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Committee in charge:

Professor Mary Ann Smart, Chair
Professor James Q. Davies
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Abstract

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This project argues that changes to operatic vocal writing in the late nineteenth century prompted Austro-German operagoers to radically expand their understandings of vocal sound in the years around 1900. As post-Wagnerian composers granted greater melodic expression to the orchestra, and increasingly exploited non-melodic vocal effects such as groans and cries, fierce debates were launched about what and how opera's voices ought to communicate. I track the fallout from these developments, drawing on an archive of journalistic music criticism, vocal treatises, and singer memoirs, as well as under-examined sources such as letters to newspapers, satire, poetry, and cartoons. Listeners looked far beyond the theater to interpret the shifting vocal terrain, enlisting operatic voices in such urgent *fin-de-siècle* projects as the fortification of human agency amidst industrial creep and the development of a middle-class resistance to elite aesthetics. By showing how they used operatic voices to comprehend and to construct the world around them—especially through emerging, abstract notions of "voice"—I not only provide new examples of the ways in which musical experiences can condition political thought, but reveal several new dimensions to the role of opera in sociopolitical change.

For my family

In loving memory of Daniel N. Lamb (1952–2018)

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Abbreviations

AMZ	*Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*
DH	*Der Humorist*
DK	*Der Kunstwart*
DM	*Die Musik*
DS	*Die Schaubühne*
DV	*Deutsches Volksblatt*
MW	*Musikalisches Wochenblatt*
MdA	*Musikblätter des Anbruch*
NmP	*Neue musikalische Presse*
NFP	*Neue Freie Presse*
NMZ	*Neue Musik-Zeitung*
NWJ	*Neues Wiener Journal*
NZfM	*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*
SfMW	*Signale für die Musikalische Welt*

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Acknowledgments

A dissertation is a thing that lives with you. It is always there, even in the moments when it becomes temporarily eclipsed by other things. One happy consequence of this otherwise grim condition is that these pages bear the traces of so many wonderful people.

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A version of Chapter 3 first appeared as "Origins of a *Menschendarstellerin*: Characterization and Operatic Performance in *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna" in the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144/1 (2019), 55–82, and I remain grateful to the readers and editors of those journals for their comments.

1 August 2019

INTRODUCTION
LESSONS FROM KUNDRY

In 1885, the third volume of Eduard Hanslick's magisterial *Modern Opera* series appeared in print. Conceived as a "living history," the series set forth the veteran music critic's impressions of contemporary musical life through essays on concert culture, significant personalities, and new works.[1] Given the timing of the volume, an extended discussion of one recent opera was almost required: Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*. It was still a young work, having premiered at Bayreuth in July 1882, and had the added distinction of being Wagner's last. These conditions made *Parsifal* an ideal starting point for a multi-chapter analysis of Wagner's posthumous status within Austro-German music culture.[2] Relying on a methodology he had developed during his career as a reviewer for some of Vienna's most influential daily papers, Hanslick made no attempt in this essay to be exhaustive or objective, but rather sought to record his own responses to the work.[3]

The account quickly makes clear that one character in particular had piqued his interest: Kundry, the music drama's lone named female character. Rehearsing the plot, Hanslick recalled the unnerving effect of her entrance in Act II, when she emerges from the ground bathed in bluish light, screaming and howling:

> Who is this Kundry? How does she, the ever-helpful messenger of the Grail, now appear as a demon serving Klingsor? A puzzle in the first act, she appears to us in the second act only as another new puzzle, and that which ought to give us the key to these two contradictory manifestations of Kundry is only a still greater third mystery.[4]

In describing Kundry as a nested set of riddles, Hanslick was responding to a character who paradoxically seemed as elusive as she was laden with meanings. She is, in Carolyn Abbate's memorable terminology, a "Wagnerian shape-shifter," adopting, amalgamating, and shedding various identities, including all the female figures in Wolfram's *Parzival* (the epic on which the opera is based) as well as several other female archetypes.[5] Klingsor gestures to this glut of personalities when he summons her

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[1] Kevin Karnes has described the task Hanslick set for himself as "record[ing] the experiences of a living participant in the midst of the unfolding of historical events." See Karnes, *Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

[2] The essay on *Parsifal* opened section four ("Richard Wagner"), and was succeeded by chapters on "Parsifal literature" and "the Cult of Wagner"; a fifth section, entitled "After Wagner's Death" also included essays on the events leading up to the composer's death on 13 February 1883, on Wagner biographies, and on an evidently controversial plan to erect a statue of the composer. Wagner would remain a prominent topic in later volumes of Hanslick's series; its fifth installment, for instance, opened with a five-chapter section on "Wagneriana."

[3] Hanslick published his first article as a music critic in 1844, and began writing for the Viennese paper *Die Presse* in 1855. His most notable post was as chief music critic for the *Neue Freie Presse* (a daily paper of high influence among Viennese liberals), a position he held from 1864 until his retirement in 1895; however, he continued to review significant musical events for the paper until his death in 1904.

[4] "Wer ist diese Kundry? Wie kommt sie, die stets hilfreiche Botin des Grals, jetzt hieher als dienender Dämon Klingsor's? Ein Räthsel im ersten Akte, erscheint sie uns im zweiten nur als ein anderes neues Räthsel, und was uns den Schlüssel geben soll zu diesen beiden entgegengesetzten Erscheinungen Kundry's, ist nur ein noch größeres drittes Räthsel." Eduard Hanslick, *Die moderne Oper,* vol. 3, *Aus dem Opernleben der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1885), 299.

[5] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 108. Regarding the many female

at the start of Act II: "your master calls you, nameless one […] you were Herodias, and what else? Gundryggia there, Kundry here!" In ascribing a fugitive quality to Kundry at this early stage in the drama, Klingsor alerts us to an ongoing process of transformation that will only become more acutely felt in the acts to come. When we first meet Kundry in Act I, she is a wild woman who helps the Grail Knights; when she returns in Act II, it is as a beautiful seductress, a *femme fatale* who inflicts suffering on the Grail community; in Act III she is reincarnated again, this time as a meek penitent. The Act II arrival that prompted Hanslick to temporarily halt his synopsis marks the moment at which secure knowledge of her character becomes fragile, as glimpses of a new, incongruous Kundry begin to emerge.

As Abbate's language attests, Hanslick's bafflement has persisted for more than a century. It has become our own, replicated again and again in the many publications that have attempted to make sense of a character whom Wagner himself once called "sphinxlike."[6] Modern scholars have often turned to Kundry's voice as a means of tackling this problem, advancing diverse theories about who she is on the basis of her utterances. In such analyses, voice and persona are often knotted together directly: where Mary Ann Smart describes Kundry's transformation "from a cackling, quivering hag […] to the silent penitent of the last act," Matthew Wilson Smith notes her "metamorphosis from shrieking hysteric to silent supplicant."[7] Such précis collapse distance between vocal sound and personality, but they also underscore the particular importance scholars have ascribed to her inarticulate vocalizations. More than her sung words, Kundry's groans and screams are mined for what they might reveal about her as an individual, as if these non-verbal textures communicate details of subjectivity more immediately and concretely than sung speech. Her laugh alone anchors prominent readings of her character as the agent of resistance against the prevailing social order, as the hysteric in the model of Freud and Charcot, or as the embodiment of corporeal theatricality in *Parsifal* (and, consequently, its excluded Other).[8] Reading such meanings onto vocality has been a core practice of musicology for a long time. But these habits of interpretation have a history; they evolved in response to particular sociocultural pressures. That history is the subject of this dissertation.

Most fundamentally, this dissertation tracks German-speakers' reactions to large-scale changes in operatic vocal writing beginning around 1880, and argues that these shifts prompted operagoers to position voice in the political and psychological terms of "modernity." As composers like Strauss, Massenet, and Puccini granted greater melodic and expressive roles to the orchestra, and increasingly exploited effects such as cries and groans, a series of intense debates was launched about what opera's voices could and should do. These conversations took on a particular urgency in German-speaking lands, where stylistic change was intimately bound up with the influence of Wagnerian music drama

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figures that have been read through Kundry, see William Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 63–8.

[6] See Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal*, 64–7.

[7] Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 191; Matthew Wilson Smith, "Laughing at the Redeemer: Kundry and the Paradox of *Parsifal*," in *Modernism and Opera*, ed. Richard Begam and Matthew Wilson Smith (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 42.

[8] One influential reading of Kundry as hysteric, where her laughter represents the ultimate vocal extension of this illness, may be found in Elisabeth Bronfen, "Kundry's Laughter," *New German Critique* 69 (Autumn 1996), 147–61. Matthew Wilson Smith pushes Bronfen's idea further, arguing that because such an overtly theatrical vocalization as Kundry's laugh also evinces the performing body, it reveals her to be incompatible with *Parsifal*'s redemptive project; see Smith, "Laughing at the Redeemer," 36–56. In a similar vein, Slavoj Žižek sees her laughter as a signal of her capacity to subvert authority by revealing "the master['s] impotence"; see Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 162.

and, as I argue in Chapter 1, with the post-Wagnerian problem of the leitmotiv's specific impact on voice.[9] Ultimately, these compositional developments unsettled listeners' expectations that voice be melodically and sonically dominant, calling for new modes of listening to and interpreting operatic voices. Among the new interpretive rubrics that appeared around this time were discourses that positioned voice as a bridge between "music" and "noise," as an expression of dwindling human agency in a technological world, as a refraction of social stratification, and as an inscription of the health of individual subjects. It is through the emergence of these rubrics that we may glimpse our modern interpretive tools for engaging voice coming into focus.

We can begin to witness the unsettling effect of these transformations to opera's musical style through another contemporary account of Kundry. Writing in 1893, the American music critic Henry Theophilus Finck seemed to suggest that Kundry's vocal lines captured something of the genre's changing sonic landscape when he argued that a role such as Kundry was "absolutely inconceivable in a 'prima-donna opera.'" Although Finck declined to elaborate on what he meant by this scare-quoted designation against which he sought to contrast Kundry, he undoubtedly conjured through it the early nineteenth-century world of Malibran and Pasta, of Rossini and Donizetti, of an opera industry built around singer-celebrities and the display of their voices. He offered only a short survey of her vocalism in support of his claim: "Only in the second act is she allowed to affect beautiful song; in the first there is little but abrupt declamation and interjection, while in the third she is condemned to complete silence, a few inarticulate sounds excepted."[10]

The opposition Finck set up between the category of "prima-donna opera" and Kundry's vocal idiom is revealing for what it conveys about the styles and categories that structured the listening experience for late nineteenth-century critics. His twin observations about the limits of "beautiful song" and the expansion of "abrupt declamation" in Kundry's lines articulated a common *fin-de-siècle* perception: that composers were increasingly turning away from the human voice as a carrier of melody and that they were increasingly exploiting more declamatory styles of vocal writing. Of course, such claims were hardly new: writers making these complaints were echoing charges made against Wagner in the 1850s and 1860s, which in turn echoed rhetoric used in criticisms of Verdi's "shouts" in the 1840s, Bellini's *canto declamato* before that, and so on, at least as far back as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's experiments in speech-like song during the late eighteenth century.[11] When these issues resurfaced at the end of the nineteenth century, however, they took on a particular color and force as they spilled onto the pages of music journals, cultural magazines, satirical weeklies, and daily newspapers. For Finck and his contemporaries, concerns over contemporary operatic vocality were not principally rooted in mere nostalgia for the secure vocal plenitude of a previous generation, but rather in a newfound anxiety about the role of voice in opera, and about the role of music in the world.

This anxiety stemmed from new questions about what and how operatic voices ought to communicate, a question that had become more urgent in light of the ascendant Wagnerian model

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[9] As Walter Frisch has observed, it is not only possible but indeed useful to speak of a coherent cultural unity encompassing Austria and the then-Prussian-dominated Reich during this period. See Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), especially pp. 7–8.

[10] Henry T. Finck, *Wagner and His Works: The Story of His Life, with Critical Comments*, vol. 2, 6th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 415.

[11] See, for instance, Laura Protano-Biggs, "Musical Materialities in Milan and Liberal Italy at the *fine secolo*," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014), 65–94, Melina Esse, "Speaking and Sighing: Bellini's *canto declamato* and the Poetics of Restraint," *Current Musicology* 87 (Spring 2009), 7–45, and Ellen Lockhart, "*Pimmalione*: Rousseau and the Melodramatisation of Italian Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26/1 (2014), 1–39.

that shifted more melodic expression and expressive weight to the orchestra. In the decades around 1900, seasoned critics and opera enthusiasts alike reached for political tropes—metaphors of anarchy, sovereignty, and constitutional upheaval—in order to communicate the seismic impact of opera's ongoing sonic reorientation toward the orchestra. As late as 1906, writers continued to stress how the human voice had, as one reviewer put it, "been forced to renounce its inborn right of leadership and sovereignty and relinquish its rule to the noisy chorus of the instruments, which, with its tendency to mob rule, deprives the voice of its right to speak."[12] Over the course of this dissertation, I will highlight the evolving meanings of such comments, as such political metaphors became more emphatic and more grounded in local debates about governance, urbanization, and social ethics. For the moment, it is worth noting simply that the very fact of this discursive struggle—the sense, as Charles Kronengold recently put it, that contemporary "techniques, materials, and aesthetic strategies were running ahead of the means for assessing them"—underscores how unnerved *fin-de-siècle* listeners were by these compositional trends that seemed to drain the voice of musical content.[13]

Matters were exacerbated by a related development: the tendency of contemporary composers to exploit a wider range of non-melodic vocal effects, including sighs, groans, and cries. In the decades following *Parsifal*'s premiere, European stages were increasingly populated by opera characters whose singing was complemented by bouts of laughter (Anita in Massenet's *La Navarraise*), groaning (Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca*), screaming (Aegisth and Klytämnestra in Strauss's *Elektra*), gurgling (Luigi in Puccini's *Il Tabarro*), and even prolonged withdrawals into silence (Mélisande in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*). This range is often construed as a logical outgrowth of the contemporary vogue for sensational plots and characters—a narrative I challenge in Chapter 2 through contemporary accounts that reveal listeners baffled by, and resistant to, the use of such vocalizations to elucidate plot or character. Inarticulate, extreme vocal effects have also been explained in psychoanalytic terms, most influentially by Michel Poizat, who narrates the history of opera as an evolution from song to cry, from verbal expression to "pure" vocal materiality. Kundry sits at a critical juncture in this quest for phonic materiality freed from a system of signification; her screams prompt Poizat to claim her voice as The Voice of Lacanian theory, a voice that epitomizes the primal human cry and its relationship to silence.[14] But Kundry is not the endpoint in this teleology. Although the role helps to mark the historical moment at which the cry achieves a new and distinct status within the operatic vocal palette, she is ultimately a precursor to Berg's Lulu, whom Poizat sees as voicing the most perfect illustration of the "pure" cry—a paroxysmal emission that cannot be accommodated by musical notation and is beyond the reach of the word.[15]

Kundry's voice, it seems, has been as much of a shape-shifter as her overall persona, a mechanism able to point forward or backward in time as authors desire. Where Finck heard only distance from a hazy operatic past through Kundry's voice, Poizat glimpsed flashes of a musical future that had yet to

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[12] Max Kalbeck, "*Salome*: Music Drama in One Act after Oscar Wilde, by Richard Strauss," trans. Susan Gillespie, in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 340.

[13] Charles Kronengold, "Freud's Uncriticality, *Pelléas*'s Multiplicity," *Opera Quarterly* 32/4 (2017), 241.

[14] Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 91, 101. He deals most extensively with Kundry on pp. 191–200. Suzanne R. Stewart develops Poizat's thesis when she describes Kundry as "a pure vocal object reduced to its enunciatory function" (p. 615) and reads *Parsifal* as "an attempt at staging this fundamental operatic desire, this quest for the voice" (p. 605). See Stewart, "The Theft of the Operatic Voice: Masochistic Seduction in Wagner's *Parsifal*," *Musical Quarterly* 80/4 (Winter 1996), 597–628.

[15] Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 201–6.

fully materialize. Writing a decade before Poizat, *Musique en jeu* contributor Marc Bégin offered an account in which the retrospection of Finck and the forward drive of Poizat were elided in one fell swoop. Kundry's vocal lines, Bégin wrote, departed heavily from the established modes of opera singers, relying instead on

> a range of procedures that would come into systematic use only with the twentieth century (in Berio, Cathy Berberian): modifications of the timbre of the singing voice, […] transition from the sung laugh to the genuine laugh, […] from the cried-out text to the true cry […] and from the cry to the groan […] So perhaps it is not surprising to find in the musical composition of Kundry's role a direct precursor of *Sprechgesang*.[16]

By sketching a progression from Kundry to the extended techniques of Berio and Berberian by way of the *Sprechgesang* of the Second Viennese School, Bégin suggests that nineteenth- and twentieth-century vocal traditions evolved according to a tidy and implicitly inevitable trajectory.

But things looked and felt quite different in the decades around 1900. As I demonstrate in the ensuing chapters, many listeners at the turn of the century perceived the kind of vocal transformations Bégin celebrates as assaults on the lyric voice. I treat their alarmed complaints as a starting point for thinking about how voice was discursively constructed at the *fin de siècle*, and about the kinds of embodied knowledge that could become available through vocality. I use the word "voice" in its singular form here and throughout the dissertation despite well-founded musicological anxieties about discussing voice in the epistemological abstract, because the writers to whom I attend were often drawn away from the individuality of particular singers' voices, toward broader issues around the materialities and the human potential of vocal sound.[17] So while individual singers and their vocal profiles come to the fore at certain moments in this study, my central focus is on constructions of voice itself—as a philosophical and dramatic category, as a mode of communication, and as a means through which operagoers could articulate their relationships to a broad array of contemporary realities.

THE KUNDRY RORSCHACH TEST

I want to put additional pressure on a question I alluded to earlier, which concerned how modern perspectives on Kundry's voice relate to those articulated by turn-of-the-century writers. The divergences between these perspectives come most sharply into focus through reactions to Kundry's prolonged muteness in the opera's last act. Modern scholars have been whipped into an interpretive frenzy by this vocal retreat. While Barry Emslie, following the model pioneered by Catherine Clément, discerns in this silence an act of misogynistic suppression, Michael P. Steinberg frames *Parsifal*'s

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[16] "De ce fait, le rôle vocal de cette sauvageonne s'écarte sensiblement des canons reçus de la cantatrice lyrique. Cinquante ans avant le théâtre de la cruauté qu'avait rêvé Artaud, on pouvait entendre sur la scène de Bayreuth une gamme de procédés qui ne seront systématiquement utilisés qu'au XX^{e} siècle (Berio, Cathy Berberian): modifications du timbre de la voix chantée [...] passage du rire chanté au rire véritable [...] du texte crié au cri proprement dit [...] et du cri à la plainte […] Aussi n'est-il peut-être pas étonnant qu'on trouve dans l'écriture musicale du rôle de Kundry une préfiguration directe du *Sprechgesang*." The portions I have excised are libretto citations for illustrative moments in Kundry's part. Marc Bégin, "Kundry, l'anti-diva," *Musique en jeu* 31 (May 1978), 74–6.

[17] See Susan Rutherford, "'La cantata delle passioni': Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19/2 (July 2008), 109; and J. Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), especially pp. 1–12.

repression of the female voice as a stamping out of modern decadence. More recently, Mary Ann Smart and Benjamin Binder have read this "vocal disappearance" (to borrow Binder's phrasing) as a prerequisite for deliverance: for Smart, Kundry's silence enables her own purification, while Binder sees it as a necessary condition of the redemption of the Grail community.[18] The late nineteenth-century response to her abrupt silence was, by contrast, no response at all: contemporary Austro-German writers treated it as a development to be noted synoptically, but not interpreted.[19] For one anonymous reviewer present at the Bayreuth premiere, for instance, it merited only a parenthetical citation within a sketch of her character development.[20] And twenty years on writers remained unruffled, as evidenced by a 1902 article in *Die Musik* that announced its intention to address Kundry's status in the third act of *Parsifal* yet neglected to mention her silence even once.[21]

Different perspectives on the same event are to be expected across the span of a century, and each records something of the attitudes toward voice that prevailed at that particular historical moment. The inclination to find Kundry's silence interpretively challenging is a function of the significance we now afford to metaphorical constructions of voice, and specifically to the (neo)liberal conception of voice as the defining expressive faculty of the self. Both Western thought in general and recent scholarly treatments prioritize models of subjectivity that presume individuals to be constituted through the exercise of voice. The nonchalance with which Alexander Weheliye claims the voice ("even more than writing") as that which "represents pure interiority and the proper domain of the sovereign human subject" in his study of a sounding Afro-Modernity finds conceptual affinity with Adriana Cavarero's influential philosophy of vocal expression, *For More than One Voice*.[22] "A voice means this," her epigraph announces, "there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices."[23] Voice studies scholars have traced this sort of implication as

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[18] Barry Emslie, "Woman as Image and Narrative in Wagner's *Parsifal*: A Case Study," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/2 (July 1991),109–24; Michael P. Steinberg, "Music Drama and the End of History," *New German Critique* 69 (Autumn 1996), 174; Benjamin Binder, "Kundry and the Jewish Voice: Anti-Semitism and Musical Transcendence in Wagner's *Parsifal*," *Current Musicology* 87 (Spring 2009), 47–131; Smart, *Mimomania*, 189–204. See also Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[19] One exception to this critical tendency is H. Weimar, "Die Musik zu Wagner's Parsifal. Versuch einer analytischen Kritik," *Musikalisches Centralblatt* 2/48 (30 November 1882), 446. French critics were generally more agitated by Kundry's silence than their German-speaking colleagues, since they felt this condition obscured her characterization; one example is Charles Tardieu, "Réminiscences Wagnériennes," *Le Guide musical* 28/33 (17 August 1882), 201–2. More crucially, however, this same disparity between modern and contemporary reactions to an opera character's silence is replicated with Strauss's *Guntram* (premiered 1894), about which much more will be said in Chapter 1. With *Guntram* we may again note a disconnect between the intellectual contortions of a modern scholar and the seeming lack of concern displayed by contemporary listeners: early reviewers seem not to have noticed the "vocal disappearance" (to borrow Adrian Daub's phrasing) of Freihild in act three, and yet Daub recently leveraged Schopenhauerian theory to try to explain it. This particular discrepancy is telling because, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 1, *Guntram*'s earliest critics were in fact highly attentive to the opera's vocal landscape. See Daub, *Tristan's Shadow: Sexuality and the Total Work of Art After Wagner* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2014), 77–95.

[20] See [Unsigned], "Parsifal. Erste Aufführung am 26. Juli im Festspielhause zu Bayreuth. II. Musik und Aufführung," *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* 36/34 (24 August 1882), 266.

[21] The article in question is Dr. Wilhelm Lubosch, "Kundry und der dritte Akt des *Parsifal*: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Dramas," *DM* 1/20–21 (1902), 1883–91.

[22] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 27.

[23] Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1. She discusses the short story from which the epigraph is drawn at greater length in her introduction on pp. 1–16.

far back as Aristotle's *De Anima*, which connects voice to living things who have, in Steven Connor's formulation, "the capacity or intent to mean."[24] Like any long history, this Aristotelian lineage surely collapses differences between modern and classical articulations of "voice" or "individual." But it finds a common conceptual thread: voice plays a major role in presenting the stuff—metaphorical, material, or anything in between—by which individuals are constructed, not subjectively, from within, but socially and culturally, from without. At the same time, recent work in the field of voice studies has moved both to develop and to interrogate the view that voice embodies the "uniqueness" (in Cavarero's lexicon) of a person's subjectivity and thus provides privileged access to an interior self. More generally, though, such conceptions raise the stakes of vocal exercise to the point that modern writers cannot help but read Kundry's prolonged silence as a problematic erosion of her agency, and indeed of her very subjectivity.

Where modern interpreters have displayed a strong interest in what vocal activity symbolizes, *fin-de-siècle* listeners tended to focus on sonic materials. Lacking workable models for understanding Kundry's vocal sounds, these listeners began to look elsewhere for ways of ascribing value to operatic vocality. At times, their comments seem to point tentatively toward modern ideas about the connection between voice and self, as when Hanslick sought to explain Kundry's wide sonic palette as an outgrowth of her persona. Calling her "unnatural [and] contradictory," he described how this "psychological and physiological hybrid […] sings, or rather shouts and stammers, brokenly and in the most hair-raising intervals."[25] Others reached outside the opera house for analogues; some marshaled mesmerism, somnambulism, and nervous illness to structure their readings, often diagnosing her screams, groans, and laughs as symptoms of hysteria.[26] Disentangling the meanings of vocal emissions from particular visual and sonic experiences in this way led writers to discuss voices in terms increasingly detached from their many owners, generating the vast abstraction we now call "voice." Remarkably, then, the emergence of voice as an aesthetic category appears as a reactionary phenomenon, created by authors disoriented and disturbed by opera's new spectrum of vocal effects.

Juxtaposing these historical responses with more recent reactions to the role of Kundry only underscores one tenet of voice studies: that voice is constructed, rather than natural or essential. Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists in particular have led recent calls to interrogate common (Western) assumptions about the universality of voice that have long shaped scholarly thinking on the subject. "Rather than assume the universal significance of the voice, anthropology should ask where and when 'voice' becomes a salient metaphor and what is at stake in it," writes Amanda Weidman, adding that: "It should [further] inquire into how practices involving the voice—including performance, singing, oratory, pedagogy, entextualiztion, writing, technological meditation—support

[24] Steven Connor, *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters, and Other Vocalizations* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 8. Connor subsumes this Aristotelian notion into his own methodology when he claims on p. 7 that "noise is accident; voice is intent."
[25] "Freilich ist auch sie […] eben Unnatürliche, Widerspruchsvolle. Ein psychologisches und physiologische Zwitterwesen, singt sie oder vielmehr ruft und stammelt sie abgebrochen in den haarsträubendsten Intonationen[.]" Ed. H. [Eduard Hanslick], "Feuilleton. Briefe aus Bayreuth über Wagner's 'Parsifal'. III," *NFP*, 1 August 1882, 2. A translation of Hanslick's review is included in Robert Hartford, ed., *Bayreuth: The Early Years; An Account of the Early Decades of the Wagner Festival as Seen by the Celebrated Visitors & Participants* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 122–8.
[26] Representative sources include Ferdinand Pfohl, *Bayreuther Fanfaren* (Leipzig: C. Reissner; New York: G. E. Stechert, [1891]), 32–41, and Dr. Paul Simon, "Hypnotismus im *Parsifal*," *NZfM* 84/36 (5 September 1888), 387–8; 84/37 (12 September 1888), 399–401.

these metaphorical elaborations."[27] In this dissertation, I approach these questions by examining the processes by which certain models of vocality came to assume a central place in the sociopolitical lexicon of the modern West. To undertake this is to acknowledge the notion that the material and symbolic dimensions of voice are inextricably intertwined, that "a notion of voice-as-discursivity," as Annette Schlichter and Nina Sun Eidsheim recently put it, "is constitutive of and constituted by vocal performances."[28] Attending to what Weidman calls "practices involving the voice," and more specifically to how the sounds of voice are heard and discursively mediated, thus becomes more than an auxiliary line of inquiry for those interested in the metaphorical force of voice; such attention becomes a critical precondition for understanding the historical processes by which the category of voice acquired its symbolic freight.

In this sense, this dissertation has much in common with the studies of historical listening popularized by Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Since its publication in 2003, *The Audible Past* has become the gold standard for approaching the study of aural culture because of how persuasively it shows what we can gain from examining the conceptual evolution of sound and hearing, as well as the audile techniques that were conditioned by such developments.[29] These same issues are of fundamental concern to me here: how did historically contingent shifts in the ways vocal sound was conceived of influence operagoers' habits of listening and interpretation in the decades around 1900? My goal in asking this question is to understand how changes in listening to, and making sense of, operatic voices shape constructions of voice as a political and social force. Thus, while my dissertation contributes to the sort of ground-level historical work pertaining to the history of the senses—namely, delineating the modes of listening and aurality that prevailed at particular times and places—that Sterne's book has helped energize in recent years, my project ultimately aims to leverage this knowledge toward another end.[30] More than another chapter in a patchwork history of aural perception, this dissertation inquires after the ways such sensory changes intersected with shifts in the way the category of voice itself was inscribed.

At the same time, my interest in *vocal* sound is precisely what separates me from much extant work on historical listening, particularly within the field of sound studies.[31] To speak of sound studies in meaningful disciplinary terms is to describe a field that coalesced around two related aims, the need to interrogate the ontology of sound and the need to examine auditory culture more generally. Equally important, but often less acknowledged, is the fact that the kinds of inquiries that define this field tend to exhibit a strong bias toward technology. From microphones and tuning forks to magnetic tape and iPods, technologies of sonic inscription and reproduction now occupy a central place in sound studies

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[27] Amanda Weidman, "Anthropology and Voice," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014), 38.

[28] Annette Schlichter and Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Introduction: Voice Matters," *Postmodern Culture* 24/3 (May 2014), https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2014.0012.

[29] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

[30] Sterne's project has indeed helped wrest attention away from the visual and toward the aural within the history of the senses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, though, such work on the history of aural perception has often taken methodological cues from the precedents set by sight-centric scholars such as Martin Jay and Jonathan Crary. On the influence of such factors in recent studies of historical listening, see David Suisman, "Introduction: Thinking Historically About Sound and Sense," in *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. David Suisman and Susan Strasser (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 6.

[31] One important exception is Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2014), which attends to the ways in which listening practices helped determine how voice was understood in nineteenth-century Colombia.

narratives, a consequence, in part, of Sterne's impact on the field.[32]

An intense focus on the objects that mediate sensory experience is now so common in sound studies that it has fundamentally shaped, indeed limited, the ways in which we construe audile technique. Attention has so often been funneled toward technologies of sound mediation that one could be forgiven for thinking that changes in listening technique have historically followed exclusively from the emergence of new media. Indeed, the current model for conceiving of audile techniques is built around the question of what a given technology affords—what kinds of knowledge about the body or about society it makes possible. This dissertation takes a different approach: by excavating the emergence of new habits of listening and interpretation that arose in response to changes in musical style, individual chapters demonstrate that audile techniques can and did evolve in response to other forms of cultural pressure.

Still more crucially, the technological orientation of sound studies has also contributed to the field's general failure to treat vocal sound as a legitimate object of study. The privileged status currently afforded to technologies has often meant that the particular materialities of the human voice have mattered far less than what vocality can reveal either about the processes by which sound itself is mediated by technologies of inscription or about the ways such mediations accrue sociocultural value.[33] The field's enchantment with technology has also led to an artificial split between technology and the human, between the mechanical objects that mediate sensory experience and those fleshy objects on which such mediations act. This split, too, could be traced back to Sterne, specifically to the significance he attaches to a shift in how nineteenth-century inventors conceived of sound reproduction. Where an earlier generation had looked to the mouth to understand the mechanisms of speech production, Sterne shows that a later generation focused more on perception and the ear: "Faber copied the movements of the vocal organs, [whereas] Edison studied a vibrating diaphragm, and reproduced the action of the ear drum when acted upon by the vibration *caused* by the vocal organ."[34]

We are thus left with a methodological blueprint whereby humans are treated almost exclusively as the receivers of auditory phenomena. With the sounds of human voices fading into the background of scholarly accounts, drowned out by the noises of industry and technologies of sound reproduction, the field's most influential accounts continue to underestimate the role of vocal sound in shaping the very themes that the field of sound studies has tended to care about most: first, the evolving relationship between humans and machines; and second, the intersections of sound with experiences of urbanization and modernity. As I demonstrate in the pages that follow, especially in Chapter 4, experiences of vocal sound acted in the decades around 1900 as critical points of reference for citizens grappling with the sonic changes wrought by industrialization, urbanization, and technological creep. Perhaps we should not be surprised, then, that a work like Steven Connor's *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters, and Other Vocalizations* (2014) has found greater traction within the field of voice studies than within sound studies, despite the fact that it traces the social histories of what he calls "sound events

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[32] Sterne's book appeared at a critical moment in the consolidation of sound studies as a field, and the absorption of his techniques into the disciplinary mainstream has meant that we have inherited, as part of this transaction, an approach to thinking about sound that is heavily reliant on methodologies that are themselves drawn from the field of media studies. See Michele Hilmes, "Is There a Field Called Sound Culture Studies? And Does It Matter?," *American Quarterly* 57/1 (March 2005), 249–59.

[33] One representative example is John M. Picker's chapter on "The Recorded Voice from Victorian Aura to Modernist Echo" in Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 123–45.

[34] Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 71 (emphasis original).

beyond articulate speech," namely, unruly sonic qualities of voice (as opposed to the semantic content such vocalizations might encode).[35]

This striking disconnect between the subject of voice and the field of sound studies has recently been observed from the other side, in accounts drawn from the field of voice studies.[36] From this disciplinary vantage point, the relative absence of voice from sound studies is equal parts problem and opportunity. Interest in voice as an embodied, sounding practice has grown steadily in recent years, alongside calls to track the ways vocal sounds accrue meaning and to interrogate how the longstanding infatuation with the symbolic power of voice has often obscured its sonic dimensions. This shift is itself indicative of a divide within the field: most scholarship on voice can be separated into one of two camps, those that take vocal materiality as the central focus, and those that remain committed to voice as a philosophical category. In this project, I move across these interests, taking my cue from historical interlocutors whose casual and certainly untheorized remarks about voice at times prioritize more metaphorical constructions of the speaking subject as enfranchised—or "envoiced," to use Carolyn Abbate's term—and at other times foreground more materialist approaches that seem to anticipate the Barthesian notion of "grain."[37]

The very necessity of carving out such a path points to a gap in the voice studies archive. While scholars of voice studies have written imaginatively about contemporary music (including opera, a fact underscored by a spate of recent special journal issues on the subject of voice), and about the histories and politics of speech and logocentrism (an interest signaled by Mladen Dolar's observation that voice is often treated as a "vanishing mediator" whose ontology becomes eclipsed by the very meanings it conveys), historical opera has not been a priority.[38] But the situation now seems poised to shift, as some of musicology's more historically minded opera scholars have begun to claim space in voice studies and to bring their considerable disciplinary knowledge to bear on the question of what it might mean to take voice as one's object of study. Though richly varied in materials and scope, these contributions share the classic anti-universalist thrust that one might expect from historians taking up residence in an interdisciplinary field. In the hands of authors like Martha Feldman and James Q. Davies, for example, narrations of operatic performance practices of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries also expertly expose the limits of our modern conceptions of voice.[39] My own project complements such efforts, aiming to trace the historical roots of current models rather than re-emphasizing the distance between these models and those that were operative in other historical moments.

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[35] Connor, *Beyond Words*, 10. It is revealing that sound studies scholars more regularly cite an earlier essay by Connor that pre-dates Sterne's book (and the formative stirrings of sound studies as a discipline) but is nevertheless closely aligned with sound studies' current inclinations toward approaching aurality through technology. See Connor, "The Modern Auditory I," in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 203–23.

[36] For instance, the inattentiveness to voice in sound studies projects has been noted by Schlichter and Eidsheim in "Introduction: Voice Matters."

[37] See Carolyn Abbate, "Opera; or the Envoicing of Women," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 225–58; and Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 179–89.

[38] I have in mind here the recent special issues of *Postmodern Culture* (2014), *Twentieth-Century Music* (2016), and *The Opera Quarterly* (2017). Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 24.

[39] Martha Feldman, *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); and Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance*.

KUNDRY'S SHADOW

Kundry's prominence in these pages has meant that her creator has also been a constant companion, even if he has mostly been kept at arm's length thus far. It is time to face him. Richard Wagner's influence on musicology now extends into virtually every sphere, from aesthetics and performance practice to politics and media. Nowhere is this condition more acute than in histories of Austro-German opera culture around 1900.[40] Books and articles that track the attempts of individual composers to wrestle with the legacy of music drama following Wagner's death in 1883 are almost a sub-genre within opera studies, and their proliferation suggests why the phrase "opera after Wagner" stands for far more than an indication of chronology: Arnold Whittall has suggested that Engelbert Humperdick's turn to fairy-tale opera was a bid to adapt Wagnerism without confronting the profound and tragic themes characteristic of Wagner's operas; Adrian Daub has traced the fallout from Wagner's stance on sexuality and eroticism in early twentieth-century imitators such as Franz Schreker and Eugen d'Albert; and Walter Frisch has linked the popularity of gritty, realist-leaning *verismo* works among German speakers—first as imports and later as templates for native composers—to a growing appetite for an alternative to Wagnerian metaphysics.[41] These examples could easily be multiplied if the geographic strictures were loosened, since, as Joy H. Calico recently observed, "Scholars often view developments in other [non-German] operatic traditions [during this period] by the extent to which Wagner had made inroads in them."[42] With Wagner settled over turn-of-the-century Austro-German opera culture like a thick cloud, musicological histories routinely dispatch the years between the premieres of Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) and Strauss's "breakthrough" opera *Salome* (1905) as a period during which Austro-German opera culture was not only haunted by Wagner, but effectively throttled by him as well.[43]

All too often, it seems, Wagner's centrality has allowed histories of opera around 1900 to collapse into histories of stylistic influence. Even as musicological thinking has turned toward performance, reception, and mediation, histories of Austro-German opera stubbornly cohere around canonical names and evidence that can be gleaned from the analysis of scores, sometimes scanting trends or ideas that do not fit neatly under the umbrella of Wagnerism. By focusing on discourses of voice, this project charts a different path, one that does not reduce Austro-German opera culture to a tortured engagement with Wagner. Instead, it works outward from problems of Wagnerism and voice to the

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[40] This remains true despite recent indications that Wagner's status within opera studies is diminishing. See Roger Parker, "Hugging the Bank: Opera Studies in Brobdingnag," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28/1 (March 2016), 109.

[41] Arnold Whittall, "Opera in Transition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8; Daub, *Tristan's Shadow*; Frisch, *German Modernism*, especially pp. 63–87. For a broadly synoptic view of Wagner's influence on later artists and art practices, see Annegret Fauser, "'Wagnerism': Responses to Wagner in Music and the Arts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 221–34.

[42] Joy H. Calico, "1900–1945," in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1052. Particularly illustrative in this regard are the numerous examples that could be drawn from French contexts, including Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the fin de siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and more recently, Katharine Ellis, "How to Make Wagner Normal: *Lohengrin*'s 'tour de France' of 1891–92," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25/2 (2013), 121–37.

[43] One illustrative example of this historiographical tendency to skip from late Wagner to the early twentieth century is Mark Berry, *After Wagner: Histories of Modernist Music Drama from* Parsifal *to Nono* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014); following an initial discussion of *Parsifal* in the first chapter, he leaps over the decades immediately after *Parsifal*'s premiere, and heads directly to Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* (first sketched in 1926) and Strauss's *Capriccio* (1942).

acts of self-fashioning these problems conditioned, framing operatic performance as a favored medium for the aesthetic, affective, and socioeconomic aspirations of newly "modern" listeners.[44] To be clear, Wagner's legacy was an important factor in launching the turn-of-the-century discussions about voice I track in this study. Equally important, however, were influences that lay far outside the opera house, particularly equivalencies between voice and selfhood being explored by early essays in psychoanalysis, as well as discourses about human-machine relations sparked by the growing presence of industrial noise in urban centers. It is through the collisions of these disparate elements—in the soundscapes of the opera house and in the pages of written discourse—that evolving notions of voice took shape.

One of my central aims is to trace an alternate history of Austro-German opera culture in which Wagner does not completely vanish from view, but rather is de-centered and de-familiarized. By demonstrating that contemporary operagoers routinely (and vigorously) debated issues aside from Wagnerism, I seek not merely to delimit the bounds of Wagner's influence in the discourse presumed to be most saturated by him, but also to inject the perspectives of German-speakers back into recent scholarly conversations about opera at the *fin de siècle*. One influential account, traced most recently by Susan Rutherford and Karen Henson, uses examples drawn mainly from Anglo-American and Franco-Italian traditions to demonstrate that singers' creative power gradually shifted from the vocal to the visual register after the middle of the nineteenth century, in accordance with a changing musical climate.[45] Faced with the rising cultural authority of composers and works, on the one hand, and the increased dramatic weight attached to orchestral sound, on the other, these late nineteenth-century performers became a generation of what Henson calls "non-singing singers."[46] Such accounts have contributed greatly to our understanding of how the work of the singer was transformed, as composers gained control over more aspects of the operatic experience, and as singers became less co-creators than agents of composers' creativity. Yet these narratives perhaps overstate the importance of the visual in shaping audiences' perceptions of singers and voices, implying a turn away from voice at the *fin de siècle* that Austro-German sources not only fail to register, but often flatly contradict. The discourses that arose around vocal sound and singing in Austro-German cities demonstrate that operagoers were not content either to abandon voice or to measure opera by the yardstick of spoken drama. Rather, as I show in Chapter 3, audience investment in operatic vocal sound did not diminish as the currency of new visual regimes grew, but instead expanded in fresh directions as listeners developed new audile techniques for opera's morphing vocal landscape.

I use a range of materials to analyze these dynamics as they impinge upon inscriptions of voice at the *fin de siècle*. Remarks from distinguished music critics and contributors to arts journals balance with illustrations published in a variety of contemporary periodicals, allowing me to capture the diverse ways audiences anchored their consumption of opera in their material and intellectual lives. Visual materials are especially important to my project, since drawings, satirical cartoons, and captioned photographs often capture points of view that may not have been central to academic music criticism but were of vital concern to the opera-going public. Reviews of individual works or singers, letters to

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[44] In this respect, the aims of this dissertation resonate with Gundula Kreuzer's recent efforts to take the long view on Wagnerian initiatives—in her case, Wagnerian technologies of the theater—in an effort to embed them within the broader intellectual and commercial economies of Europe. See Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

[45] Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815–1930* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Karen Henson, *Opera Acts: Singers and Performance in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[46] Henson, *Opera Acts*, 4.

the editors of periodicals, singers' memoirs, and pedagogical treatises also comprise a significant component of my archive. At times I focus on responses from a single city to take full measure of the clashes that arose between critics with different agendas; elsewhere I read across local cultures in order to account for comments that pervade criticism of the period but that are often discounted in musicological narratives as subjective or untutored. In attending to the sonic qualities of a diverse and dispersed written archive (often consisting of sources that musicologists do not typically regard as containing valuable information about aural histories), I draw inspiration from Ana María Ochoa Gautier's *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2014). Accounts of listening practices and the kinds of knowledge they encode, she reminds us, cannot be encompassed by a single form of inscription: "Listening is not a practice that is contained and readily available for the historian in one document but instead is enmeshed across multiple textualities, often mentioned in passing, and subsumed under other apparent purposes such as the literary, the grammatical, the poetic, the ritual, the disciplinary, or the ethnographic."[47]

INSCRIBING VOICE, CA. 1900

I focus primarily on the period from 1890 to 1910, which represented a critical juncture in the history of vocal sound, metaphors of voice, and concepts of selfhood. These were also years of sociocultural upheaval, as cities sprouted into metropolises, human subjectivity was re-articulated through psychoanalysis, and new technologies of reproduction enabled visual and aural phenomena to be experienced and used in new ways. This project consists of four chapters and a brief epilogue that track the interactions between these aesthetic, political, and social threads as they were refracted through evolving discourses of voice.

Musicologists have construed changing treatments of voice in late nineteenth-century opera as a natural consequence of other developments, such as the fascination with sensational plots and characters or the timbral expansion of the orchestra. Contemporary audiences, however, hardly saw this assault on the lyric voice as inevitable, and vigorously resisted it. Proceeding from the concerns of these alarmed operagoers, my first chapter documents how perceived threats to the lyric voice ballooned into a debate over the viability of opera's expressive codes during the 1890s. I focus on Richard Strauss's *Guntram*, a work that for modern scholars has come to symbolize composers' struggles with the posthumous legacy of Wagner. Yet the contemporary critical reception of *Guntram* also distilled a debate over the question of whether voice ought to remain melodically and sonically dominant in opera. Following the post-Wagnerian fashion for developing musical motives and dramatic situations through orchestral transformation, Strauss, some alleged, had produced a work in which voices communicated mere "stencils" rather than fully developed melodies. I read these reactions against contemporary French discourse, demonstrating a critical distinction between Austro-German and French perspectives on the deepening voice crisis of the 1890s. While the French traced the roots of this crisis back to singers' inabilities to withstand demanding modern repertoire, and thus sought to leverage cutting-edge medical knowledge about the physiology of the larynx to improve vocal pedagogy, operagoers in German lands lay the blame squarely at the feet of the composers who were rewriting opera's sonic conventions. As assumptions about what opera ought to sound like were

[47] Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*, 7–8.

destabilized, professional critics and amateur listeners alike grappled with the questions of what constituted opera and who was positioned to decide. Even singers and pedagogues like Mathilde Marchesi waded into these discussions, articulating perspectives on aesthetic theory explicitly informed by practical experience and expertise.

In my second chapter I focus on the virulent reactions of German listeners to *verismo* works. Operas that attempted to replicate the concrete, and often shocking, detail of novels by Émile Zola or Giovanni Verga were both popular and problematic across Europe in the 1890s. Contemporary commentators were unnerved by the use of sound effects such as tolling bells and gunshots as replacements for orchestral imitations of such sounds. In Germany and Austria, writers blamed this new sonic realism for further eroding the territory available to the voice, lamenting the loss of melodies that could project character and show off vocal prowess. Where scholars have suggested that composers' new emphasis on fragmented, declamatory vocal writing was considered realistic, I show that audiences heard such effects as a threat to opera's legibility, as rendering the characters surreal, inarticulate, and inert, and as effacing critical boundaries between music and sound. The currency of these non-lyrical manifestations of voice was not just an issue of realism but a central point of contention in transnational discourses of "modern" opera.

Ultimately, efforts to come to grips with these stylistic changes sensitized critics and audiences to the fraught relationship between vocal sound and its bodily source at a time when the constitution of the human self was becoming an object of scrutiny as well as a marketable commodity. The dissertation's third and fourth chapters examine the network of embodied experiences on which listeners began to draw in attempts to ascribe value to new modes of vocality. Following the more conceptual discussions of my first and second chapters, then, my third chapter examines the connection between voice and characterization in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, focusing on the physical and sonic presence of singers on stage. I show that concerns over performers' sterile expressivity (what one author called "lifelessness") prompted critics to fixate on the relationship between drama, vocal sound, and the transmission of character in performance. Many attributed this lifelessness to a lack of connection between voice and drama, and responded not by turning toward the visual or the declamatory in their search for arresting drama (as Henson shows contemporary French and Italian listeners had done), but by looking for other ways in which effective drama might be conveyed through voice. At the same time, inspired by new ideas about acting technique in spoken theater, Viennese authors also began to invest in the notion that singers' portrayals should cleave more closely to their fictionalized characters, and that this immersion into character should cross all modes of creative expression—especially voice. These developments crystallize most vividly in the reception of soprano Marie Gutheil-Schoder. Using her changing critical fortunes, I show that the tightening connection between voice and character prompted operagoers to relate their understandings of vocal sound to the health and "interiority" of the individuals emitting it, thus paving the way for listeners to hear such vocalizations as willful expressions of artists now understood to embody the human subject.

The political constructions of voice I chart in Chapter 3 are given fuller attention in Chapter 4, which explores the ways vocal sound was implicated in the social upheavals wrought by modernity. I focus on the case of Strauss's *Elektra*, situating its contemporary reception in the context of urban noise, Darwinian thought, and the biopolitical initiatives of the Wilhelmine regime. The constant "screams" critics perceived in the work helped them tie the sounds of the opera house to those of daily life. Journalists in Berlin saw singers' efforts to be heard over the orchestra as paralleling their own struggles to control the noisy soundscapes of urban industry that surrounded them. The spectacular

modernization of Berlin around 1900 had alerted its residents to the sonic costs of progress, a sensitivity that had already translated into acts of resistance by the time of *Elektra*'s premiere in 1909: the year prior, local chapters of a dedicated anti-noise league were founded in cities across Germany, including Berlin, and Maximilian Negwer introduced his *Ohropax*, which would become the first commercially successful earplug. Screams also became weapons in less geographically specific debates over human evolution and musical development, and were variously regarded as barbaric, animalistic noises that signaled regression to a developmental state long-since overcome, or as signs of progress in the Darwinian mold—bodily adaptations developed in response to shifting circumstances. Reading across reviews, poetry, cartoons, and satire, I demonstrate that while groups with varying levels of musical literacy invested in *Elektra*'s voices, the sociopolitical meanings they each discerned might prove complementary or oppositional, depending on the issue.

These four chapters show that in the years around 1900 operatic voices became means for grappling with experiences of modernity, being enlisted in such urgent projects as the fortification of human agency amidst industrial creep, the development of a middle-class resistance to elite aesthetics, and the policing of national health. Ultimately, this project documents how listeners used operatic voices to make sense of the world around them, and thus explores a new dimension of opera's sociopolitical relevance, which can be found not merely in the fictional worlds dramatized on stage, or in the boxes and balconies where patrons mingle, but through embodied knowledge.

CHAPTER 1
OPERA UPSIDE DOWN

> In many places where it could have been quite different, the main focus is still too much on the orchestra, and what the singing voices have is then too persistently un-melodic without that being necessary. Why can't the singing voice be the primary bearer of the main ideas?[1]
>
> – Richard von Wistinghausen, 1903

> The treatment of the singing voice has appeared to be in crisis since Richard Wagner, and the paw of this giant seems to shackle us even today.[2]
>
> – Walter Braunfels, 1928

When Chaikovsky's last opera, *Iolanthe,* belatedly arrived on the German stage in the spring of 1895, critics were not impressed. "Interesting" was the vague assessment of one contributor to the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.[3] Perhaps no one was more disparaging than Eduard Bernsdorf, the chief opera critic for the music periodical *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, who complained that:

> The orchestra plays the lead role in *Iolanthe*: it is not merely support, but becomes the central point and kills everything sung on the stage, so to speak, or at the very least allows it to come through only as declamation. Thus *Iolanthe* belongs to the upside-down operas, which unfortunately have been in fashion for some time; furthermore, that the upside-down operas should be called operas is actually absurd, as long as one does not consider opera to be a work for orchestra with accompanying singing.[4]

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[1] "An manchen Stellen, wo es ganz gut hätte anders sein können, liegt der Schwerpunkt noch gar zu sehr im Orchester, was die Singstimmen haben, ist dann zu anhaltend unmelodisch, ohne dass es nötig wäre. Warum kann die Singstimme nicht vorwiegend Trägerin des Hauptgedankens sein?" Rich[ard]. von Wistinghausen, "Dresden. Alpenkönig und Menschenfeind," *NZfM* 99/46 (11 November 1903), 590–1.

[2] "Die Behandlung der Singstimme ist seit Richard Wagner in eine Krise getreten und die Tatze dieses Riesen scheint uns noch heute zu fesseln[.]" Walter Braunfels, "Die Stimme und das Orchester," *MdA* 10/9–10 (November–December 1928), 347.

[3] E. R. [*sic*], "Concert- und Opernaufführungen in Leipzig," *NZfM* 91/20 (15 May 1895), 233. The author did clarify his usage somewhat, noting that the term "interesting" was meant both positively (since the work contained some musical beauties) and negatively (because its loose approach to drama meant it was not destined to find a permanent place in the repertoire). The bemusement and mild pleasure here signaled by the critic's use of the term calls to mind Sianne Ngai's conceptualization of the "interesting" as that which registers the "relatively small surprise" elicited by "variation from an existing norm" within capitalist processes of circulation. See Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 5.

[4] "Das Orchester spielt überhaupt in 'Iolanthe' die Hauptrolle: es unterstützt nicht blos, sondern wird zum Kernpunkt und macht sozusagen alles auf der Bühne Gesungene tot, oder läßt es doch wenigstens nur als Declamatorisches zu Worte kommen. So gehört denn 'Iolanthe' zu den auf den Kopf gestellten Opern, wie sie leider seit geraumer Zeit in der Mode find und wie man sie eigentlich ein Unding nennen muß, so lange man die Oper überhaupt nicht für ein Werk für Orchester mit begleitendem Gesang hält." E[duard]. Bernsdorf, "Iolanthe," *SfMW* 53/27 (April 1895), 418.

Bernsdorf's frustration with *Iolanthe* stemmed from its treatment of the voice, a point driven home through his characterization of the work as an "upside-down" opera ("Kopf gestellten Opern," literally, operas put on their heads). The term was meant to designate a work where the orchestra has usurped the dominant role from the voice, and that, Bernsdorf makes clear, was cause enough to reject *Iolanthe*.

These are surprisingly strong words for an opera that by other critical estimations was not likely to enter into the repertoire of German opera houses. But in a sense *Iolanthe* was merely an unlucky victim, since Bernsdorf was a critic with an axe to grind. His ruthless dismissal of *Iolanthe* carried with it the full weight of his anxiety about what he believed to be the grave state—indeed the downfall—of opera in Germany during the mid-1890s. Bernsdorf's concerns may sound familiar to musicologists, recalling as they do the kind of alarmist rhetoric that continues to form our diagnosis of turn-of-the-century Austro-German opera. As I suggested in the Introduction, narratives about this period of Austro-German opera are typically framed in terms of collapse: as a time when composers grappled in vain with the metaphysical themes and musical legacy of Richard Wagner's music dramas.[5] Thus, despite a flurry of operatic activity, significant aesthetic debates or directions are not usually thought to have materialized during this period. (John Deathridge, for instance, memorably described the "capacious graveyard of past operatic disasters" left in Wagner's immediate wake.[6]) Yet, in Bernsdorf's account, the serious issue raised by *Iolanthe* was no Wagnerian matter. Instead, the threat lay in challenges to the privileged status the human voice had traditionally enjoyed in opera. What really worried Bernsdorf, as well as scores of other German-speaking critics, pedagogues, and operagoers, was the fact that a growing number of contemporary works were coming dangerously close to upsetting the genre's longstanding and precious sonic hierarchy.

This issue was discussed *ad nauseam* in the German-language press throughout the mid-1890s. Some of the most impassioned voices were not professional critics but average operagoers. One concerned citizen in Cologne took to his local paper in October 1895 to raise awareness about what he termed "our opera misery." In the op-ed-style piece, the operagoer-turned-activist urged his fellow citizens to care about the fact that it was increasingly difficult to understand opera singers during performance. "If I just want to hear, I go to a concert, if I want to hear and see, I go to a pantomime or a ballet, but when I want to hear, see, and understand, shouldn't opera offer a suitable opportunity?"[7] It was the dramatic aspect of opera that made comprehension necessary, he explained. This push for comprehension was a re-articulation of how crucial human voices were to opera, and it pointed to the source of the "opera misery" befalling audiences, who had become unwilling spectators for the "wrestling match taking place [at the opera] between the ungrammatical screeching of metal, intestines and hides and the grammatical sound of the human voice." Unfortunately, he noted, "the result is almost always a solid defeat of [the voice, and] this is an unacceptable state of affairs."[8]

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[5] For examples of the standard accounts regarding this post-Wagnerian collapse, see Bryan Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 10; and Frisch, *German Modernism*, 63–6. On the struggle of post-Wagnerian composers with the late composer's legacy, see Charles Youmans, "Richard Strauss's *Guntram* and the Dismantling of Wagnerian Musical Metaphysics," (PhD diss., Duke University, 1996).

[6] John Deathridge, "Wagner and Beyond," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18.

