial relationship between music and voice. X's voice is also reinterpreted as having already been there, the sense of 'déjà' in *Marienbad* amounting to a notion of eternal return. Latent, momentarily unheard yet not absent during the bombastic orchestral music of the opening credits, the voice is consistently highlighted, as if it has always been in this state of 'a voice and nothing more': a pure sound object.

This disorientating circularity also owes something to the quality of Giorgio Albertazzi's voice. His strong Italian accent creates an even greater distance between the voice as sound-object and the speech it enunciates. The accent represents the voice's aural distinctiveness, and its presence acts as a sonic crack placed exactly between voice and speech, estranging each from the other. Such estrangement was a conscious decision for Resnais, who has always expressed a fascination for the 'grain of the voice'. A similar motivation led him to cast the Japanese actor Eiji Okada in *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and the baritone Ruggero Raimondi in *La Vie est un roman* (1983) – as actors with voices unmistakably inflected by their native accents. Resnais explained his reason for casting the opera singer Raimondi as follows:

³⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 16 (my emphasis).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

what I was looking for ... was appearance and sonority. ... This is what matters, what interests me. When I choose an actor ... I need an actor who has a particular timbre of voice, personal gestures and a very recognizable way of phrasing, that could be identified even if we were not watching the movie, simply by listening to the radio [*sic*]. In order for me to have fun, there must be a quality of sound within the writing ... one [must have] the impression that I have chosen [the actor] for the soundtrack.³⁹

In the case of *Hiroshima mon amour*, Okada did not speak French and so had to learn the whole text phonetically.⁴⁰ What may have appeared at first as a limitation eventually produced, as Resnais had hoped, the recitative-like declamation of the two actors in *Hiroshima* (Okada and French actress Emmanuelle Riva).⁴¹ This aesthetic stance is also evident in *Marienbad*, especially with the character of A played by Delphine Seyrig, who turned her sharply articulated delivery into a drawl, which became a trademark of all her subsequent appearances, whether on stage or screen.⁴² This detached declamation also became a signature of the *nouvelle vague*, and it reached its most extreme form in such movies as Marguerite Duras's *India Song* (1974), in which none of the declamation is heard as 'voice-in'. This emphasizes the contradiction with the characters, who appear on screen but are never heard or seen speaking. In fact, because of the systematic use of voice-over in *India Song*, the voices are always heard in a contradictory relation with their visual representation. The blank declamation in *India Song* is the metaphor for the absence tout court of the characters.

Robert Bresson's *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne*

In *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* and *Hiroshima mon amour* Resnais was echoing a practice that the film director Robert Bresson had already experimented with in the 1950s (*Le Journal d'un curé de campagne*, 1951, after Georges Bernanos's novel; *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé*, 1956; *Pickpocket*, 1959). Bresson's ideal of a monotonous, 'recto tono'-like declamation had also made its way into Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1958), which featured Jeanne Moreau's

³⁹ Interview with Resnais, in 'Resnais est un roman', documentary by Guy Seligmann and Anne Andreu (1983), supplement on the DVD *La Vie est un roman* (Paris, 2003).

⁴⁰ Leutrat, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 40.

⁴¹ 'I wanted the words [in *Hiroshima mon amour*] to have the tone [*ton*] of being read, an intermediary register between, for example, that of Maria Casarès and the characters of *La Pointe courte* [a movie by Agnès Varda, 1956]', Alain Resnais, quoted in Leutrat, *Hiroshima mon amour*, p. 72.

⁴² The most notable examples being Marguerite Duras's *India Song* (1975), Resnais's *Muriel* (1963) and Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975).

soft, almost whispered tone – tellingly, Malle had been Bresson's assistant for *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé*. This style of declamation, distancing the voice-object from the act of speech, is also inscribed in a long tradition of specifically French films. *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne* is the first thoughtful film in which the narration, here conveyed through the writing of a diary read by the priest's voice-over, becomes the substance of the movie itself.⁴³ More than just telling us the miserable story of a young village priest, his struggle with his faith and a fatal illness, Bresson's film questions the very act of narration.

Recourse to the melodramatic construct 'voice + music' can be illustrated by Bresson's *Le Journal*. Critical literature on this film has dealt extensively with the voice-over's narrative agency, and the relation between this voice and the act of writing on which the whole story is based.⁴⁴ From the outset, *Le Journal* is centred on the act of writing – the opening close-up of the priest's hand writing a new page of his diary, while his voice-over (with accompanying orchestral music) enunciates the text being written. However none of these studies has ever mentioned the other aural elements of the film, except the famous 'ontological' noises so essential to Bresson's aural aesthetics – the sound of a rake, or a church bell heard in the distance before the priest's death, which André Bazin, in his famous 1951 essay, presented as aural indexes of God's immanence in all things.⁴⁵ The function of the movie's orchestral score, written by the organist and composer Jean-Jacques Grunewald (1911–82), has been widely ignored.⁴⁶ The obvious reason for this neglect has nothing to do with the intrinsic characteristics of Grunewald's score, and is more about Bresson's statements against traditional film scoring in his collection of aphorisms also published as *Notes sur le cinématographe* (1975). These have in retrospect cast a shadow on the music and its function in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945) and in *Le Journal*, the latter being the last of Bresson's movies whose soundtrack relies mostly on an original symphonic score.

⁴³ Sacha Guitry's *Le Roman d'un tricheur* (1936) was the first movie to use systematically the hero's voice-over for narrating the whole movie from beginning to end.

⁴⁴ The connection between voice-over and writing, as in Max Ophuls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), has a long tradition going back to the 1930s – Guitry's *Le Roman d'un tricheur* being the epochal case-study. But this trope was also invoked in Hollywood *film noir*. Michel Chion mentions the opening sequence of Preminger's *Laura* (1944), in which the audience progressively discovers a *plausible* origin for Waldo Lydecker's voice-over: the writing machine, on which Waldo, taking a bath, is writing just before the entrance of the detective McPherson. See Chion, *Un art sonore, le cinéma: Histoire, esthétique, poétique* (Paris, 2003), p. 78.

⁴⁵ André Bazin, 'Le Journal d'un curé de campagne et la stylistique de Robert Bresson', in Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris, 1990), pp. 107–127.

⁴⁶ Grunewald had a fairly consistent career as film music composer until the 1950s. He also provided the score for Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945) and Alexandre Astruc's *Le Rideau cramoisi* (1953).

For all these reasons, *Le Journal* occupies an awkward position in the artistic development of Bresson. While the narrative structure of the film as well as the recourse to the diary as a medium for ‘monologic’ agency have been the object of repeated praise and admiration, the musical part of the movie has been ignored, not just for itself – there is indeed nothing truly remarkable or original in Grünewald’s score – but also because this score seems rooted in a practice that Bresson himself would later stigmatize. The only aural element to receive real attention has been the voice-over, but this has been at the expense of any consideration of the complex intertwining of score and voice-over.⁴⁷ Attentive listening to this intertwining through the movie confirms a use of music that frustrates traditional expectations during monologues and dialogues, and it also reveals that the relationship between these two components of the diegetic aural space play a primary role in the narrative unfolding of the movie. Considering that monologues are the main narrative mode used throughout the film, and that dialogues are treated most frequently as insertions within the monologues, the traditional use of music is challenged considerably. Bresson avoids what would have been traditionally expected, i.e. the systematic use of music as background during the monologues (in voice-over), and silencing it altogether during the dialogues (in voice-in). In one of his aphorisms (written after *Le Journal*), Bresson declared that ‘[music] isolates your movie from the life of your movie (its musical delight). It is a powerful modifier and even a destroyer of the real, like alcohol or drugs.’⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is this very musical agency as a drug or as a means of isolation that he used masterfully in *Le Journal*. A sense of isolation and alienation is established around the priest, and Bresson reinforced the atmosphere of desolation through the visual aspect, by avoiding long or medium-long shots that would offer a global view of the priest’s surrounding, embedding him within the shot and thus signalling the possibility of his social integration within the village’s community. The village of Ambricourt and its inhabitants are never represented as a community – apart from the nocturnal cabaret sequence, which the priest observes from his window (though he is clearly excluded by the window frame). Throughout the movie, the physical space in which the priest operates is depicted as fragmented and void, and this is carried through into the aural dimension. There is a disconnect between the priest’s voice-over, which fills most of the aural space of the film, and his corporeal representation on screen, usually during dialogues – Bresson using the shot/reverse shot sparingly in these situations. Perhaps like Moses, the priest lacks speech, but in his case this is less a lack than an urgency for introspective desire, as evidenced by the writing of a diary. Arising from writing, the word returns to writing.⁴⁹ Because for the priest speech has lost its original

⁴⁷ See for instance Nick Browne, ‘Film Form/Voice-Over: Bresson’s The Diary of a Country Priest’, *Yale French Studies*, 60 [Cinema/Sound] (1980): pp. 233–40.

⁴⁸ Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Paris, 1988), p. 86.

⁴⁹ The primacy of writing over (spoken) word is discussed in Keith A. Reader, ‘The Sacrament of Writing: Robert Bresson’s *Le Journal d’un curé de campagne* (1951)’, in

purpose, communication, the spoken word freezes itself into the introspective act of writing – hence Bazin's reading of the movie as an extreme form of resistance to dialogue.⁵⁰ Cinematically, Bresson achieved this by inserting the priest's monologic sequences within his dialogues with other characters. These are heard with the priest's own voice-over while he is shown on screen (the only instances during which the priest is not shown while his own voice-over is heard are the rare reverse shots, when the camera is on his interlocutor). As one would expect, the length of these monologic insertions considerably distorts the linearity of time. Such monologues expand by freezing the time of the narration, for these insertions cannot take place at the same time as the dialogue: they are narrative extensions that have been activated only a posteriori by the act of writing. In relation to the voice-over, the role of music in *Le Journal* is easy to decipher, partly because Grünewald's score is firmly rooted in a traditional conception of film music. The pairing of voice-over + music in the opening sequence (with the close-up on the priest's hand, writing his recollections) relates to the all too common practice of music highlighting the voice-over in relation to the absent voice-in, giving it a sonic wrapping that functions as the aural ersatz to the missing body.⁵¹ But later in the film Bresson's treatment of music in relation to the voice-over is reversed within dialogic situations. As already mentioned, dialogue is frequently undermined by the sudden irruption of monologues. The case discussed here takes place during the first quarter of the movie, when the priest visits Doctor Delbende (the village practitioner) for the first time. While examining the priest, Delbende initiates a discussion (see Table 12.1).

It is essentially the doctor who leads the conversation, even if at certain moments the priest's monologues, in which he ponders what the doctor has said, interrupt the dialogue. Bresson could simply have renounced music during the whole sequence of the visit, or he could have kept the music running through the scene in the background – the sort of music noticeable for going unnoticed. However, the music is used only during the dialogues, and it stops abruptly as soon as the priest's reveries begin. While there is, on the narrative level, a clear differentiation between the action visible on screen (the visit to the practitioner) and the commenting role played by the monologues, such differentiation is not easily perceptible simply on the basis of the visual and aural elements (voice-in and voice-over) of the sequence. Here, it is music that distinguishes between the 'present moment' of the action (the visit) and the moment during which these

Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (eds), *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, 2nd edn (London, 2000), pp. 89–99.

⁵⁰ Bazin, 'Le Journal d'un curé de campagne', p. 113.

⁵¹ Think of a well-known example such as Joe Gillis's opening voice-over narration in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*: once his voice is returned to his body (back in his apartment after the car chase), the voice-over (of the *now* dead Joe Gillis) becomes voice-in, and the music stops. The same thing happens at the end of Waldo Lynecker's narration in voice-over at the beginning of *Laura*, just before Lieutenant McPherson speaks.

Table 12.1 Bresson, *Le Journal d'un curé*: encounter between Doctor Delbende and the priest

Description of shots ^a	Dialogue/monologue	Music
20'20" Close-up (CU) on the priest's hand writing the diary	Priest's voice-over (VO): 'je suis sérieusement malade. Voilà juste 6 mois que j'ai ressenti les premières atteintes de ce mal...' <i>[I am seriously ill. It is now 6 months since I started to feel the first symptoms of this illness...]</i>	no music
20'28" Medium shot (MS) on the priest approaching Dr Delbende's house	Priest's VO continues: '...je suis allé voir le Docteur Delbende...' <i>[...I went to see Dr Delbende...]</i>	no music
20'45" Medium close-up (MCU) on Dr Delbende sounding the priest's chest	VO continues: 'il m'a longuement palpé l'estomac de ses grosses mains qui n'étaient guère propres...' <i>[he palpated my stomach for a long time with his big hands, which were barely clean...]</i>	no music
	Dr Delbende's voice-in (VI): 'Quand vous vous embêtez trop vous viendrez faire un tour par ici...' <i>[When you are too bored come for a stroll here...]</i>	music starts
21'03" CU on priest	Delbende (off screen) continuing to talk: '...des yeux de chien. [...] une drôle de race.' <i>[...dog's eyes.[...] a funny sort of race.]</i>	
	Priest's VO: 'L'idée d'appartenir à la même race que ces deux hommes solides ne me serait sûrement jamais venue à l'esprit.' <i>[The idea of belonging to the same race as these two strong men would certainly never have occurred to me.]</i>	music ends
	Priest's VI: 'Quelle race?' <i>[Which race?]</i>	music starts
	Delbende (off screen): 'Celle qui tient le coup. [...] Personne ne le sait au juste.' <i>[The one which holds out. [...] No-one knows exactly.]</i>	

Description of shots ^a	Dialogue/monologue	Music
21'23" MCU on Dr Delbende sounding the priest's chest	Delbende continues to talk: 'Une fois que j'étais tout gosse encore je m'étais fait une devise: faire face... J'suis pas de ces types qui n'ont que le mot de justice à la bouche...' <i>[Once when I was still a kid I created a motto for myself: face up to things... I'm not one of those people who have only the word of justice on their lips...]</i>	
21'38" CU on priest's face	Delbende (off screen) continuing to talk: '...et d'abord je ne l'exige pas pour moi.' <i>[... and at first I did not require it of myself.]</i>	
(zoom on the priest's face)	Priest's VO starts: 'Je n'ai pas beaucoup d'expérience, mais je crois reconnaître [...] une blessure profonde de l'âme.' <i>[I don't have much experience, but I think I recognize [...] a deeply wounded soul.]</i>	music ends
	Delbende, off screen: 'vous ne valez pas cher...' <i>[you are not worth much...]</i>	music starts
21'55" MCU on Delbende	Delbende, still talking: '...rien qu'à voir ça [...] à présent il est trop tard.' <i>[... nothing to see there [...] now it is too late.]</i>	
22'07" CU on priest	Delbende (off screen) continuing to talk: 'Et l'alcool, qu'est-ce que vous en faites?' <i>[And alcohol, what do you do with it?]</i>	
	Priest (VI): 'l'alcool?' <i>[alcohol?]</i>	
22'15" MCU on Delbende	Delbende, to the priest: 'pas celui que vous avez bu naturellement. Celui qu'on a bu pour vous, bien avant que vous ne veniez au monde.' <i>[not that which you have drunk, naturally. That which has been drunk for you, long before you came into the world.]</i>	
22'27" MCU on priest		music ends

^a Timings taken from Robert Bresson, *Journal d'un curé de campagne* [DVD] (The Criterion Collection, 2004).

monologic insertions take place – presumably when the priest is back home, writing his journal and *remembering* the medical visit. Thus the ‘present moment’ is a recollection from the past, the priest’s use of the past indicative tense in his monologic narration bringing us back to the present moment of the writing of the diary. Our suspension of disbelief, which leads us to perceive the whole medical visit as taking place in the present, is disturbed, however, by the uncanny proximity of the voice-over and the image of the priest, relocating his monologue to the same time and space as the visit to Delbende. Thus we cannot help but continue to associate a quality of presentness with this monologue, even if what we hear *and* see is a recollection, remembered by the priest during the writing of his diary. Yet during this sequence the alternation of music and its silencing should orientate our perception, for the addition of music amplifies the estrangement of the dialogue – not of the monologue as one would expect. Music’s presence during the dialogue considerably weakens the credibility of such presentness, already put into doubt by the tautology of Delbende’s presence and his voice-in.

Music’s agency has a past-tense quality here, casting the dialogue sequences as moments taken back from the past. On the other hand, the silencing of music during the monologic insertions creates a disrupting effect, re-locating the priest’s voice-over during the time and space where the act of writing is *now* taking place.

In its function as a narrative device, the melodramatic voice is similar to the voice-over located in an off-screen space. Refusing to be musicalized, the melodramatic voice is the discordant cog within the musical machinery. There is no affinity between melodramatic voice and music: it is a relationship of reaction, prompted by this foreign element being thrown into a quasi-hostile environment. Within the melodramatic construct, the only interaction possible between voice and music is a negative one.

The prioritization of the voice in melodrama puts into question the widely held notion that the genre is rooted in a tautological relationship between music and text. The situation here is similar to that of film, in which the possibility of *relocating* the cinematic voice in the off-screen space eventually liberated the visual from its relationship with the aural. If we want to understand melodrama as ‘proto-cinematic’, then it should primarily be on the grounds that it liberated voice – and the act of speech it conveys – from its musical surroundings. The melodramatic voice proclaims itself first and foremost as a voice, freed from any assimilative gesture that would tie it to music. Yet melodrama is still viewed primarily through a Romantic lens and usually as defined in Peter Brooks’s study, as a genre shaped by a rhetoric of excess and redundancy (at the expressive and signifying levels). Melodrama had to go through this tautological entanglement of music and text before overcoming it. It was this very entanglement, rooted in the fallacy of an organic cohesion of music and speech, which eventually revealed the frailty of the claim – the fundamental divergences between the two elements. Melodrama was jeopardized by its very

foundations, which proclaimed the tautological as the norm. The modernity of melodrama lies in its failure to maintain these foundations, but it is the consequences of this failure that have been melodrama's main contribution to film.

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Chapter 13

Dismembering the Musical Voice: Mahler, Melodrama and Dracula from Stage to Screen¹

Jeremy Barham

Mahler and the Symphony as Theatre

For various reasons, Mahler's symphonies added levels of sophistication and confusion to the late nineteenth-century aesthetic debate centring on supposedly well-defined categories of 'programme' and 'absolute' music. The close intermingling of song and instrumental music in actual or virtual vocal symphonic movements² the provision and withdrawal of verbal explanations and titles, the proximity to Strauss and the generic dallying with tone poem, the spiritual and technical allegiance to Wagner, the pregnant borrowings of – or allusions to – other musics including those of popular/folk origins, and most of all the extreme deformation of nevertheless strongly evoked, inherited structural paradigms through the gestural force of momentary rupture or prolonged extensions, all contributed to his music's challenge to the socio-cultural propriety of 'high-art'-music performance and consumption in the concert halls of bourgeois Europe.

The contemporary critical reception of the First and Second Symphonies, for example, presents a roll-call of typical jibes and vitriol primarily targeted at their perceived affront to established categorical distinctions, and spurred by their presumptuous and insupportable incursion into the cherished aesthetic territory of a purportedly structurally coherent autonomous music. Mahler was complicit in this confusion through his own initial ambivalence in the generic classification of his music. For its first performance in Budapest in 1889, the First Symphony was entitled 'Symphonic Poem in Two Parts', with conventional movement titles except for 'À la pompes funèbres' for the fourth. In January 1893 while in Hamburg, Mahler revised the work and retitled it 'Symphony ("Titan") in

¹ I am very grateful to Mark Godden and Guy Maddin for sharing in email correspondence some of their thoughts and ideas on the *Dracula* project. I would also like to thank Vonnie Von Helmolt, as well as Crystal Spicer and John Kaminski at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, for generously making a DVD recording of the ballet production available to me.

² By virtual vocality I mean Mahler's employment of song material in symphonic movements without the use of associated texts.

5 Movements (2 Parts)’ (although this was all later crossed through), but added more descriptive movement titles:

- I Teil: ‘Aus den Tagen der Jugend’ [Part I: From the Days of Youth]
1. ‘Frühling und kein Ende’ [Spring Without End]
 2. ‘Blumine’ [Little Flowers or Sweet Nothings]
 3. ‘Mit vollen Segeln’ [Under Full Sail]
- II Teil: ‘Commedia humana’ [Part II: Human Comedy]
4. ‘Todtenmarsch in Callot’s Manier’ [Funeral March in Callot’s Manner]
 5. ‘Dall’ Inferno al Paradiso’ [From Hell to Heaven]

For its second performance, in Hamburg in October 1893, the work was labelled ‘TITAN, a Tone Poem in Symphonic Form’ and supplied with more elaborate movement titles and an extensive programme.³

The Second Symphony began life in 1888 as a single-movement tone poem entitled ‘Todtenfeier’ [Funeral Rites], composed in close proximity to the First Symphony. It was not until 1893 that further movements were added. At this point, Mahler commented:

I have already thought a great deal about what I ought to call my symphony, so as to give some hint of its subject in its title, and, in a word at least, to comment on my purpose. But let it be called just a ‘Symphony’ and nothing more! For titles like ‘Symphonic Poem’ are already hackneyed and say nothing in particular; they make one think of Liszt’s compositions, in which, without any deeper underlying connection, each movement paints its own picture.⁴

Many critics disagreed. At the first performance of the First Symphony, for example, August Beer lamented “the absence of a fundamental poetic idea” that might have given the “Symphonic Poem” the unity it lacked.⁵ In 1899 the *Frankfurter Zeitung* complained that ‘he should not have refused to supply his listeners with programme notes’.⁶ At its Vienna premiere in 1900, as de La Grange reports, Hanslick noted that ‘a more thorough knowledge of the score might perhaps have helped him to a better understanding of its significance, but only on condition that a program had been available to explain the connecting link between its different movements’.⁷ Gustav Schönaich perceived ‘no link between

³ See Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Mahler: Volume One* (London, 1974), pp. 747–8.

⁴ Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Dika Newlin, ed. Peter Franklin (London, 1980), p. 30.

⁵ La Grange, *Mahler*, p. 204.

⁶ Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler* (4 vols, London & Oxford, 1974–2008), vol. 2: *Vienna: the Years of Challenge (1897–1904)* (1995), p. 145.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

the movements and declared the “entire picture” unintelligible⁸ For Robert Hirschfeld, ‘the whole was arranged like a “shopwindow”’,⁹ and Theodor Helm considered that ‘with or without a programme, the Symphony was both a “stylistic absurdity” and a “total failure”’.¹⁰ Similarly, in Lemberg in 1903, Seweryn Berson declared that ‘with no programme, the “hypermodernism” of his symphony was disconcerting’,¹¹ and in 1909 the New York critic Henry Krehbiel went as far as to say that ‘the Symphony has no justification without a programme’.¹² The harsh critiques – in the *Egyetértés*, at the 1889 Budapest premiere, and in *Roland von Berlin* in Berlin in 1905 – nevertheless intriguingly related the work to nineteenth-century stage genres by commenting respectively on its ‘succession of formless, impersonal, atmospheric tableaux’,¹³ and labelling it ‘a tableau more pathological than interesting’.¹⁴

It was not much different with the Second Symphony. The *Journal de Bruxelles* in Liège in 1899 reported: ‘we seek in vain for a sequence or a governing idea in this series of movements so abruptly juxtaposed’, and *Der Sammler* in Munich in 1900 judged the work ‘incomprehensible without a programme’.¹⁵ Fellow composer Max von Schillings articulated a significant line of thought that was echoed and developed in contrasting directions by critics: ‘I felt I was confronting a huge modern Meyerbeer of the symphony’.¹⁶ In 1899 Hans Liebstöckl of the Viennese *Die Reichswehr* took this diversified theatricalizing tendency as a sign of the failure of both Mahler and the symphony as a genre, describing the Second as

‘four-dimensional music’, with the sound reaching the listener ‘from left and right, above and below ... No two bars come from the same place ... The hubbub is repeated several times: there is thunder and lightning, one hears moaning and cries for help, and fractured triplets whimper ... all this theatrical noise strikes me as high school student stuff’.¹⁷

In generic terms, for Liebstöckl,

⁸ Ibid., p. 601.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 309.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 602.

¹² Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, trans. Basil Creighton, ed. Donald Mitchell and Knud Martner (London, 1990), p. 168.

¹³ La Grange, *Mahler*, p. 206.

¹⁴ La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3: *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904–1907)* (1999), p. 133.

¹⁵ La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, pp. 143, 304.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 610. Schillings composed the melodrama *Hexenlied* for performance in the same Basel Festival of 1903 in which Mahler conducted his Second Symphony. According to Schillings, Mahler was ‘truly impressed’ with the work (ibid.).

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 154, 155.

[t]he symphony is sick and will probably die ... No matter that, as the symphony withers people are transplanting it to the tropical regions of the Opera house; what grows in its place will simply no longer be called a symphony; even today, as the shroud is slipped on, one hears the shame-faced description ‘symphonic poem’, and bids it a happy putrefaction.¹⁸

In a predominantly negative critique of the same Vienna performance, Richard Heuberger with unwitting suggestiveness likened the Symphony to a ‘piece of imaginary theatre’,¹⁹ while the enthusiastic critic of the *Generalanzeiger* in Düsseldorf in 1903 with exceptionally rare foresight celebrated its democratizing eclecticism in almost completely converse terms to those of Liebstöckl:

The artist ... has felt an inner necessity to take the symphony down into the warm, pulsating life of the people. Drawing on his own, rich emotions he has forced the old, aristocratic form to ally itself with the spirit, inherent in modern art, that bridges all kinds of class differences. Mahler uses all those things that music lovers of all social classes have always prized – enchanting melodies, insinuating rhythms, lively harmonic sequences, dance, song, the mixture of instruments and voices – to breathe new life into the traditionally accepted symphony, though taking considerable liberties with its basic structure.²⁰

Despite misgivings, Mahler did, both privately and once publicly, provide programmatic accounts of the Second Symphony,²¹ comparable in their level of detail with that which he drew up for the First Symphony. The last of these was produced at the behest of the King of Saxony for a performance in Dresden in 1901. Billed as ‘general comments’ intended to ‘make the world of emotions expressed in the work more accessible to the audience’,²² it was not enough to prevent Hermann Starcke of the *Dresdner Nachrichten* from vilifying the work as ‘nothing but “a play of characters, aimless and shapeless sounds, an endless conglomeration of odds and ends culled from here and there”’.²³ Coming from someone who regularly disparaged the very notion of programmes, ceased providing them after the Fourth Symphony, and increasingly sought to distance himself from a Straussian aesthetic, the Dresden programme (in fact post-dating the completion of the Fourth Symphony) was a remarkably detailed and powerful apocalyptic evocation of religious transcendence, couched in the kind of fusty

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁹ La Grange, *Mahler*, p. 507.

²⁰ La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, p. 604.

²¹ See Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections*, pp. 43–4; Knud Martner (ed.), *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Eithne Wilkins, Ernst Kaiser and Bill Hopkins (London, 1979), pp. 178–81; and Mahler, *Memories and Letters*, pp. 212–14.

²² Cited in La Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, p. 414.

²³ Ibid., pp. 414–15.