[7] "Wenn ich bloß hören will, geh' ich ins Concert, wenn ich hören und sehen will, besuch' ich eine Pantomime oder ein Ballett, wenn ich aber hören, sehen, und verstehen will, sollte dazu nicht die Oper eine geeignete Gelegenheit bieten? Sollte—ja gewiß!" [Unsigned], "Unser Opern-Elend. Stoßseufzer eines Theaterfreundes," *Kölnische Volkszeitung und Handels-Blatt* 36/646 (7 October 1895), [np].

[8] "Hier [bei der Oper] findet recht eigentlich ein Ringkampf zwischen den ungrammatikalischen Tonen der Metalle,

Of course, naming the problem was the easy part; mounting a convincing case against a specific culprit and persuading others to agree proved far more difficult. This anonymous Kölner was particularly suspicious of conductors, and to a lesser extent, instrumentalists. The strongest evidence of this partiality arises during anecdotal testimony, as he related how what should have been a moment of enraptured bliss at the opera quickly turned sour with the onset of those ungrammatical roars:

> I find myself in a state of high tension and just as it rises to its peak, the conductor gives the biggest noisemakers of his group a sign, and, with drums and trumpets, with trombones and bass violins drilling on, I cannot understand a syllable. Damn it! […] The music was intended to accompany the voice of the singer—not be the main role.[9]

Elsewhere in the piece, similarly anecdotal evidence is used to suggest the enormity of the "opera misery." Citing a friend learned in the arts, the essayist recounts a story involving an unnamed conductor so envious of the applause given to his singers that he let the orchestra play louder to exact revenge.[10]

In a letter published in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* little more than a week later, a reader who went by the initials F. X. R. wrote to endorse the basic principles of his fellow Kölner's complaints: "The 'friend of the theater with common sense,' who humorously vents his displeasure about the preponderance of the orchestra over singing in opera in the local *Volkszeitung*, is in fact not so wrong."[11] But, the letter-writer countered, the issue of incomprehensible singers was not so much a result of loud orchestras as of poor enunciation: singers merely needed to "learn to speak better" and also to treat language with the same generous care they did musical notes in order for audiences to understand dramatic events. Unlike this problem of unclear speech, F. X. R. went on to note, "excessive orchestral noise is easy to eliminate with a little good will from the conductor."[12] F. X. R.'s alternative interpretation of the situation placed blame squarely on singers.

Ultimately the blame game was only the most visible dimension of Germany's voice crisis. The problem that had sent opera enthusiasts, critics, and pedagogues into a tailspin was ultimately one of genre: as Bernsdorf's spectacular outburst indicates, anxiety centered on the status of the singing voice in opera. Nowhere is this clearer than with regard to his metaphor of "upside-down opera," which pushed the debate beyond aesthetic preference. Bernsdorf's implication is epistemological: within the

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Därme und Häute und den grammatikalischen der menschlichen Stimme stallt. Leider ist das Ergebniß fast alle Mal eine vollständige Niederlage der letzteren [...] Das ist ein Mißstand—ein wahres Elend." [Unsigned], "Unser Opern-Elend."

[9] "Was mich betrifft, so befinde ich mich ebenfalls in einem Zustande hoher Spannung, und just, da sie aufs höchste steigt, gibt der Kapellmeister den größten Lärmmachern seiner Bande ein Zeichen, mit Pauken und Trompeten, mit Posaunen und Baßgeigen drauf los zu exerzieren, daß ich nicht mehr eine Silbe verstehen kann. Zum Kuckuck! [....] Ich meinte bisher, die Musik sei doch nur zur Begleitung der Stimme des Sängers oder der Sängerin bestimmt, nicht aber die Hauptrolle." [Unsigned], "Unser Opern-Elend."

[10] The fact that this amateur critic ultimately viewed the "opera misery" as an issue tied up with the conditions of live performance may explain why the only major German music periodical to reprint the op-ed was the *Deutsche Musiker-Zeitung*, a newspaper explicitly geared toward the needs and interests of working musicians.

[11] "Der 'Theaterfreund mit dem gesunden Menschenverstand,' der in der dortigen 'Volkszeitung' seinem Unmuth über das Uebergewicht des Orchesters über den Gesang in der Oper in einem humoristischen Stoßseufzer Luft macht, hat im Grunde so unrecht nicht." [F. X. R.], "Briefkasten. F. X. R. in Köln," *AMZ* 22/41 (11 October 1895), 524.

[12] "Würden unsere Theater-Sänger und -Sängerinnen überhaupt besser sprechen lernen, die Behandlung der Sprache ebenso als eine Kunst betrachten wie die Behandlung des Tones, so wäre das Wichtigste erreicht für das Verständniß dramatischer Vorgänge in der Oper. Uebermäßiger Orchesterlärm ist bei einigem guten Willen des Kapellmeisters leicht zu beseitigen, nicht so das Grundübel undeutlichen Sprechens, an dem leider so viele Bühnensänger und unter dem so viele Aufführungen zu leiden haben." [F. X. R.], "Briefkasten," 524.

genre there is a particular, right-side-up relationship between the singing voice and the orchestra. He thus claims the human voice as the primary site of musical meaning and as guarantor of aesthetic truth, exposing his, and the opera-going public's, attachment to an embodied, singer-centric construction of "voice."

This chapter examines how, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the genre of opera underwent a kind of fracturing as long-held assumptions about how opera ought to sound were destabilized. Here I follow film scholar James Naremore in treating art-historical categories like genre as being primarily constituted through discourse, which he characterizes as "a loose, evolving system of arguments and readings, [that helps] to shape commercial strategies and aesthetic ideologies."[13] No work better demonstrates how and why a more flexible approach to operatic vocal writing erupted into a full-blown crisis during the 1890s than Richard Strauss's *Guntram*. It was hardly the first (or the last) opera to spark deeply conflicted responses, but its immediate reception history provides a vivid snapshot of the pitched battle over the role of the human voice in opera, allowing us to glimpse these attitudes as they were taking shape among critics and ordinary listeners alike. *Guntram* also affords a valuable laboratory in which to test discourse against the musical score, to try and measure what critics seemed to be hearing against the way Strauss handles the relationship between singer and orchestra. Through these experiments in reading and listening, I shall demonstrate that opinions on *Guntram* were bound up with a larger issue that was heavily inflected by the lingering influence of Wagnerism: that of how themes are defined and voiced, of how different kinds of melodic material were distributed amongst different musical voices.

It was not just opera critics who waded into these disputes over the status of voice in opera, however. Following my discussion of *Guntram*, I shift my focus to another prominent voice in this discourse, the singer-turned-pedagogue Mathilde Marchesi (1821–1913), whose perspective was shaped as much by vocal practice and pedagogy as aesthetic theory and opinion. In contributing to this discussion, Marchesi was following in a tradition of singers publicly weighing in on aesthetic trends that impinged on their marketability and cultural authority.[14] Her extensive written record on the subject, recorded in a series of open-letters published in *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, captures her attempts first to describe the same phenomenon that so flummoxed *Guntram*'s critics, and later to pinpoint the causes of the seismic shift in opera's treatment of the human voice: did it stem from vocal technique and pedagogy (as some thought) or from composers?

When a more unified vision for the genre finally re-emerged around the century's end, it reflected a noticeably different attitude to the role of the voice—a change that would have significant implications for how operas were created and consumed well into the early twentieth century. I begin to sketch this history in the final section of this chapter, paying particular attention to the processes by which such changes became accepted and normalized. Attending to such processes also lets me begin to confront a larger methodological issue to which I will return in subsequent chapters—how musicologists read music criticism—since the task invites consideration of how we attend to rhetoric in order to register moments when resistance fades and new norms begin to calcify. But in the mid-

[13] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 10–1. Regarding the utility of this framework for approaching the entanglement of genre and operatic history, see Emanuele Senici, "Genre," in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34–5.

[14] One prominent contemporary of Marchesi who also published op-ed style pieces about trends in vocal performance practice from time to time was the soprano Lilli Lehmann. See for instance, [Lilli Lehmann], "Feuilleton. Lilli Lehmann über die moderne Gesangskunst," *NmP* 5/6 (9 February 1896), 2–3; 5/7 (16 February 1896) 2–3.

1890s, in a time before many were willing to entertain such talk of a new normal, one central question occupied operagoers: what makes an opera an opera?

A STENCILED VOICE

Richard Strauss's first opera has not attracted much attention in recent opera scholarship; but in the eyes of contemporary operagoers, *Guntram* seemed innovative, controversial, and perhaps even threatening.[15] When the opera premiered in Weimar in May 1894, the more disparaging critics complained that it failed to respect the most fundamental generic convention. According to Strauss advocate-turned-critic Otto Floersheim, who managed *The Musical Courier*'s Berlin office, *Guntram* was deeply flawed:

> There can be no doubt that *Guntram* is the most tremendous purely orchestral creation now in existence, but again this overpowering and predominating element, while it calls for the admiration of the connoisseur on the whole, works to the detriment of the work. Human voices are but human voices after all, and without the hidden or sunken orchestra as at Bayreuth, Strauss' non-orchestral exponents of his musical ideas are many times ununderstandable [*sic*] and at moments absolutely inaudible.[16]

Nominally, Floersheim's complaint is about the overbearing orchestra; read less literally, his comments proceed from, and seek to shore up, the belief that singers' voices ought to be privileged in opera. His most explicit condemnation of *Guntram* is that it was a "purely orchestral" work. Others would take up this argument in even stronger terms when the opera was revived in Munich the following year.[17] Oskar Merz of the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* complained that *Guntram* was "an uncommonly complex orchestral work" that revealed Strauss's "sovereign carelessness" in his treatment of the voices: "with regard to the stage," Merz huffed, "song is and remains the most important thing; that should never ever be forgotten."[18] Least forgiving of all was an anonymous contributor to the *Vossische Zeitung*, who noted with disdain that even though Strauss's opera had met with some success in Munich "it is unlikely to prove sustainable because there hardly exists a work that is written with greater contempt

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[15] Sustained musicological engagement with *Guntram* remains rare, especially for those scholars who are not Strauss specialists. This may be a consequence of the fact that Strauss's early operatic career has been understood as a coming-of-age process in which he was gradually able to cast off the weight of the Wagnerian ideal, culminating in the success of his third opera *Salome*; thus, *Guntram* is typically heard as an epigonic effort, with Strauss sheltering in Wagner's shadow while attempting to critique the master's redemptive artistic vision from within. This narrative was recently rehearsed in Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*; the title itself speaks volumes.

[16] O. F. [Otto Floersheim], "First Performance of Richard Strauss' *Guntram*," *The Musical Courier* 28/23 (6 June 1894), 11.

[17] Strauss was able to get *Guntram* staged in Munich in autumn 1895, in part because he was then serving as the conductor for the Munich court opera. However, the work's poor reception in Munich—coupled with the fact that it sparked controversy among local singers and instrumentalists—would complicate plans for future performance in Munich and elsewhere.

[18] "*Guntram* präsentirt sich dem Hörer somit zunächst als ungemein komplizirtes Orchesterwerk. Selbst in der Behandlung der Singstimmen verfährt der Komponist vielfach mit der nämlich souveränen Sorglosigkeit, wie er sie in den Zumuthungen darthut, die er an die Künstler seines Orchesters stellt. Für die Bühne aber ist und bleibt der Gesang die Hauptsache; das sollte nie und nirgends vergessen werden." Oskar Merz, "'Guntram'. Dichtung und Musik von Rich. Strauß. Erste Aufführung am Münchner Hoftheater am 16. November 1895," *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, 48 (18 November 1895), 4.

for melody and the human voice than this one."[19]

These comments complicate the standard account of *Guntram*'s mixed reception and ultimate "failure" that persists in the secondary literature. We know that *Guntram* sharply divided its early audiences, and two different circumstances have traditionally been proffered to explain these reactions. Strauss scholars have tied the unevenness of *Guntram*'s reception to the ongoing, volatile referendum on Wagnerian aesthetics: where one group of operagoers (particularly Cosima and those in the Bayreuth circle) were quick to condemn the work after they discerned in *Guntram* a multi-pronged critique of the late Meister's grand visions for music drama, others reacted more favorably.[20] But *Guntram*'s chilly reception has also been linked to unfavorable performance conditions. According to this view, the split in opinion boiled down to whether audiences invested in the musical execution or in the operatic "text," as historian Michael Kater recently argued in his cultural history of Weimar:

> The premiere has been described as anything between a "a [*sic*] highly successful first performance" (Leonhard Schrickel) and "a flop" (Alex Ross), but in reality it was a *succès d'estime*. Although the orchestra had drowned out the singers and [Pauline] de Ahna's impersonation of the heroine Freihild was merely competent, the Weimar audience gave Strauss a standing ovation, with Carl Alexander and [Hans] Bronsart [von Schellendorf] still hoping that their young genius would stay [rather than take up his new post in Munich].[21]

Given this narrative, critics like Floersheim and Merz are implicitly cast as detractors who would reject *Guntram* because of "drowned out" voices. Such assumptions have been bolstered by our retrospective knowledge of how Strauss approached his orchestra. We know that he initially sought to enlarge *Guntram*'s orchestra and complained in his diaries about having to premiere the work in Weimar as opposed to Munich, as had been planned, because the provincial city lacked a sufficiently large orchestra (only 21 string players were available in Weimar compared to the 62 indicated in the score).[22] And we also know that when Strauss returned to *Guntram* later in life, he undertook a series of revisions that aimed to correct for what he himself recognized as a "surfeit of voice" (to borrow Adrian Daub's phrase) in the original.[23]

Of course, what makes this version of events particularly attractive is how closely it tracks with the standard narrative about the development of opera orchestras and their effects on singing practices over the course of the nineteenth century. Musicologists have often stressed how the ever-larger opera orchestras of the nineteenth century were increasingly noisy, and consequently placed ever-larger

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[19] "[*Guntram*] hatte gestern hier einen ziemlich starken Lokalerfolg—Strauß ist ein Münchener—der sich jedoch nicht als nachhaltig erweisen dürfte, denn es gibt kaum ein Werk, das mit größerer Verachtung der Melodie und der menschlichen Stimme geschrieben ist als dieses." Cited in [Unsigned], "Rundschau. Aus München wird der 'Voss. Ztg.' vom 17. Nov geschrieben," *Deutsche Musiker-Zeitung* 26/48 (30 November 1895), 617.

[20] For more on how *Guntram* and its reception reflect Strauss's complicated relationship with the Wagner circle and the late Meister's legacy see Youmans, "Richard Strauss's *Guntram*," Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 10–38, and Daub, *Tristan's Shadow*, 77–95.

[21] Michael Kater, *Weimar: From Enlightenment to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 84. See also Henry T. Finck, *Richard Strauss: The Man and his Works*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1917), 226–7, and Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years 1864–1898*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 360–2.

[22] See Schuh, *Richard Strauss*, 360.

[23] Daub, *Tristan's Shadow*, 80.

burdens on singers struggling to be heard.[24] We might then expect a proliferation of the "noisy" and overly rich orchestrations that music critics have long loved to hate, the kind of orchestral abuses that Emily I. Dolan frames as the relinquishing of control by the composer over the instruments at their disposal.[25] A spate of massive *tuttis* dispersed throughout the score, for instance, could have wreaked havoc on outnumbered voices. Yet, moments in the score where large orchestral batteries are deployed appear to be carefully engineered to prevent this outcome. For example, when a group of Minnesänger must compete with an imposing and united orchestral front near the beginning of Act II, scene 1, the scoring reveals that Strauss took deliberate measures to minimize the possibility of unbalanced forces. The full weight of the orchestra is withheld until the men sustain their final pitch (on the downbeat at rehearsal number 22), and the introduction of additional Minnesänger voices at this moment (on beat three of the same measure) seems a countermeasure to mitigate any further threat. The men taper off as the orchestra gains momentum—a calculated hand-off presumably intended to foreclose a sonic battle in the heat of performance.[26]

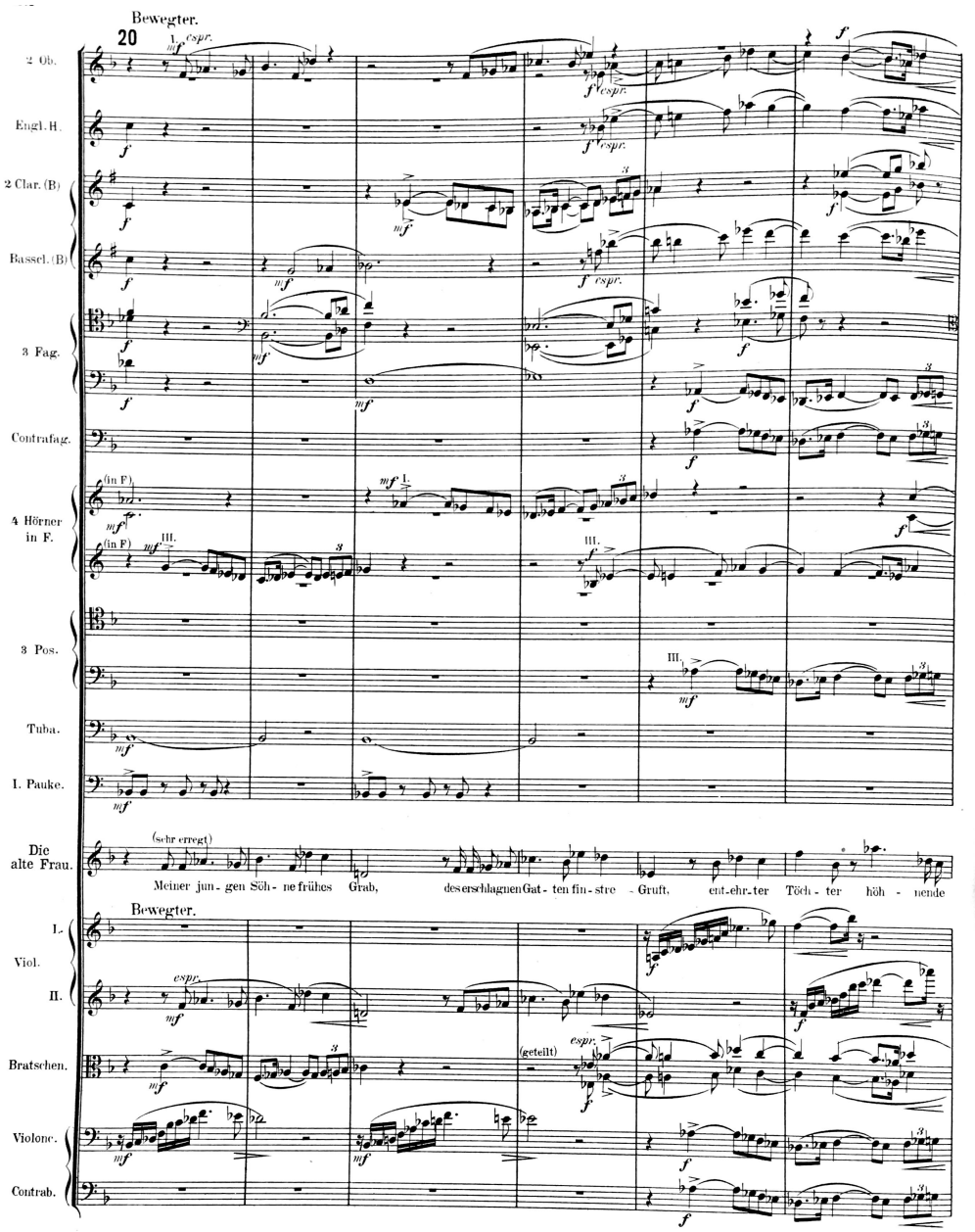
Such issues of balance were not what had unsettled the likes of Floersheim and Merz. They were more concerned by the balance of power between singers' voices and instruments in the opera's symbolic economy. In *Guntram* the human voice often yields its privileged position, becoming one among many means for the presentation and development of themes. The effect in performance is that the human voice loses its individual sonic profile, disappearing into the sonority generated by the orchestral collective. In Act I, scene 1, for instance, the voice of the old woman is often vulnerable to being absorbed into the general orchestral sound. As she sings her melody (see Example 1.1, at rehearsal number 20, mm. 1–3), she is doubled by the second violins and oboes; against this, violas and horns play a countermelody, celli introduce another distinct melodic flourish, and held pitches in the bass clarinet and bassoon anchor the harmonic structure. Here the orchestral contingent contains various shades of a limited palette both in terms of register and timbre, and this makes it hard to distinguish the alto voice individually; such efforts are especially complicated by the way the oboes and second violins shadow the vocal melody from within the same tessitura as the human voice. These sonic likenesses allow for a blending that is perhaps too seamless, leading to the impression that the melody emanates from a trio united in sound rather than an alto voice buoyed by orchestral support. Surrounded by like-colored instruments, the particular sound of the human voice becomes, to borrow Floersheim's word, "ununderstandable."

Guntram's voices are often functionally relegated as well, given the task of presenting embryonic versions of material that is then woven into other orchestral voices. This amounted to a significant departure from the kind of voice-orchestra partnership nineteenth-century operagoers had come to expect, an approach that had maintained its hold on the ear thanks to the frequent performance of repertoire staples like Verdi's *Aida* (premiered 1871), which enjoyed multiple performances across Germany during the same season in which *Guntram* received its premiere. "Celeste Aida," the tenor's

[24] John Rosselli has outlined this narrative in his essay "Grand Opera: Nineteenth-Century Revolution and Twentieth-Century Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. John Potter (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96–110. More recently, Karen Henson gestured to this narrative in setting the stage for her study of how these and related shifts shaped the ways in which late nineteenth-century singers established their creative presence in performance; see Henson, *Opera Acts*, 8.

[25] Emily I. Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), especially around p. 219.

[26] Richard Strauss, *Guntram. In drei Aufzügen. Dichtung und Musik von Richard Strauss. Op. 25*. Munich: Jos. Aibl, [1894], 193.



EXAMPLE 1.1: Die alte Frau and her orchestral shadows. Richard Strauss, *Guntram. In drei Aufzügen. Dichtung und Musik von Richard Strauss. Op. 25*, (Munich: Jos. Aibl, [1894]), 22.

first showpiece aria, offers a particularly clear illustration of how nineteenth-century operas typically privileged the human voice over the orchestra. At the outset, a background. Over the course of the aria, the voice remains the center of melodic interest and solitary flute mirrors the tenor's melody, and although its line has the same silhouette as the vocal line, the flute line is both harmonically distinct from and less elaborate than the vocal melody. As the tenor's line soars upward at the end of each phrase, the flute provides harmonic support, receding into the background. Over the course of the aria, the voice remains the center of melodic interest and development, even in moments when the orchestra is allowed thicker textures, timbral variation, and melodic embellishments.

The same cannot be said of Strauss's opera, where singers are not only overshadowed by

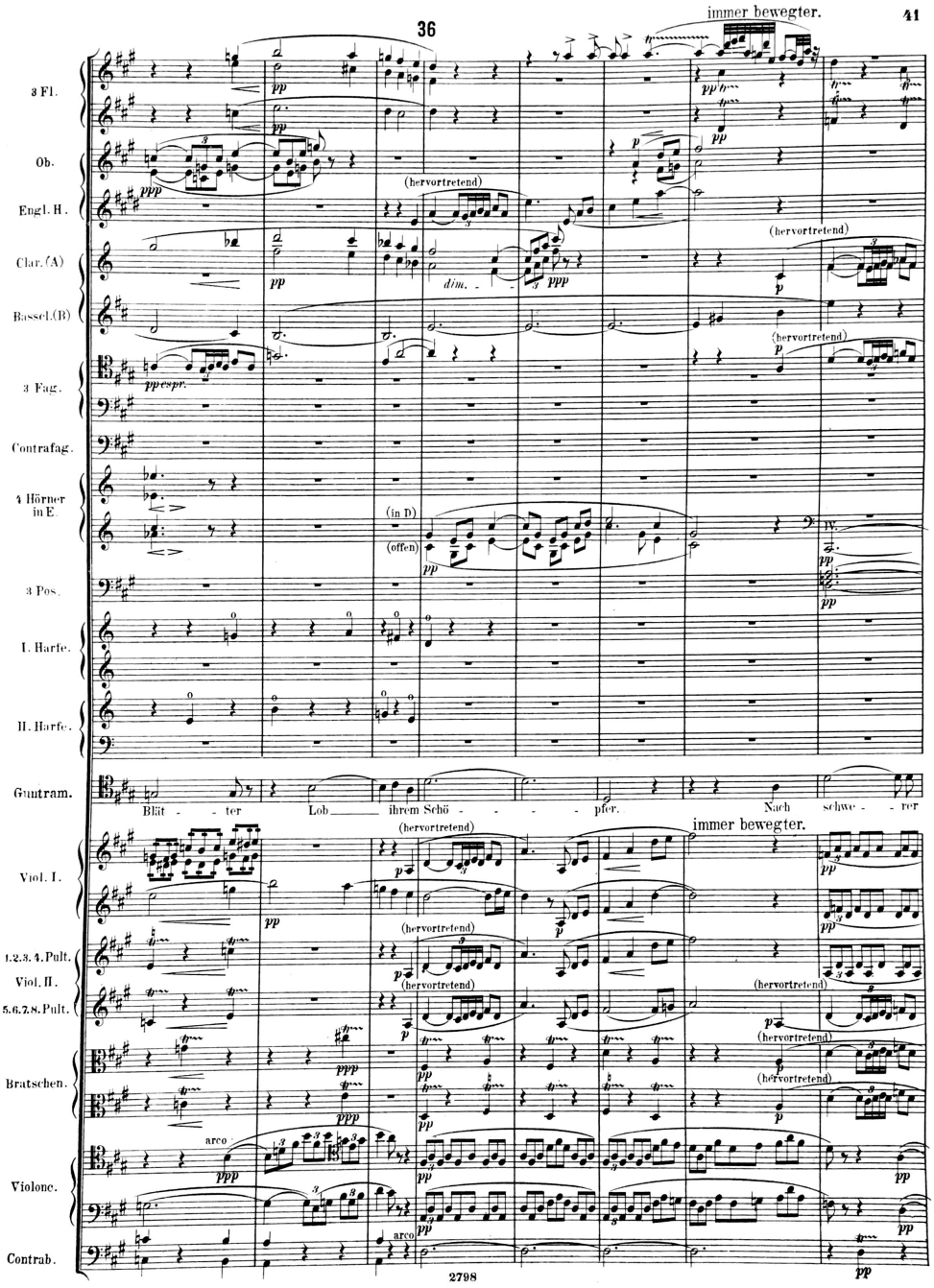
orchestral voices but effectively take on an accompanimental role. Not long after the opera's eponymous hero begins his first aria, for example, instruments begin to mirror his vocal melody. But, by the second full measure of the melody, the clarinets and first violins begin to diverge from the singing line, embroidering the voice's half- and quarter-note-filled melody with faster rhythmic figurations that provide a bit of contrasting musical flesh. Barely twenty measures later, however, the vocal line gives the more structural iteration of the theme, as the orchestra blossoms with more intricate melodic development (see Example 1.2, four measures after rehearsal number 36). Against Guntram's first held half note, the second violins, viola, clarinet, and first bassoon introduce triplet embellishments, and, in the following measure, present a more rhythmically complex variation of his held notes. With these instruments forging a different yet closely related path relative to Guntram, the voice they are ostensibly accompanying is instead liable to become subsumed by them. In fact, by the middle of the phrase, as his voice descends, it almost fades from earshot amid the surging, ascending line of its orchestral companions (see three measures before rehearsal number 37). With the reiteration of this melodic kernel by various orchestral voices in the measures that follow, the voice continues on in a secondary capacity, its rather basic line—one comprised alternatively of stepwise movements and large leaps into held notes—struggling to compete with the melodic activity in the orchestral lines.

These were small moments with massive ramifications: against an orchestra with fully formed melodies, the singers' material often consisted of little more than structural contours. This must have been what one anonymous reviewer had in mind when complaining that "the orchestra alone dominates [while] the singers sink to the level of literal silhouettes and do almost nothing more than recite for the whole evening."[27] What made *Guntram* so problematic, then, was not just that its singers were often rendered inaudible, but that this degradation was built into the musical fabric. Strauss's singers were reduced to the level of musical stencils, entrusted with merely skeletal melodic potentials that, in the best-case scenario, were valuable mainly as a vehicle for text.

More than these flustered reactions, though, the most illuminating contemporary account of the kind of stylistic overhaul taking place in *Guntram* had been published in the cultural magazine *Die Gesellschaft* nearly a year before. This précis would emerge as part of art critic Hans Merian's review of Ruggero Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci* (commonly performed in translation as *Der Bajazzo* in Germany). While Merian's chief aim was to address what "modern-realistic opera" might look like, this line of inquiry ultimately led him to hold up Leoncavallo's work as a shining example of an operatic future freed from Wagnerian paralysis. One critical aspect that had distinguished Leoncavallo, Merian wrote, was how deftly he had threaded the needle of post-Wagnerian aesthetics, not least with regard to the relationship between the orchestra and the human voice: "the beautiful vocal melody has not been abandoned—it hovers triumphantly over the phrase, particularly in dramatically and musically significant moments—but conversely, the orchestral part is also much more fully developed that was the case in earlier Italian opera. The orchestra no longer simply serves as it did before." He continued at length:

> With the young Italians, the orchestra, in self-contradiction, approaches song; it executes individual leitmotifs independently, alongside those of the voice and simultaneously with them, just as in the works of Richard Wagner; occasionally, and

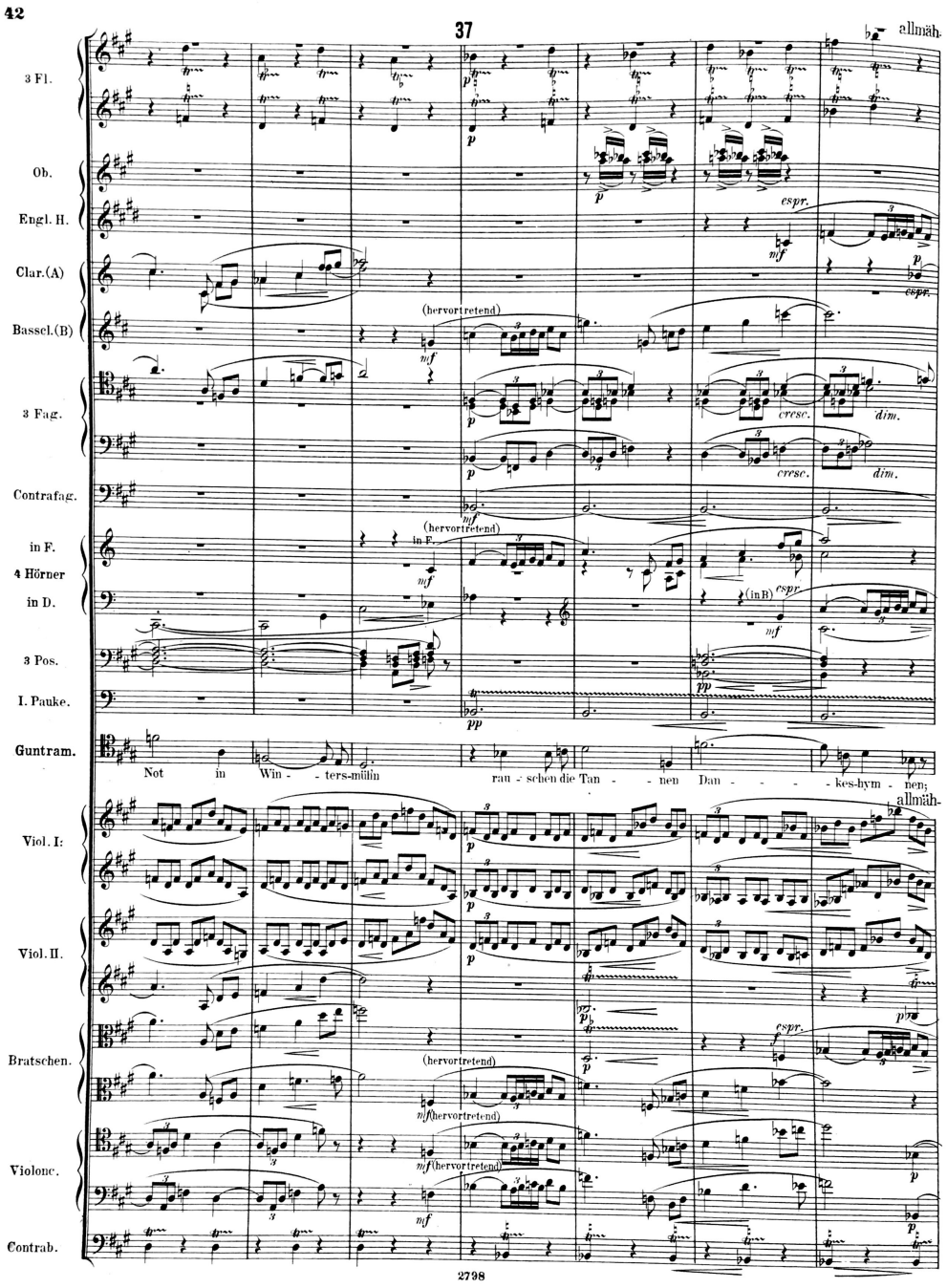
[27] "Für das groß Publicum ist diese Opernkost, in der nur das Orchester dominirt, die Sänger aber zu förmlichen Schemen herabsinken und den ganzen Abend fast nichts weiter thun als recitiren, nicht gemacht." [Unsigned], "Dur und Moll. München, 8. December," *SfMW* 53/65 (13 December 1895), 1027.



EXAMPLE 1.2: Guntram's melodic stencil. Strauss, *Guntram,* 41–2.

at those places that seem appropriate to the composer, it even takes control and lets the vocal melody that moves with less important motives or in simple repetition of pitch recede into the background. Precisely with these means, the composer attains quite beautiful effects; through the alternating dominance of the voice and the orchestra, the entire passage gains in the process a rich and beautiful diversity.[28]

[28] Hans Merian, "Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* and Modern-Realistic Opera," trans. Lorraine Fitz Gibbon, in *Puccini and His*



EXAMPLE 1.2 CONTINUED

This passage underscores how even as German operagoers looked toward operatic futures in which a robust orchestra was an active presence, they nevertheless expected balance. The prospect of greater orchestral involvement was desirable and exciting; but listeners did not want a complete inversion of opera's sonic hierarchy. They were looking for a more equal partnership between singers and orchestral instruments—or perhaps a semi-partnership, given Merian's caveat that the orchestra should only

World, ed. Arman Schwartz and Emanuele Senici (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 288–9.

"occasionally" take full control. The search for this operatic equilibrium would be a prominent motif in Austro-German opera criticism for at least the next decade, leading many authors to promote the new works they felt came closest to achieving this balance. For one veteran critic for the *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, no opera or composer was too minor to fête if it had managed to "fully exploit the modern orchestra apparatus" while maintaining vocal writing that was "rounded out melodically"; well after 1900 this critic was still gushing over works that were the "direct opposite of Wagnerian music drama," letting "the old sound relationship of melodic hegemony reign again [to make] singing the determining factor everywhere, and the orchestral part the subordinate."[29]

Ultimately, Merian's appraisal of Leoncavallo points to more than the vitality of the debate over the voice-orchestra partnership during the 1890s. It also underscores how attentive contemporary listeners were to this particular issue, and the extent to which it shaped how they heard new works as well as how they ascribed value to those works or to composers. As Merian's positive reaction to Leoncavallo's orchestration may already suggest, Strauss's approach to presenting and developing his themes galvanized his detractors, but it also won him supporters. One enthusiastic reviewer described how *Guntram* offered a promising new direction for opera precisely because of its treatment of themes:

> Since Strauss's themes always retain their full individuality, and he often uses completely new means of expression to translate the relevant emotional impulses into music, *Guntram* can no longer be considered an example of decline. It appears, in contrast, well suited to opening up new paths to the musical drama.[30]

Others echoed this appraisal: the critic for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* heralded Strauss's themes and melodies, which he noted were "often of an amazing simplicity, in contrast to many recent works that exhaust themselves in subtle sophistry," while a reviewer for the *Kölnische Zeitung* noted that Strauss "offers something entirely independent in the field of thematic invention."[31] From the descriptor "music drama" it is clear that the anonymous reviewer believed *Guntram* represented not only a new way forward, but also a move beyond Wagner.[32] It is difficult to pinpoint what aspects of the music may have prompted such claims, not least because Wagner's thematic development—the obvious point of reference for these reviewers—resists reductive or generalized descriptions.[33] But it may be significant that these early writers on *Guntram* opted to use the term "Themen" rather than "Motiven," which was readily associated with Wagner and his operas. The syntactical choice may have signaled a

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[29] "[Der Komponist] nutzt den modernen Orchesterapparat völlig aus […], während sein Deklamationsgesang, der sich vielfach dem *parlando* nähert, sich häufig melodisch rundet[.]" Karl Wolff, "Neue Opern. Köln," *NMZ* 18/22 (1897), 272. "Koczalskis Oper steht das direkte Gegenteil des Wagnerschen Musikdramas […] In ihr herrscht wieder das alte gesunde Verhältnis der melodischen Hegemonie; in ihr ist der Gesang überall das Bestimmende, der Orchesterpart das sich Unterordnende[.]" Karl Wolff, "Raoul von Koczalski und seine Oper 'Rymond'," *NMZ* 23/9 (1902), 118.

[30] "Da Straußens Themen immer ihre vollständige Eigenart bewahren, und er oft völlig neue Ausdrucksmittel anwendet, um die jeweiligen seelischen Regungen in Musik umzusetzen, kann sein *Guntram* nicht mehr als Epigonen-werk gelten. Er erscheint vielmehr wohl geeignet, dem Musikdrama neue Bahnen zu eröffnen." Cited in K. S. [*sic*], "Wichtigere Musik-Aufführungen," *DK* 7/17 (June 1894), 262.

[31] "[D]ie Themen und Tonfolgen [sind] doch oft von einer erstaunlichen Einfachheit im Gegensatz zu vielen neueren Werken, die sich in raffinirter Klügelei erschöpfen." Cited in K. S. [*sic*], "Wichtigere Musik-Aufführungen," 262. "[Strauß] bietet aber in der thematischen Erfindung etwas ganz Selbständiges." np [*sic*], "Kunst, Wissenschaft und Leben. *Guntram* von Richard Strauß," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 13 May 1894, [np].

[32] Other early reviewers framed *Guntram*'s potential in broader, more inclusive terms, emphasizing how promising it was for "opera" (rather than "music drama"). See for instance B. [*sic*], "Das Musikfest in Weimar," *NMZ* 25/13 (1894), 152.

[33] Musicologists have often stressed that Wagner tended to use leitmotivs differently across his operas; see Deathridge, "Wagner and Beyond," 16.

focus on Strauss's handling of musical materials broadly speaking, rather than the manipulation of a set of particular (leit)motivs.[34]

A broader scope would have been warranted, particularly because thematic treatment often becomes an issue of form in *Guntram*. Large sections of the musical fabric are portioned out into short, discrete sections that are strung together, each devoted to presenting and working through a particular set of musical materials, which are often related. This approach is especially clear near the end of Act I, where a few individual thematic units are developed in quick succession as part of different sections (see Example 1.3). Four measures before rehearsal number 100 the strings introduce a lumbering rhythm that defines the musical material in the section. When Robert enters, his simple vocal line initially acts as a kind of rhythmic counterpoint to the furious activity of the first violin part; three measures after number 100, however, when Robert and the violins merge on the word "Fluchtgelüste," Robert borrows the double-eighth-note-quarter-note pattern in which violins and violas are already engaged. Yet, barely ten measures later, the basic musical materials abruptly change as a new section begins. Starting at rehearsal number 101, an ascending motif marked by a dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm followed by a held note forms the basis for what follows. Against a background of fluttering woodwinds, the motif is traded between Guntram, the horns, and the celli, while simultaneously being developed in the first violins, which follow Guntram's line in imitative polyphony. But just as before, the section quickly comes to a close. After a brief interjection of the material from the previous "section," an entirely new set of materials emerges at rehearsal number 102.

Strauss's motivic approach here calls to mind Charles Kronengold's recent observation, made in reference to Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, that *fin-de-siècle* composers often relied on networks of "small, charming, highly defined musical objects—delicately orchestrated (and re-orchestrated) instrumental snatches lasting two to ten measures—[which are presented] in a relentlessly broken-up flow."[35] Kronengold reminds us that *Pelléas*'s earliest audiences struggled with this, and valued this "fractured quality […] negatively or at best neutrally, even as it adumbrated modernist musical practices that were soon to come."[36] The presence of similar techniques in *Guntram* allows us to glimpse these tactics as they were being developed and entering into the operatic mainstream, but it also reminds us that not all contemporary listeners were unsettled by the accumulation of motives that "float and dangle."[37] For instance, the juxtaposition of contrasting musical blocks in Example 1.5 can even be seen as helping to create digestible and distinct thematic units, a perspective that may have conditioned early critics' praise for the "individuality" and "simplicity" of Strauss's themes.

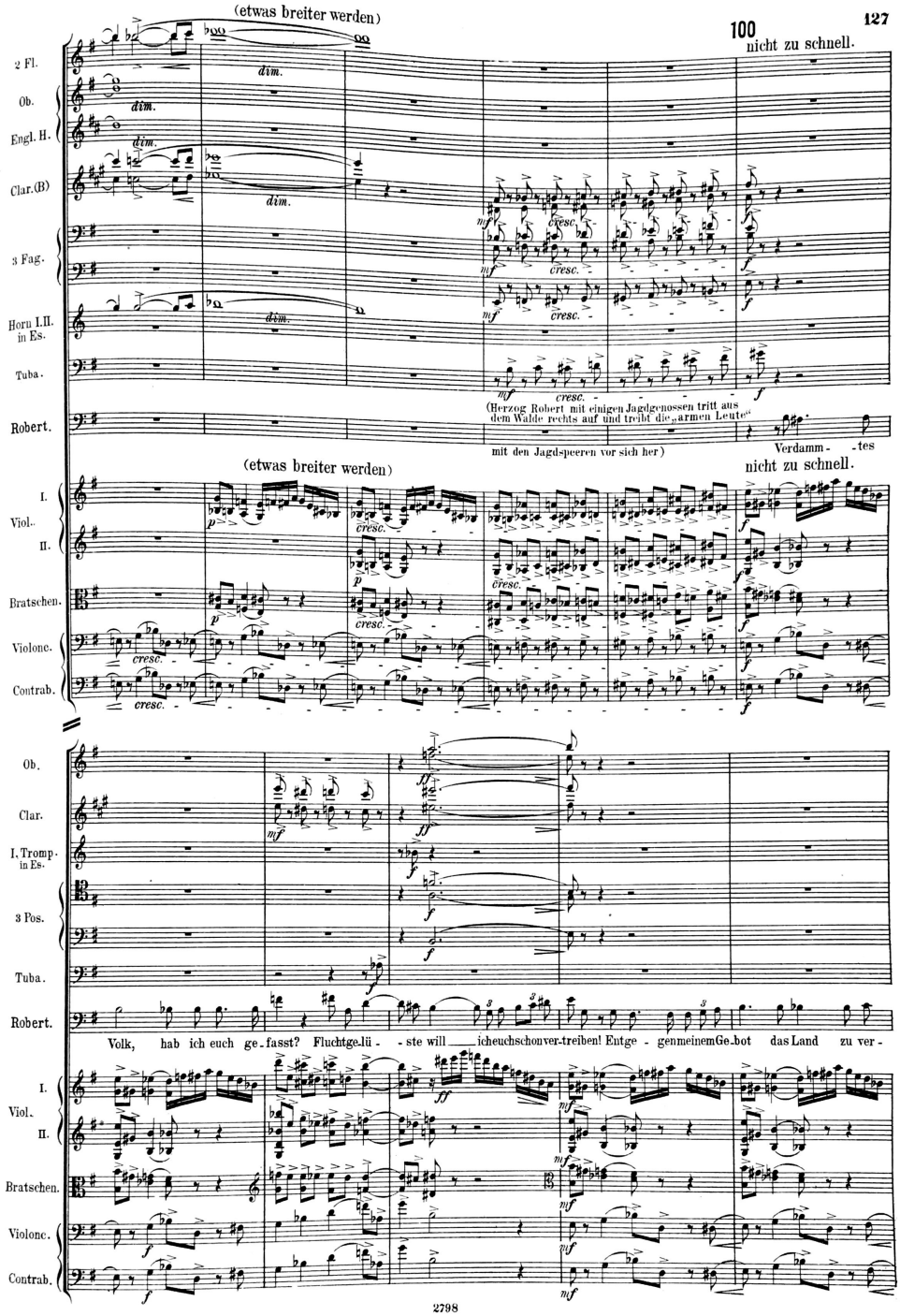
This example also suggests why many reviewers cited "modern polyphony" as one of *Guntram*'s more innovative features. The technique involved not just the creation of intricate and busy textures but the use of those textures to present multiple levels of thematic development simultaneously. Indeed, dense scoring often allowed for the introduction of overlapping groups of voices that either

[34] This is not to say that there are no leitmotivs in *Guntram* or that Strauss did not engage this system—only that the comments of *Guntram*'s earliest critics were perhaps not a response to Strauss's use of "leitmotivs" as such. For a detailed examination of the ways in which Strauss adopted, expanded, and challenged the Wagnerian leitmotiv system in *Guntram*, see Youmans, "Richard Strauss's *Guntram,*" especially pp. 274–314.

[35] Kronengold, "Freud's Uncriticality," 241.

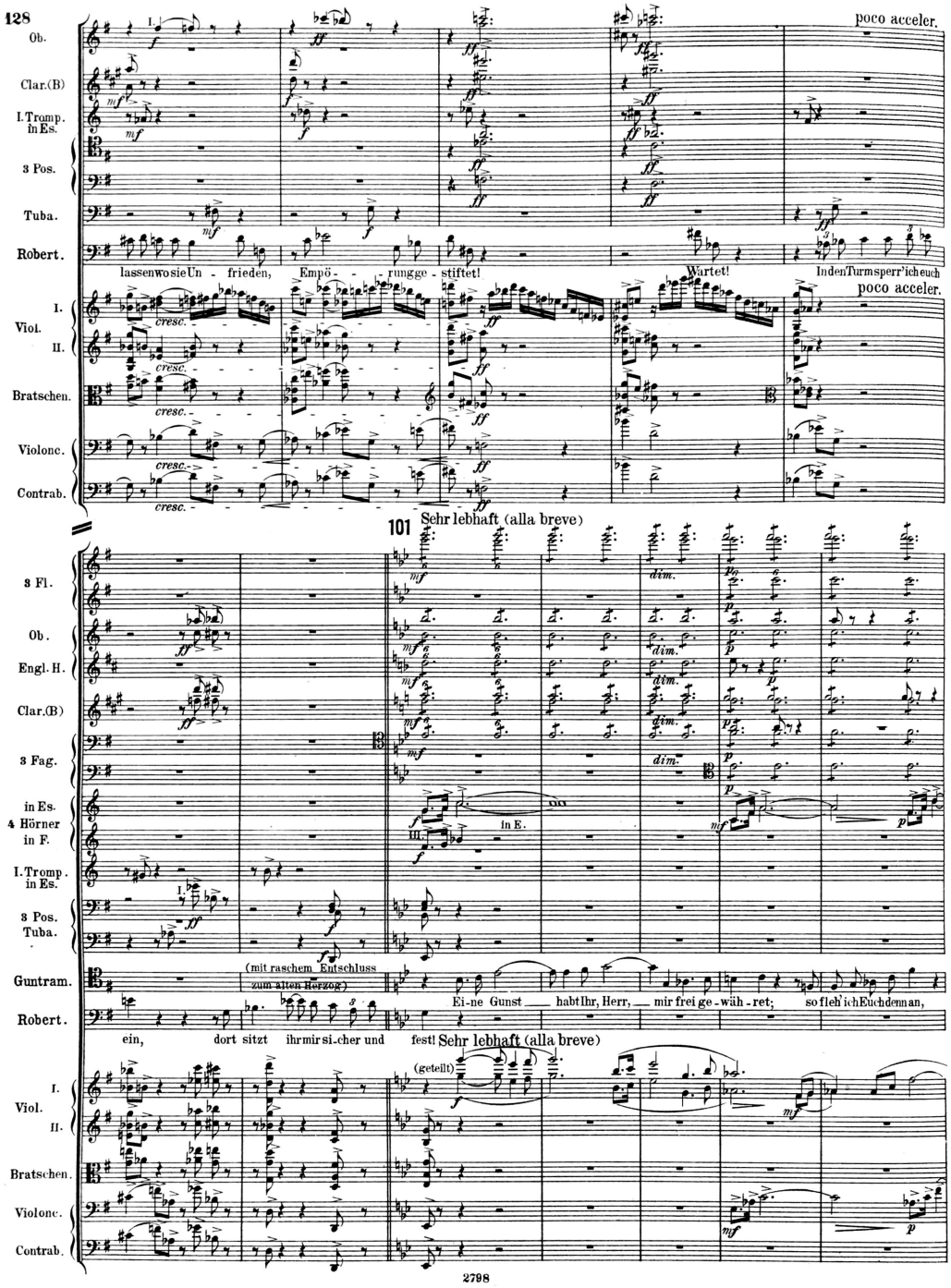
[36] Kronengold, "Freud's Uncriticality," 244.

[37] The phrase is borrowed from the writings of *fin-de-siècle* philosopher and psychologist William James; see Kronengold, "Freud's Uncriticality," 242.



EXAMPLE 1.3: Thematic treatment as form. Strauss, *Guntram*, 127–9.

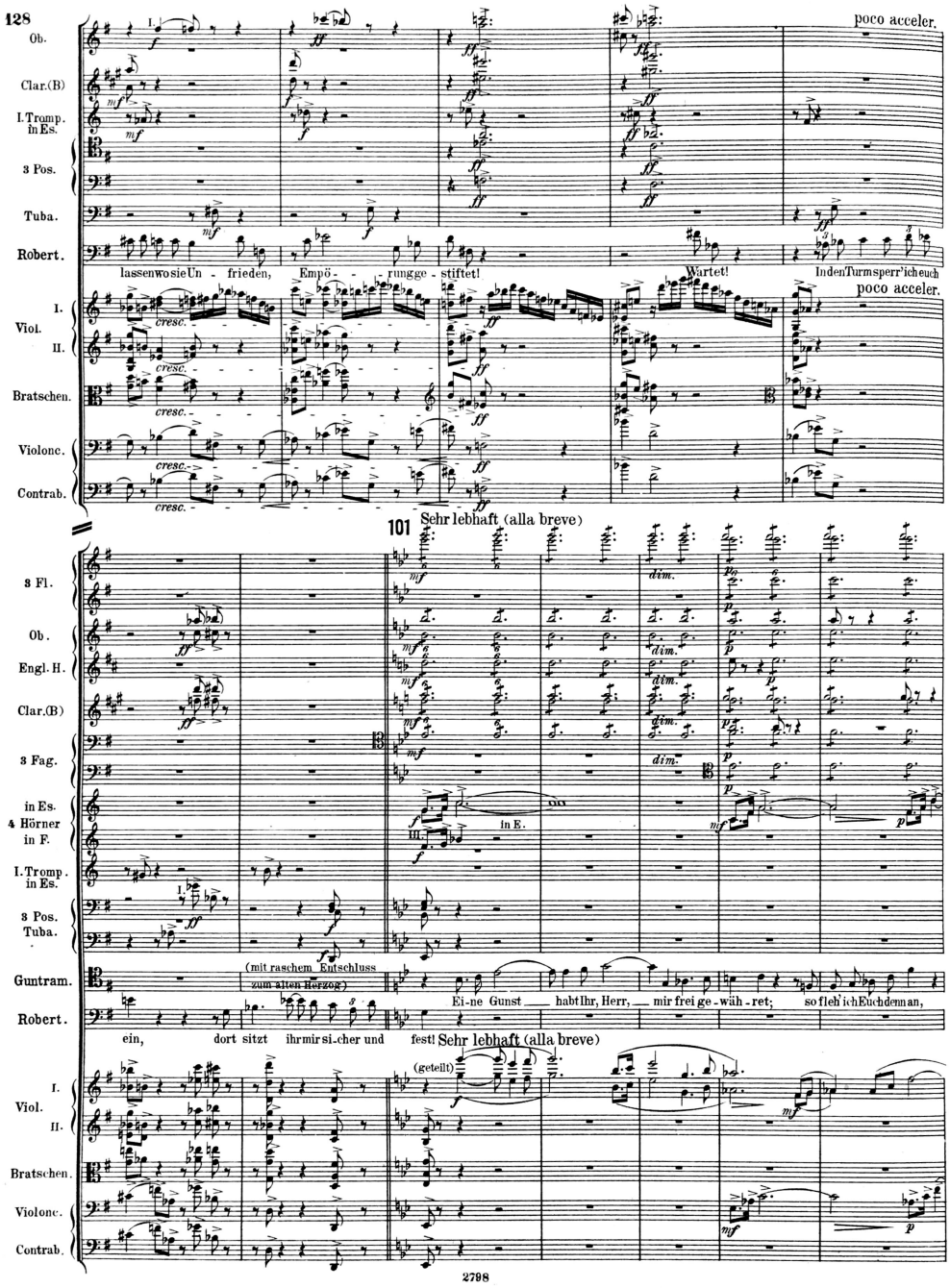
present basic musical materials or embroider them in a variety of ways. This can be seen in how, in the first section of Example 1.5, both Robert and multiple string lines play with short and held note patterns on weaker beats, while other wind and brass voices emphasize rhythmic play while providing harmonic scaffolding (see especially the seven measures before 101). Such treatment of thematic



EXAMPLE 1.3 CONTINUED

material was perhaps what led Max Hasse of the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* to point out that, "in thematic construction, *Guntram* in some respects takes after the example of *Tristan*, yet here there are also entirely original lines everywhere, which interweave into each other according to the respective surface and structure."[38] Hasse was hardly alone in linking *Guntram* with *Tristan*. Comparisons

[38] "Im thematischen Aufbau steht das Werk etwa auf dem Boden des *Tristan*, doch sind auch hier überall völlig originelle



EXAMPLE 1.3 CONTINUED

between the two frequently concerned the demands of each opera's lead male role, but the parallels may also have been motivated by thematic and sonic correspondences: both operas make use of returning (leit)motivs that are abstrusely related to the drama, and both employ a kaleidoscopic array

Züge, dem jeweiligen äußeren und inneren Vorgang entsprechend, hinein verwebt." Max Hasse, "'Guntram'. Dichtung und Musik von Rich. Strauß. (Erste Aufführung im Hoftheater zu Weimar am 10. Mai 1894.)," *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* 47/220 (13 May 1894), 1.

of instrumental and timbral combinations.[39]

Many of the same critics who praised Strauss's themes nevertheless remained lukewarm about *Guntram* on the whole. The Frankfurt and Cologne critics, for example, both alluded to the opera's "peculiar" status and musical language, and were not alone in their uneasiness.[40] The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* declined to comment on the opera for an entire month following the premiere, a silence made all the more telling because it followed an enthusiastic pre-premiere report that had prophesied a "landmark [event] in the history of opera."[41] *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* critic Otto Lessmann gave some insight into the hesitations of these critics when he appraised the work as part of his longer article on the Weimar music festival in May and June 1894, during which time *Guntram* received additional performances. In the single paragraph allocated for musical discussion of the work, Lessmann offered a perceptive précis of the majority opinion:

> The music of *Guntram* would certainly be unthinkable without *Tristan* and *Parsifal*, but the thematic invention [in *Guntram*] is on the whole quite original. Strauss masters modern polyphony with consummate skill, as he also does the expressive language of the orchestra, as he has repeatedly proven in his symphonic works. It seems to me that the composer tries too hard to avoid familiar effects, which makes it very difficult to grasp the music quickly and also places unprecedented demands on the performer.[42]

The opera's complex textures and combination of modern polyphony and extravagant orchestration, Lessmann suggests, posed obstacles to both performance and reception. In other words, the absorption of these strategies in *Guntram* forced audiences to contend with a sound world to which they were unaccustomed.