Gothic imagery and language which he inherited from one of his favourite early nineteenth-century authors, Jean Paul:

We are standing beside the coffin of a man beloved. For the last time his life, his battles, his sufferings and his purpose pass before the mind's eye. And now ... our hearts are gripped by a voice of awe-inspiring solemnity ... What next? it says. What is life – and what is death? ...

Third movement. Scherzo.

The spirit of unbelief and negation has taken possession of him. ... The world and life become a witch's brew; disgust of existence in every form strikes him with iron fist and drives him to an outburst of despair. ...

Fifth movement.

... A voice is heard crying aloud: The end of all living beings is come – the Last Judgment is at hand and the horror of the day of days has come. The earth quakes, the graves burst open, the dead arise and stream on in endless procession. ... The wailing rises higher – our senses desert us, consciousness dies at the approach of the eternal spirit. The 'Last Trump' is heard – the trumpets of the Apocalypse ring out; in the eerie silence that follows we can just catch the distant, barely audible song of a nightingale, a last tremulous echo of earthly life! ... Then appears the glory of God! ... An overwhelming love lightens our being. We know and are.²⁴

The emerging picture of the troubled reception, compromised aesthetic status, uncertain signifying mechanisms and Gothic moods of these two symphonies encourages the view that, as a lifelong conductor of opera, Mahler was attempting to develop the symphonic genre to accommodate ever-more scenic and powerful theatrical dimensions of musical expression. In answer to Wagner's appropriation of symphonic techniques in opera, Mahler seemingly took the symphony to a stage in which, through vastly expanded scope and resources, it could in turn absorb music drama. The seeds of this had been planted by Beethoven and were given a more overtly literary and pictorial slant by Liszt's symphonic poems, and both contributed to an evolutionary Wagnerian theatrical practice that itself was transformed by Mahler into an aesthetically composite, multi-genre *über*-symphony. As the composer observed in 1896: 'Wagner has made symphonic music's *means of expression* his own, just as in turn the symphonic composer, with complete justification and awareness, will encroach on the expressive capabilities that music has gained through Wagner's efforts'.²⁵ That Mahler was aware of the generic confusion potentially caused by the latter developments in their resistance to clear categorization is shown by his belief that, at this historical juncture, 'the divergent paths of symphonic and dramatic music are separating for good'.²⁶

²⁴ Mahler, *Memories and Letters*, pp. 213–14.

²⁵ Herta Blaukopf (ed.), *Gustav Mahler Briefe*, 2nd edn (Vienna, 1996), p. 172.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Elsewhere I have suggested that this Mahlerian symphonic project of integrating or juxtaposing dramatic, instrumental, vocal, theatrical, literary and abstract expressive forms has a similarly eclectic, close artistic sibling in melodrama.²⁷ Many of the elements highlighted in contemporary criticism of his music such as triviality, overburdened sentimentality, visceral excess, sensational effect, and episodic or ruptured formal construction, were familiar from certain modes and theatrical genres of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century melodrama. Moreover, in bemoaning the perceived lack of familiar musical landmarks and stable conventions, such criticism, as we have seen, often searched for explanatory verbal material – the absent text, the set of ‘stage directions’ or the ‘promptbook’, as it were (sometimes tantalizingly proffered by the composer only to be recanted) – which might hold the key to the structure and content of Heuberger’s provocative notion of Mahler’s ‘imaginary theatre’.

The apparent Manichean drama of the Second Symphony is also reminiscent of the polarized narratives of many nineteenth-century theatrical melodramas, the impact and accessibility of whose ‘blood and thunder’ are echoed in the otherwise antithetic critiques of Liebstöckl and the anonymous *Generalanzeiger* critic cited above. Indeed, referring almost certainly to Mahler’s farewell concert in Vienna in 1907, Schoenberg, despite intellectual reservations, recalled in surprisingly gushing terms the overwhelming emotional experience of hearing the Second Symphony for the first time:

I was seized, especially in certain passages, with an excitement which expressed itself even physically, in the violent throbbing of my heart ... If one is overwhelmed, the intellect maintains that there are many means which might bring forth such an overwhelming emotion. It reminds us that no one can view a tragic event in life without being most deeply moved; it reminds us of the melodramatic horror-play, whose effect none can escape.²⁸

If the theatrical ‘space’ projected by Mahler’s symphonies constitutes a form of ‘virtual’ melodrama, it does so in a number of ways:²⁹

- the usage of musical figures, socially inclusive musical topics, and malleable structural processes common in examples of generic melodrama ranging from the works of composers such as Fibich to early silent-film ‘stock’ music compilations

²⁷ See Jeremy Barham, *Mahler, Music, Culture: Discourses of Meaning* (Bloomington, IN, forthcoming, 2012).

²⁸ ‘Gustav Mahler’ in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London, 1975), pp. 449–72, here p. 450.

²⁹ See Barham, *Mahler, Music, Culture* for fuller discussion of these aspects of Mahler’s compositional idiolect and their relation to melodrama.

- virtual vocality, linking the early nineteenth-century instrumental melodrama of Pixérécourt with the dramatic embodiment of the Wagnerian orchestral complex (and indeed the mute, gestural language of silent film), thus claiming for the symphony its ‘divergent path’ away from the actualized drama of stage genres to its virtual drama of the metaphysical and the ineffable
- representation of the central melodramatic dialectic of action and pathos,³⁰ through episodic oppositions of continuity-fragmentation, progress-reversal, momentum-stasis.

Whether taken generically as a cluster of related historical forms such as passages within opera (Beethoven, *Fidelio*; Weber, *Der Freischütz*; Humperdinck, *Hänsel und Gretel* – all of which Mahler conducted), independent works by Benda and Fibich, and Victorian theatre; or whether taken as a looser mode of extreme dramatic expression straddling these genres and the nineteenth-century novel (Balzac, Dickens, Dostoyevsky), non-musical stage plays, silent cinema, and certain types of concert music – as ‘a particular form of dramatic *mise en scène*, characterized by a dynamic use of spatial and musical categories’³¹ – melodrama’s intensified, morally delineated re-examination of the music–language or music–meaning relation resonates with Mahler’s modernist confronting of what Peter Brooks refers to as a ‘chaotic, post-sacred’ era.³² There are some historical and interpretative grounds, then, for the ostensibly surprising recent association of these Mahler symphonies, over a hundred years later, with an unusual take on the Victorian melodramatic contexts par excellence of the vampire myth.

Mahler, Dracula and the Melodramatic Mode

The Balletic

Mark Godden’s use of parts of Mahler’s First, Second and Ninth Symphonies as the score for his ballet *Dracula* (1998), commissioned by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, acts as a first staging post in releasing even further the melodramatic potential of Mahler’s music.³³ This is Godden’s account of his musical preparations:

³⁰ Identified in Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, 1976, repr. 1995).

³¹ Thomas Elsaesser, ‘Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama’, in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (London, 1987), pp. 43–69, here p. 51.

³² Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 15.

³³ The Royal Winnipeg Ballet kindly provided me with a DVD of the production (performed 23 October 2005 at Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall; no credit details are listed on the recording); it is not currently commercially available. Score references are

The majority of the ballet was choreographed to Mahler's 2nd symphony; and, [this] was really the reason for my choosing Mahler. Dracula is the anti-Christ and Mahler's resurrection symphony seemed appropriate. More so than this, I was just so drawn to the music ... at the start music was the biggest concern ... After some time, 3–4 months, I finally sat down to consider music. Mahler's 2nd symphony was on my list. I was familiar with his 4th, 5th, 9th and 1st but had never heard the 2nd. Frankly, I didn't think it would be right. But, I was wrong. Since I had spent time considering the images from the novel that could be achieved in the ballet, I found upon the first listen music that matched, in my mind, these images. It was really too good to be true, but true. Anyway, after a time the music became more important than the ballet. Arrogantly, I thought I would be able to cut and splice Mahler. It was impossible. He forced me to realize my vision without messing with his. It was a huge task at times, being true to the music ... and of course, I did make some cuts.³⁴

Live performance tends to reduce the viability of complex cutting and splicing of music, and so Godden mostly choreographed to complete movements or large, continuous and sequential sections of movements, making use of the music's natural ebb and flow, its textural and emotional contours, and at times its abrupt shifts of mood and content, to determine physical movement and interaction. Table 13.1 lists the components of the ballet's score.

As would be expected, Godden selected the most dance-like movements from the three symphonies – Symphony No. 2, Scherzo; Symphony No. 1, Funeral March (with its 'Hasidic' dance middle section and obvious dark connotations); and Symphony No. 9, Ländler/Waltz. But perhaps more tellingly he also opted for the complete first movement of the Second Symphony and the first 166 bars of the First Symphony's finale, both expansive and intensely dramatic canvasses articulating and working through the conflict of opposing positive and negative poles of major–minor tonal contrast with varied outcomes, and whose sonata-form frameworks and components crucially are structurally disfigured (or liberated) in complex ways through techniques of breakthrough, violent gestural intervention, formal extension or disruption, and eclectic assemblages of allusive thematic and figurational material.³⁵

Through Godden's choreographic responses and reflections, many of these elements act as if they have been enlisted in true melodramatic fashion as 'constituents of a system of punctuation, giving expressive colour and chromatic

made to *Symphonie 1*, revd edn (Vienna: Universal [Philharmonia no. 446], 1967) and *Symphonie 2*, revd edn (Vienna: Universal [Philharmonia no. 395], 1971).

³⁴ Email communication with the author, 15 January 2009.

³⁵ For discussion of some of the formal challenges posed by these movements see, for example, James Buhler, "Breakthrough" as Critique of Form: The Finale of Mahler's First Symphony', *19th-Century Music*, 20/2 (1996): pp. 125–43; and Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon Wicker (Aldershot, 1994).

Table 13.1 Mahler components in the score of Godden's ballet *Dracula*

ACT I		
Scene 1	Symphony No. 2, first movement (complete)	Back story is presented in intertitles; Dracula bites Lucy; menfolk attend at her bedside, attempting a transfusion; left alone, Lucy is approached and bitten again by Dracula.
Scene 2	Symphony No. 2, third movement (complete)	After being attended by nurses and danced around by goblins, Lucy is found to be lying dead in a stone coffin.
Scene 3	Symphony No. 1, third movement (complete)	The undead Lucy is bitten again by Dracula, who is now in complete control of her.
Scene 4	Symphony No. 1, fourth movement (bars 1–166)	The menfolk surround her coffin, fight with her and eventually impale and decapitate her.
ACT II		
Scene 1	Symphony No. 9, second movement (complete)	Dance sequence between several females and a devil figure, who transpires to be Dracula.
Scene 2	Symphony No. 1, first movement (complete)	Scene between Mina and Harker in which they discuss his diary account of his stay in Dracula's castle; at the end she too is revealed to be coming under Dracula's sway.
Scene 3	Symphony No. 2, fifth movement: bars 1–190; 447–71; 325–446; 472–559	Pas de deux between Dracula and Mina; menfolk search Dracula's dungeon, and confront, surround and eventually impale him.

contrast to the story line, by orchestrating the ups and downs of the intrigue', as Thomas Elsaesser describes music's function in melodramatic genres.³⁶ For example, in Act I, scene 1, the turn to the still waters of the lyrical, song-like material in the first movement of the Second Symphony, as it shifts from C to E major (bars 123–33) and appeases the preceding heavy chromaticism, sees Lucy returning from her nightmare-like, nocturnal encounter with Dracula to the normality of her daytime existence. As the music gradually works its way back to Tempo 1 from bar 163, over dotted, triplet and then tremolo bass lines, so Lucy's behaviour and movements become increasingly agitated until the moment of her collapse, which is precisely synchronized with the point of musical reversal (bar 201) when textural and dynamic overload is punctured and dissipated. The topic of heroic fanfare is invoked shortly after as the trumpet calls of bars 206–207 coincide with the arrival of her fiancé, who helps her up at exactly the moment the music settles into a stable F major with a return of the lyrical theme (bar 208).

³⁶ Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury', p. 50.

The portentous entrance of Van Helsing, hat mysteriously concealing his face, is aligned with the return of the movement's opening Gothic scalic gestures in lower strings, now in the darker key of E \flat minor with intervening *ff* orchestral octaves coloured by tam-tam and bass drum, as markers of an intrusive terror that forces Lucy to retreat (bar 244). From bar 163 onwards, Mahler has in fact been ratcheting up the tension in waves with instructions such as 'gradually and imperceptibly returning to Tempo 1 from here', 'pushing on' (bar 196), 'pressing forwards somewhat' (bar 208), 'do not hold back' (bar 221), 'always more movement' (bar 227), 'always pressing on more' (bar 235); then dropping back in tempo at bar 254 ('beginning very slowly'), but picking up again from bar 262 ('from this point *imperceptibly* and gradually shift into a stricter tempo'), followed by 'always intensifying more until the a tempo' (bar 278).³⁷ Finally, at the highly theatrical girding up of loins and drawing of breath ('molto rit.', bar 290 followed by a *cæsura*), this pent-up tension is discharged in bar 291 at 'a tempo subito molto più mosso' with the additional note for conductors '*cæsura* and then suddenly forwards!', and this is the very moment in the ballet when Van Helsing removes Lucy's neck scarf to reveal the wounds and the truth of the hitherto mystifying situation. The tonality at this point still centres on a sombre E \flat minor, but structurally the music will have to shift to the dominant of C minor as it approaches a reprise of the opening. Matching on-stage action, and in a way that is typical of Mahler's brutal formal abrasions, the music can only achieve this through an act of textural and dynamic usurpation: prolonged emphasis of the dominant of E \flat minor from bar 304 is viciously swept away by tutti descending chromatic scales from bar 315 and an *fff* 3–2–1 descent in horns (with raised bells), trombones and tuba, forcibly asserting the sought-after G, which is arrived at in bar 320. Coinciding with this intervention is Lucy's sudden turn to violence, and as the remarkable build-up of musical dissonance hammered out in textural hyperbole (bars 325–8³⁸) signals a structural aporia which can only be followed by reiteration of the tonic pitch C in bar 329, Lucy finds the only outlet for her anger is to direct it towards the person she should love, her fiancé: she bites his neck and they part suddenly in shock at the precise point of arrival on the tonic. During the eventual textural dissipation over a prolonged tonic pedal (which begins in bar 410), Lucy's feverish dreams abate (bar 427) and she is left alone, but, in a sudden reversal typical of melodrama, at the final intrusive chromatic orchestral descent of the movement (bar 441), like the sudden lowering of a stage curtain on a posed tableau vivant, Dracula rushes in to bite her welcoming neck, and she drops back on to the bed at the final quaver of the movement.

³⁷ Translations are my own.

³⁸ This dissonance begins as a diminished seventh on E \flat over a G pedal, and intensifies to a dominant minor thirteenth on G with minor ninth (that is: G, B, D, F, A \flat , C, E \flat), a tonal complex that notably contains within it chords I, II, IV, V and VI of C minor, and diminished seventh on B).

For the final scenes in both acts, Godden engages in respectively greater levels of manipulation of the Mahler source material. Whilst there may have been a purely practical element of timing and length underlying this, it is significant that for these most dramatic, suspenseful, action-driven and violent passages of narrative conclusion or interim closure, Godden was driven (like Guy Maddin after him, though not as intensely – see below) to harness the music so as to maximize impact and press home the vivid moral oppositions at the root of the Manichean drama. Several gestures in the opening section of First Symphony's finale used by Godden lend themselves to the 'action' part of Brooks's melodramatic dialectic: rapid scalar string movement; tremolo, and combinations of this with tension-building repeated chromatic lines; a descending chromatic triplet motif shared among brass, woodwind and strings; short, stabbed chords; a strong, fanfare-like principal theme; short-term, localized climaxes created by rising and falling dynamics and some tempo modifications; and a typical Mahlerian collapsing section derived from receding dynamics and motivic fragmentation. The scene opens in silence as the four men kneel in prayer around Lucy's coffin. Two then approach either side of her body and, at the cymbal crash and unusual *ff* dissonant chord,³⁹ she suddenly grabs their throats: here Godden is invoking the archetypal film-scoring practice of orchestral 'stinger' at moments of shock in the horror film genre. Thereafter similar 'punctuating' and 'expressive' musical gestures provide the contours of the struggle, both physical and moral, between the crucifix-bearing men and the corrupted, undead Lucy, as shown in Table 13.2. The provisional quality of the drama's conclusion at this point is mirrored in the excerpted nature of the Mahler. Yes, Lucy has been freed from her eternal damnation and entrapment by Dracula, but only at the cost of her own existence: she was, after all, an innocent victim. Likewise the tormented striving of the symphonic movement has been dissolved but no true reconciliation or resolution of the nascent, truncated drama has been achieved, the contrasting voice of positivity not even glimpsed.

More than just a fight to the death between the forces of good and evil, the finale of Act II has to deal with the ambivalent relationship between Dracula and Mina, his humiliation of Harker, Mina's betrayal of the vampire and van Helsing's final victory. This is probably why Godden was drawn to the final movement of the Second Symphony, with its much greater variety of musical styles and topics. It is here that Godden, like Maddin after him, intervenes most extensively in the musical structure, excerpting as well as re-ordering, as shown in Table 13.1. Rather than small-scale, localized moments of precise kinetic synchronization, this part of the ballet instead provides a broader developing 'dramatic *mise en scène*', to use Elsaesser's description, 'characterized by a dynamic use of spatial and musical categories'. Mina's gentle interaction with Harker, set to the First Symphony's opening movement, gives way to the sudden and unexpected reappearance of Dracula, at the point in the Second Symphony when, according

³⁹ This chord offers the intriguing, pungent combination of a German augmented sixth chord on D₅ sounded over the root of the chord to which it would 'normally' resolve: C.

Table 13.2 Final scene of Act I: the demise of Lucy

Timing	Action	Music
42'27"	Lucy shrugs off the four men who have closely surrounded and grabbed hold of her	<i>ff</i> brass, bass drum, timpani and lower string stabbed F minor 2nd-inversion chord in bar 12 ³ , after rapid dynamic surge during previous bar
	She flails her arm at two of the men in turn	Each synchronized with the 'scharf abgerissen' brass, timpani and bass drum stabs on the same chord in bars 14 and 15
42'44"	One of the men shows crucifix to Lucy and she tiptoes backwards, weakened	bar 25: sustained full-orchestral chord (dominant minor 9th on C) with string tremolo, and winding chromatic melody
	Three of the men repel her with their crucifixes in turn	Each synchronized with the descending triplet chromatic motif in bars 32, 35 and 38
43'03"	Men dance round Lucy, making intermittent large strokes with their crucifixes	Each stroke synchronized with final <i>fp</i> note of principal theme in trumpets and trombones, bars 41, 44 and 47
43'21"	Men have closed in on Lucy, but she waves them away with single aggressive arm gesture	Arm gesture synchronized with single <i>ff</i> unison F stab with cymbal, which is the springboard for the ensuing 'Energisch' main section of the movement
43'42"	Lucy shrugs off the two men she has been dancing with, and they fall to the floor	Synchronized with the first sudden dynamic surge and <i>ff</i> stab in this section, diminished 7th on B to C ^{5/4} , bar 73 ³
43'55"	Swish of Lucy's skirt signals a brief tiring	Matches kinetically with the <i>ff</i> timpani and cymbal stroke, rapid arpeggios and downward scales, from bar 84 ³ : followed by a less energetic and texturally reduced passage
44'21"	After briefly 'seducing' him to dance with her, Lucy bites one man's wrist	Bite synchronized with chordal stab of F minor at climax of surging dynamic build-up, and a tempo after 'Zurückhalten', bar 106
45'03"	First impaling of Lucy with two stakes	Synchronized with longer chord, with Italian augmented 6th associations (F–B–D _b –G) in bar 143 ² , containing rapid brass crescendo. This passage, marked 'Mit grosser Wildheit', marks the beginning of the gradual breakdown of momentum, dynamics and texture to the <i>ppp</i> of bar 174

Timing	Action	Music
45'06"	Second impaling with other two stakes	Similarly functioning chord, though less dissonant and foreign to surrounding F minor context (diminished 7th on F) in bar 146 ²
45'10"	Third impaling with all four stakes	Similarly functioning chord, now beginning <i>p</i> and comprising a shift from F minor to diminished 7th on F, bar 149 ²
45'16"	Fourth impaling with all four stakes	Similarly functioning chord, now 'Etwas zurückhaltend' and comprising shift from F minor to German augmented 6th on D, with F in bass (which conventionally would resolve to dominant C, but does not do so here), bar 153 ²
45'24"	Final single impaling and twisting of stake, resulting in decapitation; man lifts head out of coffin; curtain falls	bars 157–66, as music ebbs away, using upward E–F appoggiatura, and descending triplet chromatic motif

to Mahler's programme, 'A voice is heard crying aloud: The end of all living beings is come – the Last Judgment is at hand and the horror of the day of days has come.' During this harmonically rather static,⁴⁰ but figurationally active, outburst of orchestral tone at the opening of the finale, marked 'Wild herausfahrend', Dracula throws Mina to the ground, and his three female disciples begin to dance together, sometimes threateningly in relation to the cowering Mina. Dracula shows Mina the trunk full of 'filthy lucre' at the point when the *Dies Irae* theme begins (bar 62), and the unfolding contours of their relationship – growing from Mina's tentativeness to full-blown passion and surrender – are closely delineated first by the nervous appoggiatura section over tremolo strings (from bar 96), whose tempo directions themselves could stand in as the set of stage directions or promptbook for which Mahler's contemporary critics craved, outlining the fluctuating degrees of reticence, acquiescence and commitment on Mina's part: 'At first very restrained' (bar 97), 'Pressing on somewhat' (bar 113), 'Very urgent' (bar 122), 'quite agitated' (bar 131), 'push on' (bar 132), 'holding back again' (bar 134). Then the return of the *Dies Irae* as brass chorale at bar 142 signals a brief hiatus and moment of complete sexual subjugation as Dracula caresses the supine Mina, and the last vestiges of her anxiety appear to be swept away at the breakthrough of C major (bar 162), when they embark on a *pas de deux* in full accord with one another. As the music begins to subside from bar 181, Mina's former doubts resurface but too late to prevent Dracula from tasting her blood – he only releases her neck when the high trumpet C (bars 185–7) is also released.

⁴⁰ B♭ minor chords over a C pedal.

As in many stage melodrama productions, the light fades (on the couple) in one area of the stage, and illuminates another area to imply parallel action in two different locations – the forerunner of cross-cutting in early film technique. Five figures with flashlights enter Dracula's dungeon through creeping dry-ice fog in search of Mina, and the music has cut to the highly evocative scenic dialogue scored by Mahler between disembodied off-stage brass calls and on-stage flute and piccolo bird sounds (from bar 447),⁴¹ omitting vast amounts of the musical argument that leads up to this point: 'The "Last Trump" is heard – the trumpets of the Apocalypse ring out; in the eerie silence that follows we can just catch the distant, barely audible song of a nightingale, a last tremulous echo of earthly life!', according to Mahler's programme. Once the vampire's three female disciples have each been dispatched with a stake, the music cuts back to provide some of the omitted developmental section that precedes this moment of scenic displacement. The arc of tension articulated by this passage provides the mute, physical developments on stage with their unspoken emotional trajectory: a reprise of the nervous *appoggiatura* figure over tremolo strings (bar 325) at the immediate discovery of Mina embodies the suspicion among some of the men that she might be 'undead'; the brusque examination of her neck coincides exactly with the unmuted cello melody cutting through the texture, beginning *fp* in bar 341; the tense search for Dracula is enlivened by the section marked 'with somewhat urgent character' (from bar 343) which combines the *appoggiaturas* with, in Mahler's original scoring, off-stage brass and percussion interjections;⁴² with sequentially rising chromatic string writing of the type copied and codified by many a golden-era Hollywood film composer as an emblem of rising tension (especially from bar 364); and finally, with the sudden intensification of dynamics and tempo ('with violent urgency') in bars 376–9, we know that something bad is about to happen. Sure enough, at the climactic point when all the foregoing voice-leading has led irrevocably to the chord of D₅ at bar 380 and Mahler doubles the tempo, Dracula himself appears from stage left. With the music then 'using' similar pre-filmic techniques of tightening repetition of ever-shorter melodic figures, rising sequential chromaticism, acceleration of tempo and raising of dynamics, Dracula fends off the attack of each man in turn, the fourth being flung to the floor at the next moment of climax – the arrival on the arresting dominant eleventh with minor ninth on C# and the shift to *Più mosso* at bar 402.

At this point in the symphonic movement there is an abrupt shift of gear as the 'Aufersteh'n' chorale melody is instrumentally intoned for the first time, in a hushed, solemn but tonally bright D₅ major (from bar 418), and this is the cue in the ballet for an intriguing moral about-face, typical of melodramatic extremes, that is carried through to the end of the ballet to varying degrees. Harmonic lucidity is

⁴¹ In the DVD of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet production, it appears that the brass were not placed 'off stage', but rather simply played more quietly to simulate the effect.

⁴² Again in the DVD recording, these instruments are clearly not sounding from 'off stage'.

matched on-stage by a shaft of sunlight shining in through a gap in the wall that has been smashed out by Van Helsing; Dracula is in trouble, momentarily falls, and shields himself behind Mina who briefly recaptures some of the intense allure she felt for the vampire. The music here is strongly intimating to us that Dracula himself is a suffering victim who should elicit our sympathy, even though he is threatening to harm Mina unless Van Helsing covers up the deadly light. By the end of the musical passage we are at the point when the 'Last Trump' would sound in the movement proper. Instead, at the last moment, Van Helsing is throttled until unconscious by Dracula, and the music cuts to the 'Aufersteh'n' vocal chorale itself (bar 472), ushering in the narrative conclusion.

With more than a hint of irony, the sung text 'Rise again, yea, thou shalt rise again, my dust, after short rest! Immortal life! Immortal life he who called thee will grant thee' suggests possibilities of transcendent sacred union rather than the pact with evil being enacted on stage. After initial trepidation, and a refusal on Mina's part to use the dagger offered to her by Dracula, by the end of the choral verse she has yet again succumbed to a reversal of moral compass, and dances an intimate pas de deux as the radiant breakthrough music from bar 162 reappears at bar 492. The relationship is sealed with a kiss at the re-entry of the chorus for the second verse of the chorale in bar 512, but, *Parsifal*-like, this is also a turning point. Mina retreats in distress and goes to the aid of the fallen Harker. Now essentially the same music underpins further moral reversals as Dracula intervenes, trusses him up on a stake and pushes money and the dagger into his mouth. As the chorale verse reaches its climax on the word 'die Starben!' ['the dead!'] in bar 534,⁴³ Dracula tears the skin of his own bare chest and forces Mina to drink, which she does hungrily, whereupon both slump to the floor in a voluptuous erotic embrace and the resplendent instrumental apotheosis of the resurrection chorale sets in. No sooner has she given herself so completely, however, than Mina recoils in even greater disgust and appears to have re-orientated her moral stance yet again. At the precise melodic apex of bar 540¹, the woodwind's aching 4–3 appoggiatura reinforced by timpani fifths, Mina thrusts a crucifix towards Dracula, who now appears somewhat disempowered by his expression of union with her. This is the cue for all the men to rise up with their stakes, for Mina to release the sunlight once more, and for Dracula to be surrounded and finally fatally impaled at bar 550 – at the point when the trumpet begins the first of four final statements of the resurrection theme. As the music gently ascends heavenward and Dracula is left hanging pathetically on the stake, moral order has been restored, and the melodramatic villain has been vanquished, but this is no heroic victory: encoded into the dynamically recessive but thematically and tonally exalted musical gestures (successively higher statements of the resurrection theme, each ending with a 'sweet' 6–5 appoggiatura, over rocking I–II–I chords in high tessitura and with diminishing bass support) is a sense of sympathy for the rogue societal element that

⁴³ The full second verse reads: 'To bloom again art thou sown! The Lord of the harvest goes and gathers in, like sheaves, Us who died.'

was unable to integrate either personally or collectively and that has finally been released from an eternal curse. Such is the power of the melos in a melodramatic context to determine, or, radically and rapidly, redefine moral and emotional axes though its eloquent system of harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and textural gestures, processes and structures. Godden's ballet may at last have provided the kind of signifying content that many contemporary critics so sorely missed in Mahler's first two symphonies, but this comes at the price of arguably establishing an over-concretized and inapt semantic dimension for what are more broadly expressive works, and at the price of at least initiating the ethically challenging practice of partitioning and re-sequencing holistically structured, long-range musical thought in the service of the immediacy of melodramatic commodification. This latter in particular was a practice that Guy Maddin would soon take to new extremes.