These conflicted responses make it clear that the opera's fate was intimately bound up with a crucial post-Wagnerian problem: the impact of the leitmotiv on the voice. For operagoers expecting a traditional partnership between singers and orchestral instruments, Strauss's work seemed to devalue the former. After the Weimar premiere and subsequent revival in Munich, staged performances were rare; but orchestral excepts made the rounds in concert performances. With the change in venue, it seems audiences found more to enjoy—or, at the very least, less to complain about. By the time Strauss's earliest biographers had begun to survey the composer's works, *Guntram*'s precarious position with regard to the institution of opera had calcified: writing in 1911, the music professor and Strauss biographer Max Steinitzer had summarized *Guntram* as "a stage work whose music barely resembled opera music."[43]

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[39] Many critics suggested that the role of Guntram made the role of Tristan look like child's play. See in particular Dr. Br. [*sic*], "XXX. Tonkünstler-Versammlung in Weimar," *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* 48/24 (14 June 1894), 275, and [Unsigned], "Dur und Moll. Am Hoftheater im Weimar," *SfMW* 52/33 (May 1894), 523.

[40] See K. S. [*sic*], "Wichtigere Musik-Aufführungen," 262, and [Unsigned], "Kunst, Wissenschaft und Leben," [np].

[41] [A. Lesimple], "Neue und neueinstudirte Opern. Ueber die neue Oper *Guntram* von Richard Strauß," *NZfM* 90/17 (25 April 1894), 195.

[42] "Die Musik zu *Guntram* ist ohne *Tristan* und *Parsifal* gewiß nicht zu denken, aber im Ganzen ist die thematische Erfindung durchaus selbstständig. Das Strauß die moderne Polyphonie ebenso mit vollster Meisterschaft beherrscht, wie die Ausdrucksmittel des Orchesters, hat er wiederholt durch seine sinfonischen Werke bewiesen, nur scheint mir hier nach beiden Richtungen hin gegen alles Gewohnte ein Uebermaß vorhanden zu sein, das ein sofortiges Verstehen der Musik außerordentlich erschwert, und das auch an die Ausführenden Anforderungen stellt, die bisher unerhört gewesen sind." Otto Lessmann, "Die XXX. Tonkünstler-Versammlung des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins. Weimar 31. Mai – 6. Juni," *AMZ* 21/24 (15 June 1894), 336.

[43] Here is the quote in context: "Ehrgeiz, ja Ehrensache war es, daß ein Bühnenwerk mit Musik so wenig als möglich an

This perceived degradation of the voice in *Guntram* undoubtedly contributed to the undesirable situation highlighted by the amateurs from Cologne who complained about the cacophony they encountered at performances. While they blamed performers, others, like the singer-turned-pedagogue Mathilde Marchesi, had a different take. Marchesi's vocal methods—and thus her opinions about operatic vocal practice more generally—were fundamentally colored by the priorities of her own teacher, Manuel Garcia II (1805–1906), a champion of what had come to be known as the *bel canto* style, with its long vocal lines and intricate embellishments.[44] Even so, her extensive written record on the subject affords a valuable, alternative view shaped by her background as a performer and pedagogue and filtered through the prism of her experiences as an audience member. By the 1890s, after crisscrossing Europe as a performer and conservatory pedagogue, Marchesi had settled in Paris. There she opened an own academy that would be attended by such celebrated singers as Nellie Melba (1861–1931), Emma Calvé (1858–1942), and Emma Eames (1865–1952), and avidly partook in Parisian musical life. During this period, Marchesi routinely took to the pages of *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, for which she was something of a foreign correspondent, to weigh in on developments surrounding operatic vocality. Her open letters, published every summer to coincide with the annual news lull as opera companies and concert series went on break, represent snapshots of opera in crisis.

Marchesi first diagnosed opera's ongoing voice crisis in a letter dated August 1895. "The modern composers care little for the human voice; quite simply, for the singers it means 'bend or break your voices!'" she complained, adding that a little civil disobedience was perhaps necessary to stem the tide:

> Why don't the singers unite for a good strike[?] That would be a real benefit to the singing collective of humans, and force the composer to engage in serious vocal studies. They probably know the mechanism of different instruments, but of the human instruments they have only superficial or no knowledge.[45]

The overall effect here is to cast singers as an exploited population, a strategic move aimed less at awakening singers to their own situation than at garnering sympathy among the *Signale* readership. By claiming that singers could help not through improvement to their own technique but rather by using their clout to prompt change in others, Marchesi elevates singers and denigrates composers in a

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eine Oper erinnerte, deren Schema dem Neudeutschen nur als Steckbrief die äußeren Merkmale eines Verbrechers aufzählte." Max Steinitzer, *Richard Strauss* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1911), 247.

[44] It should be stressed that *bel canto* was itself a retrospective invention: a term laced with nostalgia that came into usage in the 1860s (with Manuel Garcia II in tow) to describe a supposedly lost vocal art. To this end, the physiological, *bel canto*-based conception of voice that writers such as Marchesi or Bernsdorf invoked was in fact just as recent—and fabricated—a construction of voice as the more instrumentalized one they were resisting. For a gloss of the invention of *bel canto*, see Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37–8. For a more detailed study of *bel canto* that attends to the pedagogical approaches of practitioners such as Marchesi and Manuel Garcia II, see James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

[45] "Die modernen Componisten kümmern sich wenig um die menschliche Stimme; da heißt es ganz einfach: 'biegen oder brechen!' Warum vereinigen sich Sängerinnen nicht zu einem tüchtigen strike. Das würde eine wahre Wohlthat für die singende Menschheit sein und die Componisten zu ernsten Stimm-Studien zwingen. Sie kennen wohl den Mechanismus der verschiedenen Instrumente, aber von dem menschlichen Instrumente [*sic*] haben sie nur oberflächliche oder gar keine Kenntnisse." Mathilde Marchesi, "Reisebrief von Mathilde Marchesi," *SfMW* 53/42 (August 1895), 658.

single stroke. The singers' strike is conceived as a way to jolt composers into realizing how little they actually knew about the human voice. Only targeted composer training would help achieve the desired effect: operas in which singers' voices are sonically and symbolically dominant.

That Marchesi espoused such views may not come as a surprise given her background—the impulse to shift blame from singers or to resist new vocal trends would seem to be *de rigueur* for an advocate of *bel canto* in the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, her stance represented a sharp departure from the opinions of many in her adopted hometown of Paris. French operatic culture was in the grips of its own voice crisis during the 1890s, in which soul-searching about timbre and vocal style were addressed in tandem with scientific theories about the mechanism of the voice and the physiology of the larynx. Such medical considerations barely figured into Austro-German thinking about the state of operatic vocality during the 1890s, and their prominence in contemporary French discourse meant that the French developed a completely different view of who was to blame for the voice crisis, and of what corrective measures ought to be taken in response. As Kimberly Francis and Sofie Lachapelle have recently shown, French writers traced the precarious state of operatic vocality directly back to singers, attributing the voice crisis to the vocal deformations that singers suffered as the result of performing demanding (modern) repertoire, and that ultimately stemmed from an inability to maintain their voices across lengthy careers.[46]

According to this French model, composers were not entirely—or even primarily—to blame; instead, it was the responsibility of the singers to protect and strengthen their organs through training regimes centered around proper vocal hygiene as well as muscle training. The French were not alone in holding singers accountable. Laura Protano-Biggs has shown that, following an initial wave of concern about the way composers' new approaches to vocalism were harming singers' voices during the 1850s, by the 1870s and 1880s Italian writers had come to believe that vocalists themselves were responsible for causing the voice crisis while composers were granted unprecedented immunity.[47] For the French, the key to solving this crisis was a matter of blending science and art, of using cutting-edge medical knowledge about the larynx to improve vocal pedagogy so that singers could be empowered to strengthen their own voices. Thus, when Marchesi traced the roots of the voice crisis back to misguided composers, she staked out a position that was far closer to that of her German-speaking readership than to what were then the dominant talking points of her local milieu.

When Marchesi revisited opera's voice problem in her letter the following summer, in August 1896, subtle alterations in her appraisal direct our attention to the evolution of Austro-German thinking about the voice crisis. Addressing her readers, Marchesi explained that

> The old masters write for the human voice, while Wagner, his imitators and followers, treat it like an instrument and turn their attention to the orchestra. People are now occupied everywhere with the "decline of the art of singing," writing countless articles, holding meetings and cross-examinations, and doctors (as is the case in America, for example) include vocal exercises designed to promote vocal health to their

[46] Kimberly Francis and Sofie Lachapelle, "The Medical and the Musical: French Physiology and Late Nineteenth-Century Operatic Training," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28/3 (2017), 347–62. Gregory W. Bloch, James Q. Davies, and Sarah Fuchs Sampson have each outlined important nineteenth-century precedents for this French interest in how medical knowledge could be brought to bear on operatic vocal training. See Bloch, "The pathological voice of Gilbert-Louis Duprez," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19/1 (2007), 11–31, Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance*, especially pp. 123–51, and Fuchs Sampson, "Technologies of Singing, Teaching, and Spectating in French Operatic Culture, 1870–1914" (PhD diss., Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 2016), 64–94.

[47] Protano-Biggs, "Musical Materialities in Milan," 65–94.

> physiological works on the vocal organs?! …The matter is quite simple: the direction modern music has taken is downright dangerous for the voice. The expansion of the opera orchestra forces singers to unprecedented strain.[48]

This is a far cry from Marchesi's vision of singers as powerful catalysts for change. Still in evidence is her commitment to defending singers against allegations of inadequacy (which comes through most clearly in her criticism of Americans' medical efforts), but noticeably absent is her prior conviction that singers might have agency in the matter of the voice crisis. Also different are the ways in which Marchesi both labels and discusses these blameworthy composers. Unlike her previous letter, this series of complaints was directed at "Wagner, his imitators, and followers," rather than the more general designation of "modern composers." Although Marchesi had previously singled out "the great Wagner and his little imitators" for criticism in a prior letter, at the time she merely decried their tendency to "treat the human voice like an instrument" as an affront to her pedagogical sensibilities, treating it as a relatively circumscribed problem while neglecting to register its connection to composers' growing attentiveness to orchestral instruments.[49] So while Marchesi was not shy about her dislike of Wagner (and especially in the 1890s), Wagner-the-man is less important in the context of her later letter than what "Wagner" had come to represent within the opera industry.

By the mid-1890s, Wagner had become shorthand for an operatic model that invested heavily in the orchestra, and Marchesi's 1896 remark about Wagner and his disciples amounted to a condemnation of any composer who would espouse a more symphonic vision for opera. These qualms crystallize most clearly in a passage that was published as part of an 1898 memoir, in a section entitled "Wagner makes the orchestra predominant" that recounted her experiences as an audience member for a performance of one of Wagner's operas.[50] "Formerly the melody and the words took first place, now it is the orchestra which does so," she observed, adding "the singer, having to dominate the loud strains of the orchestra, is forced to make superhuman efforts, as the composer, whose one idea is *symphonic* effects, treats the voice merely as an additional wind instrument."[51] With the reference to "loud strains" Marchesi at first seems to frame the problem in terms of volume, but she quickly moves on to indicate a different issue entirely: how the voice, treated like just another wind instrument, becomes subsumed into the sound of the orchestral effects. What was so problematic, then, was not

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[48] "Die alten Meister schreiben für die menschliche Stimme, während Wagner, seine Nachahmer und Jünger, dieselbe wie ein Instrument behandeln und ihre ganze Aufmerksamkeit dem Orchester zuwenden. Man beschäftigt sich jetzt in aller Herren Länder mit dem 'Verfall der Gesangskunst', man schreibt zahllose Artikel, man hält Versammlungen, man stellt wahre Kreuz-Verhöre an und die Aerzte (wie dies z.B. in Amerika der Fall ist) fügen ihren physiologischen Werken über die Gesangs-Organe sogar Uebungen bei, welche die Ausbildung der Stimme fördern und die Verbildung vermeiden sollen?! …Die Sache ist ganz einfach: Die moderne musikalische Richtung ist der Stimme geradezu gefährlich. Die Vergrößerung des Orchesters in der Oper zwingt Sänger und Sängerinnen zu unerhörten Anstrengungen." Mathilde Marchesi, "Ferien-Brief von Mathilde Marchesi," *SfMW* 54/43 (25 August 1896), 673–4.

[49] "Der große Wagner und seine kleinen Nachahmer behandeln die menschliche Stimme wie ein Instrument." Mathilde Marchesi, "Musikalischer Brief aus Paris," *SfMW* 52/33 (May 1894), 514.

[50] These memoirs, entitled *Marchesi and Music: Passages from the Life of a Famous Singing-Teacher* were not the first Marchesi authored; her *Erinnerung aus meinem Leben* was published in 1877. However, to the best of my knowledge, they are the first set of writings to cover the 1890s.

[51] The chronology of this remark is fuzzy, not least because a specific date for the performance is never made explicit. The context suggests that the performance in question occurred sometime during 1893, but it is possible that Marchesi added or revised this passage closer to the memoir's 1898 publication date, since her remarks here more closely reflect ideas found in her 1896 *Signale* letter than those found in her earlier contributions to *Signale*. Mathilde Marchesi, *Marchesi and Music: Passages from the Life of a Famous Singing-Teacher,* (New York and London: Harper, 1898), 287–8 (emphasis original).

simply a large or loud orchestra, but more systemic changes to opera's longstanding hierarchy.

Framing opera's voice problem in terms of composers' sonic priorities foreclosed the possibility that their superficial knowledge of the vocal organ could merely be chalked up to inadequate training. Quite the opposite, in fact: opera composers' "inabilities" to write for the human voice represented a calculated reprioritization. With the awareness that composers were deliberately engineering the current situation, audiences were confronted with a bold new conception of opera.

UPSIDE DOWN

In the final years of the nineteenth century, challenges to the hegemony of an embodied, singer-centric conception of vocality began to be viewed in a more positive light, paving the way for the development new expressive possibilities. By this point, references to the old operatic model of voices singing out over a submissive orchestra took on a nostalgic, other-worldly tone, as in an 1895 advertisement for the score of Bruno Oscar Klein's new opera *Kenilworth* published in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*. The notice included testimonials from reviews, which flagged *Kenilworth* as appealing to buyers who longed for the good old days. One blurb assured potential buyers that in *Kenilworth* "the voices are never smothered by the accompaniment," and another noted that the opera is "always melodious" and does not always use the orchestra and singing voices at full force.[52] The primacy of singers' voices, long an unwritten rule of the genre, was becoming a nostalgic, even exotic treat—or at the very least a marketable commodity.

Some of the clearest and earliest evidence of this shift appears in journalistic discussions of the modern opera orchestra, envisioned as a sonic agent in its own right, rather than a distraction that impeded the human voice. Writing in 1896, the influential opera critic Oskar Bie took great care to explain that "the modern [opera] orchestra must be voice-rich, so that it can be expressive."[53] Unlike many earlier critics, Bie does not apologize for the expanded orchestra, but rather argues that this very richness is an aesthetic imperative; more than this, he gives the orchestra agency when he makes such claims on its behalf.

When Bie penned his monograph *Die Oper* over a decade later, he would reflect upon the unsettled character of this post-Wagnerian period in a section titled "the anarchy of opera." Modern opera of this period "is the praxis of paradox […] Nothing is fixed, everything is permitted," he wrote. For Bie, this aesthetic laxity proceeded from the fact that there was no longer a single "style" of opera, but rather a multitude of approaches from which a composer might choose. He conceived of style in the broadest possible sense, defined not only in relation to one's choice of subject matter and tone (e.g. fairytale, *verismo*, or symbolist opera), but also of generic codes, such as whether song or development of the orchestra texture was treated as a "guiding principle."[54]

By the time Bie penned these words, this view of opera as (at least) an equal partnership between the human voice and the orchestra had become mainstream. In December 1897, barely a year after

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[52] "'Kenilworth.' Drama in einem Vorspiele und drei Akten nach Walter Scott von Wilhelm Müller. Musik von Bruno Oscar Klein," *AMZ* 22/45 (8 November 1895), 589. The advertisement ran twice more by year's end: see *AMZ* 22/47 (22 November 1895), 617, and *AMZ* 22/50 (13 December 1895), 661.

[53] "Das modern Orchester muss stimmreicher sein, um ausdrucksvoller sein zu können[.]" O[skar]. Bie, "Rundschau. Der 'Ring' in Bayreuth," *Neue Deutsche Rundschau* 7/3–4 (1896), 923.

[54] "Die moderne Oper ist die Praxis der Paradoxie. […] Hier wird der Gesang zur Richtschnur genommen, dort das Orchester, andere suchen eine Mitte." Oskar Bie, *Die Oper*, 3rd and 4th ed. (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1919), 485.

Bie had first conceded the possibility that the orchestra might have a voice of its own, an opinion piece that appeared in *Signale für die Musikalische Welt* described a new theatrical genre, in which the orchestra was "emancipated" and the opera house was obsolete:

> A great fact dominates the modern music world, namely the emancipation of instrumental music, which, previously a vassal of vocal music, suddenly took its rise, and unveiled a new world, positioning itself as a rival to its old mistress […] Neither concert nor theater exist any longer, but instead a hybrid, general genre, a compromise situation that leaves nothing in its right place. This is not the progress that we might have hoped for fifty years ago, when the musical world was in a frenzy: this is a crisis, a chaos from which a new order is likely to emerge in the future.[55]

Histrionic though it may sound, this writer's momentous prediction about a new order from the chaos of disruption did materialize. The elevation of instrumental music pushed opera first toward rupture, then toward reconstitution.

By the end of the 1890s even as staunch a conservative as Eduard Bernsdorf would revise his position on the issue. Writing about Alexander Zemlinksy's *Sarema*, which he saw performed in May 1899, Bernsdorf abandoned his hardline rhetoric about "upside-down" operas in favor of grudging acceptance, a sign that even traditionalists could no longer dismiss opera's new sonic framework outright. "The cut of the opera is of course a modern one," he noted, "the main responsibility for the melody and atmosphere rests with the orchestra [while] the performers on stage do little more than declaim (except for a few moments, especially involving the chorus)."[56] In this one sentence, Bernsdorf not only defines "modern" style with the treatment of the orchestra as center of gravity, but also grants that such an operatic model is both comprehensible and no longer inherently transgressive.

It is perhaps the use of shorthand and allusion among critics that most clearly shows how quickly this approach to opera became accepted. Gradually in the years just before 1900, critics let go of their anguished attempts to wrestle the new situation and began to gesture casually towards a set of accepted conventions of the new style. In an assessment of Felix Weingartner's *Genesius*, Bernsdorf relied heavily on pregnant buzzwords to communicate precisely what kind of opera it was. Writing in October 1899, he observed that "Weingartner of course pays homage to the modern custom of letting the singers sing only in a declamatory style for the most part, and furthermore of avoiding closed numbers and operating primarily with leitmotivs."[57] Each musical element Bernsdorf mentions was loaded with

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[55] "Eine große Thatsache beherrscht die moderne Musikwelt, nämlich die Emanzipierung der Instrumentalmusik, die bisher eine Vasallin der Vokalmusik, plötzlich ihren Aufschwung nahm, eine neue Welt enthüllte und sich als Nebenbuhlerin ihrer alten Beherrscherin entgegenstellte. […] Es giebt sozusagen weder Concert, noch Theater mehr, sondern ein hybridisches, allgemeines Genre, eine Compromiß-Situation, die nichts an seinem wahren Plätze läßt. Das ist nicht der Fortschritt, den man vor fünfzig Jahren, als die musikalische Welt in Aufregung gerieth, erhoffen zu können glaubte: das ist eine Krise, ein Chaos, aus dem sehr wahrscheinlich in Zukunft eine neue Ordnung hervorgehen wird." [Unsigned], "Foyer. Saint-Saëns über die zeitgenössige Musikbewegung," *SfMW* 55/64 (21 December 1897), 1080 [this is a typographical error; the page number ought to read 1018]. These remarks are briefly introduced as having originally appeared in the journal *Revue de l'Art* with attribution to the composer Camille Saint-Saëns.

[56] "Der Zuschnitt der Oper ist natürlich ein moderner, das heißt der melodische und die Ausmalung der Stimmung enthaltende Schwerpunkt ruht im Orchester, und die Interpreten auf der Bühne haben mit geringen Ausnahmen (z.B. wo der Chor eingreift) nur zu declamiren." E[duard]. Bernsdorf, "Sarema," *SfMW* 57/34 (20 May 1899), 529–30.

[57] "Natürlich huldigt Weingartner der modernen Sitte, die Sänger meist nur declamatorisch sich geriren zu lassen, ferner den abgeschlossenen Musikstücken möglichst aus dem Wege zu gehen, und endlich stark mit Leitmotiven zu operiren." E[duard]. Bernsdorf, "Genesius," *SfMW* 57/47 (7 October 1899), 738.

associations whose very mention invoked the symphonic vision of opera so closely linked with the late master of Bayreuth.

The importance of this transitional moment is difficult to overstate. What had initially appeared to be simple questions—what makes an opera an opera and what the role of the human voice should be—turned out to be flashpoints that destabilized the institution of opera. But even if opera had survived a wholesale re-examination during the 1890s, the repercussions of this process would continue to emerge well into the twentieth century. As would gradually become clear—and as I will elaborate in the chapters that follow—the debates of the 1890s were tectonic shifts, and the foundational changes they processed were just a first stage in a crisis of aesthetics that would eventually force critics to confront the very definition of music and its relation to sonic material that fell outside of those bounds. Fixing the opera crisis of the 1890s was not as simple as successfully pinpointing the ideal sound of opera; the chaos could not be so easily contained.

CHAPTER 2
FOR WHOM THE BELLS TOLL

If contemporary critics are to be believed, the 1890s saw a surprising number of operas characterized by their lack of "music." Allegations of this kind are hardly unusual in critical discourse about opera, and they tend to be read as subjective complaints about music that—for whatever reason—had failed to satisfy.[1] But these late nineteenth-century accusations could carry further meanings, as can be seen in the international controversy that grew around Jules Massenet's *La Navarraise*. When it premiered at London's Covent Garden on 20 June 1894, local critics adamantly insisted that Massenet's score consisted of sounds that no longer merited the designation "music." Similar assessments began to collect around the work as it toured Europe the following year: reviewers from Hamburg to Paris to Vienna voiced concerns about the opera's severe musical deficiencies, although the reasons they cited differed widely.[2] Critics were still underscoring the corrupted musical substance of *La Navarraise* years later: in 1902 one seasoned journalist even claimed that the opera afforded no opportunities for judging the singers' musical talents, and that he must therefore withhold comment on their abilities until he could hear them in a different work.[3] This devastating verdict, shared across so many locales, raises the question of what these critics required for an opera to count as "music."

Some answers might be unearthed by turning to Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*, which met with similar reactions when it premiered a few years later, in January 1900. As Arman Schwartz has noted, *Tosca*'s earliest audiences seem to have taken little notice of the sumptuous melodies we now associate with the work. One critic lamented that the assemblage of sounds populating the opera's musical space ("the sonatinas and cantatas from the wings, and the organ, and the Gregorian chant, and the drums that announce the march to the scaffold, and the bells, and the cow bells, and the rifle shots, and the cannon fire") was still "not enough to fill the holes left by the lack of music"; another tartly dismissed the opera's entire third act with the claim that "everything was there, except for music."[4] Bells were assailed with special frequency, perhaps because of the care with which Puccini had sculpted their sound. Schwartz notes that Puccini had sought to reproduce as closely as possible the bells of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome—a daring move since the opera premiered at Rome's Teatro Costanzi, before an audience well equipped to compare Puccini's version of St. Peter's bells with the real thing. But by simulating actual chimes, Puccini's bells also underscored the opera's realist aspirations, announcing their status as a comparatively unmediated acoustic element whose very presence served to dislodge "real" music. Schwartz argues that the bells actually regulate *Tosca*'s music twice over, commanding considerable influence over other elements in the musical fabric when they are introduced into the texture. At times the bells seem to dictate the melodic dimensions of the characters' vocalizations, as lines are stretched unnaturally to fit their patterning even in moments that are not instances of diegetic

[1] Emily I. Dolan emphasizes that listeners have historically levied such accusations when they perceive the composer to have (as she puts it) abused the orchestra. See Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution*, 256.

[2] *La Navarraise* made its debut in Hamburg on 2 January 1895, in Paris on 3 October 1895, and in Vienna on 4 October 1895. For more on this opera's extensive international travels see Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera 1597–1940*, vol. 1, *Text*, 2nd ed. (Genéve: Societas Bibliographica, 1955), col. 1177–8.

[3] M. St. [*sic*] [Max Steuer], "Dur und Moll. Berlin. Königliche Oper," *SfMW* 60/47–48 (15 October 1902), 919.

[4] Both reviews are cited and translated in Arman Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes: Realism and Modernity in Italian Opera* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2016), 56–7.

incantation. These are vocal lines that seem to move in spite of themselves, foreclosing customary dramatic pauses and traditional syllabic accent patterns.[5]

Such moments resonate with contemporary anxieties about the opera, and especially with the line of thinking that discerned in *Tosca* a triumph of "materialism over music," as one critic put it.[6] The implication seems to be that the opera reversed the proper ordering of aesthetic priorities (resulting in the subjugation of music by sound), and this gives some sense of why contemporary listeners came to believe that *Tosca*'s bells lay at the epicenter of an assault on music: the prominence of the bells exposes the tension between music and environmental sound, and the vigorous debates about *verismo* in opera and naturalism in literature meant that this was a particularly fraught space at the *fin de siècle*.[7] While the term "verismo" is typically associated with Italy and with Italian composers after Verdi, the debates about *verismo* in the 1890s involved critics from across Europe, many of whom were skeptical of opera's capacity to support realism. Austro-Germans critics were particularly outspoken on the issue, as their interest in *verismo* had been piqued following the arrival in Germany of Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* in 1891 and re-energized when Ruggero Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* premiered there two years later.[8] Hans Merian (whom we met briefly in the previous chapter) summed up the position of one camp when he mused that the phrase "modern-realistic opera" might already be a contradiction in terms: "can [an opera] even be realistic?"[9] One objection to *verismo* was based in jingoistic nationalism, as when the composer-turned-critic Felix Draeseke zealously rejected *verismo* based on the "moral" threat he felt the imported style posed to the purity of German art.[10]

By the mid-1890s these Teutonic barbs had provoked a backlash in Italy. Responding to "certain German music critics" who dared dismiss works by Mascagni and Leoncavallo as "crass realism," one Italian music journalist conceded that "the whole question of the musical realism of the modern Italian school strikes me as a word without substance."[11] Many leapt to the defense of the Italian tradition by asserting realism's incompatibility with music, which was characterized, in Schwartz's words, as "an abstract and universalizing idiom."[12] The strategy here was one in which music would be cordoned off from potentially questionable "realist" techniques, a discursive move that helps to clarify why Puccini's critics would levy such pointed critiques at *Tosca*'s music a few years later: the simulated bells of St. Peter marked not only a dangerous intrusion of the real, but a transgressive aesthetic strategy that was perhaps incompatible with opera itself.

Scholars have suggested that issues related to opera's generic integrity were also at play in

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[5] Schwartz notes how in one such moment, Scarpia's vocal line becomes "awkward, breathless, and weirdly incantatory," adding that "Opportunities for (knowing) pauses after phrases like 'Tosca divina' and 'Piccola manina' are studiously avoided." Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes*, 64.

[6] Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes*, 61.

[7] For a précis of scholarship on verismo, see Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes*, 48–52. He also proposes that Puccini's verismo style can be read as an attempt to render empirical reality in the manner of photographs and the phonograph (pp. 45–70). See also Andreas Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60/2 (2007), 271–316.

[8] For a detailed study of *verismo* operas in *fin-de-siècle* Germany see Josef Horst-Lederer, *Verismo auf der deutschsprachigen Opernbühne 1891–1926: eine Untersuchung seiner Rezeption durch die zeitgenössische musikalische Fachpresse* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992). Regarding German agitations for naturalist opera around 1900, see Frisch, *German Modernism*, 63–7.

[9] Merian, "Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*," 275.

[10] Horst-Lederer, *Verismo auf der deutschsprachigen Opernbühne*, 103.

[11] Cited and translated in Schwartz, *Puccini's Bells*, 53.

[12] Schwartz, *Puccini's Bells*, 53, but see also pp. 52–5.

contemporary responses to *La Navarraise*.[13] The opera's plot, derived from Jules Claretie's popular contemporary novel *La Cigarette*, trades in precisely the kind of "realist" scenarios and sensational gestures that were becoming discursively linked with the term *verismo* during the 1890s. A mere forty-five minutes long, *La Navarraise* tells the story of one woman from Navarre, Anita, and her attempts to secure a dowry that will enable her to marry her lover, a soldier named Araquil. In desperation, she makes a deal to carry out a revenge killing of an enemy general for a fee. One of Araquil's fellow soldiers observes Anita rushing off toward the enemy camp, leading Araquil to assume that she has gone to tryst with another lover. As he searches for Anita, Araquil is mortally wounded, and ultimately dies, prompting Anita's descent into madness. The curtain falls on a scene of human destruction, with Araquil's corpse playing companion to the shattered and suicidal Anita. Early responses to the opera often invoked classic terms and texts of naturalism, not always with unalloyed appreciation. The opera's Brussels premiere in 1894 inspired a parody with the title "Nana Varaise," playing on Émile Zola's naturalistic novel *Nana*.[14] Meanwhile, journalistic reviews emphasized Massenet's supposed debt to the "young Italian" composers, and to Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* in particular, as can be gleaned from the English critic George Bernard Shaw's famous quip that Massenet had not so much "composed an opera [as] made up a prescription."[15] In German-speaking territories, this web of associations calcified quickly, so that a mere gesture toward *verismo* sometimes stood in for any discussion of the opera's plot or style, as with the Düsseldorf critic who in 1904 referred to it simply as that "bloodthirsty opera in which Italian *verismo* appears in French local color."[16]

This chapter tells a different story, looking not to realism but to issues of voice, musical expression, and the marketplace of national styles at the *fin de siècle* in order to shed new light on the problem of *La Navarraise*'s supposed lack of music. In what follows, I tour *La Navarraise*'s reception in two major cultural capitals—London, where it premiered, and Vienna, where it was received fifteen months later. Both sets of critics identified the opera's central problem as the evacuation of musical substance, but they approached it from vastly different perspectives. Following these parallel discourses reveals that the distinction between music and sound was far less clear—and less stable—than my opening exploration of *Tosca* and *verismo* may have suggested. Of the two groups of reviewers, those in London sound in many ways more like Puccini's critics, since their comments were directed toward a specific set of sound effects, while discussions about the opera in Vienna coalesced instead around vocal conventions that had long been central to opera's musical enterprise. Together, these reviews show that seemingly self-evident categories such as music, sound, and voice—which in this specific chapter is at times defined more in terms of its metaphorical, instrumental sense than the embodied constructions I prioritized in Chapter 1—were anything but clearly delineated.

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[13] See, for instance, Clair Rowden, "*Werther*, *La Navarraise*, and *Verismo*: A Matter of Taste," *Franco-British Studies* 37 (2007), 3–34, and Charlotte Bentley, "Beyond *Verismo*: Massenet's *La Navarraise* and 'Realism' in *Fin-de-siècle* Paris," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144/1 (2019), 29–54.

[14] See [Unsigned], "Dur und Moll. Eine Parodie auf Massenet's 'La Navarraise'," *SfMW* 53/4 (4 January 1895), 54.

[15] George Bernard Shaw, "27 June 1894," in *Music in London, 1890–94: Criticisms Contributed Week by Week to* The World *in Three Volumes*, vol. 3 (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1932), 261. Meanwhile, Shaw's German-speaking colleagues tended to invoke Mascagni and his opera explicitly in their own accounts of Massenet's opera; see for instance Heinrich Chevalley, "Berichte. Nürnberg," *MW* 26/5 (24 January 1895), 57. Of course, references to Mascagni were relatively common in German accounts of operas with even a tenuous link to *verismo*. For a sense of how frequently Mascagni was cited in conjunction with *verismo* works in Germany, see Horst-Lederer, *Verismo auf der deutschsprachigen Opernbühne*.

[16] "Massenet's Navarra [ist] die blutrünstige Oper, in welcher der italienische Verismus in französischem Lokalkolorit erscheint[.]" A. Eccarius-Sieber, "Korrespondenzen. Düsseldorf. Oper," *NZfM* 100/30–31 (27 July 1904), 553.

More crucially, however, these responses also expose how attempts to negotiate the boundary between music and sound were not exclusively tied, let alone reducible, to questions of realism. Ultimately, then, my aim in this chapter is to loosen our historiographical and methodological attachments to the conceptual framework of realism: to use *La Navarraise* to show that, despite the well-known limits of both realism and *verismo* as historiographical categories, modern assumptions about the ways "realism" might manifest within or impinge on operatic space continue to shape how musicologists write about opera at the *fin de siècle*.[17] I begin by taking seriously certain Londoners' apparent infatuation with the sounds of war in *La Navarraise*, and then arch toward a paradigmatic scene—Anita's Supplication to the Virgin Mary—where voice becomes a crucial concept, marked above all by its absence, in the terms used by German-speaking critics who had no immediate qualms about realism.

GUNS—AND SHIPS

When the *Musical Times* ran its review of *La Navarraise* on 1 July 1894, debate was already in full swing. The opera had provoked so many strongly worded responses in the fortnight since the premiere that the headline of the review, "Explosive Opera," nodded not just to the war-time setting of the drama but to the controversy surrounding some of Massenet's more audacious strategies for depicting it. On the one hand, the score called for the sounds of gunshots and cannonades, in addition to instruments associated with the military, like bugles and side drums.[18] On the other, it was precisely the composer's unprecedented adoption of such sounds to augment the orchestral sonorities that would scandalize the local public, thus provoking another explosion, this time in discourse.[19]

Not everyone was put off by the opera's sound world. Massenet's opera *Werther* (1892) received its first London performances just one week before *La Navarraise*, and despite a few laudatory reviews, ticket sales were poor and it was pulled from the stage after just one performance. Audiences were frustrated by *Werther*'s monotony, and, as Clair Rowden has argued, this primed some Londoners to be more receptive to *La Navarraise*, whose sensationalism seemed a corrective to the dramatic stasis of the earlier opera.[20] In *The Monthly Musical Record*, one critic's grumblings about the tediousness of *Werther*'s music ("we feel the want of change and opposed motives") even gave rise to another critic's endorsement of *La Navarraise*'s music further down the page: "M. Massenet has, in fact, displayed

[17] For one perspective that takes a long disciplinary view of the inadequacies of realism as a music-historiographical concept, see James Garratt, "Inventing Realism: Dahlhaus, Geck, and the Unities of Discourse," *Music & Letters* 84/3 (August 2003), 456–68.

[18] Notably, after a short orchestral prelude, the opera opens with a massive display of artillery fire, as per the stage direction: "Cannon shots and gunfire in the distance – [with] several cannon shots quite close. These off-stage noises must be done *ad lib* from the moment the curtain rises (start a measure before) and go until the sign; spread them out carefully so as to give the illusion of a battle taking place in the valley. The cannon shots should not be too frequent, but at moments there should be violent exchanges followed by silences." ("Coups de canon et fusillade dans l'éloignement – plusieurs coups de canon, assez près – Ces bruits de coulisses doivent être faits à volonté depuis le lever du Rideau (commencer une mesure avant) jusqu'au signe – les distribuer habilement de façon à donner l'illusion d'un combat qui aurait lieu dans la vallée.") Jules Massenet, *La Navarraise: Episode lyrique en 2 actes* (Paris: Heugel & Cie, 1894), 5.

[19] [Unsigned], "Explosive Opera," *The Musical Times* 35/617 (1 July 1894), 441.

[20] Rowden, "*Werther*, *La Navarraise*, and *Verismo*," 5. An exemplary review in this regard is [Unsigned], "Royal Opera, Covent-Garden," *The Era* 56/2909 (23 June 1894), 15, which reads, in part, that "M. Massenet has composed a work with more vigour and brilliancy in one act than is to be found in the whole of the sentimental *Werther*."

much greater force and individuality in this opera than in *Werther*," the latter critic wrote, adding that it was sure to please owing to its "wonderfully picturesque and animated music."[21]

"Wonderfully picturesque and animated" is certainly not how most contemporary critics would characterize the music of *La Navarraise*, however. Most were more alert to the profound discomfort aroused by the opera's sound world, especially its more "picturesque" volleys of gun fire. George Bernard Shaw described with characteristic wit how on the night of the premiere unsuspecting residents of the Covent Garden area were startled, even terrorized, by gun and cannon fire that they did not realize was coming from the opera house.[22] Some commentators went further, with one writer's "chief impressions" of *La Navarraise* taking the form of a cacophonous verbal collage that emphasized a diversity of sensory information but reduced the opera's sound world to a single sound effect: "Bang, bang, bang! bloodshed, soldiers, gunpowder—smoke, passion rising to hysterics, dust, noise, heat, and bang, bang, bang!" Using italics to drive the point home, the writer ultimately concluded that "*La Navarraise* is magnificent; it *is* war, but it is *not* music."[23]

This claim resonates with the central anxiety surrounding *verismo* during the 1890s: that realistic techniques threatened to corrupt not just opera's aesthetic codes, but also its status as Art-with-a-Capital-A. The anxiety that *La Navarraise* caused at its first performances was more than a symptom of transnational aesthetic debates about operatic realism, and this anxiety can tell us about some surprising forms of embodied musical knowledge. I will suggest that the frequent invocations of war in the critical discourse surrounding *La Navarraise* were shaped as much by the local issue of British militarism—that is, by contemporary Londoners' most immediate encounters with warfare—as by ideas about realism or the limits of acceptable mimesis. The tendency of modern scholars to compare the opera's fortunes in London with its Parisian reception when it arrived there fifteen months later has meant that these local contexts have been downplayed, the London reviews read only as pendants to the Parisian criticism.[24]

Although the transnational mechanisms that such studies emphasize are important, the emphasis on this imagined cross-channel axis of reception has led scholars to overlook the powerful sense of bewilderment that runs through the London reviews, a sense that seems to have faded somewhat in the fifteen months it took for *La Navarraise* to reach Paris. Many in London found *La Navarraise* thrilling, but listeners were also clearly confused. Some critics could barely conceal the labor they expended to engage with an opera that seemed to call for new modes of attention and comprehension. Allegations about Massenet's betrayal of "music" were a response to two individual problems, both of which originated in the intensity and pacing of the drama. For many reviewers, the whirlwind intensity of the scenario crowded out melody, since there was neither time nor space for melodic kernels to take

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[21] [Unsigned], "Royal Opera, Covent Garden," *The Monthly Musical Record* 24/283 (1 July 1894), 159; and [Unsigned], "La Navarraise," *The Monthly Musical Record* 24/283 (1 July 1894), 159–60.

[22] Shaw, "27 June 1894," 259.

[23] [Unsigned], "Massenet's 'La Navarraise'," *The Musical Standard*, 23 June 1894, 523 (emphasis original).

[24] Examples include Steven Huebner, "*La Navarraise* face au vérisme," in *Le naturalism sur la scène lyrique*, ed. Jean-Christophe Branger (Saint Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint Étienne, 2004), 129–49; Rowden, "*Werther*, *La Navarraise*, and *Verismo*," 3–34; and, more recently, Bentley, "Beyond *Verismo*," 29–54. Even Matthew Franke, who adopts a more international outlook, re-inscribes this image of Massenet as a surrogate for French opera writ large: in creating space for Massenet's influence in Milan, he casts Massenet as a French intervention into turn-of-the-century Italian (operatic) identity politics, a subject typically framed in terms of competition between national heritage (Verdi) and Teutonic imports (Wagner). See Franke, "The Impact of Jules Massenet's Operas in Milan, 1893–1903" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), summarized on pp. iii–iv.

root and grow. Since "rapid action is a necessity of such pieces [and] events must hurry on breathlessly," one reviewer wrote, with the exception of "one or two situations only […] the musician is chained to the wheel of the rapid drama, and hurries along with it, doing his best with transient themes and instrumental colour." Thus Massenet's opera, they concluded, could "hardly be considered important [in a musical sense]."[25]

The second and in many respects larger problem involved Massenet's unprecedented use of "non-musical sounds" (as a writer for *The Musical Standard* characterized it) to reinforce orchestral sonorities. Offering readers something closer to a polemic on aesthetics than a review of events, this critic continued: "We find it impossible to welcome with enthusiasm this latest development of operatic realism in which the 'massing of sonorities' is reinforced, not by stage thunder, as in the last act of 'Rigoletto', but by the roar of artillery."[26] The contrast with Verdi's forty-year-old opera is grounded in the idea that *Rigoletto*'s thunder was generated through the use of a metal sheet—not actual thunder—and so remained an aesthetic effect, in contrast to the ostensibly "real" live ammunition fire in *La Navarraise*. Of course, Verdi could never have hoped sonically to reproduce thunder in the way Massenet could gunshots, but this seems to have mattered less to this critic (if it even mattered at all) than the fact that Massenet had decided to use gunfire to represent gunfire. One imagines that these critics might have been content with something closer to the strategies found in the military-themed piano pieces that had resounded throughout London parlors during the Crimean war. As Gavin Williams has recently observed, these works remediated the artillery fire of distant battlefields through booming left-hand piano thuds.[27]

For these writers, realism was a means for grasping and describing sensations—and indeed whole systems of mediation—that felt unfamiliar in operatic spaces. By the same token, the language of realism helped create new knowledge about prior musical experiences, highlighting how extravagantly unmediated the sound effects of *La Navarraise* seemed by comparison with *Rigoletto*'s stage thunder or the evocative left-hand thuds of war-time piano pieces. These responses thus touch on an idea that I will address more fully in Chapter 3, that in the years around 1900 appeals to realism attested as much to modes of performance and perception as to the textual content of individual operas. This is an idea that has also been advanced recently by Charlotte Bentley, who, in writing about the Parisian reception of *La Navarraise*, has noted how critics' reactions to the "realist sounds in the work" point toward the way "they invited a kind of bodily response, as opposed to a cerebral one."[28] With the work's visual and auditory stimuli provoking new sorts of embodied responses, realism provided a way for operagoers to leverage the sensory information obtained through performance in evaluating musical works, complementing more customary forms of musical analysis.

The fact that *La Navarraise* required forms of engagement rarely demanded of operagoers was what prompted reviewers to look beyond opera when attempting to convey what it felt like to hear,

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[25] [Unsigned], "Royal Opera, Covent Garden," *The Musical Times* 35/617 (1 July 1894), 459–60.

[26] [Unsigned], "Explosive Opera," 441.

[27] Gavin Williams, "Gunfire and London's Media Reality: Listening to Distance between Piano, Newspaper, and Theater," in *Hearing the Crimean War: Wartime Sound and the Unmaking of Sense*, ed. Gavin Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 68–71.

[28] Bentley, "Beyond *Verismo*," 35. It worth noting that this observation ultimately leads her to focus on the particular nature of *La Navarraise*'s Parisian reception, "revealing that the realism [Parisian] critics perceived in *La Navarraise* was not confined to characteristics located within the music or settings of the opera, but was created in a much wider sphere of emergent technologies that affected not only performance decisions but also the ways in which critics and audiences were newly able to encounter the work." (p. 38)

see, and even smell a performance. Reflecting on the "continuous streams of white flame" that accompanied the unloading of artillery blanks, one *Sunday Times* contributor suggested that "an equivalent amount of sensation" might be found in the spoken dramas of Drury Lane or Adelphi. This was not primarily a comment on taste or lowbrow art, however: what had put this journalist in mind of these lower-prestige genres was a particular contemporary play called "A Life of Pleasure" that featured the use of live artillery fire from a type of recoil-operated machine gun known as a Maxim gun.[29] For others, meanwhile, the sensory aggregate of *La Navarraise* evoked more remote models. "Between the single shot in *Carmen*, for instance, and the cannonading in *La Navarraise* there is a difference so wide that the two cases cannot be fairly referred to in the same category," wrote one critic; this prompted them to liken the opera's tremendous fusillades—with their thunderous booms, smoky hazes, and pungent wafts of gunpowder—to the Royal Naval Exhibition, which had taken place near Chelsea Hospital in 1891.[30]

I want to linger on this particular comparison because it explains why journalists so often seemed to posit that *La Navarraise* reached both away from music and toward warfare. Specifically, it directs attention toward the limited kinds of embodied knowledge many Londoners had about war during the 1890s, alerting us to the processes by which audiences' impressions of war were formed during a time that—at least according to British elites who were content to ignore colonial violence abroad—was considered to be one of domestic peace.[31] In the absence of an ongoing conflict between Europe's imperial powers on which civilian focus might rest, Londoners' most immediate encounters with war came by way of military showcases like the Royal Naval Exhibition. The Exhibition opened on the second of May 1891 and ran until the twenty-fourth of October, during which time it was visited by nearly 2.5 million people, including Queen Victoria, the future king Edward VII (then Prince of Wales), and several other European royals.[32] Nor was it the first of its kind: a year before, in 1890, the same stretch of Chelsea real-estate had played host to the Royal Army Exhibition. Both events proved immensely popular—so much so, in fact, that the success of the Army Exhibition led planners to vastly expand the footprint of the Naval Exhibition to include some fifteen full acres.

These exhibitions glorified the military for the present and future by molding public perceptions about its past. News reports from around the time of the Exhibition's opening touted how the event would afford the general observer insight into both "the rise and progress of the Navy, and the general character of our latest warlike productions."[33] These burgeoning information economies served an explicit strategic purpose: according to an 1892 report prepared by the Royal Naval Exhibition's Honorary Secretary, Captain Sir Alfered [*sic*] Jephson, an important aim of the Naval Exhibition had been to enhance national security "by popularizing, in no matter how small a degree, the Service on

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[29] [Unsigned], "Music and Musicians. 'La Navarraise'," *The Sunday Times*, 24 June 1894, 6.
[30] [Unsigned], "Explosive Opera," 441.
[31] British forces perpetrated colonial violence during the 1890s, most notably in the course of imperialist bids for areas in modern day South Africa, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Zimbabwe; in fact, the company responsible for waging the violent campaigns for Mashonaland and Matabeleland (both in modern day Zimbabwe) during the 1890s—the British South Africa Company—only secured its Royal Charter in 1889. On the centrality of violence to the British imperial system in the decades around 1890, see Michelle Gordon, "The Dynamics of British Colonial Violence," in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, ed. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 153–74.
[32] For more on the Royal Naval Exhibition, see Huw W. G. Lewis-Jones, "'Displaying Nelson': Navalism and 'The Exhibition' of 1891," *International Journal of Maritime History* 27/1 (June 2005), 29–67, and more recently Huw Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 241–95.
[33] [Unsigned], "The Royal Naval Exhibition," *The Morning Post*, 27 March 1891, 5.

which in time of war so much will depend."[34] It was of the utmost importance, he went on, to "[reawaken] in [the public] the interest they have always taken in the Service, but which is apt to slumber in the piping times of peace."[35]

To further this aim, the exhibition combined education, entertainment, and industrial showcase on a spectacular scale. Like its Army counterpart of the previous year, the Naval Exhibition consisted of a sprawling complex of multisensory attractions that were intended to make British military might come alive for visitors. In the weeks leading up to the Exhibition's opening, the various attractions at the Chelsea grounds were routinely catalogued in London dailies as a means of drumming up enthusiasm, sometimes in astonishing detail.[36] From these accounts we know that one could watch naval brigades mimic warfare, observe a tableau of what one reporter called Admiral Nelson's "last scene in life," or experience a light show simulating the Aurora Borealis as seen by Nelson's crew in the Artic. One could also watch demonstrations of the new smokeless gun powder used in quick-fire guns, take in a performance by one of the half-dozen military service bands engaged for the event, or even test one's own skill with a firearm at the shooting gallery. These curated encounters with the British war machine were unusually corporeal, heightening visitors' personal investment in the military service.

The fact that the planners of the Royal Naval Exhibition accomplished their political goals by relying heavily on multisensory techniques borrowed from the theater returns us quite directly to the operatic world of *La Navarraise*. Whether at the Chelsea Exhibition grounds in 1891 or the Covent Garden theater in 1894, assembled spectators were greeted with a war-themed dramatic spectacle that invited a bodily response, blending fiction and reality it new ways. These exhibitions thus created a kind of knowledge about war that was different from that acquired through reading newspaper reports about conflicts abroad (the kind of mediated knowledge of warfare on which scholars typically focus on), which at most conditioned assumptions about what sensing war might be like.[37] The specifics of such assumptions as they were created through description and imagination are of little consequence, since they would be fully transformed by the vibrant sensory apparatus of exhibition ground and opera house. The point of comparison on which audiences of *La Navarraise* relied, then, was more likely to be what they had learned firsthand in venues like Chelsea than what they had gathered secondhand from accounts of actual military campaigns.

By underscoring the unexpected ways in which experiential knowledge can inform commentary about music, the accumulation of comments about war in the London discourse about *La Navarraise* offers new perspectives on the opera's durable connection to warfare in the London imaginary. Where the satirical magazine *Punch* would celebrate the "warlike" opera in an 1895 issue with phrases like "Bang go the […] cannons" and "*Vive la Guerre*!" a 1904 revival of the opera at Covent Garden occasioned a spectacular cartoon (reproduced in Figure 2.1) attesting to *La Navarraise*'s affinity to the battlefield.[38] The initial invocations of combat in reactions to *La Navarraise* were not merely the result

[34] Captain Sir Alfered [*sic*] Jephson, "The Royal Naval Exhibition, 1891," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* 36/171 (1892), 553.
[35] *Ibid.*, 545.
[36] For instance, see [Unsigned], "The Royal Naval Exhibition," 5, and [Unsigned], "The Royal Naval Exhibition," *Daily News*, 5 February 1891, 3.
[37] Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Also relevant here is Flora Willson, "Operatic Battlefields, Theater of War," in *Hearing the Crimean War: Wartime Sound and the Unmaking of Sense*, ed. Gavin Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 175–80.
[38] [Unsigned], "Operatic Notes," *Punch, or the London Charivari* 109 (27 July 1895), 41.

FIGURE 2.1: Dudley Hardy, "La Navarraise," *Punch, or the London Charivari* 126 (29 June 1904), 464.

of ostensibly realistic features in an opera set amidst war, or of aesthetic scales tipping into a-musicality; they were also the consequence of what happened when listeners' sensory experiences of opera paralleled what they had come to know of war.

THE SOUND OF LINES AND DOTS

On 4 October 1895, a little more than a year after the London premiere, Massenet's opera made its Viennese debut as *Das Mädchen von Navarra* in a German-language translation by Max Kalbeck. In 1892 the city had played host to the world premiere of *Werther*, and three years later the Viennese were eager to sample the composer's newest fare. *Das Mädchen von Navarra* provoked impassioned reactions among the Viennese: the opera was rapturously received by the local public—a reaction many reviewers attributed to the performances of Marie Renard (Anita) and Ernest Van Dyck (Araquil)—but the critics were less convinced, and many complained about the disappointing and aesthetically frightening work.[39] The critic for *Das Vaterland* did not mince words when he proclaimed how the opera exposed the "entire current decline of the musical-dramatic art in a crass example for all to see," while others more politely and blandly wondered if Massenet's new opera might not be "art in the true

[39] Regarding the audience reaction to Renard and Van Dyck, see P. [*sic*], "Theater," *Wiener Zeitung*, 5 October 1895, 4; and Dr. H. P. [*sic*], "Feuilleton. K. k. Hofoperntheater," *Wiener Abendpost*, 5 October 1895, 6. The *Wiener Zeitung* was the main paper of the franchise and offered a brief account of the performance, while the evening edition (the *Wiener Abendpost*) gave fuller coverage.

sense of the word."[40] Even *Kikeriki!*, an anti-Semitic, satirical weekly, took advantage of the uproar, printing a cartoon that jokingly mistook the shell-shocked opera audience for disaffected Liberals upset by the recent political victories of the Christian Social party and the resulting (if ultimately belated) installation of populist anti-Semite Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna (see Figure 2.2).[41]

FIGURE 2.2: [Unsigned], "Das Mädchen von Navarra," *Kikeriki!* 35/83 (17 October 1895), [np].

A man, to Kikeriki: Aren't those the liberals whose hair stands on end because of the unfavorable election outcome?
Kikeriki: Yes, well, one could think that, but these poor people are actually the victims of Mr. Massenet.

Here too the evacuation of musical substance in *Das Mädchen von Navarra* was at issue, but it was not the sounds of artillery that had prompted such accusations, as had been the case for many in London.[42] Contemporary Viennese accounts were instead peppered with fanciful observations about a distressing lack of musical substance (one writer, for instance, characterized the opera as a musical desert with only "small oases of musical personality").[43] Few were as imaginative as Robert Hirschfeld, chief music critic for *Die Presse*. Starting from the charge that *Das Mädchen von Navarra* offered merely the "appearance" (*Schein*) of music, Hirschfeld continued:

> Massenet's score is like a book that contains no words, only punctuation: it has little lines and little dots, interjections and every kind of sign for differentiation, but always things that otherwise stand between words. It is a music that speaks in platitudes but

[40] "Wir bekamen eine einactige französische Oper zu hören, deren Schrecken den ganzen gegenwärtigen Verfall der musikalisch-dramatischen Kunst in einem crassen Beispiele vor Augen führten[.]" H. G. [*sic*], "Massenet – Suppé – Berté," *Das Vaterland* 36/274 (6 October 1895), 1. "Durch eine neue Oper Massenets, 'Das Mädchen von Navarra' […] hat zwar vielleicht nicht die Kunst im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes, in jedem Falle aber das Repertoir der Wiener Hofoper eine nennenswerte Bereicherung erfahren." F. F. [*sic*], "Feuilleton. Das Mädchen von Navarra," *Grazer Tagblatt* 5/275 (5 October 1895), 1. Another representative denial of the opera's artistic status is [Unsigned], "Theater," *Dillinger's Reise- und Fremden-Zeitung* 6/29 (10 October 1895), 11.

[41] Even though the Christian Social party won the election of 1895, Emperor Franz Joseph refused to sanction the result; Karl Lueger was thus only installed as mayor in 1897, after Pope Leo XIII interceded to retroactively authorize the election result.