The Filmic

Although Mark Godden had the initial inspiration to combine the world of staged and essentially 'mimed' Gothic horror with Mahler's music, the film director Guy Maddin added new dimensions of expressionistic silent film and a level of musical manipulation far beyond what was possible for Godden, in his *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary* (2002), the result of a Canadian television commission.⁴⁴ Rather than simply a filming of Godden's ballet, this is an extensive re-imagining of it, with certain balletic interludes omitted, employing a range of purely cinematic techniques of editing and cutting in a monochrome or tinted setting enhanced with optical filtering devices, splashes of colour, intertitles and selected ambient sounds.

Maddin has declared himself to be an ardent champion of the rehabilitation of melodrama:

Melodrama is unjustly maligned as an art form that exaggerates, sometimes grotesquely, the truths of the human condition. I use British theatre-writer Eric Bentley's definition of melodrama⁴⁵ as an art form that eschews exaggerating, and therefore distorting, the truth in favour of uninhibiting the truth, the way our feelings are uninhibited in dreams. ... In our dreams we get to be uninhibited ... to ... comport ourselves in unseemly ways ... Good melodrama simply uninhibits its characters till they are behaving in ways that are repressed in waking life. This enables stories to be told in broad, lurid, criminally violent and often grotesque strokes without altering their essential truth. The truth is simply uninhibited, not exaggerated. Uninhibition implies the revelation of a truth, the truth made more obvious. While exaggeration implies a distortion of the truth, which is quite a different thing.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Available on commercial DVD (Tartan Video TVD 3468, 2004).

⁴⁵ In Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (New York, 1979).

⁴⁶ Email correspondence with the author, 23 September 2009.

There is, however, a profound tension at the heart of Maddin's aesthetic that aligns him, curiously enough, with Mahler. However much Maddin wishes to revive or keep alive old forms and practices, he cannot avoid doing so from a knowing, late twentieth-century/early twenty-first-century artistic perspective. Thus, for William Beard, 'what we find in Maddin's cinema is not melodrama, but "melodrama"', a cultural artefact that cannot but be 'stripped from its original organic environment' in a way that is 'fully in keeping with ... the perfectly postmodern nature of Maddin's work'.⁴⁷ Similarly Mahler, from his late nineteenth-century/early twentieth-century perspective, was continually re-processing inherited symphonic structures in knowing fashion, placing the history of the genre in question, producing 'symphonies' rather than symphonies much to the consternation of his critics, and, for many later commentators with the benefit of hindsight, embodying at least a proto-postmodernist ironic stance of play with, and subversion of, bourgeois conventions. The inevitable apparent conflict between a genuine artistic expression that seeks some kind of truth, and a distancing of the artist from his materials in order to do this, shows Maddin and Mahler to be somewhat kindred spirits. More than this, however, Maddin neither sees his penchant for an eclectic range of film genres and borrowings as incongruous nor views irony and melodrama as mutually exclusive categories:

It's peculiar that I'm a big fan of fairy tales and melodrama yet love the Neorealists too. Melodrama, neorealism, and, of course, surrealism all get at something true by heightening ... People talk about irony and melodrama as if they're mutually exclusive, but I'm not so sure they are. When melodrama isn't working, I crave irony. If the sweetness isn't working, I need something savory, something very salty or something horrible, caustic to undermine it. The ironic temperament is tattooed onto all of our sensibilities. People laugh at Sirk movies but get sucked into them if they have any heart at all. No matter how delighted you are by the look, the excess, the sheer madness of a film like *Imitation of Life*, how could you not be absolutely wiped out by the final scene? ... You never know when a wrecking ball will come swinging out of the Technicolor rosebushes in one of these melodramas.⁴⁸

Mahler's eclecticism is such that, very much like that of Maddin, 'heartfelt nostalgia [is] met by a strong gallows humour'⁴⁹ in 'romantic kitsch hybrids'⁵⁰ whose

⁴⁷ William Beard, 'Maddin and Melodrama', in David Church (ed.), *Playing With Memories: Essays on Guy Maddin* (Winnipeg, 2009), pp. 79–95, here p. 82.

⁴⁸ Guy Maddin and James Quandt, 'Purple Majesty: James Quandt Talks With Guy Maddin', *Artforum*, 41/10 (June 2003): pp. 156–61.

⁴⁹ David Church, 'Bark Fish Appreciation: An Introduction', in Church (ed.), *Playing With Memories*, pp. 1–25, here p. 4.

⁵⁰ Maddin, cited in Caelum Vatnsdal, *Kino Delirium: The Films of Guy Maddin* (Winnipeg, MB, 2000), p. 87.

dialectic of emotion and irony, action and pathos, ‘romantic excess ... and absurdist humour’⁵¹ exposes the true dilemma of making meaningful artistic communication through culturally obsolete, archaic or at least extremely unconventional means. Just as Maddin’s point in re-creating melodrama was ‘not to return to an earlier time, but to dramatize the impossibility of such a return’,⁵² so Mahler’s was to demonstrate that in his time it was no longer possible to write symphonies without a self-reflexiveness that turned them into ‘symphonies’, dramatizations – at times invoking a melodramatic aesthetic – of the very act of composing in this genre in a post-Wagnerian era. This self-reflexiveness was in part drawn by Mahler from the tradition of early nineteenth-century romantic irony exemplified in the works of Tieck, Novalis, Schlegel and above all Jean Paul, through which humour, play with convention, and ironic distance were crucially invested with deeply serious philosophical functions.⁵³ For Maddin and Mahler alike, then, irony is a true sibling of melodramatic discourse and both artistic modes express profound truths about the human condition. Rather than assuming that (proto)-postmodern ironic detachment is unalterably ‘toxic’ or ‘hostile’ to melodrama, and rather than taking the latter’s ‘true and satisfying expression of underlying fatality in life’, its ‘lyricism, tenderness, elegiac lament’ and its ‘placement of suffering in some framework of gravitas and decorum’ to be ‘beyond reach in the postmodern Western world’, as Beard suggests,⁵⁴ Peter Brooks on the contrary notes that ‘postmodernism has reveled in the revival of nineteenth-century melodramas’ (in much the same way that it has with Mahler), maintaining that ‘however sophisticated we have become, the appeal of the melodramatic remains a central fact of our culture’.⁵⁵ Nadine Holdsworth concurs and goes further to theorize melodrama as postmodernist art form *avant la lettre* given its boundary-breaking bricolage of high and low, tragedy and farce, the extravagant *jouissance* of its theatricality, its play with repeated formulae, its confrontation with desacralization, its ambiguous reactionary and radical ideological underpinning, its preoccupation with masks, disguise, roles and hence suppressed or fractured identities, and its ‘privileging of sensation over cognition’ and of gesture and a physiognomics that transcend codified systems of rational representation and create gaps which, I would argue for Maddin

⁵¹ Steven Shaviro, ‘Fire and Ice: The Films of Guy Maddin’, in Church (ed.), *Playing With Memories*, pp. 70–78, here p. 70.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵³ For a more detailed discussion of Mahler’s romantic irony, see Mirjam Schadendorf, *Humor als Formkonzept in der Musik Gustav Mahlers* (Stuttgart, 1995) and Jeremy Barham, ‘Mahler’s *verkehrte Welt*: Fechner, “Learned Satire” and the Third Movement of Symphony 3’, in Erich Wolfgang Partsch and Morten Solvik (eds), *Mahler im Kontext / Contextualizing Mahler* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2011), pp. 169–98.

⁵⁴ Beard, ‘Maddin and Melodrama’, pp. 82, 83 and 92.

⁵⁵ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. ix.

and Mahler in their different contexts, are filled by music's emotive, narrative and semantic resonances.⁵⁶

Given the dialogue-free nature of the *Dracula* film, and its immediate origins in the stylized, physically performative contexts of ballet, music forms a more intense and articulate focus of dramatic meaning in it than might be the case in conventional films with spoken text. However, Maddin acknowledges that music plays a central role in the structure of his cinematic language as a whole:

In the last few years, I've been trying to get my movies to make musical sense, in the way melodramas do. They can make absolutely no literal sense, but I want the images to somehow take the same shortcuts that music does. Music goes directly to your heart – it bypasses your brain. ... So I always want to get more and more music welded not just to the images, but to the actual stories on the page.⁵⁷

I love it when narratives lose logical sense and take on a musical sense, when plots and pictures work like music. Not tonal or atonal, but they take me someplace as instantly as music can.⁵⁸

In accordance with his melodramatic manifesto, and in a generically more closely related context than most of his other works, Maddin thus brings together in *Dracula* the nineteenth-century Gothic novel, supernatural horror, early silent film, expressionism, dance, mime and Mahler's music (in this case only parts of the First and Second Symphonies) in a remarkable confluence of historicized melodramatic elements. The postmodern lens through which this is projected, however, combined with the technical resources of an early twenty-first-century filmmaker at his disposal, facilitated a virtuosic display of fractured manipulation of image and music beyond the reach of most earlier models. Here, then, is the 'melodrama' of melodrama, a major part of which involves the play with and dismembering of Mahler's already playful and broken musical voice.

Maddin employs music from the same symphonic movements that Godden chose for the ballet, with the exception of the second movement of the Ninth Symphony. However, with the vital input of his associate director and editor Deco Dawson, and influenced by techniques of the Soviet montage of attractions, as well as working under the practical time constraints of the commission, he compressed, cut and reassembled this music to replace Godden's predominant use of complete movements with a collage-like mixture of unaltered shorter excerpts

⁵⁶ See Nadine Holdsworth, 'Haven't I Seen You Somewhere Before? Melodrama, Postmodernism and Victorian Culture', in Gary Day (ed.), *Varieties of Victorianism. The Uses of a Past* (London, 1998), pp. 191–205, here p. 198.

⁵⁷ Guy Maddin and William Beard, 'Conversations with Guy Maddin', in Church (ed.), *Playing With Memories*, pp. 239–65, here p. 246.

⁵⁸ Maddin and Quandt, 'Purple Majesty'.

and fragmented loops, superimpositions and rapid alternations of material within and between movements. Remarkably, rather than this process being pre-planned or closely coordinated with complex cue sheets, it was approached spontaneously during the editing in a manner akin to the moment-to-moment responses of a silent-film accompanist:

Once we'd committed the blasphemy of mutilating Mahler we decided we might as well go farther. In areas where I felt the world of the film might support more discombobulation we decided to fold Mahler over on himself, playing two pieces at once, so stuff which was cut from our version was redeployed with a companion piece, or rather, over the top of a companion piece of Mahler, to create a dissonant Mahler sandwich that, I felt, really skewed the world for filmic purposes ... There were no cue sheets or anything; these things were just improvised in the cutting room.⁵⁹

Over 80 instances of these varied interventions in the music were the result, and the following examines representative examples.

Cuts within Movements Where the opening of the ballet presented the back story through intertitles accompanied by the complete, uninterrupted first movement of the Second Symphony, the beginning of the film invokes the silent-film montage aesthetic of graphic intercutting to do the same. Among many interventions in the music, seven cuts are made during the course of the same movement, some of which are very subtle and barely noticeable without close attention to the score, and others of which are deliberately juxtapositional. In the former category, for example, Dracula first approaches Lucy during the receding march material at bar 104, bites her neck at the *fp* trombone chord in bar 111 (whereupon bars 111–12 are repeated to allow the same chord to synchronize with the moment he then places the concealing scarf roughly around her neck), and Lucy's immediate transport of ecstasy is matched by a cut from bars 112 to 119⁴, three bars into the blissful C major lyrical, song-like section (as well as by the first instance of colour-tinting (in green) of the whole image). What Maddin does here is simply to turn the longer transition from fading minor march to major-mode delight in Mahler's original into a quicker shift from one to the other. By skipping over the 'empty' connecting tissue of repeated four-note steps and fourth leaps in harp and lower strings that ends the march, as well as the beginning of the ensuing lyrical melody, he transgresses even Mahler's loosened structural etiquette in favour of a more compressed and commodified sense of dramatic progress, presenting difference as seamless continuity. Part of the effect is achieved by exploiting the deceptive technique of finishing and starting material 'in medias res', an extension of one of the most distinctive parts of Mahler's legacy for subsequent screen music idioms.

⁵⁹ Email correspondence with the author, 23 September 2009.