[42] One noteworthy overlap between the British and Viennese perspectives on Massenet's use of artillery involved the question of whether operatic frameworks and precedents were helpful for approaching this opera. See in particular Eduard Hanslick's review, which (like the above-cited *Musical Times* review) contrasts Massenet's opera with Bizet's *Carmen*, and concludes that the prelude leaves audiences expecting a painting rather than an opera. Ed[uard] H[anslick], "Feuilleton. Hofoperntheater. ("Das Mädchen von Navarra" von J. Massenet. – "Amor auf Reisen" Ballet.)," *NFP*, 6 October 1895, 1. A revised and expanded version of Hanslick's review was later included in vol. 7 of his *Die moderne Oper* series, *Fünf Jahre Musik, 1891–1895* (Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1896), 140–6.

[43] H. G. [*sic*], "Massenet – Suppé – Berté," 1.

never gets to the point. It completely neglects true music.[44]

In hearing the opera as punctuation marks without words, Hirschfeld likened it to a jumble of signs absent semantic meaning (making it unlikely that Hirschfeld was referring to Morse Code, in which lines and dots *do* carry meaning); translated into musical terms, the simile points toward an opera spiky with "sound" yet devoid of "music." Toward the end of the passage, Hirschfeld visibly struggles to distinguish the kind of music contained in Massenet's score from the "true music" it displaced.[45] Other local writers strained to navigate this same rift, observing how the opera was "illustrated with sounds" but was also a work in which "music in the true sense of the word is almost completely banished."[46]

If the dichotomy between music and sound that these Viennese critics employed is reminiscent of the framing we saw *Tosca*'s critics use at the start of this chapter, the connection is merely semantic: the phenomena that Hirschfeld and his colleagues believed had dislodged "music" in Massenet's opera were not the same as those identified either by the composer's London critics or by *Tosca*'s Roman critics. Where Puccini's Roman critics simply produced lists of specific culprits—particular "external" elements like bells, cowbells, and gunshots—to critique *Tosca*'s sound world, Massenet's Viennese critics labored in figurative, contorted, opaque language to grapple with something less concrete.

Even so, Puccini's "empty sounds" can still tell us something about the sound of Massenet's "lines and dots." Taking a cue from *Tosca*'s critics, we might start with the use of bells. Puccini's bells are musically generative—even if they can also be read as subverting traditional operatic aesthetics—since the opera's musical fabric grows from, and is shaped by, the symbiotic relationships between the different sounds and instruments that comprise Puccini's acoustic palette. For instance, Schwartz demonstrates that at the start of *Tosca*'s third act, one of the opera's biggest tunes—the central melody of Cavaradossi's aria "E lucevan le stelle"—is born from the bells: "The *campanone*'s entrance is accompanied by the first statement of the opera's most famous melody: structured around the pitches E and B, making prominent use of 'chiming' fourths and fifths, and always supported by a pedal tone, it seems to arise from the partials of the bell itself."[47] In this way, the bells effectively provide the fledgling melody with a strong sonic foundation. The first bell hit is met with violins—the orchestral contingent then carrying the melody—as both instruments converge on a sustained E. In their temporary unison, the melody gains a springboard from which it can build the pitches and rhythms of its profile. The entrance of the bells thus acts as both a point of arrival and a point of departure,

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[44] "Massenet's Partitur gleicht einem Buche, das nur Interpunctionen und keine Worte enthält: Strichlein und Pünktchen, Interjectionen und Unterscheidungszeichen jeder Art, aber immer Dinge, welche sonst zwischen den Worten stehen. Es ist eine Musik, welche sich um Phrasen schlängelt und niemals die Sache trifft. Sie drückt sich an dem eigentlich Musikalischen vorbei." Robert Hirschfeld, "Feuilleton. Hofoper," *Die Presse* 48/274 (6 October 1895), 1.

[45] This assessment had also figured in the earliest German reception of Massenet's opera. For instance, a review published following *Das Mädchen von Navarra*'s debut in Hamburg on 2 January 1895 noted that "the opera contains very few numbers of musical value […] despite the great noise ("'Das Mädchen von Navarra' enthält nur sehr wenige Nummern von musikalischem Wert, ebenso fehlt es dem Texte, trotz der vielen Worte und des großen Lärmens[.]) Alert Viennese readers may have encountered this assessment even before Massenet's opera debuted in Vienna, since this review was reprinted in *Der Humorist*, which curated information about German cultural life for a primarily Viennese readership. See h. z. [*sic*], "Hamburger Nachrichten," *Der Humorist* 15/2 (10 January 1895), 7.

[46] "Der Verfall der gegenwärtigen Opernmusik zeigt sich in diesem mit Tönen illustrirten Einacter, in welchem die Musik, im echten Sinne des Wortes genommen, nahezu gänzlich verbannt ist, mit beängstigender Anschaulichkeit." Rich[ard?] Robert, "Hofoperntheater," *Deutsche Kunst- und Musik-Zeitung* 22/20 (15 October 1895), 258.

[47] Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes*, 66.

lending a certain gravitas to the melody and allowing it to expand and blossom as it moves forward. Subsequent bell hits reveal that the bells also anchor the melody as it progresses: with each strike, the melodic line returns to join the bell on a sustained pitch, where it lingers just long enough before taking off again.[48]

Bells also play a prominent role in Massenet's opera, not least in the final scene, where their sounds resound from the wings; here, however, the raw sonic material provided by the bells only fizzles as it spreads to other voices. Their entrance is heralded by a stage direction that announces how "the sound of bells must dominate the orchestra despite the sensation of remoteness"—a practical comment regarding instrumental balance in performance that also signals the musical hierarchy that will emerge in this scene (see Example 2.1a).[49] The first bell hit punctures the silence, introducing an ascending semitone pattern that steadily oscillates with each passing quarter note. This sonic material finds broader orchestral footing with the entrance of the strings, winds, and brass a few measures later: these factions do not mirror but rather expand the bell pattern—trading half notes between them—such that all orchestral forces play a descending version of the bell's semitone pattern, one centered around the C-B semitone that reverberates in the overtones of the notated bell pitches. When the singing voices enter, they quickly become subsumed into this sonic apparatus. Anita's lover Araquil, his father Remigio, and Ramon, an army captain, take turns re-voicing semitone oscillations that soon gravitate toward the C-B axis, and despite the incorporation of more words and faster note values, Remigio's and Araquil's vocal lines stubbornly cling to the semitone oscillation. All this creates the impression of stalled musical development: the raw sonic material provided by the bells may be amplified through its adoption in other instruments, but is never fully transformed or developed into anything else.

This musical collapse is particularly noticeable in Anita's vocal line (see Example 2.1b), which, despite promising initial signals to the contrary, does not expand the musical space in a substantive way. She joins the texture after Araquil dies, and at first, her interjections help to open up the musical space by introducing new pitches and intervals; she even revitalizes Remigio's line temporarily, encouraging him to stray from his habitual fluctuation between B and C. But she quickly falls back onto semitonal shifts: throughout the passage, her vocal line is anchored by such oscillations—G-F# in the measure before rehearsal number 95, B-C in the measures at and following number 95, and finally D#-E in the two measures preceding 96—a repetitive quality underscored by her syllabic vocal style. Like her male counterparts in this scene, then, Anita continually re-voices the basic musical building block that was introduced by the bell, but she never uses it as a springboard to a big tune. In this passage, "dots" abound, but "words" never materialize; the music simply fails to launch.

This is ultimately what had concerned Hirschfeld and his colleagues: the fact that the opera's musical processes never seemed to get going in a convincing way. This circumstance not only denied the singers opportunities to display their vocal talents, but also muted the characters, constraining the kinds of subjectivity and emotion they could express. It is not immediately clear whether critics like Hirschfeld saw the opera's stunted vocal lines and lack of musical development as stemming from Massenet's limitations as a composer, or from the narrow expressive horizons of his characters.

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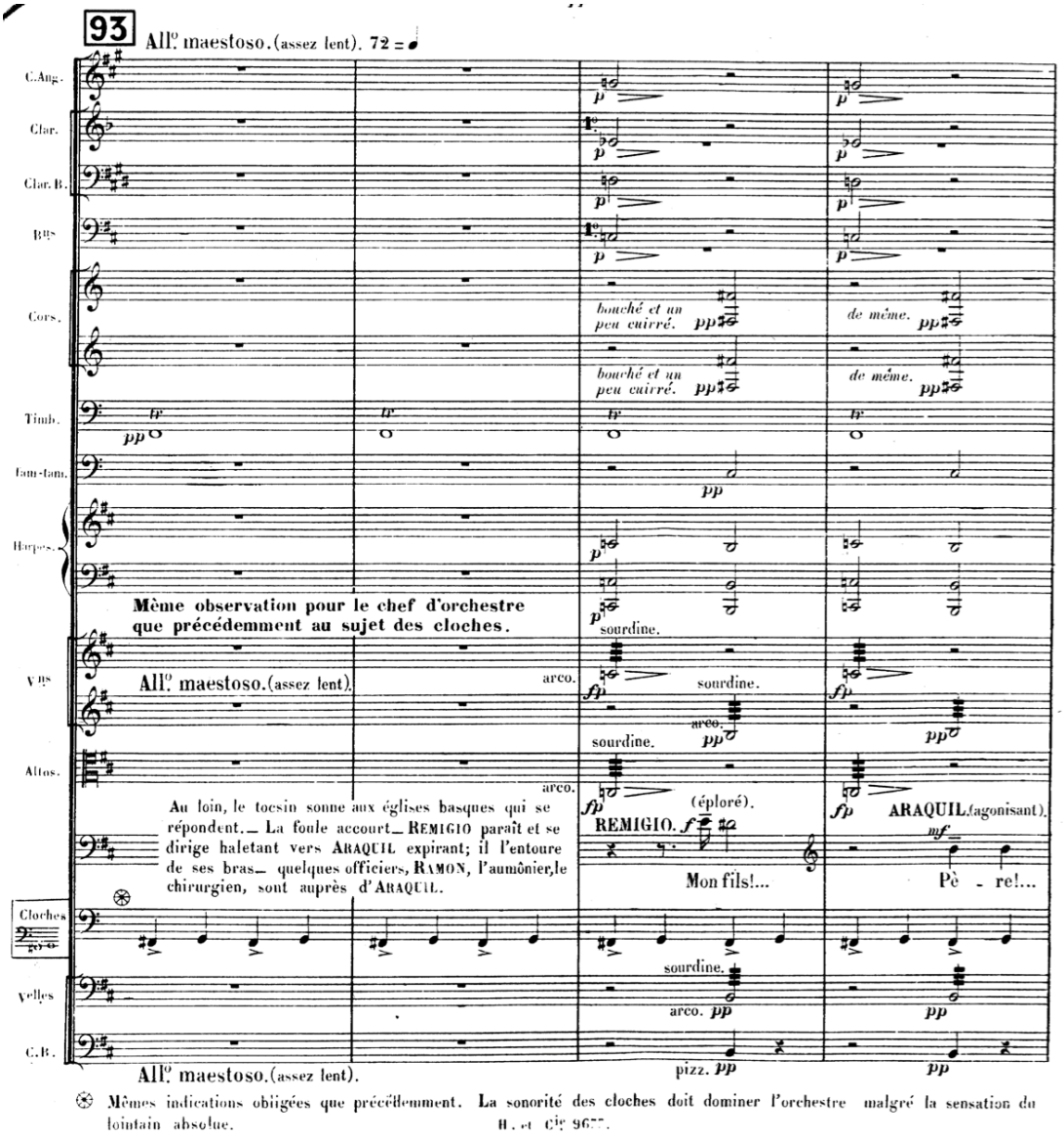
[48] The bells in Mahler's symphonies often function in a similar way. Julian Johnson has noted that Mahler's bells often issue from a position both literally and figuratively outside the established musical space (sounding from the wings or as if "in the distance"), but are then rapidly absorbed into normative sonic space through their incorporation into the musical fabric. See Johnson, *Mahler's Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53–4, 69–70.

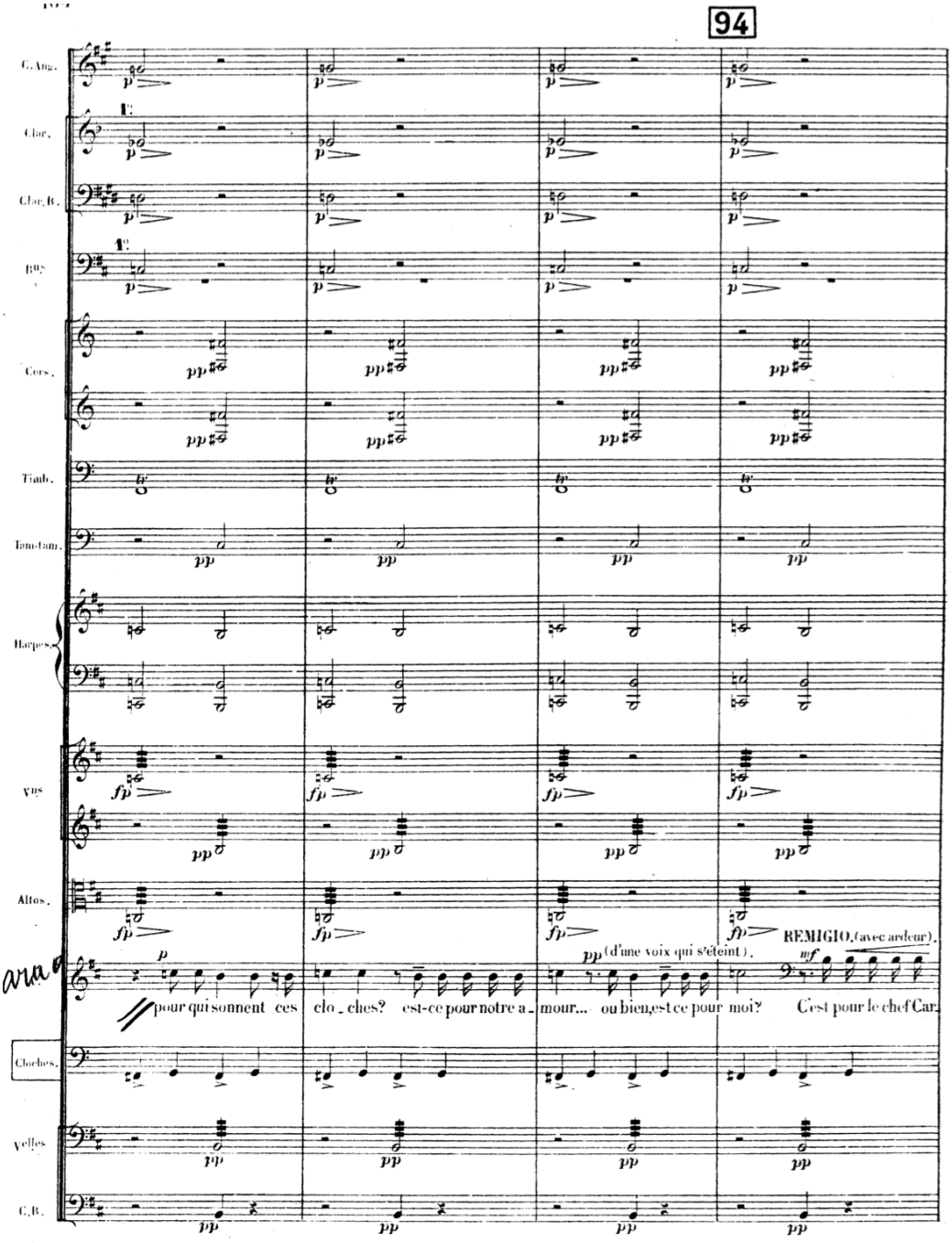
[49] "La sonorité des cloches doit dominer l'orchestre malgré la sensation du lointain absolue." Massenet, *La Navarraise*, 163.



EXAMPLE 2.1A: Bells toll and the music fails to launch. Jules Massenet, *La Navarraise* (Paris: Heugel & Cie, 1894), 163–5.

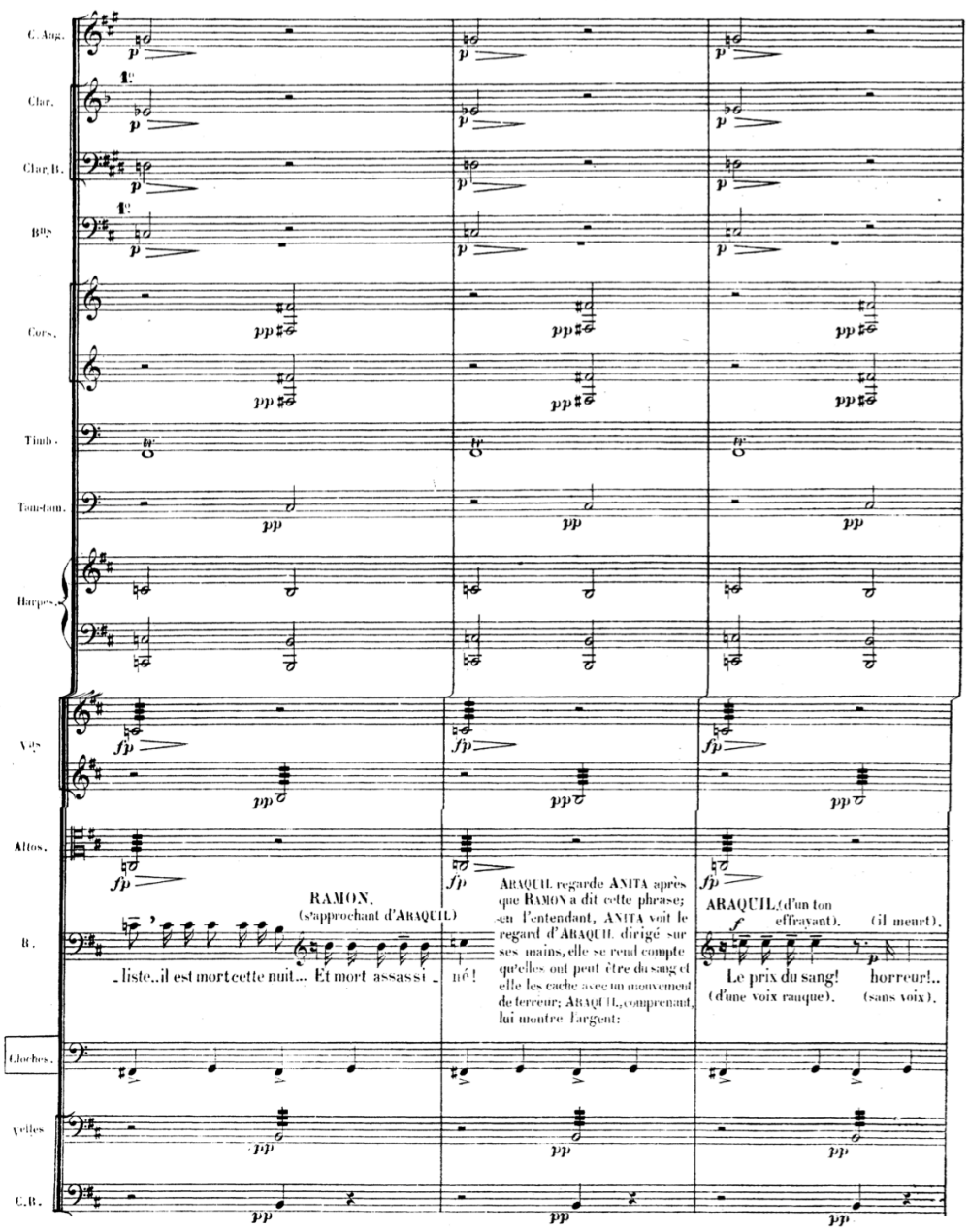
Thinking about this same music as a projection of the characters' experience, rather than as a quasi-autonomous (but failed) developmental process, for instance, it becomes possible to see the hegemony of the semitone as performing significant dramatic work. The intense, bare affect conveyed by the obsessive use of a single interval provides a sonic parallel for the scene itself, where, at the height of denouement, the characters—and Anita in particular—bounce from shock to immobility as they gradually fall to pieces.[50]

[50] Meanwhile, at least one London critic praised the opera's climactic finale for its eschewal of "a long operatic duet," adding: "The end ought to come quickly and it does, with just enough of [*sic*] music to remind us that we are listening to an opera and not a play." [Unsigned], "Music and Musicians," 6.



EXAMPLE 2.1A CONTINUED

While the lack of a big tune could in this instance be construed as a technique of realism within operatic space, contemporary Viennese critics did not generally frame the issue in this way. For them, the broader issue of melodic atomization in Massenet's opera that this scene so clearly illustrates was directly implicated in the "voice crisis" discussed in the previous chapter. Such a connection crystallizes in the account of Eduard Hanslick, the famed chief music critic for the *Neue Freie Presse*, whose careful attention to the relationship between voice and music often led him to use examples drawn from

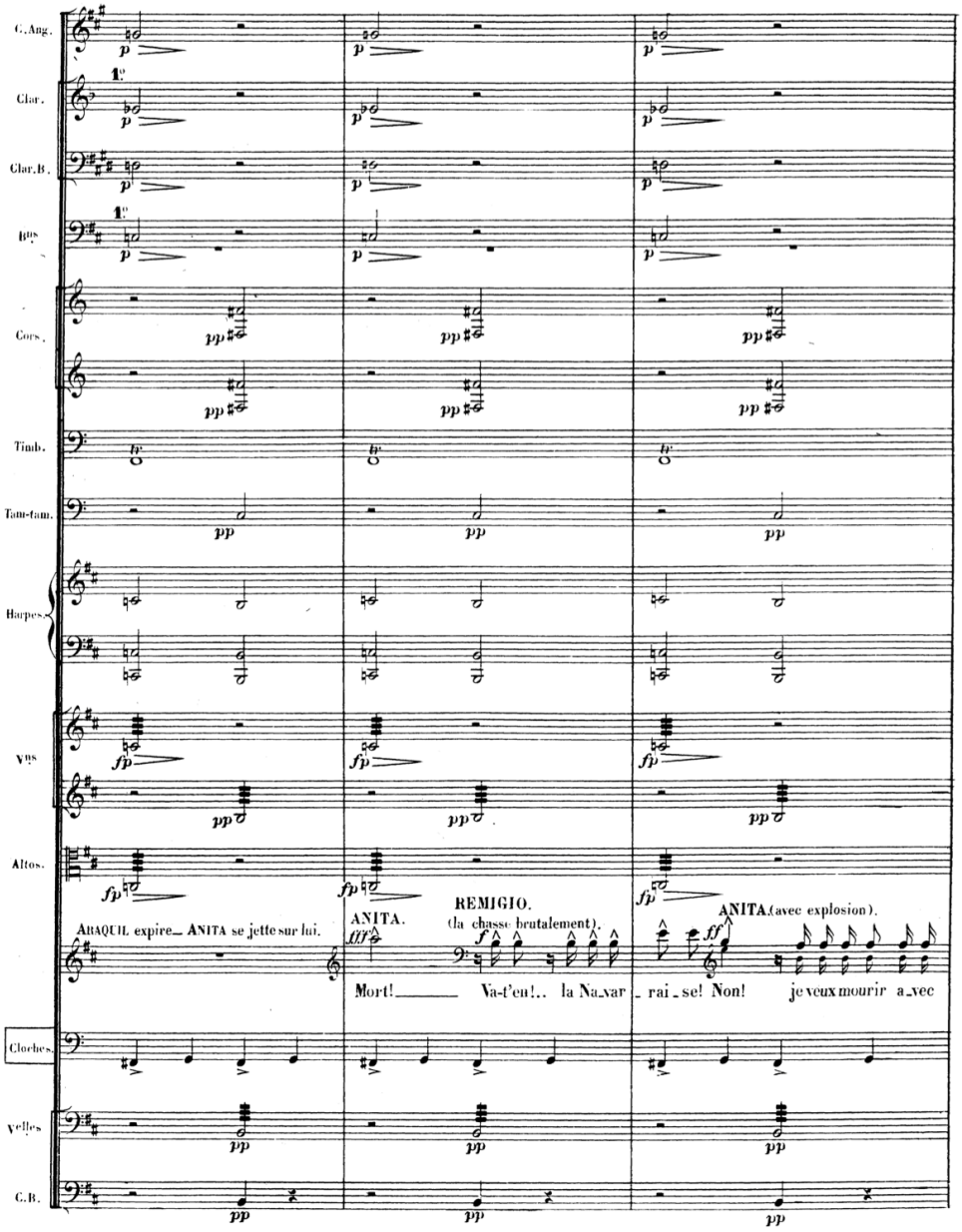


EXAMPLE 2.1A CONTINUED

Massenet's vocal writing to illustrate the opera's stunted musical development. This was an opera in which the music "cannot breathe deeply, it cannot live from its own means and become comfortable":

> All that follows the Intermezzo [separating the acts]—the awakening of the soldiers, Anita's bargaining after she commits murder, her dialogue with Garrido and Araquil—that is, virtually the entire second act, is not melodically formed and developed music, but rather declamation that alternates between suggestion [*Andeutung*] and outcry.[51]

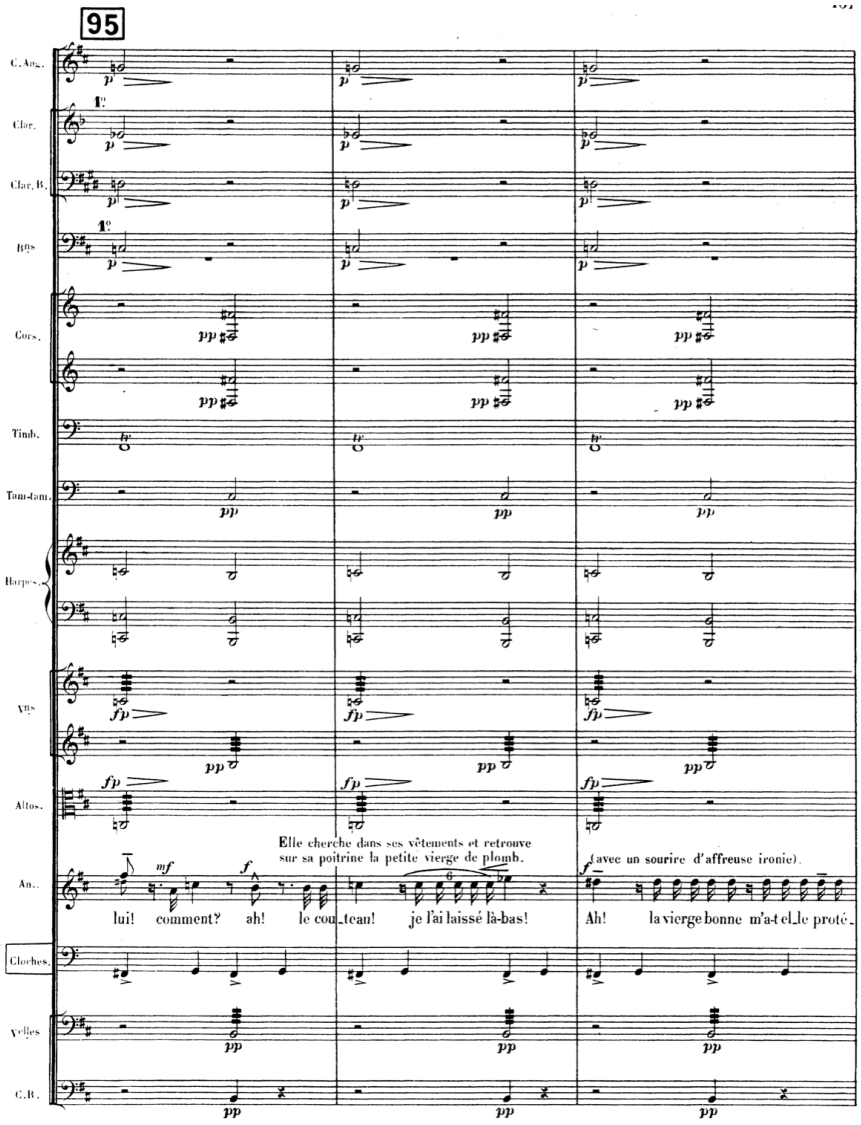
[51] "Was nun auf das Intermezzo folgt—das Erwachen der Soldaten, Hereinstürzen der Anita nach vollbrachtem Mord, ihre Dialoge mit Garrido und Araquil—also eigentlich die ganze zweite Abtheilung, ist nicht melodisch geformte und



EXAMPLE 2.1B: Anita's entrance amid the tolling bells. Massenet, *La Navarraise*, 166–8.

Hanslick's exclusive reliance on vocal evidence to support a claim about *Das Mädchen von Navarra*'s musical collapse was characteristic of German-speaking reviewers: writers in London and Paris did note that the breakneck pace of the action throttled the development of melodies—"killing the music, or rather never permitting it to be born," as the Parisian music critic Camille Bellaigue phrased it—but German-speaking ones focused on the lack of melodic development as manifested specifically in

entwickelte Musik, sondern zwischen Andeutung und Aufschrei wechselnde Declamation." Ed. H. [Eduard Hanslick], "Feuilleton. Hofoperntheater," 2.

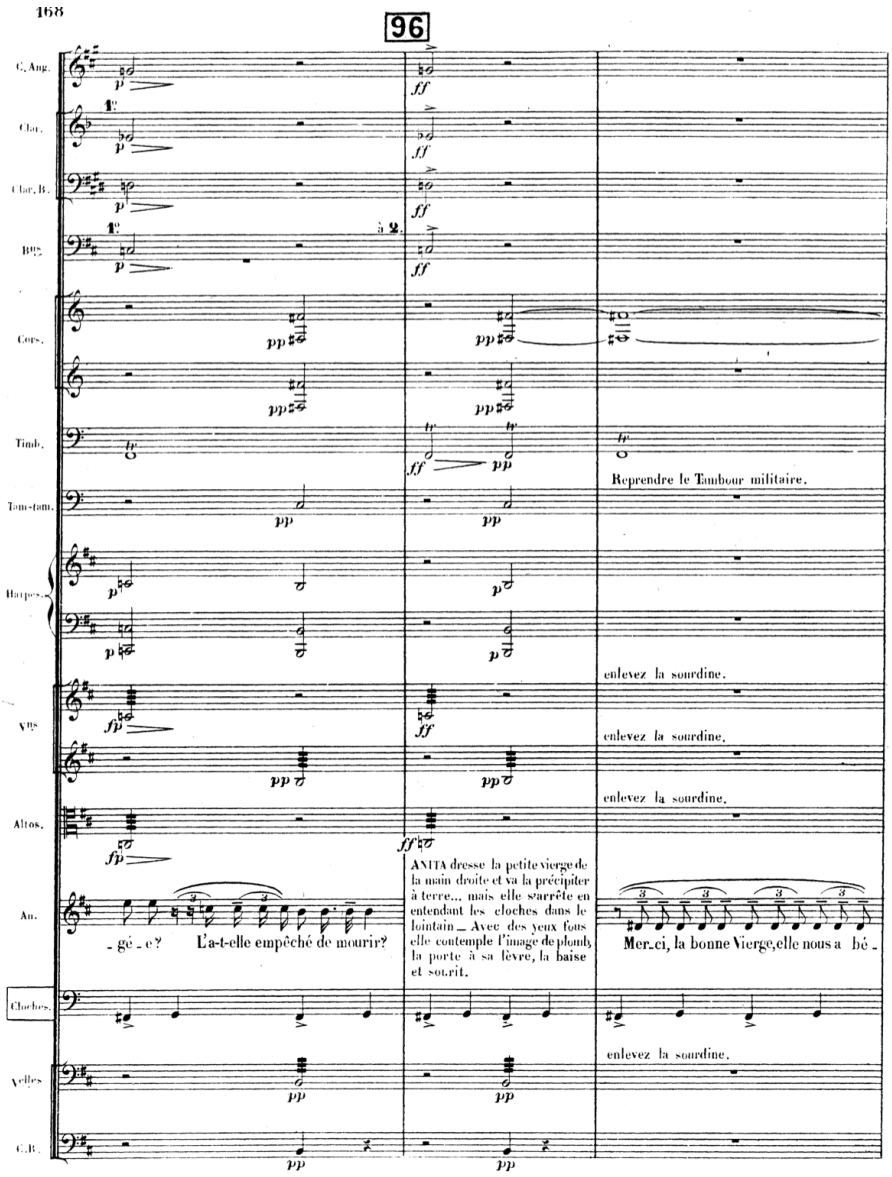


EXAMPLE 2.1B CONTINUED

sung parts.[52]

Hanslick's use of the word "Andeutung" is particularly revealing, as it was almost certainly a gesture toward the kind of vocal treatment that (as we will recall from the previous chapter) had inspired one writer to reach for the evocative image of the silhouette to describe the perpetually inchoate character of the vocal lines in Strauss's *Guntram*. Hanslick had directed his readers' attention to the ongoing debates over operatic vocality from the outset of his review, beginning the feuilleton

[52] "L'action extérieure et matérielle, l'action hachée, haletante et frénétique, tue la musique, ou plutôt ne lui permet pas même de naître." Camille Bellaigue, "Revue musicale," *La Revue des deux mondes* 65/131 (15 October 1895), 939. Representative reviews from London press include [Unsigned], "Royal Opera, Covent Garden," 460, and [Unsigned], "The Opera," *The Illustrated London News* 104/2880 (30 June 1894), 832, 834. Accounts of *La Navarraise* by German-speakers suggest that even after 1900 there remained a strong correlation between the opera's vocal parts and a lack of music; see for instance Richard Heuberger, *Im Foyer; Gesammelte Essays über das Opernrepertoire der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann, 1901), 194.



EXAMPLE 2.1B CONTINUED

with a critique of the opera's opening scene that underscored current compositional approaches to relative treatments of voices and orchestral instruments. This was a moment, he wrote, that relied on the orchestra alone to set the scene, as the singers were engaged in silent pantomime onstage—a scene, in short, that could only have been written in the current climate: "Twenty years ago a composer would have hardly let this first scene be played without a choir of soldiers, let alone without vocal music. [But] more and more in modern opera, singing seems to recede qualitatively and quantitatively, while the orchestra seizes an ever more important role."[53]

[53] "Kaum hätte noch vor zwanzig Jahren ein Componist diese erste Scene ohne einen Soldatenchor, überhaupt ganz ohne Vocalmusik sich abspielen lassen. Der Gesang scheint qualitative und quantitative in der modernen Oper immer mehr zurückzutreten, das Orchester eine immer wichtigere Rolle zu erobern." Ed. H. [Eduard Hanslick], "Feuilleton. Hofoperntheater," 1.

Hanslick's emphasis on these issues serves as a reminder that Massenet's opera arrived in Vienna right as German-speakers were beginning to fixate on the role of voice in opera; indeed, Hanslick's review appeared in print only a few months after the fiery outbursts of *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*'s Eduard Bernsdorf about "upside-down opera," which were described in chapter 1. But where Bernsdorf was centrally concerned with opera's sonic hierarchy, namely with the redistribution of melodic development away from the singing voice and toward the orchestra, the attention of Hanslick and his colleagues had been captured by what they considered to be a larger problem: the fact that both human and orchestral voices remained perpetually suspended in the realm of the motivic fragment, since melodies were never elaborated.

For German-speaking critics, this was fundamentally an issue about music and voice in opera—not least because writers like Hanslick had previously diagnosed similar problems in Wagner's vocal writing. When *Parsifal* premiered in 1882, for instance, Hanslick had been struck by how in several instances Kundry's narrations seemed to be defined by those "promising melodic buds which, with Wagner, frequently peep out, only to be broken off before becoming blooms."[54] The concern with voice—which here denotes voice-as-melody that can issue from either mouths or instruments—is made explicit in the frequent attacks on what these critics called "recitative," which, they argued, had come to dominate the entire melodically impoverished opera.[55] The term "recitative" was most often used at this time in a technical and generic sense (especially in reference to older operas of Rossinian or Mozartian vintages). Still, this was hardly the first time the term had been brandished to resist a turn away from melody; Wagner famously endured such criticism at the hands of German reviewers—Hanslick included—during the 1850s and 1860s. Wagner's critics, too, were concerned by the perceived dissolution of both melody and form, and of concrete boundaries between aria and recitative. As one reviewer of *Lohengrin* put it: "Richard Wagner despises melody [...] [But] let's leave aside for once the misused, even equivocal expression 'Melody.' […] What we require from every work of art […] are well-defined, palpable, I want to say plastically perceptible forms." Unfortunately, the reviewer continued, almost no trace of such forms was present in *Lohengrin*, having been displaced by "the continuous, eternal psalmodically reciting, musically unmusical declamation."[56] Echoes of this assessment can be found not only in other contemporary reviews of the opera, but also in discourse about composers such as Berlioz; in both instances, audiences regarded a troubling lack of melody as an issue that was at once bound up with a more continuous musical fabric and a more declamatory vocal style.[57]

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[54] "Der Anfang von Kundry's Erzählung […] läßt sich schlicht und sangbar an, eine der verheißenden Melodienknospen, wie sie bei Wagner nicht selten hervorlugen, um nur zu rasch vor ihrem Aufblühen wieder abgebrochen zu werden." Ed. H. [Eduard Hanslick], "Feuilleton. Briefe aus Bayreuth," 2.

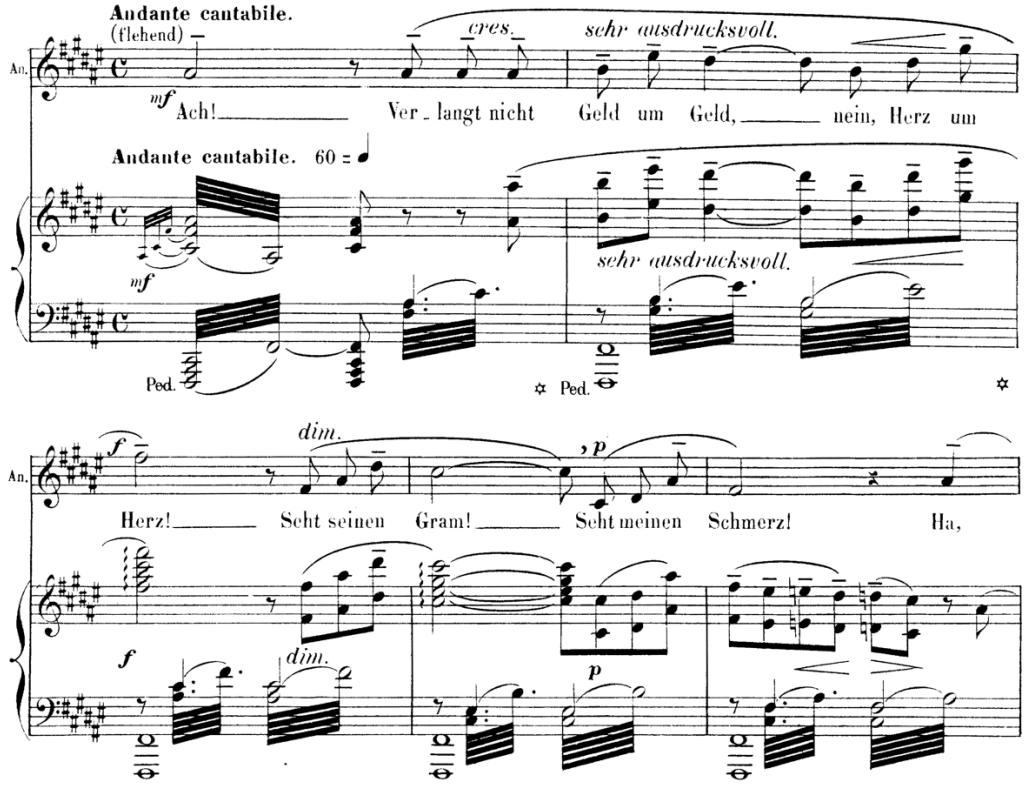
[55] This writer went so far as to claim that the opera was "very nearly dominated by a complete melodic poverty [and] the entire thing unfolds in a succession of recitatives." ("Es herrscht nahezu eine vollständige Melodienarmuth vor, das Ganze wickelt sich in einer Folge von Rezitativen ab, die den Sängern ebenso schwierige wie undankbare Aufgaben stellen.") Alpha. [*sic*], "Theater, Kunst, Musik und Literatur. K. k. Hofoperntheater," *Neuigkeits Welt-Blatt* 22/229 (5 October 1895), [np]. Another representative example is Robert, "Hofoperntheater," 258. The charge occasionally surfaced in the London reception as well, for instance in [Unsigned], "Massenet's 'La Navarraise'," *The Graphic*, 23 June 1894, 20.

[56] Cited and translated in David Trippett, *Wagner's Melodies: Aesthetics and Materialism in German Musical Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 26–7. Henson also describes Wagner's musical style from the 1830s and 1840s as reflecting a "more declamatory approach to melody, a complete breaking down of the recitative-aria division in favor of a free-flowing declamation over a web of motivically significant orchestral lines." See Henson, *Opera Acts*, 11.

[57] For instance, Hervé Lacombe reports that early audiences for Berlioz's *Les Troyens* (premiered 4 November 1863 in Paris) were disconcerted by the composer's "elimination of a clear demarcation between narrative and expressive styles and

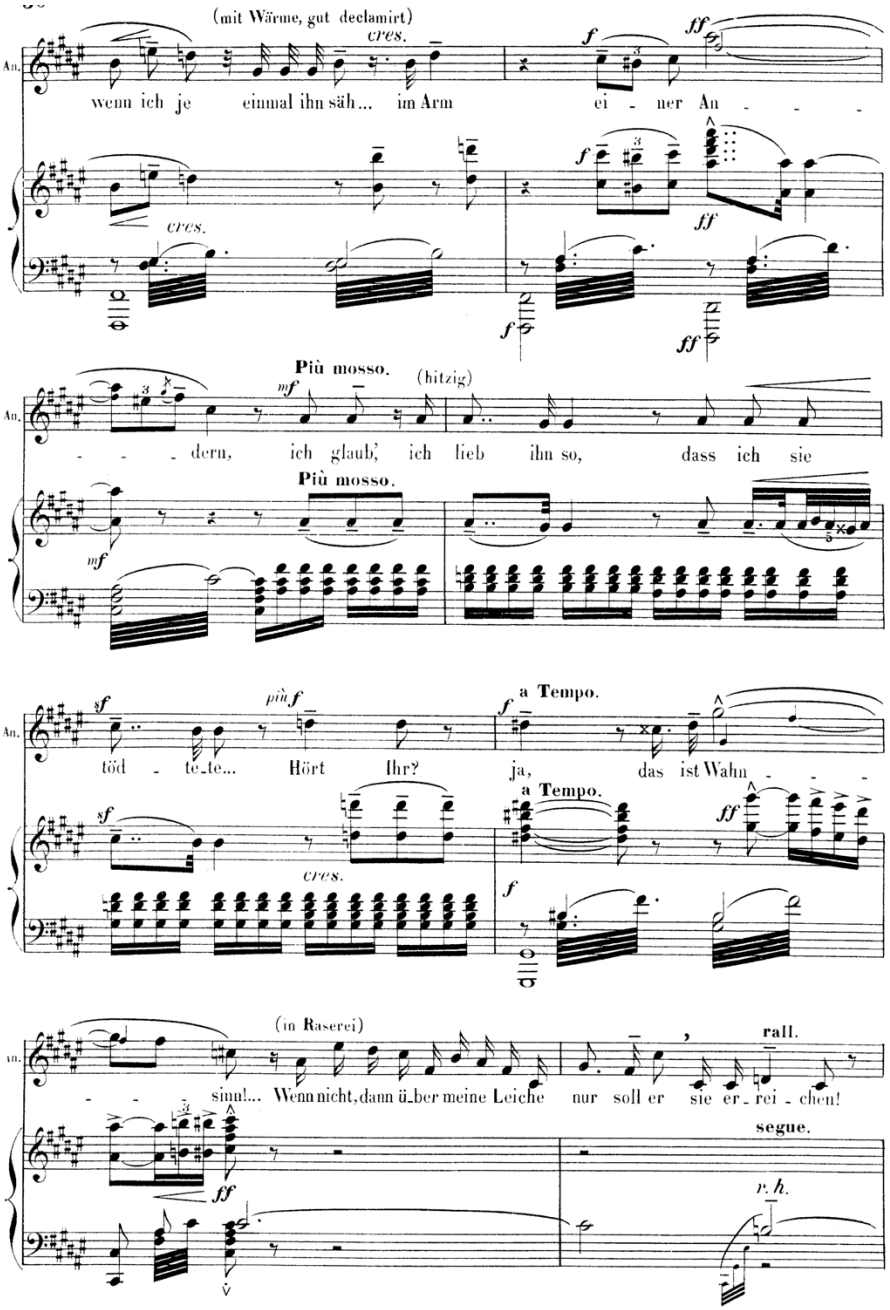
Writing in 1895, however, Massenet's German-speaking critics were purely focused on the lack of melodic development, not the lack of formal divisions—an anxiety that becomes clear through the accumulation of criticism against one scene in particular: Anita's supplication to the Virgin Mary. Poised to become perhaps the opera's most lyrical moment, the supplication begins with Anita singing a simple cantabile motive that is doubled by throbbing violins (see Example 2.2a). Any hopes for a showpiece aria are quickly dashed, however, as simple repetitions substitute for the hoped-for melodic blossoming. At first Anita and the violins reiterate a slightly altered version of the motive on different pitches, but in a subsequent repetition Anita interrupts the motive with a bout of declamation, causing the motive to melt away in the face of a choppier style of recitation punctuated with rests. By the time Anita lands on her held G in measure 11 of Example 2.2a, any trace of the motif has been scrubbed away. And when it is briefly resurrected in measure 14 of Example 2.2a, it is only as a stark reminder of what has been denied: a satisfying musical progression—of a motivic bud in turn reaching full bloom, to borrow Hanslick's botanical metaphor—to match the over-the-top concluding gestures, such as the massive orchestral groundswell, that push toward a gratifying finish.

It is not difficult to see why critics signaled out this scene for its melodic impoverishment; Anita's breathless recitation is not merely prevalent but fundamentally intrusive, calling attention to how



EXAMPLE 2.2A: Anita's supplication to the Virgin Mary. Jules Massenet, *Das Mädchen von Navarra* (Paris: Heugel & Cie, 1894), 29–31.

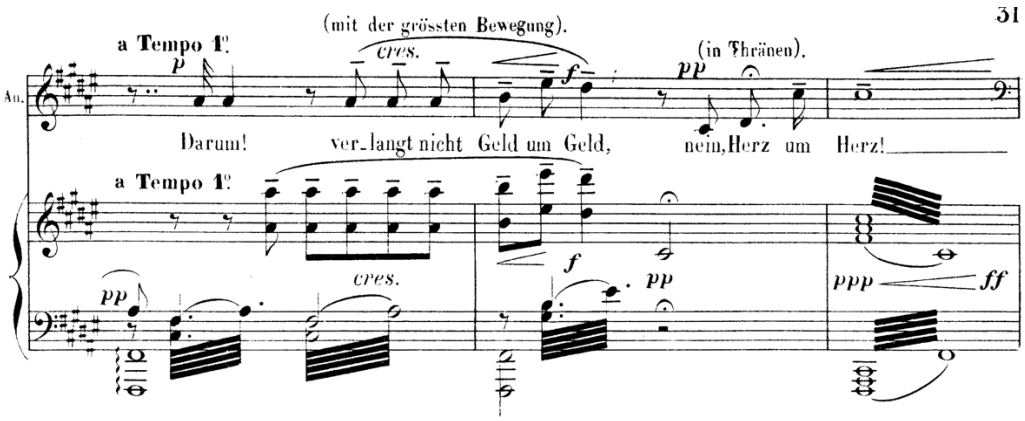
the general use of free vocal expression blended with orchestral melody." Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Edward Schneider (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 117.



EXAMPLE 2.2A CONTINUED

uncomfortably she hovers between the kind of diegetic supplication one finds in *Manon* (1884) and the unabashedly lyrical supplication of *Le Cid* (1885).[58] But the reasons for which it seemed to exemplify the problem of "recitative" are less clear. Writing in the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, Camillo Horn

[58] Where Manon's diegetically intoned prayers ultimately serve to bookend a brief lyrical respite in her supplication ("Pardonnez-moi, Dieu de toute puissance"), the pretext of diegetic prayer is dispensed with altogether in Rodrigue's lushly melodic supplication ("O Souverain").



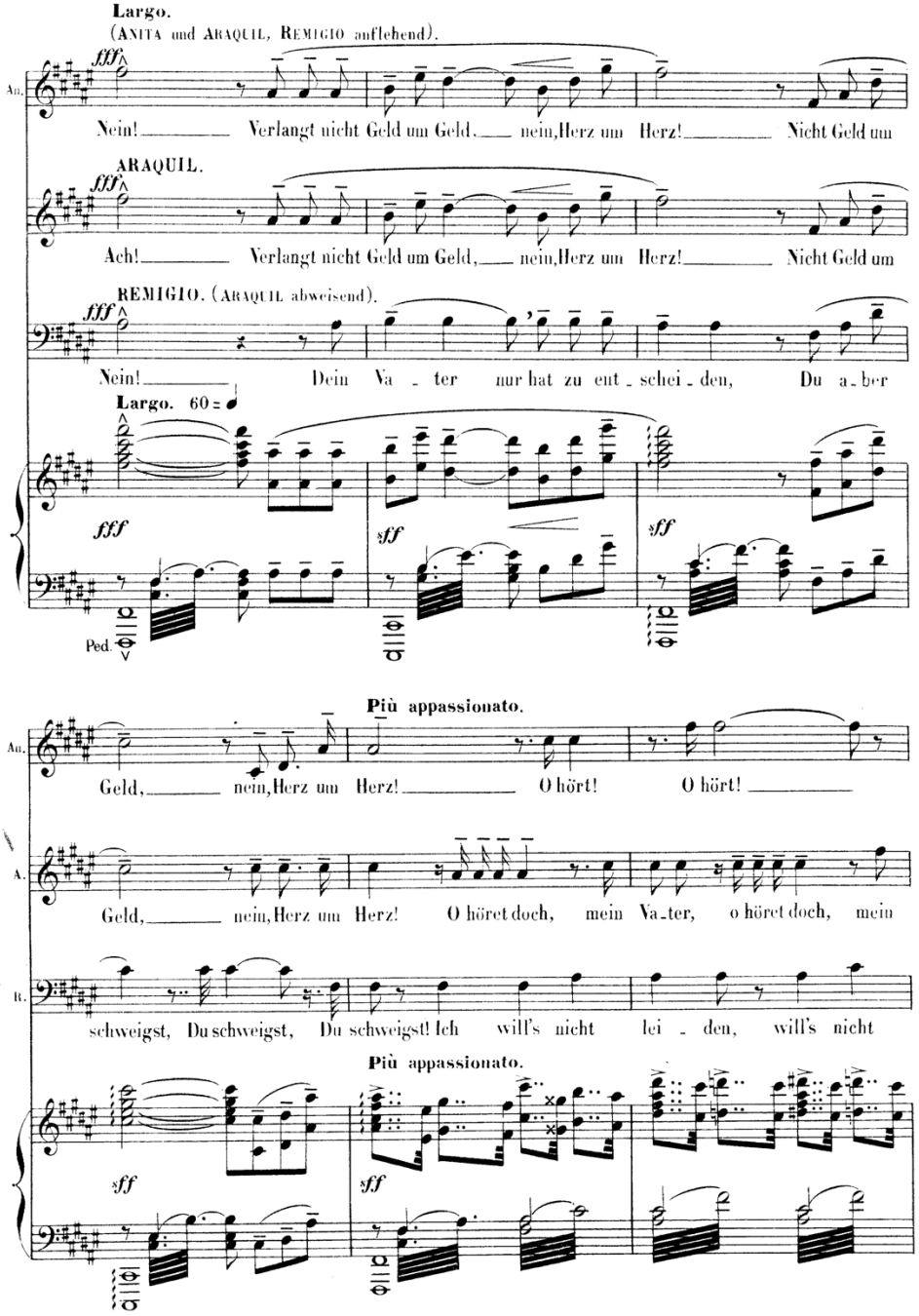
EXAMPLE 2.2A CONTINUED

noted that "Massenet has granted recitative wide latitude; indeed, he has almost made it into a sovereign ruler, which we believe is very wrong because one quickly tires of the dry sound that draws unusual attention to itself in Anita's supplication to the Virgin Mary."[59] Here "recitative" perhaps encompasses not just the breathless recitation that comes to dominate Anita's vocal line, but the fragmented vocal line that Horn characterizes as "dry sound," as well as the musical process through which every promising kernel of lyricism subsides and disintegrates before achieving the status of full-fledged melody. To put this another way, where in Chapter 1 we saw how Strauss's vocal silhouettes ultimately tended to be elaborated in orchestral voices (rather than singers' lines), Massenet demonstrates no such aspirations for Anita's opening melodic gesture. The fragment instead becomes an end in itself, as evidenced by the very end of the supplication. Following a breathless exchange between Anita and Araquil, the stencil makes a triumphant return, and for a brief moment, a big, fat love duet seems to be on the horizon (see Example 2.2b). But after a single passionate iteration, the motive gives way again as the lovers arrive at a spectacular climax of held notes.

In this context, then, the term "recitative" indicated not a texture or a fixed vocal practice (like the direct correlations with recitation so prevalent in the discourse surrounding Wagner), but a broad compositional ideology marked by an aesthetic turn away from melodic development. But the fact that this usage of the word defined musical material negatively, in terms of what composers had forsaken, and the fact that what had been forsaken was something as complex, amorphous, and subjective as a compositional approach, meant that the problem "recitative" was used to name could be addressed in other terms. This was the case with a particularly illuminating description of the issue penned by a German critic who saw *Das Mädchen von Navarra* performed in Hamburg nine months before it debuted in Vienna. The comment reads: "An alarming poverty of melodic invention abounds in *Navarraise* […] the voice is mainly presented in a dialogic style; it moves between hollow, expressionless declamation, abrupt, inarticulate cries, and psalmodic stuttering."[60] This language

[59] "Dem Recitativ hat Massenet weiten Spielraum gewährt, ja es fast zum unumschränkten Herrscher gemacht; wie wir glauben, sehr mit Unrecht, wird man doch des trockenen Tones, der sich in Anitas Flehen zur Jungfrau Maria [...] auffallend bemerkbar macht, bald satt." Camillo Horn, "Hofoperntheater," *DV* 7/2426 (5 October 1895), 2.

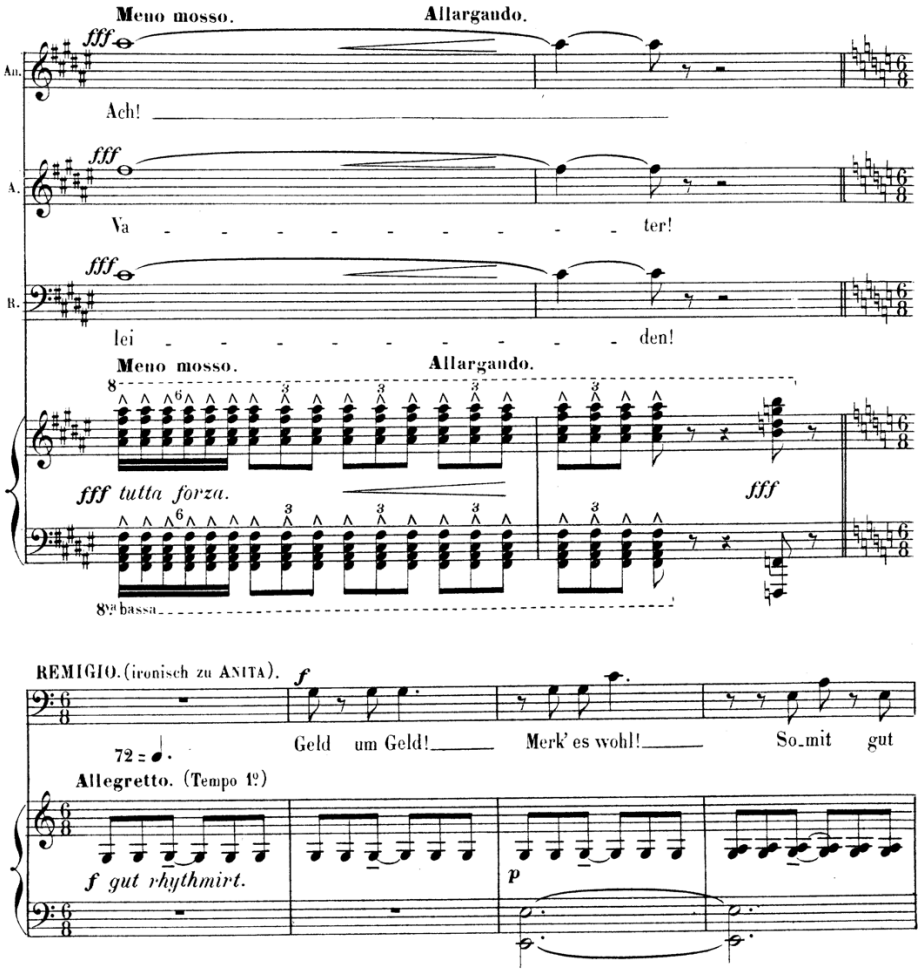
[60] "Dazu tritt in [Massenets] Navarraise eine bedenkliche Armut an melodischer Erfindung hervor. Mit Ausnahme der erwähnten Scenen ist der Gesang grösstenteils dialogisch gehalten; er bewegt sich in hohlen, nichtssagenden Deklamationen, in jähem, unartikulirtem Aufschreien und psalmodirendem Stammeln." J. S. [*sic*], "Hamburger Opernbrief," *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* 49/3 (17 January 1895), 26.



EXAMPLE 2.2B: The stencil's triumphant return. Massenet, *Das Mädchen von Navarra*, 32–3.

recalls the way Hanslick had written about the supplication scene not in terms of "recitative" or "declamation," but "parlando": "Her supplication sticks out as virtually the single melodic highpoint of the score, [but] the composer does not even indulge in any development for this theme. Within five measures it becomes deformed and torn apart through convulsive parlando."[61] This comment betrays

[61] "Ihr Flehen 'Verlangt nicht Geld um Geld', ein rührendes Andante in Fis-dur, ragt melodisch fast als einziger



EXAMPLE 2.2B CONTINUED

Hanslick's concern with both the disintegration of Anita's musical potential and the declamatory vocal line that expanded to fill the space, two elements that together outline the larger issue at hand. In Vienna, "recitative" acted as both a conceptual outlook and an umbrella term, a rhetorical device used to critique musical situations that lacked a melodic focal point and to index the range of vocalizations that characterized such scenes. To borrow again from Hirschfeld, it was merely one kind of punctuation mark in a sea of lines and dots.

Höhenpunkt aus der Partitur hervor. Und auch diesem gesangvollen Thema gönnt der Componist keine Entfaltung; schon im fünften Tact wird es durch convulsivisches Parlando verzerrt und zerrissen." Ed. H. [Eduard Hanslick], "Feuilleton. Hofoperntheater," 1. Another writer to use the term "parlando" to describe the problematic vocality on display in Anita's supplication was Hanslick's fellow music critic Fritz Gaigg von Bergheim, who also observed with disdain how this scene's characteristic stylistic feature had become the "preferred means of musical expression in recent times." ("Wir begegnen aber auch sehr oft bekannten musikalischen Formen; so ist der '*parlando*-Ton,' das Absprechen der Worte in einem Tone im Gebete Anita's an die Jungfrauen, ein in neuerer Zeit mit Vorliebe gebrauchtes musikalisches Ausdrucksmittel (siehe: 'Rose von Pontevedra' von Forster), auch der musikalische Schrei darf in neuerer Zeit nicht fehlen!") See G. v. B. [*sic*] [Fritz Gaigg von Bergheim], "Feuilleton. Das Mädchen von Navarra," *Reichspost* 2/231 (8 October 1895), 1.

The precise inflections of the term "parlando" in Hanslick's usage might seem like musicological minutiae, but they have significant ramifications for the way we think about the relationship between opera, sound, and voice in the decades around 1900. Crucially, the manner in which Hanslick and his German-speaking colleagues discussed vocality—the terms they reached for and the ways in which they framed them—expose entrenched assumptions about realism in *fin-de-siècle* opera, chief among them the status of "declamation," that continue to influence music historiography. Scholars writing about opera around 1900 often frame a composer's use of declamatory vocal writing (unlike lyricism, declamation's customary opposite) as a technique of realism. The thinking here seems to be that the ostensibly speech-like nature of declamation makes it a less mediated form of vocal address within opera, such that declamation might mark the introduction of "the real" into operatic (vocal) space in the same way as repetitive and inexpressive orchestral music "invites us to believe that we are hearing nothing more—and nothing less—than the unmediated resonance of the fictional world," as Schwartz puts it.[62]

This line of thinking is occasionally made explicit in musicological accounts—for instance, in Steven Huebner's claim that "Massenet lightens his orchestra [in *La Navarraise*] to emphasize the character's naked declamation and the realist projection of the words"—but it more often surfaces indirectly.[63] This is especially true of accounts concerning *verismo* operas, where assumptions about the "realist" status of more speech-like forms of vocal expression tend to govern how musicologists construe vocality in the context of *verismo* operas more generally. In particular, such ideas have conditioned scholars to double down on the notion that *verismo* operas are (or ought to be) declamatory and un-lyrical, despite their own acknowledgements of *verismo*'s failures as a conceptual category. Schwartz, for instance, notes that "jagged vocal declamation" is a musical quality associated with operas by the *giovane scuola* even as he warns of the difficulties inherent in trying to describe this aspect of the composers' musical vocabulary as a shared response to their (realist) subject matter.[64] Meanwhile, Carl Dahlhaus and Steven Huebner have each underscored the way lyricism often seems to take a back seat to the drama in *verismo* works, jettisoned in favor of speaking or screaming at moments of intensity or crisis.[65] The powerful assumptions that undergird these narratives have led scholars to express perplexity, even trepidation, at the prospect of *verismo* works that indulge in abundant lyricism, such as *Cavalleria rusticana*, which Walter Frisch admits "is dominated by melody, not declamation [even though it] is often viewed as the archetype of veristic opera."[66]

Such anxieties may be misplaced. After all, the responses *La Navarraise* elicited in Vienna should stand as a cautionary reminder that declamation and lyricism were, and are, not reducible to a dichotomy based in realism. I do not mean to suggest that *fin-de-siècle* audiences could not think of

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[62] Arman Schwartz, "Puccini in the Distance," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 23/3 (November 2011), 168.

[63] "Massenet allège son orchestra pour mettre en valeur la déclamation nue des personnages et la projection 'réaliste' des paroles." Huebner, "*La Navarraise* face au vérisme," 147.

[64] Schwartz, *Puccini's Soundscapes*, 48–9.

[65] Huebner, *French Opera at the fin de siècle*, 403; Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Pres, 1985), 69–71. Huebner also cites as one of *verismo*'s defining physiognomic features "the frequent use of 'speaking' or free declamation textures" ("une utilisation fréquente de textures *parlante* ou de déclamations libres […] Ces particularités pouvant très bien définir la physionomie du vérisme[.]"); see Huebner, "*La Navarraise* face au vérisme," 132.

[66] Frisch, *German Modernism*, 64.

declamatory vocality in terms of realism.[67] Rather, contemporaries read declamatory or "un-melodic" vocality—whether in *verismo* operas or in other works—against the much larger backdrop of "modern opera."[68] These Viennese reactions thus draw attention to how our modern attachments to realism have inflected the histories we write. To illustrate this point, I want briefly to turn to a 1901 essay by the Italian music critic Giuseppe Samoggia entitled "Realism in Opera." Roughly midway through the article, Samoggia turns his attention toward what *verismo* operas actually sound like, launching the discussion with a grave diagnosis of contemporary opera:

> For some time now, the music in new works has tended to eliminate itself, to slip away more and more. In the culminating points of the action music abdicates, it abstains, in order to cede its place to *parlati* and then to the explosions of an orchestra artillery that intervenes to resolve dramatic situations of every genre in the same way. It is not rare to find entire scenes, of capital importance for the action, in which song is lacking and the orchestra fills the space […] With the excuse of realism, the true musical substance becomes leaner and duller by the day: it is time to turn back.[69]

Samoggia's litany brings together many of the sonic elements that have populated this chapter—the apparent dissolution of song, the expansion of what he termed "*parlati*," the explosions of orchestra artillery, and the lack of music—elements, crucially, that musicologists have become accustomed to linking with the realist aspirations of *verismo* operas. But if we put pressure on this passage, we might stumble over the last sentence, with its unexpected suggestion that realism is actually a smokescreen, an "excuse" masking some deeper flaw.

Loosening our attachment to the conceptual framework of realism even further, we might read this passage and instead be struck by its similarities to the kind of accounts by Austro-German writers that have populated this chapter as well as the previous one. Both groups expressed concern over what they perceived as an evacuation of "true" musical substance in contemporary opera, and both were alarmed by how this process often entailed an "abandonment" of song that in turn allowed effect-heavy orchestral voices and declamatory singing lines to fill the musical void. These rhetorical similarities underscore the fact that the issues Samoggia cites were hardly unique to *verismo* works, let alone natural consequences of operatic realism, but were instead common threads in debates over the state of "modern opera" during the 1890s. Indeed, where Heinrich Schenker would in 1895 take great care to stress how "declamation is now finally the common property of all dramatic composers" (despite, he went on to add, the fact that "the composer's force rests only in the melodic formulas and motives"), another of his contemporaries would allege that one of the worst tendencies of "modern opera" was the way it deployed the human voice "in as un-singable a way as possible, often in zigzag lines."[70] In other words, what this corpus of characterizations does point toward is a different story

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[67] For instance, some of *La Navarraise*'s French-speaking and English-speaking reviewers did seem to rely on realism as an interpretive framework, especially when faced with moments such as Anita's supplication. One illustrative example from the English-speaking world is [Unsigned], "M. Massenet's New Opera," *Glasgow Herald* 112/148 (21 June 1894), 4.

[68] In proposing this historiographical and methodological intervention, I draw inspiration from the recent arguments advanced by Nicholas Mathew and Mary Ann Smart in "Elephants in the Music Room: The Future of Quirk Historicism," *Representations* 132/1 (Fall 2015), 61–78.

[69] Giuseppe Samoggia, "Realism in Opera," trans. Arman Schwartz, in *Puccini and His World*, ed. Arman Schwartz and Emanuele Senici (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 271.

[70] "[Die] Declamation ist heute endlich Gemeingut aller dramatischen Componisten [… Aber] Nur in den melodischen Formeln und Motiven liegt die Kraft des Componisten." Heinrich Schenker, "Oper. Das Mädchen von Navarra," *Die Zeit*

about voice at the *fin de siècle*. It is a story about the invention of a purist ideal of voice, one that was on the edge of inaudibility and constructed in relation to the many threats it faced from a capacious and equally constructed category: "sound."

On a basic level, then, the reactions to *La Navarraise* sampled in this chapter should illuminate the extent to which realism has colored not only our understanding of late nineteenth-century vocal style but also the ways in which we delimit music and sound within operatic space. The Viennese critiques of Massenet's opera clearly show that the reasons listeners might categorize a particular vocalization as either sound or music often had little to do with the exigencies of realism—even within an opera whose links to *verismo* might be expected to direct listener attention in that direction. Nevertheless, in Vienna "voice" and not "realism" was at issue. Taken together with *La Navarraise*'s London reception, this Viennese commentary also suggests that to operagoers in the 1890s, meaningful points of connection between sonic categories (such as music and sound) and media or aesthetic discourse (such as voice or realism) were not fixed configurations, but dynamic affiliations.

These reception histories thus prompt consideration of a critical methodological point about how musicologists tend to read primary sources such as journalistic criticism. To what extent, we might ask, has our heightened attentiveness to aesthetic debates over realism influenced the way we engage with our historical interlocutors, obscuring in the process the other factors that shape what critics and other operagoers write? In the case of *La Navarraise*, I have shown that the historiographic obsession with realism has worked to overshadow the significance of British militarism to the way Londoners reacted, as well as the influence of looming questions about operatic vocality in shaping Viennese responses. Considering these contexts enables us to better see not just the forms of experiential knowledge about music that are buried in our archives, but our own aesthetic attachments—even before they are brought to bear on the auditory experiences of the past.

5/53 (5 October 1895), 12. "In besserem Sinne modern als diese Handlung ist die Musik. Sie bietet im Orchester nicht das übertriebene Spiel mit Leitmotiven, […] worüber sich dann der Gesang möglichst unsanglich, oft in Zickzacklinien, bewegt[.]" Wolff, "Neue Opern. Köln," 272.

CHAPTER 3
"NOT BIG, BUT PSYCHOLOGICAL": THE MODERN SINGING ACTRESS

> Georg walked up and asked Else if they were to have the pleasure of hearing a song from her today. She wasn't in the mood. In any case, she had recently been studying opera parts primarily. They interested her more. She wasn't really of a lyrical temperament anyway. Georg asked her as a joke if she didn't perhaps have the secret intention of going on the stage. "With this little voice!" said Else. Nürnberger stood next to them. "That would be no hindrance," he remarked. "I am even convinced that there would very soon be found a modern critic who would declare you a great singer for precisely that reason, Fräulein Else, because you possess no voice; a critic who will discover, for example, some other gift instead that he finds characteristic of you."[1]

In this episode from his 1908 novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road into the Open*), the author Arthur Schnitzler imagined a world in which a singer could succeed without a good voice. Else professes to have a voice that is not adequate for the stage, but Nürnberger reassures her that this does not matter, least of all for "modern" critics. If Schnitzler's vignette calls to mind other literary figures from the *fin-de-siècle* such as the titular character of Émile Zola's *Nana* (1880)—a prostitute who gains fame and prestige by conquering Parisian stages despite not being able to sing or act ("she's got something else […] that makes everything else superfluous" we are assured)—it is because it signals a transformation in the ways operagoers heard singers' voices, a change that has roots in the late nineteenth century.[2] Writing about France around this time, Karen Henson has noted the emergence of a generation of singers who were "not […] principally concerned with singing in the strict or conventional sense," but who concentrated instead on textual expression, acting and physicality.[3] Schnitzler's Else and her real-life precursors could perhaps be counted among this generation. Yet, as we shall see, listeners and spectators in the German-speaking world watched and listened with concerns and presumptions that were colored as much by exposure to expressionist poetry and the theories of Sigmund Freud as by the visual technologies and declamatory drama that feature in the Parisian milieu sketched by Henson.

These new modes of engaging operatic voices come clearly into focus in the drastically shifting public reactions to the performances of the soprano Marie Gutheil-Schoder (1874–1935). Her career had begun in Weimar, where she performed regularly at the Hoftheater from 1891 until she was lured to the Vienna Hofoper by its director, Gustav Mahler, in 1900. The range of roles she performed in Vienna could scarcely have been wider: beyond her core repertoire, which included heroines of Bizet (Carmen), Mascagni (Santuzza) and Mozart (Donna Elvira, Pamina, Susanna and Cherubino), she took on everything from Wagner (Eva, Venus, Freia) and Strauss (Salome, Elektra, Octavian) to Gluck

[1] Arthur Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie*, trans. Roger Byers (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 55 (translation slightly amended).
[2] Émile Zola, *Nana*, trans. Douglas Parmée (1992; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4.
[3] Henson, *Opera Acts*, 4. Henson documents how "non-singing" singers like Victor Maurel and Sibyl Sanderson succeeded in part because of modes of creative expression that were not vocal in the customary sense: arresting declamation of text for Maurel, and memorable poses and facial expressions for Sanderson.

(Iphigénie), Massenet (Manon) and Offenbach (all three women in *Hoffmanns Erzählungen*).[4] She enjoyed numerous professional successes, creating the role of Die Frau in Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung* and performing the role of Octavian at the Viennese premiere of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. By the 1920s, Gutheil-Schoder had become an integral part of Vienna's cultural fabric, regularly performing as a chamber singer and even appearing in silent film.[5] Her clout continued to grow after her retirement in 1926: she ran a pedagogical studio at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, worked as an opera director in Berlin and Vienna, and maintained a close relationship with the Viennese public through radio and magazine interviews.[6] Her status in the city soared to the point that in 1961 a street was named after her: Gutheil-Schoder-Gasse. But in 1900, such veneration would have seemed wholly improbable; her appointment at the Hofoper initially aroused substantial resistance owing to her alleged vocal deficiencies. As the Austrian musician Erwin Stein later recalled, "during her first few years in Vienna she almost invariably had bad notices [from critics who] called her 'the singer without voice' and blamed Mahler for having engaged her."[7] In short, she succeeded despite and perhaps even because of her "lack."

These early debates revolved around whether Gutheil-Schoder's captivating acting compensated for her weak voice.[8] Matters were not helped by the fact that Gutheil-Schoder was replacing Marie Renard (1864–1939), who had just retired after more than a decade on the Viennese stage and who was beloved for her velvety sound.[9] As one contributor to the *Deutsches Volksblatt* wrote:

> The guest from Weimar is an extraordinarily experienced and thoughtful actress who is surely effective, but she is not enough of a singer to replace our brilliant Renard. Her voice is already quite faded and a little too weak for our opera house, and her singing technique is not such that one can forget about the flaws of her organ.[10]

Gutheil-Schoder's voice continued to frustrate journalists even when their memories of Renard were not so fresh. Such displeasure led one reviewer to suggest that she ought to be relieved of her duties as

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[4] For a more comprehensive list of her roles that was compiled by a contemporary, see Ludwig Eisenberg, *Grosses biographisches Lexikon der deutschen Bühne im XIX. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Paul List, 1903), 372–3.

[5] *Das verbotene Land* (1924), directed by Friedrich Feher.

[6] She was covered by a vast range of media outlets: local papers reported on masterclasses she held at the Mozarteum, while cultural magazines profiled her and her home (glossy photographs included). Representative examples include aha [*sic*], "Opernfragmentabend der operndramatischen Klasse," *Salzburger Chronik* 71/195 (26 August 1935), 5; and [Unsigned], "Wie Künstler wohnen: Bei Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *Die Bühne* 247 (1929), 29–30. She also discussed roles and their development ("Rolle und Gestaltung") on Radio Wien in March 1935.

[7] Erwin Stein, "Mahler and the Vienna Opera," *The Opera Bedside Book*, ed. Harold Rosenthal (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1965), 305. Cynicism about her voice also was shared by non-Viennese critics: one journalist in Prague lamented how her guest performance fell far short of the expectations stirred by the title "Hofoper singer." See Haimon [*sic*], "Prager Theaterbrief," *DH* 20/34 (1 December 1900), 7.

[8] According to one seasoned critic, this boiled down to where one sat in the theater: those with full view of the stage would feel her power of attraction, but those with obstructed views were likely to find her voice insufficient. See V. J. [Victor Joss], "Opern-Revue. Wien," *NmP* 9/22 (3 June 1900), 186.

[9] On 29 January 1900, Renard gave her final performance of the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*, which Gutheil-Schoder took over on 24 February in what was only her third performance at the Hofoper. She performed the role to great acclaim again on 26 May.

[10] "Die Weimarer Gastin ist eine außerordentlich routinirte, denkende und jeder beabsichtigten Wirkung sichere Darstellerin, aber nicht die Sängerin, die fähig wäre, uns unsere geniale Renard zu ersetzen. Ihre Stimme ist schon recht verblüht, auch etwas zu schwach für unsere Oper und ihre Gesangskunst nicht von solcher Art, daß man darüber die Fehler des Organs vergessen könnte." [Unsigned], "Hofoperntheater," *DV* 12/4001 (22 February 1900), 7.

Despina in a production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* later that year.[11] Within a decade, however, the voice that critics had initially dismissed as "featureless," "weak," and "faded" became a celebrated asset, and by the 1920s public opinion about Gutheil-Schoder's singing had decisively reversed. The Viennese author Felix Salten opined that "the virtuosity of her singing alone is so wonderful that she makes one forget the deficits of fullness and brilliance [in the voice itself]."[12] This newfound appreciation, I shall argue, was possible only because of changes to the criteria for judging operatic vocality that occurred in response to contemporaneous developments in characterization, acting technique, and psychological conceptions of subjectivity.

Even this brief account of Gutheil-Schoder's shifting fortunes reminds us that not all *fin-de-siècle* listeners conceived of the vocal and the visual as opposite poles on a single spectrum; still fewer were content to separate "the dramatic" from vocal sound. The complexity of the situation can be glimpsed in an 1896 article that equated the turn towards dramatic performances with a rejection of the "lifelessness" that had too long held sway at the opera.[13] After noting that contemporary singers had begun "to attach importance to dramatic accents [rather than] always think of vocal skills," the writer cast an icy gaze backward in time to make a point about the priorities of *fin-de-siècle* listeners:

> [Henriette] Sontag and [Angelica] Catalani hardly thought of dramatic effects. On the contrary, their highest ambition was to treat the voice as an instrument: they dedicated themselves to singing violin variations, completely abstracting song from words and declamation. […] If one were to hear and see celebrated singers from the past today, the modern public, so accustomed to strong effects, would be appalled by these lifeless figures with music boxes in their throats.[14]

Far from yearning for these lost voices of the past, this author measured them against modern dramatic standards and found them lacking.[15] In prioritizing drama over vocal artistry, this account revived

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[11] The reviewer claimed that Gutheil-Schoder did not "fit into the ensemble" on vocal grounds: she sang Despina "like a Carmen," her voice was "weak and hoarse" and "her singing [had] nothing of the Mozart style," all of which prompted the assertion that "a change of role must take place if the 'novelty' is to be preserved." ("Frau Gutheil-Schoder aber paßte gar nicht in dies Ensemble. Sie spielte die Kammerzofe wie eine 'Carmen,' […] ihre Stimme [ist] schwach und heiser, ihre Sangweise hat bei aller Technik nichts vom Mozartstil an sich. Hier muß eine Rollenänderung stattfinden, wenn die 'Novität' uns erhalten bleibt, was sicher zu erwarten ist.") [Unsigned], "In der Hofoper," *Reichspost* 7/288 (6 October 1900), 9.

[12] "Allein die Virtuosität ihres Gesanges ist so wunderbar, daß sie die mangelnde Fülle und den fehlenden Glanz vergessen macht." Felix Salten, *Schauen und Spielen: Studien zur Kritik des modernen Theaters*, vol. 2 (Vienna and Leipzig: Wiener Literarische Anstalt, 1921), 284.

[13] Céline Frigau Manning has unearthed similar concerns about empty virtuosity, deadness, and singers as machines in accounts by early nineteenth-century Italian and French critics; see Frigau Manning, "Singer-Machines: Describing Italian Singers, 1800–1850," trans. Nicholas Manning, *Opera Quarterly* 28 (2012), 230–58.

[14] "Man fing an, auf dramatische Accente Wert zu legen und nicht immer nur an die vokale Fertigkeit zu denken. […] Die Sontag und die Catalani dachten kaum an dramatische Effekte. Ihr höchster Ehrgeiz war es im Gegenteil, die Stimme als ein Instrument zu betrachten: sie setzten deshalb auch ihre größte Force darein, Violinvariationen zu singen, und sie abstrahierten dabei vollkommen vom Worte und seiner sinngemäßen Deklamation im Gesange. […] Und würde man heute die einst gefeierten Sänger und Sängerinnen singen hören und spielen sehen, so würde sich das moderne, an scharfe Effekte gewöhnte Publikum entsetzen über diese leblosen Figuren mit einer Spieldose in der Kehle." m. [*sic*], "Ueber Sänger von Einst und Jetzt," *NMZ* 17/3 (1896), 36.

[15] Opera scholars have often noted the tendency of writers to romanticize the "lost" voices of earlier eras and reject contemporary voices on the basis of their being less good. See Susan Rutherford, "Voices and Singers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies*, ed. Nicholas Till (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 118.

much of the standard rhetoric that nineteenth-century Germanizing critics had mobilized to resist Italianate singing while embracing more charismatic, if technically problematic, singers like Anna Milder-Hauptmann (1785–1838) and Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient (1804–60). At the turn of the century, however, the nationalistic charge of these tropes was often tempered as critics sought to address what they felt was the more pressing matter: the chasm between vocal sound and drama. In disparaging the vocal indulgences of these early singers, this anonymous writer sought to lodge dramatic nuance in vocal sound.

The conception of voice evident in this retrospective belittling of Sontag and Catalani would soon become far more emphatic, and it is an attitude that is often on display in reviews of the groundbreaking productions that Gustav Mahler staged with the set designer and Secessionist artist Alfred Roller, beginning with their famous *Tristan und Isolde* in 1903. Out of their collaborations came new scenic traditions in which lighting served as a dramatic, rather than a purely practical, tool, and in which sets "[appeared] to want to relate symbolically and intellectually to the plot," as Julius Korngold (who succeed Eduard Hanslick as the *Neue Freie Presse*'s chief music critic) would put it.[16] Reviews of the Mahler-Roller *Don Giovanni*, which premiered at the Hofoper in December 1905, in particular convey considerable resistance to this focus on the visual. In the opinion of Max Graf, the result was a truly negligent approach to vocal delivery: "Dramatic effect has been sought everywhere except where it really belongs: in the voice." Graf complained that the Hofoper had become indistinguishable from the Burgtheater—its stage now "governed by conversational sound," with parlando style and "muted voices" dominating even in ensembles and at moments of the greatest intensity. Nevertheless, he continued, the "dramatic force is often to be found in the colors given to the voice, in subtle nuances of expression, [and] in the sound mixtures."[17] For Graf, the introduction of a uniformly melodramatic style of delivery undercut the capacity of the singers' voices to communicate compelling dramatic details.

The status of the Mahler-Roller *Don Giovanni* as a symbol of the pair's innovative aesthetic also meant that the production remained a favorite target for writers displeased with the shrinking role of vocal sound in operatic drama. In a 1907 monograph about the soprano Lilli Lehmann, for instance, the critic and author Therese Rie used the production to argue that the soprano owed her success in the role of Donna Anna to her specifically vocal prowess. Lehmann triumphed where other Annas had failed, Rie claimed, because "in this mouth, the embellishments become what they should become, namely dramatic necessities without which nothing would work. And then one forgot whether the background was beautiful or not, and whether there were side curtains or gray towers."[18] The

[16] "In diesen scenischen Bildern scheinen modernste Kunstprincipien den Pinsel des Theatermalers gelenkt zu haben. Das Bühnenbild scheint Kunstwirkung für sich zu beanspruchen und überdies in symbolische, geistige Beziehungen treten zu wollen zur Handlung." J. K. [Julius Korngold], "Theater- und Kunstnachrichten. Hofoperntheater," *NFP*, 22 February 1903, 10.

[17] "Man spielt an solchen Abenden in der Oper eigentlich Burgtheater. […] Auf der Bühne herrscht der Konversationston; die dramatischesten [*sic*] Sachen werden, wie im Vorzimmer hoher Herrschaften, mit gedämpfter Stimme abgemacht, selbst in den Ensembleszenen macht sich der Parlandostil breit. […] So hat man in dieser Aufführung das Dramatische überall gesucht, nur dort nicht, wo es wirklich zu finden ist: in der Stimme. […] Oft findet man dramatische Gewalt in den Färbungen, welche der Stimme gegeben werden, in feinen Nuancen des Ausdrucks, in der Mischung der Klänge." Max Graf, "Die Neuinszenierung des 'Don Juan'," *NWJ* 13/4371 (22 December 1905), 1–2.

[18] "In diesem Munde werden die Verzierungen das, was sie werden sollten, nämlich dramatische Notwendigkeiten, ohne die es gar nicht ginge. Und da vergass man, ob der Hintergrund schön war oder nicht und ob es Seitenkoulissen oder graue Türme gab." L. Andro [Therese Rie], *Lilli Lehmann* (Berlin: "Harmonie" Verlagsgesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst, 1907), 28–9.

importance Rie attaches to Lehmann's embellishments is important, underscoring as it does the fact that complaints about "lifeless figures with music boxes in their throats" had not served to indict vocal ornamentation *per se*. Yet it is her allusion to the gray towers that gives her account such a sharp critical edge. These were the signature design element of the Mahler-Roller *Don Giovanni*; they not only framed the production architecturally, but were envisioned as communicating dramatic meaning in the same vein as Roller's sets for *Tristan*.[19] But their presence in Rie's account is actually a cunning bit of creative fiction, since Lehmann never sang the role of Donna Anna in the Mahler-Roller production (although she did perform the role regularly at the nearby Salzburg Festival between 1901 and 1910). Rie's invocation of the gray towers was thus pointedly allegorical: in her account, vocal sounds of "dramatic necessity" erase scenery from operatic experience.

Rie certainly went farther than most in asserting that vocal sound enabled arresting drama in the context of performance, but what makes her account especially useful here is its plain description of a kind of hermeneutic listening whereby ideals may be projected onto material vocal sounds.[20] That listening practice is central to the story of this chapter, which is ultimately about a "voice" that is not a pre-given essence, but rather heard and acted out willfully. By following the vicissitudes of Gutheil-Schoder's career as they intersect with broader discourses and practices of dramatic animation, my aim in this chapter is to chart a less familiar (and perhaps more concrete) course through the Viennese encounter with new possibilities for projecting the self on stage, although connections to more familiar narratives will gradually emerge.[21] The discourse that collected around Gutheil-Schoder reveals that critics increasingly fetishized the humanity of those they saw on stage in accordance with conceptions of "humanness" that were shifting in tandem with emergent psychoanalytic discourse.[22] As I will demonstrate, initial concerns about her voice led reviewers to construe Gutheil-Schoder's humanness in relation not to the sounds of her singing but to the apprehension of her audiovisual "vitality."

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[19] One indication of the extent to which the towers became symbolic of the production is how frequently they appear in satire about the Hofoper under Mahler's directorship; one example is [Unsigned], "Die Kastel-Dekorationen der k. k. Hofoper," *Kikeriki!* 46/12 (11 February 1906), 9. For more on the gray towers as well as the contemporary critical reaction to them, see Evan Baker, "Alfred Roller's production of Mozart's 'Don Giovanni': A break in the scenic traditions of the Vienna Court Opera" (PhD diss., New York University, 1993).

[20] For a recent consideration of how voice is constructed through the projection of listeners' expectations that foregrounds the racial dynamics of such processes, see Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Marian Anderson and 'Sonic Blackness' in American Opera," *American Quarterly* 63/3 (September 2011), 641–71.

[21] Histories of musical culture in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna have often centered on how the city's political situation shaped journalistic criticism, or on the innovations in staging enacted at the Hofoper under Mahler's creative leadership. On urban politics and liberalism, see especially Margaret Notley, "Brahms as Liberal: Genre, Style, and Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 17 (1993–94), 107–23, and David Brodbeck, *Defining* Deutschtum*: Political Ideology, German Identity, and Music-Critical Discourse in Liberal Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). On Mahler's tenure at the Hofoper, see Franz Willnauer, *Gustav Mahler und die Wiener Oper*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Löcker, 1993), and the magisterial work of Henry-Louis de la Grange, specifically his *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 2, *Vienna: The Years of Challenge (1897–1904)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), and *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904–1907)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). On Mahler's collaborations with Alfred Roller, see Vana Greisenegger-Georgila, "Eine Reformbühne für Mahler," in *Gustav Mahler und Wien: "Leider bleibe ich ein eingefleischter Wiener*," ed. Reinhold Kubik and Thomas Trabitsch (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2010), 134–48, and Evan Baker, *From the Score to the Stage: An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 264–77.

[22] For an account of early twentieth-century Vienna that considers how the figure of "the human" was constructed in relation to psychoanalytic and theatrical discourses, and that emphasizes both visual art and the so-called modern, pathological body, see Nathan J. Timpano, *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

Within a few years, however, Gutheil-Schoder's humanness would instead come to be evaluated in terms of her chameleon-like ability to shift colors in accordance with the demands of a burgeoning *Charakterisierungskunst*, or art of characterization; crucially, within the sphere of opera, this investment in characterization was at its core an attempt to dramatize a deep concept of "the human" using a strikingly visual concept of voice, one in search of illusive "sonic colors." Finally, and most importantly, I bring these ideas together to show how by 1910 Gutheil-Schoder's voice would emerge as the discursive projection of a contemporary *Willenskultur* (or "culture of the will"), whereby her voice was heard and valorized as psychological intention made (barely) audible.[23] As the best and most human voices were found to be "willed" more than "sounded," Gutheil-Schoder would become one of Vienna's most valued artistic possessions.

VITALITY; OR, REJECTING DEADNESS

In a world where "music boxes" populated operatic stages, Gutheil-Schoder stood out, or so it seemed to the many Viennese journalists who covered her in the years around 1900. Her vitality quickly became an *idée fixe*. Commenting on her Viennese debut, in which she appeared as Nedda in Leoncavallo's *Der Bajazzo* (i.e. *I Pagliacci*), one reporter exuberantly announced that she had "breathed new soul into the whole opera."[24] Later that year, Graf celebrated her "interiority" as the source of her creative power.[25] Another writer contended that "The art of this woman is life, warmly and freshly pulsating life."[26] The rhetoric only became more inflated as time went on. Looking back on Gutheil-Schoder's early Viennese reception, the critic Richard Specht recalled in 1906 that "at first one was surprised by such a twitching life amidst singing operatic puppets."[27] In 1911 Ludwig Ullmann, a member of Vienna's *Akademischer Verband für Literatur und Musik* (Academic Association for Literature and Music), enthused that she had endowed her character with "a will and a heartbeat, where earlier there had only been a marionette."[28] Adjectives like "pulsating" and "twitching" act as graphic guarantors of her vitality; but these descriptors also engage with the contentious discourses of literary and dramatic realism, collapsing as they do any distance between art and the corporeal dimensions of life and experience.[29]

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[23] The term *Willenskultur*, which will be addressed in the final section of this chapter, is borrowed from Michael Cowan, *Cult of the Will: Nervousness and German Modernity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

[24] "[Frau Gutheil-Schoder] entpuppte sich als eine große Künstlerin von packender Eigenart, der ganzen abgespielten Oper hauchte sie eine neue Seele ein und zum Schluß gab es einen Beifall, wie er in solchem Maße der Premiere des erfolgreichen Werkes nicht beschieden war." a. k. [*sic*], "Hofoperntheater," *NWJ* 8/2272 (20 February 1900), 6. This performance, her Hofoper debut, took place on 19 February 1900.

[25] Max Graf, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *Bühne und Welt* 3/1 (October 1900–March 1901), 384.

[26] "Die Kunst dieser Frau ist Leben, warm und frisch pulsierendes Leben.") nn. [*sic*], "Der Verismus in der Oper (Frau Gutheil-Schoder," *NMZ* 21/21 (1900), 259.

[27] "[Ihr Drang nach Charakteristik ist so groß], daß man anfangs verleitet war, durch solch zuckendes Leben inmitten singender Opernpuppen überrascht." Richard Specht, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *DS* 2/49 (6 December 1906), 566.

[28] "[E]in Wille und ein Herzschlag, wo früher nur eine Marionette gewesen." Ludwig Ullmann, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *Der Merker* 29/2 (December 1911), 1176.

[29] The multiple agendas that play out behind and within the language of these reviews bears out Benjamin Korstvedt's observation that Viennese journalists often used language to generate and to take ownership of experiences of performance events, rather than merely to report on them; see Korstvedt, "Reading Music Criticism Beyond the Fin-de-siècle Vienna Paradigm," *Musical Quarterly* 94 (2011), 169–75.

What is most striking about these early constructions of Gutheil-Schoder's vitality, however, is the rarity with which "voice" is directly addressed. At once enthralled by her artistry and alarmed by her vocal inadequacy, critics seized on the idea of vitality as a way to enjoy the former without misrepresenting the latter.[30] The need to sidestep Gutheil-Schoder's voice propelled some writers to take up surprisingly hostile positions towards the role of voice in opera in general. In the profile from 1900 cited above, Graf ventured to suggest that Gutheil-Schoder's vocal deficiencies had forced her to develop alternative modes of expressivity that actually rendered her more compelling than other singers: "This artist was driven to strengthen, through all possible aids, the effects which she was unable to exert as a singer alone […] her sharp mind and glowing interiority came together to nourish her performances."[31] Without a pleasing voice to fall back on, Graf suggested, Gutheil-Schoder relied instead on her "interiority" (*das Innere*), letting her "imagination" (*ihre Phantasie*) work on her depiction of a character.[32] While her vocally endowed colleagues were soulless music boxes, Gutheil-Schoder had become a *Menschendarstellerin* (a human performer). In advocating for this so-called singer without voice, Graf had penned an indictment of contemporary operatic performance itself.

One critic from this period drew on a particularly evocative metaphor to convey the contrast between the performances of Gutheil-Schoder and of those who played opposite her: "Her 'Don Jose' or 'Canio' must act whether he wants to or not; otherwise he would create a very sad figure as a tenor *Hampelmann*—whose left hand rests on the heart and whose right arm flails around in the air—next to the German singing Duse."[33] As the Grimm brothers had defined it in their *Wörterbuch*, the *Hampelmann* was a carved or cardboard doll that could be jolted into movement by pulling at the governing limbs.[34] Decades later, it remained a spasmodic and puerile plaything; one turn-of-the-century historian of toys counted it among the most amusing human-like figures for children, one that required only "a little tug of the thread [to make] the arms and legs of the small cardboard creature fly up in the air on command."[35] Jerky, lifeless effigies through which song moved—this was to be the fate of Gutheil-Schoder's colleagues if they did not keep pace with the new taste for vivid and nuanced dramatic performance.

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[30] The novelty of the situation was explicated by a Berlin-based critic who had seen her perform as the title heroine in Bizet's *Carmen*. He took note of her "worn-out" organ and her unique interpretation, and admitted that "with her, we satisfy ourselves with an aspirated song, with a whisper in places where we demand the most powerful vocal elaboration of others." ("Wir begnügen uns bei ihr mit einem kaum hingehauchten Gesang, mit einem Flüstern an Stellen, in denen wir von Anderen die mächtigste Stimmentfaltung verlangen.") E[ugenio] v. Pirani, "Königliches Opernhaus," *NZfM* 96/8 (21 February 1900), 92. Many authors were less forthcoming about her voice, minimizing or even abstaining from discussion of it. See, for instance, [Unsigned], "Hofoperntheater," *NFP*, 25 February 1900, 9.

[31] "So war diese Künstlerin dazu getrieben, die Wirkung, welche sie als Sängerin allein nicht auszuüben vermochte […], durch alle möglichen Hilfen zu verstärken […] Nun arbeiteten ihr scharfer Verstand und ihr glühendes Innere gemeinsam an diesem Werke, gaben sich gegenseitig Nahrung, erklügelten und erfanden Mittel, Pfiffe, [und] Seitenwege." Graf, "Gutheil-Schoder," 382.

[32] Graf, "Gutheil-Schoder," 384.

[33] "Ihr 'Don Jose' und 'Canio' muß spielen, ob er wolle oder nicht, er würde sonst eine gar zu traurige Figur machen als tenoristischer Hampelmann, der die linke Hand auf das Herz legt und mit dem rechten Arm in der Luft herumrudert, neben der deutschen singenden Duse." nn., "Der Verismus," 259.

[34] Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 4, book 2 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1877), 321–2.

[35] "[Der Hampelmann bedarf] doch nur eines kleinen Ruckes am Fädchen, und Arme und Beine des kleinen Pappgeschöpfes fliegen auf Kommando in die Höhe. Für die Kinder gibt es nichts Amüsanteres, als [der Hampelmann]." Paul Hildebrandt, *Das Spielzeug im Leben des Kindes* (Berlin: Söhlke, 1904), 358.

A (REAL) HUMAN BEING ON STAGE

If the *Hampelmann* represented a playful way of distinguishing Gutheil-Schoder from the seemingly two-dimensional singers with whom she shared the stage, the sobriquet "singing Duse" made an equally pointed distinction. The reference was to the actress Eleonora Duse (1858–1924), who commanded stages from St. Petersburg to London at the *fin de siècle* and whose style was closely linked with naturalism. Critical fascination with Duse peaked in Germany during the 1890s following a string of performances in Berlin and Vienna.[36] Even before Gutheil-Schoder earned the title, the phrase "singing Duse" had been applied to popular sopranos such as Francheschina Prevosti (1867–1939) and Gemma Bellincioni (1864–1950).[37]

These comparisons attached prestige to the singers, but also pointed towards a specifically theatrical achievement. Duse was especially known for her capacity to recede from view in performance. As the Austrian writer Hermann Bahr explained, most performers approached dramatic verse as merely a channel through which to reveal their own personalities. But Duse operated in reverse: "She creeps into the poet, disappears in him, and what finally emerges […] is *his* nature and *his* creature."[38] Duse's genius lay not only in transparency, but in the ability to transform herself at the command of the poet. By championing what Wagner had called "self-divestment," Bahr's account recalls Wagner's idealization of the performer as interpreter, a topic to which I will return in the final section of this chapter. Of course, Wagner was hardly the first to attend to this issue; but while singers had long been praised for acts of self-abnegation, these *fin-de-siècle* conceptualizations were distinguished (as we will see) by their considerable emphasis on the notion of a highly varied audiovisual canvas.

To be compared with Duse was high praise, but German-speaking critics also employed the comparison to promote a particular aesthetic of realism. Bellincioni, the singer most frequently compared to Duse during the 1890s, was frequently praised as especially "lifelike."[39] The Berlin-based critic Carl Krebs went further, enthusing that "what [Bellincioni] does on the stage appears less as a

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[36] Writing in 1892, one critic scoffed that only a proper idiot would not know that Duse was acclaimed as the greatest actress in the world and the instigator of a new art of acting. See M. H. [Maximilian Harden], "Die Duse," *Die Zukunft* 1 (5 December 1892), 469. The German fascination with Duse was fanned by exoticism and stereotypes about Italians; see Stefanie Watzka, *Die "Persona" der Virtuosin Eleonora Duse im Kulturwandel Berlins in den 1890er-Jahren: "Italienischer Typus" oder "Heimathloser Zugvogel"?* (Tübingen: Francke, 2012).

[37] Emma Calvé would also be linked with Duse; see Steven Huebner, "La princesse paysanne du Midi," in *Music, Theater and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 366–73.

[38] "Bei den Anderen ist die eigene Natur immer das Erste: der Dichter gibt blos den Stoff, in welchem sie sich zeigen, an welchem sie sich offenbaren kann. Bei ihr ist es umgekehrt: sie kriecht in den Dichter hinein, verschwindet in ihm und was am Ende aus ihm wieder herauskommt, ist seine Natur und sein Geschöpf." Hermann Bahr, *Führer durch das Gastspiel von Eleonora Duse* (Berlin: A. H. Fried, 1892), 4 (emphasis added).

[39] Heinrich Schenker counted himself among Bellincioni's champions. He waxed lyrical about how she had gone through *Cavalleria rusticana* "like the law of dramatic necessity" ("wie das Gesetz der dramatischen Nothwendigkeit") and cast her—much as Bahr had cast Duse—as the crucial intermediary between composer and audience, and as the chief arbiter of a work's dramatic essence. Heinrich Schenker, "Mascagni in Wien," *Die Zukunft* 1 (15 October 1892), 139. Schenker's correspondence with Maximilian Harden (then editor of *Die Zukunft*) suggests that both men regarded Bellincioni as a far greater talent than Duse herself. See Schenker Documents Online, OJ 11/42, [2] (29 November 1892), transcr. and trans. William Pastille, http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-11-42_2.html.

performance than an experience. It is simple, unretouched nature itself. She does not make any gestures or facial twitches that could be perceived as being out of character for the person she plays."[40] This elision of Bellincioni's art with life off stage and with sheer nature is in keeping with the tendency Susan Rutherford has noted for *fin-de-siècle* observers to construct realism in terms indebted to a scientific vocabulary of mechanism and vitality. Rutherford cites a British writer who in 1892 characterized realism as the transformation "from a machine into a living and sentient being."[41]

Both of these concepts likewise appeared in discourse about Duse, and both were active for the German critics who were trying to find ways to understand the new performance styles of Gutheil-Schoder, Bellincioni and others. Bahr contrasted Duse's ability to self-divest and crawl into the work, which he described as "perfect realism," with the "photographic realism" (*photographischen Realismus*) associated with "realist actors"; he believed the latter form was inferior because it reduced life to fossilized snapshots.[42] The dramatist and journalist Eugen Zabel similarly worried about how "photographic" realism's disproportionate emphasis on curated surfaces presented a fallacious "truth," one that displaced genuine feeling in the pursuit of external precision. Duse, meanwhile, led people to forget they were in the theater altogether.[43] When she took the stage, Zabel argued, thoughts of disguise and illusion fell away: "Everyone saw a person living, loving and suffering [such that] the differences between art and nature were completely blurred."[44]

The popularity of *verismo*-style works in 1890s Germany meant that debates about *verismo* and theatrical realism developed alongside each other. Within the same account of musical goings-on in Berlin that led him to describe Bellincioni's performance as "unretouched nature," Krebs expressed concern that the latest operatic style trafficked in a specious form of realism: "The name 'verismo,' which the Italian art magazines give to the new direction, is false. The outer verisimilitude—not the inner, artistic truth—has become greater; nature is not more deeply captured, but naturalness is better accomplished."[45] Such statements, taken together with those Rutherford has amassed from the English-language press, cut through the conceptual fog that has long shrouded terms like *verismo* and realism, to indicate (as I began to suggest in the previous chapter) that we might seek its sources not

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[40] "Was [Bellincioni] auf der Bühne thut, wirkt nicht mehr als Spiel, sondern als Erlebniß, es ist die einfache, unretouchirte Natur selbst. Sie macht keine Geste und keine Mienenzuckung, die nicht aus dem Charakter der Person, die sie darstellt, heraus empfunden wäre." Carl Krebs, "Aus dem Berliner Musikleben," *Deutsche Rundschau* 74 (January–March 1893), 294.

[41] Susan Rutherford, "'Pretending to be Wicked': Divas, Technology, and the Consumption of Bizet's Carmen," in *Technology and the Diva: Sopranos, Opera, and Media from Romanticism to the Digital Age*, ed. Karen Henson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 78.

[42] Bahr, *Führer durch das Gastspiel*, 7–8. His discussion of realism extends to p. 9. Bahr's recourse to photography here is reminiscent of another British critic who praised Emma Calvé's Carmen as "photographed from life." See Rutherford, "'Pretending to be Wicked'," 78.

[43] On this point, see especially Paul Schlenther, "Eleonora Duse," *Deutsches Rundschau* 74 (January–March 1893), 138, in which the author argued that other performers could be praised as masters of illusion, but with Duse, one's chief impression was of a human being.

[44] Here is the quotation in fuller context: "Von dem ersten Augenblick, als sie zu spielen begann, hatte man vergessen, daß man im Theater war. Niemand dachte daran, daß die Absicht einer holden Täuschung durch verkleidete Personen vorliege. Jeder sah vielmehr in Wirklichkeit einen Menschen leben, lieben und leiden. An diesem Abend waren die Unterschiede zwischen Kunst und Natur vollständig verwischt." Eugen Zabel, *Die italienische Schauspielkunst in Deutschland: Adelaide Ristori, Tommaso Salvini, Ernesto Rossi, Eleonore Duse*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Rentzel, 1893), 40.

[45] "Der Name 'Verismo,' den italienische Kunstzeitschriften der neuen Richtung geben, ist falsch. Nicht die innere, künstlerische Wahrheit ist größer geworden, sondern die äußere Wahrscheinlichkeit; nicht die Natur ist tiefer erfaßt, sondern die Natürlichkeit ist besser getroffen." Krebs, "Aus dem Berliner Musikleben," 292.

in literary models such as Giovanni Verga and Émile Zola, nor in the material content of an opera's text at all, but in modes of performance and perception.

Reviewers found Gutheil-Schoder's realism so central to her success because it was inextricable from her vital, moving body.[46] Robert Hirschfeld of the *Wiener Zeitung* rhapsodized about her movements in the role of Carmen, and built from them an argument about the accuracy of her representation. Marveling at her virtuosic sitting, how she draped her body to express sensuality, and how her face was as pliant as soft clay, he concluded that this astonishing vitality was itself a form of verisimilitude. "She demonstrated the elasticity and buoyancy of the gypsy's body," he wrote, noting that other famed performers had not "summoned Carmen [as] deeply from the foundations of southern folk life."[47] But in a *Neue Musik-Zeitung* article entitled "Der Verismus in der Oper (Frau Gutheil-Schoder)," an anonymous writer observed that Gutheil-Schoder had conquered Vienna with "truthful" representations precisely because she did not peddle fixed and overly legible signifiers meant to guarantee verisimilitude. The piece seems to have been intended as a rejoinder to the Hirschfelds of the world, whose loose rhetoric had misrepresented what kind of "verist" Gutheil-Schoder was, and perhaps more importantly, had muddied the waters as to what constituted truth and realism in opera. Opera-goers, the author wrote, were accustomed to Spanish dolls paraded around as Carmen, "singing figurines, sumptuously trimmed and richly tufted, who [rattle] castanets and [act] out the average coquetry of badly behaved teenage girls," but, spurning such "trite external art," Gutheil-Schoder extracted her expressive gestures directly from the character herself.[48] Thus, the writer concluded, it did not matter "whether she was ever in Spain, Seville, or in the cigarette factory, [or] if her Carmen [really] lives or is a mixed creature woven from fantasy and reality. She lives on stage."[49]

(RE)HEARING GUTHEIL-SCHODER

Around 1900, satirists found the "singer without voice" too good to pass up. One contributor to the *Wiener Caricaturen* joked that the Hofoper's newest addition had secured some initial success because

[46] The words "realistic," "veristic," and "truthful" frequently appeared in accounts of Gutheil-Schoder's Carmen. Exemplary reviews include O. v. Kapff, "K. k. Hofoper," *Österreichische Musik- und Theaterzeitung* 6/2 (1899/1900), 2; tr [*sic*], "Kunst und Wissenschaft. Hofoperntheater," *Ostdeutsches Rundschau* 11/55 (25 February 1900), 6; and Victor Joss, "Opern-Revue. Wien," *NmP* 9/8 (25 February 1900), 65. She was also described as a "verist" (*Veristin*), and later a "realist" (*Realistin*). See [Unsigned], "Vom Theater," *Das interessante Blatt* 19/12 (22 March 1900), 17; and Specht, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 567.

[47] "Denn selbst Frau Lucca hat ihre Carmen nicht so tief aus den Gründen des südlichen Volkslebens geholt. […] Frau Gutheil-Schoder zeigte heute die Elasticität, die Spannkraft zigeunerischer Körper." R. H. [Robert Hirschfeld], "Hofoperntheater," *Wiener Zeitung*, 25 February 1900, 5.

[48] "Man war das spanische Püppchen der Maskenredouten gewöhnt, die singende Figurine, kostbar befranst, reich betroddelt, die mit den Kastagnetten klapperte und die Durchschnitts-Koketterie des ungezogenen Backfischchens spielen ließ. Frau Gutheil-Schoder verschmäht wohlfeile Außenkünste, sie ist eine Seelenkünderin. […] Jeder Fächerschlag, jedes Zwinkern, jedes Fingerschnipfen ist mitten aus dem Charakter herausgeholt." nn. [*sic*], 'Der Verismus," 259. For a consideration of the relationship between contemporary gender constructions and Gutheil-Schoder's creation of female characters, see Carola Frances Darwin, "The 'I' of the Other: Opera and Gender in Vienna, 1900–1918" (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2009), 190–216.

[49] "Ob sie je in Spanien war, in Sevilla, in der Cigarrenfabrik? Ob ihre Carmen lebt oder ein Mischgeschöpft ist, aus Phantasie und Wirklichkeit gewoben? Auf der Bühne lebt sie." nn. [*sic*], "Der Verismus," 259. In 1908, one writer would even suggest that the role of Carmen *required* the kind of pulsating vitality Gutheil-Schoder gave to it; see Paul Felix, "Sängerinnen in ihren typischen Rollen," *Die Woche* 10/46 (14 November 1908), 1998.

audiences had judged with their eyes instead of their ears. The piece's punning title ("'Aber'—witz") hinted that the singer's fans and detractors found themselves in a strange marriage, since they disagreed only on whether her bad voice or her good acting ought to be privileged. Differences of opinion were registered with a carefully placed "but" (*aber*): one believed either that Gutheil-Schoder was an astounding actress but possessed the most meager vocal means, or that she lacked sufficient vocal means but was an extraordinary actress. The very necessity of choosing between these alternatives, the piece suggests, was sheer lunacy (*Aberwitz*), as if Gutheil-Schoder could be "a great singer without voice, as in the well-known saying that Raphael would have become a great artist even without arms."[50]

By 1910, journalists had begun to embrace her voice, even while satirists continued to mine her vocal deficiencies for comedic effect.[51] These accounts reveal a steady uptick in praise for her vocality from around 1905—effusions about her ability to achieve "the most astonishing effects [through] her dull, flat and ravished soprano voice," according to one author.[52] Such a wholesale reversal in a singer's critical fortunes is typically framed as a response by listeners to changes made by the singer, like additional training, different (more "suitable") repertoire choices, or simply moving on to a different local public. Yet Viennese writers were quick to cast themselves as the primary instigators of this change. By the early 1910s it had become routine to describe how the Viennese had overcome their blind adoration of vocal beauty, and had in turn discovered the beauty of Gutheil-Schoder's idiosyncrasies. Specht recalled in 1913 that "the public at first wanted nothing to do with her voice" because it did not conform to familiar standards of vocal beauty. "Only slowly," he continued, had they realized "the quite extraordinary singing culture" to which Gutheil-Schoder's voice belonged, and recognized how "only these slender […] tones tolerated being loaded with such a clear expression."[53]

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[50] The "well-known saying" is likely a reference to Nietzsche's phrase "Raphael without hands" ("Raffael ohne Hände"), which appears in section 274 of his *Beyond Good and Evil*; Nietzsche had drawn the phrase from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Emilia Galotti* (1772). [Unsigned], "'Aber'—witz," *Wiener Caricaturen* 20/10 (4 March 1900), 2–3.

[51] For instance, a booklet of satirical epigrams about Viennese society poked fun at Gutheil-Schoder in 1908, likening the "singer without voice" to wireless telegraphy:

"MARIE GUTHEIL SCHODER.	"MARIE GUTHEIL SCHODER.
Die Telegraphie ohne Draht erschuf	Wireless telegraphy was created
Marconi in seinem Grimme –	by Marconi in his violent anger –
Sie hat erfunden dazu ein Pendant:	She invented a counterpart to it:
Die Sängerin ohne Stimme."	The singer without voice."

[Unsigned], "Das jüngste Gericht," *Wiener Caricaturen* 28/22 (31 May 1908), 5.