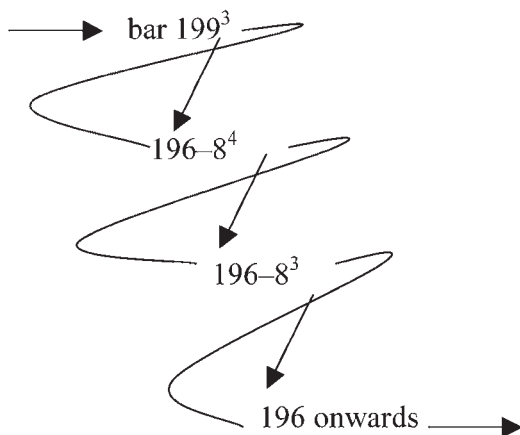
In terms of the second category of highly audible cuts, Maddin renders more shocking the moment when Van Helsing uncovers Lucy's neck wounds by shifting from bar 271 (a point of still-subdued dynamic level and texture during the gradual build-up of march material in E_b minor over sharp dotted rhythms in the bass) to bar 291, the *fff* 'suddenly forwards!', a tempo which in Mahler's original had been preceded by a more measured intensification and the 'girding up of loins' *molto ritenuto* in bar 290 previously described. The suspicion that cuts such as this are merely carried out glibly for reasons of expediency – to get through the music in the allotted shorter space of time – is countered both by the fact that other musical passages are considerably extended through looping techniques, and by the striking change in the pace and nature of visual editing that occurs at this point: the purple-tinted, relatively long takes of Van Helsing's medical examination of Lucy abruptly turn, at the musical cut, to a complex series of red- and then green-tinted rapid takes with jump cuts and overlapping, partially repeated material, matching closely the disorientating effect of the musical gearshift and in turn the bewilderment and fear of Lucy as she desperately tries to cover up her secret. Garish psychological pictograms and sonograms combine in powerful statements of the melodramatic art, regardless of how intuitively their integration was arrived at.

Cuts between Movements The orchestral 'stinger' effect of the beginning of the First Symphony's finale is retained by Maddin for Lucy's sudden grabbing of the men's throats from her coffin. However, its effect is altered by the switch being made not from a period of silence following the end of the funeral-march third movement as in the ballet, but during the fading but incomplete movement itself (the cut is made at bar 163³, five bars before the end). This is one of several inter-movement, and even inter-symphony, cuts made by Maddin for purposes of heightening melodramatic contrast and shifting between locations and timeframes. A particularly interesting example occurs when Van Helsing has decapitated Lucy: a cut is made from bar 166 of the First Symphony's finale (which was the point at which Act I of the ballet ended) back to bar 2³ of the third movement as the men wash their bloodied hands in a bowl of water, discuss their pursuit of the vampire and trepan the skull of the lunatic Renfield to extract information. The latter relates that Mina is to be the next victim and is travelling to the convent where her wounded fiancé Harker is recuperating. Between the intertitles we see brief cut-aways, presumably in the same timeframe, to Mina on her way and the bandaged Harker writing in his diary. During the latter a teasing narrative prolepsis (although chronologically a flashback) is presented, but only in the music: the unsettling high-string tremolo tritone with forceful crescendo from bar 252 of the fourth movement (the gateway to the development section in the movement proper) is superimposed as Harker looks innocuously to one side. Renfield's intertitles tell us that Harker is writing an account of the injuries he sustained while staying in Dracula's castle, the camera closes in on the diary, the scene shifts to a flashback of his farewell to Mina and train journey to Transylvania, and at the same point of temporal transfer the music switches from bar 16 of the third movement to the

very same string tremolo just heard from the fourth movement. This is extended and repeated before a cut to bar 305 in the same movement (a later point in its development section) where the music's change from triumphant C major march to troubled C minor with more intense figuration and surging dynamics matches the on-screen narrative move from Harker's confident arrival at the castle to the beginning of the vampire's attack. To mirror this, the relief of Harker's final dramatic escape from the castle is matched musically by a cut back to bar 286 of the same movement, where dissonant chromatic writing soon gives way (at bar 290) to a brighter C major. The flashback over, the music returns to bar 15 of the third movement, almost where it left off, and the scene simultaneously shifts back to Renfield in the present. A further seamless leap from bar 22 back to the first movement, bar 54 (source and target are both in D minor), sees a location shift to Mina now in the convent (again, presumably in the same or a near-same timeframe) and from monochrome to blue tint: D minor turns to D major, and the first appearance of the light-hearted 'Ging heut' Morgen über's Feld' melody here synchronizes with her long-awaited reunion with Harker. Cutting between three different symphonic movements thus articulates three different parallel locations and at least two different timeframes, a significant part of Maddin's desire to infuse melodramatic filmic structure with a sense of musical malleability.

Loops One of the most notable of the many examples of musical looping occurs when Lucy welcomes her three suitors into her home, at bar 171 of the Second Symphony's opening movement. This section of the music is dominated by variations of what Constantin Floros labels Mahler's 'cross motive', derived from earlier works by Liszt (*Trauerode 'Les Morts'*, 1860) and Wagner (*Parsifal*, 1882) and also used in the First Symphony.⁶⁰ As the three men interact with Lucy, tension rises (reflected in, or determined by, the turn to chromaticism from bar 179), a train whistle is heard at the end of bar 184, and accelerating track noise comes to match the rhythm of the lower-string triplets from bar 186 – both of which ambient sounds call on the railway topic as one of the archetypal symbols of melodramatic suspense. The 'Vorwärts' [press on] section from bar 196 combines several 'stock' elements of melodramatic accompaniment: rapid descending chromatic scales; string tremolo; 'chase'-music-like dotted-rhythm answering phrases; high dynamic levels; tight repetition of motifs and figures; and relatively simple, stratified texture. Here Lucy sits before a mirror, a more urgent train whistle is heard over the end of bar 197, train lights appear to shine in from outside, the room begins to shake, Lucy's mother becomes extremely agitated in her glass-enclosed bed, and Lucy herself seems to be emotionally imploding before falling in a faint. As if dramaticizing melodrama itself, Maddin intensifies the already hyperbolic by looping back to the beginning of the frenzied 'Vorwärts' in an ever-tightening circle three times during this passage:

⁶⁰ See Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, pp. 47, 58.



As the energy discharged by the music is finally allowed, at the fourth attempt, to progress to the dissipation from bar 200, Lucy collapses. We only learn from a brief cut-away, once she has been revived, that the whole troubling episode was triggered by her sensing Van Helsing's imminent arrival at the train station.

Superimpositions Maddin leaves his most intricate and virtuosic form of musical intervention to the very last scene of the film, depicting Dracula's downfall: 'I felt strongly the death of Dracula really needed to be more nightmarish than the Mahler music gave'.⁶¹ After the slow motion, followed by rapid elliptical cuts that mark Dracula's self-inflicted chest wound (set to the brass *Dies Irae* chorale, bars 143–50 with some unidentifiable choral texture, probably from *circa* bar 526, extremely low in the mix), a musical cut is made while Mina is supping his blood, to a collage of superimposed elements from both earlier and later in the movement, as shown in Table 13.3.

Here the central melodramatic dialectic of action and pathos is verticalized and in some ways recast: bars 107–37 embody not only a tendency for action in their growing urgency and rising-step figure with rapid crescendo to *sf* (for example, clarinets, bars 108–109; oboe and piccolo, bars 113–14) but also its dialectic other in pathos-imbued downward appoggiaturas with the opposite dynamic shape (for example, flute, oboe, cor anglais, bars 109–110); bars 528–59 re-frame both the pathetic downward appoggiatura into an embodiment of achievement and repose (bars 544, 558–9), and the urgent, unsettled F–G, rising-step figure into the apotheosis (both melodically and harmonically) of the solo vocal line 'und sammelt Garben uns ein, die Starben!' [and gathers in, like sheaves, Us who died!] (bars 529–35). We are forced to hear simultaneous tendencies – the Manichean melodramatic opposites present in both musical 'factions' – pulling in contrary directions of uncertainty, threat and urgency (reflected visually in the earlier parts of this sequence) as well

⁶¹ Email correspondence with the author, 23 September 2009.

Table 13.3 Superimposed elements in final defeat of Dracula, 69'26"–72'28"

69:26	69:59	70:32
<p>bars 107 to</p> <p>↓</p> <p>bars 528³ to 534;</p> <p>↓</p> <p>bars 528³ to 534;</p> <p>[Musical content: bars 107–37 = nervous, chromatic appoggiatura figure building from 'somewhat urgent', through 'very urgent' to 'quite agitated' and 'held back again', predominantly in B, minor</p> <p>musical content: bars 528–59 = end of second choral verse, followed by rising orchestral statements of 'resurrection' theme, G, major]</p>	<p>129² → 113³ to 137 [with omissions & further superimposed elements]</p> <p>↓</p> <p>533³ to 534⁴</p> <p>↓</p> <p>533³ to 534⁴</p>	<p>Fragments of bars 130 to 137 repeated and faded out</p> <p>↓</p> <p>bars 529³ to 559</p>
<p>Visual action</p> <p>Dracula & Mina in blood-sucking embrace</p> <p>Mina thrown to the ground 69'33", bar 109 (<i>fp</i> violin tremolo)</p> <p>Mina points crucifix at Dracula, 69'42", bar 114 (high woodwind G₃)</p> <p>Men revive and collect up stakes</p> <p>Mina releases sunlight, 70'00", repeat of bar 533 (peak of solo line 'die Starben!'), Dracula falls</p> <p>Men surround Dracula, jabbing at him with stakes, 70'22", timed with oboe, trumpet and viola falling semitone figure in repeat of bar 133 (beats 1 and 3)</p>	<p>Visual action</p> <p>At 70'40", bar 532, the competing music stops</p> <p>At 70'47", peak of solo line on G₃, bar 533, Dracula is multiply impaled (echo effects are used to match repetition in cutting from different viewpoints)</p> <p>Dracula carried into sunlight and laid to rest dangling upside down on stake; men destroy wooden structures in dungeon, men take trunk of money, Mina and Harker embrace, all exit into full colour exterior where birds are singing; last close-ups of Mina's melancholy face and shot of Dracula; outside, Van Helsing slips under his coat the undergarment of Mina's earlier removed by Dracula and used by Van Helsing to block out the invading sunlight</p>	

Key: ↓ = simultaneously layered; → ↘ ↙ = successive events

as resolution, victory and calm, to which the whole melodramatic audio-visual complex will eventually yield only after considerable struggle.

Complex interactions such as this abound in the Godden–Maddin–Mahler cultural assemblage. As artists from entirely different historical eras and cultural milieux, Maddin and Mahler in particular share surprising aesthetic affinities. For Maddin's favoured theoretician, Eric Bentley, melodramatic rhetoric is the 'rags and tatters' of a once 'splendid' language of tragedy,⁶² and where Mahler's musical language is formed from the leftovers of an exhausted Austro-German heritage

⁶² Bentley, *The Life of the Drama*, p. 207.

among whose ‘debased and vilified’ materials ... he scratches for illicit joys’ and ‘gathers up the heteronomous, the dregs for the autonomous structure’,⁶³ Maddin similarly admits to ‘gathering up things, carrion basically, from a big scrap heap of old dead masters’, using “‘vocabulary units” from the canon-writers and directors ... to tell my stories’.⁶⁴ In this way, both Mahler’s music and Maddin’s film, separately and in combination, not only integrate the ironic distancing of the ‘counterfeit found object of art’⁶⁵ with genuine emotional depth in their take on the melodramatic mode, but also fully embrace the latter’s paradoxical nature as a genre that has a ‘conformist and a critical edge’ combining the ‘shamelessly populist and kitschy’ with the ‘extremely self-conscious’.⁶⁶ Though ostensibly Mahler’s symphonies and the wider subject matter of the Dracula myth have nothing whatever to do with each other, they are brought closer together through the lens of Maddin’s and Godden’s re-imagining of Stoker’s specific late nineteenth-century setting in which a mysterious Slavic invader from Eastern Europe with irrational tendencies infiltrates and subverts the staid, rational world of respectable Western Europe – a melodramatizing equivalent of Mahler’s own cultural trajectory as Jewish, German-Bohemian outsider, perhaps. Though the parallels cannot be taken too far or too seriously (Dracula, after all, was among other things an aristocratic representation of the threatening ‘sexually other’), the notion of the melodramatic villain ‘always kept an isolated figure ... cordoned off and treated as an aberration’, yet also ‘the force behind all of the action, enabling others to test their values’,⁶⁷ suggests intriguing interconnections in the way the myth, Maddin’s film, Mahler’s music and melodrama all demand ‘critical reflection about the emptiness of ordinary bourgeois life’.⁶⁸ If these manifestations of the melodramatic mode do indeed reveal deeper truths, according to Maddin’s general view, they do so through the voice of cultural transgression: vampire myth of sexual taboos, Mahler of an inherited autonomy aesthetic, symphonic formulae and socio-musical hierarchies, Maddin–Godden of Mahler’s structural integrity and semantic horizons, and Maddin of cinematic history itself in his revitalizing of the apparently outworn. It is especially in the nature of film, the pivotal artistic form which links the above, that it hungrily appropriates disparate cultural material for its own ends. Only thus could a recycled, re-processed Mahler be so strikingly projected forward and

⁶³ Theodor Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, IL, 1992), p. 36.

⁶⁴ Maddin and Quandt, ‘Purple Majesty’.

⁶⁵ Mark Rhodes, review of *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary* (14 May 2003), www.filmsinreview.com/2003/05/14/dracula-pages-from-a-virgins-diary (accessed January 2010).

⁶⁶ Shaviro, ‘Fire and Ice’, p. 71.

⁶⁷ Martha Vicinus, “‘Helpless and Unfriended”: Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama’, *New Literary History*, 13/1 (autumn, 1981): pp. 127–43, here p. 139.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

folded back into a twenty-first-century reanimation of the early history of a form with whose birth he was contemporary but of which he had no direct experience.