[52] "Man kennt auch Frau Schoder-Gutheil [*sic*], die mit ihrem stumpfen, flachen, rauben Sopran, […] die erstaunlichsten Wirkungen erzielt." Hans Warbeck, "Emmy Destinn," *DS* 3/1 (1907), 18. Another representative example is V. S. [*sic*], "Hofoper," *DH* 28/27 (20 September 1908), 2.

[53] In its entirety, the quote reads: "Dazu kommt, daß das Wiener Publikum zunächst mit ihrer Stimme nichts anzufangen wußte, die so ganz anders war, als die voll blühenden, durchaus sinnlichen 'schönen Stimmen,' die man gewohnt war und die nichts anderes als eben nur schön waren: will sagen, nur dem rein Gesanglichen dienstbar, in keinerlei seelischen Spannungen vibrierend, von keinem frohen oder schweren Erleben gefärbt. Man erkannte erst langsam die ganz außerordentliche Gesangskultur, von der die sehr unsüßliche, eher herbe als sentimentale Stimme der Gutheil gemeistert wurde, erkannte erst langsam, daß es vor allem genau die Stimme war, die ihrem reizvoll spröden, festen, in leuchtender Heiterkeit und in schmerzlichen Bitternissen gleich starken Wesen durchaus gemäß war, und daß nur diese schlanken, zuchtvollen Töne es vertrugen, derart mit volldeutigem Ausdruck beladen zu werden, ohne in ungefüge, die Gesangslinie verdickende Akzente zu geraten." Richard Specht, *Gustav Mahler* (Berlin and Leipzig: Schuster und Loeffler, 1913), 103. Later accounts often repeated these talking points; examples include Karl Marilaun, "Aus Gesprächen mit Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *NWJ* 33/11326 (3 June 1925), 3, and Th. von Genser, "Die Gutheil-Schoder," *Die Bühne* 410 (October 1935), 36–7.

Such accounts may reflect a degree of creative rewriting: it is possible that Viennese listeners revised their aesthetic values and reacted to changes made by Gutheil-Schoder.[54] Either way, Viennese audiences had "learned to love this voice and the inimitable wailing charms of its veiled brilliance," as Ullmann put it, and this change signaled a new view of the role of voice in characterization.[55]

Fin-de-siècle critics were becoming more attuned to how well a singer's voice meshed with the dramatic needs of the role, their expectations now going far beyond proficient execution of the notes on the page. In 1895 Eduard Hanslick had been quick to label vocal cries as excessive mannerism: he heard Marie Renard's "outcries"—vocalizations which coincided with her character's descent into madness—as blemishes on the proper conduct of the voice.[56] But Julius Korngold would prioritize dramatic intensity over vocal beauty: evaluating one singer's portrayal of Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio* in 1904, he insisted that "the glow of the soul is more important […] than a lustrous B."[57] Specht would eventually offer his own variation on this line of criticism when he celebrated how Gutheil-Schoder used her voice as a tool for representing characters, rather than for self-serving feats of accomplishment like high Cs or kilometer-long trills.[58]

Mahler may have nudged this critical trajectory along through his attempts to fasten singing technique to the dramatic embodiment of role. As Hofoper director, he worked closely with his ensemble on staging as well as singing to ensure that the transmission of drama, and characterization in particular, were prioritized across all modes of creative expression.[59] He sought to elevate singing from "the merely glamorous to an artistic level," as Erwin Stein later recalled, an imperative that shaped his hiring practices as much as it did his day-to-day work with the Hofoper company.[60] Mahler's predilection for so-called singing actors rather than "star" singers influenced his decision to hire Gutheil-Schoder, whom he praised for her ability to reveal in each expressive gesture the character she sought to portray.[61] Such initiatives contributed to the development of a newly "dramatic" style of

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[54] In her posthumously published autobiography, she thanked Lilli Lehmann for helping her cultivate her artistry over "the last decades," but it remains unclear whether their coachings commenced much earlier than a 1911 letter cited by Carola Darwin, in which Gutheil-Schoder told Schoenberg of her "exciting work" with the older soprano. Marie Gutheil-Schoder, *Erlebtes und Erstrebtes: Rolle und Gestaltung* (Vienna: Rudolf Krey, 1937), 29–32; Darwin, "The 'I' of the Other," 212.

[55] "Allmählich lernte [die Wiener] diese Stimme lieben und den unnachahmlichen wehen Zauber ihres verschleierten Glanzes." Ullmann, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 1175.

[56] The comments were included in his review of *La Navarraise*; he described Renard's brilliance in the role but admonished her for falling prey to the kind of "exaggerations [that the role tempts and almost forces] in the last scenes," and advised that "in later performances Renard may [want] to lessen some of the many outcries." ("Die Rolle verleitet, ja zwingt beinahe zu Uebertreibungen in den letzten Scenen; Fräulein Renard dürfte in späteren Aufführungen manchen Aufschrei mildern.") Ed. H. [Eduard Hanslick], "Feuilleton. Hofoperntheater," 2.

[57] Korngold also argued that Leonore required more emotional maturity and expressive truth than technical prowess and vocal beauty. ("Fordert doch Leonore überhaupt weniger Reise der Technik als Reise der Empfindung und beinahe weniger Schönheit der Stimme als Wahrheit des Ausdruckes. […] Das Leuchten der Seele ist wichtiger für die E-dur-Arie, als ein aufglänzendes H.") Julius Korngold, "Feuilleton. Hofoperntheater. (Neuinszenierung von 'Fidelio'.)," *NFP*, 8 October 1904, 3.

[58] Richard Specht, "Die Vortragsmeisterin: Zur Berufung Marie Gutheil-Schoders," *NWJ* 32/10977 (11 June 1924), 3.

[59] For more on Mahler's view of operatic singing and his work with the Hofoper singers, see Franz Willnauer, "'Bedenken Sie, dass Sie und ich für das Institut da sind': Der Direktor und seine Sänger im Licht ihrer persönlichen Beziehungen," in *Gustav Mahler und Wien: "Leider bleibe ich ein eingefleischter Wiener*," ed. Reinhold Kubik and Thomas Trabitsch (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2010), 121–33.

[60] Stein, "Mahler and the Vienna Opera," 297.

[61] According to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, Mahler felt that with Gutheil-Schoder "Every note is soul, and every expression, every movement is a revelation of the character she is trying to get inside […]. It is not the isolated vocal performance or the art of a singer which gives a great impression, but rather a complete figure, warm with life, being brought into view."

opera performance in contemporary Vienna, but they also represented continuations of the performance aesthetics Wagner had championed earlier in the nineteenth century. Wagner had famously drawn inspiration for his performance ideals from the soprano Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, whom he saw as so fully immersed in her roles that all her creative faculties were directed toward communicating an unbroken dramatic whole.[62]

It is easy to connect Mahler's reform agenda to a newfound awareness of how voice could heighten drama through characterization, yet contemporary accounts suggest the need for caution when drawing straight lines of influence. It is significant that contemporary writers rarely construed the changing relationship of voice and characterization with a singular focus on the Hofoper director; furthermore, they often emphasized Gutheil-Schoder's role in the development of this new style. Even before Paul Stefan in 1908 noted the impact her presence had on Mahler's project, and before Ullmann in 1911 argued that Mahler's accomplishments as Hofoper director were wholly inseparable from her contributions, Max Vancsa of the *Neue musikalische Presse* had summoned her in 1906 when describing a new generation's ideals for representation.[63] Disenchanted with "vocal giants," this new generation, wrote Vancsa, demanded "more intellectual work" and saw consummate models for representational art in Josef Kainz (a popular stage actor praised for arresting performances), Gutheil-Schoder, and Gustav Mahler.[64] Vancsa's dispersal of agency indicates attention to the complex networks involved in developing a new dramatic performance style. This reduces the dependency of his model on particular creative forces (in this case Mahler) that might otherwise serve to yoke evolving performance ideals to—even silo them within—a particular locale (in this case Vienna), encouraging us to consider how local developments both produce and are produced by global ones.[65]

Indeed, Viennese critics were not alone in valorizing the interlacing of vocal sound and characterization. Writers across the German-speaking world had become alert to the transmission of characterization, as evidenced by the frequent allusions to *Charakterisierungskunst* and to designations

("Jeder Ton ist Seele und in jeder Miene und Bewegung liegt eine Offenbarung des Charakters, den sie darstellen will […] nicht vereinzelte außerordentliche Leistungen der Stimme oder der Kunst eines Sängers sind es, was den großen Eindruck hervorbringt. Es kommt darauf an, daß an ganze, lebenswarme Gestalt zur Anschauung gebracht wird.") Herbert Killian, *Gustav Mahler in den Erinnerungen von Natalie Bauer-Lechner* (Hamburg: K. D. Wagner, 1984), 155.

[62] Regarding Wagner's admiration for Schröder-Devrient see Susan A. Rutherford, "Wilhemine Schröder-Devrient: Wagner's Theatrical Muse," in *Women, Theatre and Performance: New Histories, New Historiographies*, ed. Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 60–80.

[63] Paul Stefan, *Gustav Mahlers Erbe: Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Geschichte der deutschen Bühne und des Herrn Felix von Weingartner* (Munich: Hans von Weber, 1908), 19–21; Ullmann, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 1775; Max Vancsa, "Hermann Winkelmann (zu seinem letzten Auftreten, am 30. Mai 1906)," *NmP* 15/13 (16 June 1906), 272–4.

[64] "Die jüngere Generation hat andere Ideale der darstellenden Kunst. Sie verlangt mehr verstandesmäßige Arbeit, reichere Nuancierung, feinere Übergange, mehr Nerven- als Empfindungskunst, schwächliche Farben und grellere Kontraste, wie denn die Bühnenrecken und Stimmriesen im Aussterben begriffen scheinen. Nicht mehr Baumeister, Winkelmann, Hans Richter sind ihre Ideale, sondern Kainz, die Gutheil-Schoder, Gustav Mahler." Vancsa, "Hermann Winkelmann," 274.

[65] To a certain extent, the notion that Mahler influenced the development of this performance style was consolidated in retrospect, through essays such as those authored by Gutheil-Schoder herself. See Gutheil-Schoder, "Mahlers Opernregie," in *Gustav Mahler: Ein Bild seiner Persönlichkeit in Widmungen*, ed. Paul Stefan (Munich, 1910), 34–7; and Gutheil-Schoder, "Mahler bei der Arbeit," *Der Merker* 3/5 (March 1912), 165. The former essay postdated Mahler's 1907 departure from the Hofoper and appeared alongside contributions by Alfred Roller, Oskar Bie, the singer Anna Bahr-Mildenburg (Mahler's Hofoper colleague), and the composer Hans Pfitzner. The latter postdated Mahler's death in 1911 and appeared as part of a special issue of *Der Merker* that was devoted to Mahler on the occasion of his death; Gutheil-Schoder spoke to his legacy in opera, while other contributors (including Strauss and Schoenberg) considered other facets of his career.

such as "character actor" (*Charakterdarstellerin*).[66] At the same time, they began replacing verbs like "vertreten" (to represent or substitute for) and "durchführen" (to carry out or implement) with stronger terms such as "verkörpern" (to embody) and phrases like "ins Leben rufen" (to bring into being). These developments went hand in hand with a solidifying operatic repertoire, which allowed for greater familiarity with individual works and their *dramatis personae*. With the steady repetition of a growing number of operas came greater integrity of characters: increasingly, the task of the singer was literally to step into a role, and this in turn prompted greater concern among critics that a singer's representation be appropriate to the character. This seems to be the thinking behind remarks such as Felix Adler's, when he applauded Gutheil-Schoder for transforming "the character [of Carmen] in her own way," but not so much as to make the character unrecognizable.[67]

In some cases, critics expected singers to portray particular characters through specific sonic attributes. In 1905 Hans Puchstein took issue with the "unpardonable" casting of Gutheil-Schoder as Donna Elvira, because the part required a "blossoming […] organ" that "intoxicates us" through its "euphony"—precisely what the singer lacked. Without this, he continued, "an Elvira filled with sensual love-passion, always ready to forgive, is inconceivable. In this role Frau Gutheil seemed to be a caricature of the part, however much she astonished here and there by means of a throat fluency, which one would hardly have expected of her."[68] Puchstein suggests that the sonic qualities of a good Elvira inhere in the singer's vocal organ, something for which no amount of skill at manipulating that organ could compensate. In other words, it is the sonic profile that Gutheil-Schoder's voice brings to the part, not her admittedly impressive "throat fluency," that jeopardizes characterization. Perhaps the clearest distillation of how intertwined vocal sound and characterization had become came the following year, when one critic's desperation led him to make a bold suggestion. Lamenting the dramatic shortcomings of some coloratura singers who had recently appeared as the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, the author wondered whether "it might be appropriate to the interest of opera to change this part discreetly, so that it could be assumed by a dramatic singer appropriate to the character."[69] Evidently the combination of pleasing sound and good technique no longer guaranteed critical satisfaction. In proposing that the text be altered to strengthen the act, this

[66] These trends are particularly clear in accounts that referenced performances by Gutheil-Schoder. Illustrative examples include C[arlo] Droste, "Biographisches: Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *MW* 31/17 (19 April 1900), 225–6, Gustav Schönaich, "Kritik. Oper. Wien," *DM* 5/8 (December 1905–January 1906), 121, and Eugen Segnitz, "Leipzig," *MW* 39/12 (12 March 1908), 289.

[67] "Nichtsdestoweniger verdient es verzeichnet zu werden, wenn man eine neue originelle Carmen sieht, wenn eine Künstlerin besonderer Qualität diese Weib neugestaltet und neue Züge findet, neue bisher ungehörte Töne anschlägt und nach eigener Art den Charakter umschafft. Eine Künstlerin, die dies vollbracht hat, ist eben Frau Marie Gutheil-Schoder." Felix Adler, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder als Carmen," *Freistatt* 4/44 (1902), 615.

[68] "Als geradezu unfaßbar und als einen unverzeihlichen Mißgriff muß es bezeichnet werden, daß man die Rolle der "Donna Elvira" der Frau Gutheil-Schoder zuteilte. Wenn eine Partie, so erfordert gerade diese etwas, was Frau Gutheil-Schoder am allerwenigsten besitzt, ein blühend frisches, uns durch seinen Wohllaut berauschendes Organ. Ohne diese ist die von heißsinnlicher Liebesleidenschaft erfüllte, stets zu neuem Verzeihen bereite Elvira nicht denkbar. Frau Gutheil wirkt in dieser Rolle wie eine Karikatur auf diese Partie, so sehr sie auch stellenweise durch eine Kehlengeläufigkeit überraschte, die man der von ernstestem Streben beseelten Frau gar nicht zugetraut hätte." Hans Puchstein, "Der Mozart Zyklus," *DV* 17/6098 (22 December 1905), 10.

[69] "Vielleicht wäre es im Interesse der Oper angebracht, diese Partie diskret so zu ändern, dass sie ihrem Charakter entsprechend von einer dramatischen Sängerin übernommen werden könnte." C[arl] Rorich, "Weimar," *DM* 5/15 (April–May 1906), 191–2.

author revealed not simply the importance of characterization but the extent to which singers' voices affected the sense of character conveyed to the listener.

This increased investment in characterization—and specifically in the idea that immersion into a character ought to cross all modes of creative expression—also laid the groundwork for the critical rehabilitation of Gutheil-Schoder's voice. What it lacked in beauty it made up for in three-dimensionality, on the one hand, and pliability, on the other. These related qualities were quickly becoming a form of virtuosity in their own right, and were often signaled through critics' usage of the word "plastisch." Following a 1906 performance of Mozart's *Hochzeit des Figaro* in which she appeared as Susanna, Specht took note of how one subtle shift in her vocal quality changed his experience of the scene. For the whole of that evening's performance, her voice had been "light, silvery and supple," but it suddenly became "hoarse and strained as she undressed [Cherubino] […] and touched his young, masculine body. Despite the unselfconsciousness of the acting, it suddenly became hot and self-conscious—a delightful moment."[70] Specht's attunement to expressive subtlety might be read in terms of an appreciation among late nineteenth-century performers and listeners for what Henson has called "the carefully placed interpretive detail."[71] Indeed, his comments are particularly striking given that a moment of vocal strain is what prompts his excitement.

But his interest in such vocal details also suggests that three-dimensionality was a quality of vocal sound to which critics could listen for evidence of immersive characterization, a point Gutheil-Schoder herself would later stress in an essay on "roles and their development."[72] Specht proceeded to marvel at how Gutheil-Schoder had allowed soft sounds to creep suddenly into her shrill directives at precisely the moment in Hermann Goetz's *Der Widerspänstigen Zähmung* when her character Katherine senses the power of the man who will eventually restrain her. Singers, he noted, had rarely undertaken such "honest things" before, out of fear for how they might impact "a merely vocal consideration."[73] His enthusiasm for "the plastic expression of her singing"—which he cited as one reason for characterizing her as a "new and forward-looking model of operatic artist"—was shared by a growing number of authors, many of whom had already begun to revise their opinions about Gutheil-Schoder's voice in mind of the new prestige being attached to pliability.[74] More and more writers noted approvingly her range of vocal expression, which in some estimations contained all possible gradations of human emotion, and celebrated her capacity to draw out aspects of the drama through nuanced vocal

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[70] "Susannens Stimme, den ganzen Abend hindurch hell, silbern und heiter geschmeidig, wird plötzlich einen Augenblick lang gepreßt und heiser, während sie den Pagen zur Mummerei entkleidet und durch die Berührung mit dem jungen männlichen Körper, trotz aller Unbefangenheit des bloßen Spiels, auf einmal heiß und befangen wird – ein entzückender Moment." Specht, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 568.

[71] Henson, *Opera Acts*, 51. She explores this concept at greater length in chapters on Victor Maurel (pp. 19–47) and Célestine Galli-Marié (pp. 48–87).

[72] The essay was published posthumously along with a brief autobiographical account. See Gutheil-Schoder, *Erlebtes und Erstrebtes*, 33–58, especially p. 46.

[73] "Oder wenn sie im zweiten Akt der 'Widerspenstigen' plötzlich weich Laute in die schrill befehlenden des herrischen Kätchzens schleichen, da sie zum ersten Mal die Macht des Mannes spürt, der sie bändigen kommt. Lauter Dinge, die kaum eine Sängerin vor ihr gemacht hat, weil vielleicht irgend ein gehaltener Ton, irgend etwas blos Gesangliches darunter hätte leiden können." Specht, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 569.

[74] "Für alle andre tondramatische Gestaltung ist sie, in ihrer nervösen Energie, im farbig Malenden ihres Wesens, im plastischen Ausdruck ihres Gesangs, die Verkörperung einer neuen und nach vorwärts weisenden Art des Opernkünstlers." Specht, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 569.

shadings.[75] In fact, Specht's account reflects attitudes that had already been taking shape. In 1903, Gutheil-Schoder's entry in Ludwig Eisenberg's lexicon of German theater personalities counted her skillful use of parlando among her most valuable artistic qualities, and by 1905 journalists had begun urging their fellow opera-goers to stop fixating on her supposed lack of vocal beauty and appreciate instead her resourcefulness.[76]

With these plaudits ringing in our ears, we might ask what traces of Gutheil-Schoder's famed nuance and three-dimensionality might be detected in the recordings she made for Gramophone & Typewriter Company Records in 1902.[77] I want to stress that I do not mean to suggest these recordings (or indeed any recordings) constitute unproblematic evidence, let alone transparent documentation of "how things sounded." Rather, I follow Martha Feldman in imaging such recordings as fragmentary "aural palimpsests," as "the scraped and funneled parchments of an acoustic past" that are nevertheless part of the "evidentiary package" available to us for "accessing a material, physiological voice, however mediated."[78] Put another way, to engage with Gutheil-Schoder's recordings is to experiment knowingly with the kind of hermeneutic listening practiced by her contemporaries, whereby imagined ideals (or perhaps expectations) are projected onto material sounds.

Gutheil-Schoder's voice sounds small and agile compared with those of her female colleagues at the Hofoper, whose own recordings suggest more forceful and even hulking vocal presences.[79] Yet she often gives the impression of a highly varied sonic canvas because moments of heightened expressivity can register so clearly.[80] At times she seems to spike the sonic intensity of individual notes, making them protrude from the texture with crackles of feedback. In a recording of "Nun eilt herbei" from Otto Nicolai's *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, jarring intensification of sound aligns with a nuanced understanding of the text: with the repetition of the word "Schamrot" (blushing), Gutheil-Schoder's vehement delivery underscores a moment at which her character imagines revealing a secret.[81]

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[75] For instance, Victor Joss enthused about how she expressed the full range of emotional gradations in tones, and added that "the vocal defects never stand as such" ("die stimmlichen Defecte nirgends als solche hervortreten"). Joss, "Prag," *NZfM* 96/49 (5 December 1900), 594.

[76] Eisenberg, *Grosses biographisches Lexikon*, 373. While reviewing a performance by Gutheil-Schoder, one writer, evidently fed up with the claim that her voice was less beautiful than those of her colleagues, huffed that ingenuity mattered more than a voice ("Die gesangliche Leistung war technisch einwandfrei, und man höre endlich damit auf, dieser großen Künstlerin immer wieder vorzuhalten, ihre Stimme sei nicht so schön wie z.B. die der [Selma] Kurz. Ich denke, Genialität ist mehr als eine Stimme!") Dr. v. L. [*sic*], "Von den Opernbühnen. (Wien)," *NmP* 14/12–13 (10 June 1905), 184.

[77] The few operatic excerpts she recorded include "Nun eilt herbei" and "Frohsinn und Laune" from Nicolai's *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, "Ce domaine" (with tenor Franz Naval) from Boieldieu's *La dame blanche*, "Draußen am Wall von Sevilla" and "Wenn dir die Karten" from Bizet's *Carmen*, and "Hörst du es tönen" (again with Naval) from Offenbach's *Hoffmanns Erzählungen*. A full list of recordings made by Gutheil-Schoder can be found in Alan Kelly, ed., *His Master's Voice/Die Stimme Seines Herrn. The German Catalogue. A Complete Numerical Catalogue of German Gramophone Recordings made from 1898 to 1929 in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere by The Gramophone Company Ltd.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

[78] Feldman, *The Castrato*, 81. For more on approaching recorded music as evidence and the limitations of doing so, see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance* (London: CHARM, 2009), http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/intro.html (accessed 10 July 2019).

[79] A more extensive consideration of the recordings made by Mahler's Hofoper singers can be found in Harold Bruder, "Recording Review: Mahler's Decade in Vienna: Singers of the Court Opera, 1897–1907," *Opera Quarterly* 20 (2004), 464–72.

[80] One contemporary to develop a similarly painterly concept of voice was Lilli Lehmann; see her treatise, *Meine gesangskunst* (Berlin: Verlag der Zukunft, 1902).

[81] *Mahler's Decade in Vienna: Singers of the Court Opera, 1897–1907*, Marston, 53004-2, 2003, disc 1, track 26.

Elsewhere, her strategic use of rolled Rs injects sonic heft and flair into the moment when her character rehearses her address to her would-be seducer, Falstaff.

A recording of Carmen's "Seguidilla" (which she sings in the German version "Draußen am Wall von Sevilla") likewise suggests something of how Gutheil-Schoder harnessed her vocal dexterity to hug the expressive contours of her roles.[82] While many modern singers strive to maintain fluid phrasing throughout the Seguidilla, she often strings along punchy, detached notes—her way, perhaps, of working within the limitations of her voice, choosing to emphasize playfulness rather charm. At the beginning of the second phrase, she leans heavily into the attack, yielding a fleshy vocalization quite distinct from the flimsier quality of her head voice; the effect is a forceful, chesty sound that seems to heighten the sense of seduction. Such subtlety may have been what Salten had in mind when he claimed that Gutheil-Schoder could "reveal a figure suddenly through completely unexpected, seemingly slight nuances of character."[83] Indeed, he seemed to hear Carmen's affective states through the precise shadings of Gutheil-Schoder's voice: her "Habañera," he wrote, was "completely parlando, with mocking triumphalism, with seductive sensuality, [and] with shameless defiance more warbled than sung."[84] Though she may not have been able to compete with the laryngeal acrobatics of coloratura singers, contemporary chroniclers understood her performances as an antidote to such inert vocalizations, as products of inspiration and ensoulment, rather than as fossilized displays of accomplishment.

This was Gutheil-Schoder at her most resourceful, wresting everything she could from her voice. Gustav Schönaich explained in his own review of the 1906 *Figaro* that her performances were compelling precisely because of this flexibility and intelligent manipulation: "She alone is capable of […] adapting herself to the […] contours of the work. She always 'fits in' with the ensemble, the music, the text and the set. […] She has her own discreet shadings for the dreamy, capricious, enamoured and mischievous moments of the role."[85] Opinions had clearly changed since 1900, but the reversal was not so much a conscious attempt to rehabilitate her voice as a logical outgrowth of the new valorization of an integrated performance style where vocal sound worked in concert with gestures to produce a cogent whole. This also suggests why some of the clearest evidence for the newfound appreciation of her voice is not couched in polemical fanfare. When Ullmann observed that it was "possible for her [to produce] unspoken and inexpressible longing in a glance, in a shy gesture, [and] in the delicate timbre of a tone like no one else," for instance, he simply lauded each of her talents in turn, folding voice back into the composite performance.[86] Gutheil-Schoder was not content, as the theater critic Herbert Ihering would put it in the 1920s, to let music and acting sit separately alongside each other. For her, tones were themselves gestures, and singing a form of body language.[87]

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[82] *Sedlmair/Gutheil-Schoder*, Rococo Records, RR 5377, n.d., 33 ⅓ rpm, side 2, track 8.

[83] "[Sie weiß] durch völlig unerwartete, scheinbar geringe Nuancen den Charakter einer Figur plötzlich zu enthüllen." Salten, *Schauen und Spielen*, vol. 2, 285.

[84] "Oder wie sie als Carmen: 'Ja, die Liebe hat bunte Flügel …' vollständig *parlando*, mit höhnischer Siegesmiene, mit lockender Sinnlichkeit, mit frivolem Trotz mehr trällert als singt." Salten, *Schauen und Spielen*, vol. 2, 286.

[85] Quoted and translated in de la Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3, *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion*, 334.

[86] "Unausgesprochene und unaussprechbare Sehnsucht in einen Blick, in eine scheue Geberde [*sic*], in das zarte Timbre eines Tons zu legen, ist ihr möglich wie keiner anderen." Ullmann, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 1176.

[87] The section in which this remark appears concerns opera and theater directing and bears Gutheil-Schoder's name as its subtitle. Herbert Ihering, *Aktuelle Dramaturgie* (Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1924), 20.

By the 1920s Gutheil-Schoder was routinely travelling between musical worlds that we often regard as separate: the Hofoper during Mahler's directorate and the "modernists" of the Schoenberg circle.[88] She excelled in operas by Mozart, Bizet, and Strauss (who reportedly called her his favorite Elektra), while garnering critical acclaim for her performances of Schoenberg.[89] In 1908 she premiered his Second String Quartet, and was the first Die Frau when his monodrama *Erwartung* received its belated premiere in 1924; that same year she was also lauded for her performance in *Pierrot lunaire* at the Berlin Singakademie. Her reputation as being "more than a mere singer" (as Specht often put it) was an important factor in Schoenberg's decision to conceive of Die Frau as a "Gutheil-part."[90] But her wide-ranging appeal was also inextricable from her perceived affinity with a contemporary conceptualization of the artist as human subject. In reviews of the Second Quartet's premiere, words like "serious," "high-value," and "intellectual" accumulated in the descriptions of Gutheil-Schoder's artistry, much as they would in the glowing reports of her *Pierrot lunaire* performance two decades later.[91] Such terms signal the advent of a newly idealized subject defined by a strong sense of interiority and willfulness, a public persona that would ultimately imbue Gutheil-Schoder with cultural authority that extended far beyond the edges of the operatic stage.

Interiority had been a motif in the discourse about Gutheil-Schoder ever since writers like Graf had mobilized the concept to minimize her vocal issues; but the notion of an interior self took on new and elevated cultural currency in early twentieth-century Vienna. Carl E. Schorske famously described *fin-de-siècle* Vienna in terms of a sharp inward turn following the political failure of liberalism in the 1890s, a shift that the historian Steven Beller has framed as a privileging of "homo psychologicus" over "homo œconomicus."[92] Even as Schorske's paradigm has been revised and challenged, interiority has remained a central theme in histories of the period. Michael Cowan has shown that in the years around 1900 Germans began vigorously embracing will (*Wille*), spirit (*Geist*), and soul (*Seele*) as means for conquering modern nervousness, which was increasingly construed as a psychic illness rooted in the

[88] This perceived gulf stems partly from the perception of the Hofoper as a conservative institution that only gradually shed aspects of its traditionalism under Mahler, and partly from a scholarly tendency to focus on the theater as an institution at the expense of connections to other musical milieux in Vienna.

[89] On Strauss's adoration of Gutheil-Schoder, and in particular of her Elektra, see Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas*, vol. 8, *Naturalismus und Impressionismus: Deutschland, Österreich, Schweiz* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1968), 261.

[90] Schoenberg wrote to Gutheil-Schoder in 1913 to gauge her interest in "a monodrama, with only one real role, which I have conceived of as a Gutheil-part" ("Ein Monodram, nur eine, eine wirkliche Rolle, von mir als Gutheil-Partie gedacht"); it remained to be seen, he added, whether the part would suit her voice ("ob es Ihnen stimmlich zusagt"). Writing to Ingeborg Ruvina some years later, Schoenberg acknowledged the necessity of an outstanding actress for Die Frau: given the musical difficulty of the role, only someone of Gutheil-Schoder's talent could ensure the proper dramatic impact was achieved in performance. Arnold Schoenberg, *Briefe*, ed. Erwin Stein (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1958), 36, 269–70.

[91] Many reviews of the String Quartet's premiere are collected in Martin Eybl, ed., *Die Befreiung des Augenblicks: Schönbergs Skandalkonzerte 1907 und 1908: Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004). An exemplary review of her *Pierrot lunaire* performance at the Berlin Singakademie is Adolf Weißmann, "Berliner Musik," *MdA* 6/3 (March 1924), 105.

[92] See Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980); and Steven Beller, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Steven Beller (New York: Berghahn, 2001), 3. On recent critiques of Schorske's paradigm, see Allan Janik, "Vienna 1900 Revisited: Paradigms and Problems," in *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed. Steven Beller, 27–56. For a lucid précis of Schorske's ideas that attends to their impact on musicology and music historiography in particular, see Korstvedt, "Reading Music Criticism," 167–9.

impairment or dispossession of a subject's agency.[93] At the same time as proponents of this *Willenskultur* fixated on nervous symptoms, artists also approached subjectivity in terms of outward representations, through decoration and design. Holly Watkins has argued that Schoenberg and the architect Alfred Loos used their respective artistic media to respond to perceived threats against interiorized subjectivity posed by urban modernity. Whereas Loos sought to protect inner life by divorcing interior spaces from exterior facades, which he rendered impenetrable through plain treatments, Schoenberg aimed to externalize and display interiority through musical sound.[94]

All of these historiographical models resonate in various ways with Freud's theories of interiority and repression. Of special importance here are the investigations into the inner lives of artists undertaken by Freud and his Psychological Wednesday Society.[95] Freud and his followers sought to understand human behavior through analysis of the inner conflict between the instinctual drives of the unconscious and the attempts of the conscious mind to repress them, a science of the psyche Freud believed was fundamentally connected with art and the figure of the artist.[96] As Graf, himself a member of Freud's inner circle from 1905, would stress in a pair of papers published in the *Österreichische Rundschau* in 1906 and 1907, it was the study of "inward emotional experience [that] opened the way to psychological understanding of the artist."[97] If Graf and his Freudian colleagues were more focused on poets, composers, and painters than on performers like Gutheil-Schoder, their views of artistic interiority nevertheless seem to have been transmitted to the critics who wrote about Gutheil-Schoder, and to have contributed to the slowly constructed narrative of her legitimacy as an artist.

These formulations suggest a broad context for the growing attention to inwardness as a feature of Gutheil-Schoder's success, but do not fully account for the intensification of music journalists' focus on her interiority just after 1900. Whereas Graf had noted in passing "how the flame of her interior heats her mind," a decade later Ullmann would take great care to stress how "everything in this woman is animated and illuminated by the warmth of an ever-glowing inwardness."[98] It also became common to foreground the link between her interiority and arresting characterizations, as when Eugen Segnitz remarked in 1908 that the "dramatic enhancements" Gutheil-Schoder lent to her portrayal of Santuzza in Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* were "created and drawn from within."[99] If, like Graf, Ullmann and

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[93] One influential theory held that nervous illness was itself a consequence of the economic insecurity that followed the stock-market crash of 1873: the historian Karl Lamprecht contended that the unpredictable market forces had only amplified people's attunement to minute signs of economic fluctuation, and that this state of heightened sensitivity in turn exacerbated the sense of economic determinism and dependency on market whims. See Cowan, *Cult of the Will*, 21–31.

[94] Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 192–244.

[95] The society was formed in 1902 and was rebranded as the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1908.

[96] Louis Rose, *The Freudian Calling: Early Viennese Psychoanalysis and the Pursuit of Cultural Sciences* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998), and Eric R. Kandel, *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain from Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2012).

[97] Cited in Rose, *The Freudian Calling*, 68. Graf also collected the case history of "little Hans" (an analysis of his own son, Herbert), which would form the basis for Freud's case study *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (1909). This was one of only a few studies Freud published in his lifetime and includes his early explorations of castration anxiety and the Oedipus complex.

[98] "Bei ihr ist es immer interessant zu sehen, wie ihr lebhafter Verstand die Leidenschaften in ihr förmlich anzublasen versteht und wie die Flamme in ihrem Innern den Verstand erhitzt." Graf, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 382. "Wenn sie auch noch nicht wissen, daß an dieser Frau alles beseelt und durchleuchtet ist von der Wärme einer stetig glühenden Innerlichkeit." Ullmann, "Marie Gutheil-Schoder," 1177.

[99] "Dem Santuzza-Charakter verlieh [Gutheil-Schoder] eine hochdramatische, aus dem Innern heraus wohl angelegte Steigerung." Segnitz, "Leipzig," 289.

Segnitz sought to emphasize the singer's creative process (her ability to generate creative expression from her interiority), their insistence on the matter points toward a new sociocultural imperative: one needed not only to possess a strong sense of subjectivity, but also to exert that subjectivity on the material world.

This was partly a matter of health. As Cowan has argued, the nervous subject was unhealthy because it "appeared to be determined from the outside in," unable to "impose his subjectivity from the inside out [… or] to resist the nervous forces emanating from the external world or the depths of the material body."[100] Moral decency was also at stake: Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Nordau, among others, had diagnosed modern decadence as a disorder of the will.[101] The growing currency of this willful, interiorized subject is refracted with particular vividness in the cultural fantasy German writers attached to the expressionist movement. According to writers like Bahr, the impressionistic subject passively recorded the world around her and thus contributed to the impairment of the will, while the expressionist artist imposed herself on her surroundings, allowing for the triumph of the human agent over the material world. As the poet Kurt Hiller observed in 1911, the emergent expressionist movement was fundamentally about coupling interiorized subjectivity with willful agency:

> To us, all of those aesthetes who only know how to react, who function merely as wax plates for impressions or precise machines for generating nuanced descriptions, appear as genuinely inferior. We are expressionists. We are concerned once again with substance, with the will, and with ethos.[102]

This language, perhaps surprisingly, recalls the debates about theatrical realism sampled above. Realism, so often framed in terms of an objective or even an anti-subjective poetics, appears here as a conceptual forbearer of expressionism.[103] Vitality—the true form of realism according to the likes of Bahr and Krebs—would become rebranded as a construction of willfulness. No longer to be a mere echo of the environment, man was to be a subjective agent and creator.

Contemporary acting manuals also bear traces of the fallout from *Willenskultur* in their strong anti-mimetic prejudices and pronounced efforts to balance the need for convincing characterizations against the preservation of the performer's willfulness. Where the acting treatises of the 1890s had cleaved quite closely to the models and theories made popular in Johann Jacob Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785), especially in the inclusion of detailed diagrams of faces, body parts, and postures to supplement the author's written method, Alfred Auerbach's treatise *Mimik: Übungsmaterial für Schauspiel- und Opern-Schüler* (1909) vehemently rejected the gestural recipe books of the past, which had taught students to replicate, not to create. According to Auerbach, materials of the old style described the "external appearance" that corresponded with a particular sentiment—like raised

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[100] Cowan, *Cult of the Will*, 8. Joachim Radkau has also shown that during the early twentieth century therapy treatments for disorders of the nerves shifted away from models based on "rest" and toward those expressly aimed at strengthening the will. See Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität: Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich: Hanser, 1998).

[101] James Kennaway, "*Lebenskraft*, the Body, and Will Power: The Life Force in German Musical Aesthetics," in *The Early History of Embodied Cognition 1740–1920: The Lebenskraft-Debate and Radical Reality in German Science, Music, and Literature*, ed. John A. McCarthy, Stephanie M. Hilger, Heather I. Sullivan and Nicholas Saul (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2016), 136–40.

[102] Kurt Hiller, "Die jüngste Berliner," cited and translated in Cowan, *Cult of the Will*, 4. For more about the relationship between expressionism and *Willenskultur*, see Cowan, *Cult of the Will*, 31–9.

[103] For instance, see Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, "Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation," trans. Roger Parker, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5/1 (1993), 39–53.

eyebrows for astonishment—and endorsed such gestures as "an artificial simulation of the 'same state'."[104] He spurned such overbearing methods of instruction (expressing a particular disgust for illustrations that demonstrated progressive stages of emotion) and implored his pupils to exert themselves over their would-be enslavers: "[The performer] should practice vigorously, but then he should get beyond the form, smash it, become free, and treat it with superiority. No excessive *study of forms,* but *people-watching! Inwardness! Experience!*"[105]

As attempts to safeguard the performer's autonomy, these tactics also reflect a conceptual shift from earlier notions of stage acting. Wagner's theories, as expounded in his pamphlet *Über Schauspieler und Sänger* (*Actors and Singers*, from 1872), are a well-known counter-example. As suggested earlier, Wagner proposed that acting ought to entail the performer's complete capitulation to the role; ideally, this exchange of the actor's personality for that of the individual to be represented would be so totalizing that the performer would never fully recover consciousness of self.[106] Self-denial remained an important aspect of theatrical treatises well into the 1890s, and even became coupled with contemporary medical developments in an attempt to give the idea more legitimacy.

When the theater historian Max Martersteig published his theory of acting in 1893, he mobilized new ideas about hypnotism to advance the idea that acting involved the performer's renunciation of her own consciousness in favor of the character's. In *Der Schauspieler: Ein künstlerisches Problem?*, Martersteig reconsidered whether an actor should feel his role, a question he approached fully aware of the reams of criticism that had been directed toward the affirmative answer.[107] He recognized that the empathetic model of acting could jeopardize the theatrical illusion because the actor who embraced his own feelings could never be anyone other than himself. He sought to reconcile this with the fact that the actor necessarily presented roles through his own bodily apparatus: "We must look for a psycho-physical possibility to get rid of the self with all its relations for a while, so that a foreign 'self,' a foreign being, dominating the center of the imagination, can be introduced."[108] Only hypnosis allowed for such a "casting off of the conscious self" ("Loswerden des bewußten Ich"). This was to be acting as "transfiguration": Martersteig proposed that the actor, moved by the suggestive force of the drama, should enter into a trance-like state that rendered the conscious mind, but not the bodily

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[104] "Es existieren Anleitungen zu einer Mimik, die zumal dem modernen Sinne wenig einleuchtend erscheinen, weil sie mit Vorschriften, mit Rezepten arbeiten. Sie geben eine Beschreibung der äusseren Erscheinungen; die z.B. beim 'Erstaunen' auftreten, wie 'hochgezogene Augenbrauen' und ähnliche Merkmale, die sie dann zur künstlichen Vortäuschung 'desselben Zustandes' empfehlen." Alfred Auerbach, *Mimik: Übungsmaterial für Schauspiel- und Opern-Schüler* (Berlin-Westend: Erich Reiss, [1909]), 5. A more typical example of a *fin-de-siècle* acting treatise (and the kind of manual that provoked Auerbach's ire) is Karl Skraup, *Mimik und Gebärdensprache*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1908).

[105] "Überhaupt lasse er sich durch die Formen nicht knechten; er übe tüchtig, aber dann komme er über die Form hinaus, zerschlage sie, werde frei, und behandle sie mit der Überlegenheit, die das Bewusstsein des sicheren Besitzes verleiht. Keine übermässigen *Form-studien*, sondern *Menschenbeobachtung! Innerlichkeit! Erlebnis!*" Auerbach, *Mimik*, 14 (emphasis original).

[106] Richard Wagner, "Actors and Singers," in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, vol. 5, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1896), 216.

[107] On theories of acting in historical perspective, see Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1985).

[108] "Ich meine, man muß auch hier zunächst nach einer psycho-physischen Möglichkeit suchen, das 'Ich' mit allen seinen Relationen für eine Weile los zu werden, damit ein fremdes 'Ich,' eine fremde Wesenheit, das Vorstellungszentrum beherrschend, eingeführt werden könne." Max Martersteig, *Der Schauspieler: Ein künstlerisches Problem?* (Leipzig: E. Diederichs, [1893]), 41.

frame, inactive.[109] Thus, the performance was only attributable to the actor insofar as her physiological constitution had served as the vehicle for the character. The functional outcome was no different from Wagner's, of course (a point Martersteig readily conceded), but his invocation of the late Meister was less a bid to legitimize his own version of self-renunciation than to fortify Wagner's squishy romantic idealism.[110] Martersteig's reliance on medical procedures provided a way of ensuring self-renunciation; no longer a matter of emotion or idealistic conjecture, self-denial could be guaranteed by science.

But by the time Auerbach published his manual, a model of subjective capitulation was no longer tenable, scientifically legitimized or not. Auerbach's manual takes great care to ensure that performers had the acumen to make decisions about what gestures were needed in the moment—to act willfully, in other words, by adjusting oneself according to the needs of the drama. He proposed a training regimen that viewed the stage as a place of experiment (*Versuchsbühne*), where students of opera and theater learnt to move, first as themselves and then in character.[111] Operatic performance in particular was not to be undertaken until the student was sufficiently endowed with will (when the student no longer needed to ask for instructions about what to do or what movement to make), because it required both gesture and sound to be "freed" through training and then "joined effortlessly" in performance. Through aesthetic training, students of opera would be "[empowered] to nestle themselves in the music" and to cultivate "internalized facial expressions [to] animate the otherwise dead gesture that mechanically accompanies the singing."[112] From the need to foreclose an unhealthy mimetic passivity, Auerbach wound up proposing a model of creative expression which was both ephemeral and endless.

The cultural prestige of will, so clear from sources like Auerbach's manual, is striking in accounts of Gutheil-Schoder's performances from the years around 1910. It was then that intentionality—previously framed as vitality or three-dimensionality—became the central motif in the Gutheil-Schoder mythology. Critics energetically claimed willfulness on her behalf, recasting any and all aspects of her artistry in its image. Now the embodiment of creative authority, Gutheil-Schoder was celebrated as a performer who did not lock eyes with the conductor or await his instructions, but rather created freely and independently on stage.[113] Her voice was the *pièce de résistance* in these arguments: critics observed how she subjugated her unruly organ "under her will and artistic intelligence."[114] She had become the perfect expressionist on the model sketched by Kurt Hiller, exerting her subjectivity over

[109] Martersteig used the English word "Transfiguration" (rather than a German equivalent) repeatedly in his text within the context of discussions about the actor's transformation.

[110] Martersteig, *Der Schauspieler*, 71–2.

[111] Auerbach, *Mimik*, 9.

[112] "Geste und Ton, beide gleichermassen befreit werden sich nun mühelos verbinden, das ästhetische Turnen befähigt ja den Schüler sich der Musik anzuschmiegen, wie sie es immer verlangen mag, und verinnerlichte Mimik, auf der Versuchsbühne geweckt und erworben, geben die Beseelung der sonst toten, nur mechanisch den Gesang begleitenden Geste." Auerbach, *Mimik*, 10.

[113] A representative example is Stefan, *Gustav Mahlers Erbe*, 21.

[114] "Es hieße lügen, wollte man behaupten, daß dies immer mühelos geschähe, daß man den Kampf der Sängerin mit ihrem Material niemals merke; um so mehr muß man bewundern, wie [Gutheil-Schoder] diese spröde und widerspenstige Stimme doch unter ihren Willen und ihren Kunstverstand bannt." This comment, made by the critic Therese Rie, is particularly revealing because it marks an escalation in her language: in an earlier piece Rie had described Gutheil-Schoder's "heroic" struggles to control her voice ("Mit einem Heroismus ohnegleichen kämpft sie allabendlich den Kampf mit einer spröden, reiz- und klanglosen Stimme"), but in this later essay she framed the issue explicitly in terms of willfulness. See L. Andro [Therese Rie], "Unsere Künstler," 170; and L. Andro [Therese Rie], "Von der Wiener Hofoper: Die Künstler der Hofoper," *NMZ* 28/8 (17 January 1907), 171.

the material world. Gutheil-Schoder's second coronation was as an artist—not merely a *Menschendarstellerin* but an emblem of the human subject itself.

The broader ramifications of Gutheil-Schoder's career were already being considered by the Viennese press on the eve of her retirement. When she reprised the role of Elektra one June night in 1925, thousands gathered to celebrate her, filling the opera house during what would have been the summer holiday period. On this occasion, critics permitted themselves to contemplate her impact on modern performance, with one writer arguing: "If the history of the art of opera in the first quarter of the twentieth century is ever written, she will not be overlooked." The unnamed writer continued with a ringing summation of her historical significance: "She […] was the first to realize and perfect the type of the singing actress [and] thus has contributed to the development of this new style […] which has become exemplary and now has taken hold throughout the world."[115]

Grandiose rhetoric aside, this estimation invites consideration of how Gutheil-Schoder's success relates to the fortunes of other twentieth-century singers, and of how the sociocultural and aesthetic developments that were key to her ascendancy affected and shaped the careers of her contemporaries. In Vienna, contagion seems to have been all but inevitable; already in 1906 one local reviewer cited the precedent of Gutheil-Schoder in praising the voice of a Fräulein Felgel as "not big, but psychological."[116] Gutheil-Schoder may not have been the first "singing actor," but she was certainly not the last.[117] The many twists and turns in her critical fortunes, then, illuminate the aesthetic priorities that enabled twentieth-century audiences to invest in singers as interpreters, to value ever-expanding vocal palettes enriched by techniques like *Sprechstimme*, or Freudian theories of character by which performers might channel inwardness and observation to render the human condition in a supposedly truer form, thus transmuting qualities that earlier generations of listeners may have regarded as creative deficiencies into the stuff of compelling drama.

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[115] "Wenn je die Geschichte der Opernkunst des ersten Viertels unseres Jahrhunderts geschrieben werden sollte, wird man an ihrer Erscheinung nicht vorübergehen können. Sie ist eine der interessantesten Künstlerinnen der Opernbühne und war die erste, die den Typ der singenden Schauspielerin erfaßte und durchbildete. So hat sie dazu beigetragen, just in der Theater- und Musikstadt diesen neuen Stil auszubilden, der vorbildlich wurde und heute in der ganzen Welt sich durchgesetzt hat." [Unsigned], "Festabend für Marie Gutheil-Schoder," *NWJ* 33/11326 (3 June 1925), 5.

[116] "Die Stimme ist nicht groß, aber—seelisch." A. V. [*sic*], "III. Opernabend der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien," *NmP* 15/14 (30 June 1906), 294.

[117] See Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera*, 231–74.

CHAPTER 4
MODERNITY SCREAMS

In the days before the premiere of Richard Strauss's *Elektra* at Dresden's Königliches Opernhaus, a veritable who's who of the music world descended on the city. All were eager to acquaint themselves with the composer's newest work, and introductions were already underway. "One met 'Elektra' everywhere," recalled one journalist, "the shop-windows were full of 'Elektra' boots, spoons, and beer-mugs. Even the 'Elektra' costumes for ski-ing occupied the centre of one of the windows, and on the day of the first performance we were made to eat 'Elektra' ices."[1] Delicious though these souvenirs may have been, they only intensified a desire for a taste of the real thing. When the veil was finally lifted on the evening of 25 January 1909, the anticipation was channeled into a frenzy of writing.[2] Critics and amateur listeners alike set about recording their impressions of the operatic event; one reviewer went so far as to issue a birth announcement to appropriately mark the occasion.[3] These reactions took a variety of forms, including cartoons, satire, poetry, personal letters to newspaper editors, journalistic reviews, and even the occasional chapter-length article.

At a whopping twenty-two pages, Carl Mennicke's "Über Richard Strauß' Elektra" was one of the earliest major commentaries on the subject. Mennicke, a music critic and the director of the local Singakademie, began by announcing that his essay eschewed both music theory and music history; instead, he focused on the timeliness of the much-anticipated new opera.[4] Within a few pages he had zeroed in on an issue he considered particularly germane to *Elektra*'s contemporary clout: its use of the human voice. Mennicke's attention to vocal writing stemmed from a claim that the human voice was a critical mechanism for conveying the social and ethical potential of theater. As Mennicke saw it, vocal sound was the channel that prompted audiences to register the humanity of fictional characters, and to perceive their own humanity in turn.[5] But Mennicke judged that the treatment of the voices in *Elektra* impeded this relational project: "It seems that Strauss does not want the singer to be heard[;] the orchestral abyss devours most of it [i.e. what the singers are doing]. The human voice, which should convey what is going on in the soul of the dramatic action, has instead become a means for Strauss to insert a new line into the orchestra music."[6]

Perhaps he need not have worried. As public reactions to Strauss's opera unfolded in the months after its premiere, it was precisely this treatment of *Elektra*'s voices that came to anchor readings that

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[1] Alfred Kalisch, "Impressions of Strauss's 'Elektra'," *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 10 (1908–09), 198.

[2] Paul Bekker devoted considerable space to recounting *Elektra*'s prehistory in his study of the opera, which was published across several issues of the *Neue Musik-Zeitung* beginning in April 1909. He carefully documented the processes by which *Elektra* had become "the great, exciting secret of our entire public sphere" because he felt that this period of suspense had fundamentally shaped the opera's early reception. Paul Bekker, "*Elektra*: A Study," trans. Susan Gillespie, in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 373.

[3] See Otto Sonne, "Strauß-Hofmannsthal 'Elektra'," *Illustrirte Zeitung* 132, no. 3422 (28 January 1909): 140.

[4] Carl (also Karl) Mennicke was based in Glogau (now Głogów, Poland), and contributed pieces to such prominent music journals as *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, *Die Musik*, and *Musica Sacra*.

[5] Carl Mennicke, "Über Richard Strauß' Elektra," *Riemann-Festschrift. Gesammelte Studien. Hugo Riemann zum 60. Geburtstage überreicht von Freunden und Schülern* (Leipzig: M. Hesse, 1909), 504–6.

[6] "Strauß will scheinbar nicht, daß der Sänger gehört werde[…]; das meiste verschlingt der Abgrund des Orchesters. Die Menschenstimme, die uns künden sollte, was in der Seele des Handelnden vorgeht, ist vielmehr für Strauß ein Mittel geworden, in die Musik des Orchesters eine neue Linie einzufügen." Mennicke, "Über Richard Strauß' Elektra," 510–1.

argued for the opera's sociopolitical relevance. The very orchestral textures that Mennicke bemoaned spurred other listeners to precisely the kind of self-critical assessments of the human condition he had imagined, stimulating lively commentary on "progress" and the status of the human within the sounds and mechanisms of modernity. As scholars such as Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik have shown, a belief in progress and in the possibility of a future defined by greater prosperity, efficiency, and stability infused *fin-de-siècle* discourse in the German-speaking world.[7] This chapter argues that *Elektra*'s earliest audiences, spurred by debates over urbanization, evolutionary science, and public health, used voice to connect the opera to contested notions of progress. In the process, the chapter illuminates the extended conceptual networks in which operatic voices had become implicated: voices served as points of entry into discourses of madness and degeneration, inflected new affinities between voice, body, and health—even as each seemed to come under increasing threat—and provided means for grappling with stylistic change, urbanization, and modernity itself.[8]

It may already be clear that this chapter will sketch unfamiliar views of an ostensibly familiar work. The *Elektra* we know has been colored alternatively by musicology's longstanding interest in the history of musical style and by the significance attributed to Hugo von Hofmannsthal's libretto. By virtue of its association with a particular vintage of musical modernism, *Elektra* has traditionally served to demarcate a particular phase of Strauss's career—the high-water mark of his modernism according to what Bryan Gilliam recently characterized as the "path-to-atonality paradigm"—and, more broadly, as a bridge between late romanticism and the more radical modernism associated with composers like Schoenberg.[9] These narratives rest on analysis of the score, certainly, but also on a selective reading of the opera's reception that privileges technical or expert knowledge.[10] But, as I shall demonstrate, the reception of *Elektra* spanned many media, including parodies, cartoons, and poetry, addressed to different readerships and attending to different aspects of the operatic experience. The concerns of the literature on Strauss and Hofmannsthal, with its unease about modernity and its interest in the dramatization of sexual perversity, hysteria, and nervous illness, lie much closer to the preoccupations of the writers who reacted most substantially to *Elektra*'s premiere.[11] However, the centrality of voice

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[7] See Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik, "Introduction: German Modernities and the Contest of Futures," in *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: A Contest of Futures*, ed. Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1–30.

[8] The opera's rapid and wide dissemination was crucial to this process. Following the two initial performances in Dresden (25 and 28 January), *Elektra* quickly travelled to several other cities, including Frankfurt (6 February), Munich (14 February), Berlin (15 February), Barmen-Elberfeld (19 February), Hamburg (22 February), Breslau (9 March), Vienna (24 March), Hannover (27 March), Milan (6 April), Graz (12 May), and Cologne (27 and 29 June).

[9] Bryan Gilliam, "The Great War and Its Aftermath: Strauss and Hofmannsthal's 'Third-Way Modernism'," in *Modernism and Opera*, ed. Richard Begam and Matthew Wilson Smith (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 137. For précis of Strauss's relationship to the history of musical modernism, see Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), especially pp. 1–6; and Morten Kristiansen, "Richard Strauss, *Die Moderne*, and the Concept of Stilkunst," *Musical Quarterly* 86/4 (2002), 689–749.

[10] For instance, see Derrick Puffett, "Introduction," in *Richard Strauss: Elektra*, ed. Derrick Puffett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3. Admittedly, the impulse to privilege accounts that demonstrate technical knowledge of music is also discernable in accounts written by Strauss's contemporaries; for instance, see Steinitzer, *Richard Strauss*, 261–6.

[11] Scholarship on *Elektra* has consistently focused on these aspects of the opera. Representative examples include Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 85–106; Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 190–219; Timpano, *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body*, 91–120; Jill Scott, *Electra After Freud: Myth and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 81–94; and David Levin, "Subjectivity

to the conversations to which I now turn nevertheless shows that many listeners' investments in Strauss's sensation were nurtured less by the fictional world of the drama than by forms of experiential knowledge about vocality.

THE CITY LISTENS

While in Vienna covering a musicological conference on the occasion of the Haydn centenary, music journalist Franz Moißl headed to the Hofoper for that evening's performance: *Elektra*. As he revealed in an article he published in *Musica Sacra*, the event proved so traumatic that he fled shortly after the curtain went up, seeking refuge at the town hall where a Männerchor performance was in progress. "How glad I was to have escaped *Elektra*!" he confessed, continuing:

> Even when skimming the libretto, one shudders; and so much more only in performance, where an orchestra, expanded to 120 men, must make the most hideous cacophony and the most devilish, lurid sound effects known to man, where on the stage a great battle is prepared, and uncanny screams and squeals pound and shake the air—one almost suffocates under the pressure of the sinister atmosphere, which contracts around Klytämnestra's Palace and the auditorium.[12]

Despite his early departure, Moißl managed to hit on some of the most prominent tropes then circulating in discourse about *Elektra*. A few months earlier, for instance, one writer had noted how in *Elektra* "the voice sinks [amid] the dense tangle of shrill and whistling instruments, in the shrieking and gargling, hammering and roaring of the orchestra."[13] Another had observed that "Strauss's orchestra is in an incessant state of feverish activity. Huge waves of sound rise, rush, and ebb; again and again the breaker returns. And in between, the voices scream, yell, and whisper."[14]

Some of these themes are familiar to modern scholars: the extremely large orchestra, the overwhelming effect of its presence, the outrageous sound effects it produced. Others, such as the notion of an onstage battle and the prominent position of screams within the opera's palette, are less so. These writers imagined the opera as staging a high-stakes struggle for sonic control that pitted human singers against an ever-expanding orchestral "machine," and often reduced the contributions

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Unhinged," in *Expression in the Performing Arts*, ed. Inma Alvarez, Hector J. Perez, and Francisca Perez-Carreno (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 50–65.

[12] "Wie froh war ich, der 'Elektra' entronnen zu sein! […] Schon beim Überfliegen des Textbuches schaudert man; um wieviel mehr erst bei der Aufführung, wo ein auf 120 Mann verstärktes Orchester die gräßlichsten Kakophonien, die teuflischesten grellsten Klangeffekte an den Mann bringen muß, wo auf der Bühne ein großes Schlachten vorbereitet wird, ein unheimliches Schreien, Quieken, Stampfen die Luft erschüttert—man erstickt fast unter dem Drucke der unheilgeschwängerten Atmosphäre, die sich um den Palast Klytämnestras und über den Zuschauerraum zusammenzieht." Franz Moißl, "Nachklänge von der Haydn-Zentarfeier und dem musikwissenschaftlichen Kongreß in Wien (25.–29. Mai)," *Musica Sacra* 42/7 (1 July 1909), 88.

[13] "Welch Aufatmen nach der gequälten Deklamation des 'Elektra'-textes für die Sänger, deren Stimme, so weise und ökonomisch auch der ungeheure Tonvorrat im Orchester gehandhabt ist, in dem dichten Gewirre schrillender und pfeifender Instrumente, in dem Kreischen und Gurgeln, Hämmern und Dröhnen des Orchesters untergeht." Hans Kleindienst, "Elektra," *Grazer Volksblatt* 42/215 (13 May 1909), 3.

[14] "Sein Orchester befindet sich unausgesetzt in fieberhafter Tätigkeit. Riesige Klangwellen steigen auf, überstürzen sich, verebben. Immer von neuem kehrt aber die Brandung wieder. Und dazwischen schreien, gellen, flüstern die Gesangsstimmen." Rich[ard?]. Robert, "Hofoperntheater," *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung* 47/13 (29 March 1909), 1.

of the embattled singers to "screams."[15] The singers were seen as severely disadvantaged in this battle, a point that critics underscored by cataloging—at astonishing lengths in some cases—the sheer number and variety of instruments required by the score: Wilhelm Klatte took a paragraph, Wilhelm Altmann, several more. Altmann, demoralized by his counting exercise, implored his readers to "pity the singers who must fight against this orchestra."[16]

It was this competition for sonic dominance that made the word "scream" an obvious choice for critics seeking to describe the efforts of singers within *Elektra*'s sound world. Early twentieth-century dictionaries frequently cited loudness and amplification as the qualities that allowed a particular vocalization to become audible as a scream. August Spanuth, the Berlin-based editor of *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, used the term in this way when he remarked on the "unprecedented demands Strauss imposes on his musicians," noting matter-of-factly that in this competition between the singers and the orchestra, "the singers must often substitute bare shrieks for song."[17] Arthur M. Abell, the Berlin correspondent for *The Musical Courier*, did not register the slightest incongruity between praising individual singers and the fact of their screaming, noting in the same breadth that Ernestine Schumann-Heink had sung the part of Klytämnestra heroically and that "the singers express themselves chiefly by shouting and screaming."[18] Within this critical camp, then, the word "scream" was not mainly pejorative—nor was it a euphemism for bad singing, as is often the case in opera criticism.[19] Even if the overall evaluation of the opera's sound world was negative, a singer's "scream" was simply the vocal quality necessary to be audible in *Elektra*.

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[15] In arguing for a link between the contemporary urban soundscape and Strauss's *Elektra*, I follow German Studies scholar Solveig M. Heinz, whose recent work has addressed the ways in which the Strauss-Hofmannsthal operas thematized the new sounds and audile techniques that she describes as being unique to Austro-German urban culture around 1900. Heinz's observations proceed from authorial intent: she states on p. 13 her aim to "draw on six full-length operas, as well as four hundred pages of correspondence [that give] a cultural historian the chance to identify which kinds of acoustic phenomena they registered textually, and how their representation or critique of them changed over time." I begin instead with the accounts of contemporary listeners, trying to understand the nature of their investments in and engagements with *Elektra*, as well as how these views intersected with questions over urbanization and modernity specifically. Heinz, "Urban Opera: Navigating Modernity through the Oeuvre of Strauss and Hofmannsthal," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013).

[16] "Zu bemitleiden sind die Sänger, die den Kampf gegen dieses Orchester aufnehmen müssen." Wilhelm Altmann, "'Elektra' von Richard Strauss," *Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte* 23/8 (April 1909), 577. See also Wilhelm Klatte, "Elektra. Tragödie an einem Aufzüge von Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Musik von Richard Strauss. Uraufführung am Dresdener Hoftheater am 25. Januar 1909," *AMZ* 36/5 (29 January 1909), 96.

[17] "Durch und durch Orchesterkomponist, stellt Strauss auch an die Musiker unerhörte Anforderungen: aber während die Sänger oft blosses Gekreisch an die Stelle des Gesanges setzen müssen, 'klingt' im Orchester auch die extravaganteste Zumutung, die er ihm Stellt." August Spanuth, "Nachträge zur 'Elektra'-Aufführung," *SfMW* 67/5 (3 February 1909), 167.

[18] Arthur M. Abell, "Richard Strauss's *Electra*: An account of the premiere which occurred at the Dresden Royal Opera House on January 25," *The Musical Courier* 58/7 (17 February 1909), 6.

[19] Mathilde Marchesi would draw on this popular usage in her 1895 letter to the *Signale* readership when she noted how a young soprano "sang the mad aria from Ambroise Thomas's 'Hamlet,' [and] I say 'sang' [advisedly], as today's youth resort to screaming." ("Sie sang—ich sage sang, indem die heutige Jugend sich auf das Schreien verlegt—mit süßer Stimme, großer Virtuosität und seelenvollem Vortrag die Wahnsinns-Arie aus der Oper 'Hamlet' von Ambroise Thomas.") Marchesi, "Reisebrief von Mathile Marchesi," *SfMW* 53/42 (August 1895), 657–8. This pejorative view was also active for less musically literate cultural consumers, as evinced by an 1895 cartoon that relied for its humor on the ostensible foreignness of screams to operatic vocal practice; see [Unsigned], "In der Sommerfrische," *Fliegende Blätter* 102/2589 (1895), 96.

Of course, the question of what it took for singers to be audible in opera was hardly a new topic when *Elektra* premiered in 1909. As we saw in chapter one, clashes between singers and orchestras were routinely discussed in the Austro-German press during the 1890s, owing to an ongoing crisis regarding the role of voice in opera. We observed how operagoers' frustrations over inaudible singers were tied to their concerns over the growing popularity of "upside-down operas" that structurally privileged the orchestra over the voice, as well as how, following debate over what the relationship of voice to opera ought to be, operagoers gradually became more accepting of works whose centers of gravity lay in the orchestra pit. The spread of these more tolerant attitudes around 1900 goes some way toward explaining why many of *Elektra*'s earliest critics were less concerned with the overbearing orchestra's impact on singers than with other pressing issues: as Bryan Gilliam has noted, a majority of early reviewers fixated on both the nature of *Elektra*'s relationship to *Salome*, and the question of what bearing *Elektra* might have on the future direction of German opera, then still very much believed to be in a post-Wagnerian tailspin.[20]

In Berlin, the familiar tales of inaudible singers gained new poignancy in conjunction with social debates about noise, which recast *Elektra*'s conflict between singer and orchestra as a war between humans and machines for control of a soundscape. Berliners were focused less on the abstract matter of voice's status within opera than on the human cost of Strauss's marginalization of actual voices. Berlin's rapid modernization raised questions about the economic advantages of urbanization and increased productivity, as weighed against the drawbacks of a noisier and more congested environment. By 1905 two million people called Berlin home, up from one million in 1877, while an expanding suburban sprawl added a further 1.5 million residents. At the same time, the cityscape was transformed by the technologies of modern urban life. Roads, rail stations, and other municipal travel networks were developed; new factories opened right next to commercial shops and private apartments; usage of new inventions like electric lighting and motorized cars became more widespread; new technologies and media became fixtures of bourgeois households as well as city-wide entertainment industries.[21]

Concerns about the sonic ramifications of industrial progress took on particular urgency as cultural figures and medical professionals drew attention to the vulnerability of the human ear.[22]

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[20] Such interest was also stoked by a highly publicized (and widely reported) lecture regarding Strauss and "modern music" given by Oskar Bie just before the *Elektra* premiere. Bie's lecture explored this relationship with an eye back toward *Salome*, in large part because neither details about *Elektra*'s music nor study scores of the opera had been made available to the press before the premiere. See Bryan Gilliam, *Richard Strauss's* Elektra (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1–17. For a contemporary perspective on Bie's lecture see Dr. Paul Fechter, "Dresdner Straußwoche: Die moderne music und Richard Strauß. Ein Vortrag von Oskar Bie," *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* 17/24 (26 January 1909), 1; and [Unsigned], "Einen Vortrag über moderne Musik," *Dresdner Anzeiger* 179/26 (26 January 1909), 3–4.

[21] On these kinds of transformations to German cityscapes, with particular focus on light and noise, see Richard Birkefeld and Martina Jung, *Die Stadt, der Lärm und das Licht: die Veränderung des öffentlichen Raumes durch Motorisierung und Elektrifizierung* (Seelze: Kallmeyersche Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH, 1994), especially pp. 41–85. For more on how such changes took shape in Berlin specifically, see Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 9–62. For an account of Berlin's shifting urban ecology that foregrounds contemporary testimony from witnesses such as Georg Simmel, see David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2001), 100–58.

[22] See Daniel Morat, "Urban Soundscapes and Acoustic Innervation around 1900," in *Les cinq sens de la ville du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, ed. Robert Beck, Ulrike Krampl, and Emmanuelle Retaillaud-Bajac (Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2013), 71–83; Peter Payer, "Signum des Urbanen: Geräusch und Lärm der Großstadt um 1900," in *Sound der Zeit: Geräusche, Töne, Stimmen 1889 bis heute*, ed. Gerhard Paul and Ralph Schock (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2014), 39–44; and Peter Payer, "Vom Geräusch zum Lärm. Zur Geschichte des Hörens im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert," in *Sinne und Erfahrung in der Geschichte*, ed. Wolfram Aichinger (Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 2003), 173–91.

Among these figures were Georg Simmel, a Berlin-based sociologist whose writings often probed the relationship between urban space and man's social and embodied experiences, and Theodor Lessing, a German philosopher who gained national fame in 1908 with the founding of his *Deutscher Lärmschutzverband* (German Association for the Protection from Noise).[23] Both described the special danger posed by the noises of modernity to the ear, which, Simmel wrote, "cannot turn away or close itself, like the eye; rather, since it only takes, it is condemned to take [in] everything that comes into its vicinity."[24] Adding to the complexity of the situation was the shifting view of the threat posed by urban noise itself. By the early twentieth century, such emissions were seen as imperiling not property and institutions so much as the minds and bodies of city residents: as Georg Pinkenburg, Berlin's chief *Stadtbauinspektor* (building inspector), asserted in a municipal report from 1903, street noise exerted such a "damaging influence on the nervous system [that] the discomfort awakened in us by noise can increase to such an extent that we feel it as if it were a physical pain."[25]

Across Germany, noise thus became an urgent consideration for scientists in the field of *Wohnungshygiene* ("household hygiene") as well as for city planning officials hoping to diminish sonic conductivity in urban spaces.[26] Even music critics waded into these socio-scientific debates, as when Richard Batka implored his readership to take collective action so as to mitigate the effects of what he termed "the necessary noises of modern life."[27] But the issue of noise also gave rise to new economic opportunities. When the German Patent Register was expanded in 1903 to include inventions pertaining to ear medicine, hearing protection, and sound absorbers, a robust domestic market for noise-reducing devices emerged; within a few years, several earplug models had been patented, including Heinz Bothmer's *Kopfbinde* (1906), Dr. Emil Sprenger's *Antiphon* (1907), and the *Ohropax* (1907/8), the work of Berlin-based pharmacist Maximilian Negwer.[28]

These developments speak to trends on a national scale that were mirrored on more local levels, not least in Berlin. In 1908 alone the city played host to the launch of several initiatives that promised to provide citizens with some measure of control over their unruly sonic environs. That year Berliners witnessed the commercial launch of Negwer's line of earplugs, the announcement of a new invention from the Berlin Hygiene Institute that was designed to measure how many acoustic shockwaves hit the ear at a given moment, and the founding of a local chapter of Lessing's Association, popularly

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[23] For more on these authors, their essays, and the arguments advanced therein, see Michael Cowan, "Imagining Modernity Through the Ear: Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge and the Noise of Modern Life*," *Arcadia – International Journal for Literary Studies* 41/1 (November 2006), 129–31.

[24] Georg Simmel, "Sociology of the Senses," trans. Mark Ritter and David Frisby, in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 115.

[25] "Im allgemeinen ist man sich wohl darüber einig, daß der Straßenlärm von schädigendem Einfluß auf das Nervensystem ist, wie dies jeder an sich selbst zur Genüge erfahren haben wird. Das durch den Lärm in uns geweckte Unbehagen kann sich so weit steigern, daß wir ihn gleichsam wie einen physischen Schmerz empfinden, wobei allerdings unser augenblicklicher geistiger und körperlicher Zustand von weitgehendstem Einflusse ist." Georg Pinkenburg, *Der Lärm in den Städten und seine Verhinderung*, in *Handbuch der Hygiene* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1903), 6.

[26] Cowan, "Imagining Modernity Through the Ear," 131–2.

[27] Batka bemoaned how thin ceilings and walls of cork and peat did not do enough to dampen sound waves, and implored readers to band together as activists. While imperial legislation protected the lungs, eyes, and nose against forms of endangerment, the ear remained vulnerable, he wrote. Batka, "Lärm," *DK* 21/13 (April–June 1908), 46–8.

[28] John Goodyear, "Escaping the Urban Din: A Comparative Study of Theodor Lessing's *Antilärmverein* (1908) and Maximilian Negwer's *Ohropax* (1908)," in *Germany in the Loud Twentieth Century: An Introduction*, ed. Florence Feiereisen and Alexandra Merley Hill (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21–4.

known as the *Antilärmverein*, or Anti-Noise League.[29] Lessing's society would attract particular interest in Berlin, as evidenced by a sizable local membership (contemporary reports in the society's official journal suggested that Berliners were among its most active participants) and by frequent satirical treatment in the press.[30] The overlapping objectives of these initiatives highlight the real fear over urban din, that humans were gradually losing control over the sounds that surrounded them.[31]

This fear is a recurrent motif in *Elektra* discourse. Satirical responses to the opera routinely emphasized the capacity of the "modern opera" orchestra to suppress "nature," or, in this case, singers. This is precisely the suggestion of the cartoon shown in Figure 4.1, in which an opera house's orchestral battery has become so engorged that it squeezes both the operagoers and the viewer (who occupies the position of the singer on stage) to the edge of the frame.[32] A humorous scenario published in the music journal *Die Musik* imagined a similar power dynamic, having one of its interlocutors observe that "the modern orchestra commands the voices to [be] its assistants, its colors, [and] its dynamics."[33]

The threat posed by non-human entities to the human element in *Elektra* was named more explicitly in the many academic articles that characterized the orchestra as a living, vampire-like entity that gained its power by draining the lifeblood of all that surrounded it.[34] As one Viennese fan of *Elektra* observed, the singers posed opposite this "living organism" became "acting puppets, instruments of mimetic expression for everything that is so intensely luminous, and so directly, corporeally, and plastically depicted in the orchestra."[35] Such comments only echoed those of earlier

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[29] For more on Lessing's society and Negwer's invention, see Goodyear, "Escaping the Urban Din," especially pp. 31–2. On the development of Rubner's noise meter and other related activities at Berlin's Hygienic Institute, see [Unsigned], "Zum Kampf gegen den Lärm," *Dokumente des Fortschritts* 1/1–6 (March 1908), 392–3.

[30] I will address the *Antilärmverein* in more detail below, but Joy H. Calico also provides helpful context in her "Noise and Arnold Schoenberg's 1913 Scandal Concert," *Journal of Austrian Studies* 50/3–4 (Fall–Winter 2017), 29–55.

[31] Even Georg Pinkenburg admitted that the prognosis for mitigating urban noise and traffic noise in particular was "not overly encouraging": his report effectively concluded with an advertisement for the *Antiphon*—an earplug-like device developed by M. Plessner that predated Negwer's *Ohropax* by several decades—which Pinkenburg cited as the best tool for "becoming the master" of one's soundscape ("[der] Herr [des Straßenlärm] zu werden"). Pinkenburg, *Der Lärm*, 21.

[32] Around the time *Elektra* premiered in the United States (in French at New York's Manhattan Opera House on 1 February 1910), this cartoon was republished as part of an article documenting *Elektra*'s American reception, where it appeared with attribution to the *Fliegende Blätter* but was retitled "'Elektra' has come to town!" See [Unsigned], "The American Reception of Strauss's 'Elektra'," *Current Literature* 48/3 (March 1910), 323. This later version of the cartoon (with its thicker, less crisp lines) was reprinted in a 1964 study of Strauss's operas along with the caption "Strauss raises pandemonium at Dresden: a contemporary cartoon." Yet, as can be seen in Figure 4.1, the original cartoonist did not explicitly tie the image with Strauss or *Elektra* (as the American sources would later do), likely because the magazine's Austro-German readership would have easily recognized Strauss's *Elektra* as a main reference point for a cartoon satirizing "modern opera." See Richard Mann, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Study of the Operas* (London: Cassell, 1964), illustration 9. More recently, the cartoon—as it appears in Mann—was reprinted in Roswitha Schlötter-Traimer, *Richard Strauss: sein Leben und Werk im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Karikatur* (Mainz and New York: Schott, 2009), 94–5.

[33] "Es ist das moderne Orchester, das die Stimmen zu seinen Helfern, seinen Farben, seinen Dynamiken befiehlt[.]" In the satire, the would-be music critic offers his lecture on *Elektra* to a more seasoned journalist for comment, and here (as elsewhere) the orchestra is not merely ascribed power over the voices, but cast as a virile, living entity: "fantastic flowers" and "grotesque animals with human souls" are listed among the many things that sprout from the life-giving orchestral soil. Musikomikus [*sic*], "Der Neue Musikkritiker: Dramolet in einem Aufzug," *DM* 8/10 (February 1909), 210.

[34] On the idea of Strauss's orchestra as a vampire, see R. Sternfeld, "Elektra," *März* 3/2 (April–June 1909), 138.

[35] Here is the quote in fuller context: "Es kann und darf nicht vorbehaltlos abgelehnt werden, denn das Orchester, dieser ungeheure Apparat, den Richard Strauß aufbietet, ist ein lebendiger Organismus von derart wunderbarer Feinheit in allen seinen Funktionen, daß dem Geiste, der solches ersann, Bewunderung nicht versagt werden darf [….] Nicht die Personen sind die Träger des Dramas, sondern das Orchester. Dieses bildet den ungeheuren Resonnanzboden [*sic*], der unter all den tausend Stimmungen und Stimmungsgewalten des Dramas vibriert und sie unserer Psyche mitteilt. Gegenüber diesem

FIGURE 4.1: [Unsigned], "Eine moderne Oper," *Fliegende Blätter* 132/3363 (1910), 27.

Berlin-based reviewers like Paul Schwers and Spanuth: where the former had described how the orchestral sound-masses at times seemed capable of squeezing the life out of singers (*erdrücken*), the latter had observed how the "life-sparkling orchestral tissue" led one to believe that "*Elektra* would make an overwhelming impact if the tormented creatures on stage shut their mouths and wanted to portray the dramatic orchestral poem in pantomime only."[36]

These anthropomorphic depictions of the orchestra are striking, far surpassing in specificity and flair the organicist vocabulary that was common in analytic writing about music at the time: although nineteenth-century music critics routinely mobilized the language of organicism to analyze musical works, their application of organicist metaphors typically extended only to musical forms or individual compositions, rather than orchestral instruments.[37] But these early twentieth-century reviewers were not merely comparing Strauss's orchestra to an organism. In ascribing it an agentive power over human bodies, these writers' accounts rehearsed Simmel's notion of a "psychic drama" in which "the objective

hyperempfindlichen, im Reichtum seiner Mittel ins Maßlose gesteigerte Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten gewährenden Apparat mit der behenden Regsamkeit seiner 58 Instrumente wird der Sänger zur agierenden Puppe, zum mimischen Ausdrucksinstrument für all das, was im Orchester so intensiv leuchtkräftig, direkt körperlich plastisch geschildert wird." Kleindienst, "Elektra," 1–2.

[36] "Wenn man gegen dieses lebensprühende Orchestergewebe dann aber die armen Singstimmen in der Partitur hält, möchte man fast behaupten, die 'Elektra' würde eine überwältigende Wirkung machen, wenn die gequälten Geschöpfe auf der Bühne den Mund halten und das dramatische Orchestergedicht nur pantomimisch versinnbildlichen wollten." August Spanuth, "Elektra," *SfMW* 67/4 (27 January 1909), 122.

[37] On the tradition of using language of organicism to describe musical compositions, see Ruth A. Solie, "The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," *19th-Century Music* 4/2 (Autumn 1980), 147–56, and more recently, Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought*.

culture created by the subject seemed to take on an agency of its own, rebelling and subjugating the subject in turn."[38] It was this fear of subjugation, coupled with anxiety over an increasingly uncontrollable sonic environment, that stoked such intense interest among Berlin-based reviewers in the trials of *Elektra*'s singers. These vocalists merited "pity" (in Altmann's words) precisely because they also struggled to exert themselves in the face of an overwhelming sonic environment that seemed to take on a life of its own.[39] These critics' identification with singers thus betrayed the acute contemporary anxiety regarding the loss of human agency in the modern world—a fear that, as we observed in Chapter 3, fueled the rise of a contemporary *Willenskultur* to guard against manifestations of passive or dispossessed subjectivity.

The connections music critics intimated between *Elektra* and urban noise positioned the opera prominently in the contemporary noise debates. Strauss's opera became the ultimate punch line in a piece entitled "Down with the Noise!," which recounted how, at a recent meeting of the Anti-Noise League, debate about urban noise culminated in an "entertainment" consisting of nothing more than a parade of the worst offenders: a military band performance, a phonograph exhibition, and, finally, an evening at *Elektra*.[40] The connection was exploited even more directly in a poem that reframes the opera's central conflict—Elektra's hatred of her mother—explicitly in terms of the noise debates: Klytämnestra solicits advice from her daughter on how to get a decent night's rest, but when Elektra encourages her to sleep during a performance of *Elektra*, Klytämnestra counters that this is neither possible nor compatible with her membership in the Anti-Noise League.[41] In each example Strauss's opera becomes the favored means by which German satirists poked fun at the Anti-Noise League, whose members their fellow citizens often found a bit too delicate. Journalists frequently portrayed Lessing and his supporters as nurturing "a tyranny of the neurasthenics" or practicing "a sport for intellectuals," charges that stemmed both from how Lessing and his supporters often characterized themselves as the group most at risk from exposure to loud sounds, and from the society's unabashedly classist approach to addressing noise pollution.[42] While the Anti-Noise League campaigned against urban nuisances like honking cars and loud neighbors, they were disinclined to partner with labor unions in order to combat industrial noise more broadly. These are the tropes that are not only revived but developed through the satirists' invocations of Strauss's opera. In the "Down with the Noise!"

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[38] Cowan, *Cult of the Will*, 49.

[39] Several authors pointedly invoked rhetoric associated with urban noise when describing *Elektra*'s orchestral sound. Spanuth, for instance, knitted them together through his use of the term "Orchesterlärm," which eschewed more customary terms like "Ton" and "Klang" that music critics used to described operatic sound in favor of "Lärm," which was rapidly becoming a byword for industrial din. Already in 1903, Pinkenburg had distinguished "Lärm" (noise) from "Tönen" (sounds) in his report, arguing that while "Tönen" (the kind of sounds that gave rise to music) were not at issue, "Geräuschen" (the sonic category to which "Lärm" belonged) were precisely the focus of his survey. Suggesting that Strauss's orchestra generated and aestheticized the noises of the modern environment, Spanuth casts the orchestral instruments as proto-"noise machines" of the kind that Futurist Luigi Russolo would develop a few years later. See Spanuth, "Elektra," 122, and Pinkenburg, *Der Lärm*, 7.

[40] M. Sp. [*sic*], "Nieder mit dem Lärm!" *Lustige Blätter* 26 (1909), 2–3.

[41] [Unsigned], "Elektra," *Der Anti-Rüpel* 6 (April 1909), 113–4. Heinz notes that the poem was originally published in the *Generalanzeiger, Elberfeld-Barmen* on 13 March 1909, although I have been unable to independently verify this.

[42] See Karin Bijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and the Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 102–3. This perception of Lessing and his supporters is reminiscent of contemporary views on another prominent anti-noise activist, the late nineteenth-century Londoner Charles Babbage; see Gavin Williams, "Engine Noise and Artificial Intelligence: Babbage's London," in *Sound Knowledge: Music and Science in London, 1789–1851*, ed. James Q. Davies and Ellen Lockhart (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 203–26.

scenario, for example, the opera helps direct attention toward these popular critiques of the Anti-Noise League.

The foundation for such rhetorical uses of the opera had been laid by discussions of screaming as a vocal practice: the immediacy and baggage of the term "scream" provided the model (and in many cases the language) for subsequent commentators to engage pressing social issues through Strauss's opera. These writers invoked the scream as a synecdoche for *Elektra* as a whole, where unpleasant noise reigned unchecked and humans were forced to compete with the orchestra for the right to be heard. Individual sounds that might have been called "screams" were thus far less important than the idea of screams, which connected the sound-world of the opera house to that of the surrounding urban sprawl. This comes through particularly vividly in two 1909 cartoons that played on the unenviable position of Strauss's singers. The first ("Moderne Opern" ["Modern Operas"], Figure 4.2), printed only a few weeks after *Elektra*'s Dresden premiere, imagines what opera auditions might look like in a post-*Elektra* world where would-be singers were wise to the sonic battles that awaited them in the opera house. A second cartoon ("Vorbereitung" ["Preparation"], Figure 4.3), which appeared just before a planned performance of *Elektra* as part of Munich's "Strauss week" in October 1909, shows a woman confronting her husband about the ruckus he is making in the kitchen; he brushes off her complaints, and explains that he's only preparing for the upcoming Strauss week. While the cartoon pokes fun at the opera's links to noisy soundscapes, the real humor lies in the husband's kinship with its vulnerable singers. Like them, his best efforts to make a racket—his breaking of pots, and, based on his mouth agape, perhaps even his shrill screams—are merely preparations for what will inevitably be a losing battle with the opera's orchestral forces.

FIGURE 4.2: M. Hagen, "Moderne Opern," *Jugend* 14/8 (16 February 1909), 184.

"How dare you come to our audition? You don't even have a voice!"

"That's not necessary, the accompaniment is so loud that the voice isn't heard anyway."

FIGURE 4.3: H. Bing, "Vorbereitung," *Jugend* 14/43 (19 October 1909), 1028.

"But Adolar, why are you making such a terrible racket in the kitchen?"

"I'm merely preparing myself for the Munich Strauss week."

WHAT'S IN A SCREAM?

The definition of screams that emerges in these reactions to *Elektra* shares little with the common parlance of opera studies, in which screams are often loosely defined by sonic features like high pitch or a "raw" timbre and are typically viewed as denoting abnormal or heighted psychological states. Philip Friedheim laid the groundwork for this understanding in a 1983 essay, arguing that Wagner typically used screams to release pent-up emotional responses in extreme dramatic situations, while later composers treated screams as more psychological, as markers of pain or mental anguish.[43] Opera studies then gained a more overtly psychoanalytic framework for operatic screams in the early 1990s with the publication in English of Michel Poizat's book *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*. As we glimpsed in the Introduction, screams for Poizat represented "paroxysmal vocal outburst[s]"—intense and even violent vocalizations that exceed musical notation and thwart sematic intelligibility, approaching the pure "vocal object" of Lacanian theory.[44] The current view of operatic screams sits somewhere between Friedheim and Poizat; Jessica Payette, Matthew Wilson Smith, and Seth Brodsky, for instance, have in their recent work framed operatic screams within a broadly psychological approach, at times mining these vocalizations for what they disclose about the characters who produce them, at times treating them as traces of psychoanalytic processes at work.[45]

The quintessential scream in *Elektra* occurs near the end of the opera, at the moment when Orest, aided by Elektra, murders Klytämnestra in retaliation for her involvement in the deposition of Agamemnon, the husband of Klytämnestra and father of Orest and Elektra (see Example 4.1). Klytämnestra's two piercing death shrieks could be heard, according to Poizat's model, as "pure vocal objects." These are raw outbursts divorced from text and musical notation, a status underscored by how they are set off from the surrounding musical texture. The obsessive circling of the low winds and strings dissipates just before Klytämnestra's first shriek erupts from the wings; Elektra's cry to strike again ("Triff noch einmal!") subsequently goads the orchestra back into action, but only momentarily. A second orchestral silence opens up as a second shriek from Klytämnestra bursts forth to fill the void, and only then does the final *tutti* punctuation, unapologetically belligerent and brassy, regain sonic control.

Few contemporary reviewers accorded this moment more than cursory notice; nor did it figure in the abundant commentary on *Elektra*'s screams.[46] Instead, early reviewers tended to describe screams as ubiquitous and embedded in the opera's musical fabric—a characterization that seems at odds with Klytämnestra's cry at the moment of her death. As Table 4.1 shows, the opera contains few moments

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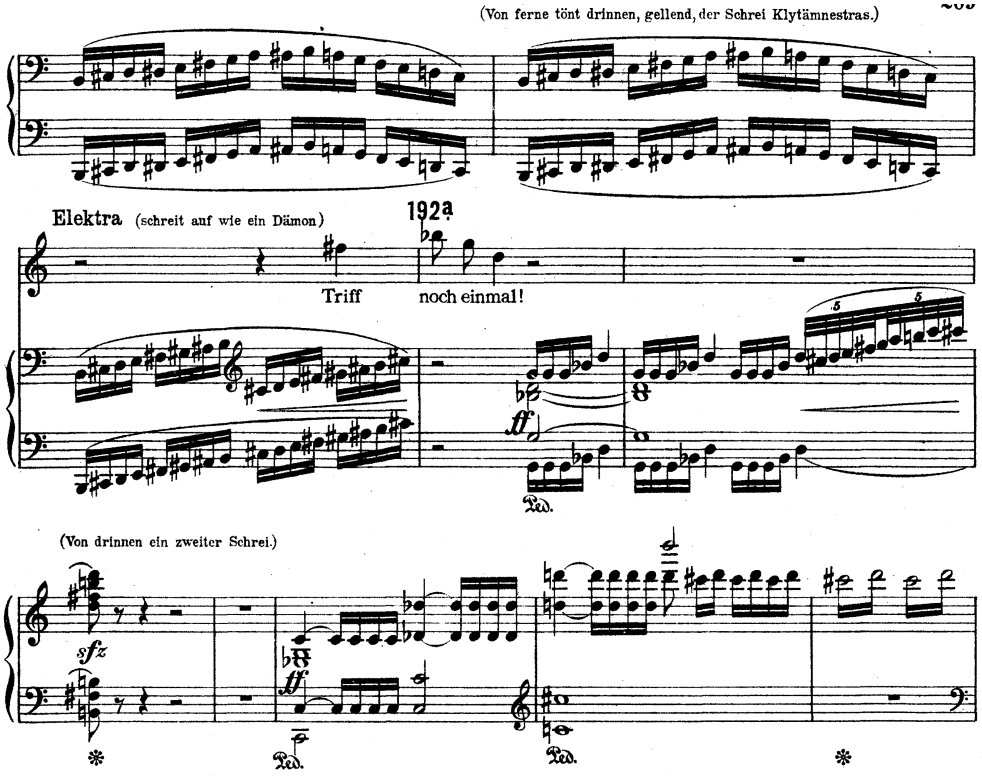
[43] Philip Friedheim, "Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream," *19th-Century Music* 7/1 (Summer 1983), 63–70.

[44] Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 109. He distinguishes the "pure" cry from the "melodic" cry, the latter of which he treats as "stratospheric" vocalizations that nevertheless "[remain] within musical and verbal discourse." (p. 76)

[45] Where Seth Brodsky uses the many screams in Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung* as entry points for exploring the elusive relationship between Freud and opera as a genre, Jessica Payette describes how these same vocalizations serve a crucial dramaturgical function by signaling the deteriorating health of the monodrama's character, die Frau; Matthew Wilson Smith, meanwhile, mixes elements of Poizat and Friedheim with Schopenhauerian theory to delineate Wagner's "neural aesthetics" via Kundry. See Brodsky, "Waiting, Still, or Is Psychoanalysis Tonal?," *Opera Quarterly* 32/4 (December 2016), 281–315, especially after p. 287; Payette, "Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung*'s Reverberations through Twentieth-Century Culture," (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2008), 45–6; and Smith, *The Nervous Stage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 100–29, especially from p. 116.

[46] One writer to express interest in this moment was Fritz Burger, whose essay touched on uses of realism in the opera. See Burger, "Der Impressionismus in d. Strauß-Hoffmannsthal'schen Elektra," *Die Tat* 1/5 (August 1909), 261.



EXAMPLE 4.1: Klytämnestra's death. Richard Strauss, *Elektra. Tragödie in einem Aufzuge vom Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Musik von Richard Strauss, Opus LVII*, ed. Otto Singer (Berlin, W.: Adolph Fürstner, 1908), 209.

like this mimetic death cry, where a scream is explicitly denoted in the score or with a stage direction. But screams of a different sort abound; Table 4.2 shows that screams are more frequently conjured second-hand, when characters narrate or describe past utterances.

This suggests an intriguing alternative for imagining how screams might work in *Elektra*: as aural memories reanimated through narration. The narrative force of this technique is established in the opera's opening moments, as second-hand screams perform the important work of characterization: the listener's first introduction to the titular heroine comes by way of the gossiping maids' recollections of Elektra's voice, recollections that repeatedly emphasize Elektra's penchant for animalistic cries and groans.[47] Manufactured in this way, screams act as another dimension of the "Bakhtinian polyphony" Carolyn Abbate has observed at work in *Elektra*, whereby "the music itself [is used] as a series of voices," and subsequently "becomes a kind of indirect discourse, at times a representation of the characters' words in another language, at times the voice of an outsider, a narrator, [and] at times the voice of music *en pur*."[48] Unlike the outbursts imagined by Poizat or Friedheim, these disembodied screams-at-a-remove are communicated through a combination of vocal and instrumental sounds that

[47] Bryan Gilliam has suggested that these opening narrations prime us to recognize Elektra's dehumanization, particularly through frequent reliance on allusions to feral animals. See Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 94.

[48] Carolyn Abbate, "Elektra's Voice: Music and Language in Strauss's Opera," in *Richard Strauss: Elektra*, ed. Derrick Puffett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 108. Also relevant here is Abbate's "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," which argues in part that the presence of such heteroglossia in *Salome* facilitates the reversal of opera's traditional gender dynamics by allowing for a female character to command an authorial voice.

CHARACTER	ENGLISH TEXT AND ACCOMPANYING EXPRESSIVE OR STAGE DIRECTION	GERMAN TEXT AND ACCOMPANYING EXPRESSIVE OR STAGE DIRECTION
Chrysothemis to Elektra	"Orest! Orest is dead!" (*screaming*)	"Orest! Orest ist tot!!" (*schreiend*)
Elektra	"Strike again!" (*screaming like a demon*)	"Triff noch einmal!" (*schreit auf wie ein Dämon*)
Kytämnestra (as she is being murdered)	(*In the distance, from within the palace, a sharp, piercing scream from KLYTÄMNESTRA*) (*Another scream from within the palace*)	(*Von ferne tönt drinnen, gellend, der Schrei KLYTÄMNESTRAS*) (*Von drinnen ein zweiter Schrei*)
Maid 4 and Maid 1	"There are murderers, murderers in the house!" (*screaming*) "Oh!" (*crying out*)	"Es sind Mörder! Es sind Mörder im Haus! " (*schreiend*) "Oh!" (*schreit auf*)
Aegisth (as he is being murdered)	"Help! Murder! Help the master! Murder! They're murdering me! Can't anyone hear me?" (*screaming*)	"Helft! Mörder! helft dem Herren! Mörder, Sie morden mich! Hört mich niemand? Hört mich niemand?" (*schreiend*)
Chrysothemis	"Can you not hear?" (*almost screaming with excitement*)	"Hörst du denn nicht[?]" (*fast schreiend vor Erregung*)

TABLE 4.1: Screams denoted in the score and stage directions of *Elektra*

may only loosely resemble the primal utterances to which they refer. One might almost call them "unsung" screams.[49]

When Chrysothemis recounts to Elektra how their mother Klytämnestra was heard to scream in her sleep, for instance, Strauss's score lets us imagine that we can hear the ghostly echoes of nightmares past.[50] As Chrysothemis begins to recount the maids' aural memories of Klytämnestra's night terrors ("they say that she dreamt of Orest, that she screamed in her sleep, screamed as one does when one is being strangled") the orchestra belches out piccolo and trumpet runs that conjure muffled cries (see Example 4.2). These are loose approximations of vocal spasms, and their sheer distortion alerts us to the temporal distance between our experiences of these vocalizations (as produced through Chrysothemis's narration) in the present, and the bygone moment in which they were originally uttered. This is music whose narrative force derives from a diegetic rather than mimetic function, music that only appears to speak in the past tense because it gives new expression to past action in the present while underscoring the disjunction; it is narration, in other words, that (to borrow from Richard Taruskin) is "unreliable as [absolute] information" but is instead "reflexive on the work [it inhabits], enriching it with dimensions of meaning we as listeners read better than we may know."[51] In recounting the maids' narrations, Chrysothemis gently elides past and present through her own inhabitation of her mother's voice. Amplified by a soaring piccolo figuration that gives shape and

[49] See Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[50] On the relationship between temporality and listening in *Elektra*, see Ståle Wikshåland, "Elektra's Oceanic Time: Voice and Identity in Richard Strauss," *19th-Century Music* 31/2 (November 2007), 164–74.

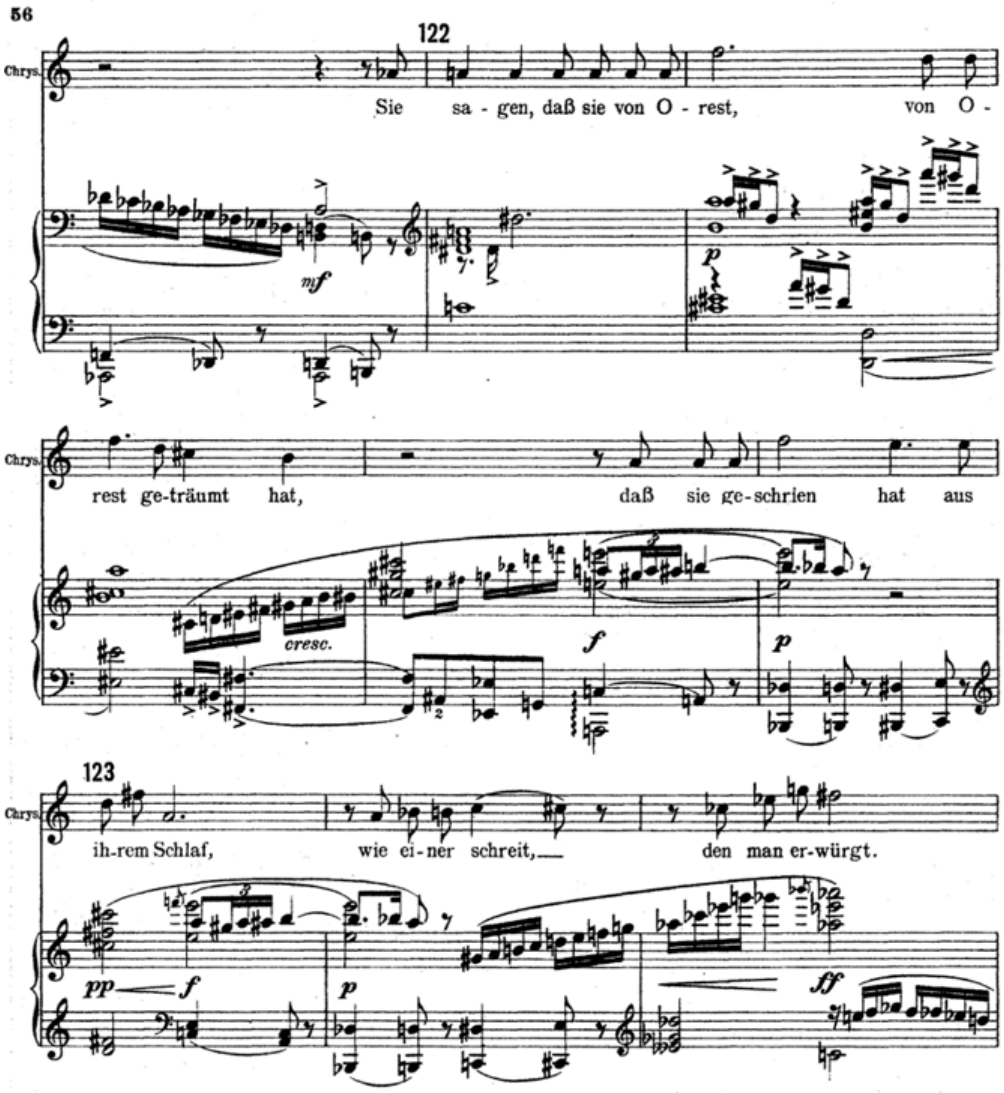
[51] Richard Taruskin, "Review: She do the Ring in different voices," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4/2 (July 1992), 187. Of course, Abbate famously cautioned against the idea that music even possesses "a *way of speaking* that enables us to hear it constituting or projecting events as past" (emphasis original). On this point, and on her idea that narrative force arises out of disjuncture, see Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 26–7, 52–3.

CHARACTER	ENGLISH TEXT	GERMAN TEXT
Maid 3	"'Shoo, flies!' she screamed, 'shoo!'"	"'Fort Fliegen!' schrie sie, 'fort!'"
Maid 4	"'Go away and hide," she screeched after us, 'Eat fats and sweets and go to bed with your husbands,' she cried"	"'Geht ab, verkreicht euch' schrie sie uns nach. 'Esst Fettes und esst Süsses und geht zu Bett mit euren Männern,' schrie sie"
Maid 3	"she […] stretched her fingers out at us like claws and screamed"	"sie [...] reckte ihre Finger wie Krallen gegen uns und schrie"
Maid 1	"'Our body,' she cries, 'stares at the garbage to which we are subservient.'"	"'Unser Lieb,' so schreit sie, 'starrt von dem Unrat, dem wir dienstbar sind!'"
The Overseer	"And when she sees us with our children, she shrieks 'Nothing can be so cursed as children […]'"	"Und wenn sie uns mit unsern Kindern sieht, so schreit sie: 'Nichts kann so verflucht sein, nichts, als Kinder [...]'"
Chrysothemis to Elektra	"They say that she dreamt of Orest, that she screamed in her sleep, screamed as one does when one is being strangled."	"sie sagen, dass sie von Orest geträumt hat, dass sie geschrien hat aus ihrem Schlaf, wie einer schreit, den man erwürgt."
Klytämnestra to Elektra	"Do you not cry out that my eyelids are swollen and my liver is diseased?"	"Schreist nicht du, dass meine Augenlider angeschwollen und meine Leber krank ist?"
Elektra to Klytämnestra (describing a vision)	"He rouses you, you flee screaming, but he is behind you"	"Er jagt dich auf, schreiend, entfliehst du, aber er, er ist hinterdrein"
Elektra to Klytämnestra (describing a vision)	"You want to scream, but the air strangles the unborn scream and lets it fall silently to the ground"	"Du möchtest schreien, doch die Luft erwürgt den ungebornen Schrei und lässt ihn lautlos zu Boden fallen"
Elektra to Chyrsothemis	"Out of your pure, strong mouth a terrible scream must come, like the cry of the goddess of death"	"Aus deinem reinen starken Mund muss furchtbar ein Schrei hervorsprüh'n furchtbar, wie der Schrei der Todesgöttin"
Maid 1	"she screams like that in her sleep"	"Sie schreit so aus dem Schlaf"

TABLE 4.2: Some instances where screams are conjured through narration in *Elektra*

meaning to her contorted vocalizations, Chrysothemis performs—and thus in a sense reanimates—her mother's cries as part of her own storytelling.

These shadowy, synthetic screams do not figure prominently in contemporary responses to *Elektra*; but early reviews of the opera do suggest that critics were attuned to distant screams in much the same way that Strauss's characters are. Wilhelm Altmann grounded his account of the opera's opening sequence in the experience of hearing the maids scream. Like *Salome*, he explained, *Elektra* begins without a prelude, "but then our ear is at once whipped by the cries and shrieks of the four maids, from which the song of the fifth (who is intimately worshipful of Elektra) stands apart; but



EXAMPLE 4.2: Chrysothemis's narration. Strauss, *Elektra*, 56.

before long one also hears this one, who is being punished for her pity, screaming and howling."[52] No screams are denoted in the score or stage direction here; Altmann's description is attuned not to real-time sounds themselves, but to an accumulation of aural memories, built from the sharing and re-narrating of previous encounters with Elektra and her cacophonous voice.

Reading Altmann's account in this way may help to explain the insistence of contemporary critics that screams were central to *Elektra*'s vocal palette. None were more vehement about this than August Spanuth, who went so far as to claim that "it is hardly an exaggeration to assert that Strauss uses the human voice only for its characteristic screams; for him it is only another instrumental effect."[53] In

[52] "Dann aber wird unser Ohr gleich gepeitscht durch das Schreien und Keifen der vier Mägde, von dem sich der Gesang der fünften, Elektra innig verehrenden, gut abhebt; aber nur zu bald hört man auch diese, die für ihr Mitleid gezüchtigt wird, schreien und heulen." Altmann, "'Elektra'," 577.

[53] "Man übertreibt kaum, wenn man behauptet, er benutze die menschliche Stimme da nur noch zum charakteristichen Geschrei. Sie ist ihm nur noch ein Instrumentationseffekt mehr." Spanuth, "Nachträge," 167.

this way, *Elektra*'s voices were perhaps not so unlike *Salome*'s "groaning" double basses, merely their newer, shinier model—and this is precisely Spanuth's point.[54] His final quip speaks to the resurfacing of an old issue that provoked a fresh round of critical resistance: Strauss's willingness to consign the human voice to the status of "a single thread in an [otherwise] instrumental arabesque," as one reviewer put it.[55] Fifteen years after the *Guntram* fiasco, however, renewed debate over Strauss's treatment of the singing voice would take on a much different form: previously a matter of the longevity of opera's generic codes, Strauss's operatic vocal writing now triggered a referendum on aesthetic progress itself.

EVOLUTIONARY PATHWAYS

"Is it progress to use the human voice as Strauss does?" Posed directly in a 1917 biography of the composer—in the chapter on *Elektra*, no less—this question had preoccupied reviewers of the opera since its premiere.[56] For many early listeners, Strauss's handling of the voice seemed to crystallize in miniature the larger issue of how progressive *Elektra*'s musical aesthetics were. *Elektra*'s voices lay at the center of two debates—one over musical modernism, the other over the very notion of progress, with the latter growing out of the former. After one group of reviewers cited Strauss's treatment of the human voice as proof of the entire opera's musical regressiveness, another group responded by challenging the assumptions about progress such views seemed to imply. Here were two camps theorizing progress polemically as much as intellectually, placing in opposition ideas that were by no means mutually exclusive. Writers on both sides of the issue owed a conceptual debt to popular Darwinism, which, through the work of Darwin's many German-speaking promulgators, had come to encompass a sprawling complex of ideas about evolutionary change and its relationship to progress.[57] And the rhetorical tools they developed to support their evaluations of Strauss's approach to vocal writing pressed upon tensions between tradition, artistic renewal, and authenticity of expression that would cut to the heart of twentieth-century modernism.

Galvanized by the existential threat of cultural decline, writers across the German-speaking world approached issues of musical style with commitments to promoting healthy evolutionary development and the purging of suspected contaminants in mind.[58] To some early listeners, *Elektra* counted as one such contagion because of its tendency to recast the human substance of opera—the voice—as bare vocal sound, rather than melody. As one writer using the pen name "Sperando" observed, it was Strauss's voracious pursuit of "new sound possibilities" that had jeopardized the musicality of the vocal lines. The composer had allowed the "dangerous *Sprechgesang*" already incipient in Wagner's operas to blossom so fully as to cause "the negation of every vocal sound." It was "only a step," Sperando

[54] On these double basses, see Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," 248–52.

[55] "Die menschliche Stimme ist nur ein Faden im sonstigen instrumentalen Arabeskenwerk[.]" Richard Schaukal, "Zur Elektra," *DM* 8/17 (June 1909), 304.

[56] Finck, *Richard Strauss*, 250.

[57] Edward Ross Dickinson credits Darwinism with "naturaliz[ing] the [German-speaking] moderns' belief in the possibility (or inevitability) of progress [and, at the same time], their sense of existential threat, of the iron necessity of change if dissolution and extinction were to be avoided." See Dickinson, "Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on Our Discourse about 'Modernity'," *Central European History* 37/1 (2004), 3.

[58] Regarding other contemporary attempts to apply evolutionary thinking to the study of music, see Alexander Rehding, "The Quest for the Origins of Music in Germany Circa 1900," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53/2 (Summer 2000), 345–85; and Eric Ames, "The Sound of Evolution," *Modernism/modernity* 10/2 (April 2003), 297–325.

concluded, "from here to the cult of ugliness and horror."[59] Taking the argument further, other writers openly framed *Elektra*'s vocal content as aesthetic backsliding. Here again screams would constitute a key piece of evidence, capturing for many writers the decay of "good" aesthetic practices and values. Julius Korngold was explicit on this point. In his view, *Elektra*'s screams were the byproducts of "a constitutional upheaval in the music"—that orchestral power-grab which had begun the voice crisis over a decade earlier. In seizing power for itself "with the paint-box and photographic camera," the orchestra

> position[ed] the colored web over the base material [and] itself over the singing, which is by no means spared through the principle of realistic imitation, but is completely adjusted to the accents and cadences of verbal language, often attracted to a speaking tone that is foreign to music, but that is nervously excited, gasping, screaming.[60]

This idea—this link between opera's shifting sonic hierarchy and the presence of screams within the vocal palette—was one that Korngold had already begun to formulate in response to *Salome*. At the time, Korngold (having been given cover by the satirical genre in which he was writing) had followed the argument all the way to its logical extreme. In the piece, which took the form of a fictitious dialogue between two anonymous aesthetes, Korngold's relates how the listeners found *Salome*'s voices subjugated to an unprecedented degree by its orchestra, such that the resulting singing ("often nothing more than droning, nervous speech [and] excited screams") was nothing short of "a degradation of the vocal element, of dramatic singing."[61]

In several important respects, the discursive foundations for these arguments had been laid with the publication of and subsequent controversy surrounding a 1906 *Neue Musik-Zeitung* article entitled "Confusion in Music" ("Die Konfusion in der Musik"). Authored by Felix Draeseke, the aging composer-turned-critic whom we met briefly in Chapter 2, the piece was widely understood as a response to Strauss's *Salome*, although it never mentioned the work by name. Draeseke instead offered a blanket critique of the "decay" of modern music. This rotting was allegedly caused by composers who prioritized color over musical elements like melody and harmony, thus abandoning values of formal coherence and elevating cacophony to the status of musical ideal. The resulting pieces were ones whose "destructive" impulses inevitably gave rise to "concoction[s] of sounds that music does not know and probably will not make use of again with further development in a healthy direction."[62]

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[59] "Sein Können ist ins Uebermaß gesteigert, es ergeben sich ihm immer neue Klangmöglichkeiten er schreckt vor keiner harmonischen Härte, vor keiner Häßlichkeit zurück. [...] Daß der Artist den gefährlichen Sprechgesang, der schon im Wagnerschen Kunstwerk gelegentlich einmal trockene Stellen hervorruft, bis zur Negation jedes Gesangstones erweitert, ist nur zur natürlich. Von hier bis zum Kultus des Häßlichen und Grausigen ist nur ein Schritt." Sperando [*sic*], "Elektra," *DS* 5/5 (4 February 1909), 130–1.

[60] "So reisst [die Symphonie] mit Farbenkasten und photographischer Camera die Herrschaft an sich, vollzieht einen Verfassungsumsturz in der Musik, stellt das farbige Gespinst über den Grundstoff, sich selber über den Gesang, der, keineswegs geschont durch das Prinzip realistischer Imitation, ganz den Akzenten und Kadenzen der Wortsprache, oft musikfremdem Sprechton schlechtweg verfällt und einem nervös erregten, keuchenden, schreienden dazu." [Julius Korngold], "Dr. Julius Korngold über 'Elektra'," *SfMW* 67/14 (7 April 1909), 518.

[61] Julius Korngold, "Richard Strauss's *Salome*: A Conversation," trans. Susan Gillespie, in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 346.