With their physiognomics of vivid movement, visceral excess, grotesquerie, emotional overload and mute articulation of meaning, Mahler's and Maddin's work in their respective disciplines and with their differing degrees of contravention give voice to the 'largely forgotten language of expression and gesture' that, according to Béla Balázs (one of the earliest film theorists, and a champion of anti-realist montage techniques), silent film was in the process of compelling us all to re-learn in the early twentieth century, and which acts as a 'communication of the directly embodied soul' through which 'humankind will once more become visible'.⁶⁹ The truths thus uncovered by an increasingly dismembered *melodramatic* and *melodramatic* voice may not often be palatable, but it is for this very reason that such a voice, and the artworks through which it is mediated, cannot be ignored.

⁶⁹ Béla Balázs, *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* [1924] (Frankfurt, 2001), p. 17.

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CZ-Bm Brno, Moravské zemské muzeum

F-Pan Paris, Archives nationales

F-Pn Paris, Bibliothèque nationale

F-Po Paris, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra

Other Abbreviations

HHW Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden

YPBC Yale University Paul Bekker Collection (The Irving S. Gilmore Music Library)

Journals

Anbruch

Annales dramatiques ou dictionnaire général des théâtres

Année musicale

Blätter der Staatsoper

Courrier français

Courrier des spectacles

Dalibor

Deutsche Zeitung

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Index

References to illustrations and music examples are in **bold**.

- Abbate, Carolyn, 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic' 8
accompanied declamation 9, 61
 see also musical melodrama
Adler, Felix 155
Adorno, Theodor, *Philosophy of Modern Music* 150, 156, 157
Allen, Elizabeth Akers, *Rock Me to Sleep Mother* 71
Altman, Rick 217
Anger, Violaine 11
Antigone (Saint-Saëns) 9, 53–60
 at Théâtre Antique d'Orange 58, 59
 choruses 55, 58
 instruments 54
 melodramatic element 59–60
 music 54–5
 reception 53–4
 structural rhythm 56–8
Arlen, Harold, and E.Y. Harburg, *Wizard of Oz*, music 199, 201, 213, 214
Artaud, Antonin 141
Astbury, Katherine 9
Auber, Daniel, *La Muette de Portici* 37
Auger, Louis-Simon 86
Auric, Georges, on silent film music 218

Bach, C.P.E., *Hamlet* 192
Baker, Bertha Kunz 78
Balfé, Michael 103
 Bianca 105
 The Bohemian Girl 106
 The Daughter of St Mark 106, 107
 playbill **108**
 set design **109**
 Joan of Arc 106
 Satanella 107, 108
 Siege of Rochelle 105

Banks, Emma Dunning 69
 Original Recitations with Lessons Talks 64
Barham, Jeremy 8, 11
Barraqué, Jean 137
Bartet, Julia, performance in *Antigone* 53–4
Baum, Frank L., *Wizard of Oz* (book)
 silent films 200
 spin offs 199–200
 stage adaption 199–200
 see also *Wizard of Oz* (1939 film)
Bazin, André 229
Beard, William 253, 254
Beer, August 238
Beethoven, Ludwig van
 Egmont 6, 217
 Fidelio 6, 217, 243
 music, in *The Man Who Wasn't There* 215
Bekker, Paul 159, 180
 on cinema and opera 163–4
 Das deutsche Musikleben 163
 Das Operntheater 164, 167
 Herrmann, collaboration 166–70
Bellen, Eise Carel van 18
Benda, Georg 1, 88, 124, 192
 Ariadne auf Naxos 6, 92
 Medea 92–3
Benedict, Julius 103
 The Lily of Killarney 10, 111, 112
 Colleen Bawn, text comparisons 117–20
 music extracts 115–16
 premiere 116
 success of 117
Bentley, Eric 261
Berlioz, Hector, *Roméo et Juliette* 11, 185
 love scene 191

- melodrama 191–6
 musical characters 190–91
 staging 185–8
 tomb scene 189–91, 195, 196
 types of music 192
 voice, use of 194–5
- Bernie, B.J., *Readings and Recitations for Winter Evenings* 67
 title page **68**
- Berson, Seweryn 239
- Bianchi, Francesco, *La Forteresse du Danube* 20
- Biddlecombe, George 104, 107
- Bishop, Emily 70
- Bispham, David 72, 77–8
- Blair, Karen 64
- Bloom, Paul 59
- Boillat, Alain 224
- Boito, Arrigo 103
- Bonitzer, Pascal 223, 225
- Bonnerot, Jean 45, 52, 53
- Bouchardy, Joseph, *Les Enfants trouvés* 29
- Boucicault, Dion
 librettist, *The Lily of Killarney* 109, 111–14
 on opera 116
The Colleen Bawn 109, 110–11, 112
The Lily of Killarney, text comparisons 117–20
- boulevard melodrama 9, 15, 161
 opera, kinship 27
- Branscombe, Peter 7
- Bresson, Robert
Le Journal d'un curé de campagne 11, 224–5, 228–35
 music, function 229–30, 231, 232, 234
 Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne 229
Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé 228–9
- Bréval, Lucienne, Mlle 52
- Brod, Max 126
- Brooks, Peter 38, 41, 42, 172, 173, 180, 221
 'Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera' 29
 on melodrama 140–41, 161, 254
The Melodramatic Imagination 2, 3, 18, 28
- Brown, Royal S. 217, 218
- Brunetière, Ferdinand 46
- Bullerjahn, Claudia 210
- Bunn, Alfred 104–5, 106
 librettist, *The Daughter of St Mark* 106, 107
The Bondman 105
- cabaret
 hysteria in 153, 154–5
 venues, female spectacle 152
- Carli, Philip 10
- Carnicke, Sharon 141
- Chantavoine, Jean 52, 53
- Charlton, David 6, 8, 98–9
- Chautauqua circuit 67
 characteristics 74
 content 75
 female performers 74–5
 musical readings 74, 75
- Chelard, Hippolyte
Macbeth 10, 87–8
 libretto 89–90, 94–5
 reception 90–92
 sleepwalking scene 93–102
 music extracts **96, 97**
 as *tragédie lyrique* 87, 90, 91
- Cherubini, Luigi
Faniska 20
Médée 100–101
- Chopin, Frédéric, *Marche Funèbre* 216n4
- cinema, and opera, Bekker on 163–4
- Coen, Joel, *The Man Who Wasn't There*
 Beethoven's music, use of 215
 voice-over 215
- Colonne, Edouard 48
- Comédie-Française 46, 53
- composers, female, and musical melodrama 75–82
- Cooke, Mervyn 161
Courrier français 91
- Croze, J.-L. 52
- Daniels, Barry 17
- Davenport, Henry Northrop 65
- Davies, Robertson 103
- Dean, Winton 103, 107
- Deleuze, Gilles 224

- Delsarte, François 70
- Delsarte movement
and music 70–74
mysticism 70
origins 70
posing 71, 72
satirized, in *The Music Man* 70, 71
and women's emancipation 70–71
- Delsarte Recitation Book* 70
- Delvard, Marya 150, 152
performance style 153
- diminished-seventh chord 1, 11, 38, 39, 72,
93, 95, 98, 101, 218
- Doane, Mary Ann 223
- Dodge, Mary Mapes, *The Minuet* 69
- Donizetti, Gaetano, *Lucia di Lammermoor*
161
- Dorval, Marie 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38, 42, 43
obituary 33
- drame lyrique* 29
definition 17n11
Edelmann's *Ariane* 6
melodrama as 17, 27
Pixérécourt's *La Forêt de Sicile* 20
- Ducange, Victor, *Trente ans* 30
see also Sept heures
- Ducis, Jean-François 85, 87
- Ducray-Duminil, François Guillaume 16,
20, 22
- Dulac, Germaine 222–3
- Dumas, Alexandre, *Antony* 43
- Duponchel, Henri 106
- Duras, Marguerite, *India Song* 228
- Durdík, Josef, *General Aesthetics* 123
- Earle, Neil 209
- Edelmann, Jean Frédéric, *Ariane*, as *drame lyrique* 6
- elocution
anthologies 63–4
as feminine accomplishment 61–4, 74
see also musical recitation
- Elocutionists, National Association of 64, 70
- Elsaesser, Thomas 245
- Emmanuel, Maurice 46
- English troupe, Shakespeare performances
188, 193, 194
- Epileptic singer 151–2
- Epstein, Jean 222
- Etude* 77
- Evreinov, Nicolai
'Introduction to Monodrama' 141, 142
on monodrama 142
The Performance of Love 141–2
- Ewers, Hanns Heinz 152
- Fauré, Gabriel 52
- Félibres movement 47, 58
- Fergus, Phyllis 76
It Takes 79
output 77
sources 78
The Highwayman 77
The Usual Way 79, 81
music extract **81**
Wedding March extract **80**
- Fétis, François-Joseph 90, 91–2
- Feuchtwanger, Lion, *Vasantasena* 165, 167
- Fibich, Zdeněk 122–3
Christmas Day 124
Moods, Impressions and Reminiscences
136
- film, melodramatic voice in 221, 223–4
- film music
and melodrama 5, 198, 216
silent, Auric on 218
- film noir* 224–5
voice-over narration 215, 216, 224–5
- Fitzball, Edward 104
Jonathan Bradford 105
librettist
Lurline 105
Maritana 105
Raymond and Agnes 105
She Stoops to Conquer 105
Siege of Rochelle 105
- Floros, Constantin 258
- Ford, Fiona 11
- Formigé, Jules 47
- Forsyth, Cecil, *Music and Nationalism*
103–4
- France, Restoration period 86–7
- French Revolution, and melodrama 1, 10,
15, 17
- Fuzet, Germain 47

- Gallet, Louis 51, 52
 Garnier, Charles 47
 Gautier, Théophile 33
Gazette de France 92
 Gérardin-Lacour, M.
 La Femme à deux maris
 music 23–4
 score 22
 Les Maures d'Espagne, score 19
 music for melodramas 19
 Gœvaert, François-Auguste 53, 60
 Histoire et théorie de la musique de l'antiquité 46, 49, 54
 Ginisty, Paul 18
 Godden, Mark, *Dracula* 11
 preparation 244
 use of Mahler's symphonies 243–52
 Goltz, Jennifer 151
 Goose, Benjamin 160
 Gorbman, Claudia 5, 217–18
 Gordon, Elizabeth, *Mah Lil Bit Sister* 78
 Gordon, Rae Beth 151, 154–5
 Greek drama, and melodrama 50–51
 Griffin, Gerald, *The Collegians* 110
 Grünewald, Jean-Jacques 229
 Guest, Edgar, *Husbands* 81
 Guilbert, Yvette, performance style 53, 152
 Guitry, Sacha, *Le Roman d'un tricheur*,
 voice-over 229n43–4
 Gumpfenberg, Hanns von, *Der Nachbar*
 142–3
 Gutheil-Schoder, Marie 147, 150

 Halévy, Fromental, *La Reine de Chypre*
 106–7
 Hamlin, Fred 200
 Hanák, Miroslav 121
 Harburg, E.Y. *see* Arlen, Harold
Harper's Bazaar 65
 Harris, Augustus 107
 Helfert, Vladimír 125
 Helm, Theodor 239
 Hennings, Emmy 153
 Herder, Johann Gottfried 191
 Herrmann, Hugo
 Bekker, collaboration 166–70
 on opera 170
 Vasantasena 10–11, 159–60, 165–81
 commissioning 165–6
 creation of 165–71
 melodrama in 169, 171–80, 180–81
 and modernism 181
 music extracts **174–5**, **176**, **177**,
 178, **179**
 non-verbal expression 172
 reception 180
 Hesselager, Jens 9
 Heuberger, Richard 240
 Heuzey, Léon 47
 Hibberd, Sarah 10, 19
 Hill, Thomas Edie, *Hill's Manual of Social
 and Business Forms* 63
 Hindemith, Paul, *Neues von Tage* 172
 Hirschfeld, Robert 239
 Hoffmann, F.-B., *Medea*, adaptation 100
 Holdsworth, Nadine 254
The Home Journal 65
 Horný, Eduard 124
 Hugo, Victor, *Cromwell*, preface 86
 Hummel, Johann Nepomuk 69
 Humperdinck, Engelbert, *Hänsel und
 Gretel* 243
 Hurd, Michael 107
 hysteria
 as alternative communication 151
 in cabaret 153, 154–5
 and *Erwartung* 151, 157
 female, and monodrama 10, 137
 and melodrama 3
 and pantomime 152

 irony, and melodrama 254

 Janáček, Leoš
 Album for Kamila Stösslová 134, 136
 music extract **135**
 Death 123, 124, 131
 loss 126–7
 performance 125–6
 text extract 124–5
 From the House of the Dead 125
 Jenůfa 133
 on melodrama 121–2, 123, 126, 134
 Pohádka 125
 The Beginning of a Romance
 evolution of 127–8