[62] Felix Draeseke, "Die Konfusion in der Musik," *NMZ* 28/1 (4 October 1906), 6. Draeseke's essay and several dozen contemporary responses to it are reprinted in Susanne Shigihara, *'Die Konfusion in der Musik': Felix Draesekes Kampfschrift (1906) und die Folgen* (Bonn: Gundrun Schröder Verlag, 1990). For an extended English-language analysis of Draeseke's

Draeseke warned that a "cult of ugliness" had taken hold and had already inaugurated a decline: "this defamiliarization with beauty, simplicity, and euphony [cannot] bear fruit, only exacerbate the already noticeable decay of art."[63]

His purpose in rehearsing such routine critiques of new music was to galvanize cultural elites, so that modern music could be set back on its proper course. He argued that it was these new musical works corrupted by "general lawlessness and anarchy" that had created the ultimately more distressing confusion to which he referred in his title: that of listeners, whose aesthetic tastes had been so thoroughly rewired by this "absolute non-music" that they came to crave it. With audiences no longer capable of distinguishing good from bad, Austro-German music culture could only be healed through decisive interventions—and specifically through a quarantine of contaminated elements—by those in positions of institutional power: "We cannot tolerate the lazy 'laisser aller' [approach] because that will improve nothing, but rather make the necessary healing more difficult, if not thwart it completely."[64]

In the final section of this chapter, I will revisit Draeseke's claims in relation to the tropes of corporeal trauma that are so prominent in the discourse around *Elektra* and the biopolitical resonances those metaphors acquire. Draeseke's attraction to biologically-oriented metaphors signals not just what Lawrence Kramer has called "supremacist" thought but the weaponization of this thought in debates over musical modernism. Kramer explains that supremacism was thoroughly dualistic: cultural progress was a product of protecting humanity's "higher" elements by separating out its "lower" ones, which typically emanated from women, the urban poor, and the indigenous populations of the colonial world. The careful management of such groups was the mechanism by which societies advanced.[65] Draeseke's own supremacism, while less sweeping, had a similar thrust; but the avalanche of commentary triggered by his *Kampfartikel*—including responses from Max Reger, Hugo Riemann, and even Strauss himself—worked to transform his original alarm into a portable framework of supremacism. Many respondents, for instance, took to characterizing Draeseke's project as a "protest against the spread of ugliness in modern music," as one contemporary put it, and thereby helped legitimize his elision of aesthetic regression with "ugliness."[66]

We have already glimpsed through Korngold and Sperando something of how Draeseke's ideas were mobilized to criticize *Elektra*'s vocal aesthetics, but nowhere is this absorption more apparent than in a review of the opera by Ferdinand Pfohl. Pfohl explained that it was Strauss's obsession with

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text, see Jonathan Gentry, "Sound Biopolitics: Modernist Music and Degeneration in the Wilhelmine Empire," *New German Critique* 44/2 (2017), 201–27.

[63] "Was uns übrigens noch schlimmer dünkt, ist der verrohende Eindruck, den ein Kultus des Hässlichen, verbunden mit der Verachtung aller bisher gültigen Traditionen, auf die gesamte musikalische Welt, Laien wie Künstler, hervorrufen muß. Denn diese Entwöhnung vom Schönen, Einfachen und Wohlklingenden kann unmöglich gute Früchte tragen und den bereits merklichen Verfall der Kunst nur noch weiter steigern." Draeseke, "Die Konfusion," 7.

[64] "Nur das faule 'laisser aller' kann von uns nicht geduldet werden, den hierdurch wird nichts gebessert, vielmehr die nötige Heilung erschwert, wenn nicht völlig verhindert." Draeseke, "Die Konfusion," 7.

[65] See Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 190–219, especially pp. 191–2. Ultimately, however, Kramer uses supremacist thinking as a hermeneutic tool for interpreting the opera's dramatic world, as when he reads Aegisth's "hysterical" screams at the moment of death as exposing the misogynistic politics of *fin-de-siècle* supremacist culture: "in the wax museum of supremacism, Aegisth is the most degraded exhibit, the degenerate effeminate male who, abject in life, must be made even more abject in death." (p. 208)

[66] "Unter dem Titel "Die Konfusion in der Musik" hat […] Prof. Felix Draeseke […] einen längeren, sehr beachtenswerten Aufsatz veröffentlich, der in energischster weise zum Proteste und zum Kampfe gegen die Ueberhandnahme des Häßlichen in der modernen Musik auffordert." Arthur Smolian, cited in [Unsigned], "Musikalische Zeitfragen. Draesekes Mahnruf und sein Echo," *NMZ* 28/5 (29 November 1906), 99.

playing the role of "colorist" that had led to the corruption of *Elektra*'s musical substance. The composer had created "nothing more than the truest reflection of barbarism" by dignifying through musical expression even those elements of Hofmannsthal's drama that Pfohl considered "unmusical in the highest degree," namely the "grisly […] will of these bloodthirsty people, over whom the sun of Hellenism has not yet risen, who still scream like animals, [and] who still stand on the threshold of the terribly egotistical natural law of primeval times."[67] To consider *Elektra* on aesthetic grounds was thus to repudiate it completely:

> A great artist has taken a fateful leap back into a lower developmental state long since overcome: the music in this score throws away its best aspects, denies its inner nature. The music has again become *Schrei*—animalistic sound, sigh, and the human beast's stertorous breathing—from melody, to which it had been raised over the course of centuries. Therefore, we must reject this Strauss-Hofmannsthal *Elektra*, because of its descent from the highest peaks of culture, because of its relapse into the misery of aesthetic and moral ugliness, into the barbarism and brutality of feeling.[68]

Every line reveals Pfohl's wholesale appropriation of Draeseke, right down to the moralistic tone, yet this critique is also made to seem specifically and even intrinsically relevant to *Elektra* through Pfohl's engagement with the category of *Schrei*.

We saw earlier how the sound qualities associated with the term "scream" made it an attractive descriptor for critics looking to describe a vocal landscape in which singers struggled to assert themselves over a gargantuan orchestra, and those associations also lend Pfohl's review its sharp critical edge. In his hands, these same sonic characteristics turned screams into powerful evidence of *Elektra*'s backwardness, because noisy vocalizations were also becoming symbolic of social transgression for reasons Anti-Noise League founder Theodor Lessing outlined in a 1908 polemic.[69] Noise was so inextricably bound to brutality and a lack of culture, he explained, that the triumph of loudness could only indicate a primitive station within the progression of social advancement: "The well-bred,

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[67] "Der stark barbarische Einschlag in dem verzerrten Griechendrama Hofmannsthals, die Wildheit entarteter Instinkte, die grausige Willensrichtung dieser blutgierigen Menschen, über denen die Sonne des Griechentums noch nicht aufgegangen ist, die noch schreien wie die Tiere, noch an der Schwelle des furchtbar egoistischen Naturgesetzes der Urzeit stehen, brutal, gewaltsam, abstossend: alle diese im höchsten Grade unmusikalischen Elemente hat die Musik Straussens nur zu sehr und zu restlos in sich aufgesogen, in Ton und Lärm verwandelt, in 'Ausdruck' umgesetzt, der, bei der Vollständigkeit, mit der die Musik den Aufsaugungsprozess an Text, Wort und Gefühl vollzog, nicht anders als barbaresk werden konnte, ein getreuestes Spiegelbild des barbaresken Vorganges." [Ferdinand Pfohl], "Ferdinand Pfohl über 'Elektra'," *SfMW* 67/36 (8 September 1909), 1260.

[68] "Ein grosser Künstler hat da einen verhängnisvollen Sprung in einen längst überwundenen niederen Entwicklungszustand zurückgetan: die Musik wirft in dieser Partitur ihr Bestes über Bord, verleugnet ihr innerstes Wesen. Sie ist aus der Melodie, zu der sie im Lauf der Jahrhunderte erhoben worden war, wieder Schrei geworden, tierischer Laut, Seufzer und Röcheln der menschlichen Bestie. Darum müssen wir wegen ihres Heruntersinkens von hohen Kulturgipfeln, wegen ihres Rückfalles in das Elend des ästhetisch und sittlich Hässlichen, in die Barbarei und Rohheit des Gefühls, diese Strauss-Hofmannsthalsche Elektra ablehnen." [Ferdinand Pfohl], "Ferdinand Pfohl über 'Elektra'," 1260.

[69] One indication of how screams were becoming symbols of social transgression comes from dictionaries. Heyne's *Wörterbuch*, for instance, introduced into its 1905–06 edition the term *Schreibalg*, which denoted a reprimand for a constantly screaming child. It appears that, even though the Heyne did not include the word *Schreibalg* in previous editions of his dictionary, the word itself was not new: the Grimm brothers' *Wörterbuch* includes this word, though it suggests the word defines the screaming child, rather than the chastisement of that child. Moriz Heyne, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1906), 474.

cultured human […] will always and above all be characterized through silence and by hostility against undisciplined, noisy attitudes," he wrote, adding "Culture is the development toward silence!"[70]

This logic begins to surface in Pfohl's review when he writes dismissively of Hofmannsthal's characters ("who still scream like animals") and stresses that since they have not yet enjoyed the civilizing effects of "Hellenism" they remain beholden to "primeval" law. Thus, at the climax of Pfohl's argument, screams are not merely held up as markers of primitivism and social transgression, or offered as emblems of operatic vocal decline (*à la* Korngold), but revealed as trace evidence of aesthetic regression itself. To claim that all *Elektra*'s music "has again become *Schrei*" meant for Pfohl that *Elektra*'s musical aesthetics boiled down to the triumph of raw sound over cultivated (melodic) expression, and therefore that the entire opera constituted a bald-faced retreat from a more "advanced" state of aesthetic development.

In laying out such an argument, Pfohl had also exposed to an unprecedented degree the linear view of progress on which such aesthetic claims were implicitly based: according to this model, progress was made by refining the crude, by perfecting traditions. His framing further evokes the evolutionary narratives of musical style recently described by Rachel Mundy, which performed the political work of supremacism by treating cultural forms as markers of biologically defined differences.[71] The evolutionary structure of Pfohl's account had a basis in a strand of Darwinism, which by the late nineteenth century had flourished into something of a popular philosophy. The historian Alfred Kelly reports that even though translations of Darwin were readily available, the average *fin-de-siècle* German reader became familiar with Darwin's ideas through the work of numerous popularizers who, starting in the 1860s, had begun to distill and apply Darwin's core arguments in an effort to elucidate the processes of both the natural and social worlds.[72] By the time Darwin's ideas reached the German public, then, they had often undergone considerable transformations, such that for many contemporary readers Darwinian theory boiled down to a single, inaccurate idea: that, as Dr. Edward B. Aveling noted in the preface to his own Darwinian text *Die Darwin'sche Theorie* (published in 1887), "man descends from the ape."[73] However misrepresentative of Darwin's arguments, this scheme seemed to confirm that progress was indeed a process of continued refinement.

In the realm of aesthetic criticism, this model encouraged contemporary audiences to believe that they could securely distinguish refinements from disintegrations, although a number of critics

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[70] "Der wohlerzogene kultivierte Mensch wird sich (ganz gleich welcher inhaltlichen, objektiven, materialen Kultur er angehöre und auf welcher Kenntnis- und Bildungsstufe er verharre) immer und überall durch Schweigen und durch Feindschaft gegen undisziplinierte, laute Lebenshaltung auszeichnen. Kultur ist Entwickelung zum Schweigen!" Theodor Lessing, *Der Lärm: Eine Kampfschrift gegen die Geräusche unseres Lebens* (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1908), 20. Lessing's views would come to shape the agenda of the Anti-Noise League he founded, as evidenced not only by the full title of their official mouthpiece—*Der Antirüpel, das Recht auf Stille: Monatsblätter zum Kampf gegen Lärm, Roheit und Unkultur im deutschen Wirtschafts-, Handels- und Verkehrsleben (The Antirowdy, the Right to Silence: Monthly Journal for the Campaign against Noise, Brutality, and Lack of Culture in the German Economy, Trade, and Traffic)*—but also by the fact that, as Peter Payer has noted, the society reportedly distributed cards that read "Silence is Noble." See Payer "The Age of Noise: Early Reactions in Vienna, 1870–1914," *Journal of Urban History* 33/5 (July 2007), 782.

[71] Rachel Mundy, "Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67/3 (Fall 2014), 735–68.

[72] Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860–1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

[73] "Fragt man Jemanden, was Darwin für die Wissenschaft geleistet habe, so erhält man gewöhnlich die Antwort: 'Darwin? Kennen wir: behauptet, der Mensch stammt vom Affen ab.'" Dr. Edward B. Aveling, *Die Darwin'sche Theorie* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1887), 1.

expressed reservations. Leopold Schmidt cautioned his fellow critics that it was not their job to assess the way evolutionary progress manifested. He noted that Strauss's stylistic experiments had yielded rich new possibilities for musical exploitation, and added that musicians had throughout history become accustomed to tasks once deemed inconceivable—facts which prompted him to conclude that it "did not fall to [them] to determine the limit to which the techniques of the future can develop." Their task, he wrote, was simply to acquaint themselves with *Elektra*, ultimately leaving it to their successors to "pass final judgment on its effect and value."[74] Those who pushed back against Draeseke's conservatism, in order to erode support for the authoritarian mechanisms by which he proposed to police culture, often used a similar logic, arguing that it was not up to critics to ascertain what constituted progress.[75] Resistance to an aesthetic based on a narrow definition of progress can also be discerned in some reviews of *Elektra*, where critics counter the reflexive tendency to reject whatever elements were not immediately aesthetically pleasing and begin to outline new, more forgiving frameworks for thinking about Strauss's vocal writing.[76]

This strategy crystallizes in an overwrought review by one Dr. Arthur Neisser, who proposed that *Elektra*'s most promising feature was the way in which Strauss harnessed the sonic potential of all instrumental voices toward dramatic ends. Admittedly, he continued,

> only real artists—not pampered prima donnas—are amenable to the task of finding the reef in the boiling-hot and flowing waters of the orchestra-sea on which the questing singing voices of *Elektra* […] can save themselves. The singers of *Elektra* must understand that they are inserted into the orchestra in the same way as instruments. At certain moments, they have to be violin cantilenas, then whining woodwinds, and then simply hissing, throaty-noise of a mixed instrumental nature; but then again they must remember […] their actual purpose of being singing voices.[77]

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[74] "Man darf jedoch nicht vergessen, daß sich unsre Musiker schon öfter an Dinge gewöhnt haben, die, als sie neu waren, gleichfalls für unausführbar, weil gegen die Natur der Instrumente verstoßend, galten. Die Grenze zu bestimmen, bis zu der sich die Technik der Zukunft zu entwickeln vermag, liegt uns nicht ob […] Wir können uns nur bemühen, einem solchen Werke [*sic*] allmählich näher zu kommen, und es getrost der Zukunft überlassen, über seine Wirkung und seinen Wert oder Unwert das endgültige Urteil zu fällen." Leopold Schmidt, "Richard Straußens 'Elektra'," *DK* 22/10 (2 February 1909), 220, 223.

[75] For instance, when Max Reger wrote of how different cliques defined progress in their own terms and how contemporary opinions about what constituted progress were often overturned several decades hence, he was responding to the horrifying prospect of what Hugo Riemann had called an "authoritative personality who by decree and personal example would be able to demarcate the limits which ought not to be transgressed." Reger defiantly insisted (contra Riemann) that "*we will not be muzzled and placed under musicological guardianship*!" (emphasis original). See Max Reger, "Degeneration and Regeneration in Music," trans. Christopher Anderson, in *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, ed. Christopher Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 47; and Hugo Riemann, "Degeneration and Regeneration in Music," trans. Christopher Anderson, in *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, 39. Reger's two other publications on the subject also appear in translations by Anderson in this collection.

[76] It could not have helped that what was effectively a conservative framework for assessing aesthetic progress was being adopted by writers such as Pfohl and Korngold, to whom "progressive" aesthetic politics were often ascribed.

[77] "[I]n der freilich für verwöhnte Primadonnen unerfüllbaren, nur echten Künstlern zugänglichen Aufgabe, aus den siedend heiß dahinströmenden Fluten des Orchestermeers die Riffe herauszufinden, auf die sich die suchenden Singstimmen der Elektra und der übrigen Gestalten retten können. Zugleich aber müssen es die Sänger und Sängerinnen der 'Elektra' verstehen, sich in das Orchester gleichsam als Instrumente einzufügen. Sie müssen bald Geigenkantilenen, bald wimmernde Holzinstrumente, bald auch nur zischende Gurgellaute instrumentaler Mischnatur sein; bald aber müssen sie sich wie einem lichten Moment ihrer eigentlichen Aufgabe, Singstimmen zu sein, erinnern können." Dr. Arthur Neisser, "Elektra," *Der Musiksalon* 1/4 (1909), 59.

While Neisser does not explicitly endorse the use of voices "in the same way as instruments" as a progressive development, he opens the door for such an argument when he reframes the situation in Darwinian terms, as a struggle for existence amid a changing operatic ecology. The struggle for existence (or *Kampf ums Dasein* as it was typically rendered in translation) proved to be one of Darwin's most exportable concepts, even as he and his theories (as originally argued) became distorted or obscured through the popularizers. Many popularizers, in fact, took great care to summarize the concept, which they saw as elucidating the very mechanism of evolution: from the struggle for survival came variations among individual organisms that amounted to adaptations to the local environment, and these variations were subsequently passed on—or not—to offspring in accordance with the process of natural selection.[78] This is the process Neisser suggests may be at work in *Elektra*: with his metaphor of the reef, he proposes that only a certain breed of singers will survive in this newly inhospitable operatic environment, for only certain singers are up to the task of negotiating the new aesthetic demands being placed on them.

Neisser also gently proposed how one might come to appreciate this kind of vocal idiom, and perhaps even to regard it as progressive. When he elevates to the status of artist those singers capable of meeting *Elektra*'s vocal demands, he suggests that listeners might attach value to the creative labor of the performer—that they might consider, in other words, the performance apart from the aesthetics. At the same time, by drawing attention to the labor of the performer, he also renders the opera's challenging approach to vocality legible in evolutionary terms, as adaptations that respond to shifting environmental circumstances. Or, as Ernst Haeckel, one of Darwin's most influential popularizers, had put it, "only through progressive movement are life and development possible. Standing still is in itself regression, and regression carries with it death. The future belongs only to progress!"[79]

ELEKTRA THE BLOODBATH

In reaching for a Darwinian metaphor of existential struggle to convey how he understood *Elektra*'s sonic landscape, Neisser perhaps unwittingly suggested that the opera created a special sort of danger, one his contemporaries would reify. According to numerous accounts from the weeks after the premiere, performing the work was a veritable blood sport. One satirical epic published in a popular art and life magazine told readers of how conductor Willi Schuh violently lost both arms in the course of the "Elektra music battle."[80] A previous issue had featured a nearly full-page cartoon in which emergency medical personnel arrive at the Dresden Hofoper to carry the lifeless body of a singer off

[78] See Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin*, especially pp. 29–30.

[79] Cited and translated in Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin*, 22.

[80] [Unsigned], "Aus der Elektra-Musikschlacht in Dresden," *Dresdener Rundschau* 18/12 (20 March 1909), 4. In the epic, Schuh whips his arms around so forcefully during the first performance of *Elektra* that both arms become severed from his body and go flying through the air. Schuh had, in fact, sustained an arm injury whilst conducting an early performance of *Elektra*, and this incident was eagerly taken up by contemporary satirists. For instance, the previous issue of the *Dresdener Rundschau*'s front page featured a cartoon that prophesied that future performances at the Hofoper would involve Schuh conducting upside down with his (uninjured) feet. Schuh's muscle strain was also the inspiration for a cartoon published in *Kladderadatsch* that showed Strauss greeting news of the conductor's injury with the steely rejoinder that he will "pursue [his operatic] goal [even if] the entire orchestra should fall by the wayside." See [Unsigned], "v. Schuch [*sic*] der Unverwüstliche (Zukunftsbild aus der Dresdener Hofoper)," *Dresdener Rundschau* 18/ 11 (13 March 1909), 1; and L. Sturtz, Untitled, *Kladderadatsch* 62/11 (1909), 42.

stage on a stretcher.[81] Some gestures to such grisly themes were more earnest. One operagoer wrote to a Dresden newspaper that the "after-effects" of *Elektra* took the form of gruesome nightmares:

> I saw [Annie] Krull [who premiered the role of Elektra] lying dead on the stage, tongue outstretched and eyes bulged out of their sockets. The other players were also defeated by the exertion of the *Elektra* performance, and their corpses covered the battlefield—excuse me!—the stage.[82]

Even reviewers like Schwers and Spanuth raised the prospect of mortal peril when they opted for unusually brutal language to convey otherwise routine concerns. Where Schwers, as we have seen, characterized the orchestra's power in terms of its capacity to squeeze the life out of singers (not merely to drown them out), Spanuth prophesied that the vocal demands of Strauss's composition would inevitably wreak "slow yet certain voice-murder" (not merely the vocal ruin feared by nineteenth-century critics).[83]

Far from discursive anomalies, these biological obsessions suggest ways to construe aesthetic discourse, as others have done before me, under the auspices of biopolitics. Such encounters were by no means inevitable, however, since biopolitics is not centrally concerned with art or aesthetic objects, but rather interrogates the intersection of sovereignty and biology. In Michel Foucault's classic formulation, which arises from his reading of historical models of sovereign power, biopolitics addresses how life became the basis of the liberal forms of governance.[84] The question of whether Foucault provides a coherent theory of biopolitics remains a matter of debate, and subsequent theorizations of biopolitics that have departed from Foucauldian loose ends have recently fueled scholarly interest in how the optimization of life became the responsibility of political leadership—interest, that is, in the sovereign's claim to manage the physical welfare of citizens as well as the mechanisms by which such power is exercised.[85]

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[81] [Unsigned], "Nach einer 'Elektra'-Aufführung in der Dresdner Hofoper," *Dresdener Rundschau* 18/7 (13 February 1909), 1.

[82] The newspaper editor introduced the letter as being from a reader who had recently attended a performance of *Elektra*: "Ein Leser unseres Blattes, der kürzlich einer Aufführung der 'Elektra' beiwohnte, übermittelt uns eine Schilderung der empfangenen Eindrücke und seiner daraus resultierenden Betrachtungen, denen wir nachstehend Raum geben: [....] Ich sah die Krull mit weitherausgestreckter Zunge und stark aus den Höhlen hervorgetretenen Augen tot auf der Bühne liegen. Auch die übrigen Mitwirkenden waren den Strapazen der *Elektra*-Aufführung unterlegen und bedeckten mit ihren Leichen das Schlachtfeld, pardon! — die Bühne." [Unsigned], "Ein- und Ausfälle: Elektra," *Dresdener Rundschau* 18/7 (13 February 1909), 2.

[83] "Was Richard Strauss den Stimmen zumutet, ist langsamer aber sicherer Stimmmord." August Spanuth, "Nachträge," 167. The tendency of pundits to frame such issues in terms of vocal ruin persisted well into the *fin de siècle* period: in her annual letter to the *Signale* readership, Marchesi in 1899 denounced certain "young composers" who, lacking proper knowledge of voice, "impose unattainable difficulties on the tortured vocal organ, and [thus] hasten the ruin of the voice!" ("Schade auch, daß die der neuen Richtung angehörigen, jungen Componisten von der 'Frauenstimme' wenig oder gar keinen Begriff haben, daher dem gequälten Stimm-Organ unerreichbare Schwierigkeiten auferlegen und den Ruin der Stimme beschleunigen!") Marchesi, "Reisebrief von Mathilde Marchesi," *SfMW* 57/41 (26 August 1899), 644.

[84] Although there is now some evidence to suggest that the term biopolitics was first used by the political scientist Rudolf Kjellén around 1905, its coinage is usually traced to Michel Foucault. The central texts that theorize biopolitics are collected in *Biopolitics: A Reader*, ed. Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). For an overview of the main players, issues, and stakes of biopolitical thought, see Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, trans. Eric Frederick Trump (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

[85] Prominent examples of these different theorizations of biopolitics include Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Roberto Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Alexander

The attentiveness of biopolitics to these dynamics has made it a particularly attractive concept for interpreting the history of early twentieth-century Germany. While historians have long relied on biopolitics to make sense of the transition from Wilhelmine-era welfare programs to the eugenics of the National Socialists, the concept has recently been mobilized toward music-historiographical ends, in order to explain the intensifying hostility toward modernist music among German speakers after 1900. According to historian Jonathan Gentry, the development of this antagonism replays a foundational biopolitical scene in which a powerful elite steps in to regulate public welfare: much as Chancellor von Bülow had sought to fortify the stability of the body politic through the suppression of radical elements in the first decade of the twentieth century, Gentry argues, contemporary aesthetic authorities sought to protect the welfare of the musical public by quarantining "dangerous" modernist music.[86] For Gentry, the early reception of *Salome* illuminates the emergence of this biopolitical logic by crystallizing the discursive shift from merely critiquing aesthetically "unhealthy" elements of a musical work to using such objections as grounds for repressing these ostensible cultural contagions as a matter of national security. We have already glimpsed this development through Draeseke, whom Gentry credits with introducing an aesthetic application of biopolitics into mainstream Austro-German music journalism after 1900. Draeseke, we will recall, sought to revive an ailing music culture and its attendant body of listeners through the aggressive removal of aesthetic contagions—an approach that, as Gentry rightly stresses, departed sharply from the liberal welfare policies favored by nineteenth-century music critics like Eduard Hanslick, which emphasized self-regulation through education.[87]

These agitations over the health of the nation provide a backdrop that helps make sense of this biologically oriented strand of *Elektra* discourse, as well as of its urgency. Yet, as self-conscious and even wry engagements with tropes of bodily injury, these responses to *Elektra* cannot be read as straightforward, if blithe, echoes of public health concerns originally articulated at the level of political leadership as Gentry would have it. This disjuncture partly stems from a difference in emphasis. Where many of the critics Gentry cites tended to focus (much as many musicologists continue to do) on disease as an issue of representation—that is, on manifestations of illness that occur on the level of the aesthetic text, such as pathological characters or "unhealthy" features of musical style—the abovementioned reactions to *Elektra* locate corporeal damage in the moment of performance, and mobilize images of such harm in order to frame art as mimetic, spectacular, and dangerous.[88]

G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2014); and Catherine Malabou, "Will Sovereignty Ever Be Deconstructed?" in *Plastic Materialities: Politics, Legality, and Metamorphosis in the Work of Catherine Malabou*, ed. Brenna Bhandar and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 35–46.

[86] Gentry, "Sound Biopolitics," 204.

[87] Gentry, "Sound Biopolitics," 214. In the dissertation chapter on which his article is based, Gentry cites a passage of Hanslick's criticism that is explicit on this point; it reads: "A wise aesthetic pathology would no more attempt to suppress such phenomena than would rational physical hygiene attempt to obstruct the cleansing processes of the human body, even when they break out conspicuously upon the skin." See Eduard Hanslick, *Music Criticisms*, *1846–99*, trans. and ed. Henry Pleasants (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1963), 294, cited in Gentry, "Sound Bodies: Biopolitics in German Musical Culture, 1850–1910" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2015), 66.

[88] Here I am thinking of examples drawn from musicology's longstanding interests in opera's tubercular heroines and *fin-de-siècle* complaints levied against Wagner's "diseased" music, as well as the kind of (now debunked) arguments that have historically sought to locate traces of "illnesses" such as Beethoven's deafness or Chaikovsky's homosexuality within stylistic features of their respective compositions. One classic (and relevant) example that is representative of the tendency to prioritize disease vis-à-vis the aesthetic text is Sander L. Gilman, "Strauss, the Pervert, and Avant Garde Opera of the Fin

These reactions are thus not only more attentive to the figure of the performer, but more deeply invested in the work of performers—a circumstance that was not lost on contemporary listeners like the nightmare-suffering Dresdner mentioned earlier:

> We have animal welfare associations, but do not yet have an institution that protects defenseless musicians and soloists from the impositions of overly-drunk composers. With the performance of *Elektra*, the question of founding a musician and soloist protection association has become acute. The audience can resist the cacophony by holding their ears or fleeing the auditorium. The poor musicians and soloists, however, not only have to listen to the hellish spectacle, but produce it themselves or risk losing their livelihood.[89]

This portion of their letter cheekily underscores how debates about public health in the aesthetic sphere tended to prioritize listeners at the expense of others. But by flagging the precarious situation of Strauss's performers, it also gestures toward a potent narrative about *Elektra* that crystallized around the time of the opera's premiere: that it far exceeded the bodies of its performers, at times breaking them in brutal fashion.

The gossipy reports that newspapers published to stir up public interest in performances played a significant role in consolidating this narrative. At times they confirmed listeners' impressions of the danger *Elektra* posed to its singers, as when reviewers seized on reports that contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink would pull out after only one performance in the role of Klytämnestra due to overextension.[90] At other times, the rumor mill functioned as an expression of these suspicions: newspaper columnists reported hearing whispers that Strauss would revise the vocal parts so as to lessen the strain on his singers, and correspondents across Germany traded stories about singers signing the cross before taking the stage to perform the opera.[91] As far away as America readers learned that the musical demands of *Elektra* were "so extreme" (in one writer's estimation), that virtually all opera

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de Siècle," *New German Critique* 43 (Winter 1998), 35–68. For a wide-ranging account of music's relationship to disease, see James Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as Cause of Disease* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

[89] "Wir haben Tierschutzvereine, aber noch keine Institution, die wehrlose Musiker und Solisten vor den Zumutungen übergeschnappter Komponisten schützt. Mit der Aufführung der 'Elektra' ist die Frage der Gründung von Musiker- und Solistenschutzverein akut geworden. Das Publikum kann sich durch Zuhalten der Ohren oder Flucht aus dem Zuschauerraum der Kakophonie erwehren. Die armen Musiker und Solisten aber müssen sich den Höllenspektakel nicht nur anhören, sondern ihn im Schweiße ihres Angesichts selbst erzeugen. Wenn sie es nicht tun, laufen sie Gefahr, ihren Erwerb zu verlieren." [Unsigned], "Ein- und Ausfälle," 2.

[90] Schumann-Heink's tribulations were the subject of a well-known contemporary anecdote about *Elektra*: during rehearsals in the lead up to the opera's premiere, Strauss supposedly urged Schuh to have the orchestra play louder since he could still hear her voice. Regarding this anecdote and Schumann-Heink's own accounts of the strain of performing *Elektra*, see Joy H. Calico, "Staging Scandal with *Salome* and *Elektra*," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71–6. Representative contemporary reports concerning Schumann-Heink's withdrawal include Altmann, "'Elektra'," 579; E. G. [*sic*], "Uraufführung der 'Elektra'," *Der Musiksalon* 1/3 (1 February 1909), 49; and L. S. [*sic*], "Nouvelles Diverses. Étranger," *Le Ménstrel* 75/18 (1 May 1909), 141.

[91] On these rumors see [Unsigned], "Zum Pressekampf um die Elektra," *NMZ* 30/11 (4 March 1909), 239; and Calico, "Staging Scandal," 70–1. Examples of the press's fixation on singers struggling to perform *Elektra* include "Hinter den Kulissen. Unser Wiener Korrespondent schreibt uns," *Berliner Börsen-Courier* 42/51 (31 January 1909), 7; and A. Keller, "Bühnentelegraph. Barmen-Elberfeld," *Bühne und Welt* 11/1 (October 1908–March 1909), 523.

houses in Germany were struggling to keep enough substitute performers on hand, to the point that additional singers were routinely being retrieved "from other cities on hurry calls."[92]

What emerged was a storyline that would play out repeatedly in the *Elektra* archive, nowhere more fantastically than in its satirical corners. Where one satirist casually gestured to the way "modern opera" now required multiple singers to perform a single role,[93] their straining voices stacked one atop the other, another distilled the narrative into a dystopic poem:

We are in the year 1910.	Wir sind im Jahre neunzehnhundertzehn.
Come, wanderer, come, here you shall see	Komm, Wanderer, komm, hier sollst du seh'n
This cemetery of the community,	Auf diesem Friedhof der Gemeine
The most recent tombstones.	Die allerneusten Leichensteine.
Here lies the singer Frau X,	Hier liegt die Sängerin Frau X,
Who earned a huge curtain call	Die sich geholt den großen Knicks,
By singing Elektra,	Indem sie die Elektra sang,
Whereupon her pleura burst.	Wobei das Brustfell ihr zersprang.
There lies singer Y,	Dort liegt die Sängerin Upsilon,
She sang alto; as happens,	Sie sang den Alt, das kommt davon,
When one studies such a difficult role,	Wenn man so Schweres einstudiert,
Her larynx exploded.	Ihr ist der Kehlkopf explodiert.
Here lie even more singers,	Da liegen mehrere Sänger noch,
Each crawled into the open grave,	Ein jeder in die Grube kroch,
Because their physique was altogether	Weil seine Physis ganz und gar
Unable to cope with the work.	Dem Werke nicht gewachsen war.
Each crawled into the open grave,	Ein jeder in die Grube kroch,
Because their physique was altogether	Weil seine Physis ganz und gar
Unable to cope with the work.	Dem Werke nicht gewachsen war.[94]

Still a third satirist presented these scenes of corporeal insufficiency in a more arresting visual form, as a cartoon titled "the life-threatening opera" (see Figure 4.4).[95] Four segments, each portraying a different night's injury report, chronicle the performers' attempts to stave off death, with the singers garnering the lion's share of attention. The spectacle of exertion is repeated, and presumably marveled at, night after night. Klytämnestra suffers fainting spells on the first night, but does not sing high enough to break her own neck until the third. Elektra goes mad during the second performance, but meets her end two nights later, when she strangles herself with harp strings. Aegisth, having lost consciousness during the first performance, soldiers on until he suffers lockjaw and dies on night three. Orest, having maniacally scaled the set during the second performance, ultimately survives until the fourth evening, when a trombone causes him to asphyxiate. The accumulation and repetition of the

[92] [Unsigned], "Echoes of Music Abroad," *Musical America* 9/23 (17 April 1909), 15.
[93] [Unsigned], "Moderne Oper," *Fliegende Blätter* 130/3321 (1909), 142.
[94] Notenquetscher [*sic*], "Glossen Zur Elektra," in *Der zerpflückte Strauss: Richard Strauss Karikaturen in Bild und Wort* (Berlin: Dr. Eysler & Co. G.m.b.H., 1910), 24–5.
[95] The cartoon was later reprinted in Karl Storck, *Musik und muskier in karikatur und satire* (Oldenburg im Grossherzogtum, [1911]), 433.

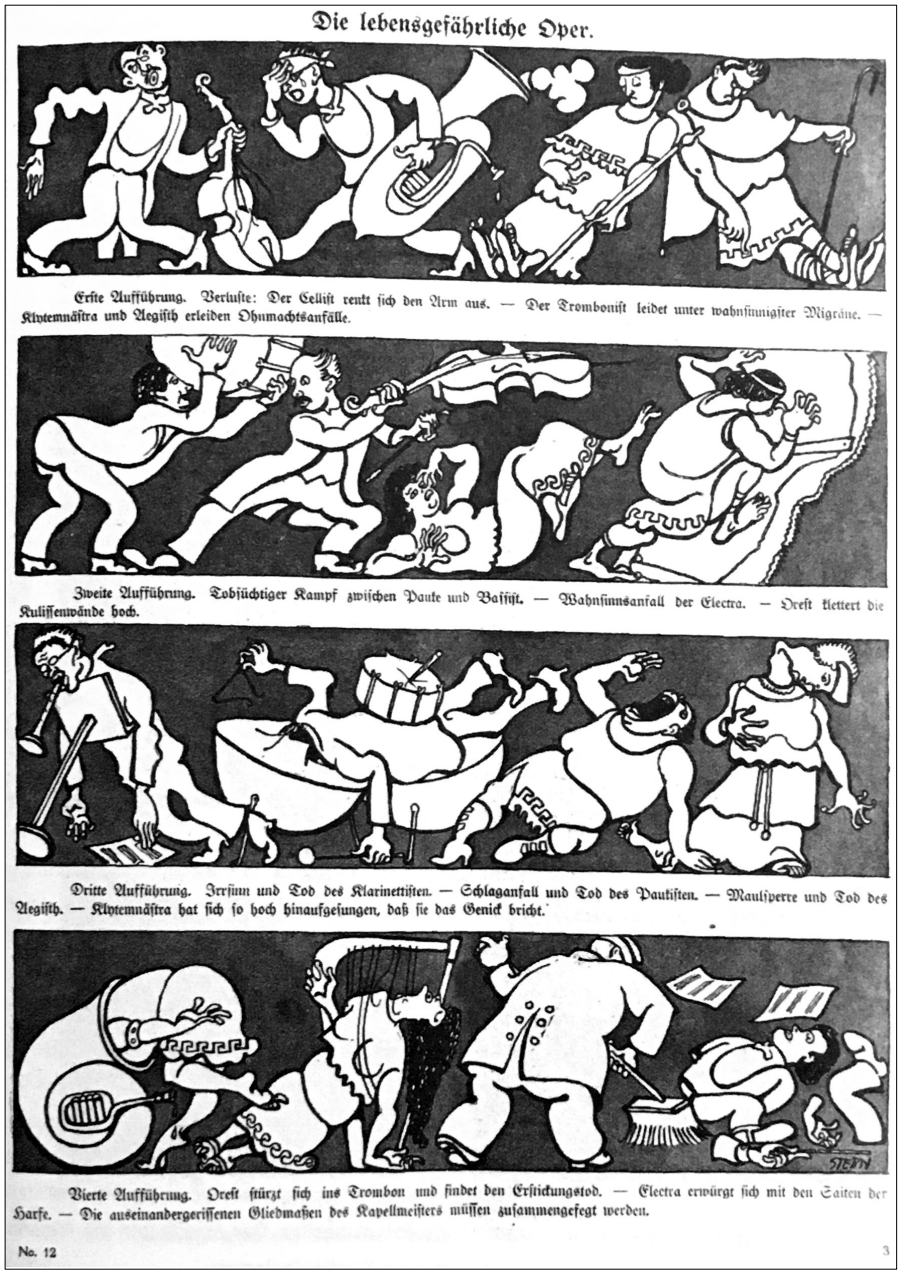

FIGURE 4.4: [Ernst Stern], "Die lebensgefährliche Oper," *Lustige Blätter* 24/12 (1909), 3.

First performance. Casualties: The cellist dislocates his arm. The trombonist suffers the most insane migraine. Klytemnästra and Aegisth suffer from fainting spells.

Second performance. Maniacal fight erupts between the percussionist and the bassist. Onset of madness for Elektra. Orest climbs high up the set.

Third performance. Insanity and death of the clarinetist. Apoplexy and death of the percussionist. Lockjaw and death of Aegisth. Klytemnästra has sung so high that she broke her neck.

Fourth performance. Orest hurls himself in a trombone and asphyxiates. Elektra strangles herself with the harp strings. The dismembered limbs of the conductor must be swept away.

feat is certainly important, but just as important is the thrill of the possibility of failure night after night—an unapologetically morbid version of the pleasure opera-goers continue to get from the idea that the diva of the moment might fail.[96]

Gone, in these examples, is the urgent emphasis on a Draeseke-esque "cure"; instead, the maimed bodies and crippling acts of performance are lovingly sketched, the details savored. In their obsessive emphasis on corporeal insufficiency, these responses speak to experiences of opera-going that were not always prioritized in journalistic criticism, to the thrill of witnessing perverse and deadly spectacles like that of the human body pushed to its limits. Strauss's singers were thus perhaps not so different from the circus performers another contemporary cartoonist imagined them to be: much as Klytämnestra the strongman lifts 5000-kilogram weights in this drawing, so did Strauss's singers demonstrate their physiological exceptionalism when they conquered the composer's score.[97] If the elision of operatic performance and circus spectacle in this way calls to mind the dazzling yet monstrous displays of ability by nineteenth-century musical virtuosos such as Paganini, it also underscores the particular titillation aroused by "superhuman" figures in the German-speaking world around 1900—figures whose multivalent associations held as strong an appeal in scholarly arenas as in commercial entertainments.[98] More fundamentally, though, these discursive investments in transgression and failure amount to investments in progress, crystallizing a survivalist aesthetic grounded in biopolitical logics that fetishize "life." Where the Draesekes of the world sought to quarantine cultural pathogens, these critics treated decay, stress, and death as means by which to immunize culture against disease, which of course required that a small amount be allowed into the bloodstream.

These scenes of survival and failure also call to mind an issue that initially surfaced in the debates over urban noise—the human cost of progress—and thus return us directly to the contested notions of progress with which I began. By mobilizing images of corporeal trauma, these life-idealizing responses to *Elektra* paint a sober picture of the kinds of violence "progress" engenders and the unevenness with which such violence is distributed. Concerns over the moral dimensions of socio-technical change, particularly urbanization, were not new.[99] Rather, the discursive wake of the opera allowed for these to find newly direct and colorful, if no less coy, forms of expression. The end of the dystopic poem cited above, for instance, concludes with a derisive reminder to appreciate the Frauen X and Y of the world who paid for Strauss and Hofmannsthal's success with their exploded larynxes and shattered pleurae.[100] But if the supposed traumas of "modernity" became focal points of

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[96] See Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30/3 (Spring 2004), 505–36, especially pp. 535–6.

[97] Lyonel Feiniger, "Revanche," *Lustige Blätter* 24/22 (1909), 20.

[98] Andrew Zimmerman highlights one example of this when he describes how German anthropological society meetings began in the years after 1900 to feature performances by "humans with extraordinary acquired characteristics, such as tattooed women and circus strongmen" rather than the "oddities that appeared to transgress the boundary between human and animal, such as hirsute or tailed people" that had previously been mainstays of such events. Furthermore, he continues, the "only significance [of such performances] seems to have been the titillation that they afforded the audience," since anthropological society meeting reports do not suggest that members discussed the performances in relation to such academic issues as Lamarckian inheritance. See Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 215.

[99] See Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2002).

[100] The final lines read:

"But don't you cry your eyes sore:	"Doch wein' dir nicht die Augen wund:
the two authors are healthy;	Die zwei Autoren sind gesund;

contemporary discourse about *Elektra*, it is only because of what the opera elicited from its singers: a vocality that captured by turns the promise of a "modern" future and the collateral damage likely to be incurred in its pursuit.

the work, which guaranteed success	Das Werk, das den Erfolg verbürgt,
has truly worked wonderfully	Hat wahrhaft wundervoll gewirkt
for artistic fame and pocket,	Für Künstlerruhm und Tasche,
consequently: honor their 'ashes'!"	Drum: Ehre ihrer 'Asche'!"

Notenquetscher [*sic*], "Glossen Zur Elektra," 25.

EPILOGUE
NEW VOCALITY'S UNRULY FUTURES

Let us return to the starting point of the previous chapter, and specifically to the ideas of Carl Mennicke.[1] There they served as a means of focusing on how central voice was to perceptions of *Elektra*'s contemporary relevance. Here I want to use Mennicke's ideas to contemplate the conceptual evolutions this project has traced. If his appraisal of *Elektra* opened up fresh paths by illuminating new perspectives on operatic vocality, then it also transported us back to places we have been before. In particular, it returned us to material treated in Chapter 1, where we glimpsed the affinity between the language Mennicke used to describe Strauss's treatment of the human voice—how the composer allegedly let it be subsumed, even devoured by the orchestra—and the terms in which *Guntram*'s critics objected to that opera.[2] Mennicke's concern over the unsettling impact such vocalism might have on the ability of listeners to understand the drama further calls to mind the "opera misery" lamented by anxious audience members.[3] Above all, however, it is his framing of these ideas that reveals how far we have come. In conceiving of operatic vocality as a privileged means by which audiences could recognize their own humanity, Mennicke telescopes the central argument of this project: that as changes in musical style unsettled old listening habits and called for new modes of attention and interpretation, "voice" became mediated in newly sociopolitical terms, as an index of subjectivity, of "humanity," and of political life itself.

While Mennicke's ideas about operatic vocality can be seen as a culmination of the history I have narrated, they also point in several directions. One is toward Weimar-era Germany, for reasons perhaps best demonstrated by a behemoth special double issue of *Musikblätter des Anbruch* published in 1928 on the topic of "song" ("Gesang"). The issue opened with an introduction by acting editor Paul Stefan that heralded the arrival of what he termed "new vocality" ("neue Vokalität"). Stefan seemed to frame the discussion in terms of the favored (and by now familiar) talking points of the 1890s when he characterized the so-called new vocality: "The role of 'accompaniment' is reduced, [and] the weight of contrapuntal voices is minimized. One emphasizes the connection to the old masters of vocal art and wants to emulate them. The tasks are set and their tendency is clear: to re-postulate the primacy [*Primat*] of the human voice."[4]

As contributor after contributor went on to explain, the agenda for this "new vocality" had been set in response to an unflinching assessment of the recent past. Writers described in detail how since Wagner composers had maltreated the human voice—overusing it as an accompanimental voice, overexploiting its more declamatory modes of expression, burying it under a thicket of over-developed orchestral lines ostensibly intended to support vocal melodies. The composer Walter Braunfels opened his essay with a frank admission that stands as one of two epigraphs for my first chapter: that German music culture had been experiencing a voice crisis since the time of Wagner. Bemoaning how the voice

[1] See p. 89.
[2] See pp. 20–32.
[3] See pp. 17–8.
[4] "Die Rolle der 'Begleitung' wird verringert, das Gewicht kontrapunktischer Gegenstimmen vermindert. Man betont den Anschluß an die alten Meister der Gesangskunst und will ihnen nacheifern. Die Aufgaben sind gestellt und ihre Tendenz ist deutlich: den Primat der menschlichen Stimme neuerlich zu postulieren." Paul Stefan, "Neue Vokalität," *MdA* 10/9–10 (November–December 1928), 320.

still had to "struggle vainly against a polyphonic or thick orchestra," Braunfels expounded on the challenges of always treating the human voice properly.[5] Fellow composer Alban Berg picked up this thread in his own contribution, whose conclusion advanced an unequivocal claim about the status of the human voice within opera:

> [O]pera, like no other musical form, is predestined to place itself in service to the human voice, to help it to safeguard its rights, which have almost been lost in the music drama of recent decades, during which time opera music has often represented—as Schoenberg remarked—nothing more than a "symphony for large orchestra with vocal accompaniment."[6]

And the musicologist-composer Egon Wellesz—a student of both Guido Adler and Arnold Schoenberg—matter-of-factly asserted in his contribution (an essay entitled "Rediscovery of the Voice"): the "unprinted headline of our day" is that "the earlier generation of composers neglected the vocal part [but] the present generation rediscovers the primacy [*Primat*] of the voice."[7]

While the ideas that emerge in these essays were surely made more attractive by the distance they afforded from (now-unfashionable) Wagnerian aesthetics, they have often been interpreted as responses to a central aesthetic anxiety of the Weimar era: the so-called *Opernkrise*, or a crisis over the supposed obsolesce of opera in the face of financial breakdowns, sociopolitical upheavals, and the appeal of new media and entertainment industries.[8] In this view, "new vocality" was central to a bid for opera's relevance within an economically and politically volatile environment, because "vocal primacy" could make opera matter to the urgent work of stabilizing society by embodying universalist notions of "humanness." The logic of this argument rested on the idea that the human voice represented the privileged articulation of humanity—an idea the composer Ernst Krenek would sketch in his own contribution to the *Musikblätter des Anbruch* special issue. There he characterized the sounding human voice as one of the "purest and most immediate expressions of humanity" given that it could be heard without any mediation, and thus declared that "as the most intense human [expression]," the voice demanded prioritization over all musical instruments. The singing voice, he concluded, was in fact "no musical instrument at all" but simply "the human voice."[9] He would return

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[5] "[N]och immer scheint es einer heillosen Mißhandlung, dem vergeblichen Kampf gegen ein polyphones oder dickes Orchester ausgeliefert […] Eine Frage, die mich viel beschäftigt hat, ist die, wie weit man die Melodie der Singstimme im Orchester unterstützen soll." Braunfels, "Die Stimme und das Orchester," 347–8.

[6] "[D]ie Oper, wie keiner andere musikalische Form, dazu prädestiniert erscheinen lassen, vor allem der menschlichen Stimme zu dienen und ihr zu ihrem guten Recht zu verhelfen, welches Recht allerdings in den letzten Jahrzenten musikdramatischen Schaffens fast verloren gegangen war, wo die Opernmusik—nach einem Wort Schönbergs—vielfach nichts anderes mehr darstellte, als eine 'Symphonie für großes Orchester mit Begleitung einer Singstimme'." Alban Berg, "Die Stimme in Der Oper," *MdA* 10/9–10 (November–December 1928), 350.

[7] "Und nun besteht in unseren Tagen eine ungedruckte Headline[:] die frühere Generation der Komponisten hat die Singstimme vernächlässigt, die gegenwärtige entdeckt aufs neue den Primat der Stimme." Egon Wellesz, "Wiederentdeckung der Stimme: Ein Brief," *MdA* 10/9–10 (November–December 1928), 353.

[8] For a gloss of the *Opernkrise* see Gundula Kreuzer, *Verdi and the Germans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 176–85.

[9] "Da die von ihr erzeugten Töne ohne jeder weitere Vermittlung durch eine instrumentale Mechanik hörbar werden, müssen sie zu den reinsten und unmittelbarsten Ausdrucksarten menschlichen Seins gehören. […] Alle anderen Stimmen [das heißt nicht Koloraturstimme, die am meisten nähert sich dem Instrumentalcharakter ist] werden in einem mit Instrumenten gemischten Satze stets dominieren, weil sie als intensivste menschliche Äußerungen die Aufmerksamkeit auf stärkste beanspruchen […] die Singstimme [ist] kein Musikinstrument, sondern eben einfach: Die menschliche Stimme ist." Ernst Krenek, "Stimme und Instrument," *MdA* 10/9–10 (November–December 1928), 351–2.

to this idea in an essay published a few years later when he emphasized how a renewed investment in song could help opera harness its potential to offer "a complete and more deeply penetrating display of humanity."[10] Perhaps no one was more explicit on this issue than the music critic Paul Bekker. Operatic vocality had long been a subject of interest to Bekker—he was publishing essays on the "characteristics of voices" as early as 1905—but in the 1920s and 1930s he would propose that a renewed focus on the human voice in opera would return human beings to their rightful place at the center of artistic endeavor, thus staving off sociopolitical fragmentation by fostering a sense of shared humanity.[11]

The foundations for such an ethical argument about opera and the singing voice are already there, if at times incipiently, in Mennicke's essay. But as a capsule of this dissertation's trajectory, Mennicke's account could just as easily be seen to point elsewhere—for example, to the late modernist composers (such as Steve Reich and Helmut Lachenmann) that Marcelle Pierson surveys in her study of "voice under erasure." Central to her project is the idea that vocality, not least as an index of "humanity," remains vitally important for these composers even if it often manifests in untraditional ways:

> [I]t is not that these composers try to disengage from the voice; their discussion of music is flooded with voice and melody[.] It is more that they are experiencing a crisis of voice and vocality. They all seek the human through voice and/or melody, although they also reject its traditional musical form of Mendelssohn-like melodies (either sung or performed instrumentally).[12]

Such observations ultimately prompt Pierson to frame her project in terms that could be applied to this dissertation with remarkably little violence: hers, she writes, is a project that is centrally concerned with "voices that don't sing; instruments that do; singing that comes from a speaking voice; melody that comes from a mass texture; [and] singing, melody, and voice that are obstructed in a stunning variety of ways."[13]

My point in sketching these two trajectories is not to suggest that these contexts are interchangeable with either each other or that of the *fin de siècle*; as I already suggested in my Introduction, recent work in voice studies has repeatedly emphasized that the stakes and ontologies of "voice" (let alone "the human voice") are not and have never been stable across time. My hope is rather that they might prompt consideration of we might gain from attending to the particularities of the *fin-de-siècle* discourses about voice examined in this dissertation—especially at the current moment, when so much scholarly energy is being directed toward questions of voice and music-making after

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[10] Ernst Krenek, "On the Situation of Opera 1932," trans. Amy Stebbins and Hannah Eldridge, *The Opera Quarterly* 25/1–2 (Winter–Spring 2009), 131–2. Heather Wiebe notes that Krenek believed that one reason operas of the past had failed to harness the genre's special potential was because of the antagonism with which composers had treated song and singers "whom he [saw] as newly reduced to either rigid 'marionette' or 'chanting agitator'." See Heather Wiebe, "Ernst Krenek's 'On the Situation of Opera'," *Opera Quarterly* 25/1–2 (Winter–Spring 2009), 124.

[11] The early essay to which I am referring is Paul Bekker, "Zur Charakteristik der Stimmen," *DM* 4/21 (1904–05), 171–6. Regarding Bekker's later positions, see Nanette Nielsen, *Paul Bekker's Musical Ethics* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), as well as her related article "*Sein oder Schein?*: Paul Bekker's 'Mirror Image' and the Ethical Voice of Humane Opera," *Opera Quarterly* 23/2–3 (Spring–Summer 2007), 295–310.

[12] Marcelle Pierson, "The Voice Under Erasure: Singing, Melody and Expression in Late Modernist Music" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2015), 26–7.

[13] Pierson, "The Voice Under Erasure," 19.

1900.[14]

Above all, I have sought to show that the period around 1900 saw "voice" emerge at the intersection of discursive politics, newsprint, and critical opinion. My introduction outlined a methodology for using discourse about vocal sound to trace the inscription of this category through a range of fractiously political print media. In Chapter 1 we were confronted by deeply conflicted press responses to operas that were flipped "upside down" such that these works' singing voices were indexed by their suppression. Moreover, as I went on to stress in Chapter 2, such reactions had virtually nothing to do with the strictures of *verismo* or indeed realism; instead, "melody" *tout court*—which is to say any semblance of voice—was repressed within the dominant orchestras of the "upside-down" operas. Ultimately, though, the sounds of voices mattered primarily as projections of will: as I argued in Chapter 3, the rise of a contemporary *Willenskultur* helped "humanity" inhere less in the apperception of vocal sound than in the apperception of expectations and desires through voice. And with these socially rooted forms of hermeneutic listening again taking center stage in Chapter 4, we found that *Elektra*'s early audiences imagined voice, especially at the edges of sonic audibility, to be a matter of concern impinging on nothing less than "life" and its survival. By the early twentieth century, then, a conception of voice had emerged that was distinguished as much by its repression and extra-audibility as by the liberal structures of its mediation.

To this end, we may have much to gain by considering the afterlives of these *fin-de-siècle* discourses about "voice" not merely in relation to music-historiographical narratives but also in more broadly political terms. Indeed, this process of diffusing sounding voices into discourse only seems to have strengthened the attraction of the category of "voice" for liberal political actors: first emerging through the mediations of political discourse, voice seems to have transformed over the course of subsequent decades into a supposedly universal currency of political agency—into the ultimate medium of liberalism itself. Setting such future-oriented speculations aside for the moment, the fine-grained histories I have compiled and narrated in these pages resoundingly confirm a central tenet of voice studies: the idea that voice is not natural, but always constructed and indeed inseparable from the processes of its mediation. At the same time, the impassioned and often contradictory inscriptions of voice I have tracked throughout this dissertation exemplify the ways musical experiences can condition political thought: how the idea of voice as abstract signifier is constituted through multiple strands of opinionated discourse that capture encounters with very specific voices and vocal sounds.

[14] Here I have in mind a loose body of scholarship that includes, but is hardly limited to, Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Jelena Novak, *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-Body* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Amanda Weidman, "Neoliberal Logics of Voice: Playback Singing and Public Femaleness in South India," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55/2 (2014), 175–93; Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*; Francesca Placanica, "*Recital I (for Cathy)*: A Drama 'Through the Voice'," *Twentieth-Century Music* 15/3 (2018), 350–97; and the contributions to special issue 1 (Voice), *Twentieth-Century Music* 13/1 (February 2016), 1–197.

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Discography

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