- melodrama version 129
 music extracts **130–31**
 plot 127
 recitative 129
 as *Singspiel* 127, 128
 structure 131–2
The Excursions of Mr Brouček 133–4
 Janin, Jules 33
The Jazz Singer 222n22
 Johnson, Nan 69
Journal de Bruxelles 239
Journal des débats 90
 Kaiser, George 163
 Kandinsky, Wassily 142
 Keathley, Elizabeth 153
 Kerr, Alfred 153
 Kivy, Peter, on melodrama 218
 Korngold, Julius 162
 Kozloff, Sarah 225
Invisible Storytellers 224
 Krehbiel, Henry 239
 Krenek, Ernst, *Jonny spielt auf* 160
 Kunc, Jan 123, 126
 Lake, Susan Taylor 71
 Lederer, Victor 150, 151, 155
 Lemaître, Frédérick 30, 33, 34, 36
 Lesueur, Jean-François 191
Paul et Virginie 6
 Levi, Erik 165
 Lewis, Matthew, *The Monk* 16
 Liebstockl, Hans 239–40, 242
 Liszt, Franz, *Lenore* 221
 Loder, Edward
Nourjahad 105
Raymond and Agnes 105
 Long, Michael 215
 Lumm, Emma Griffith, *The New American Speaker, Elocutionist and Orator* 66
 illustrations **73**
 McClellan, Michael 100
 Macfarren, George, *She Stoops to Conquer* 105
 Maddin, Guy
Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary 11
 use of Mahler's symphonies 252–62
 cuts between movements 257–8
 cuts within movements 256–7
 loops 258–9
 superimpositions 259–61
 on melodrama 252–3, 253
 Magill, Mary Tucker, *Pantomime or 'Wordless Poems'* 71–2
 Mahler, Gustave 11
 First Symphony
 movement titles 238
 reception 238–9
 Second Symphony
 movement additions 238
 programme notes 241
 reception 239–40
 Schoenberg on 242
 symphonies
 in Godden's *Dracula* (ballet) 243–52
 in Maddin's *Dracula* (film) 252–62
 melodrama, similarities 242–3, 254
 as theatre 237–43
 Malle, Louis, *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* 228
 Mannheimer, Jennie 64
 Mariéton, Paul 47, 52, 58
 Marks, Martin Miller 5
 Martin, John, *Sadak In Search of the Waters of Oblivion* 106
 mass culture
 and melodrama 160–62
 and opera 160
 Maxwell Davies, Peter 137
 Mayer, David 5
Meet Me in St Louis 199
 Méhul, Etienne-Nicolas, *Joseph* 47
 melodrama
 American 61–82
 Brooks on 140–41, 161, 254
 as 'cluster concept' 2–3, 198
 definitions 17, 49, 50, 197, 216–17
 as *drame lyrique* 17, 27
 English 103–20
 spectacle 105–6
 excess 3
 and film music 5, 198, 216
 and the French Revolution 1, 10, 15, 17
 and Greek drama 50–51
 and hysteria 3
 and irony 254

- Janáček on 121–2, 123, 126, 134
 Kivy on 218
 literary approach to 2
 Maddin on 252–3
 and Mahler's symphonies 242–3, 254
 and mass culture 160–62
 and modernity 159
 monodrama, distinction 138n3, 139
 music element 3–4, 18–19
 musical forms 4–5
 musicological interest in 1–2
 and opera 9–10, 161–2, 218, 218–20, 222
 Pixérécourt on 27, 30
 plots, Gothic novels 16
 and postmodernism 254–5
 as proto-film music 217–19
 quasi-operatic qualities 28–9
 Romantic opera, influence on 6
 roots 1, 88–9
 scholarship on 3
 Williams on 198
see also boulevard melodrama; musical melodrama
- 'melodramatic', meaning 198
 melodramatic speech 11
 melodramatic voice 220–24
 in film 222, 223–4
- Membrée, Edmond, music, *Œdipe-roi* 52
 Mendelssohn, Felix, music, *Antigone* 5, 53
 Messenger, André 45, 51
 Meurice, Paul 53
 Meyerbeer, Giacomo, *Le Prophète* 192
 Micale, Mark 151
 Mitchell, Julian 200
 modernity, and melodrama 159
 Moline, Pierre Louis 6
 Mongrédien, Jean 18
 monodrama 10
 characteristics 138
 Evreinov on 142
 and female hysteria 10, 137
 melodrama, distinction 138n3, 139
 theorization 140
- Montgomery, L.M., *Anne of Green Gables* 67
 music, and Delsarte movement 70–74
 musical melodrama
- American 61
 definition 139n8
 and female composers 75–82
 without actors 191–4
 musical recitation
 anthologies 69
The Drowning Singer 68
 women 65–9, 72–3
see also elocution
- Nathanson, Paul 205
 Neumeyer, David 5, 199, 217
 Nielsen, Nanette 10, 19
 Nodier, Charles 16–17, 89
 Nordau, Max 155
nouvelle vague, voice-over narration 225
 Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, 'Minnellis and Melodrama' 3
 Noyes, Alfred, *The Highwayman* 77
- Olin, Elinor 9
 opera
 Boucicault on 116
 boulevard melodrama, kinship 27
 and cinema, Bekker on 163–4
 Herrmann on 170
 and mass culture 160
 and melodrama 9–10, 161–2, 218, 218–20, 222
opéra comique 1, 8, 19, 51, 88, 99
Médée 100–101
Victor 17
 Opéra-Comique 48
 Oxenford, John, librettist, *The Lily of Killarney* 109, 111, 116
- Packer, Charles Edward, *Sadak and Kalasrade* 105
 pantomime performance 151–2, 197–8
 books 71–2
 and hysteria 152
 pantomime tradition 20–21
 Pappenheim, Marie, librettist, *Erwartung* 138, 139, 153, 154
 Paris Opéra 106
tragédie lyrique 10
 Parker, Roger 38
 Payette, Jessica 10

- Penney, Diane 139
- Peycke, Frieda 76–7
Foes 82
Husbands 81, 82
 ‘Home, Sweet Home’ extract **82**
Mah Lil Bit Sister 78
 output 77
 sources 78
Wishful Waiting 79
 music example **80**
- Pfitzner, Hans 163
- Piccini, Alexandre, music
La Citerne 22, 24–6
Sept heures 28, 33
Trente ans 30
- Pirandello, Luigi 222
- Pisani, Michael 5
- Pixérécourt, René-Charles Guilbert de 1,
 88, 89
 on melodrama 27, 30
 output 15, 20
 works
La Citerne 21
 mime 24
 music 24–6
 plot 22
 reception 22
La Femme à deux maris
 music 23–4
 plot 22
 reception 21–2
 score 22
La Forêt de Sicile 21
 as *drame lyrique* 20
Les Maures d’Espagne 20
Victor, ou L’Enfant de la forêt 15
 as *opéra comique* 17
 origins 17
- Planche, James Robinson 105
- poetry, melodramatic settings 61
- Pompeii
Cithara Player 49, **50**
 paintings, Saint-Saëns on 49
 Roman theatre, and Théâtre Antique
 d’Orange 49
- Possart, Ernst von 7
- postmodernism, and melodrama 254–5
- Power, Jessie Armager, publicity flier 65, **66**
- Preminger, Otto, *Laura* 229n44
- Prokofiev, Serge, *Semyon Kotko* 6
- Przyboś, Julia 18
- La Quotidienne* 90, 91
- Radcliffe, Ann 16
- Réal, Antony 47
- Reinach, Théodore 46, 52
- Resnais, Alain & Alain Robbe-Grillet
Hiroshima mon amour 228
L’Année dernière à Marienbad 11, 224,
 225–8
La Vie est un Roman 227
- Ridley, James, *Tales of the Genii* 105
- Ries, Ferdinand, *The Sorceress* 105
- Riesefeld, Paul, on *Erwartung* 155–6
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain *see* Resnais, Alain
- Rossini, Gioacchino, *Otello* 87
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 191, 194–5
Pygmalion 1, 88, 92, 219
- Royal English Opera 107
- Royal Shakespeare Company, *Wizard of Oz*, stage show 212
- Rushdie, Salman, on *Wizard of Oz* (1939 film) 208–9
- Russell, Anna U., *Elocutionary Reader* 62
- Rychnovsky, Ernst, on *Erwartung* 156
- Sade, Marquis de 16
- St Louis Municipal Opera, *Wizard of Oz*
 stage show 212
 music extracts 212, **213–14**
- Saint-Saëns, Camille
 ancient music, interest in 46
 anti-modernism 45
 musico-archaeology 9, 45, 52, 59
 on Pompeii paintings 49
 reputation 45
 works
École buissonnière 45
Hymne à Pallas-Athènes 52
Le Déluge 51–2
*Note sur les décors de théâtre dans
 l’antiquité romaine* 46, 47,
 48–9, 50
Phyrrné 51
Samson 45

- Spartacus* 51
see also Antigone
- Sala, Emilio 18, 27–8
L'opera senza canto 6
- Der Sammler* 239
- Saunders, Nellie Peck 67
- Sázavský, Karel 126
- Scarton, Cesare 220
- Scharfrichter cabaret 142, 150, 152, 155
 programme 153, **154**
- Schering, Arnold 210
- Schillings
Hexenlied 61, 239n16
- Schmidt, Hans-Christian 217
- Schoenberg, Arnold
Die glückliche Hand 143, 150
Erwartung 10, 137–9
 ambiguity 155
 and *fin-de-siècle* cabaret 147, 150
 and hysteria 151, 157
 music extracts **144, 145–7, 148–9**
 premiere 147, 150
 reception 150, 156
 Riesenfeld on 155–6
 Rychnovsky on 156
 stream-of-consciousness 138
 as temporal suspension 143, 144,
 147
 on Mahler's Second Symphony 242
Pierrot lunaire 139
Sprechstimme notation 151
- Schönaich, Gustav 238–9
- Schreker, Franz
Der Schatzgräber 163
Die Gezeichneten 162
- Schulhoff, Erwin 156
- Schumann, Robert, *Manfred* 7
- Sears, Edmund H., *The Listening Ear of Night* 71
- Seinen, Nathan 6
- Senelick, Laurence 140
- Sept heures* (Ducange/Bourgeois) 9, 30–43
 'Ah! Si j'étais plus qu'une femme!' 32–4
 'C'est moi qui l'ai tué' 39–43
 music extracts **39–41**
 'Guidez-le, mon dieu...délivrez ma patrie!!!...' 36–9
 music extract **37**
- historical basis 31
 music, censorship 31–2, 41, 42
 'O mon dieu! mon dieu! soyez moi
 cruel pour mon père!' 34, 35, 36
 music extract **35**
 operatic qualities 36
 plot 31
Tosca, comparison 43
- Sessions, Roger 137
- Seyrig, Francis 225
- Shakespeare, William
 threat to French culture 85–6
 Voltaire on 85
- Shapiro, Anne Dhu 4
- Shaw, George Bernard 103
 on *Maritana* 104
- Shoemaker, J.W., *Delsartean Pantomimes* 71
- Simpson, Palgrave, librettist, *Bianca* 105
- Singer, Ben 2–3, 198
- Sirk, Douglas 2, 198
Imitation of Life 253
- Smart, Mary Ann 6
- Smetana, Bedrich, *The Two Widows* 126
- Smithson, Harriet 188, 193
- Sonnleithner, Joseph, *Les Mines de Pologne* (adapt.) 20
- Starcke, Hermann 240
- Stebbins, Genevieve 70
- Steiner, Max 199
- Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare* 86
- Stösslová, Kamila 134
- Stothart, Herbert 201, 202, 208
- Strauss, Richard
Enoch Arden 61
Intermezzo 162
- Swartz, Mark Evan 199, 201
- Théâtre Antique d'Orange 9
Antigone at 58, 59
 performances 47–8
 and Roman theatre, Pompeii 49
 view of **48**
- Théâtre de la Gaîté 4
- Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin 28
- Théâtre de l'Odéon 46
- Théâtre des Folies-Marigny 52
- Théâtre Favart 17
- Théâtre-Français 85, 87

- Théâtre-Italien 87
 Thomasson, Arnie 59
 Tietjens, Paul 199
tragédie lyrique 88, 100, 191
 Chelard's *Macbeth* 87, 90, 91
 Paris Opéra 10
 traditional 89, 98, 191
 Tunbridge, Laura 7, 138
 Tyrrell, John 10
- Vaccari, Nicola, *Giulietta e Romeo* 87
 Vacquerie, Auguste 53
 Verdi, Giuseppe
 Giovanna d'Arco 106
 Luisa Miller 6
 Tosca, *Sept heures*, comparison 43
 Voiart, Eloïse 20
 voice-over narration
 Ascenseur pour l'échafaud 228
 Citizen Kane 223n24
 film noir 215, 216, 224–5
 L'Année dernière à Marienbad 11, 225–8
 Laura 229n44
 Le Journal d'un curé de campagne 11,
 224–5, 228–35
 Le Roman d'un tricheur 229n43–4
 nouvelle vague 225
 Sunset Boulevard 231n51
 Voltaire, on Shakespeare 85
- Waeber, Jacqueline 11, 89, 92, 188
 En musique dans le texte 6–7
 Wagner, Richard 241
 Parsifal 258
 Wallace, William Vincent 103
 Lurline 105, 109
 Maritana 105
 Shaw on 104
 Warman, E.B. 63
- Weber, Carl Maria von
 Der Freischütz 6, 105, 111–12, 114, 243
 Oberon 5, 105
 Weill, Kurt
 Die Bürgschaft 165
 Royal Palace 160
 Wells, Orson, *Citizen Kane*, voice-over
 223n24
 Werner, Edgar, *Musical Effects* 69
Werner's Magazine 67
Werner's Voice Magazine 68–9
 Wild, Nicole 4, 18, 21
 Wilder, Billy, *Sunset Boulevard*, voice over
 231n51
 Williams, Linda 210
 on melodrama 198
 Williams, Peter 210
The Wizard of Oz (1939 film) 11, 200–209,
 212–14
 Baum's novel, comparisons 205
 'Crystal Gazing' cue **206–7**
 'Home, Sweet Home' 203–9
 music extract **208**
 origins 203
 quotations 203–4
 influences on 201
 musical borrowings 202–3
 musical clichés 210–11
 orchestral score 201
 'Over the Rainbow' 202, 205
 music extract **208**
 Rushdie on 208–9
 stage productions 212
 Wilson Kimber, Marian 9
 women, musical recitation 65–9, 72–3
 Wüllner, Ludwig 7, 221
- Zemlinsky, Alexander 147
 Žižek, Slavoj 137